CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

1.0 Objective of study

Various African imageries have been ascribed to Jesus Christ in order to explicate the Christ event in a way that the ordinary African can best understand. To this effect, African theologians in quest for an African face of Jesus, suggested symbols, idioms and epithets which resonate with the people’s culture. This effort to reimage Jesus in the African context was to make him receptive to the ordinary African in such a way that he may no longer be considered a stranger in Africa, but one of their own. This is because African theologians reasoned that for long, the Christ event has been shrouded by symbols and language of the foreign missionaries who brought the gospel to Africa and that had been a limiting factor for the growth of Christianity. According to the Nigerian Baptist theologian, Osadolor Imasogie, ‘Symbols lose their potency and the theological formulations become atrophied when the symbols around which they are built have become irrelevant or foreign to a people of another culture. There is always a search for living and relevant symbols that mediate the saving presence of God in Jesus Christ.’

African Christian theologians suggested imageries as jete- ancestor, elder brother, king, proto chief, the medicine man and many others that represent important personages in the African cultural context, who apart from their status and importance, play a significant role as mediator among humans or between humans and the deity. Jesus is not considered in the manner of Apostles creed as the only begotten of God, but chiefly as a mediator between the supreme God as seen in these various titles ascribed to him in the African cultural context. These imageries were suggested by these theologians who sought for a Christology that truly reflects African character and which is detached from the overbearing dominance of the North Atlantic influence on African theologies. They reasoned that Africans should have Christologies fitting into their peculiar context just as Christians elsewhere in the world can

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determine what Christology best suit them. The Dutch Contextual theologian Vroom, corroborated this view when he stated that ‘The church’s ‘product’ or the results of theology should not be uniform or universal; instead, its understanding of the Word of God should be creative and relevant, sincere and honest, responsible and contextual.’ This is why the recent quest for an African face of Jesus Christ has become a dominant theme in African Christian theology.

This form of Afro-Christology that is a creation of the African theologians may be regarded as a Christology of the academia in deference to the organized efforts and theological process that birthed it, as against the Christology arising from the grass roots or from the context of the ordinary people. This research effort is geared towards examining the Christology from the peoples context, which I consider as populist Christology, often referred to in African theological circles as the base or ‘grassroots theology’, which is devoid of theological niceties, containing ‘unprocessed’ perceptions of Jesus Christ whom they encounter daily in their interactions with the Bible as a source and communal living in the African society.

As rightly pointed out by Nicholas M. Healy that theologizing exists at the level of professionals and non-professionals when he stated that ‘By thinking and acting as Christians we are already in some sense engaged in the practice of theology, whether we actually engage in critical reflections upon our lives or not. And all “theologians” from the non-reflective to the professional have their own pre-understandings – sets of beliefs, questions, concerns, aesthetic judgement about ... “the Christian thing.’ It is the non-reflective Christology arising from the perception of non-professional Christians in Nigerian indigenous church context that is the focus of this study. The indigenous churches have widely been acknowledged as a ready source for African theology. This is why the research effort is on the Christology of the Mountain of Fire and Miracles Church, one of the indigenous churches in Nigeria. The Mountain of Fire and Miracles Church (hereafter referred as MFM) is one of the foremost indigenous churches that has witnessed a rapid growth in the past twenty years, on the account of its particular emphasis on spiritual warfare.

The focus shall be on how Jesus Christ is appropriated in relation to healing, as healing constitutes a critical aspect in African Christianity. Healing encapsulates everything that pertains to wellness of the spirit, soul and body. In the Nigerian religious context, healthy living is not merely the absence of physical ailment in the body, but includes freedom from psychic afflictions from malicious beings in the realm of the spirit and peace with one’s environment. What has made the MFM church popular over the years is their belief and practice of spiritual warfare that is rooted in New Testament practices of exorcism, which resonates with the African worldview on spirits existence and the influence they exert on human affairs. The emphasis on spiritual warfare has become the dominant theology in the new generation African churches like the MFM, a theme that also resonate with primal religions of Africa. How Jesus Christ is appropriated in this context and the significance of Christology on the growth of this church is the focus of this study. What kind of images of Jesus is portrayed in the teachings and practices of this church and how it blends with Christological motifs of African Christian intellectuals such as Jesus as an Ancestor, Elder brother, Chief, Healer, etc. are questions which we seek to find answers to.

1.1 Christology in Churches in Nigeria

Christology is variously described as the doctrine of the person of Jesus Christ or the Church’s response to what he said about himself or what he did. ‘Thus Christology is essentially a response to a particular history. It is a confessional response. For men confess their faith in what God has done in Jesus Christ in terms of Christology. It is a kerygmatic response. For the disciples of Jesus proclaim Jesus by means of Christology as the one in whom God has acted redemptively...the church’s Christology was a response not only in his earthly history but also in the Church’s continuing life.’

The experience in Nigeria shows Christology at three levels. There is what has been described as the Mission Christology which essentially is a product of the mission churches established by the European missionaries in the era of colonialism; and a reflection of the Christology of the home denominations and mission agencies. It is essentially a Eurocentric Christology. The other type of Christology is the various African faces of Jesus, a creation of

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African Christian intellectuals who are in search for an Afro centric Christology that is responsive to the African cultural context. In Nigeria, certain theologians have suggested reimagining of Jesus Christ as an African King, an esteemed Guest, Christ as Chief etc, so that as one of them stated, ‘Christianity becomes rooted in Africa only when Christ and his church dwell among Africans in the world of their values and meanings, not in alien signs and symbols.’\(^6\) The desire here is to project an African Christian thought of Jesus Christ, one that is distinctively African, that reflects the people’s perception, culture and hope and what Christ means in their context. This can be considered as propositional Christology as against what obtains now in many of the indigenous churches.

The third type of Christology is that which is appropriated and observable in the indigenous churches, which as earlier stated, is often referred to as Christology of the grass roots. It is a Christology arising from the ordinary people’s context and their perception of him.

Mission Christology dominated Nigerian Christianity for a long time and was such that did not make much difference in the lives of the people, because as notable Nigerian theologians observed that Nigerians in the mission churches often revert to their traditional religion in times of crises, because the type of Christ they were introduced to could not meet challenges of their African context. Osadolor Imasogie, for example noted that, ‘It is our view that the average African’s commitment to Christ is superficial…The superficiality of the African Christian’s commitment is evidenced by the fact that when he is faced with problems and uncertainties he often reverts to traditional religious practices.’\(^7\) It was about this time that theologians proposed a Christology that is fitting into African cultural milieu that will better explicate the person, teachings and work of Christ. However, the indigenous Churches were light years ahead, as they appropriated Christ in ways that suited the exigencies of their peculiar environment. African theologians have come to accept that it is in these churches of African extraction that authentic African Christianity is experienced, as African images, symbols, idioms, and various language expressions are used to explicate the person and works of Christ. It is a Christology of an African face of Jesus Christ arising out of the peoples’ context and for the African people.

Of recent however, African Christianity has been impacted by trends in global scene. This is because one factor shaping African Christianity is the effect of globalization as seen in present economic trends, modern technologies and communication, and cultural renaissance as a backlash of modernism. It can be seen for example, that since the economic recession in Nigeria in the eighties, a new form of Christian theological emphasis that dwelt on economic alleviation as an integral part of the Christian message (the ‘prosperity gospel’) became prevalent in response to the recession. The Jesus of this popular church movement is one that blesses not only with eternal life but with abundance of material and financial blessings that make life good and meaningful for the African in the face of harsh economic realities. Churches that preached the prosperity messages grew by leaps and bounds because it appealed to the famished Nigerian who desired miracles of economic blessings in poverty stricken African context. These were churches belonging to Pentecostal circles.

The effect of globalization can be seen also from the dimension of cultural revival as indigenous people across the world are reaching for their cultural roots in the face of fast pace of erosion of cultural values and way of life. For fear of a total loss of their culture and traditional religion to a squeeze by modernism into a giant global mould, there has been a renaissance of dormant religions and cultures by indigenous peoples across the world in reaction to the effects of globalization. The present wave of religious fundamentalism,8 intolerance and terrorism is a reflection of this. On a lower scale, the recent emphasis on spiritual warfare in African Christianity,9 characterised by theology of power over evil forces and popularized by deliverance or exorcism slant in the AICs and newer Pentecostal churches in Africa, is a reflection of Africa traditional religion’s worldview of the ubiquity of spirit beings in the African space. This is an example of how indigenous Christians and Africans are reaching for cultural beliefs to mediate existing realities in their local contexts. Christology that is emphasised here is the divine Christ who is all powerful to vitiate malignant spirits in the African communities that are responsible for backwardness, poverty, low life expectancy, ill-health, ignorance, want etc. Christ is a life giver both in terms of quality and quantity, which makes exorcism and prosperity teaching a dominant theme in many of the newer churches in Nigeria.

This is distinct from the Christology of the mission churches which a Nigerian theologian described as a ‘Christology of the cathedral’ that seems impotent to meet African existential realities; and African Christian theological tradition whose emphasis is exploratory into the person and nature of Christ in the African context. The deliverance Christology of the MFM church representing a genre as seen in some AICs, oscillates between the populist Christology of the Aladura churches and the Christology often witnessed in Pentecostal circles that portrays Jesus as the giver of life, health and wealth or ‘Jesus the blesser.’ The common feature in the Christologies of the later churches mentioned above is the emphasis on a transcendent Jesus who is able to deliver from pain and penury.

This sometime makes the MFM church placement or categorization as an AIC or African Pentecostal somewhat difficult as its beliefs and practices shifts between these two major church movements. This is also true of the identity of some other Nigerian churches.

1.2 Taxonomy of Nigerian Churches

There are some Nigerian theologians who attempt to distinguish African churches into three distinct categories; the mission or historic churches, the African Independent or Initiated churches, and the Pentecostal churches. The Mission churches are the historic churches of Africa founded by European missionaries in the colonial era such as the Anglican, Roman Catholic, the Methodist, the Presbyterian, and Baptist etc. These churches pioneered Christianity via various missionary enterprises of their denominations or home churches in Western Europe and America. The African Independent churches (hereafter referred to as AICs) are churches founded by the natives who had accepted and appropriated the Christian faith as their own and sought to make it responsive to their existential concerns within their cultural context. These churches were often considered as representing African Christian converts’ quest for selfhood of the church, an African liturgy (prayer, worship, hymnology etc), and theology and organization free from foreign domination. These native Christians sought for Christianity with an African slant and where they can give an authentic African expression to their faith and provide what is culturally lacking in the mission churches. The contentious issues that gave rise to these churches were either theological, liturgical, cultural, leadership or simply quest for spiritual power to contend with forces

dwindling longevity and quality of living in their African environment. The Pentecostal churches emerged much later on the African continent after contacts with Americans in the post–Azusa Street Holy Spirit baptism experience of the early 20th century that ushered in the modern church era of Pentecostalism.

For most part of the nineteenth century, Christianity in Africa, according to Matthews Ojo, was dominated by the Roman Catholic Church and the mainline Protestant denominations, offshoot of the Western missionary endeavors. However, this near absolute monopoly or Western dominance of the religious scene was broken in the closing decades of that century with the emergence of the African Independent churches (AICs). The AICs can be classified into two categories, the earlier and later churches. The earlier AICs in south west of Nigeria often trace their roots to the founding fathers of the Aladura church movement (like Shadare, Odunlami, Oshitelu, Babalola, Orimolade etc). Agodame listed the earlier or ‘traditional’ Aladura churches that emerged in the colonial era as follows, the Cherubim and Seraphim (C & S) (1925), Christ Apostolic Church (CAC) (1930), Church of the Lord-Aladura (CLA) 1930, and Celestial Church of Christ (1950).

Members of these churches take pride in the pioneering efforts and healing feats of their founders, who in most cases are revered as prophets and healers in their days, and whose words are authoritative on issues concerning the doctrines and continuity of the church even after their demise. Due to the fast pace of urbanization however, many of these churches are now located in rural settings and comprise mainly of not too literate members who also relish in the cultural appeals of these churches. They are being supplanted in the cities by the later AICs and Pentecostal churches of various strands whose mega churches dot the landscapes of the major cities in Nigeria.

Many of these earlier AICs are vernacular speaking and have adopted certain elements of African culture into their church tradition. Some of these churches, according to Adogame, have a distinctive form of Christianity that bears the imprint of the African traditional system. He further stated that some of these churches owe much to traditional religion so that they are easily taken as practicing “paganism” with “borrowed” Christian

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12 A.U Adogame, Celestial Church of Christ:, 2.
He makes particular reference to the practices of the Church of the Lord - Aladura (CLA) where ‘despite the change in religious allegiance to “God” (the Christian deity), Yoruba world view remained essentially unchanged. This according to him is what gave Aladura Christianity its this-worldly and integrated character. In a real sense, the religious rules and goals remained the same; only the content has changed. God and the Holy Spirit became the new Orisha and Christianity became the new ‘cult’ system.\textsuperscript{14} Though these churches were founded in the colonial era to give them an African distinctiveness, there are other churches of this category with the same character that emerged in the post-colonial era. These include the ‘Evangelical Church of Yahweh (ECY) (1973), Church of the Seven Seals of God (CSSG) (1979) and the various appendages and splinter formations from the earlier movements.\textsuperscript{15} Agodame also uses the term Charismatic Religious Movements (CRMs) to refer to these indigenous churches because of their emphasis on prayer, prophetic; and healing.

The later AICs comprise of churches that metamorphosed from the Aladura churches but are now Pentecostals in outlook. The founder of the Redeemed Church of God, one of the largest churches in Nigeria had his roots in the Cherubim and Seraphim, an Aladura church. The founder of the Mountain of Fire and Miracles also traces his roots to the effectual work of Apostle Babalola of the Christ Apostolic Church (CAC), another Aladura church that emerged in the 1930s. They reflect the current practices in Christianity in Nigeria.

Other theologians would however classify churches in Africa, south of the Sahara, into two broad categories; the mission churches and churches that lean towards African Pentecostalism. The nomenclature African Pentecostalism is used to describe churches that emphasize in one form or the other spiritual empowerment through gifts and enablement of the Holy Spirit. ‘Pentecostalism’ may be defined as that stream of Christianity which emphasizes personal salvation in Christ as a “transformative experience wrought by the Holy Spirit”. Subsequent to that initial experience, such Pneumatic phenomena as speaking in

\textsuperscript{13} A.U Adogame, \textit{Celestial Church of Christ:}, 3.
\textsuperscript{14} A.U Adogame, \textit{Celestial Church of Christ:}, 4.
\textsuperscript{15} A.U Adogame, \textit{Celestial Church of Christ:}, 2.
tongues’, prophecies, visions, healing, signs and wonders, have come to be accepted, valued, and encouraged among members as evidence of active presence of God’s Spirit.”

The latter categorization of churches into two, the mission churches and African Pentecostalism, group all churches aside from the mission churches as Pentecostals, because of emphasis on the Holy Spirit’s presence and activities in these churches. They also include charismatic groups which ‘generally refers to historically younger Pentecostal independent and para-church movements, many of which function within non-Pentecostal denominations. According to Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, the expression ‘charismatic’ itself derives from St. Paul’s reference to charismata pneumatika, ‘Gifts of the Spirit,’ in 1 Corinthians 12-14. Thus St. Paul uses the expression to refer to those ‘extraordinary divine graces’ that believers manifest on account of their experience of the Holy Spirit. In Nigeria, Charismatic groups are found in older mission churches like the Roman Catholics (the Catholic Charismatic Renewal), the Anglican Church (Evangelical Fellowship of the Anglican Communion, (EFAC), the Methodist, Baptist and the Presbyterian churches. These groups were founded mostly by the youths of these churches in a bid to impact positively on age long practices of their churches so as to make them conform to contemporary developments such as the belief and demonstrations of Holy Spirit power through baptism and subsequent gifting; which was largely suppressed or denied altogether in these older churches before the emergence of these charismatic groups. The emergence of these groups within what is popularly referred to in the Nigerian context as ‘orthodox’ churches (informed by these churches quest to adhere strictly to historic doctrines and traditions of the church and their rigidity towards any novel experience), was aimed at stemming the drift of younger people from these mission churches into newer Pentecostal churches populated by youths seeking for spiritual renewal and power of the Spirit.

For the purpose of this study, emphasis will dwell directly on the Mountain of Fire and Miracles Church (MFM), which originated as an AIC, but of recent has had a Pentecostal disposition with much emphasis on spiritual empowerment to dominate the malevolent forces prevalent in Africa. The rationale behind the choice of the MFM Church is because of its emphasis on exorcism that has promoted its rapid growth in the past two decades. MFM epitomizes current trend in African Christianity with particular emphasis on spiritual warfare.

Although this nomenclature (AIC) is sometimes used in order to refer derogatively to churches that have incorporated elements of their local culture and of African Traditional Religion (ATR) into their religious practices and therefore are regarded as leaning towards syncretism, I use the concept in this study in a more formal or neutral way referring to churches that are founded by Africans, devoid of Western theological influence as in the Mission or Mainline churches. In other words, these churches are believed to a large extent to be ‘self-supporting, self-financing, and self-governing.’\(^{17}\), who seek to reverse the trend of the colonial era, as noted by Cardinal Joseph-Albert Malula of Zaire, quoted by Elizabeth Isichei, ‘In the past, foreign missionaries Christianized Africa. Today the Christians of Africa are invited to Africanize Christianity.’\(^{18}\)

### 1.3 Some features of African Indigenous Churches

Having discussed the genesis of the AICs, it is imperative that we discuss briefly here some of the peculiar features of this movement that differentiates them from the Mission Churches. This is germane to the present study. It is noteworthy that Christianity came into Nigeria as a foreign religion, but with passage of time has been adapted or contextualized to meet both the needs and culture of the people. Adaptations however vary from one context to the other, and in most cases depend on how these churches emerged and the visions of the founders of these churches. But there are some features that are common to all. Ayegboyin and Ishola highlight some of these features are as follows:

a) **Emphasis on Prayer**

One dominant feature of the AICs is their emphasis on prayer. These sects preach the power and authority of prayer\(^ {19}\). They reiterate the fact that prayer is the cure of all human problems, and indeed the source of all blessings and successes. Prayer in this context is often accompanied by a short or long period of fasting and abstinence from essentials of life. In most cases, these churches have secluded mountain sites, beaches or camps in faraway forests for the purpose of concentration in prayers. Night vigils

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and hours of prayer are also observed. It is not unusual for pastors and priests in these secluded places to receive patronage from those who are in need, for prayers for solutions to their problems.

b) Emphasis on the 'Spiritual'

There is a tendency amongst the indigenous churches to see human experiences mainly from the spiritual perspective. According to Ayegboyn and Ishola, these churches ‘...give spiritual interpretation to virtually all happenings especially misfortunes and failures in life such as barrenness, poverty, illnesses, unemployment, prolonged pregnancy, disappointments, and so on.’ This perception may be a hang-over from the African traditional religion where misfortunes and disasters are considered to be expressions of anger of the gods or ancestors.

They lay emphasis also on the guidance of the Holy Spirit, power of revelation, faith healing, exorcism, usage of certain paraphernalia of worship such as holy water, chaplet etc as a way out of the problems. The Holy Spirit grants visions, dreams and their interpretations, prophetic utterances, ecstatic behaviours and other manifestations of the Spirit to godly and gifted people as they solve the mysteries of life. Many of the indigenous churches wear white garment as a mark of purity and holiness of the Spirit that works in their midst.

c) Emphasis on Faith (Divine) Healing

Many of the indigenous churches lay emphasis on divine healing as a source of health. This is against the background that Africa is plagued by many tropical diseases, and many communities do not have easy access to modern health care system. Many Nigerians patronize these churches because there is little or no financial involvement. Ilogu observes that the dysfunctions in the Nigeria state has given rise to the proliferation of African indigenous churches, ‘... lending credence to the sociological theory that times of strain, stress and economic depression tend to induce more people to seek ‘salvation’ from this sectarian type of churches, whether their emphasis be prayer or healing or Pentecostal prophetism.’

20 D. Ayegboyn and S. A. Ishola, African Indigenous Churches, .28
d) **Emphasis on aspects of African cultures which are congenial to Christianity.**

The AICs freely incorporated elements in African culture that are congenial to Christianity. They adapted African world view and culture where desirable to preach the Christian message in thought and form. According to Ayegboyin and Ishola, ‘The AICs are pragmatic in contextualizing Christian culture. They are practical and down to earth in their belief, doctrine and response to the problems of their African congregations. Missionary Christianity with European cultural manifestations was too foreign to meet some of the pressing demands of the African. The AICs on the other hand preach a brand of Christianity that is deeply rooted in African traditional culture, and flexible enough to respond to their demand.’

In this regard, leaders of the indigenous churches take cognizance of the African background of their members, their world view of the spirit world, evil forces, witches, and other malevolent spirits; and for treatment as discussed earlier, resort to prayers, long period of fasting, exorcism etc. Some of these churches however go to the extreme of engaging in syncretism, in acts as sacrificing animals at cross roads, using extra-biblical resources and names in their liturgy, using the media of trance, dreams and visions to discern the future and solutions to problems brought by the afflicted. Ilogu explains why this form of Christianity gained a wide acceptance than the mission churches amongst the Ibos and other tribes in Nigeria. He reasons that

> The genius for prophetism in the form of vision seeing and vision interpretation is like traditional divination. The combination of healing through herbs and oils with religious practices, and the desire for visible symbols of religious vitality in the form of spirit possession, ecstasy and the feeling of abandon and “carefree”-worship patterns have their counterpart in traditional religion also.

This underscores the rapid growth of these churches and their popularity among Africans. Many consider the practices of the AICs as improvised methods of the African traditional religion and are much at home with them. These churches lean more on the Old Testament text for support as they reason that there is similarity between the Semitic and African culture as demonstrated by some Old Testament practices such as the sacrificial

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system, marriage, religious cults etc. Some churches however condemn such practices and label them as syncretism. These practices however subsist in many of the AICs like the Celestial Church of Christ (CCC), certain sects of the Aladura churches and the Sabbath churches.

e) **Unstructured worship style**

The ‘carefree worship’ or unstructured worship style of the AICs is one of the attracting factors into these churches. The worship does not follow any liturgical pattern as in the mission churches, but Holy Spirit enabled, empowered and directed. Worship in the indigenous churches is a reflection of a typical cultural African festival. Africans are in their true element when worship involve singing, dancing, clapping, and generally in a celebration mood. In this context, there is room for prophetic utterances and interpretation of dreams and visions. The songs mostly come in form of choruses and mostly centred on God’s greatness, His power and majesty; Jesus and redemption; the Holy Spirit and His power to deliver from troubles. As observed by Ayegboyin and Ishola, the songs which are mostly in traditional lyrics, ‘…are evocations and sometimes spontaneous composition accompanied with ringing of bells, drumming and the use of other native musical instruments.’

In many of the indigenous churches, time is not factored into worship as it is with the mission churches where everything is done business like and in order of pre-planned structure of worship. Worship time is in accordance with the leading of the Spirit and can be a whole day’s affair. Worshippers are usually not in a hurry and are fully involved and not passive participants as in the case of the mission churches. They praise, sing and dance through the service. The period of prayer is spontaneous and everyone is encouraged to pray so as not to lose out in God’s blessings.

f) **Simple Administrative Structures**

The AICs are not given to highly structured bureaucratic setting of the mission churches. They adopt simple structures patterned after church offices as in the New Testament. It is not uncommon to find in these churches apostles, pastors, evangelists

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and prophets all occupying different cadre in the administrative structure of the church. The apostles occupy the top of the hierarchy while in most cases, church officers begin from the base as evangelists. The structure is simple largely because many who preside over these churches have little or no formal education, nor are they seminary trained professionals. Spiritual gifts and authority are given prominence in these churches. Besides, leaders with their charisma are acknowledged as men of God whose words are the words of God and are binding as far as decision making and church doctrine are concerned. Just as the traditional religion priest is held in high esteem as an intermediary between the gods, the ancestors and the spirit world on one hand and the world of humans on the other in a typical African community, so are leaders, particularly the head of these churches who are highly esteemed among the members. Ayegboyin and Ishola are of the opinion that the absence of complex administrative structure enables the leadership of these AICs to be focused on the essentials of the ministry and give daily spiritual counsel and support to those who have problems.

1.4 Research Question

What could the critical analysis of the main characteristics of the Christology of the MFM Church in Nigeria contribute to the topical Christological reflection in the Mission Churches? On the basis of what kind of criteria could there be a fruitful exchange?

Sub questions
- What are the main trends in the current Christologies of the Mission Churches?
- What are the main characteristics of the Christology of the MFM Church?
- What are their weaknesses and what the strengths?
- What could be the preconditions for a fruitful exchange between both approaches?

1.5 Research Methodology

The methodology employed in this study is the empirical and historical methods. The empirical method involved participation in church worship and deliverance sessions, in order to obtain relevant information through observations in the context of worship and healing
services. The historical method entailed the use of library resources, church literature and other historical documents to validate information derived primarily from the field research. This will be briefly discussed below.

**a) Empirical study.** I did part of my research as participant observer. Several visits were made to the National headquarters of the MFM Church at Onike, Yaba, Lagos and the Prayer City of the same church along the Lagos–Ibadan Express road to participate in worship services between 2008 and 2009. I also visited and participated in worship service at the provincial headquarters, Abuja where I also observed the form and content of worship in the month of March, 2010. At the Yaba headquarters of the church, there is a regular Sunday worship presided over by the General Overseer himself, Pastor Daniel K. Olukoya. He is the chief minister here and participates in these weekly services whenever he is available. The Prayer City serves as the venue for the monthly ‘Power Must Change Hands’ miracle and deliverance services that hold every first Saturday morning of every month. Devotees and seekers converge at this venue from all over the country every Friday evening preceding this monthly event. They come prepared by way of fasting, for miracles and deliverance. Before now, the monthly ‘Power must Change Hands’ programme was hosted at the MFM headquarters church, Onike, Yaba. Due to the influx of people to the Onike neighborhood and complaints of the residents, the venue was shifted to the Lagos-Ibadan expressway. I participated in the programme at the old venue. The Prayer City also serves as a deliverance centre where people come during the week to be prayed for and attended to as I observed.

It is easy to discern from the sermons, hymns and songs, prayer emphasis and the numerous deliverance sessions taking place regularly in these contexts, the theological emphasis of the church as I participated in these programs.

**b) Interviews** - Members of the MFM church were interviewed in the course of this study. The interview method was largely unstructured in order not to manipulate the interviewees in a specific direction. Those interviewed were graduates of higher institutions in Nigeria and whose previous church affiliations were the old mission churches. I was particularly interested in this sample group to determine also the extent to which education of respondents’ influences acceptability of the Church’s
doctrinal emphasis on the need for exorcism for every African. All those interviewed had particularly challenges like barrenness, ill health or marital problems and have had to go through the process of deliverance to be exorcised of malignant spirits responsible for their misfortunes. It is noteworthy that a large percentage of current membership of the MFM Church once had previous church affiliation in mission churches or other church groups that do not emphasize exorcism, which MFM teaches as indispensable in the African context.

I made effort to interview the General Overseer of the church, through an intermediary, but proved abortive because of his various church commitments and engagements. In lieu of an interview with the General Overseer, I had discussions with some pastors and a missionary of the church on policies and doctrines of the MFM Church.

c) Historical Sources - Much of this research work depended largely on historical materials or documents of the MFM church such as sermons on electronic storages and books by the founder and General Overseer of the church, Pastor (Dr.) D. K. Olukoya. There are several titles by the General Overseer listed on the website of the church, published by the Battle Cry ministry (the publication arm of the church) and available in bookstores at the church headquarters, Prayer City and other local branches of the church. These books reflect doctrinal position of the church in respect of demonology and exorcism. Over thirty titles in this series relevant to the objective of this study were consulted in the course of this study.

d) Magazines and Bulletins - Other materials consulted included regular Sunday bulletins and prayer pamphlets of the church. There are two bulletins, “Fire in the Word”, and “Battle Cry” that are published every Sunday and sold to church members. Topics often covered relates to pertinent issues on African cultures and peculiar environment that make exorcism necessary, and why Christians must be prayerful. Other magazines and periodicals that are not publications of the MFM, but have direct relevance to this study were also used.

e) Prayer Bulletins - In some of the worship services I participated in, prayer bulletins containing prophetic prayer points ordered by the General Overseer were freely
distributed and used in the course of service. These are prayer points arising from the sermon of the day, which are used after the sermons. Members pray to be rid of whatever spirits are mentioned in the sermons hindering their spiritual, physical or material progress in life.

f) **Electronic Storages** - I listened to several recorded sermons on audio tapes by the General Overseer of the MFM Church on subjects relating to this study. There are audio tapes of sermons delivered on regular Sunday worship at the Church’s headquarters by the General Overseer or at the ‘Power Must Change Hands’ programme that holds once in a month.

g) **Internet Source** - The MFM Church headquarters’ website www./http:mountainoffire.org came handy on quick reference relating to topical issues on the church. Other related websites on Afro-Christology and African Pentecostalism which are of importance to this present study were also consulted.

h) **Library Sources** - The library was a major source for information gathering in this study. These materials included books, periodicals, and documents etc. that are relevant to this study.

1.6 **Importance of this Study**

Several studies have been carried out on the importance of having a Christology fitted for the African context. This study however will focus on the Christology of the Mountain of Fire and Miracles Church representing a genre of indigenous churches of Africa. The particular emphasis of these African churches is spiritual warfare and undoing the works of malignant spirits that abound in the African space. Does the Christology that was introduced into Nigeria by way of the missionary enterprise of the nineteenth century fit into the aspirations of these indigenous Christians whose concept of abundant life that Jesus brought is interpreted to mean a life free from pain, poverty and negative spirits’ influence that many Africans experience? Or has a new Christology evolved in these churches representing the aspiration of the people who desire the power of Christ to destroy the powers of darkness that diminish the essence of life in Africa? This happens to be the focus of this study, to understand the Christology of an indigenous church as against what obtains in the historic
mission churches and what is recommended by African Christian intellectuals like Jesus as our ancestor, Chief, Elder brother etc.

1.7 The Steps of the argument

This study is divided into six chapters. Chapter one is introductory, a focus on the rationale and scope of this study. Chapter Two is on review of relevant literature germane to this study, a deliberation of previous work in this regards. Chapter Three focuses on the different phases of Christianity in Nigeria beginning from the sixteenth century with the Portuguese explorers and merchants to the present influence of global Christianity. The impact of developments of these different phases on Nigerian Christianity and the Christology that evolved over time is considered. Chapter Four relays a brief history of the MFM church, her doctrines and practices. It also examines some criticisms of the practices of the church. Chapter Five examines healing practices in Nigerian churches, ranging from how healing became a critical concept in the African Indigenous Churches in the early twentieth century to the present day, so that any church in Nigeria that does not make healing as a cardinal teaching is considered not contemporary in the faith and loses members to those that emphasize healing and deliverance like the MFM church. Chapter Six dwells on the focus of this study, examining the Christologies of the different strands of churches in Nigeria, with particular emphasis on the MFM Church. These are the AICs (as seen in the MFM), the Mission churches and African Pentecostal churches. The chapter also dwells on what gave rise to these different Christological emphases and their impact on Nigerian Christianity and African Christian theology in general. Chapter Seven is the concluding chapter, an analysis of the observations made during the study, a critique of some doctrinal positions of the churches on the subject of Christology, and concluding remarks.