

## Biblical Research in Africa: Historical Jesus Quest in Inculturation Perspective

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### Abstract

*The Historical Jesus research is a very interesting and challenging academic enterprise especially as it relates to Africa. This type of research is new in Africa but is being attempted by African scholars. The historical Jesus research is gradually gaining ground in Africa especially in South Africa. However, the African scholar needs to explore more ground on this department of research in biblical studies. Therefore, using the inculturation paradigm, this paper aimed at reconstructing the historical Jesus research in Africa. The work showed that historical Jesus research is new in Africa but have been attempted by African scholars with a view to making it more constructive to African Christianity. Unlike Reimarus' and Schweitzer's opinion that separate Jesus of history from Jesus of the Christian faith, African scholars see Jesus of Nazareth as the same with Jesus of Christian faith. More significant meanings are made when African Christology is formulated within inculturation design such as African languages, symbolism, etc.*

**Keywords:** Biblical Research, Africa, Historical Jesus Quest, Inculturation, Perspective.

### 1. Introduction

Biblical studies as a distinct academic discipline is rather young in sub-Saharan Africa compared to Europe and the USA. It was introduced into the region from Europe and the USA with the founding of the first African universities in the 1960s (Onwu, 1984:35; Ukong, 2008). Although, North and East Africa have been exposed to biblical history for a very long time, their biblical studies were also influenced by the west. In the Europe and United States of America, Biblical Studies are being offered in their advanced studies in the University and colleges. Also, in Contemporary Africa, many church and state related higher institutions are offering biblical studies unlike the pre 1980s Africa (Le Marquand, 1995).

Ukpong (2008) maintains that the quest for the Historical Jesus belongs within the tradition of the Historical Critical Method which is currently a major sector of modern western biblical scholarship, and remains perhaps the most engaging and at the same time daunting task of this branch of biblical scholarship. By this understanding, the historical Jesus research is new in the soil of Africa even though, some African scholars are aware of it and have done some works on it. The historical Jesus research in a broader understanding, has to do with the Jesus of the New Testament against his first century context.

This indeed is not an easy task to be reconstructed in another context such as African. Therefore, the aim of this study is to reconstruct historical Jesus research in Africa and its broad objectives include: to examine the Historical Jesus research as presented in the West; and to do a study on the Historical Jesus research in African contextual milieu. Within the methodology of African biblical contextual study, the paper shall explore the inculturation paradigm as a method. The inculturation model according to Ottuh (2014) quoting (Ukpong, 1999) is a recent development which attempted to evolve a holistic approach to inculturation that would among other things, be interested not only in religious aspect of culture, but also in its secular aspects and as applied in biblical interpretation, it is heavily dependent on the historical critical method for the analysis of the context of the biblical text. This methodology was chosen because it treats cultural and secular aspect of culture as interconnected. This will make the paper relevant to both the secular and cultural reader.

### 2. Methodological Framework

Both western and African scholars have approached the Historical Jesus research using various methodologies. Although, the former has been well established, the later is still evolving. One of the prominent and recognized approach

of biblical research in the west is the historical critical method and it was informed by the 18<sup>th</sup> century's scientific approach which emanated from the concept of the enlightenment. Although, the uncritical method of biblical studies was once introduced long ago, it has metamorphosed into a more sophisticated method in recent times (McNeill, 1996). The uncritical method was based on church authority. Ukpong (2008) pointed out that in Africa two main streams of biblical scholarship are current.

One follows the Euro-American pattern that combines the search for truth with a professed commitment to scientific objectivity and seeks to discover the objective meaning of biblical texts. The other one is contextual in nature. This type consciously links the understanding of biblical texts to specific concrete texts and establishes creative encounters between them in a way that consciously and explicitly brings the present context into the process of interpretation. In it, the bible is read, not at arriving at universal principles but for responding to faith questions and clarifying Christian commitment and practice in concrete life situations. This approach ensures specifically that African issues and interests constitute the key factors that shape the agenda of biblical scholarship in Africa. It also mediates Africa's specific contribution to global biblical research.

This paper shall follow the second model, other wise called the contextual approach. By implication, the Historical Jesus research model shall be explored contextually in this research. Within this contextual approach, this essay shall explore it from an inculturation point of view.

### **3. Biblical Research in Africa: A Nexus**

On the sociopolitical scene, African theology as an intellectual discipline arose during the 1950s, when the struggle against colonialism led to several newly independent states." Christ began to appear as the answer to the question of Africans in their context. He was no longer a messiah of the "pie in the sky" or a stranger who forced himself into Africans' lives. But as one who genuinely loved them, Africans wanted Christ to intervene in their present subjugation, exploitation, and dehumanizing circumstances under the colonial power (Stinton, 2004:7). The western scholars have been in the business of biblical scholarship for a very long time when compared with Africa. Ever before they came to colonize Africa and brought Christianity, the act of religious scholarship and biblical scholarship in particular has been on in their land. It is in the 1950s-60s that advance biblical scholarship started in Africa by the introduction of post graduate studies in some theological schools and Universities in Africa. For example, the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomosho started in May 3, 1898 and started offering first degree in theological studies (c.1950) before the establishment of the premier Nigerian University in Ibadan. This same Seminary started offering a postgraduate studies at the masters level in c.1990. Although, African scholars have devised their own method of biblical scholarship, they still combine their method with the western method called the historical-critical method (Ukpong, 1999). By implication, African biblical studies emanated from the west and as such, the western method is still wading great influence on African scholars. It is so because, many of them studied either in the west or in schools where the west has great influence in Africa.

Contextualization of biblical interpretation has gained so much ground in African biblical scholarship. It is rightly so because every nation of the world want the bible to make meaning in their cultural, economic, social and religious milieus. This understanding could have informed Moxnes (2011) argument on Jesus' life when he argued that one cannot understand any 'life of Jesus' apart from nationalism and national identity: and that what is needed in modern biblical studies is an awareness of all the presuppositions that underlie presentations of Jesus, whether in terms of power, gender, sex and class. Only then, he says, can we start to look at Jesus in a way that does him justice. Botha (2009) citing Craffert (2002) discussion on the variety of images of Jesus found in African Christianity states that the main trends in these depictions are the quest for what Jesus can do for Africans and the inculturation of Jesus in African images. Although historical Jesus research receives very little attention in African scholarship, Craffert argues that attempts at historical understanding of Jesus within his particular cultural setting should discover many clues from the study of religious specialists in African traditional religions and from such an approach, Jesus as an historical figure can not only be described as similar to typical religious practitioners in various African traditional religions, but new avenues for inter-religious dialogue in Africa are provided.

### **4. Historical-Jesus Research: The Quests**

Modern Scholars have divided the Historical-Jesus Research into three quests. These quests are distinguished by their beginning and ends. These quests also showed the cause of the separation or ends.

#### 4.1 The first Quest (1778-1906)

Historical investigation of the Jesus tradition by theological scholars was the product of the 18th-century Enlightenment (Germ. *aufklärung*). One of the first persons to undertake such an investigation was the orientalist Hermann Samuel Reimarus (1694-1768), with whose work Albert Schweitzer begins his classic work, "The Quest of the Historical Jesus" (Schweitzer, 1906). The first Quest for the historical Jesus, now defined generally as the Old Quest, received its name from the title given to the English translation of Albert Schweitzer's book, *Von Reimarus zu Wrede: eine Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung*, published in 1906 (Schweitzer, 1906). The English translation was given the title "The Quest of the Historical Jesus" which came to be used for the pattern of study as a whole (Schweitzer, 1910). Funk (2001) like other scholars presented the work of Reimarus as the first quest. Therefore, distinguishing the Historical Jesus from the First Disciples, Hermann Samuel Reimarus (1694–1768) exhibits the first influences of the Enlightenment in an essay entitled, "The Aims of Jesus and His Disciples" (1778). The essay was part of a larger work in which Reimarus rejects outright the miraculous and the idea of revelation. Reimarus was the first to draw an absolute distinction between what the historical Jesus did and taught and the teachings and aims of Jesus' disciples. He accused the gospel writers of conscious fraud, fanaticism, and numerous contradictions. Moreover, Funk revealed that, Reimarus' work was so controversial for his day that he decided not to publish it himself of which seven fragments from it were published anonymously following his death and presently, very few scholars would care to endorse Reimarus' view outright, yet the distinction he drew between the historical figure of Jesus and the views of his followers as reflected in the gospels stands as a lighthouse warning against the shoals of harmonization. Bessler (2013) also remarked that to answer the question of why there have been quests for the historical Jesus, one must step back to view the broader cultural context in which Jesus emerged as a figure critical of the church and that the quest to understand the Jesus of the Gospel from his social political and socio-cultural milieu in the light of scientific trends in the society is one of the reasons for the first quest for the Historical Jesus. Of course nothing is as simple as it seems. Hermann Samuel Reimarus did not think in a vacuum; recent study has pointed to trends and periods earlier than the Enlightenment which influenced his thinking (Wright, 1996:13-16).

Moreover, Wright pointed out the inability of Reformation theology to adequately deal with the life of Jesus as a primary factor for setting the stage for Reimarus. McArthur (1966: 104) also pointed to the influence of English Deists upon Reimarus with whom he had had contact during a visit to England. In the eighteenth century, according to Funk (2001), the church authorities became increasingly embattled as scientific knowledge challenged the bible. First astronomy and physics laid down the gauntlet, and then geology and later psychology reshaped the contours of human knowledge. This brought the first to an end because science cannot be used to verify biblical miracles. This is one major weakness in Reimarus historical Jesus quest. The *Aufklärung* (enlightenment era) must have influenced his thought. It is clear that scientific apparatus cannot be used to verify biblical miracles because they are spiritually designed by God.

#### 4.2 The Second Quest

The second quest came up after the failure of the first quest. In this line of thought, Robinson (2004:196) states that the original quest was brought to an end by the rise of the kerygma to the centre of the twentieth-century theology. Funk (2001) like other scholars agree that Ernst Käsemann called for a renewal of the quest in 1953 in an article entitled "The Problem of the Historical Jesus." His point was that if we do not establish some continuity between the preaching of Jesus and the proclamations of the primitive church, the church is left with a mythological lord. Funk (2001) also showed that it was Günther Bornkamm (1905–1990) who resumed the quest with the publication of *Jesus of Nazareth* (1956; 3rd ed., 1959). The English translation appeared in 1963. It has been translated into eleven foreign languages. James M. Robinson interpreted Bornkamm's work as a renewal of the quest over the objections of Bultmann and other neo-orthodox theologians in his "the New Quest of the Historical Jesus" (Allenson, 1959). The orthodox theologians, such as Karl Barth and Bultmann, held that it was impossible to recover the historical figure since the gospels were not histories, and they took the view that the quest was illegitimate in any case since it was an effort to provide a factual basis for faith. The old quest had presumably ended in 1900 and the new one begun in 1956 with the first edition of Bornkamm's book on Jesus. However, the new quest died aborting because it attempted to establish some continuity between the historical Jesus and the early Christian proclamation. However, the discrepancy between the two grew greater as work on the gospels advanced.

### 4.3 The Third Quest

In the judgment of some scholars, a third quest was inaugurated by Geza Vermes in 1973 with his *Jesus the Jew: A Historian's Reading of the Gospel* (2nd edition, 1983). Vermes concluded that Jesus was a Jewish Hasid and thus belonged to the category of charismatic holy men and healers.

The label "third quest" has been applied to a group of scholars whose work gives allegiance to a certain set of generalizations about the search for the historical figure of Jesus. The first of these generalizations is that Jesus was an eschatological prophet in the train of John the Baptist and Paul of Tarsus. One can draw a straight line from John to Paul and it passes through the heart of Jesus' message. This is an extension of the thesis of Albert Schweitzer who reacted against the liberal portraits of Jesus which made Jesus out to be an ethical teacher advocating the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of humankind. The second generalization, which is a twin of the first, is that there is overwhelming continuity between Jesus and the primitive church: we can trust the canonical writers (with the exception of the Fourth Gospel) because they got it right; everybody else got it wrong. The third feature of the third quest — speaking generally — is an apologetic undertow for orthodox Christianity as defined by the canonical writers. This aspect of the third quest is a rearguard action being fought against all who would distance Jesus from John the Baptist, on the one hand, and the canonical books of the New Testament, on the other. Third questers may acknowledge the Sayings Gospel Q, for example, but make little use of it; they are vigorously opposed to any regard for the Gospel of Thomas. And they tend to be apologists for the basic tenets of traditional Christianity: the true faith was defined by the "apostles" who correctly understood Jesus.

## 5. The Criteria for Authenticity in Historical-Jesus Research

Historical-Jesus research continues to captivate the interests of scholars, and recently, there has been renewed discussion of the criteria for authenticity. Porter (2004) in one of his explanation in one of the chapters of his work presents several criteria, especially those based on linguistics, and need reevaluation. In another segment of the work Porter proposes three new criteria, based upon use of the Greek language. These criteria are: Greek language and its context; textual variance; and discourse features. The criteria are proposed as a way forward in historical-Jesus research. In a rundown, the criteria are represented in a table with date.

**Table 1.** Criteria and the Development of Form and Redaction Criticism in 'Quests' for the Historical Jesus

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Criticism</b>	<b>Quest'</b>
Preliminary Criteria Criterion of Multiple Attestation/Cross-Section Method (1906) Criterion of Double Dissimilarity (1913) Criterion of Least Distinctiveness (1919) Criterion of Coherence/Consistency (1921) Criterion of Semitic Language Phenomena (1925) Criterion of Embarrassment (1953) Criterion of Rejection and Execution (1985) Criterion of Historical Plausibility (1997)	Higher Criticism (Post-Enlightenment) Form Criticism (1919-21) Redaction Criticism (1948-56)	'Old' or 'First Quest' (1778-1906) 'No Quest' (1906-1953) 'New' or 'Second Quest' (1953-88) 'Third Quest' (1988)

**Source:** (Porter, 2004:102).

The above table lays out in chronological order the approximate dates for instigation and initial development of the major criteria for authenticity discussed above, as well as several supposedly new criteria discussed in Chapter 3 of Porter's book on the subject mater, above. Alongside these are the dates of the major initial development of form and redaction criticism, and the dates of the supposed 'quests' for the historical Jesus.

In agreement with other scholars, Allison, Jr. (2011) presents some criteria for authenticity in Historical-Jesus Research. These criteria are formulated by several scholars who view the historical Jesus research from either their social cultural or educational background. One of such criteria is the criterion of double dissimilarity, which like our commercials implicitly equates new with improved, is no less troublesome than the criterion of consistency (duToit, 2002). Just as others have often remarked, Allison, Jr. explained that double dissimilarity criteria can at best tell us what was distinctive of Jesus, not what was characteristic in the sense that Jesus lived and moved and had his being within the Jewish tradition, the criterion is not a net that catches fish of every kind: it can find only things that Jesus did not take from

elsewhere. Holmén (1999) also observed that dissimilarity has been misused as a means of separating the authentic from the unauthentic, that is, a way of eliminating items from the corpus of authentic materials. Holmén also argued that dissimilarity from Judaism is irrelevant if dissimilarity from the church can be established. For those who follow this criterion, they see a Jesus cut off from both his Jewish predecessors and his Christian followers. This may inhibit deeper knowledge either first-century Judaism or early Christianity. Allison, Jr., judging from Hooker (1971) view, submitted that there are flaws in the criterion of dissimilarity and such flaws could include making some authentic materials to go oblivion or at least create some gaps because the dissimilarities in the gospels does not mean that there are no relevance between similar and dissimilar accounts in the gospels. Even in the synoptic gospel, there are similarities and dissimilarities. However, this does not make the accounts irrelevant to each other. Any attempt to remove any part could lose of some vital information.

Another criterion presented by Allison, Jr. is the criterion of embarrassment. This precipitated on historico-logical reasoning pointing out that some events so presented by the gospel writers about Jesus Christ are embarrassing. For instance, sometimes Matthew preserves a Markan saying that Luke, out of what we must guess to be embarrassment, drops, or vice versa. Matthew, for instance, retains Mark 13:32 (the Son does not know the day or the hour) whereas Luke does not. Furthermore, the church fathers, just like Luke, found Mark 13:32 problematic: the logion limits the Son's knowledge. Should we then urge that the saying must go back to Jesus because it bothered many early Christians? Or does its preservation in Mark and Matthew show us that some were comfortable with a less-than-omniscient Jesus, and that such people could have composed Mark 13:32 and assigned it to Jesus without any anxiety? Many modern scholars, observing that the Jesus of Mark 13:32 uses the absolute "the Son" of himself, have not hesitated to judge the saying a post-Easter creation (Allison, Jr., 2011; Bousset, 1970: 81-82). Also, Mark 12:35-37 supplies another illustration of the problem. The passage seems to suggest that Jesus is not the son of David. Did Jesus actually deny being the son of David? The context of the passage presents dual personality of Jesus, that is human and divine. Those scholars who do not see it from this context, may conclude that Jesus is not the son of David. This criterion is also having some flaws in the sense that the context of the passages that presented what is being referred to as embarrassing situation may not have been properly examined.

Another criterion presented by Allison, Jr., is criterion of multiple attestations. This criterion emphasizes that Jesus must have said what gospel writers said that he said and must have done what they writers also said he has done. All of these have been attested to by the gospel writers, the early church and church historical fathers. Although, this criterion can give us insight into the historical Jesus research, scholars still subject it to critical analysis. Here the criterion of multiple attestation is in a tug-of-war with the criterion of dissimilarity: they pull the same unit in opposite directions. Some look at the many Son of man sayings and insist that, given the title's frequent appearances in the Jesus tradition and its relative scarcity outside of it, Jesus must have used the idiom (Allison, Jr., 2011). Others have inferred, in part because of the great quantity of sayings, that some segment of the early church must have had a Son of man Christology, and that the relevant sayings reflect its ideology, not the outlook of the historical Jesus (Burkett, 1999).

Another criterion presented by Allison, Jr., is the criterion of coherence of sources. This criterion focuses on recurrent themes in different streams of the tradition which argues that what Jesus intended and said must be compatible with the Judaism of the first half of the first century in Galilee and as such what Jesus intended and did must be recognizable as that of an individual figure within the framework of the Judaism of that time (Theissen and Winter, 2002:211). Given that the work of Theissen and Winter, although the best we have on its subject, still comes up far short, because in Allison's judgment he pointed out that we should not be trying to refine our criteria but should rather be marginalizing them and experimenting with other methods.

Meier (1991) summarized the criteria saying that there are two sets of criteria: primary criteria (which includes; criterion of discontinuity, criterion of multiple attestation, criterion of coherence, criterion of embarrassment, criterion of rejection and execution) and secondary or dubious (which include; criterion of traces of Aramaic, criterion of Palestinian environment, criterion of vividness of narration, criterion of the tendency of the developing synoptic tradition).

## **6. Historical Jesus Research in Africa Biblical Studies**

### **6.1 South Africa**

Botha (2009) examined the development of historical Jesus research in South Africa for three decades and pointed out its significant to South African scholarship. Botha further pointed out that the historical Jesus investigations are not characteristic or even dominant in South African New Testament scholarship, but at least some of the scholars working in



this field have not only made significant contributions to the discipline, they are also of considerable relevance to the challenges facing biblical scholarship in general in the South African context; and that South African historical Jesus publications show a distinct development from the almost unproblematic application of Jesus' words and actions at the earlier stage to a sophisticated and nuanced juxtaposing and interrelating of modern and ancient settings at the present time, it is suggested that these developments can contribute to the exploration of alternative and appropriate theological discourses. South African historical Jesus research is very strong on methodological issues but not without contextualization. Botha observed in line with other South African scholars that the integration of social-scientific models into New Testament scholarship in South Africa is becoming quite widespread, but it is especially prominent among those interested in the historical Jesus. Johan Strijdom (Religious Studies, University of South Africa), who studied with Van Aarde, takes on Stevan Davies' analysis of Jesus' baptism (Davies 1995). Strijdom evaluates Davies' presentation in terms of his database of sources, his arguments for authenticity, and his psychological explanation of this crucial event in Jesus' life. Strijdom concludes that Davies' psychological analysis should be supplemented with a consideration of social values if we wish to understand the historical Jesus better (Strijdom 1998). Strijdom has also produced an interesting critique of John Dominic Crossan's understanding of history and fiction in ancient sources (Strijdom 2003).

Voster and Botha (1999) citing Breece (1989:13) opined that Christians all over the world (including South Africa) believe that Jesus of Nazareth is the originator of Christianity. Here Breece is said to have argued that most of the patterns of life and social and religious structures adopted by Christians as part of the new reality that Jesus inaugurated, were, however, not invented by Jesus and as such, many of the theologies and teachings which were linked to with Jesus of Nazareth were probably not related to Him. Moreover, Voster and Botha (1999) in chapter eighteen (pp.319-321) argue within the scope of the old quest of historical Jesus admit that differentiation between the Jesus of faith and Jesus of history is indeed a problem in South Africa research. To the scholars in South Africa and other contributors, the Jesus known in South Africa by the Christians is the Jesus of dogma weaved up by the church. The lingering question continues: is the Jesus of the Christian faith the same as the Jesus of history? Voster and Botha tries to explain this with the logic or concept of the Jesus from above and Jesus from below. To the scholar, the man of flesh and blood, Jesus of Nazareth, is not the person portrayed in the New Testament. Jesus of the New Testament is the Christ of faith. Jesus of Nazareth refers to his identity, while Christ of faith is used in connection with his significance.

Another article that is also relevant here is Craffert (2003) essay titled: "Mapping Current South African Jesus Research: the Schweitzerstrasse, the Wredebahn and Cultural Bundubashing." Pieter F. Craffert is a New Testament scholar in the Department of New Testament, University of South Africa, Pretoria, Republic of South Africa. Craffert argued that Wright's distinction between the Schweitzerstrasse (the third questers) and the Wredebahn (the Jesus Seminar) in historical Jesus research is supplemented by a third approach, called a cultural bundubashing, which describes an interpretive, interdisciplinary and cross-cultural approach to historiography. In this essay, an analytical distinction is made between these three trends which, like the roads in South Africa: toll roads (the Wredebahn), alternative routes (the Schweitzerstrasse) and off-road travelling (cultural bundubashing), offer divergent driving experiences, alternative perspectives on the same scenery and often unique features and scenes. He submitted that Current South African contributions to historical Jesus research are mapped according to this grid.

## 6.2 West Africa

Many African scholars are positive about the value of the quest for African provided its agenda is African, and employ the common criteria for verifying authenticity of Gospel materials in their work. How do these scholars approach the historical Jesus question, and what sort of questions do they ask? These are the questions that will occupy us in the rest of the essay (Ukpong, 2008). Within West Africa, especially in Nigeria scholars have attempted the historical Jesus research and they contributed in their to this trend of research in their own rights. Within West African biblical scholarship, we do not find writings that adopt the perspective of the old quest, other wise called first quest. This is because the old quest had already come to an end at the time African biblical scholarship was beginning. We do not also find writings that adopt the perspective of the third quest either because this approach establishes too much distance between the historical Jesus and the Jesus of the biblical text (Ukpong). Besides, while the other two approaches have some theological interest, some "third quest scholars" explicitly deny any theological intentions (Moxnes, 1997:133). All this makes this approach unappealing to African scholars especially, Nigerian scholars whose general goal is to establish a relationship between the historical Jesus and the biblical text. Beside because African biblical scholarship is tied to the concerns of African Christian faith and research that distances Jesus from the biblical text also distance the people from Jesus and the Bible. Therefore, African scholars work within the perspective of the "second quest" that recognizes a relationship

between the historical Jesus and the Jesus of the Gospels (Ukpong).

Late professor Justin S. Ukpong was a professor of New Testament and Inculturation Theology, in the University of Uyo and later the Vice Chancellor of Verita University (Catholic University), Abuja between 2008 and 2011. In one of his presentations in the Department of Religious and Cultural Studies, University of Uyo in May, 2008, he discussed some essays of Western African scholars that demonstrate these scholars' approaches to the historical Jesus question. The scholars whose works were discussed by Ukpong on the subject matter include: Emmanuel Obeng (1997), Teresa Okure (1990), Chri Ukachukwu Manus (1992), and Justin S. Ukpong (1995).

The first essay Ukpong discussed is "the Use of Biblical Critical Methods in Rooting the Scriptures in Africa" by Emmanuel Obeng, a New Testament professor from Ghana, West Africa. The title is somehow deceptive as it gives the impression that the essay is about both historical and literary critical methods, whereas only the historical critical method is discussed. Obeng argues in favour of this as a tool for rooting Christianity in Africa. Historical Criticism that he discusses first has a direct bearing on the historical Jesus research. Obeng defines the aim of historical criticism as "studying the historical circumstances in which the narrative or text came into being in order to determine what actually happened or to throw light to the meaning of an obscure text." He gives an example: "Did the events on Easter Sunday morning happen as they are narrated in the Gospels?" He continues: "The hope of the historical critic here would be to peel away the encrustations of traditions and arrive at the solid core of genuine history" (p.9). Obeng does not elaborate on the resurrection in the sense that it is outside his scope here in his work but he raises awareness of the need for the historical Jesus research for rooting Christianity in Africa. In another essay, he identifies reasons for using the historical critical methods in Africa among which is that biblical material is not unique to the Bible but shares in the patrimony of the Ancient Near East that belongs to a different culture, and a different time and space than ours (pp.32-33).

The next Essay considered by Ukpong is that of Teresa Okure's essay titled, "Leadership in the New Testament." Okure is a New Testament Professor at the Catholic Institute of West Africa, Nigeria. The article was the paper she read at the conference of Catholic theologians with the theme: "Leadership in the Church." She seeks to show that the historical Jesus gave us a model of "a humble, servant-like type of leadership" that Christians should follow today. After examining the Gospel material that portray Jesus' understanding and exercise of leadership in this way (p.80-86), she poses the question "whether Jesus actually performed his leadership service among the disciples in the way reported here or whether these narratives are merely stories invented by the evangelists to teach a lesson" (p. 87). Without saying so explicitly, she uses a criterion of the "second quest" otherwise called the principle of "consistency with the life-style of Jesus" to show that the tests describe the historical Jesus (pp.87-88). She refers to the foot washing episode in John 13:1-17, Jesus' humble origin in Nazareth (John 1:46; 7:52), Jesus' lowly social status as a carpenter, the fact that his closest companions were fishermen, and his association with the rejects in society as consistent with his portrayal as a servant-leader. In other words, this mode of leadership was not out of character with this general life-style (pp.87-88). To Okure (2012), in the New Testament, Jesus' inaugural discourse in his home town in Nazareth "where he had been brought up", that is, where he had his roots (Luke 4:18-19), makes this jubilee injunction his missionary agenda, the purpose of his having been anointed, "christened" (*echrisen*; made the Messiah), commissioned and sent by God. The divine jubilee year rules out vengeance on the wicked, a motif present in the Isaiah passage cited by Jesus (Isa 61:1-2). God's general amnesty excludes nobody and no age. Its Johannine corollary is John 10:10: "Others come to steal and to plunder. I have come so that they may have life in ever increasing abundance." The declaration of God's general amnesty to Israel and the entire creation constitutes the core of Jesus' liberating and life-giving mission. He declares this year of God's favour by the totality of his life, ministry, passion, death and resurrection. This is the Jesus known by African Christians. This is more vivid in miracles and exorcism performed in the church in Jesus' name. By this understanding, presenting the Jesus of the New Testament as different from Jesus of Nazareth is indeed a serious hindrance to faith in West Africa like other African Christian nations.

The next Essay considered by Ukpong is that of Chris Ukachukwu Manus' essay titled: "Healing and Exorcism: A Scriptural Viewpoint." Manus is a New Testament Professor at Obafemi Awolowo University, Nigeria. He read the essay at a symposium that was organized to look at different dimensions of the church's healing ministry against the background of the rise of many priest healers and exorcists in the Nigerian Catholic Church. Manus starts by discussing the worldview that underlies the New Testament emphasizing the predominance of belief in evil spirits and demons. This worldview permeated the Greco-Roman world, the Ancient Near East and Palestine. Alongside this belief was the practice of exorcism and healing. He states that Christianity developed within this context, and points to the preponderance of the term *daimonion* in the Gospels as indicating that Jesus and the early Christians shared in this worldview (pp.92-93). After identifying those Gospel texts that attribute healing and exorcism to Jesus, he discusses the healing of the man with an unclean spirit in the Synagogue (Mark 1:21-28, Luke 4:33-37). He does redaction criticism indicating the absence of the

story from Matthew, and its modification in Luke, and then poses the question: "can we gain an insight into the preached Kyrios Christos from this account of the preaching historical Jesus?" (p.96). Though he does not say it in so many words, his response is positive as he goes on to identify the historical Jesus as a healer and exorcist, and to compare Jesus exorcism with those of the Old Testament. Manu' ultimate goal is to articulate a Christology (based on the historical Jesus) that may be pressed into responding to the contemporary practice of healing and exorcism in the Catholic Church in Nigeria (pp. 96-97).

Ukpong also considered his (1995) essay titled: "Christology and Inculturation: A New Testament Perspective. He discuss the historical Jesus here in the context of the inculturation movement in the church in Africa today. His goal is to show that the inculturation movement is founded on the missionary approach of the historical Jesus. After explaining the basic concept of inculturation as proclaiming the Gospel from the perspectives of different people's cultures, he went further to analyze how Jesus did exactly the same thing in his ministry: "he proclaimed the Good News to the Jewish people from within the perspective of the Jewish culture" (p.1). Ukpong clarifying his methodology, state that any interpretation that draws historical conclusions from the Gospels is no longer possible without attention to the historical problems the Gospels raised, and the use of historical criticism. This method seeks to identify, through the application of certain accepted criteria, what in the gospels can be authentically attributed to the earthly Jesus. My investigation shall be informed by this method (p.5). In other words, the historical Jesus was his focus. He started by emphasizing that all four canonical sources of the life of Jesus attest to the basic outline of Jesus' ministry as being itinerant, taking place in the open air, directed mainly to the Jews and comprising preaching, teaching and healing. Ukpong also described Jesus as a Jew who identified with the repentant movement of John the Baptist, and his movement as a sectarian movement within Judaism aimed mainly at evangelizing the Jewish people and he then examined aspects of Jesus' ministry to show how he utilized the Jewish culture in evangelizing the Jews (pp.5-6) thereby seeing the proclamation of the kingdom as fundamental to the synoptic Gospels' presentation of Jesus' ministry. Even though John's Gospel does not articulate this theme the way the synoptic Gospels do, it is however very much in the background of John's presentation of Jesus as the eternal logos, and the light that shines in the dark to enlighten all people. The underlying arguments here is that the testimony of these independent sources indicates that what they describe goes back to the historical Jesus (pp. 7-8). He argued that apart from those texts that show evidence of polemics, the teachings attributed to Jesus in the Gospels are very often contrary to the prevalent Jewish teachings such as his teaching on divorce, adultery, love of enemy etc., the parables attributed to him also show a mark contrast with those of his contemporary rabbis. This is an indication that the substance of these teachings and parables go back to the historical Jesus and were not a later invention of the early church (pp. 7-16). Finally, Ukpong agree that all the Gospels attest that Jesus worked miracles and demonstrated this by trying to understand this concept by referring to the Jewish worldview and Jesus' cultural background of first century Palestine and referred to the fact that this was not something particular to Jesus. However, historically there were other people known to have performed miracles and to heal. Ukpong's conclusion is that Jesus used the common resources of his culture in presenting the Good News (pp. 16-17).

### 6.3 East Africa

Ukpong (2008) also considered the article of Anne Nasimiyu-Wasike, a lecturer at Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya, titled "Christology and an African Woman's Experience". As the title of the essay indicates, Nasimiyu-Wasike's study is done within the context of the social, cultural, economic, political and religious marginalization of African women. Her goal is to present the historical Jesus as a basis of an empowering Christology for African women. She identifies African women's experiences as including poverty, social marginalization and oppression. Against this background, she investigates the attitude and actions of the historical Jesus in the Gospels towards women. In the section that deals with Jesus' attitude to women, which is of direct interest to us, she studies the attitude and actions of Jesus as reported in the Gospels against the background of first century Greco-Roman and Jewish cultures (pp.73-77). First, she affirms that all the four Gospels record Jesus' concern for women as persons, and contrasts the inferior status of women in the Jewish society to the ennobling one that they had before Jesus. As an example, she states that Jesus mentioned women in his parables whereas the rabbis deliberately avoided mentioning them. He thus used both men and women as symbols in his representation of the kingdom of God. Another example, is Jesus' teaching on adultery. The Jewish law saw adultery as the woman's sin, whereas Jesus taught that both men and women engaged in divorce committed adultery. She points to all this as a revolution in the Jewish society. At work in her analysis are two criteria of the "second quest". One is the criterion of multiple attestation whereby she identifies Jesus' positive attitude to women as common to all four canonical sources of the life of Jesus. The other is the criterion of dissimilarity/discontinuity whereby she shows that Jesus' attitude



to women as reported in the Gospels was out of place with the pervading culture, and therefore could not have been made up by the early Christians.

#### 6.4 North Africa

North African scholars are very renowned in biblical scholarship but their historical Jesus research is scares and as such, we explore some fragment of available information on the subject matter. Allison Jr. (2005) linked Jesus of the New Testament to Moses of the Old Testament within Egyptian context. The Passover meal in Egypt and the manna in the wilderness were juxtaposed with the Lord's supper in Mark 14:24, Matthew 26:28, Luke 22:20 and the Eucharist in 1 Corinthians 11:25. Jesus spoke about them and referred to the blood and flesh of the lamb in Egypt as His blood and flesh and the bread and wine in the last supper with his disciples as His body and flesh. All of these were a pre-figuration of the His death on the cross. In all of these, he referred to His blood as the blood of the new covenant. Allison Jr., further pointed out that both instances (Moses and Jesus) function partly as allusions to Exodus 24:8: Moses took the blood and dashed it on the people and said; 'see the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words. This allusion is being referred to as Moses the eschatological Jesus.

No biblical research of this nature can be complete without referring to the contribution of North Africa especially Egypt and Alexandria. Egypt has provided us with some historical evidence of Jesus taking refuge in Egypt. Although, scholars especially those from the west have tried to distinguished the Jesus of New Testament from that of Jesus of history, it will be difficult to distinguish this in Egypt, Ethiopia and Alexandria due to the role they have played in biblical history. They have played more roles in biblical history than any other African nation. Can scholars entirely score away the reality of this roles by the North Africans. In the Old Testament, the patriarchs of Israel had serious association with the Egyptians and the New Testament Jesus was taken to Egypt for refuge. Are these true? If they are, can we separate the Jesus of the New Testament from the Jesus that was taken to Egypt as an infant? If we cannot separate it, it therefore means that the Jesus of history so presented by Reimarus, Schweitzer and other scholars like them is not acceptable to the North African Christians like the other African Christians (Dunn, 2011).

A new wave of "Historical Jesus" research has emerged in the wake of the discovery in 1947 in Egypt of the ancient manuscripts that are known today as the "Nag Hammadi library" and as "Gnostic Gospels" and of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947. Until then, little was known about the early Christians known as the Gnostics. "We have listened to the winners, and their story does not make any sense. So let us listen to the losers and see if their story makes more sense (Freke and Gandy,1999).

### 7. Inculturation Significance of Historical Jesus Quest to the Church in Africa

- i. **African Christology.** African Christology suggests that Jesus Christ is being studied in Africa and is being known in Africa. The Africa Christian does not only see Jesus as saviour, God and man but also as brother of African. Moreover, in Africa, Jesus is also being called such name as Ancestor par excellence, Ancestor who-gives-life, Great Ancestor, and Unique Ancestor (Elena, 2002). Ottuh (2014:33-34) citing Ukpong (1995:4) gave two contemporary theological approaches to African Christology. First, a Christology that is focused on the meaning of Jesus (Christology from above). Second, a Christology that is focused on the life and ministry of the earthly Jesus (Christology from below). Another dimension that could be added is the Christology that is universal. The universal Jesus who came and was experienced in the cultural environment of the Jews as given by the gospel writers was the Saviour of the World including the Jews. Abogunrin (2000:27-43) affirmed that Luke's Gospel in the New Testament for example, gives the concept of a universal Jesus who came to give salvation to men irrespective of their cultural and racial affinities. It is in this context, it becomes important to present Jesus in all the habitations of man as the same Christ of Christian history and faith. By so doing both the Jesus Christ above, below and universal becomes bridged to become the same Jesus Christ that came from above to save humankind. The Christ from above is the Christ that ministered on earth and that same Christ is the Saviour of all. It is this same Christ that the apostles preached and was preached by the missionaries that came to Africa which we are also now preaching in Africa. Although, we criticize the missionary for relegating African cultures to the background, the Jesus Christ who they preached is the true and only Jesus Christ, the saviour of mankind. This same Christ is relevant in African Christian faith, hence he is preached in Africa with the African cultural garb.
- ii. **Jesus as figure of Inculturation.** He spoke Aramaic, Hebrew and probably Greek. When He was to raise a

dead girl He said: "*Talitha koum!*" meaning "little girl, I say to you, get up" (Mark 5:41). While on the cross before His death He said: "*Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?*" meaning "my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46). This leads to the argument of *ipsissima verba versus ipsissima vox*. Some scholars are of the opinion that the Gospel writers lack authenticity in their recounting of what Jesus actually said, arguing that they created sayings of Jesus and put words in his mouth (Bock, 1995; Wilkin, 2000). This, of course, assumes a considerable fluidity in the oral tradition that quite simply was not present (Adams, 2012). In technical terms, this discussion centers on whether the Gospels contain the *ipsissima vox* of Jesus ("His very voice," i.e., His teaching summarized) or the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus ("His very words"). The proponents of *ipsissima vox* maintain that the gospel writers never intended to give a verbatim account of Jesus' words, but rather took the liberty to edit His words to fit their own purposes in writing. Under the *ipsissima vox* view, the concepts go back to Jesus, but the words do not at least, not exactly as recorded (Green, 2001). Here, we do not intend to go deep into the *ipsissima* argument but at least point it out for reference purpose. However, shaping of the material does not necessarily mean the distortion of it. Moreover, in Jesus' time there were no electronic audio or visual recorder where the very words of Jesus were recorded like the present day preachers do. This makes it difficult to argue absolutely for or against. What matters to African Christianity is that Jesus preached the good news of the kingdom of God and also addressed people in the language they understood. The disciples and witnesses wrote what they saw and heard in their own language and understanding and what they recorded in the New Testament are relevant to salvation experience in Africa. Jesus preached within the cultural space of the Jewish and Non Jewish people. He did all of these in the language of humans. This is why He is a cultural figure. This means Jesus also spoke to Africa. This is why the bible is being interpreted into African languages to enable all in Africa to understand the gospel in their cultural milieu. It is on this basis that Jesus is being referred to as figure of inculturation. The church in Africa should preach Jesus in the local language of the people so as to bring home the message of the gospel so that can be brought nearer to the people.

- iii. **Relevance of Jesus Christ within Time and Space.** Jesus was presented by the New Testament writers as someone who is the same yesterday, today, tomorrow and forever. This gives the understanding of Jesus Christ as a person and spiritual figure who never expires within time and space. Even when He died, He was raised from the dead on the third day according to the scriptures (1 Corinthians 15). Second, the miracles Jesus did in the New Testament are not only being replicated by the then disciples and apostles, they are still being replicated by His present day disciples in Africa and other parts of the world. This makes Jesus Christ to be so real to the African Christian. This reoccurrence of miracles through Jesus' disciples in a contemporary world is enough point to critique Bultman (1941) on his concept of demythology of the New Testament. Bultman postulates that the story of miracle and resurrection in the New Testament are myths and that the Jesus he knows is the Jesus of faith. Bultman believed that the myths be removed from the New Testament so as to the real human figure of Jesus. Doing this may receive some applause from scholars of their likes but does not appeal to Christian faith especially those in Africa. This is why Ukpong (2008) opines that African scholarship is meant to build faith not the other way round. Therefore, following Bultman's theory is a serious damage to African Christian experience. If the miracles are myths, how come many of the miracles we have read about in the New Testament are being replicated today in Africa, USA and other parts of the world in the name of Jesus? These miracles are not done through the power of African Magic or charms but by the mention of the name: "Jesus Christ." This makes Jesus Christ relevant in the present and eschatological church community. Within the space of time and spiritual essence. Jesus is relevant to Africa not only as saviour of the entire world but also as a historical figure who was born according to God's purpose in the land of Israel, taken to Africa (Egypt) for refuge also according to the purpose of God, crucified, by the Romans, died on the cross, was buried and was raised from the dead by the Holy Spirit (Rom.8:11). This Jesus reigns in the African Christianity. Any attempt to separate the Jesus of the New Testament from the Jesus Christ of Nazareth will be distorting and destroying African Christian faith. The miracle stories in the New Testament should be told in African cultural gabs so as to make the church in Africa to easily understand Him. The story has been told with western cultural attires for a very long time and as such, it creates cultural gaps. Retelling the story in an African cultural milieu will enhance the church to understand the bible better.
- iv. **Incarnate divinity and human personality of Jesus Christ.** The New Testament presented Jesus as both fully divine and human while He was on earth. In the Gospels, there are instances where both personalities of Jesus were presented. In his divine personality: Jesus pronounced forgiveness on people (Matthew 9:2,5;

Mark 2:5,9; Luke 7:47-48); Jesus was addressed by Thomas as Lord and God having been convinced of the resurrection (John 20:28); Jesus was also referred to as the *logos*-incarnate word of God (John 1:1-14); Jesus testified about Himself as same with the Father (John 14:9-10) meaning He is God incarnate; Jesus was being referred to as the son of God (Matthew 16:16-17; Luke 1:35; John 3:16,10:36) meaning also the He is God incarnate; Jesus was referred to as God (Matt.1:23; John 5:17-18; ); etc. In the human dimension of his personality: Jesus was referred to as son of man (Matt.20:28; Mk.14:62) meaning, He is a man born of a woman but the Son of God implies His deity; He was called the son of David (Mk. 10:47; Lk.18:38) meaning, Jesus has a family lineage on earth as well. All of these depict His deity and humanity. Christians in Africa and else where must understand the personality of Jesus in the dimension of His divinity and humanity in the bible time and the Jesus in the spiritual reality. A spiritual reality in the sense that no one is seeing Him physically in the contemporary, yet He is so real in such contemporary world. He reveals Himself in so many ways to Christians in Africa and elsewhere in the world and when He does, the life of such person becomes transformed. He is real because, His name carries out exorcism and heals the sick in Africa and elsewhere in the world when the Jesus is mentioned by a Christian. The name of Jesus has become incarnated in the church in Africa in the sense that, the name of Jesus has been translated into the local language of the African people. For example, in Nigeria, the Yorubas (call Him Jesu); the Urhobo (call Him, Ijesu). When the name is mentioned in the local dialect of the people, it is as real as when a Hebrew man calls Him Yeshua. In this line of thought, Elenga, (2002) opines that though both the humanity and the divinity of Jesus are recognized, the employment of various superlative, exceptional, and phenomenal attributes qualify the figure of Jesus and as such being Brother, Ancestor, Proto-Ancestor, Healer, Diviner, Jesus is portrayed as a Super-human. That is why Jesus' divinity overshadows his humanity and shrinks his historical insertion. The model of incarnate God follows the Chalcedon Christological doctrine of two natures (human and divine). Nyamiti whose anthropological background appears clearly in his Christology, is still marked by the scholastic and the Chalcedonian doctrines, to say the least (Elenga, 2002 citing Nyamiti, 1998; Uzukwu,1998). To Elenga, the theological understanding of Jesus as both divine and human in nature at the Nicaea and Chalcedon council represent the first major inculturation of the Christian message regarding Jesus Christ into Greek and Roman cultures in the early centuries of the Common Era in the sense that Christian faith in Africa and else where in the world have been interpreted in this regard.

- v. **Jesus is not an Abstraction but a real Person and Saviour.** Schweitzer (2004) opines in conjunction with other scholars that the gospels were written to inform faith as well as to proclaim Jesus Christ and that then, as now, the risen Christ easily becomes an abstraction on which people are tempted to project their narrow self-interests. Schweitzer noting Calvin; and Kasemann (1969:2) said that human minds, including those of people in the church, have a tendency to produce idols and that in order to help prevent this, the gospel writers reached back to remembrances of Jesus' sayings and actions in the belief that as the risen Christ is continuous with Jesus who was crucified, these remembrances could provide concrete criteria for discerning the Spirit in the present. They did this, so that the risen Christ would not become an empty abstraction that could be filled with idolatrous content. The risen Christ becomes concrete through remembering the ministry of Jesus, how he came forward amidst the conflicts of his day in the name of God, and how this led to his death on a Roman cross. The way in which the gospels relate the proclamation of the risen Christ to Jesus who was crucified demonstrates that the "function of recalling the historical Jesus is thus, within the framework of the Gospel, a permanent "necessity. In order, for the church to determine the legitimacy of the place it occupies within the conflicts of the present in terms of its faith in Jesus Christ, it must continually reach back to these memories of Jesus' ministry and reflect upon them. In agreement with Welker (2002:136), Schweitzer comments further that as Jesus has become a "highly ambivalent cultural icon, the cultural memories of churches and societies need to be continually tested by historical inquiry as part of determining the legitimacy of the way Jesus is remembered therein and that in doing this, the quest serves the church in two ways: First, it is only as the salvation that Jesus brings is concretely revealed in his ministry, death and resurrection that his being the Christ becomes meaningful in relation to the particularities of people's lives. People live in societies divided and conflicted along lines such as race, class, gender, or cultural heritage. The concreteness of Jesus' public ministry, which the gospels narrate and the quest studies, is needed to give content to Jesus as the Christ in relation to these conflicts. It was in part failure to attend to this concreteness that enabled slaveholding Christians to overlook the contradiction between the brutality of their slaveholding and the claims of the gospel (Douglas, 1994:18-19). There is the presence of a divide in the society and even in the church

community in the bible times and African church community. This divide is between the function of men and women. This is probably why Schweitzer agree with Fiorenza (1995) that failure to attend to the presence of women in the movement around Jesus enabled later teaching to relegate them to a subordinate place in the church, in 'contradiction,' to what can be discerned historically about Jesus' own practice. The concrete aspects of Jesus' life must be remembered and related to the alienations and conflicts of the present if he is to bring healing and hope into them. The quest for the historical Jesus seeks to uncover these. This is one reason why the church has an interest in it. Second, Schweitzer said that people never perceive the truth absolutely, in a way that puts what they believe beyond question or needed critique. Rather, even in the case of religious truth, we always live with relative insights that are continually in need, of revision and on-going testimony. The concrete aspects of Jesus' life and work can never be determined, once and for all. Christians must repeatedly ask themselves, how well have we understood Jesus? Whose interests do our images of Jesus serve? What exclusionist tendencies may they harbour? Within the Reformed theological tradition's understanding of the church as reformed and always in need of reform, the quest can help in the church's on-going task of continually rethinking its, understanding of the Christian faith in light of the witness of Scripture and the witness of the Spirit in the present. By gathering historical knowledge of Jesus, it helps the Church in its constant task of testing the continuity of its witness with the person and work of Jesus Christ. As the quest for the historical Jesus serves these two purposes, it has a genuine theological significance (Schweitzer, 2004:48-49; citing Kasemann, 1964:46 Dalferth, 2003:430). Don Schweitzer is a professor at the St. Andrew's College, Saskatoon in Canada. His postulations on the Jesus concreteness, though controversial in some sense, gives some insight into African understanding of Jesus' concreteness in African Christian worship. Jesus is being seen as Lord and saviour. The Africans respect their earthly kings as lord and as such, Jesus is easily understood and worshiped and a saviour King. This concreteness is more demonstrated during worship in prayers. The person praying addresses God through the name of Jesus as if they are seeing Him sited close to them. This is so because Jesus said so and when the Christian prays believing it works for them.

- vi. **Jesus as historical figure in physical and spiritual senses.** African Christianity tells the story of Jesus from the Bible. The African scholars have also reconstructed biblical history from African perspective which is being called today as African in the bible model (Adamo,1998; Habtu,2001; Ntre, 2001). All of these scholars reconstructed their story without any damage to the Christian faith in Africa. The story started from Genesis 3:15. Here, the son of the woman is Jesus, the woman is a pre-figuration of the virgin Mary and the snake represents the devil and sin. The story continues in Isaiah 9:1-7 and in some other parts of the Old Testament of which many of them are quoted in the New Testament as fulfillment of the prophecies that were said by the Old Testament prophets. The Story about Jesus Christ become more clearer in the New Testament. It started with the genealogy of Jesus' family, the virgin birth, childhood, adulthood and down to the resurrection and ascension to heaven. Another era of the story is Jesus existence after the resurrection and ascension. Was He still in existence after this time in history? The answer to this question by the African Christian is yes. It is yes because they are seeing by faith every day. What informed this faith? The story they saw in the bible. Are they real? The African Christian answer is yes. Yes, because, those who are Christians became Christians due to what they experienced spiritually and physically just as Christians in the bible times also felt when they heard the Good news. All of these make up the personality of Jesus Christ in African Christianity. The story about Jesus' preaching, teaching, exorcism, healing, crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection, ascension and His eschatological return were all told in the New Testament. While the scholar especially those with the background of *aufklärung* (Germ.; enlightenment) which to verify the story of the New Testament and the entire Bible with scientific means, the Christians in Africa which to verify it by their salvation experience and the African Christians have come to the conclusion that the experience in the bible by people are not too far from what is being experienced in their contemporary world. Being that African Christians believe in the story of the bible like other Christians elsewhere in the world, they are waiting for the *parousia* (second coming of Jesus Christ) especially when they keep seeing the prophecies of the bible about wars and rumours of wars around the world. This makes Jesus Christ a real figure of history in the physical and spiritual senses to the African Christian. To them, in the physical sense, Jesus lived within Jewish community within time and space and the stories about Him in the New Testament were witnessed by people who lived within the time and space. In the spiritual sense, He exists as God and He is being felt by Christians in the physical realm. Scholars can argue this but how can they explain and show to us that they do not experience what those who are Christians have experienced physically and spiritually? At the argument of the scholar becomes a mere



academic guess.

- vii. **The Experience of African Independent Churches (AIC).** AIC refers to churches that were founded by African indigenes and being funded independently in the soil of Africa. Most of these founders claim to have some sort of spiritual experience which no man can dispute. It is even more real when the people are seeing the evidence through miracles that are being done through the name of Jesus Christ. Some of these miracles are so outstanding that it dumbfounds one. These miracles cannot be verified by scientific means like that of the bible. This experience has given more credence to the story of the bible about Jesus Christ. They also experience and demonstrate the power of the Holy Spirit like that of Pentecost experience involving some display of power and spiritual atmosphere. In this experience, there is a sudden outbreak of prophecy, tongues, healing, exorcism, etc. All of these just at the mention of the name Jesus. This is why most of the AIC refer to themselves as Pentecostal churches. They claim this because of the replication of some of the experiences that took place during the Pentecost among the believers in the upper room and in the book of Acts in relation to this experience. This has made Jesus of the New Testament to be so real to them in Africa.

## 8. Conclusion

African scholars have proven their competence in Biblical research even though, it is relatively new in Africa when compared to the west. The Historical Jesus research could be very interesting and challenging especially when it comes to balancing it with African Christianity. While some western scholars do not consider the damage some of their postulations may cause Christianity, the African scholar's aim is also to build faith. This work has shown that a reconstruction of the historical study of Jesus is a necessary task of discipleship and mission in Africa. One of the reasons for this reconstruction is necessitated by the cultural distance created by the western scholars and the biblical milieus.

In this work, the inculturation significance of historical Jesus quest to the Church in Africa was enumerated to include: African Christology; Jesus as figure of inculturation; relevance of Jesus Christ within time and space; incarnate divinity and human personality of Jesus Christ; Jesus beyond abstraction; Jesus as historical figure in physical and spiritual senses; and the experience of African Independent Churches (AIC). While the historical Jesus quests in the West spans between, 1778-1906 (the Old or First Quest), 1953-1988 (New or Second Quest) and 1988 (Third Quest), the African scholars research especially those in South and West Africa is very recent. Both African scholars and west alike are in agreement on the existence of Jesus as a historical figure, the portraits of Jesus constructed during the three quests have often differed from each other, and from the dogmatic image portrayed in the gospel accounts. Being that African scholarship is both academic and faith building, African biblical scholars have depicted Jesus' figure in African context such as seeing Jesus as African ancestor, African Bother etc. This situation has open the door for more quest and research in African biblical scholarship.

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