MIRACULOUS SIGNS IN JOHN'S GOSPEL AND THE QUEST FOR MIRACLES IN NIGERIA

BY

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DEPARTMENT OF RELIGION AND CULTURAL STUDIES,

FACULTY OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES,

UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA, NSUKKA

AREA OF SPECIALISATION: NEW TESTAMENT

SUPERVISIOR: REV. PROF. EMMANUEL N. CHINWOKWU

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This thesis has been approved as meeting the requirement for the award of Doctor of Philosophy Degree (Ph.D) in the Department of Religion and Cultural Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

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Dedication

This research work is dedicated to all genuine followers of Jesus Christ who are committedly engaging in the compassionate motivated wonder-arousing mission mandate of the Church. I also dedicate this research work to my parents, Charles Ibeamuta and Charity Nkechi Ukeachusim and to my siblings; Ozioma, Ifunanya, Ifeanyi, ThankGod and Chijiokem for the moral supports they have given to me.

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Abstract

The mission of Jesus was one characterized by miraculous-deeds which were motivated by compassionate-love. Jesus' miraculous performances were geared towards restoring mankind to God and towards alleviating human sufferings. For revelatory and evangelistic purposes, John the Evangelist in his autoptic gospel by way of redaction selected, edited and theologized these miracles by designating them to be signs that unveil Jesus' ontological and functional natures. John was consistent in highlighting these miraculous-deeds to connote signs, following this, signs formed an underlining theme in his gospel. In John, Jesus modelled the significance of miraculous-signs for the gospel commission of the Church. This consolidates that his followers in every age are to carry on the gospel commission in the same way that Jesus exemplified. But in this era, the Church has gotten a paradigm shift from the prototypical miraculous-sign characterized mission Jesus modelled. The problem of most Nigerians being obsessed with the quest for the miraculous is negatively impacting on the Church. In this obsession, there is the issue of the proliferation of the number of those claiming to be gifted with miracle working powers. Most acclaimed plenipotentiaries of God are erroneously motivated in engaging in the mission-mandate of the Church. On the other hand, significant number of Nigerians are following Jesus just for the miracles he performs. In their solution oriented dispositions, many Nigerians have become so gullible and vulnerable that they are attracted to the advertised miracles and to the acclaimed miraculous. This research therefore studied the concept of miraculous-signs as an underlining theme in the gospel of John and its implications to the gospel commission of the Church in Nigeria. It exegetically examined John's gospel 6:1-15 and other parallel texts that underlined miracles as signs and explicated their significances and implications for the ongoing mission-mandate of the Church in Nigeria. This study adopted historical-critical method with redaction criticism as a modern, scientific and analytical methodology in Biblical research. The study found out that Jesus aims the miraculous signs he demonstrates to be appreciated from a balanced understanding of his ontological and functional natures. This study stresses that the Church is not supposed to be obsessed with the quest for the miraculous. This thesis therefore proffered hermeneutical solutions to the issue of followers of Jesus being obsessed with the quest for the miraculous in Nigeria.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title Page- - - - - - - - - - - - i
Blank Page- - - - - - - - - - - - ii
Requirement Page- - - - - - - - - - - iii
Approval Page- - - - - - - - - - - iv
Certification Page- - - - - - - - - - - v
Dedication- - - - - - - - - - - - vi
Acknowledgments- - - - - - - - - - - vii
Abstract- - - - - - - - - - - - viii
Table of Contents- - - - - - - - - - - ix

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study - - - - - - - - - - 1
1.2 Statement of the Problem - - - - - - - - - - 5
1.3 Aims of Study - - - - - - - - - - - 9
1.4 Research Methodology - - - - - - - - - - 9
1.5 Scope and Limitations of the Study - - - - - - - 10
1.6 Significance of the Study - - - - - - - - - - 11
End Notes - - - - - - - - - - - 12

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Etymological Study of ***Σημεῖον*** - - - - - - - - **15**
2.2 Miraculous-Signs in the Old Testament - - - - - - - - 20
2.3 Miracle in the New Testament - - - - - - - - - 23
2.3.1 The Topological Model of Jesus' Miracles in the Gospels - - - - 27
2.3.2 Similarity between Biblical and African Worlds - - - - - 29
2.3.3 The Relationship between 'Sin' 'Suffering' and the need for Miracles - - 30
2.3.4 The Relationship between Miracles ***(τέρατα- Terata),*** and Signs **(*Σημεῖα-Sēmeia*)** - **33**
2.4 Miracles as Signs -**(*Σημεῖă-Sēmeia*)** in John's Gospel - - - - 34
2.4.1. What the Miracles of Jesus in John as Signs **(*σημεῖα-sēmeia*)** never intended to achieve 37
2.4.2. The Purposes of Jesus' Miraculous signs **(*Σημεῖα-Sēmeia*)** in John 20: 30-31 - 38
2.5.1. Philosophical Views on Miracles - - - - - - - 40

2.5.1.1. The Semantic Question: What is Miracle? - - - - - - 41
2.5.1.2. Other ways to Conceptualize Miracles - - - - - - 44
2.5.1.2.1. Coincidence Miracles - - - - - - - - 44
2.5.1.2.2. Experiential Miracles - - - - - - - - 44
2.5.1.2.3. Miracle as a Basic Action - - - - - - - - 45
2.5.1.2.4. Miracle as a Gesture - - - - - - - - 45
2.5.1.2.5. Miracle as the Providence of God - - - - - - - 46
2.5.2. Epistemological Confirmation of Miracles - - - - - - 47
2.5.2.1. Credibility of Miracle Reports - - - - - - - 48
2.5.2.2. World-Views and the Credibility of Miracle Reports - - - - 49
2.6. Science and Religion and the Question of Miracles - - - - - 50
2.7. Some Scholars' Views on the Concept of Miraculous Sign- (***Σημεῖον***) in John 6:1-15 - 52
2.8. Functional and Ontological Christology and the Quest for the Miraculous - - 59
2.9 Summary of Literature Review - - - - - - - - - 63
End Notes - - - - - - - - - - - 67

CHAPTER THREE: AN EXEGESIS OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN 6:1-15

3.1 The Gospel of John: An Overview - - - - - - - 76
3.1.1. Historical Background of the Gospel of John - - - - - - 76
3.1.1.1. Authorship - - - - - - - - - - 77
3.1.1.2 Purpose of the Gospel of John - - - - - - - 82
3.1.1.3. Audience of the Gospel of John - - - - - - - 85
3.1.1.4 Date of Composition of the Gospel of John - - - - - - 90
3.1.1.5. Location of Composition of the Gospel of John - - - - - 92
3.1.1.6. The Setting of the Gospel of John - - - - - - - 94
3.2. Historical Reliability of the Gospel of John - - - - - - 95
3.3. Literary Point of View of the Gospel of John - - - - - - 96
3.3.1. Who is Telling the Story of the Gospel of John? - - - - - 97
3.3.2. What is the Author's Physical Point of View? - - - - - - 97
3.3.3. What is the Author of John's Gospel Mental Point of View or Mood? - - 99
3.4. The Structure and Contents in John's Gospel - - - - - - 100
3.4.1. The Structure of John - - - - - - - - - 100
3.4.1.1. The Prologue (1:1-18) - - - -- - - - - 101

3.4.1.2. The Book of Signs (1:19-12:50) - - - - - - - 101
3.4.1.3. The Book of Glory (13-20:31) - - - - - - - 103
3.4.1.4. The Epilogue (21:1-25) - - - - - - - - 104
3.4.2 The Contents and Themes in the Gospel of John - - - - - 104
3.4.2.1 Christology –(*Christos)* - - - - - - - - 105
3.4.2.2. Believe (*pisteuo*) - - - - - - - - - 106
3.4.2.3. Life (-*zoe*) - - - - - - - - - - 107
3.4.2.4. Individualism - - - - - - - - - - 107
3.4.2.5. Cross Implying Suffering - - - - - - - - 108
3.4.2.6. Dualism (Righteousness and Sin) - - - - - - - 110
3.4.2.7. Miraculous Signs (*Σημεῖα-Sēmeia*) as an Underlining Theme in John's Gospel - 111
3.4.2.7.1. Turning Water into Wine (2:1-11) - - - - - - - 113
3.4.2.7.2. Healing the Nobleman's Son (4:46-54) - - - - - - 117
3.4.2.7.3 Jesus' Healing of the Lame Man (John 5:1-15) - - - - - 118
3.4.2.7.4. The Feeding of the Five Thousand (John 6:1-15) - - - - - 120
3.4.2.7.5. Walking on the Sea (6:16-21) - - - - - - - 121
3.4.2.7.6 The Healing of the Blind Man(9:1-41) - - - - - - 123
3.4.2.7.7 Lazarus Raised from the Dead (John 11:1) - - - - - - 126
3.5. Food for the Five Thousand in the Synoptic Gospels - - - - - 128
3.5.1. Matthew's Account of the Feeding of the Five Thousand (14:3-12) - - - 129
3.5.2 Mark's Account of the Feeding of the Five Thousand (6:30-56) - - - 131
3.5.3. Luke's Account of the Feeding of the Five Thousand (9:10b-17) - - - 133
3.5.4. The Similarities in the Synoptics Accounts of the Feeding of the Five Thousand Compared 136
3.5.5. John's Account of the Feeding of the Five Thousand Compared with the Synoptic Accounts 139
3.6 The Four Basic Parts of the Feeding of the Five Thousand in John 6:1-15 - - 140
3.7. Chiasmus Presentation of the Johannine Account of the Feeding of the Five Thousand (6:1-15)140
3.8. The Pictorial Representation of the Summary of the Gospels Account of the Narrative of the Feeding of the Five Thousand - - - - - - - - 141
3.9. Summary of the Four Gospels' Accounts of the Feeding of the Five Thousand- - 142

3.10. Exegesis and Critical Commentary of the Text John 6:1-15 - - - - 143
3.10.1. The Greek Text of John 6:1-15 - - - - - - - 144
3.10.2. The English Translation of the Text John 6:1-15 - - - - - 144
3.10.3 The Exegetical Study of the Text John 6:1-15- - - - - - 145
3.10. 4. Other Related Texts - - - - - - - - 164
3.10.4.1. The 'Sign' *(Σημεῖον-Sēmeion)* of Walking on the Sea - - - - 164
3.10.4.2. The Discourse on the Bread of Life (ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ἄρτος τῆς ζωῆς·) - - - 170
3.10.4.3 The Purpose for which John wrote (John 20:30-31)- - - - - 200
3.10.5. Exegetical Conclusions: Comparing the Synoptics Accounts of the Feeding of the Five Thousand with Johannine Account - - - - - - - - 202
3.10.6. Lessons Drawn from the Exegesis of the Miraculous Sign of the Feeding of the Five Thousand in the Context of John 6 - - - - - - - - 205
3.10.6.1. Jesus does not desire anyone to be seeking and following him just for Miracles Acquisition - - - - - - - - - - - 205
3.10.6.2. Miracles are Signs (*σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia*) with spiritual meanings pointing humanity to Jesus: - - - - - - - - - - 205
3.10.6.3. Jesus can test his own to help them grow in Faith - - - - - 205
3.10.6.4. Seeing things the way Jesus sees them - - - - - - 205
3.10.6.5. The Ontology of Jesus Displayed - - - - - - - 206
3.10.6.6. Giving thanks to God even in the times of Needs - - - - - 206
3.10.6.7. Jesus increases any sacrifice anyone offers to him and uses it to bless the person and many others - - - - - - - - - - - 207
3.10.6.8. The Ethic of Obedience to Jesus - - - - - - - 207
3.10.6.9. Being Sensitive to the needs of other people - - - - - 207
3.10.6.10. Emulative Worthiness of Jesus' Compassionate Disposition - - - 208
3.10.6.11. Neither Jesus nor his Disciples enriched themselves from the Miraculous Ventures - - - - - - - - - - - 208
3.10.6.12. Let there be no Waste: Jesus' Economic Standard Worthy of Emulation - 209
3.10.6.13. The Superiority of Spiritual Bread over Physical Bread - - - 209
3.10.6.14. Construing a Balanced Understanding of the Ontological and Functional natures of Jesus - - - - - - - - - - 209
3.10.6.15. Miraculous Signs (*Σημεῖᾰ-Sēmeia*) are Revelatory and Evangelistic in Natures - 210
End Notes - - - - - - - - - - - 211

CHAPTER FOUR: THE QUEST FOR MIRACULOUS SIGNS IN JOHN'S GOSPEL AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE GOSPEL COMMISSION OF THE CHURCH IN NIGERIA

4.1. The Gospel Commission and the Church in Nigeria - - - - - 224
4.2. The Natures and Attributes of Jesus and the Miraculous Signs *(σημεῖα-sēmeia)* he modeled for the Church - - - - - - - - - - 227
4.2.1. Jesus is Divine and has Supernatural Power - - - - - - 227
4.2.2 Jesus' Miracles are the expressions of Divine Compassion - - - - 228
4.2.3 Virtues of Love, Humility, Patience, Grace and Selflessness - - - - 231
4.2.4. Jesus' Miraculous Signs attract Crowds - - - - - - 232
4.2.5 Care for both humanities' Spiritual and Physical needs - - - - 233
4.2.6 Miraculous Signs could engender Faith and Believe, and even Unbelief - - 234
4.2.7 It establishes Religious Theological Signs and has to do with Realized and Futuristic Eschatology - - - - - - - - - - - 235
4.3 Non Cessation of Miraculous Signs in the Mission Mandate of the Church in Nigeria - 236
4.4 The History of Christianity and the Problem of Obsession with the Miraculous in Nigeria 238
4.5. Functional and Ontological Natures of Jesus and the African quest for the Miraculous - 249
4.6. Nigerians and the Christological Debates - - - - - - 252
4.7 Current Experiential Ministry Models in Nigeria - - - - - - 256
4.8. The Observable Erroneous Objectives of the Current Ministry Models in Nigeria - 269
4.8.1. Personal Interests - - - - - - - - - 271
4.8.2. For Fame and Ministerial Call Confirmation - - - - - - 272
4.8.3. To Attract Audience/Crowd - - - - - - - - 273
4.8.4. Perceiving and Presenting Miracles as the End in Themselves - - - 274
4.9. The Typology of Miraculous Signs in Nigeria - - - - - - 274
4.9.1. Genuine Miraculous Signs and Workers - - - - - - 276
4.9.2. Pseudo Miracles and Fake Miracle Workers - - - - - - 278
4. 10 The Characteristics of Pseudo Miracles and Fake Miracle Workers - - - 283
4.10.1. False Miraculous Signs are Egocentric and not Christocentric - - - 283
4.10.2. The Gospel of Health and Wealth and False Teaching - - - - 284
4.10.3 The Acts of Manipulations - - - - - - - - 285
4.11. The Essence/benefits of Miraculous Signs in the Gospel Commission in Nigeria - 286
4.11.1. Confirmation and Demonstration of the Power of God - - - - 287

4.11.2. Miracles and Church Growth - - - - - - - - 289
4.11.3. Alleviation of Human Sufferings - - - - - - - 291
4.11.4. Miracles are the Signs of the Realized and Futuristic Eschatology - - - 291
4.12. The Negative Effects of followers of Jesus in Nigeria Questing after Miraculous Signs 295
4.12.1. Poor Spiritual Growth - - - - - - - - - 296
4.12.2. Miraculous Sign may fail to Consolidate Authentic Faith in Jesus - - - 298
4.12.3. Perceiving the Miracles to be the Ends in Themselves - - - - 299
4.12.4. Church Doctrines Compromised - - - - - - - 300
4.12.5. Opening up Oneself to Deception by Diverse Spirits - - - - 301
4.12.6. Syncretism - - - - - - - - - - 302
4.12.7. Denial of Realized and Eternal life - - - - - - - 303
4.12.8. Half-baked and Nominal Christians - - - - - - - 304
4.12.9. Proliferation of Churches, Ministers and Miracles - - - - - 304
4.12.10. A Charismatic Leader can become an Object of Hero Worship - - - 305
4.13. The Nature of Jesus' Miraculous Signs in John 6 compared with the acclaimed Plenipotentiaries and their acclaimed Miracles in Contemporary Nigeria - - - 306
4.13.1. Jesus the Miraculous and the Modern Acclaimed Miracle Workers - - - 306
4.13.2. The Disciples-Those that came to Believe in Jesus and the Genuine Believers in Nigeria 310
4.13.2.1. Stages of Signs-(***Σημεῖă-Sēmeia***) of Faith in the Disciples in John 6 - - 312
4.13.2.1.1. The Predisposition to believe that Jesus Possesses Extraordinary Powers - 313
4.13.2.1.2. A Person's or Group of Peoples' Strong Faith Providing a Catalyst - - 313
4.13.2.1.3. A Sign Commences with a Common and Ordinary Physical Entities - - 314
4.13.2.1.4. An Openness to Perceive the Transcendent Dimension to which the Sign Points- 314
4.13.2.1.5. A Profound Conviction that Jesus is Son of God, sent to reveal God for the Holistic Salvation of mankind - - - - - - - - 315
4.13.3. The Unbelieving Jewish Crowd and the Nigerian Crowds Obsessed with the Miraculous 316
4.14. The Johannine Ethical Requirements in Following Jesus - - - - 321
4.15. The Johannine Ethical Requirements for Authentic followers of Jesus in Nigeria - 324
4.15.1. Believe and Faith - - - - - - - - - 324
4.15.2. Sacrificial Love - - - - - - - - - 327
4.15.3. Discipleship and Commitment - - - - - - - 329
4.15.4. Intimacy with the Holy Spirit (**The *Paraclete***) - - - - - 332
4.16. Implications of the Quest for the Miraculous by the acclaimed followers of Jesus in Nigeria 335

4.16.1. Socio-Cultural Implication - - - - - - - - 336
4.16.2. Socio- Political and Economic Implication - - - - - - 339
4.16.3. Theological Implication - - - - - - - - 344
4.17 Recommendations (Hermeneutical Solutions) - - - - - - 347
4.17.1. Seekers and followers of Jesus in Nigeria should refraining from desperately questing after Miraculous Signs - - - - - - - - - 347
4.17.2. Consolidating a Balanced and an Authentic Salvific Faith on the Functional and Ontological Natures of Jesus - - - - - - - - - 347
4.17.3. Focus on Soteriological Works of Christ and Non-Material Acquisitions - - 348
4.17.4. Construing a Balanced Understanding of the Central Significance of the Cross and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ in the Faith Walk with him - - - - - 349
4.17.5. Understanding and Exposing the Dangers Associated with the Health and Wealth Gospels 350
4.17.6. Heart Transformation and Regeneration - - - - - - 351
4.17.7. Spiritual Discernment and Scrutiny of Miracles and acclaimed Miracle Performers - 351
4.17.8. Being an Authentic Disciple of Jesus rather than being a Miracle Obsessed Disciple - 353
4.17.9. Evangelism based on the Undiluted Gospel and Proper Hermeneutics - - 354
4.17.10. Academic Writings Exposing the Dangers Associated with citizens of Nigeria being Obsessed with the Miraculous - - - - - - - - 355
End Notes - - - - - - - - - - - 357

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE AND CONCLUSION

5.1. Summary - - - - - - - - - - - 374
5.2. Contribution to Knowledge - - - - - - - - 376
5.3. Conclusion - - - - - - - - - - 377
Bibliography - - - - - - - - - - - 381

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.3 **Background of the Study**

Miraculous signs are supernatural acts of God, they may or may not appear to be contrary to the law of nature. Miraculous events involve immediate and powerful actions of God designed to reveal His character or purposes. Through miraculous signs, God proves His presence and substantiates His purpose for the creation.[1] The Christian Scripture in both its Old and New Testaments is replete with accounts of miracles. New Testament has four Greek words that are principally used to designate miracles, they include ***σημεῖον (sēmeion***-"a sign" John 2:11); ***τέρατα*** (***Terata***-"Wonders" Acts 2:19); ***δυνάμεις*** (***Dunameis***- "Mighty works" Acts 2:22); and ***ἔργα*** (***Erga***- "Works" John 5:20).[2] Theologically, only John among other New Testament writers chiefly recorded and designated various miracles performed by Jesus as 'signs'- (***σημεῖα-sēmeia***). The miraculous signs of Jesus are the reflections of his natures which the reciepients and or witnessess may not immediately understand. Through the sermonic-discourses, Jesus speaks of Himself as the Revealer. John theologically gives an account of the sermonic discourses of Jesus, to shed more light on the theological meaning of the message behind the miraculous signs Jesus performed. The sermonic-discourses served to interpret the signs-***sēmeia*** by deriving from them the insight as to Jesus' ontology**.** The wonder arousing deeds of Jesus were neither demonstrated to relate to a prophetic claim nor do they arise merely out of compassion in face of specific needs. Instead they are solely signs- (***σημεῖα-sēmeia***) that prove that Jesus is the Christ. The above accounts for John's use of the Greek word '***σημεῖον***' (***sēmeion***- sign), rather than simply '***δυνάμεις'-*** ('***δunameis'*** powerful deeds) exclusively used by the synoptics' evangelists. Miraculous signs are integral part of Jesus' ministry. Jesus in his mission mandate accompanied his teachings with the performing of many miracles. Buttressing the above, Hall observed that Jesus not only spoke about the kingdom, he reinforced his message through what came to be described as wondrous deeds and miraculous events.[3]

Through the miraculous signs (***σημεῖα-sēmeia***) performed by Jesus, he interfered with the laws of nature with the genuine motivation to restore humanity to God and to alleviate human sufferings. Onwu documented that Jesus did not deliberately perform miracles to attract and or gain authority and influence for his message.[4] In the context of everything the gospels reveal about Jesus' public life and ministry, there is nothing to suggest he ever performed miracles to bring wrong motivated attention to himself. He never made any wrong motivated self- referential miracle, rather the referent of his actions is always God-Abba-Father whose reign, Jesus proclaims through words and deeds. The fellowship of Jesus with God and his unique relationship to God as His Father unveils the unique kind of full working relationship he enjoyed in his relation to God as his Father (Jn. 3:35; 5:20). Jesus acts, not in self-glory, rather he worked with-in the framework of His sending by the Father (Jon.6:29). His words and deeds conformed with the will of God concerning his mission.

The miraculous acts of Jesus served as God's self-revelation. Events that are proclaimed miraculous, Jesus understands and presents them as nothing more and nothing less than indications that God's saving and redeeming power is not merely a reality of past and future, but something available to people in the here-and-now.[5] It is apparent that wonder arousing works in John were not captured as the miracles of Jesus. Rather, the wonder-arousing works of Jesus functioned as signs-(***σημεῖα-sēmeia***) which make a specific insight with sole intention of bringing to lime-light the veiled characteristics of Jesus as God. Miraculous events that were attributed to Jesus were then best understood as dynamic signs (***σημεῖα-sēmeia***) having deeper meanings that identified Jesus to be God and that which reflected both the realized and futuristic expected kingdom of God. Consequently, though Jesus' ministerial activities were motivated by selfless and compassionate moves to restore humanity to their lost relationship with God, they were not merely actions of a compassionate social worker responding to people in need. Rather, Jesus' miraculous compassionate activities unraveled and expressed his mission which were God centered, for he is God that was God sent. Jesus' deeds were to reveal God to humanity. Thus, as preserved in John's gospel, Jesus in performing miraculous signs (***σημεῖα-sēmeia***) aimed to point people away from the

miracles themselves and through the symbolic underlying meanings bring humanity to a deeper knowledge of him, which would lead them to develop belief and faith in him.

In the contemporary Nigerian society, significant number of the populace are desperately seeking for miracles. Some Church leaders and ministers obsessed with the quest for miraculous signs (***σημεῖα-sēmeia***) are presenting themselves as the monopoly embodiments of divine powers. They want to be seen as miracle workers by their followers. These acclaimed plenipotentiaries of God, use the idea of miracle as a means to attract audience. Significant number of Church leaders in the name of working for God, are desperately seeking to be identified as miracle workers, so as to keep their adherents within their folds. Consequently, so great is the obsession with miracles that Churches are now competing with one another in laying claims to miracles, to prevent their members from flooding to the so-called "living" Churches.[6] The obsession of most celebrated Church leaders and ministers' to be identified as the miraculous, is producing negative effects on the holistic mission mandate of the Church because they are not presenting miracles to be accessed as the means to the end. Rather, they are making miracles to become the end in themselves.[7]

Desperate Christians pursue after miraculous signs, so as to get the divine to deliver them from afflictions that are troubling them. These Christians being troubled by diverse forms of human problems are always gullible in their quest to access miracles. The individual Christians who think that they are being starved[8] of miracles in their own churches cross any denominational boundaries so as to access miracles. Such Christians in quest for miracles attend all forms of crusades, night vigils, various revival assemblies etc. In their quest for miracles, some have had horrible experiences. Some miracle seekers, have had petrol poured on them and as well set ablaze. Some seeking for healing miracles have been made to drink the water in which an acclaimed miracle worker bathes him or herself for purported healing of ailments,[9] some have become sexually molested, some duped of their material possessions, some lost their lives and so on. These miracle seekers want to get God to intervene and solve their problems without consolidating a commensurate quest to have a deeper knowledge of the divinity for the eternal salvation of their souls. In

search for wholeness, Mbefo noted that "many Christians still search for solutions from traditional magicians, sorcerers and medicine-men."[10] Syncretism[11] becomes one of the resultant problems of the quest for miracles. Many identify with both Jesus and evil spirits in order to get power or have their problems solved.

The quest for miracles cannot be said to be out of place. Having a desire to get a miracle from God is not evil in itself, but when the desire to get miracle is done in a desperate way, then the quest becomes problematic and yields direct or indirect negative results to the Church, individual Christians and to the society at large. Ever since humanity through one man lost their original place in God's creation plan, they are always in need of God's mediation in their affairs so as to help them come out of one problem or the other. But the motivation for human obsession with miracles are not always right. Most people's obsession with the miraculous are erroneously motivated. The purpose of miracles which Jesus did are being undermined by the characteristics of the obsession with the pursuit of miracles as being demonstrated by many acclaimed Christians of this age. The purpose for which Jesus performed many miracles as preserved in the gospels and for what he intends his miracle recipients and observers to achieve are being deluded or mistaken. And so, when the motivations behind Jesus and his doing of miracles as signs are compared with the influencers motivating these modern Church leaders and their quest to become miracle workers are analyzed, there are striking differences between them. Jesus performed miracles to alleviate human sufferings and to bring men to believe in him.

The pericope of John 6:1-15, in which Jesus fed the five thousand, has it that, Jesus had many following him. But their motive for following him were not totally right. Most people among the crowd followed him because of the miraculous signs-(***σημεῖᾰ-semeia***) they had seen him perform. The crowd in following him, conceived the miracles they needed Jesus to perform, to mean the end in themselves and not the means to the end. Ellen commenting on John 6 and how many seek miracles as the ends in themselves noted that "the people did not seek Him (Christ) from any worthy motive; but as they had been fed with

the loaves, they hoped still to receive temporal benefit by attaching themselves to Him."[12] Abogunrin commenting on John 6 as the context relates to the Africans and their quest for the miraculous in this era, observed that "people appear in their thousands in Churches and crusade grounds (both Christians and non-Christians), not seriously seeking after Christ or spiritual food, but for miracles."[13] It is therefore a glaring fact that miracle has become the real thing or the most current issue in African Christianity in this era. Comparatively, just as the significant number of the people in the crowd were following Jesus with the wrong motive, also relates to what many acclaimed Nigerian Christians and non-Christians are doing. Jesus himself in John 6: 26 declared that many of those who were seeking him, did so not because they understood and have identified with the true spiritual import of the miraculous-signs they have seen, but because they ate of the loaves and were filled. Jesus also knew that they were only following him with the sole desire to have their needs met. Having this understanding, Jesus expressed a displeasure about this human nature of being obsessed with the quest for miracles with the selfish motive of getting their needs met, without the commensurate desire to develop a deeper knowledge of him and hence believe and have faith in who He is.

1.4 **Statement of the Problem**

A study in redaction criticism reveals that, John collected, edited and documented seven miraculous-signs Jesus performed during his earthly ministry and another set of two miracles attributed to Jesus after his death and resurrection. The writer of the gospel of John theologically designated miracles Jesus performed to be '***sēmeia***'-signs which have deeper meanings to unravel. To unveil the intrinsic meanings of the miracles Jesus did, John becomes the only gospel writer who gives an account of the sermonic-discourses of Jesus, which shed light on the meaning of the messages behind each of the miracles that took place.[14] These miracles as signs (***sēmeia***) point to other things beyond the miracles themselves. These miracles rising from the functional aspect of Jesus' personality, as signs, point to his ontological nature. Hence, the essence of the seven miracles Jesus performed during his earthly ministry, which John chose to document in his gospel were chiefly significant in bringing people to believe and have faith in Jesus as the Divine

as implied in John 20: 30-31, where he stated the purpose of his gospel. John encapsulates two-fold aim for the miracles Jesus performed. First, miracles as signs (***sēmeia***) in John are revelatory in nature and seek to reveal and demonstrate that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Secondly, miracles as signs (‘***sēmeia*’**) are for evangelistic purposes, through which people will come to know the true identity of Jesus and as well may have life in his name. Miracles as signs (***sēmeia***) are not to be the end in themselves, instead, they are to lead to spiritual transformation that consolidates one’s identification with Christ.[15]

In this era, it is glaring that the Church have strayed from the model of compassionate motivated miraculous signs Jesus performed. Miraculous works of Jesus were not aimed to be the ends in themselves, rather they were to function as a means of spiritual transformation.[16] Instead, the Church have taken up indifference and excessive focus on miracles rather than centering attention on Jesus himself who transforms. The multitude in John 6 were just following Jesus because of what he would do for their earthly satisfaction without the commensurable desire to get to know Jesus for who he is and for which he proved, in his supernatural activities he designated as signs. In like manner, many Nigerian Christians are running around chasing after miracles. This excessive focus on miracles as the ends in themselves is destroying the true essence for which the Church is to be miraculous in her mission mandate. On the excessive focus on miracles, it seems that the Church and the individual Christians have demonstrated the characteristics of having forgotten the true essence of mission mandate of the Church. Most Churches in undermining the essence of miracles in mission mandate, to some extent now characterize greatest height of fraudulent institution from which the wise should protect themselves from.[17]

Today, predominantly, some Pentecostal Church leaders, Church workers and Church members are obsessed with the quest for miracles. Anaele observed that

> In Nigeria, noisy and swanky Pentecostal churches have taken belief in miracles to a completely new level altogether, to the extent that traditional Christian denominations, such as Catholic and Anglican churches, are losing members steadily to the newer denominations because of frantic quest for miracles.[18]

Miracle is a bait with which the unscrupulous ministers win converts. The Church leaders and worker want to be seen as the miraculous, on the other hand the people under the affliction of diverse forms of problems seek after miracles and the miraculous. Following this, because most needy people want to see miracles, there are then others in the name of Jesus, who are posing themselves to be empowered or gifted with the powers to be performing miracles. Consequently people are moving from one Church to another, from one prayer ministry to another, from one crusade to another, from one deliverance center to another. This heightened quest for the miraculous in this era, is denting the Church and presenting her in her unified form as representing a big fraud. In fraudulence and selfish motivations, Churches and ministries are proliferating every day. People want to see and receive miracles. They want to share their testimonies.

After the fall of man due to sin, humanity started needing God to intervene in their affairs through miracles or other means (eg magic and sorcery). Problems and cares of life have been traced to be the remote and immediate causes behind humanity and their unceasing quest for the miraculous. Due to the quest for miracles everything seems to be shaken and shifted from the old foundation. In the words of C.H. Spurgeon, "Everything appears to be shaken nowadays, and shifted from the old foundation."[19] The foundational essences for which Jesus did miracles are being wrongly appropriated and construed. The early image of the Church is genuine, compassionate in nature and character. But, in this era, in most cases miracles are being performed and pursued for selfish reasons.

The spiritual transformation essence for which miracles were performed by Jesus is lacking in most Nigerian Churches. Significant number of Church leaders and individual Church goers and even those who are not Christians are obsessed with the quest for the miraculous. It would not be said that some genuine miracles do not take place in Nigeria or that there are no genuine miracle performers or that all the Church leaders and Christians are obsessed with the quest for the miraculous, but there is a high rate of this quest for the miraculous which exposes everyone into miraculous activities to be suspected. It would not be said that it is wrong for miracles to be performed by ministers of God or for Christians to desire miracles from God, but the rate at which some Church leaders, ministers and lay Christians quest after the miraculous exposes

the Church to consciously or unconsciously indulge into the sin of undermining the foundational purposes of miracles as Jesus in John purposed them. These beg the question of, what motivates those who claim to be miraculous in this era? It is important and as well necessary to unravel the motivation(s) prompting one who claims to be a miracle performers and those who seek miracles.

In the light of the above, this research work will concern itself with critically assessing the significance of miraculous signs as demonstrated and proposed by Jesus in John's gospel and critically investigate why an average church leader, those that follow their leadership and even those who are not Christians, are obsessed with the quest for miracles. In establishing the above, this study will exegetically examine the gospel of John to ascertain the theological purpose and significance of miracles as signs in the mission mandate and as well, critically analyze other contemporary materials that would aid the researcher in unraveling the remote and immediate causes of the issue of the contemporary Nigerians being obsessed with the quest for miracles.

In this research, in order to examine the significance of Jesus the miracle-worker within the framework of his public life and ministry, this work would attempt to respond to questions such as: what is miracle? Who is Jesus according John's gospel? What motivates Jesus as the miracle worker? Why was miracle an important part of Jesus' public ministry? What does Jesus want his miracles to signal? How did the Jewish people of Jesus's day understand his miracles? The miracles attributed to Jesus, did they actually happened?

To respond to the issue of contemporary Christians as regards their obsession with the quest for the miraculous, this research would attempt to investigate these contemporary issues: What are the acclaimed ministers' motivations towards joining the mission mandate of the Church? What are the characteristics that are there to reveal their intents for joining in the mission mandate of the Church? Why do they claim to be the contemporary miracle workers? In observing and detecting the current experiential ministry models in Nigeria, what are the erroneous observable objectives of the current ministry models in Nigeria?

For the teeming Christian populace that are questing after miracles and the miraculous: why are they desperately questing after miracles and the miraculous? How do they respond to the demands of the acclaimed miracle workers so as to access their desired miracles? When they access or did not get the miracles they are questing after, how do they respond? These constitute the theological identified problems the researcher wants to attempt to hermeneutically resolve.

1.3 Aims of Study

The all-encompassing aim of this study is to explore why John redactionally presented Jesus' miracles to depict signs ('***sēmeia***') and to unravel the theological and social implications of the high quest for miracles by contemporary Christians in Nigeria. The specific objectives of this study include the following:

(i) To exegetically examine what miracles as signs-(***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***) meant to Jesus in John 6: 1-15

(ii) To examine how the first century Jewish people understood miracles in their own time, place and culture.

(iii) To compare the above objectives with the ways the modern Church leaders and ministers and individual Christians and those who are not Christians understand and quest after the miraculous.

(iv) To establish the direct and indirect theological implications of the quest for the miraculous to the mission mandate of the Church as a body of Christ in Nigeria.

(v) To apply the lessons that would be drawn from the exegesis to the issue of an average Nigerian being obsessed with the quest for the miraculous.

1.4 Research Methodology

The methodology that has been adopted in this study is historical-critical method. Historical critical method has been adopted in this work because it focuses on the origin and development of a text. Exegetical approach will be adopted in analyzing the selected texts, so as to enable the researcher to critically establish the meaning of the texts under study as first meant by the author of the gospel of John and explore how his first audience understood it. In adopting exegetical approach, Mbonu in Ejizu noted that "the exegete's

main task is that of interpreting a text from the past to bring out the meaning of what it means then."[20] Establishing the meaning of the text during the time it was written would help the researcher in applying its meaning to this contemporary age and as well be used in solving other related theological and societal problems.[21]

Redaction criticism studies the evangelists through the Gospels' literature. Redaction critical method is mainly used in the study of the Gospels to determine the particular redactional and theological intentions of the evangelists by analyzing how they organized and edited their source materials.[22] In line with the above, redaction criticism will also be employed to establish the theological motivations that influenced the writer of the Gospel of John towards conceptualizing miracles that he consistently depicted signs as having deeper meaning for his audience and its implications for the Church's mission mandate in this era. Secondary sources will be used as the means through which information for the research will be collected. Key authors, lexical materials, commentaries, and published Journals will also be consulted in the course of doing the research.

1.5 Scope and Limitations of the Study

The extent of the ramifications of the thoughts will be drawn from New Testament, but focusing mainly on the gospel according to John. The study will focus on the gospel of John because in John's gospel, seven (7) public ministerial miracles of Jesus were purposefully or redactionally selected. The selections were done to theologically point his audience to Jesus as the pre-existent Word of God and so that through the miraculous signs he performed, that many would come to believe in him to be God, God sent and as well have eternal life through him. The pericope of Jesus feeding the five thousand narrated in John 6:1-15 was chosen out of other miracle pericopes in the whole gospel of John, because this context represents a typical miracle of Jesus depicting sign. This miraculous sign is also documented in all the three synoptic gospels. Other related text like John 20:30-31 will also be critically examined in relation to the topic under study, because it contains the underlining purpose for which the writer of the gospel of John wrote. Some scientific

or philosophical findings relating to the concept of miracle will also be examined. This research will focus its application to the contemporary issue of most Church leaders and those following their leaderships and even non-Christians' being obsessed with the quest for the miraculous. The findings of the research will be applied to the Nigerian geo-cultural area.

A number of factors beyond the control of the researcher attempted to limit this study. Among them are deficiency of electric light, unavailability of research grant, limitations encountered in accessing relevant scholarly materials on the subject matter and health challenges. The researcher being dogged in her attempt to explore the theologicially identified problem of significant number of followers of Jesus in Nigeria being obsessed with the miraculous still in a novel result oriented way overcame the listed limitations.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The importance of this study would include the following:

(i) This work will unveil the dangers embedded in Christians being obsessed with the quest for miracles and the miraculous without developing a commensurate knowledge about Jesus' ontological nature.

(ii) The spiritual theological insights that would be exegetically unraveled from this work will be of a great importance to Nigerian Church leaders and the led in enculturing a balanced understanding of the true essence of miraculous-signs as envisioned by Jesus in John's gospel, for the mission mandate of the Church.

(iii) The research findings of this study will further serve as a source of information to those in academic community, who would want to carry out further research in other facets of the issue of the quest for miraculous-signs as expressed in John or other gospels.

(iv) The importance of this study also lies in its attempt to proffer solutions to the problems associated with the issues encouraging the high quest for miracles by the Church and individual Christians in Nigeria.

End Notes

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CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

To effectively carry out a research on miracles as denoting signs in the gospel of John, it will be necessary to systematically review a body of literature that has in one way or the other contributed scholarly to the topic under study. Doing literature review would give the researcher a comprehensive knowledge of the literature in the field, and as well establish a stepping stone on which the research rationale will be based. Reviewing relevant body of literature would also help the researcher to know the knowledge gap that exists on this issue and hence channel this research attempts towards filling the gap. Odili, has noted that "there are many ways to approach a literature review depending on its purpose."[1] In documenting the major contributions of authors of the body of literature under review, the researcher will adopt the thematic method of documenting literature reviews' findings. This method will be adopted in this work because it will help the researcher to organize the themes into categories and to critically analyze them in relations to their contributions to the topic under discussion.

The questions that bother scholars concerning miracles on which the reviews will be done include the following: what is the etymological origin of the Greek ***σημεῖον*** and its usage over the process of time in history? What is the concept of miraculous-sign in the Old Testament? What is the concept of miracles as signs in the New Testament? What is the relationship between miracles and sign? What are the purposes of Jesus' miracles as signs in John? What relationship does miraculous signs have with sin, suffering and divine intervention? What are modern scholars' views on the concept of miracles as signs in John 6. The researcher's interest here will be to establish the reasons John's Jesus used miracles to point at religious ideas as implying deeper meanings. It is also of the researcher's interest to unravel how Jesus in John's gospel wants his miracles recipients to respond to the miraculous signs.

2.1 Etymological Study of *Σημεῖον*

As summarily reviewed from Rengstorf in Kittle,[2] the word ***'σημεῖον'*** is to be etymologically traced to ***'σημα'. 'Σημα'*** is driven from the Doric *'σαμα'* by way of Ionic ***σημηῖον*** and Doric ***σαμηχῖον*** constructs. During the era of the early epic, '***σημεῖον'*** was used in the form of *'σημα'*. ***'Σημα'*** was used even till the Christian era. ***'Σημα'*** was then mostly used in prose writings while ***'σημεῖον'*** gradually began to be used in a more general sense. '***Σημεῖον'*** though used in a general sense, still shared with ***'σημα'/ 'σαμα'*** the denotative meaning of 'sign,' 'characteristic,' 'mark'.

In the general Greek Usage, ***'σημεῖον'*** was a later development. This is said because ***'σημεῖον'*** does not occur in the earlier Greek, but at the earliest stage 'σημα' has already become an established part of their vocabulary. ***'Σημα'*** was always used in its plural form. ***'Σημα'*** still connotes a miracle as a sign that establishes gradual revelation that brings knowledge. ***'Σημα'*** is a form of a pointer that is highly prominent and visible. Its visible nature is in the form that even a blind man can identify it by touch as implied by the two passages in the Epic Hom. Hom using ***'σημα'*** alludes to it as 'a stick set in the earth'. This encapsulates ***'σημα'*** to denote an indicator or a pointer. The later replacement of ***'σημα'*** by ***'σημεῖον'*** may be connected that a more abstract term was needed that would retain the same idea.

Linguistically ***'σημεῖον'*** is 'an abstract pointer,' while ***'σημα'*** functioned as 'a visible pointer or element.' There is a physical observable pointer in 'σημα'. ***'Σημα'*** defines the mark by which someone or something is physically recognized. ***'Σημεῖον'*** in its own capacity appeals to the invisible perception. ***'Σημα'*** can be a sign heralding war, it can also be a monument which by its nature and by certain details denotes the last resting-place of a prominent man, it can be the set of a finishing-point in a race, or a mark for individual achievement, and it can also function as a distinguishing mark on the body of an individual which serves as an identification. Antiquated ***'σημα'*** and its later derivation ***'σημεῖον'*** is used in making a clear statement or assertion which holds good irrespective of explanations. It is ***'σημα'*** that gives ***'σημεῖον'*** its meanings. It should be noted here that earlier on, Greek used ***'σημα'*** in quite a uniform way. ***'Σημεῖον'*** was then used in relation to an object or circumstance which makes reference to a specific perception or

insight. ***'Σημεῖον'*** was not from outset connected with the religious sphere rather it acquires a religious distinction only when it is used in a religious context. It is used in the religious sphere in technical and functional forms.

The relationship between '***σημα'*** and **'*'σημα'*** *in* Greek is that it was from **'*σημα'*** that **'σημεῖον'** was developed and it is from ***'σημα'*** that '***σημεῖον'*** derives its meaning. Though over the passage of time, '***σημα'*** became less prominent, but its use still persisted right on into modern Greek. ***'Σημα'*** began then to be specifically used in referring to what physically strikes the eye (eg. 'Monument'). Hence, ***'σημα'*** is directly used as a sign by which someone or something is recognized, this is also notable with ***'σημεῖον'*** from perception point of view. ***'σημα'*** as a sign can be directly identified in the following: it is the "symptom" of an illness, it is a "scent" indicating that an animal is present and active hence suitable for sacrifice by prescribed "indices". If the animal passed the tests, is then furnished with a formal mark '***σημαίνω'*** by their ring, Ships are known and identified by their ensigns. The modern use of ***'σημα'*** highlights little differences distinguishing it from the prominent **'*σημεῖον'.** In the course of time, mostly in literature, ***'σημεῖον'*** almost completely out crowded the original ***'σημα'***.

'Σημεῖον' became prevalent in its transferred use forms. In its transferred use forms, ***'σημεῖον'*** then becomes a special term for a manifestation of will which impresses itself upon the will of another and shapes their insight. In this transferred use, ***'σημεῖον'*** can be designated as the spoken word encapsulating details like "enlightenment", "instruction", "direction", or "command". When the subject of the ***'σημεῖον'*** is a divine person, he may use sign to tell a man something or to give him necessary information. In most cases the ***'σημεῖον'*** is more embraced than the oracle or the divine himself, this may establish a problem. This warrants the need for a relevant and competent explanation which will lead to correct understanding. It is with this given explanation which unveils the intrinsic meaning of the ***'σημεῖον'*** that clearly establishes the sense of insight into the mysterious ways of the destiny of persons and events concerned. The given explanation appeals to the mental sense. It is then natural for ***'σημεῖον'*** whether in philosophical or common sense use to take on the meaning in establishing argument or proof in the sense of an irrefutable

statement or even example in so far this serves to clarify something and to lead from doubt to certainty. ***'Σημεῖον'*** in the sense of an example serves to illustrate and to confirm its subject. ***'Σημεῖον'*** in the sense of 'proof' settles and confirms. It should be noted that the stress of ***'σημεῖον'*** in its transferred sense still domiciled on perception and its resolve. ***'Σημεῖον'*** retained this sense in both its developed and indispensable forms. Its varied usage over the process of time still retains its original nature which is its technical character.

Σημεῖον **καὶ** ***τέρατα*** (sign and wonders) is a phrase that combines two words categorically to make a meaning. This combination of words ***(σημεῖον καὶ τέρατα)*** that are not the same are brought together because of their significances**.** This phrase was first ironically used in relation to the population of Rome when they were threatened by Hannibal after the battle of Cannae. It was first used in castigation of the fear and naïve superstition of the Romans and not emphasizing their piety. It was used to make reference to strange events rooted in superstition e.g., raining blood or stones, sweating idols, lightning striking sanctuaries and statues of the gods, the clash of weapons and neighing of horses for no discernible cause, abnormalities of nature etc. It is therefore to be noted that greatest caution should be exercised in the usage of ***σημεῖον*** καὶ ***τέρατα*** as they relate to religious interpretation.

Σημεῖον was used in gnosticism. But ***σημεῖον*** never played any independent role in Gnosticism. ***Σημεῖον*** was uncommon, bears no specific sense and has no distinct religious connotation for the Gnostics. In most of their liturgies, like in Mithras liturgy ***σημεῖον*** does not occur. Hermetica in which there are few examples, ***σημεῖον*** means "constellation." In the passages of the gnostic writings in which ***σημεῖον*** was used, its use still retains its technical character. For the Gnostic Mandaean writings' "sign" still means same thing as ***σημεῖον in Greek.*** The broad senses of ***σημεῖον*** which are "characteristic," "sign," "mark" has no specific emphasis. ***Σημεῖον*** does not have independent religious content. It does not specifically denote miracle as such for this group of Gnostics, rather it was used in rare cases. It only attains its main importance in its connection with baptism which they performed in Jordan. In connection to baptism, they designated it "pure sign" or "sign of life."

It should be noted here that this etymological study showed that ***'σημεῖον'*** was developed from the ***'σαμα'*** by way of Ionic ***σημηῖον*** and Doric ***σαμηχῖον*** constructs. Through the process of time, the use of ***'σημεῖον'*** became more prominent than the antique ***'σαμα'*** which though it survived extinction is rarely being used. It is only used to pin point visible marks. ***'Σημεῖον'*** is used technically in writing. 'Σημεῖον' being prominent is used in writing to refer to perceptional insights about human-being and things. It is this technical way of perceptional insights which the Greek ***'σημεῖον'*** encapsulates pinpoints Johannine usage of the word, to the point that it formed an underlining theme in his gospel that is autoptic. Hellenistic Gnosticism, the Mandaean movement and ancient aretalogy are not to be addressed as a possible background for the Johannine use of ***σημεῖον.*** Ancient aretalogy is ruled out because their usage of words related to sign-like miracle include terms like ***ἀρετῆ*** and ***θαῦμα*** which means Latin ***virtus*** and ***miraculum***. Probably the unique Johannine use of ***σημεῖον*** could be traced to Christian aretalogies which developed out of the ancient form in connection with the rise of an ecclesiastical cult of saints. Christian aretalogies' usage still highlights a little difference when their usage is compared to John's usage, it is established that theirs is weaker and lacks the distinctive coloring of the use in John.

Exploring the usage of ***σημεῖον*** in the septuagaint-LXX, it is observed that ***σημεῖον*** incorporates the Hebrew אות – ***'ot.*** The inherent interpretative aspect of אות –***'ot*** is also an intrinsic character of the Johannine ***σημεῖον.*** The inherent nature of אות –***'ot*** *as* 'sign' in the Old Testament carries the link on how God should be viewed. And this gives אות –***'ot*** the ability to point to the presence of the self-declaration of the one God as the God of Israel. In the LXX, אות –***'ot*** encapsulating sign functions as a pointer unveiling God's glory ***(δόξα)*** and persuading people to consolidate faith(***πιστεύ***) in God. In this, is implied that His deity is manifested for faith to be consolidated in Him. Both the symbolic ideas of אות –***'ot*** *as* sign unveiling God's glory and persuading faith in God are also the characteristics of the Johannine ***σημεῖον.*** The only observed difference is that the reference of Johannine ***σημεῖον*** is Jesus while the reference of אות –***'ot*** as sign is God directly. This is seen that John theologically employs the use of ***σημεῖον*** to prove the glory of the deityship of Jesus and also uses the same to persuade faith in him. Signs

in the Old Testament achieves its purpose when it unites those who come to consolidate faith in God with God. In this same manner, Jesus in John unites with God those who through believe unite themselves to him. The works of Jesus in uniting those who would come to believe in him as the revealer, sent into the world by God becomes signs-(***sēmeia***) in John. Following this, the ***sēmeia*** of Jesus in John then underlines and serves his kerygmatic goal which is to consolidate the knowledge and acknowledgment of Jesus as the Son of God (20:30). The underlying theme of John as it relates to signs portrays him to be a theologian of the divine revelation which is also one of the focal themes of the Old Testament.

The above establishment pinpoints that the technical idea of Johannine well developed underlining theme of ***σημεῖον*** -sign is developed from the Old Testament אות –***'ot.*** But then the typological character of Johannine technical usage of ***sēmeia*** was not restricted only to transferring to Jesus the use of ***σημεῖον*** as drawn from the Greek Pentateuch and thereby making ***σημεῖον*** a basic factor in the self-revelation of Jesus**.** What is observed is that John gave אות –***'ot*** which is ***σημεῖον*** a unique typological accent within his picture of Christ. Johannine unique typological accent that fine-tunes his picture of Jesus is located within his emphatic reference to the faith or unbelief of those whom Jesus addresses as the Revealer. Consequent to this, John seems to technically emphasize two values: first –the description of Jesus as the "Prophet" (Jon.4:19;6:14;7:40;9:17). On the second part he values his stresses on Jesus' divine foreordination as the Passover Lamb of eschatological redemption. These two values of John are also the adumbrated values of the age of Moses and their redemptive typology. It is then from this frame work that the ***σημεῖă-*(*sēmeia)*** of Jesus in John got their typological significances. This adumbrated Old Testament idea was declared by the Baptist when he proclaimed the imminence of the second and final age of Passover and redemption (Jon. 1:29,36). They form the introduction to this, as the signs in Egypt did to the redemption from bondage to the Egyptians.

Related to the redemptive age of Moses, the signs ***σημεῖă-*** (***sēmeia)*** of Jesus show and confirm that the age of Moses is not only repeated in Him, but that the redemptive age of Moses is surpassed in Jesus as He Himself in His ontology and in what He brings substantially surpasses Moses(Jon.1:17;6:32). It is the

surpassing nature of Jesus and his ***σημεῖᾰ-***(***sēmeia)*** when compared to what is inherent in the redemptive age of Moses that the ***σημεῖᾰ-*** (***sēmeia)*** of Jesus in John acquires its enriched Christological significance. As established from the background of the Mosaic age, and the summative of the Johannine underlined theme of ***σημεῖον*** emphasized in his gospel, their contents make it apparent for all to see that Jesus is in fact more than even a new Moses. This is said because Jesus acts as God, for it is in his ontological essence that he shows Himself to be the Son of God. This underscores the substantial theological significance of the Johannine underlining theme of ***σημεῖον.***

2.2 Miraculous-Signs in the Old Testament

Many miraculous events as signs and wonders occurred in the times of the Old Testament which are documented in the Hebrew scripture, which Christians refer to as the Old Testament. The two Hebrew words most frequently used for "miracle" are translated "sign" **(**אוֹת-***'ot)*** and "wonder" (מוֹפֵת ***-mophet***) (Ex 7:3;Deut. 4:34). "Sign**" (**אוֹת-***'ot***) is an object of sense perception. What miracle as a sign denotes is that what it stresses can be perceived with the senses. 'Sign' may be an object or daily activity as well as an unexpected divine action. The basic nature of a sign is that it points people to God. Signs in seeking to bring belief (Ex 4:9), does not compel a person to believe (Ex 4.9). 'Wonder' in its capacity, describes God's supernatural activity. It underlines a special manifestation of his power (Ex 7:3). 'Wonder' can as well serve as a sign of a future event. Those events were ascribed as being miraculous because they represent events only God can do in the world inhabited by humankind. While some Biblical miracles may be seen as expressions of God's supernatural actions, God did miraculous signs and wonders in the Old Testament for diverse purposes. These purposes include the following: as signs to prove himself to Israel; his people, to prove that he is the one true God and increase their faith in him (Ex 7:17), as a means of judgment upon the unjust (Ex 7-12), as symbolic in nature (Jonah,1:17:2:10).[3] As further noted by Trouth, miraculous signs were done for these reasons in the Old Testament to point to the start and finish of a day (Gen. 1:14), to remind Gods' people that he is faithful to his promises (Gen. 9:12), to mark out

God's people as distinct and holy in the world (Gen. 17:9-14, Ex 31:13), and to prove that God's presence is among his people (Deut. 4:34, 6:22).[4]

Aside from God directly doing miracles, there were human beings, God used to do wonderful acts in the world of men. For example in Exodus, God instructs Moses to perform miracles, so that people will believe that he is speaking on behalf of God. Old Testament history has it that a number of individuals claimed to be miracle workers in the traditions of Moses, Elijah, and Elisha, the Jewish prophets. Examples of the descriptions of miracles that were documented in the Tanakh include the following,

> Elijah who performed miracles like the raising of a widow's dead son (1 Kings 17:17–24) and Elisha whose miracles include multiplying the poor widow's jar of oil (2 Kings 4:1–7) and restoring to life of the son of the woman of Shunem (2 Kings 4:18–37). The Torah describes many miracles related to Moses during his time as a prophet and the Exodus of the Israelites. Parting the Red Sea, and facilitating the Plagues of Egypt are among the most famous.[5]

There were still those who did things that were seen as miraculous though they were not from God. False prophets performed actions that people perceived as signs and wonders (Deut. 13:1-3).[6] Such signs are not to be depended on, because following them does lead people into destruction. During the first century BCE, acts of miracles were attributed to various religious movements and splinter groups which developed and were operating among the Jews in Judea. History has it that "the Talmud and Jewish medieval writings also accepted the idea of miracles, as signs of God's intervention in the world."[7] The Talmud provides some examples of such Jewish miracle workers, one of whom is Honi HaM'agel, who was famous for his ability to successfully pray for rain.[8]

In the salvational history of the Old Testament, miracles were not uniformly distributed throughout Biblical accounts. This is said because miracles occurred at certain times associated with God's special saving work, such as the Exodus, the conflict with paganism in the time of Elijah and Elisha (1ki. 17; 2ki. 4-5).[9] There were times when God himself asked or invited people to ask for signs from him (Isa. 7: 11).[10] Some on seeing signs believed, while others though they have seen miracles remained obstinate, and did not come to believe in God. The reactions of the crowds to miracles or signs performed in the Old

Testament were of positivity by worshiping Yahweh alone and of negativity by questing after more miracles for their selfish purposes (Ex 4:30-312; Chro.7:3). For selfish reasons, some in the Old Testament quested for God just because of what they would get from him and not with a genuine desirous heart to worship Yahweh as the only one true God. Sometimes the crowd turned syncretic by attempting to blend worshiping Yahweh with adapting and assimilating foreign ideas and practices into Judaism,[11] so as to get the divine to intervene and supernaturally provide solutions to their desperate needs. In their desperate quest for miracles, selfish motives got a better hold of some of them and they were not only alienated from God, they were totally destroyed.

With regards to believing and doubting about the possibility or reality of miracles, it is obvious that the people of the Bible, did not have much problems with accepting that miracles can be real. McNeal observed that the people of the Bible did not face this problem because the Biblical perspective on the universe is that it is created, sustained, and providentially governed by God.[12] It is this understanding that made the Jews to be at home with the idea that God works in supernatural ways to call attention to himself or his purposes. As shown in the Old Testament, God revealed himself as the liberator of the enslaved Israelites from the bondage of the Egyptian Pharaoh through powerful miracles (Ex 20:2; Deut. 26:8). Through great miracles, God revealed that he judges the inequities of humanity in great events such as the flood of Noah (Gen 6: 5-8: 14), the destruction of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19: 1-29), and the destruction of the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 B.C. (2 Ki. 17: 6-23) and the southern kingdom of Judah in 586 B.C. (2 Ki. 25) because of their apostasies, and inequities. After the intertestamental times, God continued the revelation about himself in the person of Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word of God, through his words, his character and mighty miracles.[13]

For the modern Jews, due to their unflinching faith in one God, they still believe in the existence and occurrence of miracles, but they may not be quick to conclude any unusual event to be a miracle. The Jewish theologian Rabbi Lewis Jacobs remarked that “a modern Jew might be less likely to consider an extraordinary event to be a divine miracle, but the belief in God requires that he or she accept the idea of

miracles."[14] So, for the Jews, miracles can be said in a general term, that it is foolish to believe that all the miracles acclaimed to have been performed in the world are true but anyone who believes that they could not have happened is an unbeliever.

2.3 Miracle in the New Testament

New Testament has four Greek words that are principally used to designate miracles, they include ***σημεῖον (sēmeion***-"a sign" John 2:11); ***τέρατα*** (***Terata***-"Wonders" Acts 2:19); ***δυνάμεις*** (***Dunameis***- "Mighty works" Acts 2:22); and ***ἔργα*** (***Erga***- "Works" John 5:20).[15] Miracle is an important concept in the New Testament mission and ministries, but it did not start at a scratch in the New Testament.[16] The New Testament teaches that miracles occupied a special place in God's redemptive plan,[17] which God started in the Old Testament and continued in the New Testament era. And so, the notion of miracle has been an essential part of Christian belief. In the New Testament, miraculous signs-(***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***) performed by Jesus himself (John 3: 2, 6:2) and other human instruments are indispensable (Acts 19: 11). To explain the above notion, Woodward noted that "miracles and the miracle workers who perform them are an integral part of Christianity."[18] The gospels' accounts in giving the historical narratives of Jesus and his ministry, death and resurrection, presented that it was through Jesus that God continued his miraculous activities which is characterized with the sole purpose of salvaging humanity from the eternal consequences of sin. And so, miracles are not fortuitous to Christ. Miracles are part of the very substance of the Gospel of Jesus in his earthly ministry. They are inextricable from his life, mission, and supernatural teachings. Jesus exercised divine power in diverse ways: he healed the sick; expelled demons that tormented people; granted sight to the blind; transformed water into wine, fed the hungry multitudes; raised the dead; stilled the storm; walked on the raging waters of the sea and so on. His miracles complemented his teachings. His sole purpose is to consolidate for humanity, a platform for physical and spiritual wholeness.

It is therefore obvious that when one includes signs and texts that refer to Jesus' and the disciples' wonder-arousing works, the degree to which miracles dominate the gospels becomes apparent. The gospels contain stories of about 35 different occasions where Jesus performed various kinds of deeds that seemed miraculous to those who saw them. There are also several passages where declarations are made in quite general terms that Jesus performed miracles.[19] In the synoptic gospels miracles occurred as signs and wonders ***σημεῖᾰ- (sēmeia) καὶ τέρατα*** (***Terata)*** and or as ***δυνάμεις - Dunameis***- "Mighty works". But in John, miracles occurred specifically as signs- ***σημεῖᾰ- (sēmeia)*** revealing Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of God. Sign- ***σημεῖον (sēmeion***) occurs 73 times in the New Testament. The Greek word ***σημεῖον (sēmeion)*** is used 10 times in Matthew, 7 times in Mark, 23 times in Luke (Luke 10 and Acts 13), 24 times in John (John 17 and Rev 6), 8 times in Paul and once in Hebreew.[20] Noteworthy is that the most common use of ***σημεῖον*** (***sēmeion***) as referring to miracle is in John**.** Miracles either as sign-***(σημεῖον - sēmeion)***, wonders-(***τέρατα -Terata***), mighty works (***δυνάμεις -Dunameis***) and works (***ἔργα -Erga***) in totality dominated the New Testament.

These Greek words ***σημεῖον (sēmeion)*** which is translated as "Sign", ***Terata*** translated as "wonders*",* ***Dunamis*** which means force or power, and ***Ergon*** translated work,[21] each is used in a diversified technical forms. When miraculous events depict 'signs'- ***σημεῖᾰ (sēmeia)*** they are used to validate a divine commission, to attest to a message from God or bear witness of His presence. Miraculous signs also give the testimony of God as to the nature and person of Jesus Christ,[22] as God who is in the midst of men. Miracle as a 'wonder'- ***Terata*** denotes event that is astonishing for human to see. ***Dunamis*** in relation to miracle refers to an event that is clearly caused by someone possessing superhuman power that is supernatural in its origin and does powerful works. Miraculous 'work'- ***Erga*** refers to the deeds of Christ (John 5:20,26, 7:3, 10:38).

While Jesus has been affirmed to be miraculous in his days, there were people of his contemporaries who were also known as having powers to perform miracles. G. Vermes in citing a Talmudic report notes that Hanina ben Dosa -a famous compatriot of Jesus, through his prayer healed Gamaliel's son of his fever,[23]

Apollonius of Tyana who had comparable feats to his name, and Emperor Vespasian who was reported to have performed two notable cures.[24] There were also small groups of prayerful and charismatic men whose prayers almost guaranteed answers from God and as such made the rabbinic sources to designate them ***aretai***- 'men of good deeds.' By contrast with the genuine sources of miracles, there were also the practitioners of evil arts that aroused wonders, they include: magicians, sorcerers, witchcraft etc. They sourced their powers from the evil forces. The effects of their evil activities were felt in the then society, as such, the charge of sorcery was so much referenced in the Jewish legal writings[25] and as well resulted in the appearance of Jewish names in the magical papyri.[26] It was because of the dangers associated with practicing sorcery in the then world, that exposed anyone who attempts to deliberately perform miracles to be suspected as one who is practicing sorcery or magic.[27] It was this worldview that exposed Jesus' power of doing miracles to have been suspected to may have been sourced from Beelzebub. The contemporaries of Jesus and the miracles attributed to them cannot be compared to the kinds and methods of miracles attributed to Jesus. Jesus in performing miracles exercised great authority. He adopted intimate style of address to the Father, [28] which reveals the united form of relationship he had with God.

Jesus having done many miracles also gave power to his apostles to work miracles (Mark 3:15;16;17), consequently, the apostles of Christ worked many miracles in his name in the first century A.D., that people might believe the gospel of Christ (Act 2:43:8:7). In Acts of the Apostles, ***σημεῖον*** appeared 9 times in the form of the phrase ***σημεῖἄ καῖ τέρατα (***signs and wonders***)*** or ***τέρατα καῖ σημεῖἄ-*** (wonders and signs). It was also used by Peter twice in Acts 4:16,22 and Philip used it twice in Acts 8:6,13. In Acts of the Apostles, the disciples of Jesus performed 'signs' (***σημεῖἄ***) in Jesus' name. The disciples of Jesus having encountered the new dynamic situation inaugurated by the death, ressurection and ascension of Jesus became the agents through whom the mission mandate was continued in works of powerful manisfestations - ***δυνάμεις*** (***Dunameis***- "Mighty works" Acts 2:22). These works of power or wonders which were done in the name of Jesus became signs- (***σημεῖἄ***) which functioned as pointers to Jesus and beyond him to God, who he reavealed. In Acts the 'Mighty works'- ***δυνάμεις*** (***Dunameis)*** of the

plenipotentiaries of God functioned as a 'sign'- ***σημεῖον (sēmeion)*** that the Trinity is continuing his mission mandate through them. Consequently, the apostles and the other disciples were not enthusiastic about the material aspect of the signs and wonders demonstrated in their mission venture, rather they were obedient and unselfish in their acts of power done in Jesus' name and for his sake.

In Paul, ***σημεῖον*** occures 10 times. Most of its instances contain the expression "signs" and "wonders"- (***σημεῖᾰ καῖ τέρατα =sēmeia kai Terata)*** Rom 15:19;2 Cor 12:12; 2Thess 2:9. In Paul, ***σημεῖον*** still encapsulates the traditional meaning. ***Σημεῖον*** emphasizes in Paul that there is now a Christian apostolate established and sent on a mision by Jesus. And so, in Paul there was no need for a new use of ***σημεῖον.*** Rather, what happens is that now it is required that the current use of ***σημεῖον*** be set in the new situation.

From the above analysis, it would be observed that miracle has broad definitions as it relates to its significances in the missionary ministry of Jesus in the gospels and during the first Christian generations. The concept of miracle has been established to have important essence in the mission mandate of the body of Christ of all ages. Jesus did not compromise miracles, his miracles had characteristics and purposes for all ages. Miracles of Jesus were signs unveiling who he is to humanity. It also functions to bring people to engender belief and faith in Jesus for the holistic salvation of humankind. Jesus modeled miracles that aim to point humanity to the One who has all the capacity to save them from the consequences of sin and hence lead to worship of Jesus as the Divine. The missionary activities of the apostles and early Christians that followed Christ were not also devoid of genuine miracles. The miracles they did were chiefly aimed to help the unbelievers not only to come to believe but to remain in faith, and to keep growing in their personal relationships with Christ for the eternal salvation of the human souls. As demonstrated by Jesus, his apostles and disciples, effective mission activities were always backed up by genuine miraculous activities. Therefore, the Church and individual Christians misconstrue it when they abuse the true essence of miraculous signs which is an integral part of the mission mandate. The above establishments propel one to ask, what then is Jesus' model of miracles?

2.3.1 The Topological Model of Jesus' Miracles in the Gospels

The gospels' evangelists agreed in emphasizing that Jesus was and is a divine and a miraculous figure. All the gospel writers affirmed that Jesus performed miracles. John Drane, captures the above when he notes that "some of the most striking parts of the Gospels are the stories about Jesus performing what we call miracles."[29] The synoptics presented miracles Jesus performed to represent evidence of and indeed part of the coming of the kingdom of God. The synoptics did not use 'sign'- ***σημεῖον (sēmeion)*** to describe the miracles of Jesus. The synoptics majorly captured miracles of Jesus to be "Mighty works"- ***δυνάμεις*** (***Dunameis***), while John from another purview presents miracles as signs-(***σημεῖă-sēmeia***) revealing who Jesus is (1:18; 2:11;6:14;8:59; 14:9), and as evidence for believing in him (20:31).

Joseph Kudasiewicz observes that the gospels used two kinds of terms to describe a miracle. The first description of miracle in the gospels was represented in theological terms which underlined miracles to depict religious signs-(***σημεῖă-sēmeia***). In this group, miracles were designated with these terms: ***dynamis***-strength, miraculous-work of power (Mk 9:39; Mt 7:22; Lk 19:32); ***σημεῖον (sēmeion)***-sign (Mk 16:17; Mt 12:38; Lk 21:11; Jn 2:11; 3:2-5); ***Ergon***-deed, work (Mt 11:2; Lk24:19; John 4:34; 5:20,36;7:2). The second description in the gospels that unravels the aspect of the miraculous and extraordinary character of miracle include ***terata***-miracles (only Mk 13:22-used it to indicate the spurious wonders of pseudo-messiah;Jn. 4:48; Ac2:22); ***Paradoksa***- unbelievable events exciting surprise and fear (only Lk 5:26); ***aretai***-deeds of power (1 Pt. 2:9).[30] Examining critically the second group's description of miracle, one will observe that in the gospels, the evangelists redactionally and explicitly avoided dwelling in explaining miracles in relations to its extraordinary characteristics. This explicit avoidance indicates that the Gospels have a theological purpose for not emphasizing the extraordinary elements in the miracles accounts they narrated. Rather their focus is on the religious, theological and personal sense of the events. Consequently, miracles were mainly presented in the gospels to signify ***σημεῖον***- sign of something to someone. In relation to the Christ's model of miracles, miraculous signs-(***σημεῖă)*** unravel the works of God, of Christ, for the benefit of an individual or group of persons. The miracles of Jesus as signs of God's

glory, are indeed works of God, which should lead to a response of faith (10:25). It holds therefore, that the miracles of Jesus are explicitly (Johannine) and implicitly (Synoptics) christologically pointing to who Jesus is.[31]

In the gopsels, the miracles which were attributed to Jesus in its classifications include healing miracles, exorcism, nature miracles and resuscitation miracles.[32] These miracles explicitly and implicitly presented Jesus as one with God in ontology and in functions. Jesus performed every miraculous sign with a purpose: in most cases, his miracles reveal who He is (John 10:38). In totality, the stories told about Jesus proved that Jesus lived and in reality modeled the characteristics of miracles in its most genuine forms. The model of Jesus' miracles manifested unique characters which include the following: Jesus' miracles were done by the supernatural power of God,[33] and motivated by genuine compassion,[34] mercy [35]and love[36], drew crowds [37]to him. Some believed in him to be the Messiah because of the miraculous signs-(***σημεῖᾰ)*** that he was doing. There were many who did not believe in him though they have witnessed miraculous signs -(***σημεῖᾰ)*** that he has demonstrated.

The wonder-arousing works of Jesus were not done to attract or gain authority and influence for his messages, they were not designed to unravel his divine authorization, they were not done for amazement, they were not done for him to achieve personal popularity: they were done to awaken repentance,[38] that should lead to salvation that is holistic.[39] Miracles of Jesus were done to restore and consolidate humanities' physical, emotional and spiritual wholeness, to create a deeper understanding of Jesus' ontology and to generate a deeper sense of commitment to him.

In the gospels, miracle stories were preserved in two forms: on the one hand, some of the miracle stories were preserved to provide a context for an important saying of Jesus that comes at the end of the narrative (eg Mk 2:1-2, 10). Miracle story in providing the context for the important sayings of Jesus captures the sayings as being as important as the miracles themselves. On the second hand, some other miracle stories

were preserved as an independent unit, whose sole aim is to call attention to Jesus' significant mighty deeds or acts which unravel the supernatural power which Jesus possesses. [40]

The models of miracles attributed to Jesus in the gospels conform to no pattern but noteworthy is that most often, the miracles contain a threefold pattern of development (1) a description of the situation which prompted the miracle (2) a description of the miraculous act and (3) a description of the consequences of the miracle.[41] Miracles attributed to Jesus directly or indirectly conformed to this threefold pattern. The significance of Jesus' miracles lies primarily in the fact that they are to be seen as signs (***σημεῖᾰ)*** of the power of God in Jesus as One with the Father in ontology and function; through whom God has unleashed the era of the reality of the kingdom of God and through which many may come to develop and consolidate faith in God. Many uphold that the miracles attributed to Jesus in the gospels are not real. Drane notes that "Most people, including a number of Christians find it hard to believe that the miracles recorded in the Gospels actually took place."[42] Those doubting the historicity of Jesus' miracles designate them to be of superstitions, myths, or even fairy tales.[43] But most critical scholars today recognize that miracles attributed to Jesus actually happened[44] and there are many proofs that are there to confirm that the miracles attributed to Jesus were historical (John 10:32-33).[45]

2.3.2 Similarity between Biblical and African Worlds

Onwu notes that "there is similarity between African and Biblical worlds. In both there is interaction between man and spiritual forces of both good and evil. Visions of angels, demonic possessions, witches and wizards were accepted as real."[46] The both worlds: the early Christian age and the contemporary age know what it means to suffer. It is because of these precarious situations of humankind that the Jewish world and Africans are so much interested in the functional character of the Messiah in his mission on earth, which was demonstrated in genuine compassion. This points at the truth, that the need for the virtue of divine's compassionate miraculous interventions would ever be relevant in every age. This contemporary generation full of sinners and those suffering, daily need compassionate miraculous interventions of the divine. Jesus' model of compassionate miracles, which is a challenge to his followers,

is aimed at taking actions that would solve the pains or problems of the suffering and calls attention to his ontological nature to them. It is to be established here that the miracle stories told about Jesus in the gospels unraveled that Jesus' model of compassionate miracles focused on both the physical and spiritual needs of the people passing through any form of sufferings and that he aims to point to his ontological nature through the miraculous signs he demonstrated. This points at the truth that should be critically unraveled, whether, that there is a relationship between the concepts; 'sin' 'suffering' and the need for miracles.

2.3.3 The Relationship between 'Sin' 'Suffering' and the need for Miracles

Sin is any act, thought or way of behaving that is against the dictates of God for humanity. According to Billy E. Simmons, "sin is the actions by which humans rebel against God, miss his purpose for their life, and surrender to the power of evil rather than to God."[47] Sin is a rebellious activity against God. Sin resulted to humanity's estrangement from God. It is universal in nature and character, hence it could be said to be personal or inherited from ancestors.[48] Sin has a corollary of shame. Sin estranges the victim from God. Though, it could be said to be personal or inherited, yet man is not excusable and therefore is held responsible of his choice of sin. Sin therefore is the root cause of all problems of humanity which include ignorance, sickness and poverty. At the long run it leads the victim to death, judgment, condemnation and eternal damnation. The origin of sin and suffering could be traced to the time, when Adam and Eve in Genesis displayed their first act of disobedience in human history. They sinned against God in the Garden of Eden. Simmons notes that "Since Adam and Eve rebelled against the clear command of God; sin has infected humanity like a dread malignancy."[49] Sin entered the world of men and came with it corollaries of suffering and death. Man was created in the image of God. Man was not created from ***abinitio*** to suffer. Suffering is a word that is used to explain the situation of one that is experiencing psychological pain, and emotional distress. The experience of suffering may result to pain and distress. It is not a pleasant or desired situation for any mankind. Obiorah Mary Jerome notes that,

> The present is characterized by **suffering**. 'there is no human being on earth, white or black, rich or poor, old or young, saint or sinner that is free from **suffering** here on earth for this is common to all Adam's children.'[50]

Suffering is an age-long problem. It is a reality that is universal, real and painful. There are diverse forms of human sufferings. Every human being experiences one form of suffering or another; whether rich or poor. Suffering is in fact a mystery, a hidden reality that goes beyond human comprehension.[51] It was the entrance of sin in the life and world of human beings that came with it the corollaries of suffering and death. Obiorah in her own words explains that "sin of our first parents, however, initiated suffering and its accompanying pain."[52] In other words, sin has a direct relationship with suffering because it was with the entrance of sin in the world that came with it a corollary of suffering. The picture of sin in the New Testament is defined against the backdrop of Jesus as the standard for righteousness. Sin in John's gospel constitutes unbelieve in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God. Lack of fellowship with God and unbelief in Jesus are sin. Obiorah asserts that "The consequence of this alienation, which we call sin, is suffering."[53] Anything that disturbs or distorts man's fellowship with God in Jesus is sin. Unbelief as a sin is seen in the rejection of that spiritual light that has been revealed in Jesus Christ. Perfection is modeled in the life of Jesus and his life standard therefore created the norm for judging what is sinful. The outcome of unbelief and rejection of truth which is the gift of God in Jesus is judgment. Jesus in reinterpreting the old law in Matthew 5 traced sin to the inner motives of the condition of the heart.

The consequences of sin landed humanity into spiritual blindness. Sin also made human race to lose their spiritual position with God: this also culminated to humankind's unending sufferings, which established the human need for compassion. As a result of the above, man needs compassion from the divine so as to be helped to be restored to his place in God's plan for the creation. The relationship here established is that sin came with suffering and for man to be saved from the consequences of sin and suffering; he then needs the divine kind of compassion. The consequences of sin are more powerful than man, in that he cannot help himself. Therefore he needs that model of compassion that does not seek for his merit, before

helping him out of the consequences of his sins. It is grace that positions man to receive what he does not merit. It is therefore God's kind of compassion that man needs for him to be saved. Simmons writes that "sin also necessitates God's intervention in human affairs. Since humanity could not extricate itself from the entanglements of sin, it was necessary for God to intervene if humanity was ever to be freed from these entanglements."[54] The deliverance that man needed he cannot offer it to himself; he can only be graciously given it by God. God perfected his compassionate actions in the person of Jesus.

Ray C. Stedman observes that "Jesus was so human nobody would believe he was God."[55] The Christian faith upholds firmly the human nature of Jesus, and as well, do not neglect his divine nature. This is because, it is required of Him to be made of human nature so that he could feel what man feels and as well conquer, become a model for mankind and be able to save humanity. As for the divinity of Jesus, it takes the Spirit of God in a man to live a life that manifests God's kind of compassionate love. God's model of compassion can only be shown to man directly from God as demonstrated by God himself in the Old Testament and through God the Son in the New Testament. God's kind of compassion can be indirectly shown to man by man: which can only be practiced by those that have graciously received the illumination of God's light in their hearts. Anyhow, one looks at compassion- man is always the one in need of compassion and not God. God has through diverse ways miraculously intervened and has continued to intervene in the affairs of mankind to do for mankind both physical alleviation of pains and spiritual salvation. In the consequences of sin which constituted problems and suffering for man, man needs compassionate interventions of the divine. The kind of intervention accompanied with the commensurate moves that would bring out lasting solution to human sufferings comes only from the divine. Simmons and Obiorah established here that there is a strong relationship between these concepts: sin, Suffering and the need for miracles.

2.3.4 The Relationship between Miracles *(Τέρατα- Terata),* and Signs (*Σημεῖα-Sēmeia*)

Miracle is an English word that is gotten from the Latin word **"*miraculum*"**[56] which means "object of wonder." Miracles are acts which only the Divine can do in the world. Miraculous acts are actions or events that is amazing, extraordinary and that which goes beyond human understanding and natural ways things should go in the world. In the theological history of the world, God has through diverse means, done many miraculous events in the world inhabited by human-kind. Both the Old Testament and New Testament are filled with many miracle stories which depict ways God has moved to intervene in the affairs of man so as to consolidate salvation to those who would identify with him. Many of these miracles have been designated as signs in the Old Testament. For example, in the Old Testament: Signs point to the start and finish of a day (Gen. 1:14); Signs remind God's people that he is faithful to his promises (Gen. 9:12); Signs mark out God's people as distinct and holy in the world (Gen. 17:9-14, Exod. 31:13); Signs are evidence that God's presence is among his people (Deuter 4:34, 6:22).[57]

Also in the New Testament, miracles were used as either 'a sign' (***σημεῖον -Semeion*** John 2:11), 'wonders' ***(τέρατα- Terata*** -Acts 2:19), 'mighty works' (***δυνάμεις -Dunameis*** Acts 2:22); 'works' (***ἔργα-Erga***- John 5:20). While other New Testament writers depict miracles either as 'mighty works- ***δυνάμεις –Dunameis*'** and 'wonders' ***(τέρατα- Terata),*** John the evangelist was consistent in depicting miracles to be signs(***σημεῖα-sēmeia*)** pointing humanity to the divinity of Jesus. Troutt noted that 'Signs and wonders' are different ways of talking about miracles, in the New Testament.[58] In this way, miracles are used interchangeably. Here one is used to mean the other. Sign like miracle is used to refer to works or events that only God does in the world that refer to some other thing beyond the miracle itself. Sign ***σημεῖον*** is a word that is driven from the Doric *'**σαμα'*** by way of Ionic ***σημηῖον*** and Doric ***σαμηχῖον*** constructs and from Latin word '***signum***'[59] which means 'mark'. Sign represents a mark, thing or event that signifies or indicates something else that is not immediately apparent. It could be an action or a gesture that is used to convey an idea, information, a wish or a command. It gives advertising notice or informative notice about another. It calls for notification of another and not majorly about its self. With the above definition of

what sign means, it is related to miracle-when its emphasis is placed on the deeper attention which is called by the miraculous event.

The usage of each could highlight a little difference. ***'Σημεῖον'*** is used technically. When miracle is talked about as a ***'σημεῖον'*** -sign, it is used to point to some other thing beyond itself, which represents a greater meaning, concept or purpose. The emphasis of actions or events that are depicted as signs-(***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***) remain that they appeal to the understanding. Miracles as signs- (***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***) seek for perceptional understanding. Its purpose is that the targeted would come to consolidate a deeper understanding about what it is emphasized. Explaining the above Trouth noted that "Wonders are similar to signs, but have a different emphasis. "A sign appeals to the understanding; a wonder appeals to the imagination"… 'Sign' emphasizes what the miracle proves and 'wonder' emphasizes how the miracle inspires worship."[60] Consequently miracles are related to signs- in which way either of them are used reflects miraculous works of God that point to who Jesus is and what he is doing in the world.

2.4 Miracles as Signs -(*Σημεῖᾰ-Sēmeia*) in John's Gospel

John was among the gospel writers who told stories about Jesus and his earthly ministry. Wayne Jackson noted that "when one opens the New Testament, he is introduced to four narratives which are concerned with the activities and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth."[61] These records are Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The whole gospels evangelists in their unique theological ways of writing, documented many miracles stories which they attributed to Jesus. In totality about 35 miracles were attributed to Jesus in all the gospel narratives. David Wenham explains that "the very name **'syn-optic'** means having a common perspective, and reflects the perception that Matthew, Mark and Luke see Jesus in one way, whereas John is different."[62] Synoptic is gotten from the noun '**synopsis**', but technically ***'synopsis'*** is gotten from the Greek words ***'syn'*** which means 'with' or 'together', and '***opsis***' which means 'view'. The above derivation presents that '**synopsis**' means 'viewing together'. Consequently, the three ***synoptists*** in their different gospels presented a common view of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.[63] John presented the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ from his peculiar personal perspective. John

documented a reflective personal view of Jesus. Hence, his gospel is known as an '***autoptic*** gospel***'***. '***Autoptic****'* is an adjective that is originally derived from Greek words '***autos***' it denotes self or personal, and '***opsis****'* means sight or view.[64] John was peculiar in his choice of miracles which he was consistent in depicting signs (***σημεῖα-sēmeia***), which he by way of redaction collected, edited and documented in his gospel. His personal theological view influenced his use and interpretation of the miraculous-sign stories associated with Jesus and his earthly ministry. It is glaring that the apostle John paid special attention to several 'signs'(***σημεῖα-sēmeia***) that point clearly to the nature of Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God. He is God with humanity (John 1:14, 18). And so for John, miracles of Jesus in its holistic form depict signs (***σημεῖα-sēmeia***). John did not call miracles"Mighty works"- (***δυνάμεσι*** *Dunameis*). John the evangelist called miracles 'signs'-(***σημεῖα-sēmeia***) because they signified something.[65] Miracles in John's gospel are signs (***σημεῖα-sēmeia***) because they point to something deeper than the miracles themselves. Sign (***σημεῖον***) is simply another way of talking about miracle in John. Because miracles are signs (***σημεῖα-sēmeia***), John did not see anything wrong in using them interchangeably or synonymously. John spiritualizing everything Jesus did wrote to buttress that every of his earthly function reveals his ontological nature. Everything Jesus did were done to reveal the person and character of God. The miracles show humanity the nature of Christ. They demonstrate that God is with humanity in their daily affairs. Jesus' miracles were signs-(***σημεῖα-sēmeia*****)** that were demonstrated with the sole purpose of helping the Jews to believe Jesus to be the promised Messiah. The basic purpose is that, these 'signs' (***σημεῖα-sēmeia***) were to prove that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, which should lead the believer to eternal life (Jn. 20:30- 31). It was also due to these 'signs' (***σημεῖα-sēmeia*****)** that convinced his disciples to first believe in him (John 2:1-11).

Consequently, in proving the divine nature of Jesus, John was very selective in the materials he collected, edited and included in his gospel. Wayne notes that "Surely the abbreviated selectivity of one who was so close to his Lord is evidence of the fact that the Holy Spirit was guiding the production of the Fourth Gospel."[66] Thus, the result of the selections done in John's gospel, showed John's records to be

characterized by a series of both 'word signs' and 'work signs', the word signs include the famous "I am-***ἐγώ εἰμι- ego eimi***" declarations and the seven work signs in the gospel of John. Both the 'I am' declarations of Jesus and the works were designated as signs(***σημεῖα-sēmeia***) because they represent deeper marks that would guide one with the help of the Holy Spirit to believe and have faith in Jesus as the Son of God. In the 'I am' declarations, Jesus affirmed that he is the following: "the bread of life" (Jn. 6:35),"the light of the world" (Jn. 8:12), "the door" (Jn. 10:7),"the good shepherd" (Jn. 10:14), "the resurrection and the life" (Jn. 11:25),"the way, the truth, and the life" (Jn. 14:6), and "the true vine" (Jn. 15:1). In all these 'I am' declarations, Jesus directly or indirectly affirmed that he is the Son of God. Each of the '***ἐγώ εἰμι' -`ego eimi`,*** translated 'I am' in English were statements used distinctively by John to prove the divinity of Jesus, as well, he matched each with the functional roles of Jesus as the true Son of God.

John documented 9 miraculous-signs (***σημεῖα-sēmeia*)** in his gospel. The first 7 miraculous signs (***σημεῖα-sēmeia***) were done during his public ministry, while the remaining two were done after Jesus' death and resurrection. The work signs (***σημεῖα-sēmeia***) which were by way of redaction collected, edited and documented in John in which Jesus demonstrated his power over time include the following: instantly changing water into wine (Jn. 2:1-11),he showed his control of space by healing the nobleman's son from a distance of several miles away (Jn. 4:46-54),The Lord's authority over infirmity was evinced by the cure of the man at the pool of Bethesda (Jn. 5:1-18),Christ was the master of matter in multiplication of the loaves and fish (Jn. 6:1-14),The Savior controlled the law of gravity by walking upon Galilee's turbulent waves (Jn. 6:16-21), He reversed the effect of congenital blindness by restoring the vision of a sightless man (Jn. 9:1-41),And when Jesus called Lazarus from his tomb, he gave a preview of his power over death, to fully be revealed on the last day (Jn. 11:1-44). John's Gospel concluded with the apostle's eyewitness record of the resurrection events (20:1-29) and the miracle of the fish-laden net (Jn. 21:5, 6). The scope of this study covers Jesus' public ministry work signs (miracles) and word signs (dialogues) that unveil his functional and ontological natures. Both the seven public works and seven words signs

consolidate firmly the divinity of Jesus. The gospel of John in its emphasis on signs (***σημεῖα-sēmeia*****)** demonstrated by Jesus, when compared with the other New Testament books, is affirmed to be stronger in arguing the case for the deity of Christ (Jn. 1:1,Jn. 10:30,Jn. 20:28).[67]

2.4.1. What the Miraculous Signs (*Σημεῖα-Sēmeia*) of Jesus in John never intended to achieve

Jesus demonstrated miracles as signs (***σημεῖα-sēmeia***) in John for the right purposes. His aim of performing miracles were not to achieve any self-gain or for any selfish interest. His miraculous signs were done so as to liberate or provide for his beneficiary and as well desires that the beneficiary would come to believe and have faith in him- to be the Son of God. Jesus' miraculous-signs were never magic tricks. Magic tricks are majorly designed to impress and coerce. Jesus' miraculous-signs (***σημεῖα-sēmeia*****)** were not intended to excite or compel people who benefited or witnesses to be his followers. He aimed to meet both the physical and spiritual needs of the beneficiary and the witnesses. Consequently, Jesus through his miraculous signs (***σημεῖα-sēmeia***) healed the sick, feed the hungry, and raised the dead etc.

Jesus never meant his miracles as signs (***σημεῖα-sēmeia***) to be the suspension or the violation of the natural order, as many are liberally defining miracle to be. Keller remarked that Instead, Jesus meant his miracles signs to be the restoration of the natural order. When he heals the sick, raises the dead, feeds the hungry, he was aligning his motivation to conform to how God originally intended the creation to live peaceably without any form of suffering.[68] Although with the introduction of sin, mankind lost their original place in creation, God through Jesus is still in the business of performing miraculous works to restore humanity to the original plan of God.

Jesus' miraculous signs-(***σημεῖα-sēmeia*****)** were never intended to throw Jesus to the lime light. Jesus never advertised his miraculous dispositions. Jesus possessing miraculous power never thought of it as the means to enrich himself or perhaps to be the richest man of his days. His miraculous disposition can make him rich if he would have wanted. He would have been collecting some remunerations from people that benefited from his miraculous demonstrations. But no! He was not interested in acquiring worldly things

to be his personal possessions. This is seen that, when he collected from the kid who donated his fishes and loaves, Jesus in thanksgiving to the Father miraculously multiplied it and gave it to the crowd following him for diverse motivations. If Jesus' demonstrated miracles were not aimed to achieve for him personal gains, what then are the Jesus' miraculous signs (***σημεῖα-sēmeia*)** in John purposed to achieve?

2.4.2. The Purposes of Jesus' Miraculous signs (*Σημεῖα-Sēmeia*) in John 20: 30-31

Jesus in John is depicted as the Son of God who did many miraculous signs (***σημεῖα-sēmeia*).** The miracles Jesus demonstrated were not just to be taken only for their material benefits. The miracles pointed the beneficiaries, witnesses and those who would read the narratives in the future, to ideas beyond the miracles themselves. It is in these signs (***σημεῖα-sēmeia***) are encapsulated the purposes for which Jesus did many miracles in John's gospel. One of the two reasons for which John composed his gospel which is encapsulated in miracles as signs is to prove and consolidate that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (20:31), the Savior of the world (4:42). In his attempt to prove the divinity of Jesus, to help him achieve that he used the following: witnessing statements of John the Baptist (1:29, 32-36), the Samaritan woman and villagers (4:39-42), Jesus (8:13-14), God Himself (8:17; 12:28-30), accounts of the life, ministry and works of Jesus, including His many discourses and His eventual death and resurrection. El Naggar observed that John chiefly recorded various miracles designated as signs performed by Jesus, he gives an account of the sermonic discourses of Jesus, to shed more light on the meaning of the message behind the miracles Jesus did.[69] The above accounts for John's use of the Greek word '***σημεῖον***' (***sēmeion*** - sign), rather than simply '***dunamis***' powerful deeds. Trouth listed three reasons for which the divinity performs miracles as signs, they include: to authenticate his messenger, as part of his message, this is shown that miracles are microcosms of the cosmic restoration that has begun in the person and work of Jesus, and to serve as a foretaste of the coming kingdom.[70]

For Keller, Biblical miracles are purposed to lead from cognitive believe to worship, to awe and wonder.[71] Having seen the signs -(***σημεῖα-sēmeia*)** for which the miracle is deeply pointing, one should not stop at only believing Jesus to be the Son of God. The person who has believed Jesus to be the Son of God should develop personal relationship that breeds worship. In this, the worship which humanity lost in their relationship with God through the first man and woman is to be restored. In another direction it should be noted that what was spoken of and remembered , specifically, about Jesus' miracles provided faith and transformation in the discipleship process both during the life of Jesus and after.[72] Miracles in consolidating faith in Jesus to be truly the Son of God should also lead to transformation in the continued discipleship process. The transformation of the believer is only possible by the work of the indwelling Spirit of Christ. Transformation occurs when the believer must have had a vital contact with the Trinity **(**Jn 15:5), which leads to salvation**.**

Don Stewart in answering the question about the purpose of Jesus' miracles remarked that miracles Testified to Jesus' identity.[73] The identity here emphasized is the divinity of Jesus whose activity was questioned or objected by the Jews. It was not easy for the Jews to accept God's own testimony as to the nature and person of Jesus Christ as he relates to God himself (John 10:38).[74] And so, the miracles were done as a testimony to the identity of Jesus which should create belief in him. Consequently the miraculous signs Jesus performed convinced many that he was truly the Son of God. There were also many in the multitude surrounding Jesus who only marveled at times at the material aspect of the miracles but did not come to consolidate faith in Jesus as the one who would fulfil the divine plan of salvation (John 6:26).[75] Again, on why Jesus needed to perform miracles, it should be noted that Jesus' miracles were not random acts performed for random people. Instead, they sent a very specific message to those who met him.[76] It is summarized here that Jesus' miracles proved that he is God. Jesus has power over death, demonstrated that he has complete control of creation, showed that he has the power to heal and that they all sum by consolidating Jesus to be the Son of God.

Diane Dew writing on the reasons God generally performs miracles in the world listed the following: Miracles serve as a confirmation of a person's ministry or message (John 3:2:6:14, 36; 11:42), the message (word), that it is from God (John 5:36), God performs miracles to meet the needs of His people (John 2:1-11), miracles increase one's faith (John 2:11, 23; 5:53:7:31; 11:45;20:30-31), they may simply be symbolic in nature. Dew concludes by remarking that "no matter who is the vessel God uses to bring about a miracle, that it is God who is to get the glory for it (John 2:11; 11:4).[77]

El Naggar tracking the implicit intentions of John in writing his version of the Gospel of Jesus the Christ as stated in chapter 20 verses 30-31 affirms that John's aim is two-fold: firstly, it is revelatory, he seeks to reveal and demonstrated "that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God." Secondly, it is evangelistic, he wants people to know the true identity of Jesus, "so that you may have life in his name." There is the emphasis on believing. Believing is linked with Jesus's own person.[78] The emphasis is that it is important to Jesus that those he addressed, come to trust him as the Son of God-he is.

2.5.1. Philosophical Views on Miracles

The idea of miracle originally found its home from the stand point of religious culture and traditional views. But Philosophers in many ways have contributed to the debated issues regarding the idea of miracle and the miraculous. Miracle relates to the event that nature cannot produce on its own. But conceptualizing what miracle in its holistic form is, has some difficulties. These difficulties are seen when miracle is conceptualized as a violation of natural law.[79] If miracles are denied as having anything to do with the violation of natural law, since they have supernatural causes, then they fall outside the scope of these laws. Consequent to this, Miracle are described as the basic actions or miracles as God's gestures. Philosophical arguments on the miraculous, however is limited to the use to which religion-and in particular, theistic religion –puts that conception.[80] On the concept of miracle, philosophical discussion epicenter is on two overlapping main issues which include the following: what is a miracle? And what are the epistemological positons on confirmation of miracles? For the sake of this research, the work would attempt to find out

contributions of philosophy to the semantic and epistemological questions as they relate to the concept of miracle.

2.5.1.1. The Semantic Question: What is Miracle?

Semantic enquiry posits that miracles are events caused by God and it consolidates believe in God. David Corner noted that recent criticisms of belief in miracles have focused on the concept of a miracle.[81] From the etymological source, miracle is a word that can be traced from the 12 century, which developed through French to Latin ***miraculum*** which means 'object of wonder' which is derived from ***mirari,*** to 'wonder at' *to* ***mirus*** 'wonderful'. From this, the most general characterization of a miracle is an experience or event that provokes wonder.[82] Hence, miracle is an event that must in some way be extraordinary, unusual or contrary to human's expectations. From this point, scholars disagree on what makes a miracle something worth wondering about. This raises the question of what makes an event defined to be miraculous extraordinary or supernatural.

St. Augustine gave one of the earliest accounts of what miracle is. He is of the position that "a miracle is not contrary to nature, but only to our knowledge of nature; miracles are made possible by hidden potentialities in nature that are placed there by God."[83] St. Augustine affirms that miracles are traceable to those actions or events which only God can do and that they must not be contrary to nature so as to be a miracle. Thomas Aquinas in his own stance conceptualizes miracle as an occurrence that must go beyond the order usually observed in nature. He also insisted that a miracle is not contrary to nature in any absolute sense, since it is in the nature of all created things to be responsive to God's will.[84]

The question of what miracle simply is, has not been easy to conceptualize or define. For what is really a miracle to be defined philosophically, philosophers have primarily focused on whether a miracle must be , in some sense, contrary to natural law or must it in particular be a violation of natural law as David Hume has defined it. It is noteworthy that philosophical conversations about miracles almost invariably begin with Hume's definition.[85] Hume calls things or events that religious people would call miracle "marvelous

events". He holds that there is a distinction between a miracle and a marvelous event. To him what religious people designates miraculous are only wonderful, amazing and fabulous events. He then in his book "*An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding"* defines miracle as "a transgression of law of nature by a particular volition of the deity or by the interposition of some invisible agent."[86] In Hume's definition, an event is caused by God directly or indirectly through an invisible agent and there must be a violation or transgression of law of Nature. Natural laws to Hume are nothing but descriptions of general causal relationships between events, from which human infer effects from causes and vice versa. So for something to be a miracle, it must go contrary to the laws of the nature and must be an expression of the divine will for the good of man.

In the above definition, Hume gave his own answer to the semantic question and as well employed this semantic answer to arguably conclude that it is never reasonable to believe that a miracle has occurred. This, his position also unravels his answer to the epistemological question. Hume, in his argument rules out the possibility of miracles. He contends this because religious people use false claims of miracles to propagate their religions. Omoregbe commenting on Hume's denial of the possibility of miracles noted that it is inconsistent with his critical analysis of the principle of causality and the uniformity of nature.[87] Hume's conclusion that the miracles recorded in the Bible could or could not have occurred has been critiqued and found to be wrong. Earman in his own views explains that "if Hume's concern is to show that we cannot in principle ever have good reason to believe testimony to a miracle, he would appear to be wrong about this"[88] Hume's use of unreliable method, in some sense make people to reject reports that are true or accept those that are false.[89]

The conceptualization of miracle as a violation of the natural law has not been generally viewed to be a coherent one, consequently, it has been attacked in diverse ways. The critics of Hume have posited that the notion of a violation of natural law is self-contradictory. Huxley in seeing Hume's definition as being self-contradictory remarked that because all human know of the order of nature is derived from humans' observation of the course of events of which the so-called miracle is a part.[90] Miracle must not have to be

defined as violations of natural laws in the sense in which Hume has defined it. Rather miracles should be seen as relatively abnormal, unusual, atypical, or extraordinary, usually rare and which are basically acts of God, which does leave natural laws as they are. R. F. Holland attacking Hume's idea of definition of miracle in terms of natural law argued that,

> A miracle may be consistent with natural law, since a religiously significant coincidence may qualify as miraculous, even though we fully understand the causes that brought it about. Accounts of the miraculous that distance themselves from the requirement that a miracle be in some way contrary to the order of nature, in favor of a focus on their significance to human life, might be said to emphasize their nature as signs; indeed the term *semeion,* "sign," is one of the terms used in the New Testament to describe miraculous events.[91]

For Holland, miracles can take place without unswerving natural laws. Actions or events that connote religious significance at some point also could met the requirements of being described as a miracle. The causes of those actions or events can be scientifically explainable, but their miraculous nature are based on their religious significance to the beneficiary. Also in this regard, it is to be seen that it is only miracles which constitute those things only God can do for the benefit of humanity that does require an appeal to God's agency to explain their occurrences.

Michael Levin in refuting Hume's definition of miracle in relation to the violation of the laws of nature posited his arguments in the line of miracles to be conceptualized as being outside the scope of natural laws.[92] The line of this reasoning is to deny that natural laws must describe the actual course of events. Here natural laws are seen as not being able to describe absolutely the limits of what can and cannot happen in nature. This is so posited here because natural laws were concluded to describe what can happen as a result of natural causes and effects. They lack the potent efficacy to pre-inform humanity what can happen when a supernatural cause is present. Many other ways abound through which one can conceptualize miracle. Ways through which events can be described as being miraculous are explained below.

2.5.1.2. Other Ways to Conceptualize Miracles

2.5.1.2.1. Coincidence Miracles: Some events have been described to represent coincidence miracles. Events or occurrences are conceptualized to be a coincidence miracles when they are defined in relation that God causes a miracle to occur which yields a non-causal effect. Holland has suggested that a religiously significant coincidence may qualify as a miracle.[93] This is what happens when one is saved from one harm or another and thanks is given to God for his providence. Religious people experiencing this insists that miracle has happened even when they have explanations of how the event took place. The cause of that event may be another thing which can be accounted for scientifically, but what makes that event to be a miracle, is its significance, which is given at least in part by it being an apparent response to a human need. Coincidence miracle occurs contrary to human expectations, yet it does this without standing in opposition to human understanding of natural law.[94]

2.5.1.2.2. Experiential Miracles: Like coincidence miracles, "**the experience-as**" as John Hick[95] conceptualized it or "**seeing as**" as Wittgenstein[96] conceptualized it, are similar non-causal ways through which events can be described as being miraculous. Here, events are defined to be miraculous depending on how the witnesses see or experience it. These terms explain common events as being experienced as a miracle and as an expression of divine providence. Here Hick, relates that while the theist and the atheist live in the same physical world, they experience it differently. The theist sees a significance in the events of her life that prompts her to describe her experience as a continuing interaction with God. For example, a religious person when he/she benefits from an unexpected Job opportunity – he/she experiences this as an expression of divine providence; the same event might not move an atheist in this way. An atheist is more likely to attribute the benefit coming to him as a result of his hard work. In this case, the problem that arises here is that, if the question of whether an event is a miracle lies in its significance, and if its significance is a matter of how human understands it, then it is hard to see how the determination that some event is a miracle can avoid being an entirely subjective matter.[97] Consequently, it is posited that

any dispute over the cause of a putative miracle is a dispute over the facts, not a dispute about how people view the facts.[98]

2.5.1.2.3. Miracle as a Basic Action: David Corner explains that miracles are either to be mediated or basic. Actions are said to be mediated if performing action x involves doing y. In this, an action occurs with the effect from another action. This is the opposite of what happens when an action is described to be basic. The view that miracles are basic actions of God is widely held. Miracles are said to be basic action when the miraculous action is not referred to have any natural causes, it is in this same way, that the traditional view of miracle has understood the manner of God's action in a miracle. In this regard, Christians could hold tenaciously that as it relates to miracles that one cannot offer natural explanation for various miracles such as the creation of the universe, or Jesus' resurrection. Miracles are basic actions on the part of God, it cannot involve a requirement to show that it has no natural cause.[99]

2.5.1.2.4. Miracle as a Gesture: Miracle could also be conceived as a gesture as proposed by Ludwig Wittgenstein. The answer is given here on how humans are to identify an event as a miracle that does not involve a causal analysis. One approach is to think of a miracle as a gesture on the part of God. To Wittgenstein, "a miracle is, as it were, a gesture that God makes."[100] He further describes it thus, "As a man sits quietly and then makes an impressive gesture, God lets the world run smoothly and then accompanies the words of a saint by a symbolic occurrence, a gesture of nature."[101] Marking gestures involves body movements made with a part of the body in order to express meaning to the receiver. Gesture involves an action that communicates something to another. What is communicated may be feelings, intentions or instruction. This gesture Wittgenstein, sees as representing a symbolic occurrence. A human bodily movement becomes a gesture when it takes on a particular kind of significance as it originates from the valued culture. Miracle as a gesture may give one the opportunity to view miracles at once as signs. In this regard, one is allowed to say that the character of a miracle lies, at least in part, in its significance within what Wittgenstein would call a "form of life". At same time he also insists that the question of its significance is an objective matter. It holds here that an event is identified as a miracle in

appreciation of its significance. But a miracle does not take on its significance in a vacuum; the significance of a miracle, like the significance of a gesture, is dependent on a certain sort of context. It is remarkable that the context is established at least to some degree of one's view of the world.[102]

2.5.1.2.5. Miracle as the Providence of God: Dickson explains that in this era, 'Providence' is the way God works in the affairs of his people to keep working out his fore-planned eternal work, aimed for the immediate or eternal salvation of man. In providence, God in his wisdom, cares, guides and mediates in the world for the benefit of man. God is perceived as the caring supreme force guiding humankind. The work done by the divine in his consolidated good judgment and foresightedness as the creator of the universe is professed to be miraculous when they are perceived by faith by the believers. Providence is encapsulated in the divine works, done behind the scenes so as to bring about God's fore-planned purposes. Providence is the work done by the divine which is perceived by faith by any individual who believes in God and is referred to as the providential work of God. The word "providence" is not used in the Scriptures to refer to God's work. It is a word that was used to define God's work from the 14th century which developed from Latin ***providentia*** through French to the English form it is being used in this era. Dickson observed that the closest Greek word that is used in Act 24:2 and Rom 13:14 – (though used in secular intellect in these contexts are in some sense) similar to providence is '***pronoia'*** which means forethought or foresight.[103]

Some scholars in positing that God does not do miracles in this era, hold that what God is persistently doing in the world today is to be perceived as 'providence'. Dickson buttresses this further by noting that,

> "though God worked in a miraculous manner in the past to accomplish His purpose, we conclude that He works today after what we would call a non-miraculous manner in order to also accomplish His plans as time transpires in the history of the world"[104]

This religious 'world view' believes that the existence of all men can only be traced to God only (Acts 17:28, Rom. 11;36). And that God is the one who sustains all things (Heb.1:3). That God is not a distant God, but that he is always present in a providential way in his creation. They affirm that God in his

providential nature still works exceedingly abundantly above all, that those who believe would ever ask or think (Ep 3:20). The ways through which God providentially works in the world cannot be fully understood by humanity though they see the result of his works. Human know that God works but may not know in full details how God does His works. Consequently in believing faith, the religious affirms that what God did or is doing which he has seen or experiencing was not by coincidence. Ways through which God demonstrates his providential nature in the affairs of nations and in the life of individual Christians include opening doors for his people, directing his people, protecting, hearing prayers, providing and giving wisdom to the people he wishes and so on. Those who believe in the providence of God live and walk by faith. It should be noted here that the providential work of God does not only depends on the indwelling of the Holy-Spirit. God also works providentially to the non-Christians today (Rom.13:1-7). His work are not benefited by only Christians; God also works regardless of one's view about the indwelling of the Holy-Spirit. Finally, however the concept of miracle might have been conceived or defined, it encapsulates the event through which human beings become vivid and immediate conscious of God as acting for the benefit of human beings. An amazing happening related as miracles, even when it involves the suspension of natural law, does not constitute genuine miracle in the religious sense of the word if it fails to make the benefactor to be intensely aware of God's presence and purpose of doing that miracle.

2.5.2. Epistemological Confirmation of Miracles

The next issue which concerns philosophers after settling what a miracle is, is establishing logical answers that give any one good reasons to believe or to disabuse that miracles do occur. Epistemological question is closely tied to a cluster of metaphysical questions, most fundamentally does God exist? Here the question that is asked is, is it reasonable to believe that miracles do occur? In analyzing the epistemological questions as they relates to miracles, philosophers attempt to unravel the rationale behind believing that miracles do occur. Hume, in his epistemological response to the debate on miracle attempted to construct an epistemology that he hopes will rule out belief in miracles in principle. Taylor noted that "Philosophers

continue to debate about David Hume's case against the rationality of belief in miracles."[105] Here philosophers raise questions concerning the testimonies given to make miracles credible, they argue to determine whether they are adequate to give someone the reason to believe that a miracle has occurred. For example the question whether the testimonies provided by Scriptural sources can ever give one adequate reason to believe that a miracle has occurred.[106] Earman holds that Hume is wrong if his concern is to show that believers cannot in principle ever have good reason to believe testimony to credit a miracle. Miracles of the Bible do have witnesses that go to attest about the occurrences of each of the miracle stories in the gospels.[107] All the gospel miracles had witnesses. For Example the miraculous feeding of the crowd were witnessed by more than five thousand men. Earman remarked it this way:

> …It is true that some of the miracles of the Bible are reported to have occurred in the presence of a good number of witnesses; the miracle of the loaves and fishes is a good example, which according to Mark (Mark 6:30-44) was witnessed by 5,000 people. But we have already noticed that the testimony of one person, or even of four, that some event was witnessed by a multitude is not nearly the same as having the testimony of the multitude itself.[108]

The above notion implores the need to examine the credibility of miracle reports.

2.5.2.1. Credibility of Miracle Reports

Here the question that boarders scholars is hinged on whether the evidential status of miracles should be determined on the basis of a relatively narrow process of enumerative induction[109] (conclusion based on observable evidence) or by means of abductive reasoning.[110] Philosophers want to determine whether it is proper for reasonable people to proportion their beliefs about miracles to the evidence they have before them. In other words, is it instead possible to be justified in believing that a miracle has occurred on the basis of perceptual or religious experiences rather than propositional evidence? In this regards, it is reasoned that the smallness or largeness of the number of witnesses to an event may not produce a perfect guarantee to prove that something happened or did not happen. But the power of multiple witnessing which is the character of many of the miracles demonstrated by Jesus stands to prove that for sure, that those recorded miracle stories truly were historic. In assessing the truth of miracle reports, it holds that ordinary experience is very relevant in assessing their credibility.

2.5.2.2. World-Views and the Credibility of Miracle Reports

For someone to admit that reported miracle testimonies are true or not has a lot to do with the person's world-view. Corner noted that "It would appear that the question of whether miracle reports are credible turns on a larger question, namely, whether we ought to hold the supernaturalistic worldview, or the naturalistic one."[111] The religious people who hold the supernaturalistic worldview would naturally tend to believe significant number of miracle stories they hear. Those with the naturalistic worldview would tend to be rational and hence incline to be skeptical about miracles testimonies that come across them. The belief on whether miracles do happen or not is based on one's worldview. An atheist will have good reason to believe that it is impossible and so improbable that miracles occur. The theistic will justify believe that miracles are possible and do happen or even probable (on the basis of the claim that God does exist and does perform miracles). This is affirmed because, the usual theistic view of the world is one that presumes the existence of an omnipotent God, who while transcending nature, is nevertheless able to act, or to express his will, within the natural world. This is described as the supernaturalistic worldview which holds that God reveals his nature in part through observable phenomena (eg miracles), which must be supplemented by revelation. Supernaturalistic world view is defended through a commitment to an ontology of entities that exist in some sense outside of nature. Those holding agnostic worldview that God's existence is not provable, would suspend belief about whether or not miracle does happen. In other words, it may be reasonable for the agnostic[112] to believe that it is just as likely that miracles occur as that they do not. The believe system vary with one's worldview which is influenced by the prior probability.

2.6. Science and Religion and the Question of Miracles

Science and religion encompass different realms. Over the years, it has been observed that one common area of contention in the science-religion arena is the question of miracles.[113] Halls remarks that "Science and religion are diametrically opposed at their deepest philosophical levels. And, because the two worldviews make claims to the same intellectual territory…that of the origin of the universe and

humankind's relationship to it… conflict is inevitable."[114] It is emphasized that naturalist worldview is the unifying theory for all of science and the starting point of scientific research. The scientific worldview makes use of logic, reason, empiricism, rational thought and skepticism in order to generate explanations about natural phenomena. The rationalist or scientific worldview assumes that there are no transcendent, immaterial forces and all forces which do exist within the universe behave in an ultimately objective or random fashion.[115] Science proposes and consolidates a secular scientific worldview that serves as a good bases for their explanations of natural phenomena.

Myers contends that scientific literacy suffers when the religious worldview is set as the basis for explanations of natural phenomena. Religion in expressing the supernatural worldview sometimes subjects its adherents to become vulnerable in its ability to adjust itself to any finite set of facts has paradoxically made it seem easy to consent to both the findings of science and that of the spiritualism.[116] Consequently, some people tend to simultaneously hold both the scientific and religious worldviews. This they have done because of the consistent success of science at explaining the universe and which has consistently confirms and consolidates the tended usefulness of the rationalist worldview. On the side of the science, it is proposed that it seems that their goal has been and has continued to push belief in the supernatural to even more remote point of raising doubts on its beliefs until it might disappear entirely. This weakness of religion is seen in it not being a valid substitute for rationalism, in order to explain observation of the universe. To the scientist, religion is vague and expresses empty hypothesis. The conclusions of religion are not testable, and they are not based on evidence. It should also be noted that promoting religion at the expense of science comes with a price. This points that if the religious worldview is favored against the scientific worldview, it then means that the hard task of making and testing theories, as well as all human-made explanations and meaning become senseless or meaningless efforts because religion most times lack evidence for its conclusions.

Commentators like Lewis and Houston have suggested that Hume's arguments are opposing the possibility of miracles occurring.[117] Hume tried using reasoning power to suggest that miracles do not happen and that it is not rational for anyone to believe that they do happen. Many other scholars have also used reasoning power to critic his propositions and hence affirm that miracles happened from time immemorial as documented in the Bible and that miracles are still happening. It should be noted as explained by Taylor that how one defines natural laws in relation to the definition of miracles: the question about the evidential status of miracles whether it has to be determined on the basis of a relatively narrow process of enumerative induction or by means of abductive reasoning that takes one's general justified metaphysical beliefs in to account and whether reasonable people should proportion their beliefs about miracles to the evidence they have before them or religious experiences rather than propositional evidence, that one's answer to the above questions will depend to a large extent on ones' background beliefs such as whether one is a theist or not. Agreeing on this, Corner also remarked that the outcome of any discussion of miracles seems to depend greatly on one's worldview. For Hume a belief that a miracle has occurred must be justified on the basis of evidence. Here believe and evidence come into play. Does evidence of miracle make one to believe? Would it be said that the beliefs of the apostles that Jesus was raised from the dead was because they saw him alive after he died? Here question is asked on whether it is reasonable for people to proportion their beliefs about miracles to the evidence they have before for them or is it instead possible to be justified in believing that a miracle has occurred on the basis of perceptual or religious experiences rather than propositional evidence.

2.7. Some Scholars' Views on the Concept of Miraculous Sign in John 6:1-15

Biblical scholars have variously viewed and commented on the concept of miraculous signs as documented in the gospels with special reference to the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand in John 6. According to the accounts of all the gospel writers (Matt. 14:13; Mk.6 Lk. 9:10-17; Jn 6:1-14), Jesus did the miracle of using five loaves of bread and two fishes to feed five thousand men. To unravel the

concept of miraculous signs in John, the researcher shall critically analyze available books as well as review their theological positions.

Ray C. Stedman in his writing about the "God's Loving Word" points to the God's Word as the bread that can satisfy all the hungers of life.[118] First century era, was a world filled with diverse forms of troubles. The Jews were expecting a king that will be like King David to them. The crowd followed Jesus because they had seen other miracles he had done. The majority of the crowd saw in Jesus as one who has the functioning power to be the king of Israel. They were then attracted to him for they have seen him as the one who can take care of all their needs. Having seen all that he has been doing, the people tended to have come to a proper conclusion, but then they followed it up with a completely improper response.[119] They followed him for only what they will get from, this is the fulcrum of the problem. Likewise, there are many people in todays' Churches, who do not have a basic map of faith which they believe links them with the Lord, who gives eternal life. They rather constitute those who have been warming the pews in the Churches for generations.[120] They were not following him to get to know him deeply and to understand the deeper signal of the miracle he has been demonstrating. They responded completely in the wrong way by intending to take him by force and make him their king so that they would not have to keep worrying about the meeting of their needs. Because of this wrong notion, Jesus knowing their intents, separated himself and went back up on the mountain side alone.

Stedman also noted that many have attempted to explain the miracle of feeding the five thousand with five loaves of bread and two fishes, on rational, non-miraculous grounds and spiritual miracle of sharing. Those who hold this spiritual -miracle views explain that the miracle never really happened, rather they try to use reason to explain that as Jesus was teaching the people, his teaching moved the people that they abandoned their selfish habits and shared their own lunches with each other so that, there proved to be plenty for everybody. This position is rejected because, it was clearly stated that this crowd never had time to go home and pack a lunch-they were all too busy trying to keep up with Jesus![121] Again, Andrew's report has it that he had scouted out the crowd and found no food, lays the attempt to explain this miracle

on rational or non-miraculous grounds or arguments to rest. Those who attempt to explain the miracle in terms of "miracle of sublimation" explain that Jesus' teaching influenced them powerfully and compelled the people that constituted the crowd to forget about their hunger and went home saying, "his teaching is so reach and filling and satisfying that I'm not even hungry anymore!"[122] But, this was not the case with the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand.

Derek J. Tidball in his reviews on the life, miracles, teaching, and parables of Jesus documented that "many find preaching on the miracles difficult.", he calls it the "fruits of modern scholarship" Some tend to only spiritualize miracles.[123] Many acclaimed ministers of God directly or indirectly hold that the miracles never happened, they only express what the acclaimed miracles could mean in concrete terms - what Christ can mean to humanity. Some Christians do not believe that miracles occurred as they were documented in the gospels, but that they still happen. Beasley-Murray contends that for those in modern scholarship, miracles must be taken as eyewitness accounts of what happened and then draws out why they are Good News for humanity today. Even as it was during the first generation of Christians as it is still today, miracles speak about the fact and the nature of the Lordship of Christ. Miracles in its genuine forms have the characteristics of showing the nature of Jesus' Lordship as the savior of men, the master over evil powers, the Lord of creation, the revealer of God and the bestower of Life. It is the above framework that gives Christians in evangelistic ventures guides towards preaching on the miracles of the gospels evangelically. It importantly matters whether people become genuine followers of Jesus or not. It is the focus that people become disciples of Jesus. It is the focus that miracle receivers, become authentic disciples who should consistently seek to follow Jesus for who he is and not just for what they would get from him. That is why evangelistic proclamation in its appeal-making should be consolidated on the truth about the person of Jesus which should seek for a balance between his functional and ontological nature.[124]

Eddie Ashew observed something very earthy and real about Jesus in the Gospels. What he observed was that in the gospels whether Jesus depicted teaching by the lakeside, performing a miracle or chasing traders from the temple he is always radiantly clean. But then, Jesus was part of the then real world. It should be

conclusively noted that Jesus comes into human world, not neatly starched and ironed but travel-stained, smelling of smoke and fish, or their modern equivalents. Jesus was on the edge of the crowd.[125] The crowd had heard about the healings and were coming for more, making greater demands on their time and patience.[126] Why had so many people come, and following Jesus around the Lakeside? Karen Armstrong writing about human-beings noted that they are "meaning-seeking creatures and need to engage in an effort to find some shape and pattern in our otherwise amorphous existence."[127] The people that constituted the crowd were following Jesus for diverse motives. Some sought for Jesus for curiosity reason- to see and hear this new teacher and his new teachings. The second sect of the group came looking for sensation. Others came with illness, hoping for healing. Some were devout, seeking a deeper experience of the God about whom Jesus spoke so convincingly. Some simply followed the rest.[128] Noteworthy according to Donald Barnhouse, is that many in the crowds that followed Jesus did not understand who He was. They kept following Jesus until they were strained to the limit. Jesus looked at them with understanding and love, accepted their vulnerability. What so ever the motive of each person in that crowd was, it is important to note that Jesus was concerned to not only met their physical needs but also their spiritual needs.[129] The evangelist of the gospel of John is the only gospel writer who made mention of the boy from whom the loaves and fishes were gotten. For the other writers, the boy remains in shadow with no name or personality, they concentrated on the food, but to think only of the gift and not the giver leaves part of the story untold.[130] It is not known whether, the boy was the only one in the crowd who had food with him, but the fact here is that he was the only one who took what Jesus said personally and responded to what he heard: that the disciples should feed the crowd. Ashew writing about the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand in relation to Mark 6:41 noted that it's easy to live through a miracle without recognizing it."[131] Jesus in giving thanks -he probably used the grace of his people traditionally and which the Jewish people still uses that is giving thanks-"Blessed art thou, king of the universe, who brings forth bread from the earth."[132] The great crowd sitting near enough to see must have felt astonished and the wonder of watching the limited bread become sufficient for all. Ashew wondered about "how many in that great

crowd actually realized what was taking place. Five thousand people being fed"[133] Most of them would perhaps wonder where the food was coming from, but would have no means of knowing. The deeper significance of the miraculous event was going on but they could not pick it, eventually, the miracle passed them by. The import of the significance of the miracle, most of the people missed because they had their eyes fixed firmly on the ground- on the bread. They have no consolidated faith on Jesus. All the people in the Bible who were favored by God, stood above the crowd, were people of faith. [135] But majority of the people in this crowd, just wanted their needs met, they were not seeking to develop a consolidated faith in Jesus. Mostly today, the crowd claiming to be following Jesus, recognize miracles only when they conform to their expectations. Ashew puts it this way, "we only acknowledge …only when God intervenes in our lives and works in the way we ask him to…" [136] But real miracle does not only take place when God intervenes in the human world and does the thing that human have need of, but also when humanity begin to do the things he desires humans to be doing.

Robert Paterson explaining about the value of symbols in the Bible in relation to the 'I am sayings' recorded in John's Gospel views that symbols are active, concrete as they sometimes illustrate a deeper truth.[137] Symbol encourages human to look beneath the surface of existence and to encounter a dimension that went beyond human's normal experience.[138] This is seen that often the symbols seen in the Bible are united with the realities behind the symbols. Paterson puts it this way: "historical events and the signs and memorials of those events are closely interwoven."[139] It is in this, that one sees why after Jesus fed the five thousand with five loaves of bread and two fishes, in the later part of that chapter (John 6:35) he makes the great declaration: "I am the bread of Life". In this Jesus united the reality with its spiritual symbolism. In the regards of the above, Paterson views that Christians should be more aware than any others of the unity of symbol as they relate to reality.[140] Symbols relate to perceptive or visible reality.

John Drane is of the view that "some of the most striking parts of the Gospels are the stories about Jesus performing what we call miracles."[141] Jesus' actions of healing the sick, feeding thousands with few loaves of bread and some fishes, raising some from the dead and so on may not mean miraculous events

for Jesus himself. This is so said because, Jesus sees those activities as simply doing the works of his Father. It follows that what human call miracle, may not connote miracle for God. Derek James, in making reference to why those who do not believe in miracles should not worry noted that "for God Miracles, do not exist, for a miracle is only a miracle to the observer who has not the knowledge or power to explain what has happened."[142] It holds that one should not worry too much about miracles, but one should look at miraculous events from God's point of view. The issue of whether miracle does or does not occur has been a debated issue that has lasted over the ages. Drane observes that "of all the subjects mentioned in the Gospels, this is the one that presents most problems for us today."[143] This is because the modern man may not have real difficulty in understanding Jesus' teaching about God and his new society, but when it comes to the miracles, things are very different. It is observed that most people, even some acclaimed Christians and Church leaders find it hard to believe that the miracles recorded in the Gospels actually took place. Bultmann sees miracles as myths and he seeks for the demythologization[144] of myths in the gospels so that the true picture of who Jesus historically was can be accurately captured. As well Dibelus in his own view sees miracles as tales.[145] And so, some in assuming the miracle stories to be old superstitions, or even fairy tales, unravel the widespread feeling that it is quite impossible for modern people to accept miracles stories in the Gospels as literal facts.[146] Apart from the stories documented in the gospels, a great many people find it difficult to conceive of the possibility of supernatural intervention in the natural world. The question posed by the miracles of Jesus, is identified by Derek C. James as 'the problem of miracles'.[147] These days, the idea of viewing the Bible miracles as just myths and fairy-tales is beginning to look a bit shaky because many archeological discoveries and researches demonstrate how accurate the historical miracles of the gospels are. From another angle, it is important to verify whether the miracle stories are consistent with the teaching of Jesus himself as it touches the teachings he gave about himself. It holds that if the claims he made about himself as it touches the miracles stories are true or in fact correct, it points that one will not find it difficult to accept the trust worthiness of the miracle stories. But in all ramifications, the miracles Jesus demonstrated actually complemented his teachings.

Drane relates the miracle stories to being consistent in expressing a different aspect of Jesus' teaching: they declare the meaning of the kingdom for individual men and women, for the world as a whole, and in the future.[148] The stories of the feeding of the 5000 and of the 4000 relay to the Jewish thought, in which they thought the future kingdom of God which was often pictured as a meal. Jesus fulfilled this in terms of a banquet in the wilderness. It was the above thought line, that made the Jews following Jesus to become impressed when he fed five thousands with few loaves and fishes, and so they tried to forcefully make him their king. But Jesus refusing to accept their political expectations which was bound up with Jewish messianism, withdrew from them. The motives for which Jesus performs miracles were not in consonant with their thought line, miracles Jesus did invariably meant something deeper.[149]

Leon Morris writing about the fourth sign which is the feeding of the five thousand noted that the apostle John recounted the events that he was still remembering clearly. He remembered clearly which disciple that replied Jesus' question, the lad from whom five loaves and two fishes were gotten from and how they have rowed from shore when they saw Jesus. He remembered that the crowd were following Jesus about. Jesus was not annoyed or irritable with the pursuing crowds, rather his heart goes out to them. This particular crowd were in favor of a Messiah who can provide free meals for the asking. The food they were asking represents the need for which no one can live without. But for John's Jesus, life is more than physical existence. Bread which Jesus has come to give would continually satiate those who are spiritually starving. In this, Jesus is made available as the bread of the new life, the One upon whom humanity would depend entirely for existence. Jesus representing the spiritual food points to the source of life for humanity through his death.[150] In this, is unveiled that the forgiveness his death has brought is the meat and drink of Christian living.

Joseph Kudasiewicz writing about modern man and the Gospels' miracles noted that "the miracles of Jesus are no small problem for the contemporary reader of the Gospel."[151] The issue about miracles have become difficult to holistically understand. Consequently, it has become a subject of concern for theologians and ordinary readers of the Gospels.[152] As well, many modern followers of Christ accept

Christ and the Gospels, but many of these believers find it hard to accept miracle stories documented in the gospel to be historical. They think that the gospels without miracles would be more acceptable. This problem is traceable to the rapid development of the sciences, skepticism of modern times and the crisis arising from the traditional and popular conception of miracle as not having its root from the Bible but in scholasticism. In the regards of the above, it should be noted that there are many evidence that are there proving that the gospels miracles are actually historic.

It is also important to note that the gospel of John like the other gospels did not emphasize the miraculous and extraordinary element but the religious and personal sense of the miraculous events. Strictly for John, miracle is the sign of something for someone.[153] It points to the work of God which is aimed to lead human race towards accessing holistic salvation. Thus, miracles perceived from the point of view of salvation history are strictly linked to faith. This is so said, because miracles in both Old and New Testaments which are functionally consolidated, have shown that they require faith, lead to faith, excite faith, and strengthen faith.[154]

For John there is a serious connection between faith and miraculous events. The enemies of Jesus saw the miracles of Jesus, yet the miracles did not persuade them to believe and have faith in Jesus. Rather these enemies of Jesus attributed his extraordinary deeds to Beelzebub (Mk.3:22). In other words, they regarded them to relate to magic. The multitudes that were following Jesus about, marveled at the material aspect of the miracle.[155] As such, they did not come to faith in Jesus as the one who fulfilled the divine plan of salvation (Jn 6:26). It is also important to note that it was the same miracle that the disciples saw, the glory of the Messiah was revealed and they were persuaded to make a conscious decision to believe in Jesus (Jn 11:45). The other people that also saw the miracles hardened their hearts and sought to kill him (Jn 11:47, 53). The basis of biblical faith is not based on inferential reasoning. It is consolidated on personal encounter and continued relationship with the trinity. Faith should be rooted in encounter with a personal, moral, liberating, and transforming power and presence of Jesus.[156]

2.8. Functional and Ontological Christology and the Quest for the Miraculous

Christological debate is among the most controversial issues in the history of the Church, importantly, it underlines that these controversies can offer a chance for reconstructive hermeneutics for Christology.[157] Christology focuses on the study of the personality and the works of Christ. At the center of the Christology idea of the Church is the affirmation, identification and consolidation that Jesus is divine. Jesus himself have claimed to be uniquely related to his Father: that he is one with the Father. This claim was also confirmed by God through the resurrection, which in the apocalyptic context in which it occurred marked the beginning of the end of the age.[158] The historical conclusion that the historical Jesus is divine begs the question of how one would understand this affirmation. In affirming the crucial theological implication that Jesus is one with God, efforts have been and are being made for people to identify with him. Identifying with Jesus can be done through two ways. Developing and consolidating Faith in Jesus can be done through identifying with Jesus from his functional roles and or his ontological nature. In this modern era, theological scholars have been debating on the best approach of understanding the fundamental Christology affirmation, that Jesus is divine. Some modern theological scholars advocate that Jesus should be approached through his functional nature which is also known as Christology from below. Other theological scholars argue for an ontological approach which is also termed, Christology from above.[159]

Functional Christology approach towards identifying with Jesus as the divine is deemed to be the most readily evidential means of understanding Jesus. Functional Christology underscores the roles of Jesus the divine: as the only true intermediary between God and man. Jesus' person is understood and identified in line with what he has come to do as the Son of God. Functional approach had their day in the 1940s and 1950s.[160] Christology from below defines Jesus in relations to his functions rather than his ontology. Functional Christology concludes that in affirming Jesus to be one with God, it means also declaring that Jesus functions as God he has claimed to be. Consequently, Jesus' activities confirm that he has acted in accordance of his divine nature when he undertook and fulfilled the lofty task.[161] God the Father sent God

the Son- Jesus to offer an everlasting solution towards reconciling humanity back to God. The above idea was promoted by an important modern advocate of functional Christology of the nineteenth century German liberal theologian by name Albrecht Ritschl. He theorized that "Jesus fully completed his divinely given vocation, and as a consequence Jesus carries the value of deity for the Church."[162] The notion propounded by Albrecht explains that it was the functions Jesus carried out that depicted him to be the Messiah. In the same vein, Cullmann Oscar in explaining the place of functional means of approaching Jesus, identifying with him or answering the question of 'Who is Christ?,' emphasized that "when it is asked in the New Testament, 'who is Christ?, the question never means exclusively, or even primarily, "What is his nature?, but first of all, 'what is his function?'"[163] For Cullmann, to understand the mystery of Jesus' relationship to God is unraveled by the Lord's historic divine role in "salvation history." Through the works Jesus did, God was in him reconciling the human race to himself.

Those who advocate for functional Christology advance that Jesus is functionally one with God and consequently hold tenaciously that functional approach is the proper place to begin in the search to understand Jesus as being God.[164] The idea of pursuing a pure functional Christology has been critiqued. But the question is, is there no way the modern Christians can go beyond approaching Jesus apart from his functional nature and come to identify with him and develop a deeper relationship with him because of his ontological nature?[165] Many modern thinkers' answer to the above question is in the negative: this they hold because "ontological terminology is solely a reflection of the Greek philosophical outlook and is totally foreign to the Hebrew soil on which Jesus walked."[166] It is therefore from the above understanding that unravels why many in the first half of the twentieth century prefer to approach Jesus Christ purely from his functional nature as the divine. As well they disclaim any means that attempts to persuade them to tilt towards by-counting the functional categories of the New Testament to the ontological concerns of the scripture.

Ontology is a branch of Philosophy that specializes in the study of being or existence.[167] Ontological approach towards understanding the person of Jesus unravels the traditional theological claim that Jesus is ontologically one with God. Jesus' claim "if you have seen me, you have seen the Father (John 14:9)" has an underlying meaning. Ontology asks the question-is Jesus saying that He has the same substance or essence of the Father?"[168] This claim tenaciously holds that Jesus is not only one with God in function, but that Jesus is also one with God the Father in essence. In this Jesus' relation to God in essence, defines Jesus as the one who is the Revealer of God. In doing the works that reveals who God is, points to the functional connection between Jesus and God. Jesus' task of revealing who God is, in wholeness is a divine activity. All Jesus did, be it teaching or his doing of miracles were all solely focused towards revealing the essence of God.[169] But it should be understood that the task of Jesus revealing the essence of God also has an underlining ontological implications, in so far as Jesus the revealer cannot be separated from God, he is revealing. It holds therefore as it relates to the consequences of the kind of connection Jesus have with God, that "Jesus participates by necessity in the essential nature of the One he reveals. He must be ontologically one with God and share in the divine essence which he exemplifies."[170] By revelation, it was this understanding that most Christians and theologians had and were readily willing to identify with Christ from his ontological nature. Ontological approach towards understanding and identifying with Jesus according to history shows that most Christians and theologians were readily willing to speak about Jesus' divinity beginning from his ontological nature. Christians through the ontological approach, affirm Jesus' revelatory role: Jesus is the revealer of God (John 14:9-10). The above indicates that the traditional view, prefers to identify with Jesus from his ontological nature.[171] But then, ontological worldview was related to the outlook that proposes that ontological terminology is solely traceable to the Greek philosophical stance and that which is deemed totally foreign to the Hebrew soil on which Jesus walked. Consequently, Christians and theologians of the first half of the twentieth century are more tended to approach Jesus from his functional understanding of the unity Jesus enjoys with God,

they also disclaim attempts to go beyond the functional categories of the New Testament as it relates to Jesus and to his ontological nature as captured in the scripture.[172]

It is also noteworthy, that recent Studies have acknowledged that the New Testament writers during the New Testament era, were visibly speaking about Jesus' ontological nature. Grenz claimed that early believers used ontological approach to undertake the task of spreading the Christian message into the Greek world.[173] The early believers used the ontological approach in their attempt to express the message about Jesus in a way that would communicate his identity to the wilder Gentile world.

In this era, there is a renewed interest in ontological categories propelled by the growing realization that in contrast to the advances of the proponents of functional Christology, Christians and theologians cannot avoid the ontological dimension of contemporary questions that concerns the identity and personhood of Jesus. It is in moving beyond functional Christology that establishes for Christians and theologians the platform that would enable them to ask and attempt to find answers concerning the difficult but crucial questions concerning the ontological relationship between Jesus and God.[174] Again, it is very crucial that the ontological identity of Jesus be understood by every true follower of Jesus.

In this era, contemporary theologians are now more in-tuned towards advocating for the return to the quest for an ontological and as well a functional, Christology. They are advancing for a balance between the two approaches. In the attempt to unify the approaches, Christians are to move from a functional to an ontological understanding of Jesus' nature as the One who is the revealer of God. A Christian's understanding and the affirmation of this revelatory role of Jesus, positions him or her to have a consolidated relationship with Jesus. The understanding and affirmation that Jesus is the revealer of God transcends the demarcation between function and ontology, it facilitates the transition from functional to ontological Christology.

2.9 Summary of Literature Review

Having reviewed many of the study's related written works, it is crucial at this point to make conclusive comments summarizing this reviewed body of literature. The literature reviews this study covered, unveiled the issues of concern to the authors. The review established that the etymology of the Greek word ***'σημεῖον'*** was drawn from ***'σημα'*** driven from the Doric ***'σαμα'*** by way of Ionic ***σημηῖον*** and Doric ***σαμηχῖον*** constructs. The Greek word ***'σημεῖον'*** was established to connote sign that encapsulates perceptive insight that points to some thing beyond itself. It was used technically by John the envangelist to depict the miraculous works of Jesus with the purposes of revealing his ontology and persuading people to believe in him for their eternal salvation. Many authors whose works were reviewed agreed that with the introduction of sin in the world by the first man and woman, came with it evil, suffering and death as its consequences. As well, due to sin man lost his position in the original plan of God. Humanity became cursed, hence they became vulnerable to suffering and to death. The suffering states humanity found themselves, they cannot salvage themselves. Consequently, human beings began to seek for ways to solve their problems. In seeking for solutions, human-beings can do anything so as to find ways to access miracles or solutions. With regards to the concept of miraculous signs in the Old Testament, a number of the works reviewed showed that the idea of the divine mediating in the cause of nature to do supernatural acts for the benefit of humankind started from the Old Testament accounts of the salvational history. And so, the divine supernaturally interfering with the cause of nature as one of the means of holistically salvaging humanity from sin and its consequences, did not start at a scratch in the New Testament. Reviews done showed that one of the purposes for which God did many supernatural acts in the Old Testament and in New Testament were depicted as signs with the main intention of persuading people to believe and have faith in him. In the New Testament, the concept of miracle was captured as being very important and indispensable in the ministry of Jesus, his disciples and followers. It was through Jesus and his followers, that God continued his supernatural acts that were aimed to achieve and consolidate holistic salvation for humanity.

All the gospel evangelists that narrated the stories about Jesus in their unique ways, affirmed that Jesus was a miraculous figure in his days. The gospels attribute to Jesus, the miracles of healing the sick, exorcism, nature miracles and resuscitation miracles. The synoptics presented the miraculous functions of Jesus as the part of the coming and fulfilment of the kingdom of God. But redactionally, John the evangelist in giving his own personal view about the person and ministry of Jesus explicitly depicted the miracles of Jesus to represent signs (***σημεῖα-sēmeia*)** pointing to something deeper about the ontological nature of Jesus. John used the 'I am' sermonic-discourses to explain the deep meanings which the miraculous signs Jesus performed intended to unravel. Miraculous signs (***σημεῖα-sēmeia***) in John's gospel reveal Jesus as having the same essence with God the Father. In John's gospel miracles were not aimed to be the ends in themselves, rather they were intended to be a platform through which one should develop belief and faith in Jesus and as well may have eternal life (Jn. 20:30-31). Examining the prototypical model of Jesus' miraculous signs (***σημεῖα-sēmeia***) in John 6 and in other miraculous sign contexts unveiled that Jesus never performed miracles to earn any self-gain of fame or prosperity. He never used magic tricks, evil powers to impress or coerce people to follow him. Rather, Jesus was motivated to intervene miraculously to the human problems due to compassion, love and mercy. Jesus' ministry drew crowd because of his teachings and the miracles the people have seen him perform. Jesus did his miracles through the power of God unlike other acclaimed wonders workers of his days who used sorcery and magic powers to amaze and attract people.

The review found out that there is a similarity between the Bible and African worlds, both worlds are filled with precarious situations. And so, it is because of the precarious situations of these worlds that excite them to be more interested in the functional nature of the Messiah as it relates to the mission mandate. Scholars like Simmons, Obiorah, and Stedman, affirmed that it was the relationship that exist between sin and suffering that consolidates the human need for the miraculous intervention of the divine in the affairs of the humankind. On the purpose for which John wrote his gospel which was recorded in John 20:30-31, scholars like El Naggar, keller, Stewart and kudaiewicz agree that miracles as signs

(***σημεῖα-sēmeia***) were redactionally selected, edited and preserved by John for the sole purpose of the establishment and consolidation of faith in Jesus through whom one could have eternal life.

The reviews that covered the enquiry examining the philosophers' and scientists' questions and answers regarding the issue of miracles unveiled diverse ways the philosophers and scientists apply reasoning power in explaining their assessments concerning the concept of miracle. In their reasoning debates, they oppose the possibility of miracles occurring and advance that it is not rational for anyone to believe that miracles do happen. Hume's definition of miracle as a violation of natural law compounded the definition of miracle and this Hume's concept of miracle was refuted by Christian apologetics. Most Christian apologetics affirm that miracles happened from time immemorial as documented in the Bible and that miracles are still happening. The critics of Hume's concept of miracle see his arguments to be incoherent. Consolidating that miracles must not involve the violation of the natural order, it was related that miracle could be in form of a gesture, or a coincidence, experiential and providential.

On the credibility of miracle reports, it was established that the question on whether anyone would accept miracles reports to be true or false depends to a large extent on the person's world view. On the modern scholars' views on the concept of miraculous-signs in John 6: 1-15, scholars like Stedman, Parterson, Beasley-Myrray, Ashew, Donald Grey, and Drane, commenting on Jesus and the feeding of the five thousand with five loaves and two fishes, agreed that many followed Jesus because of the miracles they would get from him and that in following Jesus with wrong motive resulted in them undermining the symbolic essence for which Jesus performs miracles.

Having reviewed what other scholars have written from their diverse purviews and contexts, this review established that there are other important aspects of miraculous-signs as conceived in John and its relevance to the 21st century Nigerian context which these authors did not cover. These include: What is the place of miracles in the mission mandate of the Church in Nigeria? Are miracles to be pursued after? Why does an average Nigerian become obsessed with the quest for the miraculous? What are the characteristics of genuine and fake miracles often advertised in Nigeria? What are the Johannine

theological implications of miracles being depicted as signs for Nigerian Christians in their precarious society? These questions constitute the knowledge gap which the body of the literature reviewed did not cover. Having identified these gaps, it becomes important to carry out this research, making attempts to fill in the gaps.

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CHAPTER THREE

AN EXEGESIS OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN 6:1-15

3.1 The Gospel of John: An Overview

The gospel of John like the other gospels are treated as the documents of the religious experiences or the reflections of the early Church. Dodd noted that "the Hebrew prophets 'experienced God in terms of history, so did the early Christians-in terms of the historic life of Jesus with its great sequel."[1] With special reference to the Fourth gospel, the inspiration of John the evangelist seems to have been driven from his personal reflections of the experiences he gathered when he and the other disciples encountered Jesus who is the center of the Christian experience. Studying the history behind the religious experience of John and other factors that influenced the writing of this gospel will help one to understand the uniqueness of his gospel demonstrated in the author's consistency in depicting Jesus' miraculous acts to be signs (***σημεῖα-sēmeia***). The overview of this study will explore the history behind the gospel of John. This Johaninne historical analysis will boarder on by whom, where, when and under what conditions that influenced the writing of the gospel according to John.

3.1.1. Historical Background of the Gospel of John

The Gospel according to John (Greek: ***Τὸ κατὰ Ἰωάννην εὐαγγέλιον- Tò katà Iōánnēn euangélion***) is also called the Gospel of John, the Fourth Gospel, or simply John. It is among the four canonical gospels in the New Testament. Traditionally, the gospel of John appears fourth, after the Synoptic Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. The gospel of John is an autoptic and an independent source of knowledge about Jesus' life and teaching.[2] The underlining theme of John's gospel is that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God. It is presumed to be the last gospel to be written. It is assumed that his original audience already knew the many other stories about Jesus' life. Presumably, John may have been written to supplement the synoptic gospels accounts. The author of John's gospel seems to have concentrated on interpreting and bringing out the deeper meaning of the events that took place in Jesus' life and teachings. By way of redaction, John selected miracles of Jesus which he consistently depicted

as signs (***σημεῖα-sēmeia***) that clearly showcases his functional and ontological natures. Works and sayings of Jesus he documented agrees with his writing aim of bringing the reader to develop belief and consolidate faith in Jesus, which climaxes in leading them to salvation (20:30-31). John documented mainly what Jesus did and said about himself in a style very different from the other gospels.[3] Consequently, when the gospel of John is compared with the other gospels, it is set apart as an autoptic gospel while the other three gospels are unitedly viewed as the synoptic gospels.

To explain the above notion, C.k. Barrett writing about the relation which John's gospel have with the other gospels noted that "the first impression received by a reader who turns from the synoptic gospels to the forth is of difference"[4] These differences are seen in the areas of style, chronology, in locality, subject matter and to some extent-difference in the presentation of Jesus himself. It is also observed that there are notable similarity between the synoptic gospels and the autoptic gospel in the areas of the basic out line, and a good many details in the events like the work of the John the Baptist (Mk 1:4-8; Jn 1:19-36).[5] Because of the stories common to both the synoptic and the autoptic gospels some scholars propose that John wrote a theological interpretation of the factual stories of the synoptic Gospels. This view also led to the conclusion that the fourth gospel must be late in date and inferior in quality to the synoptic gospels. It is to be noted that it has been realized that the gospel of John contains sources of its' own right that are independent of the synoptic gospels, complements the other three and as well is of equal value with the synoptics.[6]

3.1.1.1. Authorship

Widespread and thorough discussions in scholarly circles concerning who might be the author of the Fourth Gospel have been going on over the years. It is almost impossible to group together and summarize the significance of all the different theories that have been advanced concerning the origin of the fourth gospel.[7] The writer of the gospel of John was not explicit in naming the author of the gospel and so many scholars designate the Gospel of John to be anonymous. Designating John as the author of the fourth gospel has been a rather confused one. This confusion rises from the fact that the Church traditions

mentions two Johns in connection with the Gospel: the apostle and a John whom they call "the Elder".[8] A distinction has been made between the Elder John and the Apostle mentioned in John 21:24. David Ellis noted that "none of the usual arguments set forth in order to distinguish 'the beloved disciple' from John the Apostle is finally convincing."[9] It follows therefore that it is John the Apostle that is the same 'the beloved disciple.' (21:24). This John is the son of Zebedee and one of Jesus' Twelve Apostles.[10]

John was a native of Bethsaida of Galilee. He was the brother of James the Great. Both John and James were the children of Zebedee and Salome, sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus. John and James worked as fishermen on the then foreshore of Galilee. Having been first a disciple of John the Baptizer, afterwards he followed Jesus. By the process of time, during Jesus' public ministry which lasted for only three years John became Jesus' favorite disciple. John was that disciple "whom Jesus loved" and who in the last Passover Meal "was leaning on Jesus' bosom" (John 13:23). John followed Jesus as a friend who understand His Heart. As John was the beloved disciple of Jesus, he also became an intimate witness of His Love and Sorrows.[11] It was this John that while Jesus was hanging on the Cross guaranteed the custody of his mother. John the Evangelist was also the only follower of Jesus that didn't abandon him after his crucifixion.[12] After the Resurrection, John stayed in Jerusalem as one of the "pillars" of the Church (Gal 2:9). Later on, he moved over and dwelt in Ephesus (in today's Turkey). Afterwards John was banished by Emperor Domician (81-95 A.D.) to the island of Patmos, where it was presumed that he wrote the Book of Revelation. History has it that, "at Domician's death he was able to return to Ephesus. John founded many Churches in Ephesus located in Asia Minor. The date and details of his death are unknown in the West although some details have been handed down throughout the centuries in Ephesus and surrounding communities (John 21:23)."[13] Noteworthy is that, it is proposed that *"*He died at 94 years old; this was quite an achievement as back in that era-the average age to live up to was only around 50 or 60 years old, because of their living conditions.[14]

Though some modern Biblical scholars reject the idea that John the son of Zebedee who is also one of the disciple wrote the gospel, they feel more at home to designate the author to be called sometimes John the Evangelist.[15] This they do out of convenience, since the definitive name of the author is still debated. There are many evidences within the gospel pointing the one who is the "beloved disciple", to be the sources of some of the information in the gospel. There is no writer who mentions the fourth Gospel or its author before Irenaeus.[16] Irenaeus is claimed to have testified on Polycarp's authority, documented in the early part of the second century that John was the author of this gospel.[17] This Polycarp was John's own disciple. There are also many modern authors who discount Irenaeus' testimony because they concluded that John the Apostle could not have written the Gospel.[18] Though Irenaeus identifies the beloved disciple with John the Apostle, many scholars believe that the author may just be an ideal figure, symbolic of the true follower of Christ. Floyd Filson proposed that the author has also been presumably identified with Lazarus who is, after all, the only person of whom it is consistently said that Jesus loved him.[19] The traditional position is that John the apostle wrote the fourth gospel.[20] Other modern proposals concerning the authorship of the Fourth Gospel include John of Jerusalem,[21] the Fourth Gospel is a pseudepigraphical work, the fourth Gospel was written by John Mark,[22] and that it was written by John the Elder.[23] The effects of all these proposed authors of gospel of John is strong. Guthrie notes that "things that the individual points become even weaker on closer examination."[24] Though the writer did not specifically identify himself in the gospel as the writer there are many evidences that are there to help the reader of the gospel of John to identify the author of the gospel. There are both the external and internal proofs that support the traditional position that it was John the apostle that wrote the Fourth Gospel.

External evidences are historical evidences that help to unravel the authorship of the Fourth Gospel. Guthrie[25], and more recently Burge[26] and Carson[27] discussed the external evidences of the Johanine authorship. The first external evidence for the Johannine authorship argue that this was the position of the Church fathers who were also the early writers, they include Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen and Hippolytus. Although, these early writer assumed the apostolic authorship of the Gospel

without asking question, they affirm that it was John the Apostle that wrote the gospel of John. With these earliest Church fathers being certain that John was the author of the gospel accounts for the reason why the gospel was accepted so easily into the canon of the New Testament.[28] It is also important to note that "Theophilus quoted and taught from the Gospel of John unambiguously (A.D. 181), as did Justin Martyr, Papia, and Claudius Appollinaris and Tatian who was Justin Martyr's students.[29] The second external argument for the Johannine authorship is that the tradition does not suggest any other as the author of the gospel. The third argument posits that the wide acceptance of the gospel and its wide distribution proved that it must have been authoritatively written by an apostle. It is argued that if the gospel of John was not written by an apostle that it would not receive such a wide acceptance.[30]

There are many internal proofs that are indirect but they are supporting that it must be John the Apostle that wrote the gospel. B. f. Westcott[31] listed the internal evidences supporting John's authorship to include the following: 1) the author must have been a Jew. The author is a Jew because he knew Jewish peoples' life-style very well. He knew about the Messianic speculations and made references to them (1:21; 7:40-42). He quotes the Old Testament and understood and explains the various Jewish religious feasts and customs such as the duty of circumcision on the eight day taking precedence over the prohibition of working on the Sabbath (7:22). He knew about the hostility that exist between the Jews and Samaritans (4:9)[32] (2.) This author knew the geography of the Holy Land. The author of John's Gospel must have been a resident of Palestine because of his graphic and accurate descriptions of that area. He describes these areas in specific details: He mentioned Cana, a village not referred to in any earlier writing (2:1, 21:2), The pool of Bethsaida had five porches (5:2), Bethany was only 15 furlongs from Jerusalem (11:18), Ephraim was near the wilderness (11:54), The Garden of Gethsemane was on the other side of the Brook Kidron (18:1), and the area outside of the Praetorium was Paved.[33]

(3.) The author of the gospel of John must have been an eyewitness of many of the events in the gospel. His writing depicts the reflection of one who recollected the events he was actually an eye witness. He beheld Christ's glory (1:14), He knew the size of the water pots at Cana (2:6), he knew the distance from

the boat to the shore (2:18), he noted that a particular house was filled with the fragrance of the broken perfume jar (12:3), he was at the crucifixion (19:33-35) and he knew the exact number of fish caught (21:11). (4.) The author seems to identify himself as "the disciple whom Jesus loved (13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20, 24)." It is presumed that since the name of John is conspicuously absent from the Gospel of John, it would seem that the phrase "the one whom Jesus Loved" is a veiled reference to himself.[34] (5.) It is observed that there is remarkable similarity between the gospel and the three Epistles of John. This similarity indicates that both the fourth gospel and the three epistles is most likely to have the same author. (6.) The author in his writing demonstrated that he knew about the other apostles: he recalled the exact words spoken among the apostles (4:33; 6:17; 20:25; 21:3,7), He showed knowledge even of the thoughts of the disciples (2:11, 4:27, 17:22,), he have knowledge of the exact places they visited often (11:54; 18:2) and he made mention of the mistakes they later made (2:21; 11:13).[35]

All the above examined arguments and internal proofs consolidate that John the apostle is the author of the gospel of John. This John was prominent in the early Church, though he is not explicitly mentioned by name in the Gospel of John. He was personally known by the high Priest, and he owned his own house (19:27). He was formerly a disciple of John the Baptist and of all the disciples of Jesus, he was the youngest. He was one of the three inner cycle[36] with whom Jesus frequently confided in. It was the same John that became a leader of the Church at Ephesus and Asia Minor but was exiled for a time to the island of Patmos.

3.1.1.2 Purpose of the Gospel of John

The author of the gospel of John wrote his gospel with specific purposes. The gospel according to John is both apologetic and evangelistic. The author of this gospel wrote with a sense of purpose and intentionality in an effort to convince the reader that Jesus Christ is divine, that He is the incarnate God-Man, being both God and Man .[37] This is shown that from the prologue of his gospel, he gave his audience the key towards understanding the person he is writing about. In the prologue (1:1-18) of this gospel, John presented Jesus as the Pre-existence Word- who is God. John carefully and explicitly defines Jesus to not just be divine

but that he is as well equal with God the Father (14:7). John the evangelist wrote his gospel to give a defense of Jesus as the Christ and the Son of God. For Jack Wellman, "the gospel of John focuses on signs and miracles and places unique significance on these and their connection with faith. John links faith with miracles more than all the other gospels combined"[38] After establishing the prologue, to convince his audience that Jesus is divine, he employed the historic miracles which he depicted signs (***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***) to unravel the deeper truth about Jesus. Wayne observes that "John's record is characterized by a series of both word signs and work signs."[39]

The miracles as signs-(***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***) which Jesus demonstrated to prove that he is God include the following: Jesus demonstrated his power over time by instantly changing water into wine (Jn. 2:1-11). He showed his control of space by healing the nobleman's son from a distance of several miles away (Jn. 4:46-54). The Lord's authority over infirmity was evinced by the cure of the man at the pool of Bethesda (Jn. 5:1-18). Christ was the master of matter in the multiplication of the loaves and fishes (Jn. 6:1-14). Jesus controlled the law of gravity by walking upon Galilee's turbulent waves (Jn. 6:16-21). He reversed the effect of congenital blindness by restoring the vision of a sightless man (Jn. 9:1-41). And when Jesus called Lazarus from his tomb, he gave a preview of his power over death, to fully be revealed on the last day (Jn. 11:1-44). John's Gospel concludes with the apostle's eyewitness record of the resurrection events (20:1-29) and the miracle of the fish-laden net (Jn. 21:5, 6).[40] The list of these miraculous-signs (***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***) in John truly establish the divinity of Jesus.

Reading the gospel of John, attention of the readers are drawn to the Greek words '***ego eimi***`', translated 'I AM' in English. Leon Morris states, "Jesus uses an emphatic "I AM" to bring out important teaching about his person: he captures himself as the deity he is.[41] When his audience does not seem to understand the spiritual imports of the work signs -(***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***) that they have seen, Jesus sometimes also used the word signs (6:35)[42] which are the sermonic-discusses to explicitly unveil to them who he is functionally and ontologically. And so, in the 'I am sayings', the Gospel writer explicitly explains Jesus' function and ontology to his audiences. The famous 'I am' declarations of Jesus which are word signs

were used to clearly unravel who Jesus functionally and ontologically is include the following: "the bread of life" (Jn. 6:35), "the light of the world" (Jn. 8:12), "the door" (Jn. 10:7), "the good shepherd" (Jn. 10:14), "the resurrection and the life" (Jn. 11:25), "the way, the truth, and the life" (Jn. 14:6), and "the true vine" (Jn. 15:1). Adel with regards to the "I am sayings" noted that,

> It is in the "I am" sayings of Jesus that we are presented with some of the clearest assertions, affirmations and proof of His divinity. For in them we have the very words of Jesus concerning His "true identity." Here we have the self-disclosure of the Incarnate God.[43]

It was towards the end of the gospel (20:30-31) that John the evangelist unambiguously tells the readers of his gospel the purpose for which he consciously depicted miracles as signs -(***σημεῖα-sēmeia***) in his gospel. Here many scholars like Brown[44], Van belle[45], Mlakuzhyil[46], Carson[47] and other large measure of consensus exists that supports that 20:30-31 should indeed be seen as the explicit statement of the purpose of the gospel. John 20:30-31 reads: Many other signs-(***σημεῖα-sēmeia***) therefore Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; But these have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.[48] Dickson agrees with the above mentioned authors when he noted that "John explains his reason for recording seven specific miracles of Jesus in John 20:30,31.[49] For John, Jesus did many signs-(***σημεῖα-sēmeia***), but these seven miracles he consciously by way of redaction selected, were the ones that would help his readers believe and have faith in Jesus as the Messiah and the Son of God. The purpose for which John wrote his gospel centers on the person of Jesus. Following this, John focuses on the signs- (***σημεῖα-sēmeia***) Jesus performed that reveal who he is, so that people would come to believe in him and thereby receive eternal life in him.[50] John wrote his gospel to confirm and secure Christians in their faith in Jesus and to persuade unbelievers to come to consolidate faith in Jesus. His aim include that through the miraculous signs-(***σημεῖα-sēmeia***), people would believe and as well may have new life in Jesus as the Messiah. John wrote this Gospel with the intent of strengthening the faith in the Messianism and Divinity of Jesus while, at the same time, complements the earlier Gospels - most specially from the spiritual point of view. He has been called the Evangelist of Love.[51]

The miraculous signs-(***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***) were to provide faith and transformation in the discipleship process both during the life of Jesus and after.[52] It is also noteworthy that from the purpose for which the Evangelist theologically wrote, two aims are implicitly underlined. Adel explained these underlined aims to include the following: Firstly, it is revelatory, he seeks to reveal and demonstrate "that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God." Secondly, it is evangelistic, he wants people to know the true identity of Jesus, so "that you may have life in his name.[53] The underlying implication of the purpose for which this gospel was written is to reveal explicitly Jesus to humanity as God in human person who embodies the glorious image of God. For John, once one catches the revelation of who Jesus is, as both God in function and ontology, this revelation should lead to the evangelistic sphere of one developing believe and faith in Jesus which yields the corollary of the salvation of one's soul.

In John's gospel, the word "believe" appears over 100 times and ties in belief with having eternal life. Here belief is open to anyone who chooses to believe and all those who believe in Jesus to be the Son of God can inherit eternal life. It is explicit that this gospel contains some of the most powerful verses in the Bible where belief is necessarily joined with a person receiving eternal (Jn 3:16; 6:37, 39; 10:10:28-29).[54] Emphasis is so much lead on belief in John but then, the import of one getting the revelation of who Jesus is, should not stop at only believing. Explaining the above, Keller noted that the revelation of 'who Jesus is' to someone should not simply or only lead to cognitive belief, but that it most importantly should lead to worship, to awe and wonder.[55] It is consolidated here that the fourth gospel was written with both evangelistic and didactic aims in view. Burkett noted that this gospel arose in a Jewish Christian community in the process of breaking from the Jewish synagogue.[56] Noteworthy is that the gospel suggests not only a Jewish Christians readership but also of a much wider audience which include Samaritans and Greeks. It should be noted that the issues of the original recipients and the purpose of the gospel are indeed closely related. Nielsen captures it this way, "it is primarily on the basis of the present Gospel that it is possible to form an idea of the history of the community /school and its relation to the origin of the Gospel"[57] It follows that it is from the supposed situation of the audience out of which and for which the

gospel was written by the evangelist that equally in a significant manner contributes to the precise purpose of the Gospel.[58]

3.1.1.3. Audience of the Gospel of John

The identification of the initial audience of the gospel of John is a necessary preliminary to the proper understanding of the entire gospel of John.[59] The audience for which John wrote his gospel is not a specific one. This is so said because the specific recipients are not clearly indicated in the Gospel. Quite noticeable is that the gospel of John was written for a very varied crowd which included mostly of Jews, and some Gentiles.[60] Some scholars advance that this gospel was a product of a community for a community which its inherent mixture of converts may have hastened innovative developments in Johannine Christology and made Johannine Christians particularly troublesome in the eyes of Jews who did not believe in Jesus,[61] others posit that the gospel was written for the Jews and still others posit that the gospel was written for everyone. Jack wellham says that "John was written to the Church, both then and now"[62] He also believes that it was written for unbelievers as well because the Gospel of John focuses more on the divinity of Jesus Christ than any of the other gospels.

Some scholars like C. K. Barrett[63] and Raymond E. Brown[64] suggested that the Fourth Gospel was written especially for the so-called Johannine community which was serially redacted.[65] Brown noted that "the possibility of Palestinian and Jewish Origins for the Johannine presentation of Jesus leads us to the issue of Johannine community development."[66] The idea that the gospel of John was written in and for the community of the beloved disciple was proposed by Culpepper[67] and Raymond E. Brown.[68] It is presumed that the founder of this proposed community is the beloved Disciple. This beloved disciple who had been an eye witness of Jesus and his ministry ended up in Ephesus where he assembled a community of the followers of Jesus who were somewhat different from the Peter/Paul crowd. Those he gathered consisted the group that scholars call 'the community of the beloved disciple'. Though they have an uncertain existence, they may have started as a community of early followers of Jesus. The members of this community defined themselves in an unambiguously manner against the Jewish milieu from which they

arose. They understood themselves to be in more intimate contact with Jesus and with one another being guided by the Spirit-Paraclete. They were conscious of their relationship to other groups who also believe in Jesus with whom they hoped to be in eventual union as one. It is assumed that their piety found distinctive expression in reflective literary corpus that explored new ways of expressing faith in Jesus. This presumed Johannine community may have influenced John's gospel and the universal Church through its distinctive literary corpus and estimation of Jesus which gradually dominated the development of later Christian orthodoxy.[69] It was internal disputes that eventually divided the community. By the middle of the second century some representatives of the Johannine tradition achieved a respected role in the emerging 'great Church'. The emerged Church formed the interconnected web of believers throughout the Mediterranean that provided mutual support and maintained fellowship under the leadership of emerging episcopal authorities.[70]

It is advanced that this Johannine community composed the gospel of John for its own community. Some suggested that it was written for the disciples in Asia Minor but it cannot be confirmed.[71] The members of this community took the beloved disciple's testimony and elaborated on it and arranged it into the form the gospel is today.[72] Those who advance this, hold that the gospel of John was composed by the community of the beloved disciple for that community. The implication from the above postulate, consolidates that the target audience for the gospel of John was the community of the beloved disciple. This is so postulated because it seems that the gospel perhaps may have been written originally for a community that held some beliefs outside the mainstream.[73] Ricahrd Bauckham, challenged the long held belief that the fourth Gospel was written especially for the so-called Johannine community and underwent a series of redactions.[74] Again for Bauchkham, the theory of the Johannine community has been long assumed but rarely argued for. His stance consolidated from the evidence which most scholars concur to climax to the conclusion that the early Christian movement though was composed of various isolated communities but was rather a "network of communities in constant, close communication with each other."[75] Established from the above understanding, Bauchkham, feels that the Johannine community

hypothesis is implausible. Against this implausible theory, Bauchkham believes that the fourth gospel was not only intended to be read and circulated throughout all believing communities, he also believes that it was intended to be read by interested non-Christians as well! This he concluded from the Johannine use of images that "come from the common experience of all people of the time: light and darkness, water, bread, vine and wine, shepherd and sheep, judgment and witness, birth and death."[76] It should also be noted that the hypothesis of Johannine community and serial redaction of the gospel for the community should not be taken as the main underlining means of determining the audience for which John wrote his gospel. This is said because R. E. Brown who presented a reconstruction of the community history warned that "while it explains many factors in the Gospel, it remains a hypothesis and "perhaps" needs to be added to every sentence."[77]

D. A. Carson, from his own purview, advance that from a grammatical basis, the use of the term ***χριστὸς*** in John 20:31 implies that the Non-Christian Jews were primarily the most plausible audience for which John wrote his gospel. He explains that "this verse points to a Jewish audience, not purely based on the use of ***χριστὸς*** but because there is every syntactical reason for thinking that the crucial clause should be rendered "that the Christ, the Son of God, is Jesus."[78] Cason opines that the then non-Christian Jews may most likely be the gospel's audience because he assumes that majority of the Jews who were non-Christians may have some vague exposure and knowledge about Christianity and therefore were at least interested enough to ask the question, who then is the Messiah? But then, the question that is raised in mind include the following: does the use of the term ***χριστὸς*** itself suggest a Jewish audience? Can Carson's argument be justified on a grammatical basis? And if the grammar is correct, is this a firm argument for a Jewish audience?[79] Wallace in addressing Carson's argument of using the grammar to propose Jewish audience for John's gospel considers that since the same grammar is found in a letter to Gentiles (1 John 2:22, 4:15, 5:1, and 5:5) makes it invalid. He adopted the critical analysis of the text (Jn 20:31) and other related texts to advance his rejection of the Carson's propositions. It should be noted that there is no need to deny that there is a Jewish background to all Scripture. But it would then be a

delusion to assume that simply because there was references of Jewish ideas (eg ***χριστὸς***), that it therefore means that the gospel of John has in mind primarily a Jewish audience. For Won-Ha Hwang and J.G. van der Watt, the present form of the fourth Gospel seems to envisage a variety of implied readers.[80] To them amidst these many groups of intended readers which include Jewish, Samaritan, and Greek groups, Jewish Christians formed the core of the audience for whom the Gospel was written.

Chapter one of the gospel which consists of the prologue contains many strong statements that set the stage for defining to the readers of the gospel what 'Christ' means, to both Jews and Gentiles. Both Jews and Gentiles here means all people inclusive. The intended audience is anyone who reads John's gospel. So for the evangelist, both the Jews and the Gentiles needed some education on who the pre-existent Word of God is, consequently he began the process of educating his reader within the prologue. Hence, by the time any reader gets to John 20:31, the explicit reference to ***χριστὸς*** (Christ), is intended to be understood in the context of how the evangelist has defined Christ and his bolded qualities throughout his work. ***Χριστὸς*** first mentioned in 1:17 is used as part of the designation of this incarnated Word/Light Person. Noteworthy is that Word/Light were employed from 1:1-16 and they function in defining "Christ" for the reader. And the writer of this gospel showed familiarity of the Old Testament Jewish understanding of Messiah/Christ.[81] The Old Testament, be it the ***septuagint-LXX*** or the Greek idea of the word "logos –the Word" may have helped John in educating his intended all-encompassing readers. It should be noted here that there are both Jewish aspects and universal points as well. John's gospel was initially intended to be written for the world. Its universal intent is also indicated in the popular John 3:16. It was because of the Love God has for the world that motivated him to give his only Son for the salvation of whoso ever that believes in him. The Jewish aspects go to affirm the Christian belief that, the promise of One that would come from humanity to handle the problems of mankind came first to Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:15). This promise came even before the further revelation of His political and ethnic relation to Israel found in the later Old Testament Scriptures.

It should be summarized here that the evangelist employed chapter one of his gospel to define and present Christ-(***χριστὸς***) to his readers. Though Christ-(***χριστὸς***) is identified as the One expected by the Jews, also he was identified as God Himself, Word and light, the one who started from the Old Testament to make moves to take care of sin and its consequences for all mankind (universal aspects). The reference to the Old Testament's revelation was used to help his group of non-Christian Jewish readers to understand better who this Christ is- functionally and ontologically. Also, he used chapter one reference to the Old Testament to lay much foundation for those who are not Jews who were unfamiliar with the Old Testament writings to help them understand the rest of the Gospel message. It is the writers intention that any-one reading what has been written in his gospel "may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God ; and that believing you may have lie in His name " (Jn 20:31). John explicitly stating why his Gospel was written down pinpoints his intended audience to be the readers; in this case, any one that reads his gospel. John being an autoptic gospel unraveled his self-contained message whose key note is to define the functional and ontological essence of who Christ is as God. The underlining imports of his gospel defended that Jesus is the Christ for all (3:16), with the main explicit purpose that people believe it and be saved. All the above explanations aims to substantiate that John intends his audience to be any one (be it a Jew or a Gentile) who reads his gospel.

3.1.1.4. Date of Composition of the Gospel of John

The dating of the gospel according to John has raised heated debate amongst scholars of repute. In line with the above, Dickson noted that "there has been much speculation concerning the date when John wrote this document."[82] Dates have been given everywhere from A.D. 40 to 150.[83] Around 1835, F. C. Baur and his adherents who over time came to be known as the "Tubingen School", advocated for a date late in the second century for John's gospel (AD 175). The Tubingen School advocated for a later date because they relate the content of the gospel of John to be similar to Gnosticism, which flourished in the mid to late second century and was assumed to be the background for "Johannine" thought. In this era, no New Testament scholar would advocate such a late date as proposed by Tubingen School. The modern New

Testament scholars are influenced by findings gathered from the discovery of the fragmentary manuscript known as P52 by C.H. Roberts in 1934 in the John Rylands[84] Library of the University of Manchester and the discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls in 1947. They all give credence to the late first century date. Hall noted that "the date is usually given as between AD 100 and 150", so AD 125 is usually accepted as the approximate average date.[85]

In a more all-encompassing views, two views of the dating of the gospel of John have been advocated for. These two views include ***terminus post quem*** and a ***terminus ante quem*** dating demarcations.[86] ***Terminus post quem*** and a ***terminus ante quem*** dating demarcations have to do with the destruction of the Jerusalem temple. The question here is whether gospel of John was written before or after the destruction of the Jerusalem temple. The two dating views of the Gospel of Johns include the traditional view (85 ad or later) and the group of other interpreters have suggested an earlier date, perhaps as early as the 50s and no later than 70 AD.[87] Before or after the destruction of the temple in A.D 70. W.G. Kummel suggests the beginning of the second century as the ***terminus ad quem*** (end to which) when the gospel of John must have been written, if it is considered that John was known in Egypt in the first quarter of the 2nd century.[88]

Terminus post quem is gotten from Latin origin (limit after which). It means the possible date after something must have happened. In the context ***terminus post quem*** is being used here, underlines the earliest possible date when it is most likely that the gospel of John must have been written after the destruction of the temple. For D. B. Wallace, there are significant clues pointing to the early dating of the gospel.[89] The earliest date when the gospel of John could be presumably may have been written is bracketed within 40 to 96 AD.[90] Under the ***terminus post quem*** dating, it is advanced that this gospel must have been written during or after the year in which the temple was destroyed, that is during AD 70 or rather of 80, 90 or above. Within these range of dates some scholars pinpoint between 80 and 90. Still there are some who prefer to advance the possible authorship date to be within AD 60 and 70 (***terminus ante quem***). These dates were thus estimated so as to allow the circulation of the earlier Gospels. Supporting the ***terminus post quem*** dating, the traditional position advance that John the apostle wrote

this gospel towards the end of the century perhaps between AD 85 and 95, at the time when John would have been very aged.[91] Those who support very early dates- ***terminus ante quem***, advance that the gospel may have been written even before the destruction of the temple. They presumably draw reference from the statement in 5:2 that has "there is" rather than "there was" a pool "near the sheep Gate". This may suggest a time before 70AD when Jerusalem was destroyed. This proposition should not be depended on in determining the actual date when the gospel was written because of the observation that John elsewhere sometimes used the present tense when speaking of the past.[92] These dates were chosen because it remains probable that 9:22 and 16:2 may allude to the Jewish decision to ban the followers of Jesus from participating in the synagogue which may have taken place between AD 85 and 90.[93] The first view may be supported by reference to the statement of Clement of Alexandria that John wrote to supplement the accounts found in the other Gospels and this accounts for the reason the gospel of John is properly estimated to have been written later than the first three gospels which are the synoptics.[94] This view has found more favor because it has been felt more recently that John wrote independently of the other gospels. The supposition that John may have written his gospel probably in the last decade of the first century is today almost universally accepted.[95] This is established as J.A.T Robinson summarized it this way,

> With marginal variation at each end, the span 90-100 is agreed by Catholic and Protestant, by conservative and radical, by those who defend apostolic authorship and those who reject it, by those who believe that John used the synoptists and those who do not. It includes virtually all those who have recently written commentaries on the gospel, not to mention other interpreters. It is one of the relatively few points at which over a span of two generations Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible and The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible agree, and the consensus includes now the redaction-critics…[96]

Terminus post quem gotten from the Latin '**terminus'** (a boundary or limit) and '***post*'** (after) and **quem** (which). ***Terminus post quem*** is the latest date when the gospel of John may have been written are to be dated, and this is probably not later than A.D. 150.[97] Scholars who critique this view posit that "developed theology does not necessarily argue for a late origin"

However this study supports the date range between 60 and 100 AD to be the presumed date within which the gospel according John must have been written. The Fourth Gospel was probably written shortly before

AD 70 or shortly after the fall of Jerusalem. This is so advanced because this range covered the time when a document as the gospel of John would have been needed to be written in order to affirm that Jesus was the Christ and Son of God and also to strengthen the persecuted faith of those who believed in Jesus.

3.1.1.5. Location of the Composition of the Gospel of John

The location of where John wrote his gospel is also being disputed. Scholars locate Syria or Asia Minor as the gospel composition location. The scholars who advance Syria as the location for the composition of the gospel do so because of the connection the gospel had with the Odes of Solomon and Ignatius of Antioch (ca. 110), who is claimed to have had early association with John's Gospel. On the other hand, the location where the gospel according John was originally composed is traditionally identified to be in Ephesus located in Asia Minor. The example of the early Church tradition which suggests that John's gospel was composted in Ephesus in Asia minor was attested to by the testimony of Iranaeus who testified that "Then John, the disciple of the Lord, who had even rested on his breast, himself also gave forth the Gospel, while he was living at Ephesus in Asia"[98]

For Hadla, John may have travelled to Ephesus with Mary the mother of Jesus after the death and resurrection of Jesus, while living in Ephesus he may have founded the first Christin Church in Ephesus. Perhaps after the death of Paul, John may have become the great ruler of Ephesus' community of Christians.[99] Asia Minor was a very significant place for John and the whole of the Christian community as it was the perfect place for them to expand the Christian faith into the Western world. Ephesus was one of the most central and popular cities in Asia minor, from which the new-founded Christian faith spread widely throughout to the rest of Minor. Evidently John's gospel would have been very important in helping many people in Ephesus learn about Jesus' teaching, words and traditions. John's teaching may have helped many people to further their understanding of Jesus and helped the spread of Christianity into Rome. Although there is a recent claim of Alexandria being proposed to be the location where John composed his gospel. Those who suggested Alexandria may have done so because of the John Rylands

Fragment found in Egypt contains portion of the two or three verse of the gospel of John. This document have been dated to may have been written between AD 125 and 135. The document may have had the time to circulate. This small piece of papyrus containing some verses of the gospel of John is the oldest piece of the New Testament that is still extant.[100] But then, the proposition of the tradition that the gospel of John was composed in Ephesus has stood the test of time hence there has not been any decisive reason for its rejection.[101] MacCain assumable noted that John the apostle may have arrived in Ephesus about AD 69-70.[102] This is so estimated because nearly all ancient witnesses state that John lived his last 20 or 30 years in Ephesus, therefore it should be most likely that the surrounding areas in Ephesus may have been the location where this gospel was composed.

3.1.1.6. The Setting of the Gospel of John

The condition under which the gospel of John was written has its setting when many things were occurring in the religious communities, especially between the Christians, Jews and Romans. Prior to the composition of the gospel of John, the Great Revolt of the Jews against the Romans took place. This Revolt propelled the Romans to destroy the Jew's sacred temple. This destruction of the Jew's sacred temple marked out that time to be a very significant time in the Jews' history. This resulted in the death of many Jews, hence a minimal amount of people that were still alive were mentioned in John's gospel. This event happened almost sixty years after Jesus had died, resurrected and ascended into heaven. The situation on ground then, may have been preceded by the removal of Jesus' followers from the synagogue after they were considered as heretics, because they had started following the Christian religion. Along with the destruction of the temple many of the other disciples had either been persecuted or martyred because of their religious beliefs. Nevertheless, the main thing that was occurring during the time of the gospel, include that the followers of Jesus due to the much suffering that they have been subjected into, were getting very scared and were losing faith. Their faith in Jesus was being weakened because their great leader who is Jesus, who before his death promised of his second-coming had not fulfilled his promise, coupled with much suffering of persecution that have been unleashed against them. And so, like

the other gospel evangelists, John the Evangelist, in writing his gospel intended to help reinforce their Christian faith. More so, he wrote to help a community of people that were being excluded because of their faith in Jesus. John's writing was timely and very important at that time because the Roman people and most Jews were not Christians. The Romans and the Jews were persecuting the then early Christians because of their faith and traditions which is different from their own. The persecutions lashed against the early Christians got so severe that it created a sense of panic for many of these early Christians till it got to the point for them to eventual make a choice. For these persecuted Christians the choice they were to make include either to "switch to the majority, and live, or keep the faith and die." It is therefore in this situation, that John the Evangelist wrote his gospel to help people strengthen their faith and love towards Jesus Christ's ontology[103] and to persuade those who have not come to belief in Jesus to do so for both the realized and eternal salvation of their souls.

3.2. Historical Reliability of the Gospel of John

The gospel of John is among the gospel writings that told the stories of the life and ministries, passion, death and resurrection of Jesus. In it is included the historical narratives about Jesus' ontology and functionalism. W. Hall Harris III notes that "views on the authorship, origin and historicity of the Fourth Gospel have changed drastically over the last centuries and a half."[104] The scholars' positions on the historical reliability of the gospel of John have not been static. About one hundred and fifty years ago, most New Testament scholars rated "the Gospel of John" among other gospels as the gospel that is most filled with information about the life and ministry of Jesus. But in this modern era, the gospel of John is rated by many scholars as the last choice as a source of information about Jesus. Some view it as having nothing at all about the historical information about Jesus. The issue about how the drastic shift in scholarly opinion regarding the Fourth Gospel came about is to be traced to the shift in scholarly opinion about the interrelationship of the four gospels. Scholarly findings in this era place John's Gospel Late in the first century. F.C. Baur and the "Tubingen School" around 1835 proposed that the composition date of the gospel of John should be pushed into the second century. John's version of the gospel being rated

to be a later work when compared with the other gospels was therefore regarded as secondary and derivative. It is assumed that in the narratives where John's version differed from that of the synoptics, that John did deviate intentionally so as to achieve his theological ends. This view influenced the outlooks on the gospel until only about two decades ago.

Noteworthy is that again, things have now begun to change on how scholars view the Fourth Gospel. The late first century date proposal for the gospel of John is now suggested because of the fragment manuscript known as 52 discovered by C.H. Roberts in 1934 in the John Rylands Library of the University of Manchester.[105] With this discovery, scholars now see the gospel of John as a legitimate source for information about Jesus' life and ministry. Robinson in distinguishing the new look on the Fourth Gospel from the old look developed what he regarded as "the five presuppositions belonging to critical orthodoxy in the first half of the twentieth century so far as the interpretation of John's Gospel was concerned"[106] These assumptions of Robinson which go to support why the version of John's gospel is to be rated as being of lesser value include :(I) That the fourth evangelist is dependent on sources, including at least one of the Synoptic Gospels; (II) That his background differs from that of the tradition he reports; (III) That his work is a serious witness not to the Jesus of history but to the Christ of faith; (IV) That he reflects the latest stage of theological development in first-century Christianity and (V) That he is neither the apostle John nor an eyewitness. These presuppositions need to be re-examined. Noteworthy is that adopting the ideas of the old look on the Fourth Gospel means to initiate a wedge between the Evangelist and his tradition.[107] This also goes to oppose Johannine history and theology. Smalley establishes the problem by explaining that it is precisely this presupposition of the literary dependence of the Fourth Gospel on the synoptics, with all the implications that follow from it, that is being most widely and seriously questioned by scholars at present.[107] The attention of most scholars have also moved from the issue of authorship to the issues surrounding the tradition behind the Gospel of John with the aim of finding out whether the tradition of John is independent of the synoptic tradition or not.

3.3. Literary Point of View of the Gospel of John

Literary point of view is one of the most important developments in the field of literary criticism in the last century. "Point of view" as it relates to literary criticism examines the position where the author stands in relation to the events he is relating to his reader. Literary point of view unveils the 'stance', the author adopts as he relates his story. Hall explains the literary point of view of John in detail. The analysis of literary point of view of John for this study will be developed from Hall's analysis.[109] To determine the literary point of view of a narrated story one can ask the following three questions: who is telling the story? From what physical point of view or angle of narrative is the author telling the story? From what mental point of view or mood (not grammatical mood) is the author telling the story? An attempt is made here to examine 'the literary point of view' behind the gospel of John.

3.3.1. Who is Telling the Story of the Gospel of John?

The answer to the question of who is telling the gospel of John's story is to be found in the gospel itself, (21:24). Though the gospel of John is in some extent designated as an anonymous work, there are pointers that are there to make it easy to determine who is most likely to be the author who must have written the gospel. There are many both internal and external evidences that point the disciple whom Jesus Loved (21:20) to be the one who has written these things. Significant number of scholarly discussions concerning the authorship of the gospel according to John affirm that this beloved disciple is most likely to be the Apostle John.

3.3.2. What is the Author's Physical Point of View?

This question is basically limited to two choices. The first choice is that the author may have adopted a first person point of view. Here, the author who tells the story is actually an observer of the events he or she relates. The story teller must not use the first person pronouns. He or she has the leverage to narrate his story using second or third person pronouns. In using the first person point of view, the author gains the advantage of exuding the great feeling of immediacy and closeness with the readers. The disadvantage

of employing the first person pronouns in narrating a story is that it greatly limits the range with which the author can deal with the events. The narrator will not have the leverage to present him or herself as knowing another person's mind or knowing the future.

The second choice is that the author may adopt a third person point of view. The author tells the story as if he were separated from the events which are being described. The disadvantage an author can suffer for using this, is only that he loses the feeling of immediacy and closeness with the intended reader. The advantages an author can gain by using a third person point of view in narrating his or her story are many. They include: a greater range of perspective from which to tell the story is available to the author, the author may include later insights which the character have received through the perspective of time, upon further reflection, the writer has the leverage to interrupt the narrative to give his readers additional details and information they could not otherwise have. Here notes, explanatory glosses, comments etc., permit the reader to survey the lives of characters from a height, participating in the privilege of novelist.

If the physical point of view involves a third person, it may involve the "omniscient author" convention. Having established the above, it is in the basics of gospels' evangelists' view point that one sees a huge difference between John and the synoptics. While the synoptics were written from a first person point of view (as if the author had personally observed all the events), the author of John's gospel wrote his gospel from a third person point of view (he removed himself from the events he describes). The author of the Fourth Gospel claims to be a participant in the events, but he was also very careful in separating himself from the events. Though it is clear, that he was an eyewitness of the life of Jesus and his ministry, it is not less clear that he looks back upon it from a distance. He wrote from reminisces of what he could remember and interposes it with his personal reflections. The author wants his readers not only to see the events through his eyes. Through his redaction gospel, he wants his audience also to be carefully guided towards not to only see the events as they were relayed -that they happened when they happened, but that they see and understand it as he now redacted or sees it. This position the author of the gospel of John holds is clearly shown from chapter 1:1, he established his reflected view of the person of Jesus. The numerous

passages that exemplify John's third person perspective include: 2:17; 2:22; 3:16; 12:16; 20:9. Each of these passages unraveled that John has adopted the "post-resurrection" view point. He recounts past events concerning the life and ministry of Jesus and emphasizes the inability of the apostles to understand the events that were happening in their true theological perspective at the time they occurred. It is hereby shown that it is only possible for followers of Jesus to understand the events that were recounted about the life and ministry of Jesus from the Jesus events, and its significances in God's holistic salvation plan 'point of view'.

Still at the second level, the author of the gospel according to John also employs the use of the "omniscient author" convention. The "omniscient author" is a variation of the third person point of view. Here the author not only includes information the readers would not have, but also the information that even a firsthand observer of the events could not know. Example of this is shown when the story narrator gives the thoughts and feelings of more than one person at the same time. This omniscient knowledge is employed by the author of John's gospel in the following ways: details which John specifically explains to his readers (1:28-the place where John was baptizing; 2:6-Jewish purification customs; 4:9-the state of Jewish-Samaritan relations; 12:42-43-the existence of ""secret believers" among the Jewish leaders because they wanted to retain their positions, 19:40-Details of Jewish burial customs), the disciples' lack of understanding is repeatedly pointed out (13:28-29- Jesus' exchange with Judas in the Upper Room; 20:9 Jesus' teaching concerning the resurrection; 21:4 the disciples did not at first recognize the glorified Jesus), Explanation of future events (11:2-Mary mentioned as "the Mary who anointed the Lord" even before this takes place in 12:9; the coming of the Holy Spirit mentioned by Jesus (7:9) before Pentecost), things a firsthand observer would not know (12:6- Judas was a thief; 11:51-52-the appropriateness of Caiaphas' prophecy. He spoke "more truly than he knew")

3.3.3 What is the Author of John's Gospel Mental Point of View or Mood?

The third question of the author's mental view is just as important as the physical point of view. Here the author's mental understanding and analysis of a situation must cohere with the physical point of view he or she adopts. This can be said in another way that the author cannot adopt a first person point of view and yet narrate the story as an "omniscient author" who knows the outcome. If that is done mistakenly or consciously, that would create a lack of coherence between the physical and mental points of view and would ring false idea to the reader or hearer. And so in John, in the general sense, there is a consistency with the physical point of view he adopts as the omniscient author. The mental point of view chosen by the author gave him the leverage to choose materials which the other gospel writers did not use and to present them with the confidence that his readers would also view and understand them from the post-resurrection point of view. Noteworthy is that those to whom the teaching was originally delivered did not understand it at the time. One example of this in the gospel of John is to be seen in the Nicodemus encounter with Jesus in chapter 3. The author of John's gospel made his readers to understand that Nicodemus apparently did not understand the point of Jesus' teaching until after the conversation some time later. John simply wants his audience to understand Jesus.

3.4. The Structure and Contents in John's Gospel

3.4.1. The Structure of John

The gospel of John is a highly systemized work which was theologically structured so as to achieve the established purposes for which it was written. Ron Merryman noted that "When an author of Scripture states the purpose or purposes of the book or even a section of a book, the student and teacher should search out the plan or structure that the author uses to make his purpose telling."[110] And so, in engaging in the greatly valued occupation with the details of the scriptural text, it is important to start by looking at the bigger picture to see how the Spirit of God has grouped different events and blocks of teaching in this gospel. It helps one to consider some of the glories of Christ presented in this gospel and the relationship of the main doctrinal points to one another.[111] Establishing how the gospel of John was structured by the

writer, will help one to understand how John intends his gospel to achieve its revelatory and evangelistic goals.

It is important to note that breaking down the content of this gospel into structures was not necessarily intended by the original author. The attempt of breaking down this gospel is used to make interpretation easier. The gospel of John has 21 chapters. Scholars have attempted to structure the gospel of John in different ways for different reasons. Gary H. Evertt, listed many forms of outlines- scholars have attempted structuring the gospel of John to include signs/glory outline, public/private ministry outline, geographical outline, and the five-fold witness outline.[112] Noteworthy is that the most popular of all these outline methods remains the signs/glory outline. Gary Everett explaining the structure of John noted that "the Gospel of John is structured so as to give the testimonies of the Father (1:1-18), of John the Baptist (1:19-51), of Jesus' miracles (2:1 to 12:11), of Scripture (12:12 to 20:31) and of Jesus Himself (21:1-23)."[113] On a more detailed analytical form, the gospel of John is structured into four sections which include the following: a prologue 1:1-18, a book of Signs 1:19-12:50, a Book of Glory 13:1-20:31, and an epilogue 21:1-25.[114]

3.4.1.1. The Prologue (1:1-18): In the Prologue, John, the author of this gospel carefully gives an introductory background to the entire writing. J. Gresham Machen, describes John 1:1-18 as a remarkable prologue. From the very start of the gospel, in the prologue is unraveled the heavenly point of view from which the whole of the gospel history must be contemplated.[115] The remarkable nature of this prologue is that, in it is contained the key with which the reader of gospel will understand John's picture of the pre-existent and the incarnate Word. Jesus as the Word of God-means that he is the expression of all God had and wants to say, he is the full revelation of who God is. As the pre-existent Word (v.14), he was always existed, eternally ('in the beginning').[116] John in the prologue presents Jesus to his readers as the revealer of God and man. Jesus is God (v1-2) and man (v.14). Jesus is the light (v.9.10), he was rejected (v.10) as the eternal Son of God (v.18), as the Lamb of God (v.29.39).

3.4.1.2. The Book of Signs is located from John 1:19 and terminates at 12:50. It is the part one of the main body of the literal work of the gospel. It is in this book of Signs that Jesus who is the Word is revealed to his own through his demonstrations of miraculous-signs (***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***). In this part is contained the narratives of Jesus' public ministry. Harcourt, notes that "According to John, Jesus' public ministry can be summarized in connection with a number of miracles that John reports and then follows it with interpretations that point to their spiritual significance."[117] Hence, John incorporates seven miracle stories he consistently designates signs. Houghton explains that "John does not regard the stories' miraculous elements themselves as having great significance but rather the spiritual meanings that he finds implicit in them."[118] Jesus as the pre-existent and incarnate Word was revealed through his work and word signs. The work-signs refer to the miraculous signs (***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***) and while the word-signs refer to the discourses and the 'I am' statements. Both the work and word signs unveil and explicate the functional and ontological natures of the personified Word –who is the incarnate Son of God.

The first stage of this part is located in 1:19-2:11. In this phase, it contains the initial days when Jesus first revealed himself to his disciples under different titles.[119] In the second phase (2-4), John used Jesus' performing of the first miracle of changing water to wine, cleansing the temple and the narrative about Nicodemus' encounter with Jesus to establish the necessity of new birth and Christ as giver of eternal life.[120] With narratives of the Samaritan woman at the well and the healing of the royal official's son, John the evangelist used the sign to underline the themes of replacement and of reactions to Jesus. In the third phase, through the miraculous signs (***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***), John unveils Jesus using the miraculous signs to replaces the Old Testament feasts. For Sabbath, in chapter 5:1-47, Jesus is captured as the new Moses and the Sabbath ordinance is replaced with the command to 'rest'. The Old Testament idea of Passover was in John 6:1-71 replaced with Jesus' revelation of feeding of the multitude and the discourse of the bread of Life. The Son of Man is here captured as the bread that came from heaven. The Old Testament manna is replaced with the Eucharist. The highest point of the Galilean ministry was attained here, hence at this time was when Jesus' popularity reached its highest point.[121] Consequently, the Jewish crowd in John 6

wanted to take him by force and make him their king (6:15). Jesus withdrew from people that attempted to make him king. In verse 35 he confronted them with the hard saying about himself as the bread of life. Most followers of Jesus at this point became discouraged and many of the crowd and of the disciples withdrew from following him. Noteworthy is that the apostles remained because they believed that Jesus has the Words of eternal life. With the miraculous and events surrounding the tabernacles located in 7:1-10:21- Jesus is presented as the source of the living water and the light of the world. This functional nature of Jesus, is used to replace the significances of the Old Testament water and light ceremonies. In 10:22-42 Jesus is consecrated in place of the Temple alter. In the last phase of the book of signs (***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***), John's Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead and it's after math. After the resurrection of Jesus, Jesus was condemned to death by the Sanhedrin, Lazarus's sister- Mary anoints Jesus in preparation for his death and resurrection. Then Jesus goes into Jerusalem. All these marked the end of the public ministry of Jesus and as well inaugurated was the phase of the Glorious part of his mission work.

3.4.1.3. The Book of Glory (13-20:31) is the part two of the body of the gospel of John. It contains the glory that the Word experiences and would show to those who would come to accept him. Jesus in this phase, shows his glory by returning to the Father through his death, resurrection and ascension. Jesus is presented as being fully glorified and in turn, he sends his living Spirit to his followers. In the last supper narrated in chapter 13, Jesus by washing the feet of his disciples teaches them to learn of him. Though all things had been given to him, yet love in him still propels him to serve. Hardt explains here that "This service illustrates that - in all the glory to which He was going - He would ever remain a servant for them, with one objective: namely that they might be able to have a 'part with Him'"[122] With the introduction of the discourse he gives them the Love commandment and he as well foretells of Peter's denial. The last discourse that took place in chapter 14-17, in the first part, Jesus pre-informs them again of his departure, divinity indwelling in them through the presence of the ***Paraclete***. In the second phase (15-16), Jesus presents himself as the Vine, while those that would remain in him were described as branches, he informs them of how the world would hate and persecute them. This he said because the Jews also hated and

persecuted him. In chapter 17, Jesus prays for them the priestly prayer. Harcourt notes that "In a long and remarkable prayer, John attributes to Jesus, the meaning and significance of Jesus' entire career are neatly summarized."[123] In chapter 18-19 the passion events which include the arrest, inquiry before Annas with Peter's denials, trials before Pilate, crucifixion, death and burial took place. Then came the resurrection event in chapter 20:1-29 and the four other scenes that followed (two at the tomb and two inside a room) after the resurrection events. In 20:30-31, the writer in a concluding statement stated the all-encompassing purpose for which he penned down this gospel. Then finally, the gospel writer again composes the gospel's ending remarks.

3.4.1.4. The Epilogue (21:1-25): The gospel of John is so well structured that it had a prologue and an epilogue. Epilogue of John's gospel is contained in a single chapter in which John the envagelist gave his final word. In the Epilogue, John gives a remarkable conclusion to the final events of Jesus' life and mission on earth. In this gospel's epilogue, is contained the Galilean resurrection appearances of Jesus. The gospel closes with an account of the post-resurrection experiences that took place both in Jerusalem and in Galilee. It contains the miraculous sign of the fish-laden net, Jesus' commands to Peter to feed his sheep and an internal hint that reveals who the author of the gospel of John is. This ending address is seen as the second conclusion.[124]

3.4.2 The Contents and Themes in the Gospel of John

The purpose of the gospel of John helps one to understand the structure of his gospel. The five key words which are the pivots of John's purposes which form the underlining themes of the gospel include sign-***sēmeion,*** Christ-***kristos,*** Son of God, Believe-***pisteuo*** and life-***zoe.*** The purpose of John's gospel unveiled that John employed the use of signs (***σημεῖα-sēmeia***) to reveal the divine nature of the man Jesus and intends that the miraculous signs -(***σημεῖα-sēmeia***) would persuade people to come to believe and thereby have eternal life. John the evangelist utilizes the word ***σημεῖα-sēmeia***- signs for the miracles of Jesus Christ. The symbolic element of the miracle becomes primary in John.[125] Houghton Mifflin Harcourt thinks that this purpose of John also aligns with the purpose for which the synoptics wrote, however, he

observes that his method for achieving it distinguishes his gospel from the earlier ones.[126] The literal structure contents of the gospel of John is Christocentric…,[127] Hence, its central theme is the divine Logos while that of the synoptics borders on the coming kingdom of God. In the literature of the gospel of John, one sees the unity of the gospel which is loyally defended on the grounds of its structural content integrity.[128] This is established and clearly shown that from the Prologue (Jn 1:1-18) to the Epilogue (21:25), the literal structure and the contents of the gospel of John is a unified whole. The gospel of John is simply an organic whole and not a form of critical patch-work of disparate community theologies. The nature of the organic whole of the gospel of John is to be implicitly and explicitly observed in its literary and theological design.[129] The patterns discovered in the gospel of John must be attributed to the design of the author, evangelist John.[130] It is important to carefully analysize the operational themes found in the gospel of John which depicts John as the literary artist of the highest caliber done by the genius, he is.

The style and content of the gospel of John is one of variations that distinguish it from the synoptic gospels.[131] The content of the gospel of John was penned down in a simple but inspiring language. It has been observed that "His language is the most sublime found in the Holy Scriptures, as the prologue clearly shows - a supernatural sublimity that has no equal in human literature."[132] Apart from its sublime language, the content of this gospel has a special theological character. The Gospel has been considered to be the spiritual Gospel[133] and an eagle's eye view gospel.[134] Gospel of John exerted an insightful and lasting influence on the development of early Christian doctrine. Consequently, John, differing in both pattern and content when compared with the synoptics, contains many themes that make it to appear richer in theological interpretation of its gospel goals. Themes in John are many, but this study will analyze those key themes upon which the purpose of John pivots, they includes the following: Christ (Christology), believe and life, signs. Other important themes that would be examined in relation to the topic under study include, individualism, cross, and dualism.

3.4.2.1. Christology: Critical analysis of John has revealed that "one of the most striking features of the gospel of John is its distinctive Christology.[135] The whole gospel of John is majorly Christocentric. Jack explaining the natures of Jesus notes that "He was both human and divine…both Man and God. This God-Man was both 100% man while still being fully 100% God."[136] John in explaining the divinity of Jesus Christ, implies that Jesus is God that humbled himself by condescending to human level so as to salvage humanity. The gospel is more focused to prove the divinity of Jesus who he presented as the pre-existent Word (Logos) of God, who for the mission he was sent to accomplish became the incarnate Son of God. Jesus, therefore is the eternal and unique Son of God. He is the only begotten Son of God (the monogenes). Jesus as the only begotten of God is equal with God (5:18), is therefore worthy of worship (9:35-38), and because he claimed to be the Son, the sacrificial Lamb, he was condemned to death (19:7). Though, the gospel still upholds the humanity of Jesus, it is described as consisting a 'high Christology', because John gave more focus on the relationship of the Son to the Father than the other synoptics. Jesus as the Logos embodies the two powers of God-to create and to rule and for this reason, the Logos can be called 'God' and 'Lord'(Jn 1:1, 20:28). The logos is the agent of creation (1:3) and the incarnate agent of God's judgment. At the end of the gospel, Jesus the Logos is confessed as the Lord and God, this reveals how theologically important this address is to Johannine.[137] And so, Jesus is the Christ from God. Christ was used 19 times in this gospel.[138] Christ theologically means the anointed king, the Messiah. The author himself in John explains that Messiah is to be interpreted ***χριστός***-Christ (1:41). Through the miraculous signs (***σημεῖα-sēmeia***) that Jesus the Messiah does, and the "I am" declarations and the deeper meanings they connote, John expected the Jewish witnesses and others who would read his account of Jesus' life to believe in him. This Messiah is the One- people should believe in and thereby have eternal life. Anyone who accepts this Messiah, not just for his functional nature but also for his ontological nature and remains in him would have a transformed live, and thereby live God's kind of life. Sin for John is rejecting to believe in Jesus, the Messiah.

3.4.2.2. Believe (*pisteuo*): Believe is a verb, an action word that implies the acceptance of something as being true or real. D. Mark Parks notes that "Faith does not function as a verb in contemporary English; the verb 'to believe' has replaced the verb 'to faith'."[139] As a transitive verb, believe denotes someone accepting somebody as truthful, to have trust, to rely upon. It means to have religious faith. In Johannine theology, believe is a very important concept. It was used 98 times[140] in its diverse forms. And so, for John it is anyone who accepts the person of Jesus as the Messiah sent from God as the Son of God and remains in him that would possess eternal life. This idea of believing and all it connotes- are stated again and again in this gospel, thereby stressing its significance in his salvation theology. John therefore used diverse forms of symbols to persuade and encourage his audience to believe in Jesus for their salvation (1:12, 3:15).

3.4.2.3. Life - (*zoe*): John mentioned this 'life' 35 times. This life is often modified by 'eternal'.[141] ' Life' John so much emphasized in his gospel is a transformed life that manifests the will of God. This life is ***zoe*-**God's kind of life. This life is revealed in the scriptures (Jon. 5:39). Jesus being the revelation of God as a human, embodies this life (1Jon. 1:2,5:20). This life is a reward to those who would come to believe in Jesus to be the Son of God (Joh 3:15, 16: 6:40, 47, 5:24; 12:25). This life is a reward because it is 'given' to anyone who believes and remains in Jesus (6:27). This 'life' one is given lasts till eternity if the person continues remaining in Jesus (John 6:27; 10:28). Jesus is the One that sustains this 'life', for he is the bread whereby if one eats, he or she may not die (6:50-58).

3.4.2.4. Individualism: Individualism has to do with the pursuit of personal goals rather than the collective goals or interests. In the gospel of John, individualism is established through the use of singular grammatical structure of various aphoristic sayings of Jesus throughout the gospel.[142] Theologically, John lays emphases on individual's relation with Jesus for the transformation of one's life and eternal salvation of one's soul. When one compares the synoptic gospel with the Fourth Gospel, the gospel of John is markedly individualistic. This is so said because, John places emphasis more on the individual's relation

to Jesus than on a group efforts. His emphasis on individualism is to be seen on how he consistently used 'whosoever' in his writing. John used "whosoever" 10 times. 'Whosoever' is a singular pronoun that is the emphatic form of 'whosoever' It is used to indicate a person whose identity is not known. It is 'whosoever' and not group of persons, that believes in Jesus that should not perish but would have eternal life (3:15). God motivated by Love, he gave the world -Jesus who is his only begotten Son, but it is 'whosoever' that is- any individual that comes to believe in him that should not perish but would have everlasting life(3:16). Based on the interaction between Jesus and the Samaritan woman, it is whosever that drinks of the water that Jesus gives that would not thirst again because in him shall be flowing rivers of living water that should flow everlasting (4:14). It is whosoever that first steps into the troubled water of the pool that was made whole of whatsoever disease (5:4). It is 'him' that comes to Jesus, he will in no wise cast out (6:37). It is 'no man' and not 'no group of people' can come to Jesus, except the Father which has sent Jesus that draws him and it is that person that Jesus would raise up at the last day (6:44, 47,50,51). It is whosoever that commits sin, that is a slave of sin (8:34). It is whosoever that believes in Jesus that shall never die. (11:26). Jesus as the 'I am' came into the world as the 'light' that whosoever that would believe in him should not abide in darkness (12:26). The texts above establish the significant place of individualism in John. Emphasis is on individuals' establishing an intimate personal relationship with Jesus. It is also important to note that the individualistic tendencies of the Fourth Gospel could possibly lead to the Johanine realized eschatology by the individual believer. Realized eschatology achieved by the individual would not replace the futurist eschatological expectations, instead both will correlate in preparing the person to be a holistic saved person.[143] From the time of Jesus till now, one's relationship with Jesus was/is never meant to be transactional. Rather, it remains purposed to be progressively transformational.

3.4.2.5. Cross Implying Suffering: Crosses can hold different meanings depending on the context. But on most occasions crosses are frequently seen or referred to as indicating the suffering of the characters associated with it. It is important to mention that though John the evangelist like the other gospel evangelists narrated the story of the crucifixion of Jesus, noteworthy is that Johannine gospel does not have any special theology of the Cross as was glaringly established by the apostle Paul.[144] But observed in the gospel of John's sublime background is the imports of the theme of the Cross being implied. The cross has a theological significance in John's gospel. Across the Christian history, the cross has become one of the most enduring and well-recognized Christian symbols throughout the world. One would almost never guess that it started out as a way to kill people[145] but the idea of what the cross constitutes has changed over the years. John like other New Testament authors in their writings made conscious efforts to reclaim the symbol and significance of the Cross. At the background of the gospel of John is implied that Jesus died as the sacrificial lamb of the new covenant. Cross is presented as being an important event or process that represents God's wonderful plan of salvation, rather than it being a humiliating method of execution by the Romans. And so, John in his account of every step of the Jesus events, presents Jesus' suffering and death as describing the glorious fulfillment of all God wants for the world. The scourging, mocking and stripping that preceded the crucifixion have theological implication for John the evangelist. His presentation of the Jesus events showed that even the agony of crucifixion does not seem so bad. Suffering and dying is part of God's will for the accomplishment of Jesus' mission goals.

For Jesus to achieve his mission goal, he would have to go the way of the cross and resurrection. Jesus understands this very well and was at home with it. Craig R. Koester notes that "Focusing initially on what it means for Jesus to go the way casts into relief what it means for Jesus to be the way. Jesus' own journey is mentioned repeatedly in John"[140] Jesus speaks of ''where I am going'' (13:33,36), it has to do with his destination and his route. Jesus came from the Father (5:23-24:6:38-39) and was going back to the Father (13:1,3). Jesus also tells of preparing a place for his followers in his Father's house with its many rooms (14:2-4). The route that Jesus took to get to his destination (to his Father's house), is the way

of the Cross. It is his crucifixion and resurrection that led to that destination. The way of the Cross which Jesus followed include, through betrayal (13:1-2), going to the garden where he was arrested, then to the high priest's house where he was questioned, and to the headquarters of the Roman governors where he was scourged. He follows the way out of the city, bearing his own cross, and was crucified at Golgotha. He died and entombment was followed by resurrection. It is therefore through all these- that belongs the way by which Jesus returned to the Father (20:17). For Jesus, through the events that led to his suffering, death and resurrection, is presented as the way he represents. He went back to the Father by being 'lifted up.' He focused on the significance of being 'lifted up' and its resultant 'Glorification' (13:30-33). It is therefore clearly shown in John that Jesus' glorification and return to the Father took place through his dying and rising (12:23-24). Following this, the disciples Jesus called to follow him, and the crowds following him because of the miracles they were seeing him perform would also in coming to him continue with him in going through the way of the cross which would lead to their glorification and return to the Father. This is so said because by the implication of Jesus going the way of the Cross and resurrection he comes to embody the way of the Cross and resurrection. Followers of Jesus who are committed and dogged in abiding in him, who would be glorified by getting back to the Father must here in the interim go through the way of the Cross as Jesus exemplified! In doing that, they will make self-denial sacrifices, and lay down their lives. All these, summed up in the way of the Cross is the way of divine love Jesus modelled.

3.4.2.6. Dualism (Righteousness and Sin): Dualism has to do with using the idea of two opposing principles to explicate a phenomenon. Consistently, John the evangelist used two opposing principles to explicate the theology he is consolidating. Examples of dualism in John include: darkness and light, flesh and Spirit, death and life, and above and below. In line with his dualism theme in his gospel he explains what constitutes righteousness and sin. Righteousness is simply the act of believing in Jesus to be the Son of God. This Son of God is the Messiah from whom one can be bestowed on the eternal salvation. Sin in John is the acts or manifestations of 'sin'. It is ***'sin'*** and not **'sins'** that the Holy Spirit convicts the world of (16:8). And so, John lays greater emphasis on the principle of 'sin' and not 'sins'. The principle of 'sin'

is fully manifested in ‘unbelief in Christ’. And so, belief in Christ ***(pisteuo eis)*** receives strong emphasis. Anyone who continues to practice sin is in bondage and therefore is a slave of sin (8:34). Continuance in sin leads to complete separation from God. Anyone who continues in the sin of unbelieve will die in their sins (8:4).

Again with his theme of dualism, he explicates and distinguishes the world of the righteous from the world of the sinners. In John there is no in-between. One cannot at the same time be of the light and of darkness. Wenham commenting on the dualism of John’s gospel noted that “people are either in the ‘light’ of Jesus or in the ‘darkness’ of the devil.” [147] In this, one sees the very sharp way that Jesus and his way is set over against the way of the ‘world’ and ‘the Jews’. The Jews like the world is identified with unbelief, because of their unbelief, they were described as being blind and therefore were under God’s Judgement. Ladd notes that “The dualism of John is …a contrast between two worlds - the world above and the world below. "You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world" (Jn. 8:23).”[148] John consistently advances the idea that ‘this world’ stands in contrast with ‘the world above’. ‘This world’ which is ‘the world below’ is the realm of darkness, of satanic power, of sin and of death. On the other hand, ‘the world above’ is the world of the Spirit, of light and life. ‘The world above’ is where Jesus has come from and hence radiates the light signaling where he has come from. ‘This world’ is viewed as evil with the devil as its ruler (16:11). Jesus therefore has come to be the light of ‘this world’ (11:9). Also, Jesus is presented as having come down from heaven as the ‘living bread’. For John, if anyone from ‘this world’ eats of this bread, he or she shall never die but would be given eternal life (6:33, 41, 50, 51, 58) which constitutes a holistic salvation: realized and futuristic salvation. Brown posits that “the Johannine view of salvation is both vertical and horizontal”[149] while the vertical expresses the uniqueness of the divine intervention in Jesus, the horizontal aspect establishes a relationship between this intervention and salvation history.

3.4.2.7. Miraculous Signs (*Σημεῖα-Sēmeia*) as an Underlining Theme in John's Gospel

Jesus, the Son of God who was sent to the world to fulfill the divine purpose for the reconciliation of humanity to God did many wonderful deeds in his earthly ministry. John, the author organized his gospel around seven specific signs (***σημεῖα-sēmeia*)** which he by way of redaction, selected, edited, theological and incorporated in his writing. In John, Jesus' ministerial wonder arousing deeds were theologically consistently designated to depict signs (***σημεῖα-sēmeia*).** It is important to mention that, a sign could be miraculous, but they must not have to be miraculous.[150] But of a significant value is the important roles signs (***σημεῖα-sēmeia*)** play in confirming God's message. Just as in Old Testament "signs"- ('***ot***) and "wonder" (***mophet***) (Ex 7:3; Deut. 4:34) functioned in authenticating God's appointed divine messengers so that people would believe the message, so it is also with signs (***σημεῖα- sēmeia***) as they were employed in John's Gospel. In John's gospel signs (***σημεῖα- sēmeia***) were intended to prove that Jesus was who he claimed to be and to help people to believe his message. And so, it could be said that in John, Jesus does not work 'Miracles' in the forms of ***τέρατα*** (***Terata***-"Wonders) and ***δυνάμεσι*** (***Dunameis***- "Mighty works"). Rather John presents Jesus' works to be 'signs'- ***σημεῖᾰ***-(***sēmeia***).[151] A sign refers to a 'mark', 'indication' or 'token' that can be used to distinguish a person or a thing from other. A 'sign' could be used to mark out direction. It could also represent a miraculous act as a token of divine authority and power (John 10:14). The works of Jesus were in John consistently designated 'signs' (***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***) because they being wonderful works of Jesus unveiled significant theological underlying symbolical meanings about the natures of the person of Jesus. Signs (***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***) point to the ontology and functional natures of Jesus. They unveil Jesus to be God and God sent. John from his own purview presented signs (***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***) to his contemporary and future readers to consider the signs and believe on Jesus Christ who rose in glory. In most cases, for a work or an event to qualify to be depicted signs (***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***), the work or event had to be done in public,[152] and in most cases John by his own theological stand must have explicitly designated them to be signs (***sēmeia***).

John employed the works of Jesus he designated signs (***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***) to address those who have been taught of and were drawn by God and those who are yet considering the claims of Jesus Christ for the first time. The public wonder arousing works of Jesus which John depicted signs (***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***) include the following: Turning Water into Wine (John 2:1-11), Healing the Nobleman's Son (John 4:46-54), Healing the Lame Man (John 5:1- 9 15), Feeding the Multitude (John 6:1-15) and walking on water (6:15-25), Healing the Blind Man (John 9), and Raising Lazarus (John 11). Theologically, John sees these events as more than mere miracles, rather for him they are signs(***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***) that should force readers to ask, 'who is this man who can do all these things? How can he be master over quality, distance, time, quantity, natural laws, misfortune, and death?[153] Listed above are the perfect number of signs (***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***) and they were selected from a pool of many others (John 20:30). To achieve these theological goals, John by way of redaction selected, edited and included these specific 'signs' - (***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***) in his gospel. John believes that the evidence behind each of the signs proves that 'Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Following this, all of these 'signs' (***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***) have a "common, cumulative, and collective purpose" that aim to elicit faith in all who hear or read of them. Each of these wonderful deeds of Jesus have a significant underlying theological truth they unravel about the ontology and function of Jesus the Messiah. Each of these signs (***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***) have its own cultural and historical context that unravels how the author and first century reader would have understood the sign. Establishing the cultural and historical context for each of the signs (***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***) is important in helping the twenty-first century readers to understand the way the first-century readers may have understood it and it gives room towards applying its findings to the similar contemporary situation. In studying each sign (***σημεῖον -sēmeion)***), it is also important to delve into the literary content of the sign to trace and establish how the signs add to the cumulative message of who Jesus is. At the end of the study of each sign, the researcher would give hermeneutical application to the contemporary issue which the pericope of the sign best addressees.

Everything is tied in each sign ***σημεῖον (sēmeion)*** in that each sign is a typical of the whole. There is always the move from the typical sign to the cross and resurrection and post-resurrection implication in each ***σημεῖον (sēmeion)*** that represents the whole. John intends to use every theology unveiled in each sign ***σημεῖον (sēmeion***) to prepare his reader from every generation for the end of the story. For from the beginning of his gospel to the end of his gospel, his guiding aim was to present and prove a significant aspect of Jesus' identity as the Christ. And so, he theologically shaped each sign to point to Jesus' identity from his function to his ontology. Each sign ***σημεῖον (sēmeion)*** in the context of the whole worked together to point people to the glorious Son of God. Each of these signs from its beginning point moved to the climax point of explicitly magnifying Christ's resurrection, the end- ***telos*** to which all the signs point. Each of the works of Jesus which John emphatically depicted signs (***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***) is below briefly analyzed. This will be done with the aim of pinpointing the symbolic deeper truth about Jesus' ontology and functional natures which each sign unravels.

3.4.2.7.1. Turning Water into Wine: In John 2:1-11 was the first narrative in which John presented Jesus' wonder arousing deed of turning water into wine as depicting 'sign' -***σημεῖον (sēmeion)***. It was the first miraculous 'sign' ***σημεῖον (sēmeion)*** which Jesus performed in his public ministry. This is the first simple seeming story which the forth gospel presents to his reader which when retold in its spiritual light, unveils deeper meaning about the person and nature of Jesus to the people he has been sent to reconcile back to God.[154] With the performing of this sign, occurred the revelation of Jesus' glory that leads his disciples to believe in him(v.11).[155] It is important to set this miraculous sign within its background that helps this narrative to come alive and become relevant to the modern followers of Jesus. This miraculous sign took place in a small village quite near to Nazareth called Cana of Galilee, this place is so called to distinguish it from Cana in Coelo-syria. The scene is a village wedding feast to which Mary attended. She was captured in this narrative as having a special place in the feast. William notes that, one of the Coptic gospels tells that Mary was a sister of the bridegroom's mother. Monarchian preface informs that the bridegroom was none other than John himself and that his mother was Salome the sister of Mary, whether

these said are true no one is sure.[156] This is so said because her actions portrayed her as having something to do with the arrangements, for she was worried when the wine ran out and she had authority enough to order the servants to do whatever Jesus told them to do.

In Palestine a marriage ceremony was really an important occasion. Marriage ceremony do last for more than one day. The wedding ceremony itself takes place late in the evening, afterwards the new couple will be conducted to their home by a host of their guests who amid light of flaming torches would wish them well. Over a period of one week, the new couple would keep open their house, often dressed in their bridal robes and treated as a king and a queen. In their then world in which people lived in much poverty and constant hard work, the marriage week of festivity is seen as a source of joy. It was seen as one of the supreme occasions. It was in this joyous occasion that Jesus and his disciples shared. But all of a sudden, the wine with which the guests were being served finished. William notes here that

> …for a Jewish feast, wine was essential. 'without wine,' said the Rabbis, 'there is no joy.' it was not that people were drunk, but in this part of the world wine was an essential. Drunkenness was in fact a great disgrace, and they actually drank their wine in a mixture composed of two parts of wine to three arts of water. At any time, the failure of provisions would have been a problem, for hospitality in the Middle East is a sacred terrible humiliation for the bride and the bridegroom.[157]

For in this marriage context, when wine from which the joy flows finished, Mary informed Jesus that they have no wine. Jesus replied her "Woman, what have I to do with you? My hour has not yet come". By this response, Jesus could be taken to have meant, "don't worry; you don't quite understand what is going on; leave things to me and I will settle them in my own way."[158] Simply, Jesus' reply implies Mary should leave things to him, because he would have his own way of dealing with the situation. Mary reporting about the situation was self-assured of Jesus, she knew about the power that was at work in Jesus. Though, Mary heard the response of Jesus, she still commanded those serving to do whatever Jesus may wish to tell them to do. By the entrance, were kept six stone water jars that could contain about twenty or thirty gallons of water. Because John intends his gospel to be read by Jews and Gentiles, he explains that the water was for the purifying ceremonies of the Jews. They use the purifying water for two purposes: first

the water is used for cleansing the feet on entry to the house and secondly water was required for the hand washing. The Jewish ceremonial law insisted that hand washing should be done not only at the beginning of a meal but also between courses, if it was not done, the hands were technically ascribed as being unclean.

And so, it was for this foot washing and hand washing that these great stone jars of water stood there. Jesus commanded the servants that they should fill the jars to the brim. After the servants filled the jars to the brim with water only, Jesus commanded the servants to take some and give to the ***ἀρχιτρικλίνῳ*** (***architriklinos***- servant in charge) to have a taste and they did so. The chief steward did not know that what he was served to have a taste was water, but those who filled the jars to the brim knew. When the chief steward tasted the water that became wine, he was surprised with how tasty the drink is and why the bridegroom reserved this sweet wine till the last phase of the ceremony. The chief servant called the groom and jestingly he said, "Everybody sets out the fine wine first, then, after people have drunk freely, the inferior. But you have kept the fine wine until now." The chief waiter could not understand this and so he enquired to know why the bridegroom should serve the inferior wine first and reserved the good wine till the guests have become drunk. John narrated this event as a historic event. But then, this event he sees and presents it as an event that has a theological underlying symbolic meaning. And so in verse 11, he declares that this miraculous deed of Jesus to be the sign ***σημεῖον (sēmeion)*** in which Jesus' glory was manifested, which also persuaded his disciples to believe in him. William noted here that,

> we must always remember that beneath John's simple stories there is a deeper meaning which is open only to those who have eyes to see. In all his gospel, John never wrote an unnecessary or an insignificant detail. Everything means something, and everything points beyond.[159]

Though he narrated this event as a real event, all the details he provided were pointing to a deeper truth about the person and ontology of Jesus. Every detail point to something beyond its materialistic form. It was not coincidence that six stone water pots were fixed at the entrance. John knew the theological meaning of number seven; it means perfection. Hence by mentioning six, he refers to the number that is

unfinished and imperfect. He indirectly made reference to the number six as the human number that relates to the imperfections of the Jewish law. Just like the old law which is in this context referred to as the poor wine has all along been the guiding force of the Jews with its imperfection and bad taste relates to the poor wine that the groom has made available to his guest all this while. Jesus turned the imperfection of the law into the perfection of the sweetness of the grace of God now made available. And so, Jesus came as the later but the sweet wine that is being served in these last days. Just as Jesus commanded the servants to fill the jars to the brim and the description given is that each jar can contain about twenty or thirty gallons of water. When one multiplies twenty or thirty gallons by six, it either sums up to 120 or180 gallons of wine supernaturally made available by the grace that is at work in Jesus. With the availability of about 120 or 180 gallons of sweet wine, the groom now have more than enough to serve his guests. This points to the enormous nature of grace made available through the ontology and the function of Jesus which has replaced the nature of the Old Testament law; [160] the task master. John by this miraculous-sign ***σημεῖον (sēmeion)*** narrative is unveiling that in Jesus the imperfections have been turned perfect and that the grace that is from this last days made available is illimitable hence more than sufficient for everyone who would want to drink of it.

Contents in this story tell readers today about Jesus' ontology and his works. The permanent truth which John is consistently passing across to the modern readers of his gospel is that this thing Jesus did in Palestine in the first- century era, is still what Jesus does today. It implies that John does not only want his readers to see that Jesus once a day turned some water into wine but more importantly, he wants his readers to see that whenever Jesus comes into a person's life, there comes a new quality which is like turning ordinary water into a sweet wine. Before Jesus comes into some one, life is dull and unsatisfied. But when Jesus comes into some one, life becomes sweet, purposeful and some sense of spiritual joy and satisfaction can be attained.

3.4.2.7.2. Healing the Nobleman's Son: Here again in John 4:46-54, Jesus' act of healing the Nobleman's son unveiled his ontological nature through his functional nature. The narrative of the Healing of the Nobleman's Son in John 4:46-54 has it that, a certain ***βασιλικὸς*** **–*Basilikos*** **–** royal official, whose son was sick at Capernaum when he heard that Jesus returned from Judaea and has come into Galilee, he went to him and pleaded with Him to come and heal his son who was at the point of death. Jesus then said to him, unless you see ***σημεῖα***- signs and ***τέρατα***- wonders, you will not believe. All that the noble man wants is that Jesus should come down to his house and heal his son before he dies. This constitutes the problem, he does not want to believe in Jesus just because of his ontology (his person), he wants to first identify with his functional nature, what the Messiahs will do for him. This Jesus saw and in passing, he made emphases on it but the noble man does not even want to lay to heart what Jesus said, all he wants was his own miracle. Jesus at this point did not yield to his request that he should come down to his house just to heal his son. He was willing to through his functional nature reveal his ontological nature to this man and his house hold. Though he refused to come down to his house, but because he wanted the faith of the man to be kindled, he gave him a command, 'Go, your son is alive.' This noble man might have believed in Jesus' prophetic command because he might have heard of the other miraculous signs Jesus had done. Being desperate to have his son healed, he had no other option than to believe the word that Jesus spoke to him and went on his way. While he was still on his way going home, his slaves met him and informed him that his boy was still alive. The noble man desiring to know whether it was by Jesus' word that his boy was still alive, enquired from his slaves the hour when the boy started recuperating. The slaves replied their master that it was "Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him." John in noting that the boy was healed at the seventh hour is not coincidental. For him, seventh denoting perfection is the perfect hour, it is at God's own perfect hour that God does his wonderful things, though human being are consistently looking for signs. The noble man was looking for sign that would make him believe in Jesus, but Jesus expresses his functional nature at his own perfect time. And so, this noble father of the sick boy who is at this point recuperating realized that it was by that seventh hour that Jesus told him to go home

and that his son is alife. Because of this miraculous healing sign- ***σημεῖον (sēmeion)*** that this man has experienced, persuaded him and his whole family to believe in Jesus. In verse 54, John categorically noted that this is again the second ***σημεῖον***-sign which Jesus performed after he returned from Judea and came to Galilee. This miracle's theological implication is that in every age, God through Jesus is still doing miracles in His perfect time, so as to draw people of the world to himself.

3.4.2.7.3. Jesus' Healing of the Lame Man in John 5:1-15 is another miraculous 'sign'- ***σημεῖον (sēmeion)*** performed by Jesus which has a deeper theological implication through which John intends his readers to understand the ontological and functional natures of Jesus. The narrative has it that after some events had happened, then there was a feast of the Jews in Jerusalem and Jesus went up to Jerusalem to partake in the feast. In Jerusalem by the Sheep gate, there was a pool called ***Βηθζαθὰ***-Bethesda which has five entryways. It is in these porches lay a multitude of people who were sick, blind, lame and paralyzed waiting for the moving of the water. The pool gets stirred up only when an angel from the Lord comes down at certain seasons to stir up the water. It happens that anyone who first gets in to the water after it has been stirred up, recovers from whatever disease he or she had. Among these multitude waiting for an opportunity to jump into the water and receive healing, there was one man who had been sick for 38 years. Jesus arriving there saw this man lying down. Jesus knew that he had been sick for a long time. Jesus said to him, do you wish to get well? The sick man answered Jesus and said, Lord, I don't have a man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, but while I am coming someone goes into the pool before me. Jesus over rides what he was explaining and in a commanding tune- said to him, take up your bed and walk. Jesus would always give a command and expect his recipients to obey his command and thereby consolidate faith and believe in him. Having heard Jesus's command, the one who wants to receive miracle from Jesus must put his or her faith that is -obedience to Jesus' command to work. The man obeyed Jesus' command and immediately he got well, picked up his bed and walked. This miraculous sign took place on a Sabbath day. Being a Sabbath day, a Jew is not supposed to do any form of work, not even to carry anything. Then the Jews, seeing this man carrying his bed, propelled them to ask the healed man, is it legal

for you to pick up your bedroll today being Sabbath? The man replied the Jews, "the man who healed me - said to me, 'pick up your bedroll and walk'." This his reply caught the attention of the Jews. They enquired to know the man who violated the Sabbath's rule by healing someone on a Sabbath day and as well undermining the Sabbath laws by telling the healed man to carry his bedroll and walk. The man that received his healing did not even come to know the person who healed him, for Jesus had withdrawn from the midst of the crowd. Later Jesus found the man he had healed in the temple and said to him "behold, you are healed. Do not sin anymore, so that something worse doesn't happen to you." It was at this point that this healed man came to know that it was Jesus that healed him and he went and reported to the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him of his infirmities.

Revealing the theological symbolical connotations of this miraculous sign, it is deduced that it was grace that found the man that received his healing from the miraculous Jesus. Out of many, Jesus selected this old (5:5), dependent (5:7), complainer (5:5,7), blamer (5:10-13), sinner (5:14), ungrateful and disloyal and unrepentant (5:14-15) man to show him mercy. The narrative established that there were many people who were at the pool because they needed healing from one form of sickness or another. But, the grace power in the person and ministry of Jesus, deemed it fit that it was that man that should receive his miraculous healing that day. Jesus shows mercy to whosoever he wills to show mercy. In application of this miraculous signs to the Christian experience of the people of every age, it is to be established that it is whosever the trinity wills to show mercy that receives mercy. It is also significant to note that Jesus healed this man on a Sabbath day, because, he is one with God and as well one with God in functions. The Sabbath law is for man. Jesus who is God is not to be limited by this law, he over rides it to achieve his mission goal of working to consolidates a platform that functions towards restoring mankind to himself.

3.4.2.7.4. The Feeding of the Five Thousand: In John 6:1-15, the writer of this gospel again presented the narrative of the feeding of the five thousand which he employed to prove to his readers the symbolic theological deeper truth about the ontological and functional natures of Jesus. In this narrative, John

explicitly noted that a great multitude were following Jesus because of the signs (***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***) which they had seen him perform on those that were sick. When Jesus saw the multitude that were coming to him, to test Philip, he asked him where they were to buy bread so that they can feed the multitude. Though he desired to hear Philip's opinion, he himself knew what to do. For Philip even if they buy two hundred denarii worth of bread it would not be enough to feed the crowd. For Andrew, there is a boy who has five barley loaves and two fishes, but he wondered how far they can go in feeding the multitude. Though, these disciples have visualized the impossibility of the situation, Jesus being God, commanded that the people be made to be seated in circles. The men who sat down were about five thousand men. Then, Jesus took the bread and fishes and gave thanks and distributed them to those who were seated, as much as they wanted. When they had eaten to their fill and satisfaction, Jesus commanded his disciples to gather and collect the leftovers so that nothing be lost. When they gathered and collected the left overs, they were able to fill in twelve baskets. The people who saw the miraculous sign -***σημεῖον (sēmeion)*** Jesus did before them, were propelled to believe that Jesus is truly that prophet that is to come into the world. But Jesus knowing their inner most intent at that moment, that they were about to come and take him by force and make him their king by force, he withdrew from them and went up the mountain alone. This miraculous sign -***σημεῖον (sēmeion)*** narrative which John presented to his intended readers to be historical, also have a deeper truth about the ontology and the functional nature of Jesus which he intends his readers to see and understand. The symbolic underlying meaning of this miraculous narrative were explicitly unveiled by Jesus in the '***ego elmi'*** discourse that followed after Jesus had miraculously grossed over to the other side of the sea.

3.4.2.7.5. Walking on the Sea (6:16-21): The miraculous sign- ***σημεῖον (sēmeion)*** of 'Jesus walking on the Sea' is a typical historic story which John as a fisherman may have remembered as an indelible encounter he and other disciples had with Jesus. He understood the sign-***σημεῖον (sēmeion)*** the miracle connotes, hence he remembered it so vividly to include it in his gospel like the other gospel evangelists. The wonder arousing act of 'Jesus walking on the Sea' is the fifth miraculous sign- ***σημεῖον (sēmeion)***

John theologically included in his gospel to prove to his audience the divinity of Jesus. This miraculous sign was theologically placed after the sign- ***σημεῖον (sēmeion)*** of Jesus feeding the five thousand to demonstrate how miraculously Jesus crossed over to the other side of the Sea. It was to prevent the Jewish crowd who did not understand the spiritual meaning of the sign- ***σημεῖον (sēmeion)*** Jesus just performed before them, who wanted to take him by fore to make him their king accounts for why Jesus slipped away to the hills alone.

The narrative has it that after the miraculous sign- ***σημεῖον (sēmeion)*** of Jesus feeding the five thousand, when 'the second evening' approached, Jesus' disciples went down to the sea. They embarked on a boat as a means to cross over the Sea to Capernaum. As they were on the boat crossing over to the side of Capernaum, darkness began to set in and Jesus had not yet come to them. As they were sailing, the Sea aroused because a great wind was blowing. When they would have sailed for a distance of about three or four miles, they saw 'Jesus walking on the Sea'- ***(τὸν Ἰησοῦν περιπατοῦντα ἐπὶ τῆς θαλάσσης)*** coming near their boat. When they saw him they were afraid. They thought that it was a spirit that they have seen. Jesus seeing that they were afraid, then said to them it is ' ***ἐγώ εἰμι'-*** 'I am', do not be afraid! It is '***ἐγώ εἰμι'-'***I am'**,** Jesus said and not 'I' as the English translations renders it. Jesus means that it is the 'I am'- '***ἐγώ εἰμι',*** that he is the one coming to them, therefore they should not be afraid! When the scared disciples heard his voice and discovered that he is their Rabbi, they were willing to take him in into their boat. Immediately Jesus entered their boat, they reached their destination. This historic wonder arousing act of Jesus has an underlying symbolic theological meanings that are not immediately apparent.

The consideration of this 'wonder act' as a typical miraculous sign-***σημεῖον (sēmeion)*** unveiling Jesus' ontology is essential. On the first note, it is established that as regards this sign, Jesus did not contradict the law of gravity for this 'wonder act' to take effect. What happened in this miracle is that there was simply a greater power at work on the Sea that evening. On the second note, it is established that the natural law of gravity was not set aside in this sign. Rather, in this wonder arousing act, under the influence

of divine power the superior force of magnetism overcame the gravity at this particular point of space and time. On the third note, it should be noted that Jesus did not suspend the laws of gravity, rather what he did was to control them. Consequently, this sign- ***σημεῖον (sēmeion)*** could be taken as the fulfilled adumbrated reminiscent of Psalm 77:19-20 in which the psalmist reflectively meditated on the crossing of the Red Sea by the Israelites led by Moses. Through this functional sign Jesus' omnipotence is hereby demonstrated as pointing to his ontological nature. The ontology of Jesus was revealed to his disciples as he in this sign proved himself to be 'the Master of the elements'.[161]

This sign- ***σημεῖον (semeion)*** truly presented Jesus to be God and unveiled the relationship that existed with him and his disciples. This sign centering on the relationship of Jesus and his disciples unveiled that the disciples without Jesus were making little or no headway (6:17). This is shown that without Jesus in their boat, they were in danger of drowning. Then in their despair, Jesus appears to the disciples (6:19). They mistook him to be a ghost. Jesus then reassures them by declaring to them in their troubled state that he is the "I am". In this context, the disciples were willing to receive Jesus into their troubled boat. The disciples' willing reception of Jesus proves their confidence in Him. The way the disciples received Jesus in their troubled boat is an example for the followers of Jesus of any age who are tossed by "the storms of life". If Jesus is willingly accepted into one's troubled boat of life, Jesus as God is endued with divine abilities to function as the "I am" by stilling any storm that is tossing the person around at his own time.

3.4.2.7.6. The Healing of the Blind Man: In the healing of the Blind man narrated in John 9, ones sees the ontology and the functional natures of Jesus explicitly unveiled. Jesus being God healed a man that has been blind from his birth, and his disciples desired to know if it was the sins of the man or of his parents that made the man to be born blind. Jesus being God sent, reveals the mind of God here. Jesus in this context explains to them that, "neither did this man sin, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him" from this question and answer section, Jesus furthers his explanations on the essence of working the works of God who sent him when there is still the time. For there will be

time when someone would want to work but would not have the time to work again. The functional and ontological natures of Jesus is here explicitly unveiled in that he functions as the light of the world. As long as Jesus is in the world, he remains the light of the world. This also symbolically implies that since Jesus was in the world then, he must keep doing the will of the Father that sent him. Jesus here by brought out the theological underlying meaning for which that man was born blind. This man was born blind so that Jesus' ontological nature will be unveiled through the miraculous work that will be made manifested. After Jesus had explained the essence of his work, he spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle, and anointed the eye of the blind man with clay. Jesus also gave him the command to go and wash in the pool of Siloam. This blind man obeyed the command of Jesus by going to wash in the appointed pool and he received his sight. His neighbors who had known him as the blind one, on seeing him no more blind- they wondered and questioned, is not this, he that sat and begged? And so, they questioned among themselves whether he is the one or not, but he answered for himself and said, I am he. They questioned him the more, to find out how his blind eyes were miraculously opened. He told them that it was the man called Jesus that healed his eyes. From this point, the Jews sought for ways to punish Jesus for it was on the Sabbath day that Jesus made clay and opened his eye.

The miraculous ways through which Jesus healed the blind eyes is a sign that presents Jesus to be the One sent by God, who is also doing the will of God in the world of men, thereby lightening the world. But the Pharisees tried to counter that by saying that he is not from God, because he does not keep the Sabbath. In verse 16, others who did not agree with the Pharisees questioned, how can a man that is a sinner do such signs? Because of these two opposing opinions the Jews have, there was division between them. They questioned the once blind man and whose eyes have now been opened to say what he thinks about the person of Jesus, in response he declared that Jesus is a prophet. He is a prophet to the man who received his sight because he anointed his eye and told him what he has to do, he did them and his eyes opened. And so, for the sign he has seen proves Jesus to be a Prophet. But Jesus is not only a prophet! With these, the Jews still were obstinate to believe and so they also reached the healed man's parents to be sure, that

he actually received a new sight. The parents of this man were afraid of the Jews, for if they identify themselves with Jesus they would be excommunicated from the synagogue. The parents knowing the religious nature of the Jews, asked them to direct their questions to their son who encountered Jesus and his blind eyes were opened to speak for himself- for he is of age. The Jews not accepting Jesus to be God, advised the man that was once blind to return glory to God the Father, for Jesus remains a sinful man to them. For the man who received his sight, whether Jesus is a sinner he does not care to know, the thing he cares to know remains that he was blind but now he has received his sight. They kept questioning this young man until he asked them whether they would also become his disciples too? They retorted, you are the one who is his disciples, as for them, they are Moses' disciples. They claimed to be Moses' disciples because their history has it that God has spoken to Moses in the times of the Old. But for Jesus, they do not know where he comes from, though he claims to have 'come from above'.

Again the healed man confronts them again, this is the amazing thing, you claim to not know where he comes from and yet he opened my eye. The man explains further to them, it is true that God does not hear sinners, but if anyone- being a devout worshiper of God, does his will, the Lord hears him. Jesus is truly of God, he does his will therefore the Lord God hears him. Nobody has ever opened the eye of the blind, it is because he is from God that he could perform this sign and if he is not from God, he cannot do anything of this sort. The Jews reminded the man that he was born of sin, hence sinful and why then should he teach them? And so, because of his firm confrontation and defense about the ontology and functional nature of Jesus, they threw him out. When Jesus heard that they had casted him out, when he found him, he asked him, do you believe in the Son of Man? The man desired to know the ***κύριε*** - the Lord so that he may believe in Him (Jon. 9:36). Through the functional character of the Messiah, the Lord has revealed himself to the man who was once blind, he therefore have been shown who the Lord is, he is the One speaking to him. In verse 38, the man now did not only come to believe and accept Jesus as the Lord, but he also worshiped Him! This is the climax of it. Miraculous sign should lead to believe and to worship! It is very important to note that it was in verse 39 that John's theology unveiled the deeper truth which the

miraculous sign of healing the blind meant to Jesus. John used symbols behind this historic narrative to unveil the reason why Jesus came into the world; it is to judge the world that Jesus came into the world, that they that see not may see; and that they that see may become blind. The blind in encountering Jesus, obeyed his commands and he began to see, along the line he grew in his relationship with Jesus, he came to accept and believe in him to be not only the prophet but also the Lord, hence he worshiped him. But the Jews who thought they were seeing, who declared the one born blind sinner, could neither see nor receive the revelation of who Jesus is through the signs that he has performed before them, hence in their claimed sight, they lived in perpetual blindness.

When the Pharisees who claimed to understand what he implied, desired to be separated from those who were described as being blind, they asked "are we also blind?" Jesus' response to them, appears to be more complicated. For John's Jesus, if the Jews would acknowledged that they were blind about the deep things- God is set to reveal through the person of Jesus and his miraculous signs-(***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***), they would have not been judged to have sinned, but because they claim to see or to understand were as they do not, accounts for the reason their sin remains.

3.4.2.7.7. Lazarus Raised from the Dead: In John 11:1, John the evangelist selected and incorporated the story of how Jesus raised Lazarus as not just being a historical event, but one that has a deep theological symbolic underlying meaning. This theological symbolic underlying meaning he intends his readers to see the signs-(***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***), it is unveiling about the natures of Jesus. He also wants them to appropriate them for the eternal salvation of their souls. The storyline of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead narrated in John 11 has it that there was a man John identified as Lazarus from Bethany who was related to Mary and Martha. When this Lazarus became sick, his sisters sent a message to Jesus, telling him that Lazarus whom he loved is sick. When Jesus heard it, he declared that this sickness will not end in death, but that it was divinely allowed so that God, through the Son may be glorified through it. Though Jesus loved Martha, Mary and Lazarus, though he heard of Lazarus' sickness on time, he still waited for more two

days in the place where he was, before he decided to go into Judaea again with his disciples. The events that have taken place before this time have been propelling the Jews to seek out Jesus for them to catch and stone him. Jesus used his explanation about walking in the day and stumbling not because one sees by the illumination of the light in the world, but if anyone walks in the night, he does stumble, because the light is not in him, to respond to the question raised by the disciples. But Jesus' response implies that he is the light that is in the world, who is illuminating the world with his works which he is doing in its appointed time, in this context described as the twelfth hour during the day time. If one walks in this life, seeing and understanding the signs (***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***) pointing to who Jesus is, he or she will not stumble. But if one though seeing and not understanding the signs and the underlying meanings they carry, he would stumble because the light is not in him.

After saying these, Jesus declared that Lazarus has died, that he has fallen asleep, but that he would go and awake him from the sleep of death. But to the disciples, if he has only fallen asleep, he would awake. But falling asleep presupposes awakening. The disciples did not understand that Jesus had spoken of his death and not about taking rest in sleep, until he plainly told them that Lazarus has died. On getting there, Jesus found that he had been in the tomb for four days already. Verses 17-32 describe the visit Jesus made to Lazarus' relations when he had heard of his death and their entertainment of his visit. For Martha and Mary, if Jesus had been there with them, their brother would not have died. Jesus groaned in the spirit and was deeply moved by Mary who was weeping and those mourning with her over the death of her brother. When Jesus was taken to where he was buried, he was so touched that he wept (11:35). The people around who had seen the signs that Jesus had done wondered, could he not also prevent this man from dying? When Jesus still in groaning mood got to the cave covered with a stone, wherein they buried Lazarus, he commanded that they "take away the stone." Martha at this point reminded Jesus that Lazarus had been dead for four days, for he should be stinking by now. Jesus reminded Martha that if she has 'come to believe' that she would see the glory of God. When the stone was removed, Jesus lifted up his eyes and gave thanks to the Father for he had already heard him and would hear him always. Jesus prayed

to the Father to hear him like always he has been hearing him, so that the multitude standing around would see and believe that he was sent by God himself. Then, Jesus cried in a loud voice, and said, Lazarus come out! Miraculously the dead Lazarus came forth, his hand and foot bound with grace-clothes and his face wrapped with a cloth, then again, Jesus commands that they should 'loose him and let him go.'

Many who had come to mourn with Mary, who now saw the miraculous sign Jesus performed believed in him. There were others that went to the Pharisees and informed them of what Jesus had done. At this point, the Chief priests and the Pharisees convened the Sanhedrin for them to plan on what they were to do about Jesus, for he has been consistent in doing many signs. They feared that if they allow him to continue performing signs, that everybody will eventually believe in him and that if that happens, then the Romans will come and take away both their place and their nation. Then one of them, who was the high priest prophetically declared that they should consider that it will be better for them that one man should die for the people rather than the whole nation should perish. This statement points to Jesus' death that will be not just for their nation but for the whole world. From this point, they made plans on how to kill him. Jesus knowing of their inner most intent no longer walked openly among the Jews but he went to the city of Ephraim. The miraculous signs (***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***) Jesus performed presented him to be God he claimed to be and this the Jews understood as being blasphemous. It should be noted here that it was the effects of the miraculous signs upon others as unveiled from 45-47 that moved the Jews to plan on how they would arrest Jesus and kill him. The Contents in this story unveil to readers today about Jesus' ontology and his functional nature; that anyone who Jesus loves, who believes in him will not only see his glory here on earth but they would be resurrected on the last day.

In summation, it should be noted that John in his gospel, used the wonder arousing deeds and his explicit declarations to present Jesus to his readers to be God and God sent. John sees these wonder arousing deeds as signs (***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***) unveiling and pointing to who Jesus is, both ontologically and functionally. John's intent in selecting, editing and incorporating these signs in his gospel remains to illicit faith in

Jesus. Consequently, Jesus is seen in all these signs (***σημεῖă-sēmeia***) demanding that anyone who benefits or witnesses his miraculous-signs may come to believe in him. These miraculous signs (***σημεῖă-sēmeia***) were set within their backgrounds so that these signs narratives should come alive and become relevant to the modern followers of Jesus. The permanent truth which John is consistently passing across to the modern readers of his gospel is that- in coming to Jesus, he should not just be sought, for the miraculous signs that one can get from him. It is important to note that a demand of believe, commitment and consolidated faith is on a personal level required for anyone to remain in Jesus and partake in his glory.

3.5. Food for the Five Thousand in the Synoptic Gospels

The miraculous feeding of the five thousand is documented not only in John but also in all the synoptic gospels. The passages (Matthew 14:13-21;Mark 6:31-44; Luke 9:10b-17; John 6:1-15) in which each evangelist documents his account presents a rare opportunity to see an event in which the paths of all four Gospel narratives cross prior to the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus.[162] The context in which each of the synoptic writers places an event is usually significant. In the account of the miraculous feeding of the five thousand, the three synoptic Gospels place the feeding of the five thousand in exactly the same place although with a different emphasis. Noteworthy is that when the synoptics attempt to relay their account from the same view point, there are still some differing intervening materials imbedded in each of them. The approach of this subdivision will be to present this miraculous account as narrated by each synoptic writer in the sequence that they presented it.

3.5.1. Matthew's Account of the Feeding of the Five Thousand (14:13-21): Matthew's account is the most immediate and attention-grabbing. The context of his account is to be traced from Matthew 14:13-21, he presented the death of John the Baptist and at the end of verse 12 the disciples came to tell Jesus of it. His account presents that it was upon hearing the news of John's death that Jesus apparently alone left where he was. After presenting how John's Baptist's ministry decreased and ended, and how Jesus' ministry must increase, he then presents to his readers the miracles of Jesus the Messiah. Matthew Henry noted that "thus he went forth, thus he went on, conquering and to conquer, or rather, curing and to

cure."[163] Thus, though it was not explicitly stated, Matthian's account could imply that it was the death of John that propelled Jesus' action of departure. In chapter 14:13-21 the Matthian evangelist gave his version of how Jesus miraculous feed five thousand. Matthian's account has it that when it came to the hearing of Jesus that John the Baptist has been beheaded, by boat he withdrew from where he had been to a desert place alone. The setting of this account which is extremely concise pinpoints that "the Lord travelled by boat and emphasizes that the quest was for isolation; but that he went to a deserted place and that he was by Himself."[164] When the multitude (***ὅχλοι***) heard that Jesus has gone to a desert place, they followed him on foot from their cities. When Jesus saw the multitude that were coming towards him, he had compassion on them and healed those who were sick among them (14:14), but Mark at this point says that Jesus' compassion led him to teach them. Luke also says that Jesus healed those who needed it but did not attribute it to compassion. These multitudes continued staying with Jesus till evening, this propelled the disciples to suggest to him that he should send them away so that they can go and buy food for themselves, since it was already late.

Matthew in this context presents a very simple statement of the problem in verse 15- that the place was deserted and the time far spent. Jesus replied his disciples that the crowd does not need to be sent away rather that they should give them something to eat. The disciples informed Jesus that they have only five loaves and two fishes. Jesus commanded his disciples to bring the five loaves and two fishes and commanded the multitudes to sit on the grass. He looked up, blessed, broke the loaves and gave to his disciple. His disciples then shared to the seated crowd. About five thousand men besides women and children ate to their fill and satisfaction and they picked up 12 baskets full of leftover pieces. By noting that five thousand men besides women and children (v.21), seems to imply expansive comment which Matthew employed to underline the scale of the miracle.[165]

Having fed the crowd, Jesus urged his disciples to go over to the other side of the Sea of Galilee by boat, after that he sent the crowd away. He went up to the mountain to pray alone till it was evening. From this point, what followed next was the description of what happened to the disciples travelling to the other side

by boat. The disciples who were travelling to the other side of Sea of Galilee were being distressed by the contrary waves. Around three in the morning, Jesus came towards them walking on the sea. The distressed disciples beholding Jesus coming to them thought that he was a ghost and cried out in fear but immediately Jesus sensed their fear. Jesus in a commanding tune said to them "be courageous! That he is the 'I am'-(***ἐγώ εἰμι***). Then in a commanding tune he said to them do not be afraid for he is the One. At this point, Matthew continued with the narrative of how Peter demanded to join Jesus to walk on the water. When Jesus said come, Peter climbed out of the boat and started walking towards Jesus, he saw the strong wave of the wind, he became afraid and he began to sink, then he shouted out to the Lord to save him. Jesus reached out and helped him, for he was not happy that Peter had little faith and asked him why he doubted him. Jesus and Peter got into the boat and the wind ceased. Those who were in the boat worshipped Jesus and confirmed, saying truly that Jesus is the Son of God. Those in the boat had seen Jesus feed many with few loaves and few fishes, walked on the sea, empowered Peter to also walk on the water and as well saved him when his faith started failing. It was these miracles Jesus performed that motivated these disciples to not only worship Jesus but to also confirm that Jesus is truly the Son of God. When they got to Gennesaret, the men in that city recognized Jesus and they brought many who were sick, as they touched the hem of his garment, they were healed.

3.5.2. Mark's Account of the Feeding of the Five Thousand (6:30-56): Mark 6:30-56 contains Mark's version of how Jesus miraculously feed five the thousand men. From verse 1 to 6 of this chapter, Mark narrated how Jesus was contemned by his countrymen, not only because he was one of them, but also because they knew or thought that they knew of his origin.[166] Verses 7 to 13 captured how Jesus gave his apostles power over unclean spirits. Verses 14 to 29 presents the narrative on the strange notion which Herod and others had about Jesus, which climaxed with the occasion that led to the martyrdom of John the Baptist. Mark by the implication of verse 30 concurs that the miraculous feeding is subsequent to the death of John. Mark account's broadened context can thereby be traced. Similarly, Mark and Matthew presented how John the Baptist was martyred, that functioned as the immediate past event that preceded

the miraculous feeding of the five thousands men. The Lord had sent out the disciples to preach, when they returned, they reported to the Lord all things they had done and taught. And so, from verses 30 to 44 the account narrated that Jesus retired to a desert place with his disciples. Mark explains why Jesus takes his disciples to the isolated place where the miracle occurred: it is to get away from the relentless thronging of people around them, which has reached such an intensity that they have no leisure even to eat (v.31).[167] Mark's narrative being an action packed account agrees that the trip was taken in a boat and that the destination was deserted, with main purpose of going to rest. The crowd spied the ship leaving and ran on foot so that when the ship lands they were there already waiting. As Jesus disembarks from the ship, the group they had been trying to avoid were there already waiting for him. But it seems ironic, that in seeking the escape from the crowds, they attracted a huge multitude! Mark seems fond of such ironies (1:44-45).[168]And so, Jesus and his disciples were followed by crowds to learn from him, after wards they were not only taught, for they were also miraculously fed with only five loaves and two fishes. The story has it that Jesus invited his disciples for them to go by boat to the desert place and rest for a while. When people saw and recognized them, they ran by land from all surrounding towns and arrived there before them. When Jesus stepped ashore, he saw a great crowd= ***πολὺν ὄχλον*** waiting for him.

Mark did not just note that Jesus had compassion for them for no reason, but he also stated the reason. Jesus envisioned the crowd to be as sheep without a shepherd v.34, this is also hinted by Matthew (9:36). But the whole idea of sheep without a shepherd may be remotely traced to Moses' remark in the times of the Old that envisions that the congregation of Israel 'may not be like sheep without a shepherd (Num 27:17). And so, Jesus seeing them now as sheep without a shepherd showed compassion to them. It is interesting to note that in Mark's account the Lord does not heal rather he teaches,[169] Mark is more interested in what Jesus does. Following this, out of compassion he taught them many things v. 34, though Mark did not tell his readers what Jesus teaches or taught them. Mark the evangelist, most often refers to Jesus' teaching activities, without specifying the content of Jesus' teaching (1-21-22;2.13). Mark on the

general level is esteemed to have recorded far fewer of Jesus' actual teachings than the other Gospel writers, but in this context. This implies that their 'shepherdlessness' was more related to lack of direction than lack of care. These people were with Jesus learning from him till it was late. Jesus' disciples suggested to him that because they were in a deserted place and the day far spent, that he should send away the crowd. Like Matthew, the disciples said this -so that the people may go into the surrounding villages and buy themselves something to eat. As shown by all the gospel writers, Jesus' reply to his disciples was a command that they should give the crowd something to eat. The disciples responded to Jesus' command as humans who have not fully understood the power that is at work in Jesus. Edward Adams deems their response "are we to go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread, and give it to them to eat? (v.37)", as being sarcastic.[170] This their somewhat impolite response by the disciples is in keeping with Mark's rather unflattering portrait of the disciples in his Gospel (4:11-13, 33-34,40). Hence, they suggested again, whether they were to go and buy two hundred shillings' worth of bread and share to the crowd. Jesus found with them five loaves and two fishes. At Jesus' command, all of them sat down on the green grass. Grass would be green in early spring, which gives this miracle a setting around the time of Passover, as in John's account. Those who sat on the green grass, sat in groups, some by hundreds and others by fifties.

Jesus took the five loaves and the two fishes, looked up to heaven, he blessed, brake the loaves and he gave to the disciples to set before them. Jesus also shared the two fishes among them all and they all ate till they were satisfied. After five thousand men (***πεντακισχίλιοι***) had eaten to their fill and satisfaction his disciples picked up 12 basketfuls of both broken pieces of the loaves and of the fishes. After the miraculous feeding, immediately Jesus made his disciples to go to the other side of Bethsaida by boat while he dismissed the crowd, from here he went up to the mountain to pray. The next event that took place was the miracle of Jesus walking on the sea. The disciples were scared when they saw Jesus waking on the sea. Jesus immediately commanded them to be courageous and not to be afraid, that it is I am = ***ἐγώ εἰμι***. As he joined them in the boat, the wind ceased and his disciples were amazed. At this point, even with the miraculous feeding of the five thousand the disciples did not come to understand the person of

Jesus through his functions. Though, they have seen the miracles, yet their hearts were hardened - ***πεπωρωμένη*** (Mar 6:52). Same as in Matthew, when they crossed over, and got to Gennesaret, as they tied their boat up and were coming out, people immediately recognized Jesus. Those who recognized Jesus ran around villages, and towns bringing to him those who were sick and they implored Jesus that he allow them to only touch the fringe of his garment. Those who touched the hem of Jesus' garment were healed.

3.5.3. Luke's Account of the Feeding of the Five Thousand (9:10b-17): Luke 9:10b-17 has the shortest version of the narrative of how Jesus fed five thousand with five loaves and two fishes. Reading from verse 1 to10, Luke the evangelist discussed the mission of the disciples that had spread so that when Herod heard it, he was troubled about it. The context of this miracle account in Luke seems more remarkably realistic and un-interpretive. This is so said because, the reason and mode of the departure were clearly stated. It is noteworthy that Luke does however give some geographical information, the deserted place belonged to a city called Bethsaida. But then, the information given by Luke does not help modern researchers to locate the location, for Bethsaida has been lost.[171] Some try to locate Bethsaida within the location of ***e-Tel***[172] that is a mile and a half from the northeastern shore of the Lake of Galilee. Some dictionaries note that Bethsaida means 'house of fish', although it has been suggests that the actual root of the Hebrew Bethsaida means 'house of the box-lunch'. Luke in his own account did not note that the Lord had compassion upon the multitude. But he captured it this way, that they were received, or that he welcomed them, this depicts the action of a host receiving his or her guests. Luke would have used this term for he has a special interest in hospitality, he hereby presents Jesus as exemplifying what he teaches by offering an indiscriminating welcome to the crowd. Luke pinpoints that the Lord was going around speaking about the kingdom of God and healed those that needed it. Luke noted that the multitude went when they knew, while Matthew noted that the crowd heard, where as in Mark they had seen. Perhaps some of the eventual five thousand may have seen the ship and ran (Mark), while then others heard (Matthew) this had happened and the crowd grew to its' eventual size. [173]

Jesus was doing miracles. At this point Jesus gave power to his disciples and was also sending them into the mission of preaching the gospel and healing those who were sick. The response that came because Jesus and his disciples were doing miracles was that Herod the tetrarch heard it, he was greatly bewildered. Herod reconciled the news with what he heard that John he had killed has risen from dead and now performing many miracles. Herod reasoned that Elijah may have appeared again and or that one of the Old prophets had risen again. Herod reasoning in his heart said, he was sure that he had beheaded John the Baptist, but he was worried about who it is that is doing such things. He then sought to see him. When the apostles returned from mission wherein they had been sent, Jesus and his disciples privately withdrew to the city of Bethsaida. When the multitudes who found out that Jesus and his disciples had gone to a private place, they followed him. Jesus welcoming them, not only did he speak to them about the kingdom of God but he also healed those who needed healing. As the day was declining, the disciples suggested to Jesus to send the multitude away, so that they may go into the surrounding places and find food and a place to stay. These they suggested because they were in a desolate place.

Here again like in all the other gospels' Jesus - commanded his disciples to give the multitude something to eat (Luk 9:13). The disciples responded that they do not have more than five loaves and two fishes, more can only be provided if they go out to buy food for that teeming crowd of about five thousand men (Luk 9:14). Jesus seeing things the way God sees them, at his commanded made the crowds to sit in companies of fifty each. Like in other gospels, Jesus taking the five loaves and two fishes, looking up to heaven, he blessed and broke them. Afterwards, he gave the broken loaves and fishes to his disciples to set them before the multitude. Miraculously all the people ate and were all filled. After they all had eaten, twelve baskets of leftovers were gathered.

In Luke, it is after the miraculous feeding, while Jesus was alone with his disciples, that he asked them, who the multitudes say that he is. Jesus intended that through his functions that the people would come to know who he is. Jesus knew that the people who have been seeing the miracles he has been doing, would have diverse perceptions of who he is. And so, he desired that his disciples tell him who the multitudes

were saying that he is. The disciples replied that some of the people thought of Jesus to be John the Baptist, others Elijah and still others one of the old prophets who has risen again. Then Jesus puts the question to his own disciples who have been following him for a while and who have seen the wonders he has been doing. He asked his disciple who they say he is. Here, Peter speaking for himself and on behalf of the other disciples confessed that Jesus is 'the Christ of God' (v.20). Being that through the works of Jesus that they have come to understand Jesus to be Messiah, the anointed of God, Jesus then warned them not to disclose his the Messiahship to anyone. At this moment, he afore informed them of how he must be rejected by the elders, chief priests and scribes and be killed and be raised on the third day.

3.5.4. The Similarities in the Synoptics Accounts of the Feeding of the Five Thousand Compared

All the synoptics confirmed that Jesus was preaching and doing miracles. Mark and Luke noted that Jesus gave his disciples power and sent them to preach and to heal the sick, and so they went out preaching and doing miracles. Mark continued that when they returned, Jesus took his disciples with him to go and rest alone in a desert place. Mark and Matthew narrated that, When Jesus heard of how Herod beheaded John the Baptist, propelled him to take his disciples and withdrew to a desert place, Luke says they with-drew to Bethsaida. All the synoptic evangelists noted that multitude followed Jesus on foot. For Mark and Matthew, Jesus saw the crowd and had compassion on them, because for Mark, they were like sheep without a shepherd, demonstrating compassion, Jesus taught them about the kingdom of God, Luke continued by noting that as well Jesus healed those who needed healing. It was while teaching them that when evening came his disciples suggested to him that he send away the multitude to go and buy food for themselves, because they were in a desert place. In all the synoptics, Jesus commanded that the disciples give the multitude something to eat. In Mark, the disciples asked whether they were to go and buy two hundred shillings worth of bread and serve the multitude. Luke says the disciples declared that they have no more than five loaves and two fishes unless they were to go and buy food for all the people. Jesus commanded the people to sit down. They obeyed and sat in groups. In all synoptics, there were the provision of 5 loaves of bread and 2 fishes and they were given to Jesus. Jesus looking up to heaven, he

blessed, broke the loaves and gave to his disciples who also shared them among the crowds. The miracle started in the hands of Jesus and continued in the hands of the disciples who further shared the loaves and fishes to the crowds who were sited in groups.

All the synoptic evangelists noted that all the people ate and were satisfied. For Mark and Luke about 5000 men ate to their fill. For Matthew, 5000 men aside women and children ate to their fill and satisfaction. All the synoptic evangelists noted that there were 12 basket leftovers. Mark and Luke noted that Jesus sent his disciples away by boat to Bethsaida while he waited behind to send the multitude away. Even after the miracle of the loaves, the disciples have not come to understand the person of Jesus through his functional character for their hearts were hardened. Afterwards, Jesus went to the mountain to pray. What followed next was the narration of how the miracle of walking on the sea took place. Mark, Matthew and John were also similar in matching the miraculous feeding of the thousands with the miraculous walking on the sea by Jesus. Mark and Matthew confirmed that Jesus landed at Gennesaret. At Gennesaret, many recognized them and brought those who were sick and Jesus healed them. Mark specifically noted that, they touched the hem of Jesus' cloth and were healed.

While Jesus was walking on sea they thought him to be a ghost. Jesus calming them said it is I - ***ἐγώ εἰμι*** (Mar 6:50). 'I' in Matthew is originally ***ἐγώ εἰμι*** (Mat 14:27). Because the 'I am' was there with them, they were not to fear, though their sailing is being troubled. At this point Peter joined Jesus in walking on the sea. But when his faith began to fail, he began to sink. Jesus rebuked him for having little faith and for having doubted. The disciples having seen the wonderful things Jesus has been doing were supposed to have developed a full faith in Jesus. Only Peter made an attempt but the faith he developed could not carry him through. At his cry that Jesus should save him, Jesus helped him and both of them got into the boat. Observing all that happened- those that were in the boat worshiped Jesus and confirmed of a truth that Jesus is the Son of God. After they have come to worship Jesus as the true Son of God, Jesus did many other healing miracles which they observed which also helped them to confirm the ontology of Jesus through his works.

For Mark, after the crowd were miraculously fed, and Jesus miraculously walked on the sea, Mark's Jesus also calmed his distressed disciple, encouraging them to be cheered up. He said to them, it is I am - ***ἐγώ εἰμι*** (Mar 6:50), so they should not be afraid. At this point Mark stated that though the disciples have witnessed the miracle of the loaves, their hearts were still hardened. When they got to Gennesaret, people recognized him and brought people who were sick and as they touched his hem, they were healed. Mark ended his account this way for he wrote to set Jesus apart as a wonder worker.

Also Luke in verse 18 presents Jesus as asking the question "who do the multitudes say I am." The miracles Jesus were performing supposed to unveil to the multitude who Jesus is. But then, the multitude, have a varied pictures of who Jesus could be. For Luke, the multitude thought of Jesus to be either John the Baptist, Elijah or one of the old prophets who has risen again. Again Jesus in Luke then directs the question of who people thought him to be, to his disciples. Here Peter answers for himself and for the disciples that Jesus is the "the Christ of God." Peter having said this, Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone and from that moment he afore informed them of how he must suffer, be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribed and would be eventually be killed would be risen up on the third day. He further explained to them that any man who would come after him must deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow him. At this point, in a seeming long discourse Jesus demanded discipleship and commitment from those who would not only seek for him for the wonderful things he had been doing but would follow him for who he is. After wards, Jesus transfigured before Peter, James and John and they beheld his glory and a voice declared that Jesus is the Son of God, he is the chosen One and that people should listen to him.

The synoptics narratives clearly showed that they were referring to the same event but each does so in a very distinct manner. The analysis done to this particular miracle reveals that though in some aspects, two or all the synoptic writers will agree in the account they were narrating, but there are so many other areas were they do not agree. If one wants to act out each of these accounts, the actors would do quite different things for each Gospel. Noteworthy is that in some aspects, one notices a huge amount of deviation between the accounts especially at the level of final details. Close reading of these gospels shows that

there is no real similarity between any two accounts. This is seen that sometimes Mark and Luke agree against Luke. In other part of the narratives Matthew and Luke would agree against Mark. Sometimes Mark and Luke would agree against Mathew. None of the higher critical theories has been able to explain the reason behind all of these combinations without special pleading or generation of makeup theologies. It is important to note it here that what these evangelists narrated is not different translations of the same event, but it is clearly the result of a highly selective word choice and edition consciously done for each to achieve his unique theological purpose. This is established that Matthew wrote to establish the kingship, Mark wrote to establish servility, Luke wrote to establish the humanity of Jesus and John wrote to establish the deity of Jesus. All these establishments consolidate the scholarly specification that Matthew is a transition document showing why the Jews were put to one side as from whom the world would be saved. Mark is the Gospel that gives the good news of salvation. Luke is the reference guide for new believers. And John could be pictured as a wrapper around the Gospel designed to cause humanity to see Christ.[174]

3.5.5. John's Account of the Feeding of the Five Thousand Compared with the Synoptic Accounts

The Sea of Tiberias is the up-to-date name, John used to identify the Sea of Galilee. For John, the crowds followed Jesus because of the signs that they were seeing him perform. When the autoptic gospel is compared with the other synoptic writers, only John was consistent in using sign as a preferred word for Jesus' miracles (2:1, 23; 3:2). In the context of this miraculous feeding, John presents Jesus and his disciples as having gone up the mountain which is different to but not necessarily in conflict with the synoptics deserted place. This is noted because in verse 15, Jesus returns to the mountain, this also agrees with Mark (6:46) and Matthew (14:23). Only John makes reference to the nearness of the Passover (v.4) which is the second of the three Passovers he mentioned (2:13,23;11:55). In the synoptic versions, the problem was presented by the disciples. The synoptics presented that it was the disciples who first expressed the concern that the crowd be feed. But in John, it is Jesus who raises the problem. John may have theologically done that so as to establish that it was Jesus who initiated the idea to feed the crowd. These miraculous signs -(***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***) are important to John in establishing the ontology of Jesus

through his functional nature. Still to show that Jesus is not flummoxed but being God who is in control of the situation was presented by the evangelist as knowing exactly what he intends to do (Joh.6:6). Below is the chiasmus presentation of the Johannine account of the feeding of the five thousand with five loaves and two fishes.

3.6. The Four Basic Parts of the Feeding of the Five Thousand in John 6:1-15[175]

The parts of the pericope of the feeding of the five thousand include: (1) his description of the situation and background in verses 1-4, (2)the preparation for the feeding in verses 5-10, (3) the generous provisions in verses 11-13 and (4) the consequences of the feeding expressed by the crowd's response and Jesus' reaction. There are many details of the account of Jesus feeding the five thousand that were given in John that are not found in the parallel passages in the synoptic gospels. John gave these details so as to make explicit his theological interests.

3.7. Chiasmus Presentation of the Johannine Account of the Feeding of the Five Thousand (6:1-15)[176]

A(6:1-4)	6:2 they saw the signs he was performing on the sick. (6:2) (σημεῖα)
B(6:5-6)	6:5 enough food for them to eat (6:5) (φάγωσιν)
C(6:7)	Answer of Philip (φίλιππος)
C'(6:8-9)	Answer of Andrew (Ἀνδρέας)
B'(6:10-11)	6:11 Then Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks, and Distributed them (6:11)" (διέδωκεν)
A'(6:12-15)	6:14 When the people saw the sign he had done (6:14) (σημεῖον)

A: The signs. B: Giving something to eat. C: Answers of the disciples.

3.8 The Pictorial Representation of the Summary of the Gospels Account of the Narrative of the Feeding of the Five Thousand

Whilst all the points in this summary have been mentioned in the above analysis they are repeated here in a tabular form for easy reference.[177]

Subject	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Time	Subsequent to John's death	Disciples return from preaching and healing tour	Disciples return from healing tour	No prologue given
Reason for departing	John's death	Fatigue of disciples	Unstated	Unstated
Who (apparently) went?	Jesus	Jesus and disciples	Jesus and disciples	Jesus
Where did they go?	Deserted place	Deserted place	Deserted place belonging to Bethsaida	Over the sea of Galilee
Why did the multitude go?	They heard the Lord had gone	They saw the Lord go	They knew the Lord had gone	They saw the miracle he had done
What did the Lord do?	Have compassion and heal the sick	Have compassion and teach	Received them, taught of the kingdom and healed those that needed it	Go up into a mountain with His disciples
Who mentions the problem?	The disciples	The disciples	The disciples	Jesus
How are the loaves and fish mentioned?	In one narrative without prompting.	The disciples are asked what they have and go to find out.	In one narrative without prompting.	Mentioned by Andrew as belonging to a lad.
How are the 200 denarii mentioned?	Not mentioned.	In response to being told to provide food.	Not explicitly mentioned although buying food is.	Mentioned by Philip after being asked by the Lord where food should be bought.
What was blessed?	Bread and fishes both blessed together.	Bread and fish both blessed together.	Bread and fish both blessed together.	Bread and fish both blessed but loaves first.
What was broken	Bread and fish both broken.	Bread broken.	Bread and fish both broken.	Bread and fish not broken.
What was distributed?	Bread distributed.	Bread and fish both distributed but fish mentioned separately.	Bread and fished distributed.	Bread distributed. Fish distributed as much as wanted.
Did the multitude eat?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
What was picked up?	Fragments - nature unspecified.	Bread and fishes both recovered.	Fragments - nature unspecified.	Bread recovered.

Afterwards?	Disciples into ship; Lord to mountain	Disciples into ship; Lord to mountain	Really a change of subject	Crowd wish to make Lord king. Disciples to ship; Lord to mountain.

3.9. Summary of the Four Gospels' Accounts of the Feeding of the Five Thousand

The feeding of the five thousand is narrated by all the gospel writers. In harmonization of the account, the feeding of the five thousand happened immediately after the death and burial of John the Baptist around the time of the Passover feast. Then Jesus set out to take his disciples to another place and was met by a large crowd. The Lord ministered to thronging crowd and after wards withdrew up to a mountain towards the evening time. The crowd who were not showing signs of departing, motivated the disciples to suggest sending them away for them to go and buy food for themselves. Then Jesus commands his disciples to feed them. The disciples considered that the available five loaves and two fishes will not be enough, even if they buy a two hundred denarius, they will not still be enough for the crowd. Before them, the Lord in blessing the five loaves and two fishes, gave thanks to the Father and they multiplied from the hands of Jesus and then as well in the hands of his disciple. At the end all the people ate to their fill and 12 baskets of leftovers were gathered. This miracle seems to have ended with the Lord sending the disciples away and Himself going back into a mountain to commune with His Father. The loaves of bread is here theologically presented as symbolizing spiritual nourishment while the fishes symbolize salvation.

3.10. Exegesis and Critical Commentary of the Text John 6:1-15

The Bible contains the ancient religious text. Mbonu documents that Bible is a religious text…and texts are open to many meanings, more than one of which may be legitimate."[178] Scholars are therefore to be careful when studying or interpreting the ancient Biblical texts. Ugwu C.O.T. notes that "words are like ships that carry with them so many cargoes and as they arrive each port, they discharge some of them and journey on"[179] Words can mean different things to different readers. A reader can read a word to mean what he or she wants it to mean to him or her. This is said because some of these biblical ancient texts sometimes tend to have ambiguous meanings. Consequent to this, there is the need for biblical texts to be

studied scientifically. The scientific study and analysis of the relationship of ancient words to each other in a text is called philology. John 6: 1-15 in the context of the whole gospel of John was originally written in an ancient language (Greek language). Therefore the text should be scientifically studied so as to explicate the relationship between each word to another in the text. The essence of adopting philologically method is to help the researcher in doing a better exegesis of the text, so as to establish without being biased what the text means from its original Greek language and etymology to what it means in English language.

For the purpose of this study, the researcher will exegetically examine the selected text pericope of the Johanine gospel texts ranging from verse 1 to 15 of chapter 6, highlighting and analyzing the key words and phrases. The key words and phrases would be critically analyzed with the intent of helping this study to unravel the theological focus of this pericope and the essence of its application by the followers of Jesus in this era, in the ongoing gospel commission of the Church. This study would involve the tools of textual criticism. Textual criticism would be used in doing the exegesis in order to establish the periscope's actual philology. Redaction method of doing Biblical exegesis would also be adopted so as to unravel and establish the theological position of the author of the gospel of John. Hermeneutical approach would also be used to interpret and apply the theological motive of the author of the Fourth Gospel to the theological problem of followers of Jesus being preoccupied with the issue of miracles.

3.10.1. The Greek Text of John 6:1-15

> **1** Μετὰ ταῦτα ἀπῆλθεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς πέραν τῆς θαλάσσης τῆς Γαλιλαίας τῆς Τιβεριάδος. [2] ἠκολούθει δὲ αὐτῷ ὄχλος πολύς, ὅτι ἐθεώρουν τὰ σημεῖα ἃ ἐποίει ἐπὶ τῶν ἀσθενούντων. [3] ἀνῆλθεν δὲ εἰς τὸ ὄρος Ἰησοῦς καὶ ἐκεῖ ἐκάθητο μετὰ τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ. [4] ἦν δὲ ἐγγὺς τὸ πάσχα, ἡ ἑορτὴ τῶν Ἰουδαίων.[5] ἐπάρας οὖν τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς ὁ Ἰησοῦς καὶ θεασάμενος ὅτι πολὺς ὄχλος ἔρχεται πρὸς αὐτὸν λέγει πρὸς Φίλιππον, Πόθεν ἀγοράσωμεν ἄρτους ἵνα φάγωσιν οὗτοι; [6] τοῦτο δὲ ἔλεγεν πειράζων αὐτόν· αὐτὸς γὰρ ᾔδει τί ἔμελλεν ποιεῖν. [7] ἀπεκρίθη αὐτῷ [ὁ] Φίλιππος, Διακοσίων δηναρίων ἄρτοι οὐκ ἀρκοῦσιν αὐτοῖς ἵνα ἕκαστος βραχύ [τι] λάβῃ.[8] λέγει αὐτῷ εἷς ἐκ τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ, Ἀνδρέας ὁ ἀδελφὸς Σίμωνος Πέτρου, [9] Ἔστιν παιδάριον ὧδε ὃς ἔχει πέντε ἄρτους κριθίνους καὶ δύο ὀψάρια· ἀλλὰ ταῦτα τί ἐστιν εἰς τοσούτους; [10] εἶπεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Ποιήσατε τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ἀναπεσεῖν. ἦν δὲ χόρτος πολὺς ἐν τῷ τόπῳ. ἀνέπεσαν οὖν οἱ ἄνδρες τὸν ἀριθμὸν ὡς πεντακισχίλιοι. [11]ἔλαβεν οὖν τοὺς ἄρτους ὁ Ἰησοῦς καὶ εὐχαριστήσας διέδωκεν τοῖς ἀνακειμένοις ὁμοίως

καὶ ἐκ τῶν ὀψαρίων ὅσον ἤθελον.[12] ὡς δὲ ἐνεπλήσθησαν, λέγει τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ, Συναγάγετε τὰ περισσεύσαντα κλάσματα, ἵνα μή τι ἀπόληται. [13] συνήγαγον οὖν καὶ ἐγέμισαν δώδεκα κοφίνους κλασμάτων ἐκ τῶν πέντε ἄρτων τῶν κριθίνων ἃ ἐπερίσσευσαν τοῖς βεβρωκόσιν.[14] Οἱ οὖν ἄνθρωποι ἰδόντες ὃ ἐποίησεν σημεῖον ἔλεγον ὅτι Οὗτός ἐστιν ἀληθῶς ὁ προφήτης ὁ ἐρχόμενος εἰς τὸν κόσμον. [15] Ἰησοῦς οὖν γνοὺς ὅτι μέλλουσιν ἔρχεσθαι καὶ ἁρπάζειν αὐτὸν ἵνα ποιήσωσιν βασιλέα, ἀνεχώρησεν πάλιν εἰς τὸ ὄρος αὐτὸς μόνος.[180]

3.10.2. The English Translation of the Text John 6:1-15

1. After these things Jesus crossed over beyond the see of the Sea of Galilee of the Tiberias

2. And a large crowd was following him, because of the signs they were seeing which he had done on those who were sick.

3. And Jesus went up into the mountain and there he sat down with his disciples.

4. Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was near.

5. Jesus then lifted up his eye and beheld that a great multitude was coming toward him, he said to Philip, "where can we buy bread, that these may eat?"

6. And this he said to test him, for he himself knew what he would do.

7. Philip answered him, Two hundred denarii of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one may take a little.

8. One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to Him.

9. There is a boy here, who has five barley loaves and two fishes, but what are these for so many?

10. And Jesus said, make the men sit in circle. Now there was much grass in the place. Then the men sat in circle, in number about five thousand.

11. Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, He distributed to those who sat in circles; and likewise of the fishes as many as they desired.

12 . And when they were filled, He said to his disciples, gather up the leftover broken pieces, that nothing be lost.

13. Then they gathered them up, and filled twelve baskets with broken pieces out of the loaves of the barley loaves which remained from those who had eaten.

14. Then those men who beheld the signs that he had done, said that, this is of a truth the prophet who is to come into the world.

15. Therefore, Jesus knew that they were about to come and seize him, to make him a king, He withdrew again into the mountain alone by himself.[181]

3.10.3 The Exegetical Study of the Text John 6:1-15

In this pericope, the Evangelist of John's gospel sets up the narrative of Jesus' wonderful deeds to depict signs-(***σημεῖă-sēmeia***). Many scholars agree that "this passage of story, concerning Christ's feeding of five thousand men…is recorded by all the four evangelists"[182] This account has it that Jesus healed and fed the multitude who were following him. John grounds his understanding of the wonderful deeds of Jesus, by using his performances to point to who Jesus is ontologically. The basic nature of Jesus' ontology is grounded in giving life, hence Jesus is presented as providing bread to those who came seeking for him, not just to satisfy their material hunger but also for Jesus to be fed on as the bread of Life. Life flows from Jesus. Through Jesus' function in this pericope, he provided bread to the hungry so as to sustain their life and used that to relate to his essence to be basic in the sustainment of the spiritual life of those who would seek him in truth. In this context, John established a typical character of how the function of Jesus is inseparable to his ontology. Hence, in this pericope, John used the function of Jesus as the Messiah to unveil explicitly the essence of Jesus as the Son of God. In giving this pericope a special attention, the researcher gives exegetic interpretation of the texts in this narrative. The text under study shall be critically analyzed verse by verse.

Verse 1 of this pericope begins with these Greek words, ***Μετὰ ταῦτα*** **-**(after these things). John used this ***Μετὰ ταῦτα*** to make reference to all that have happened from the prologue of his gospel to this point in his narrative. It could also refer to the recent trip Jesus made to Jerusalem where the tremendous exchange took place between Jesus and the religious of Isreal.[183] Ellicott's commentary notes for 'after these things…' that it could mean "allowing an undefined interval, which is filled up by the earlier Gospels"[184] The things that happened historically which lasted for about ten and eleven months may be briefly and uniquely supplied from the other gospel evangelists (Mat.14;13-21; Mark 6:32-44; Luke 9:10-1).[185] Noteworthy is that John has added a few circumstances omitted by the other evangelists.[186] For Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible, ***Μετὰ ταῦτα*** -after these things, makes reference to events covering,

> After Christ's curing the man at Bethesda's pool, and the vindication of himself for doing it on the Sabbath day and for asserting his equality with God; near a year after these things : for these were done at the feast of the Passover, and now it was near another; and what is related here, was after the death of John the Baptist, and when the disciples had returned from preaching in the several cities and towns, where Christ afterwards went, and had given an account of their success; Mathew 14:12. Quickly after the Passover was ended, Christ departed from Jerusalem, and went into Galilee and preached in the several cities and towns in those parts, and wrought many miracles: and after these things, in process of time Jesus went over the sea of Galilee; the same with the Lake of Gennesaret, Luke 5:1.[187]

But what the writer of John's gospel referred to as "***Μετὰ ταῦτα*****"** is not certain. Everything the commentators have noted as meaning "***Μετὰ ταῦτα*****" - "**after these things" are implied**.** They do not literally reveal what John meant by "after these things"**.** '***Μετὰ*** -after' is used here in a preposition accusation relationship with the other words in the sentence. ***ταῦτα*** is used in the sense of an adjective, pronoun that is in demonstrative form, in accusative case neuter plural form. 'After these' could be a reference to the past events in the preceding chapters and verses. Roger Hahn notes that " the transition from John 5 to John 6 is problematic"[188] This is said because the last geographical reference in chapter 5 placed Jesus to had been in Jerusalem. But then, John 6: 1 has Jesus on the Sea of Galilee. The text does not have the connecting reference capturing Jesus as having returned to Galilee. The transition is more complicated with the reference to an approaching Passover in 6:4. As a consequence of these difficulties, many Biblical scholars suggest that chapter 5 and 6 may have been reversed from the way the author of this gospel has originally ordered his write up. These scholars presume this, because they assume that John may have intended to present a smoothly developed account of Jesus' life. There is purely arbitrary supposition that a portion of the Gospel between 5 and 6 has been lost.[189] The author seems to have skipped in connecting them in immediate order of time. John 5 and 6 do not seem to cohere. There seems to be no connection between chapters 5 and 6.

For John, the discourse is that in which the whole is recorded. The discourse touched almost every facet of his theological themes. And so, the exact sequence of events is not important to him hence he left it undetermined. Noteworthy is that the gospel of John is to be understood from its holistic context and purpose. Roger notes here, that "the whole of John's gospel, however, suggests that he is more interested

in theological truth than in chronological precision."[190] Chapter 6 reflects the theological concern of the author of the gospel of John. Chapter 6 of John's gospel is rich in theological implications. This is shown that this chapter starts with the narrative of the feeding of the five thousand from verse 1 to 15. While verses 16 to 21 contain the narrative of Jesus walking on the water, verses 22-59 contain a lengthy discourse revealing the meaning of Jesus as the Bread of life. Verses 60-71 contain the last response of the crowd to Jesus' exposition and the concluding narrative to the chapter. John might have placed the miracle of Jesus walking on the sea to follow the miracle of Jesus feeding the five thousand men because he saw a clear relationship between them and the Passover. John again unveils what is typical about his gospel by using the two miracles as signs-(***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***) that would help his audience to understand who Jesus is.

Verse 1 uses these Greek words- ***ἀπῆλθεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς πέραν τῆς θαλάσσης τῆς Γαλιλαίας τῆς Τιβεριάδος*** to communicate that Jesus went over the Sea of Galilee, which is also the sea of Tiberias. ***τῆς θαλάσσης τῆς Γαλιλαίας*** which is also ***Τιβεριάδος*** is the unusual designation mentioned as the place where this important ***σημεον*** *–sign* took place. The Jews called all great collections of waters 'Seas'.[191] The Sea of Galilee is also called the sea of Tiberias. John may have used ***τῆς Τιβεριάδος*** not just to give the exact description of the locality, since he had mentioned ***τῆς θαλάσσης τῆς Γαλιλαίας*** (Joh 6:1). He may have used ***τῆς Τιβεριάδος*** to help his foreign readers understand his narrative which is theologically under tuned.[192] This Sea is described as being "sixteen miles long, and six broad. This was surrounded with very pleasant towns; on the East were Julias and Hippo, and on the south Tarichea, by which name some call the lake, and on the west Tiberias, wholesome for the hot waters"[193] Then the Jews called it "the hot baths of Tiberias." Tiberias was mentioned in John 3 times (6:1, 6:23 and 21:1).[194] Sea of Tiberias is frequently called so by the Jewish writers. In their writings they often make mention of , "the sea of Tiberias" and by other writers, it is called the Lake of Tiberias; Pliny calls it the lake of Genersara.[195] This location has been referred to by several names. This sea of Tiberias was called the lake of Gennesaret in Luke 5:1. Then for the Jews, seas get their names from the whole province whose coast they washed and so like the

name Sea of Galilee or the particular shore or cities they washed, so they are sometimes called the Sea of Tiberias or sometimes the lake of Gennesaret.[196] It is the present well known as ***Tabariyeh*** built by Herod the Tetrarch but named after the Emperor Tiberius Caesar (John 6:23).[197] Barclay identifying this location notes that "Near the fords was a village called Bethsaida Julias, to distinguish it from the other Bethsaida in Galilee, and it was that place that Jesus withdrew to with his disciples (Luke 9:10).[198] Near Bethsaida Julias, almost on the lake side, was a little plain where the grass always grew. It was to be the scene of a wondrous happening. This is the only place in which Tiberias is mentioned in the New Testament. Roger notes that "Tiberias was used as the name of the Sea of Galilee. It does not appear to have been in use during Jesus' lifetime as a name for the Lake."[199] John may have used this name to describe this particular Sea, so as to use a nomenclature that his original intended audience would understand. Mentioning the particular location this miraculous sign took place proves this miracle to be historical.

In Verse 2 the use of ***ἠκολούθει δὲ αὐτῷ ὄχλος πολύς,*** means *"*And a large crowd was following him." ***ὄχλος*** is a masculine noun. It can be translated multitude or crowd. It could also mean people, company and a number…depending on the context or usage. Vine's Concordance notes here that ***ὄχλος*** is used frequently in the four gospels…often qualified with ***πολύς -polus*** (Matt 20:29; John 6:2) which signifies 'a great multitude.'[200] Barclay describes these crowds as appearing in droves and were making the journey with all speed.[201] These crowds may have been attracted to that place because of the feast of the Passover which was declared to be near. This feast may have been either a direct or indirect reason why there could have been at that time larger crowds on the roads. And so, it may have been most likely that many people were on their way to Jerusalem following the north. They may have crossed the Jordan near Jericho, though this route may be longer, they may have travelled through that way so as to avoid the territory of the hated and dangerous Samaritans. Following this, it becomes more likely that the great crowd were travelling as pilgrimages who were on their way to the Passover Feast.

ὅτι ἐθεώρουν τὰ σημεῖα ἃ ἐποίει ἐπὶ τῶν ἀσθενούντων... were the Greek words, the author used to explain why a large crowd were following Jesus. Roger observes here that "verse 2 contains the only reference in John why great crowds were following Jesus."[202] The author clearly notes that the multitude were following Jesus because of the signs - ***σημεῖα*** of healing that they had seen him perform. In this, one sees the theological idea of coming and following Jesus introduced. The Greek word "***ἠκολούθει***" is a singular verb, used in its indicative imperfect active 3rd person singular form. It means that someone is being 'followed.' ***ὄχλος πολύς*** is a noun used in its nominative masculine singular form. It means 'a large crowd or multitude.' ***ὄχλος πολύς*** is connected to **"*ἠκολούθει*"** in the sense that it was the ***ὄχλος πολύς*** (a large multitude) that were following **(*ἠκολούθει*)** the One being followed who is Jesus-***Ἰησοῦς***, who was first mentioned in verse 1. ***ἐθεώρουν*** used in the second part of the sentence is a verb used in its indicative imperfect active 3rd person plural form. It means to look at or behold. ***ἐθεώρουν*** functions in this sentence to pinpoint the action that motivated them to start following Jesus. The ***ὄχλος πολύς*** (a large multitude) were motivated to start following Jesus because of the signs (***τὰ σημεῖα***), they were seeing him perform. ***ἐποίει*** is a verb, means to do or make. It was used in this sentence in its indicative imperfect active 3rd person plural form. The people had been watching with astonishment the things Jesus was doing. The active actions Jesus was doing, which the crowd were seeing which motivated the people to keep coming to see, kept happening until those coming to see, began to follow him about, they culminated in 'a large crowd' were the healing signs Jesus was performing on the ***ἀσθενούντων. ἀσθενούντων*** means to be weak or sick. It is a verb used in its participle present active genitive masculine plural form. Roger notes here that "The construction of the Greek verb indicates a pattern of healing miracles, not just the two mentioned in John 4:46-54 and 5:1-9."[203] The world of the Bible is like the world of today in which one can find so many people suffering from one form of sickness or the other. Jesus demonstrated miraculous signs of healing their diseases, and this attracted a large number of people to start following him wherever he goes.

In Verse 3, John states what Jesus and his disciples did when they got to the mountain top**.** The Greek word ***Ἀνῆλθεν*** means that "he went up." In this sentence, it functions as a verb used in its indicative aorist active 3rd person singular form. Being used as an aorist implies that it was a completed action. In the gospels, Jesus goes up the mountain for many reasons, it is either to rest, pray and or to teach and instruct his follower. But for John, mountain is a place of worship, rest and a place where he could teach and do miracles and hide away from the thronging crowd (6:15). And so, Jesus 'going up' the mountain contemplates a time of teaching and instruction.[204]

ὄρος means a mountain. It functions in the sentence as a noun used in its accusative neuter singular case. Mountain was used 4 times in the gospel of John (4:20, 4:21, 6:3, 6:15). John presents that it was on a mountain that this miraculous sign took place. When synoptics accounts are compared with the fourth gospel's accounts, it is only John that places this event on a mountain. Many Biblical scholars interpreting this pericope in this gospel, attempt to place Jesus and Moses in a comparative relationship. The Old Testament is the adumbration of the spiritual truths that were later perfectly unveiled in the New Testament. Jesus in the New Testament was therefore presented as fulfilling the things foreshadowed in the Old Testament. Jesus here is then symbolized as Moses on the mountain through whom God provided Manner to Israelites. Examining this context to establish whether this proposed comparison is in any way related, it would be interesting to note several factors that were there suggesting such possibility. Roger noted this about the connection,

> First, Moses had been contrasted with Christ in the closing verse of chapter 5. Second, John specifically connects the feeding to the Jewish Passover in verse 4. The Passover had its origins in the Mosaic period and the Passover liturgy in Judaism emphasized the manna provided by Moses. Manna will be specifically introduced in verse 31. The Moses motif and the Passover emphasis also provide a backdrop for a possible Eucharistic interpretation of the story.[205]

The later verses of John 6 presents the author of this gospel making references to the deeds of the Old Testament Moses. John mostly compared the bread Moses provided with the bread Jesus now provides. Both Jesus and Moses feed people on a mountain. ***ἐκάθητο*** 'to sit' functions as a verb in its indicative

imperfect middle 3rd person singular form. ***μαθητῶν*** means disciples. Jesus together with his disciples sat on the mountain. ***μαθητῶν*** is a noun used in its genitive masculine plural form.

In verse 4, with these Greek words ***ἦν δὲ ἐγγὺς τὸ πάσχα, ἡ ἑορτὴ τῶν Ἰουδαίων-*** John makes reference to the Passover feast of the Jews that was approaching when the miraculous event he was narrating took place. It has been estimated that this particular Passover must have held on April 16, A.D. which is the likely time of the year when there will be much grass on the plain.[206] ***Πάσχα,*** in this sentence is a neuter noun. It means to Passover, to spare, a feast instituted by God. 'Passover' John mentions here had its origins in the Mosaic period. From the time of Moses to the time of Jesus. This Passover's liturgy in Judaism emphasized the manna provided by God through Moses. It was this Passover that could have informed why pilgrims on their way to the feast would gladly go several miles out of their way to see the great Prophet performing a miracle.[207]

In verse 5, with these Greek words ***ἐπάρας οὖν τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς ὁ Ἰησοῦς***, John continues his narration by stating what motivated the performing of the miraculous-sign (***σημεῖον sēmeion)*** of the multiplication loaves and fishes. ***ἐπάρας*** means 'to look up'. It is a participle aorist verb used in its active nominative masculine singular form. It was Jesus who initiated the feeding of the crowd and not the disciples as seen in the synoptics accounts. In John's gospel, the decision to feed the multitude and the distribution of loaves of bread and fishes focused all the attention on Jesus. Here Jesus lifted up his eyes and saw a great company coming toward him, he again reacted by initiating that the crowd be fed. Barclay notes that "at the sight of the crowd, Jesus' sympathy was kindled. They were hungry and tired, and they must be fed. "[208] But in the synoptics, the lateness of the hour and the fatigue of the crowd were presented as what motivated Jesus to have compassion to perform the miracle of feeding the five thousand. In other words, in the synoptics it was the need of the people that motivated the miracle demonstrated by Jesus. In the Fourth Gospel, the text in verse 5 indicates that immediately Jesus saw the multitude coming to him, he straight away initiated the process that finally led to the feeding of the crowd. Jesus was forehand concerned about what his followers would have need of.

With these Greek words, ***καὶ θεασάμενος ὅτι πολὺς ὄχλος ἔρχεται πρὸς αὐτὸν*** John describes the crowd as "coming to Jesus". Each person that made up that crowd marched towards Jesus for the signs that they had seen him perform or perhaps for many other intrinsic reasons. Coming to Jesus is not a problem. What matters is what the person does with having come to Jesus. Would the person believe in him to be the Messiah? Would the person be able to become a disciple adhering to the demands of being a committed disciple of Jesus? On the issue of coming to Jesus, these constitute the fulcrum of the problem then and now.

John theologically notes that it was Jesus that initiated the idea of feeding the crowd immediately he lifted his eyes and saw the crowd coming to him. Jesus is presented as asking Philip of where they could buy bread for the multitude that is before them. Jesus tested Philip by asking where the bread might be bought, although that the power to feed the multitude resided in himself. This was adumbrated in Isaiah 55:1. Philip was the natural man to whom to turn, and would have local knowledge about the nearby cities, for he came from Bethsaida as John 1:44 indicates. And so, Jesus chose him of all the disciples to ask him where food could be gotten from. With these Greek words, ***Πόθεν ἀγοράσωμεν ἄρτους ἵνα φάγωσιν οὗτοι;*** Jesus does not seem to employ the use of questioning Philip just to elicit information. In Verse 6 this question is used as just an interrogation designed to test Philip's faith. Philip having been with Jesus for a long while was expected to have come up to the level of understanding who Jesus is functionally and ontologically. Here, John behaves as an omniscient author by saying the intent of Jesus to his readers by employing these Greek words ***τοῦτο δὲ ἔλεγεν πειράζων αὐτόν· αὐτὸς γὰρ ᾔδει τί ἔμελλεν ποιεῖν***. The question here is, how did John come to know about what was in the innermost mind of Jesus? The author of the gospel of John is an ominicient author and he wrote from his post-resurrection reflection. He used this Greek word ***πειράζων*** (to test) which is a verb in its participle present active nominative masculine singular form to mean either testing or tempting Philip. Using this Greek words ***αὐτὸς γὰρ ᾔδει τί ἔμελλεν ποιεῖν*** John went further to note for his readers that Jesus had already known what to do! What is Jesus' intent for tempting or testing Philip who was one of his disciples? Why would Jesus test or tempt

(πειράζων) Philip since He already knew what to do? Testing the faith of Philip and the faith of other disciples around may be one option but grounding their understanding of his person and helping their faith to grow may be another.

In verse 7 Philip replied ***ἀπεκρίθη*** -(to answer, a verb used in its indicative aorist passive deponent 3rd person singular form) Jesus' enquiry directed to him. Philip's answer was in despairing manner. For the situation, as a natural man- he saw hopelessness. Philip who has not grown in understanding spiritual things, answered Jesus' question, from his understanding of their then economic situation. Philip estimated that "***Διακοσίων δηναρίων ἄρτοι οὐκ ἀρκοῦσιν αὐτοῖς ἵνα ἕκαστος βραχύ τι λάβῃ.***"- To Philip, even if they buy two hundred (***δηναρίων -denarii)*** worth of bread, they will not even be enough for each person in the crowd to have a little. During this historic time, this amount of Roman denarius was an imposing sum. It is doubted if the treasury-bag kept by Judas ever contained the fourth part of it then.[209] Barclay noted here that "a denarius was the standard day's wage for a working man. Philip calculated that it would take more than six months' wages to begin to feed a crowd like this."[210] What Philip saw was the impossibility of the situation. Though the situation seems impossible to Philip, Jesus knew what he was going to do. Jesus is pictured as not being limited by the human situations and viewpoints.

In verse 8, with these Greek words, ***Ἀνδρέας ὁ ἀδελφὸς Σίμωνος Πέτρου***, Andrew who John further described as one of Jesus' disciples and the brother of Simon Peter is brought into the narrative. In verse 9, John writing of what he could remember from this account of Jesus performing this miraculous sign, narrated that it was Andrew who discovered a young boy-(***παιδάριον***) who came there with five barley loaves and two little fishes- ***ὧδε ὃς ἔχει πέντε ἄρτους κριθίνους καὶ δύο ὀψάρια***. The then eastern loaves-(***ἄρτους***) were thin and small, like good-sized crackers. Around the Sea of Galilee, the salting and preserving of small fish was traditional for them then. In this era, those fishes will be about the size of sardines. As it is in this context, the whole supply was no more than enough for one hungry boy.[211] And so, for Andrew though he has seen a boy who has five loaves of bread and two fishes, he like Philip also wondered and concluded that they will not be enough for the crowd. It was therefore Andrew who brought

the boy to Jesus. Both Philip and Andrew had fear that their preferred solution to the issue of feeding the crowd, will not even solve the need to feed the multitude. Roger notes that "only John describes the five loaves as barley loaves and mentioned that the Loaves and fishes were gotten from a lad."[212] This bread mentioned in this verse is made from barley flour- ***ἄρτους κριθίνους*** (6:9.). ***Κριθίνους***-barley is often used in its plural form. In the Old Testament, barley as a name for a type of bread was used 32 times. In the New Testament, Barley bread was mentioned two times in John (6:9; 6:13) and once in revelation 6:6. Barley bread for the Jews of the then first century time, was the cheapest of all bread and was held in contempt. Barley is the name for the type of bread which is offered to animals. Bread made of this barley flour for human consumption was disdained and seen as the food for the very poor. The two fishes as the Greek words ***δύο ὀψάρια*** (Joh 6:9) denotes 'a little fish' (6:9,11; 21:9; 10,13), it is cooked fish to be likened to this present day's sardines.[213] And so, John technically using δύο ὀψάρια (noun accusative neuter plural) in this narrative implies that the size of the fishes the boy provided would not be bigger than sardine fish one can see today. William describing this type of fish the boy brought notes that,

> Pickled fish from Galilee were known all over the Roman Empire. In those days, fresh fish was an unheard-of luxury, for there was no means of transporting it to any distance and keeping it in an eatable condition. Small sardine-like fish swarmed in the Sea of Galilee. They were caught and pickled and made into a kind of savory. The boy had hid little pickled fish to help the dry barley bread down.[214]

These kinds of bread and fishes the boy brought were one of the lowest form of food. The numerical value of the loaves of bread and fishes provided by this young boy cannot feed the multitude, but Jesus multiplied it that each loaf had to be divided between a thousand and each fish between two thousand-five hundred men. Jesus therefore in this context used that which is so insufficient to feed thousands of people. This is the physical miracle that met the crowd's needs, but there is still the underlying miracle sign which Jesus wants his followers to see and understand.

There seems to be a relationship between John's use of the Greek words ***ἄρτους κριθίνους*** (barley loaves) and ***παιδάριον*** – (lad or child) and the Old Testament account of Elisha found in 2 kings 4:42-44. In this Old Testament account, Prophet Elisha fed a hundred people with 20 barley loaves and had some left over.

If there seems to be a relationship, in the context of John, the writer places this sign as having far outstripped that one performed by the great Old Testament prophet by presenting Jesus as having fed five thousand men.

In verse 10, Jesus establishes the first step which his followers must follow so as to receive miracle from him. The Johannine ethics of obedience was required here. This step is grounded in obeying simple commands from he that was sent from God for the holistic restoration and salvation of those who would come to Jesus. The Greek words used here reads, ***εἶπεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς***-(Jesus said…), obeying what Jesus says is very important in John's theological ethics. What Jesus commanded the crowd to do is ***Ποιήσατε τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ἀναπεσεῖν***.-"Have the people to sit down." Though ***ἀνθρώπους*** used here is masculine, it denotes plural common noun-in its accusative form that is used in its generality for a human being that may be male or female without reference to sex or nationality.

Second part of this verse explains the condition of the place where the miraculous sign-***(σημεῖον- sēmeion)*** would take place, the response of the crowd and the number of the people that obeyed Jesus' instruction**.** These men were arranged orderly in groups. Orderliness may have helped the disciples to save much time and labor in distributing the food. Jesus also may have instructed them to sit orderly so as to ensure that each one should be fed**.** Roger sees a shift in symbolic relationship between John's account and the Old Testament account in which Moses fed Israel manna in the desert.[215] In this account, there is an emphasis on the ***ἦν δὲ χόρτος πολὺς ἐν τῷ τόπῳ***- there was much grass in the place. Moses was captured as having fed the Israelites manner in the desert, but John presents One who is greater than Moses- who is Jesus as having fed his followers on the mountain rich in green pastures. A typical of this pasture is described in Psalm 23:2. In John, Jesus is the Messianic shepherd who leads his people in green pastures and provides them with the nourishment of life itself. These Greek words ***-ἀνέπεσαν οὖν οἱ ἄνδρες τὸν ἀριθμὸν ὡς πεντακισχίλιοι*** (Joh 6:10) describes the number of the people who were made to sit in obedience to Jesus' commands, they numbered about five thousand. Five thousand far outnumbered the people Moses fed in the Old Testament.

In verse **11, with these Greek words *ἔλαβεν οὖν τοὺς ἄρτους ὁ Ἰησοῦς*** John presents Jesus as having set rolling the actions that resulted in the miraculous sign-***(σημεῖον- sēmeion)*** taking place. After commanding that the crowds sit on the grass in circles, the second action was that "he took the Loaves". By these Greek words John describes Jesus as ***ἔλαβεν οὖν τοὺς ἄρτους*** -taking the few loaves which Andrew concluded that they will not be enough for the crowds that Jesus has proposed to feed. Jesus' hand has touched that which has been concluded to be impossible! That moment when the impossibility is still in the hands of Jesus could seem to be eternity to the one who is expectant of the miracle. ***ἔλαβεν*** *means* to take or receive. It functions in the sentence as a verb in its indicative aorist active, 3rd person singular form. Being an aorist, it indicates a completed action. Jesus has taken the few loaves and it stayed in His hands for a while. With these words***, καὶ εὐχαριστήσας διέδωκεν*** John in his narration describes the next action Jesus demonstrated that resulted in turning an impossible situation to a miraculous sign-***(σημεῖον- sēmeion)***. Jesus blessed the loaves and fishes by returning thanks for them to the Father. This and similar acts of Jesus are modern precedents for giving thanks, or asking the blessing from God over the food before someone.[216] Jesus' hands touched what has been deemed impossible, instead of worrying-He gave thanks to God. Jesus having asked the people to sit in circles, taking the bread and giving thanks, acted as the Father of the family. The gracious prayer of thanksgiving he gave reflected thanksgiving grace used in every Jewish home: 'blessed are thou, O Lord, our God, who causes to come forth bread from the earth'.[217] This Greek word '***εὐχαριστήσας***' is a verb participle aorist active nominative masculine singular. It is from '***εὐχαριστήσας***' that the term Eucharist is derived ***eu***-'well', ***charizomi***, it means to give freely. It denotes to give gratitude. ***Εὐχαριστήσας*** (thanks) appears two times in the gospel of John (6:11; 6:23). In John, Jesus gave thanks to the Father, Jesus also blessed in all the synoptic accounts (Matt.15:36; 26:27; Mark 8:6; 14:23; Luke 22:17,19). Roger notes that "There are certain parallels in language between the description of Jesus' action here and his actions in introducing the Lord's Supper at the Last Supper Passover meal."[218] Some of the evidences point toward a Eucharistic theme while some

point against it. However, it should be noted that the real Eucharistic emphasis is not in the feeding of the five thousand but in the interpretation given in the following discourse.

The fourth step Jesus took after having given thanks, in performing this miracle was captured in this phrase "***διέδωκεν τοῖς ἀνακειμένοις ὁμοίως καὶ ἐκ τῶν ὀψαρίων ὅσον ἤθελον***."- he distributed them to those who were seated. What should be noted here is that, it was Jesus himself that distributed the bread and fishes to those who obeyed his command, that is- those who sat in circle on the grass. It is at this point of distribution that the miraculous sign took place! The loaves and fishes which Andrew had concluded that they will never be enough to feed the crowd kept multiplying to the point that the crowd ate to their fill, as they wanted (Joh 6:12).

Scholars have tried to understand or explain this miraculous sign-***(σημεῖον- sēmeion)*** from a tripartite point of views which include: that this miracle historically happened, as the sacramental meal and as a miracle of sublimation. For the idea of the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand being seen as a historical event, there are some that believe that Jesus actually miraculously multiplied the loaves and fishes. There are still those that find it difficult to believe that this miracle actually happened. And so, the idea that Jesus once rejected the idea to make bread out of stone informs why some find it hard to reconcile and wholly accept the narration of Jesus feeding thousands by multiplying the loaves and fishes. This they hold onto because Jesus once rejected the temptation to make bread out of stone (Matt 4:3-4). On the second view point, some see this miracle as that it may really be a sacramental meal. At the initial stage, the miracle narration boarded on the multiplication of five loaves of barley bread and two fishes but in the discourse Jesus' emphasis shifted to eating his body as the bread and drinking his blood. The idea of not emphasizing on the fish but stressing on the need of identifying with his body and blood relates most assuredly to sacramental meal. The idea of this miracle as sign ***(σημεῖον- sēmeion)*** representing sacramental meal is supported by the language of Jesus which exactly reflected the last supper, as shown by the rest of the chapter. The analysis of the discourse in which Jesus made declaration and exposition about himself reflects the idea of the Holy Communion. In this discourse, Jesus speaks about anyone who

would believe and remain in him and he being in him, eating his flesh and drinking his blood. Barclay captures it this way,

> It could be that at his meal it was but a morsel, like the sacrament, that each person received; and that the thrill and wonder of the presence of Jesus and the reality of God turned the sacramental crumb into something which richly nourished their hearts and souls-as happens at every communion service to this day"[219]

On the third point of view, people who see this wonderful event as a miracle of sublimation. They see it as a miracle of sublimation by not wholly accepting it to be historical. By way of sublimation, they redirect their understanding and explanation of this miracle to some description that they assumedly deem to be more socially accepted. Here it is posited that it is most unlikely that the crowd walked a distance of about nine miles expedition without carrying with them some things to eat and drink along their journey. These droves of people must have embarked on this journey with some food to eat. It may be that these people in humanities' nature of selfishness, would tend to keep their food with them and would not want to share it with others. And so, it might be that because of the rare higher grace which Jesus and his disciples may have, motivated them to share the little they had. In faith, Jesus gave thanks for the little food they had and shared it all. The crowd seeing the example Jesus and his disciples displayed, were moved by his example and everyone who had food shared it in the manner- Jesus and his disciples did. As they kept on sharing, in the end there was more than enough for all. And so, through this miraculous example, Jesus turned a crowd of selfish men and women into a fellowship of sharers. The virtue imbedded in the idea of this story as the proposition of sublimation suggests, may represent the biggest form of miracle-one which changed not loaves and fishes, but men and women.

Verse 12 describes what happened after the miracle had taken place. The miraculous sign took place when the bread which has been deemed to be too small to feed a multitude, now not only fed them till they were filled, but also had room for many left overs. The next instruction that came from Jesus to his disciples was that they should "collect the leftovers so that nothing is wasted"***Συναγάγετε τὰ περισσεύσαντα κλάσματα, ἵνα μή τι ἀπόληται***. Here Jesus commands his disciples to gather up and collect the leftovers (***περισσεύσαντα κλάσματα***). The question is why did Jesus command his disciples to gather the

fragments? It has been a long standing tradition that at Jewish feasts, it has been a regular practice for them to leave something for the servants. ***Peah*** is the name they call the left over foods, and so it seems that the people left their usual part for those who had served them with the meal.[220] The Old Testament account of Elisha feeding about hundred and twenty men with only twenty loaves also had left overs. Leftovers remaining shows that the people who were miraculously fed ate to their satisfaction and still had many remaining. It is to be noted here that the instructions to gather the fragments serve to emphasize the generous and even extravagant supply of Jesus. Those that were fed, ate to their fill and there were still many leftovers. It was these leftovers that Jesus commanded his disciples to collect. Jesus is the economist of the universe, he does not want any wastage.

And so, followed is the emphasis on "let nothing be lost"- ***ἵνα μή τι ἀπόληται***. So that nothing be lost, of the fragments of the leftovers, twelve baskets were taken up. Each of the twelve disciples had his own basket of the remnants of the multiplied barley bread. Comparing the synoptics account of this miracle with that of the Fourth Gospel showed that it was only in John was it suggested that the motivation for gathering the fragments is that "nothing be lost." The Greek word ***ἀπόληται*** "be lost or perish in verse 12 is similar to the lost ***-ἀπολλυμένην*** in 6:27 which Jesus in John used to warn the crowd not to work for bread that passes away. This shows the emphasis on prevention of losing that which has been miraculously provided. Not even the crumbs of any miraculous sign should be allowed to be wasted. John does not emphasize the miraculous feeding of the five thousand with just bread per say, but John presents Jesus as the bread of life himself. Jesus is presented here as the bread that does not pass away. Therefore the emphasis on "nothing be lost"- ***ἵνα μή τι ἀπόληται*** highlighted in John, symbolically relates to the fragments that are gathered. It stresses that none of Jesus' supply of Himself should be wasted. No part of Jesus should be wasted. Roger captures it this way,

> In John's mind the bread that fed the five thousand was not really the product of a bakery but Jesus as the bread of life himself. He is the bread that does not pass away. The fragments are gathered so none of Jesus' supply [of himself] be wasted.[221]

Verse 13 with these Greek words ***συνήγαγον οὖν*** the disciples obeyed Jesus' command that they should gather up the leftovers- ***κλασμάτων***. The leftovers they gathered filled twelve baskets- ***ἐγέμισαν δώδεκα κοφίνους.*** The Jews have been expecting a Messiah that will fulfill their desire to be fed just as their prophet Moses had done in the Old Testament. Certain segments of Judaism expected the Messiah to repeat the miracle of the manna. The idea of some Jews expecting the Messiah that would feed them appears to have arisen from the combination of understanding the Messiah as a Prophet like Moses (Deut. 18:15,18) and their then general world view that the Messianic Age would be a time of utopian plenty. The plenteousness would be likened to the glorious reign and days of King David. The generous feeding of the five thousand doubles as fulfilling the role of the Messianic expectation of the Jews. It also unveils the ontological nature of Jesus to the Jews. Jesus' miraculous sign of feeding the five thousand is presented to be more superior to the miraculous feeding of the Israelites by Moses and Elisha. It seems that John symbolizes that, it is a good point to start understanding Jesus from the level of a prophet and from there grow in understanding who Jesus is holistically. Roger remarks here that "The affirmation of Jesus' as prophet can be a stepping-stone to further understanding of Jesus or it can become a stumbling block if it limits understanding of Jesus to the earthly sphere. It is this second, undesirable possibility that characterized the crowd."[222]

In verse 14 with these Greek words ***Οἱ οὖν ἄνθρωποι ἰδόντες ὃ ἐποίησεν σημεῖον ἔλεγον*** John captures the reaction of the crowd. The Jews for a long time have been waiting for the prophet that would come as Moses had promised them. Moses promised them that "the Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you shall heed such a prophet (Deu 18:15)" and so when this Jewish crowd saw the sign that Jesus performed before them, they not only marveled, they remembered the promise of Moses to them. To explain the reactions of the recipients and witnesses of the miraculous signs Jesus performed, John noted what they said, ***ὅτι Οὗτός ἐστιν ἀληθῶς ὁ προφήτης ὁ ἐρχόμενος εἰς τὸν κόσμον-*** "This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!" By this exclamation- the Jewish crowd were excited about the miracle they saw Jesus performed.

The sign (***σημεῖον***) they have seen convinced them to almost come to believe in Jesus to be truly the Prophet that is to come into the world- ***ἀληθῶς ὁ προφήτης ὁ ἐρχόμενος εἰς τὸν κόσμον***. Those men who saw the miracle related it to what they were told about the Messiah they were expecting. They were persuaded to expect and persuaded to believe that Jesus is the Prophet prophesied about in the Old Testament that was to come into the world. William notes here that,

> In that moment at Bethsaida Julias, they were willing to accept Jesus as that prophet and to carry him to power on a wave of popular acclaim. But it was not so very long before another crowd was clamoring: 'crucify him! Crucify him!'[223]

The miraculous signs Jesus performed, helped some of the Jews to believe that Jesus is the prophesied One. Jesus is the prophesied anointed One, the Messiah. The power to work the miracle, and the benevolence manifested in it, showed that he was the long-expected Messiah.[224] This crowd was eager to not only accept Jesus as the prophet, because he had given them what they wanted by healing those who were sick and feeding them. But also because, they now see him as one who could be a capable leader to them. Consequently, they accorded to him what should be described as a bought loyalty or a cupboard love. This phrase ***ἀληθῶς ὁ προφήτης ὁ ἐρχόμενος εἰς τὸν κόσμον*** also introduces the question of who Jesus was assumed to be by many of the Jews of the first century era. To this crowd, the sign they have seen presents Jesus to be the Prophet whose office is likened to that of Moses (Deu18,15, 18). Moses though a prophet also promised his people that God will raise up a prophet like himself from among them (Deut. 18:15). The crowd sees Jesus to be best addressed as the Prophet, but this title is inadequate for Jesus. Though Jesus is in one way a prophet, he is also the king and the Messiah. One observes that Jesus in performing this miraculous sign also fulfilled the expectant Jews messianic expectation without making any reference to his Messiahship. Though modern reader may have lost the relationship that exist between Jesus' feeding of the five thousand and Israelites being fed with manna, it was not lost on the original crowd. This Jewish crowd identifying Jesus to be the Prophet that is to come into the world because of the signs (***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***) they had seen him perform may be disgusting to the present day acclaimed followers of Jesus. But the question is, are the modern followers of Jesus any different? When significant

followers of Jesus want comfort in sorrow, when they want strength in difficulty, when they want peace in turmoil, when they want peace in depression, Jesus becomes the wonderful One. In need for solutions to their problems, they tend to talk to him and walk with him and claim to have opened their hearths to him.[225] But when Jesus makes a demand for sacrifice, commitment and discipleship, then his demands would be rated as stern. His teachings would be rated a hard saying and his cross disdained. In following Jesus, these acclaimed modern followers of Jesus do not want any form of challenge to carry any cross in their journey with him. They want Christ's gifts without his cross; they want to use him instead of allowing him to use them. What they want is Christianity without the Cross. Once the Cross is laid before them, they will have nothing to do with him. Following this, many modern professed followers of Jesus are attracted to following Jesus because of what they will get from his functional nature and not mainly because of his ontological nature as God. They end up underming the ontology of Jesus.

Verse 15, with these Greek words ***Ἰησοῦς οὖν γνοὺς*** the author of the gospel of John is again presented to be an omniscience author. He knew what Jesus thought in his heart. Jesus as the Son of God is conscious of what men following him or seeking after him think in their inner most heart. This Jewish crowd being cognitive of the would-be functions of their promised and expected Prophet Messiah, they wished to use Jesus for their purposes and to mould him to their own dreams. Consequently, with this Greek words- ***ὅτι μέλλουσιν ἔρχεσθαι καὶ ἁρπάζειν αὐτὸν ἵνα ποιήσωσιν βασιλέα*** -they wanted to take Jesus by force and make him their king. William notes it this way,

> They were waiting for the Messiah; but they visualized him in their own way. They looked for a Messiah who would be king and conqueror, who would set his foot upon the eagle's neck and drive the Romans from the land. They had seen what Jesus could do; and the thought in their minds was: 'this man has power, marvelous power. If we can harness him and his power to our dreams, things will being to happen.' If they wished had been honest, they would have had to admit that they wished to make use of him.[226]

Their envisioned motive for following Jesus and for tending to have accepted him to be the prophet - ***ὁ προφήτης*** sold them out. They were simply following Jesus at the moment because he was giving them what they wanted and wished to use him to achieve their other pressing purposes or wants or needs. But

this crowd did not know that, it is not Christ's first object to secure for men in this Life outward conditions favorable to universal ease and comfort. Nor is it Christ's first object to give humanity a social and a political order that shall certainly secure for men universal physical happiness.[227] Many modern Christians appeal to Christ for the spiritual strength to go on with their own schemes and ideas and not to in humility adhere to, obedience, love and sacrificial manner which are required Johannine ethics, to accept Jesus' plans and wishes for them. This is the fulcrum of the problem then and this problem still lingers as the attitude of the significant number of the modern followers of Jesus. Here, John presents Jesus as knowing (***γνοὺς***) what the crowd were thinking in their heart. John with these words ***μέλλουσιν ἔρχεσθαι καὶ ἁρπάζειν αὐτὸν ἵνα ποιήσωσιν βασιλέα*** explained that the Jews having seen the miraculous sign Jesus performed, they then envisioned him to be the true prophet and proposed in their hearts to take him by force and make him their long expected king.

Verse 15 affirms Jesus' premonition that the crowd had limited their understanding of Jesus to traditional, materialistic Messianic concepts. After the miraculous sign -(***σημεῖον)*** was performed, Jesus became very popular at that time. The people wanted to come and take him by force, and make him king, Jesus knew the value of that popularity. What was it but a puff of wind![228] Because Jesus understood their intents, they were ready to make him king. So he withdrew-***, ἀνεχώρησεν πάλιν εἰς τὸ ὄρος αὐτὸς μόνος***. At this point, instead of the signs which they have seen, which functioned as a stepping-stone for them to understand Jesus to be the sealed true prophet for them- this should have equipped them to grow further in understanding the ontological nature of Jesus, instead they had the thought of taking Jesus by force to make him king. Jesus knew that they have not come to understand the underlying meaning of the miraculous signs he has been performing. They wanted to just identify with his functions and not with his ontology for both their spiritual and physical wellbeing. They desired to take him by force and make him their king (***βασιλέα***). Being quiet cognitive of the level of their understanding and their obsession with their needs which have blurred their spiritual understanding, Jesus withdrew from them. Roger noted here that "verse 15 affirms Jesus' premonition that the crowd had limited its understanding of him to traditional,

materialistic messianic concepts."[229] Jesus here again (***πάλιν***) went to the mountain having withdrawn from them.

3.10. 4. Other Related Texts

3.10.4.1. The 'Sign' *(Σημεῖον-Sēmeion)* of Walking on the Sea

After the miraculous-sign ***σημεῖον (sēmeion)*** of the feeding of the multitudes with five loaves of bread and two fishes, like Matthew and Mark, John continued his narrative with the scene of Jesus walking on the water (John 6:16-21). Many Biblical scholars have wondered on the transitional relationship that exist between the miraculous sign ***σημεῖον (sēmeion)*** of feeding the five thousand and the miracle of Jesus walking on the Sea. But John strategically interposed the scene of Jesus' walk on the sea between the miraculous sign ***σημεῖον (sēmeion)*** of feeding the five thousand and the discourse of the theme of the bread of life. The question that is asked is "is not the account of the walking on the water an interruption to his story? It is reasoned that John may have interrupted the flow of his narrative just to follow Matthew and Mark order though it does not seem to fit the flow of the theological thought that he intended to develop.[230] But what some may have termed 'an unfitting interpolation' may as well fit theologically with the theology John was developing. It should be noted that it would certainly be strange if John felt bound to include something in his gospel that did not fit his flow of thought or contribute to his theological emphasis. Though it seemed that he interrupted the flow of the account the sign ***σημεῖον (sēmeion)*** of feeding the five thousand has with the discourse, with a reason best known to him. He returned to provide a discourse in which Jesus is described as the Bread of life and matched it with unveiling of the true significance of the multiplication of the loaves. The miracle of Jesus walking on the sea is also a sign ***σημεῖον (sēmeion)*** unveiling who Jesus is first to his twelve disciples and later to the crowd who would want to know how Jesus crossed over to the other side. It also showed how dogged this crowd following were in seeking for Jesus.

The miracle of Jesus walking on the sea has a strange but a considerable theological symbolic connection to the Passover liturgy in Judaism. Roger explains this connection by noting that "That liturgy also emphasized the "I am" phrase from God's self-disclosure in Exodus. The connection of Passover, passage through the Red Sea, and "I am" in the Passover liturgy seems to be clearly reflected in John 6."[231] The connection is shown that the feeding of the five thousand and the walking on water have Passover theme which climaxes with an "I am" saying of Jesus. In verse 16 which reads that ***Ὡς δὲ ὀψία*** -When evening came, historically pinpoints when the disciples decided to make a movement to the sea. Jesus had still not arrived there at late in the evening. It was by the evening - ***ὀψία*** that the disciples moved out of the place where the miraculous feeding had taken place. The evening - ***ὀψία*** is the time which the Jews describe as the "the second evening", the time between the twilight and the dark.[232] It signifies "late evening" the first evening is marked out by the Jews from 3p.m to sunset while the second evening is reckoned by Jews as after the sunset.[233] This implies that it was by late in the evening that the disciples went down to the Sea (***ἐγένετο κατέβησαν οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τὴν θάλασσαν)*** in Capernaum. Mark 6:45 explains here that the disciples did not leave Jesus behind but it was Jesus who sent them ahead while he persuaded the crowds to go home. Jesus may have on his own accord wished to rejoin them in Capernaum. Verse 17 of this narrative tells the readers the means of movement by which the disciples employed to move down to the sea of Capernaum. It was by boat -***πλοῖον (ploion***) that the disciples sailed to Caper*naum*. While they were sailing, darkness (***σκοτία***) had set in and yet Jesus has not come to them.

Another connection between the miraculous feeding of the five thousand and the miracle of Jesus walking on the sea is shown when the disciples were presented as being caught in the darkness (v.17). John uses the darkness theme to describe characteristics of life without Jesus Christ. Verse 17 further symbolically unveils that the disciples were in darkness because Jesus has not come into their boat. As of the time they were without Jesus in the boat, the strong wind traumatized them. On their own, in the darkness, away from Christ the strong wind distressed the disciples. Being already frightened by the darkness and the waving of the sea, in verse 19, when they saw some One coming towards them, they were more terrified

(***ἐφοβήθησαν***). This event most likely happened during the Passover time, which was also the time of the full moon (John 6:4). Jesus might have gone up the hillside, presumable to pray and commune with God. When Jesus thought it necessary to set out from there- that might have been the time when silver moon shines that makes the serene to look almost like the daylight. And so, down the lake below, Jesus could see the boat and his disciples- the rowers toiling at the oars.[234]

Verse 18- ***Ἥ τε θάλασσα ἀνέμου μεγάλου πνέοντος διηγείρετο*** -describes the difficulty the disciples were experiencing; as they were sailing a strong wind arose because of the high blowing sea. Jesus came down and was walking on the sea towards them. Verse 19 described the distance they have rowed before they saw Jesus walking on the sea as about three or four miles (***σταδίους εἴκοσι πέντε ἢ τριάκοντα***), this implies that they were nearly at the end of their journey. This is presumed, since from the North end- the lake was no more than four miles across.[235] They were first frightened by the wave of the high wind that arose and secondly they were also seeing a human figure walking on the sea (***ἐπὶ τῆς θαλάσσης***). The miracle of Jesus walking on the Sea is never to be questioned because this miracle was also confirmed by John by a recounting phrase ***Ἰησοῦς τοῖς μαθηταῖς ἐπὶ τῆς θαλάσσης τῆς Τιβεριάδος· ἐφανέρωσεν δὲ οὕτως. (***After this Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, and he revealed himself in this way…(21:1). It was this same Greek ***ἐπὶ τῆς θαλάσσης*** that John used to describe what Jesus did. Then, Jesus knowing that they were afraid, they did not know that He was the One walking on the sea-coming towards them, verse 20 presents Jesus saying to his disciple that "I am" (***ἐγώ εἰμι***) is the one coming and that they should not be afraid (***μὴ φοβεῖσθε***). English translation renders ***Ἐγώ εἰμι*** in verse 20 as simply as 'I' there by not denoting its holistic spiritual imports. Noteworthy is that it has been thought by some that the words, "it is I," might be more literally rendered, " I am," and that they were intended to refer to the name of God, so familiar to Jews: "I am."[236] Unambiguously, the original Greek reading captures Jesus as having said ***Ἐγώ εἰμι***-I am in this context and not just ***Ἐγώ***- 'I'. The disciples were not to fear for the "I am" has come into their boat with his helping presence. Those who are coming to Jesus or seeking Jesus in genuine mind can be confronted with the waves of troubles in their journey

but they are assured of the helping presence of the "I am"- ***Ἐγώ εἰμι,*** telling them do not be afraid!' Do not fear -***μὴ φοβεῖσθε*** is used in its imperative form, this implies that Jesus gives it as a command. Jesus requires obedience from his disciples because his presence is with his disciples, they should obey his command and they should not fear even in the face of the turbulent waves. The famous "I am" saying in John with its full spiritual significances is also represented in the scene of Jesus walking on the sea, however Jesus afterwards fully declared himself as the ***Ἐγώ εἰμι***. Roger notes here

> Jesus' words, "It is I," are a translation of ***ego eimi,*** which literally means, "I AM." It is the Old Testament name for God revealed to Moses in Exodus 3:14. It is part of a phrase that will be increasingly used by John. "I am the bread of life." "I am the good shepherd." "I am the true vine." These are only a few of the "I am" statements in John. Out of the storm comes the comforting words, ***ego eimi***, God is here, do not be afraid."[237]

Jesus is the ***ἐγώ εἰμι*** -"I am." This point is the climax of the scene of the sign of Jesus walking on the sea. This ***ἐγώ εἰμι*** in the scene of walking on Water is the same ***ἐγώ εἰμι*** in the discourse narrative. On hearing the voice of Jesus and recognizing the I am-***ἐγώ εἰμι,*** they were glad and willing to receive him into their troubled boat. As they received Jesus into their boat, right away the boat reached the sea shore where they were going. As a fisher man John was, he may have loved and therefore vividly remembered this historic event that helps to unveil who Jesus is first to his disciples and then to the thronging crowd that have been seeking for him. William notes this "one of the loveliest things in the Fourth Gospel is that John, the old Fisherman turned evangelist, found all the wealth of Christ in the memory of a fisherman's story."[238] John presents in this miracle that Jesus watches over those who come seeking for him, who are discipled in him and that Jesus also comes to them in their time of need. Jesus does not watch his own who are in trouble with a serene or calm detachment. Jesus comes with his helping presence which guarantees his own the aura that leads to victory. Jesus comes to his own that is suffering and offers helping hand and helps them to land safely to their desired haven. For John those who willingly receive Jesus into the boat of their life would out swerve the troubling storms. They would have peace and would most importantly reach their destination. The theological picture painted by John is here summarized by Roger "The Passover imagery

is fulfilled in him. The Exodus which produced Israel has been surpassed and Christ calls to a new people, the Church, and consists in saying to them because I am- '***ego eimi'*** is with you, do not fear![239]

Verses 22-25 establish the transition from the wonder of Jesus walking on the sea to the elongated discourse Jesus had with the crowd. Roger notes here that "Verses 22-25a form the transition from the recounting of the two miracles on a Passover theme to the discourse on the deeper meaning of those miracles by Jesus."[240] The crowd had lingered on the far side of the lake. This crowd exercised patience waiting for Jesus because they saw that there was only one boat and that his disciples had gone off in it alone. And so, they reasoned that Jesus must have been around. But when they had waited for so long, it dawned on them that Jesus might not come back there. This crowd (***ὄχλος***) desperately seeking for Jesus, saw boats coming from Tiberias (v.23) and they entered the small boats (***πλοιάρια***) and came to Capernaum seeking (***ζητοῦντες***) for Jesus. Just like this ***ὄχλος*** the modern multitudes seeking for Jesus still cross diverse forms of boundaries, some in desperation seek for Jesus for diverse reasons. The then multitude seeking for Jesus entered the small boats, today the multitudes of individuals trek, enter boats, trains, vehicles, tricycles, bicycles, airplanes; crossing boundaries in the name of seeking for Jesus.

Verse 22 establishes that Jesus could only be on the order side only through a miraculous means. This crowd were surprised to see that Jesus was already on the other side of the sea, they were moved to ask him how he had arrived. The multitude that stood on the other side of the sea saw for themselves that it was only through miraculous means that Jesus who did not enter the boat with his disciples now returned with them. This narration is given by John to confirm the miracle by the host of other witnesses. Verses 22-25 also functions as a form of transition from the account of Jesus walking on the water to the discourse on Jesus as the Bread of Life. It is from verses 22 down that Jesus reproved the carnal views of the multitude flocking to him, and required their faith in him whom God sent.[241] The mention of some boat from ***Tiberais*** coming near the place where they ate the bread after the Lord gave thanks also serves in this narrative to restore the readers' attention to the miraculous sign that he is about to connect to the

discourse narrative. Verse 24 brings again the issue of the multitude (***ὁ ὄχλος***) who were seeking for Jesus (***ζητοῦντες τὸν Ἰησοῦν***). The multitude engaged one of the means of traveling in their then world just to catch up with Jesus. Verse 25 continued with relating that these desperate seekers of Jesus continued seeking for Jesus until they found him on the other side of the sea. The author also introduces Jesus' teaching role by the name they addressed him ***Ῥαββί - 'Rabbi'*** which is translated 'Teacher' or 'Master'. Those who seek for Jesus do find him! This particular multitude that sought for him found him. It is this crowd that Jesus gave the discourse on the Bread of Life. John employed the Bread of Life discourse, to present the Pre-existent Word of God to be the life giver and sustainer of life.

Verse 25 establishes a connection between the miracles of walking on the water and introduces the discourse. In verse 25, the people who sought and found Jesus, confronted him with a question. They wanted to find out from Jesus 'when?'- **(*πότε;*)** he got to the other side? They asked the question of 'when' but they were also desirous to know 'how' he got to the Capernaum side. Here, instead of Jesus answering the inquiry of how he came there, Jesus blamed their asking.[242] But Jesus was not interested in answering their 'when?'- **(*πότε*;)** question, it is the why question that he rather concerned himself. William notes here that "to that question, Jesus simply did not reply. This was no time to talk of things like that; life was too short for pleasant gossip about journeys. He went straight to the heart of the matter."[243] The concern of Jesus which is to answer 'the why question' was set rolling from verse 26 in which Jesus begins the discourse by engaging the Jews in a discussion so as to make explicit their hidden motivation in seeking him.

3.10.4.2. The Discourse on the "I am the Bread of Life"- (ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ἄρτος τῆς ζωῆς·)

Jesus in John is presented as always having discourses with his disciples or with those who seek after him. This discourse Jesus often had in John was of a more conversational character. The spiritual truth Jesus aimed to reveal are mostly at the first instance being misunderstood. Roger Hahn observes that "After a significant event is narrated, discussion with either the Jews or the would-be disciples follows. Their

misunderstanding opens the way for Jesus to enter a major discourse that reveals more of his true nature."[244] A discourse of Jesus which is a typical pattern in the fourth Gospel is beautifully illustrated in John 6. It is observed in John 6 that after the major events of feeding of the five thousand and walking on the water, what followed next was the discussion Jesus had with the crowd- ***ὄχλος*.** What motivated Jesus to engage the crowd in this discourse was their failure to understand or see the wonderful actions Jesus performed from their spiritual standpoints. Seeing the signs (***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***) they were shown, their thoughts ought to have been turned to the God who did these things, instead all they were thinking about was how they were to be getting steady supply of bread. In other words, they were not thinking about their souls but for the bread that would satisfy their stomachs. They were more drawn to the materialistic aspect of the miracle. And so, Jesus used the opportunity to explain to them explicitly about his ontological identity as the Bread of Life. It is in this discourse that Jesus in John further expanded his presentation of himself as the giver and sustainer of life.

The discourse on the bread of Life started from verse 26 in which Jesus established the multitude's hidden intent for seeking (***ζητεῖτέ*** -You (plural) seek) him. Jesus himself understands the reason why the crowd were seeking for him. John quotes Jesus as having said, ***ἀπεκρίθη αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς καὶ εἶπεν, Ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, ζητεῖτέ με οὐχ ὅτι εἴδετε σημεῖα, ἀλλ᾽ ὅτι ἐφάγετε ἐκ τῶν ἄρτων καὶ ἐχορτάσθητε.*** Translated - Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs- ***σημεῖα***, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. ***Ἀμὴν-amen*** translated surely, indeed or truly –***alethos***. This 'verily' (amen) is often used by Jesus in the four Gospels. Most especially in the gospel of John, the Lord introduces a solemn pronouncement by the repeated word "verily, verily." This "verily verily" occurred in John twenty-five times.[245] In verse 26, Jesus using these Greek words, ***Ἀμὴν ἀμὴν***, he was speaking of what was, is and will continue to be the truth! Jesus speaks as One who is God. Jesus speaks of what he is sure of, about the nature of man, though the reference is here made about the Jewish crowd. Here, Jesus recognizes the fact that human beings do seek him. Yes, they were seeking Jesus, it is good and important

to seek Jesus, but the reason or motivation for which one seeks Jesus needs to be established. It is observed that ***ζητεῖτέ με οὐχ ὅτι εἴδετε σημεῖα-*** you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, sounds to be contradictory since this comment is related to the crowd coming to Jesus because of the sign- ***σημεῖον (sēmeion)*** of the feeding of the five thousand. The truth here is that the crowd's interest in looking for Jesus was not based on their understanding of his ontology, but they were seeking Jesus for their immediate self-gratification. Roger remarks here that "For John the question of motivation in seeking Jesus is always an important question."[246] In this case, The Jews were seeking for him for a reason which Jesus does not approve. In this context, the Jews were seeking for Jesus because of the signs-***σημεῖα*** that he has been performing, but they could not see the signs! Here Jesus in John uses 'you see'***εἴδετε*** which relates to the perceptive eye of their understanding. See is here synonymous to understanding. Roger notes here that,

> For John "seeing signs" in the physical sense of optical perception is of no significance. To "see a sign" one must penetrate its meaning. We would speak of "understanding signs." (Interestingly, the particular Greek word that John chose for "see" is very similar in form for a word meaning "know.") True understanding of the feeding of the five thousand would have recognized that the barley loaves were only pointers to the true bread. The gift of loaves should have pointed to the giver. How often we are like the Jews in seeking only the gifts and not being interested in the giver.[247]

They did not see the signs (***σημεῖă-sēmeia***) Jesus performed with the spiritual eye of understanding. And so, they did not understand the true spiritual import or significance of the miracles they have witnessed Jesus perform. In not seeing, they were eluded of the spiritual significance of the signs (***σημεῖă-sēmeia***) and instead they got hold of the material benefits! Consequently, Jesus knowing their hidden intent and the level of their understanding, explicitly made known to them the reason for which they were seeking him, which is because of the material gain of them eating of the miraculous multiplied loaves till they had their fill (***ἀλλ᾽ ὅτι ἐφάγετε ἐκ τῶν ἄρτων καὶ ἐχορτάσθητε)***. Jesus is not happy that they were seeking him only for the material gain, they did not match their search for him with the needed authentic faith which yields the corollary of trusting obedience to Jesus' ontology. This is said because for John, authentic faith is consolidated and grounded on belief that has everything to do with trusting obedience to Christ.

Seeking and coming to Jesus must involve commitment to the will of the Father. Consequently, seeking and coming to Jesus merely for one to have his or her needs met and satisfied is not a genuine faith. They were seeking Jesus for more satisfying food. It was this materialistic motivated quest for Jesus, that Jesus saw demonstrated by the crowd seeking him and he out rightly condemned it.

John 6:26-34 – captures the crowd asking for a sign - ***σημεῖον (sēmeion)*** to be likened to the crowd that were fed Manna in the wilderness. As regards verse 27, the fourth-century theologian, John Chrysostom notes that "'Men', are nailed to the things of this life."[248] Like most men of every generation, this crowd were conscious of the material things they would get from Jesus. Jesus himself, pointed out to them that all they were interested in were for their physical satisfaction. They were just fed with free meal which they ate to their satisfaction and so they wanted more but there are other more important hungers which can be satisfied only by Jesus. Jesus here stresses that material food is real and that hunger is real, but that spiritual realities are of pre-eminent value; they transcend and outlast the material aspect. Indeed, they give true meaning to the material world.[249]

Following this, Jesus commanded this crowd seeking him for their material gains to rather desist from working for the food that perishes. They are to engage their energy in working for that which should ***μένουσαν*** -'abide' or remain. The work in which they should engage their energy which should as well yield fruits that would abide were unveiled in Johannine Ethics. They should hunger for truth –in him alone is the truth of God; this can abide. There is the hunger for life- but in him alone is more abundant life. There is the hunger for love-in him alone is the love that abides and outlasts sin and death. It is in Christ alone that one can satisfy the hunger of the human heart and soul.[250] 'Abide' is one of the favorite words used in John. 'Abide' (***μένουσαν***) in this context describes the bread of eternal life. In the Old Testament, Prophet Isaiah (Is 55:2) had asked his audience: why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and you labor for that which does not satisfy? There is a higher tendency of human-beings to engage their energy into daily ventures that would not satisfy their spiritual hunger. Physical food can only satisfy physical hunger and does not satisfy spiritual hunger. Thus, people may amass great wealth

and still be feeling incompleteness in life. Worldly people would keep trying anything for a new pleasure because they are both appallingly rich and appallingly hungry. It takes only the spiritual bread to satisfy the spiritual hunger.

Jesus in John uses the term ***ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου*** - Son of Man to refer to himself. The Son of Man is here unambiguously associated to be the bread, which if one eats it, should lead to 'eternal life' which is another favorite phrase in John. This food that sustains and guarantees eternal life can only be given by the Son of man for only he has the seal or the approval from the Father. The phrase: God has set his seal (***ἐσφράγισεν*)** upon him has wealth of meanings. Seal (***ἐσφράγισεν***) denotes "a stamp" or "signet", used to indicate security and permanency.[251] It is made from pottery or metal or jewels. In commercial and political documents, seals are imprinted with the signet ring, which made the document valid; seals are used to authenticate a will and tied on the mount of a sack to guarantee the contents. The Jews see the truth from God as the seal from God. There is a Rabbis saying that states that "the seal of God is truth".

In the context of verse 27, seal (***σφράγιζώ sphragizo-ἐσφράγισεν***) functions as a verb in its aorist form. Seal (***σφράγιζώ sphragizo-ἐσφράγισεν***) functions in this verse, not as the signature but as an authenticator.[252] And so, Jesus is the seal from God. Authentication here is done by God in sealing the Son as the Giver of eternal life. This is used as perhaps a figurative allusion to the impress of a mark upon loaves.[253] This could account for the reason the flesh which is the bread which Jesus now offers can satisfy the eternal hunger. Jesus satisfies spiritual hunger because he is God's true incarnate who is sealed by God. And so, he alone being the incarnate of God, is endued with the grace to truly satisfy the hunger of the soul which God created.

In verse 28 with this phrase ***εἶπον οὖν πρὸς αὐτόν, Τί ποιῶμεν ἵνα ἐργαζώμεθα τὰ ἔργα τοῦ θεοῦ;*** presents the crowd as asking Jesus, what must we do so as to do the works of God? They asked this question because Jesus had admonished them not to work for material gains. The Jews having heard of the admonition to work, what came to their mind was their worldview of what 'good works' connote. They believed that it was by living a good life, it was possible to earn the favor of God. To the Jews human

beings could be divided into three classes: those who were good, those who were bad and those who were in between who could be transferred to the category of the good people, if they do one more good work. Consequently, the Jews at this point expected Jesus to list to them the more good works they are to start doing so as to join the league of good people.

In verse 29, Jesus replied the crowd, ***Τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ ἔργον τοῦ θεοῦ, ἵνα πιστεύητε εἰς ὃν ἀπέστειλεν ἐκεῖνος***. - "This is the work of God that you believe in him whom he has sent." This Jesus' answer places emphasizes on ***πιστεύητε*** – believe or faith. ***πιστεύητε*** in this context was used in its verb subjunctive present active 2nd person plural form. ***πιστεύητε*** used as a subjunctive verb expresses wishes. It is controlled by ones will power. It implies an action one may wish or not will to do. ***'Πιστεύητε εἰς'*** denotes to be persuaded of and hence, to place confidence in, to trust. It signifies, in this sense of the word, reliance upon, not mere credence. The Greek word, ***πιστεύώ*** *is* most frequently used by John the evangelist in his gospel. John does not use ***πιστεύώ*** in its noun form but in its verb form. Due to the theological importance of ***πιστεύώ*** to John the evangelist, he used ***πιστεύώ*** ninety-nine times in its verb form while Matthew used it ten times, Mark used it ten times and Luke used it nine times.[254] Following this, John stressed that the followers of Jesus have to enculture believe and faith in Jesus who was sent by God. Having seen signs that Jesus was sent by God, the work they are to do is to believe and have faith in Jesus. A believing faith in Jesus requires a personal surrender to Jesus (1:12). A believing faith in Jesus means being in such a relationship with the divine in which the believer becomes a friend to God, not terrified of him anymore but knowing him as his or her Father and friend and being committed in giving him the trust, obedience and the submission which naturally arise from this new relationship.[255] It follows that ***πιστεύητε*** used in its subjunctive present active 2nd person plural form indicates that the believe and or faith Jesus was requiring from this crowd is believing faith that should be continuous. It should be a life time of trusting in Jesus Christ, it is a continuous work -***Τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ ἔργον τοῦ θεοῦ***. It does not have to be simply a single moment of belief. The object on whom one should believe in is 'that sent One' –'***ἀπέστειλεν ἐκεῖνος'***.Jesus is the sent One, who came to fullfil his mission goals. It is important to believe in this sent

One because he came from the Father. Roger notes here that "the significance of Christ for the Christian faith, the reason he is the One to be trusted in, is the fact that he came to us as the emissary of God."[256] This sent One is to be 'believed in'- (***πιστεύητε εἰς***) because he came with authority and the seal from God. It is because of the Father's will that he came and so he came to do the Father's will (5:30).

In verse 30, these Jews began again to ask of another sign ***σημεῖον (sēmeion)*** from Jesus to prove to them that he was sent from God. These Jews said to Jesus, ***Τί οὖν ποιεῖς σὺ σημεῖον, ἵνα ἴδωμεν καὶ πιστεύσωμέν σοι; τί ἐργάζῃ;*** - "Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? "What are You going to perform? The question is an awkward question because it obviously unveiled their obstinacy to believe, though they have witnessed many signs (***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***) that revealed who Jesus is. This crowd asking for another sign ***(σημεῖον)*** were the ones miraculously fed as a sign ***σημεῖον (sēmeion)*** from the Father to persuade them to identify with Jesus as the 'sent One'- sent from the Father in whom individuals should 'believe in'-(***πιστεύητε εἰς***). They ate the barley bread miraculous provided before them. They had witnessed the healing miracles, with the miraculous feeding, they were shown signs-(***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***), they knew that Jesus had miraculously crossed the lake without a boat but in verse 30 they were asking for another sign (***Τί οὖν ποιεῖς σὺ σημεῖον, ἵνα ἴδωμεν καὶ πιστεύσωμέν σοι; τί ἐργάζῃ***;- "Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform?) to be performed before them- for them to 'believe in Jesus'. These show that in most cases, people seeing signs (***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***) must not compel or bring them to develop a believing faith in Jesus. These people have seen all these signs, yet these signs they have witnessed could not bring them to faith. Roger notes this "If miracles could bring faith surely that crowd would have been the best of believers!"[257] Examining this crowd, one will see that their consistent demand shows that their quest for the miraculous was one motivated by selfish centeredness rather than the desire to do the will of God. There is a difference between "believe in" and "believe." "Believe in" -(***πιστεύητε εἰς***) has to do with trust. "Believe" simply signifies intellectual acknowledgment. The fulcrum of the problem in this context is that though the crowd have witnessed the signs (***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***), nevertheless they kept on demanding to be shown more signs and yet they were

reluctant to 'believe in Jesus'. This relates to what many modern seekers of Jesus do also. With these Greek words, They claimed that "***οἱ πατέρες ἡμῶν τὸ μάννα ἔφαγον ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ***," - Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness" they even quoted and even made reference to the Old Testament account of how Moses fed Israelites in the wilderness with these Greek words "***Αρτον ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς φαγεῖν."-*** He gave them bread from heaven to eat (Exod 16:4; Neh 9:15; Ps 78:24,25). In this verse the argument raised becomes specifically Jewish in expression, assumptions and allusion. With these references, they try to show Jesus that his feeding of the five thousand people with few fishes- is not a new thing to them. Roger notes that,

> Referring to the manna in the wilderness and citing Scripture the crowd dares Jesus to top that miracle. The challenge was double-barreled. First, it was a challenge to top Moses, the man Judaism saw as the founder of their faith. If Jesus would call them to trust in him, he would have to win that right by out-performing Moses. Thus, the challenge is clearly laid out in terms of Judaism versus Christianity. Second, it was a challenge to bring in the Messianic Age, to prove himself as Messiah. The Jewish expectation of that time believed the Messiah would renew the gift of manna.[258]

Though their challenge was clear, Jesus answered them by explaining to them that the adumbrated event in the Old Testament is before their eye being unveiled. This answer, Jesus gave the crowd that reads, ***Ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, οὐ Μωϋσῆς δέδωκεν ὑμῖν τὸν ἄρτον ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, ἀλλ᾽ ὁ πατήρ μου δίδωσιν ὑμῖν τὸν ἄρτον ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ τὸν ἀληθινόν***·- ("Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven) has been recently shown to have been formulated along a pattern of Jesus' interpretation of scripture. In this pattern, the interpreter responds to a Scripture passage by saying, "Do not read 'this' but 'that". The interpreter goes further by providing an alternative way of understanding the passage. Roger explaining that this pattern is seen demonstrated in this discourse, noted this,

> The crowd had said, "He gave them bread out of heaven to eat." Jesus responded, "Do not interpret the 'he' as Moses but as the Father. Do not read 'gave' but 'gives'." Suddenly the Scripture citation by the crowd has been turned to a witness to Jesus.[259]

For John's Jesus, Moses did not give the Israelites the bread from Heaven, what Moses demonstrated was the shadowed event, it was God that gave them manna. But then, with these words, ***ἀλλ᾽ ὁ πατήρ μου***

δίδωσιν ὑμῖν τὸν ἄρτον ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ τὸν ἀληθινόν· Jesus explains to them that it is not Moses but the Father that gives them the true bread (***τὸν ἄρτον***) from heaven. The verbs δέδωκεν (give-gave) related to Moses' functions is used in its indicative perfect active 3rd person singular while δίδωσιν (gives) used in its indicative present active 3rd person singular form, signifies that what the Father gives is Jesus and it is continuously given! Jesus in John clarified by the further modification that the Father gives 'the true bread'-(***τὸν ἄρτον τὸν ἀληθινόν***) from heaven. In this context, the word "true"- ***ἀληθινόν*** may be taken to mean "genuine" as opposed to "false" or "spurious" or in typical Hebrew thought it could mean "reliable" and thus "lasting" as opposed to that which passes away (v.27).

The manna (***μάννα***) was not really the bread of God, it was only the symbol of the bread of God. The adjective used to describe what the Father gives is ***ἀληθινόν***-True, this presents what Moses gave to be a shadow of the real thing while that which the Father gives is the real thing in the person of Jesus. The shadow and real thing is also to be applied to both the Old and New Testament, considering their similar and different contexts. The Old Testament relates to the shadowed events, while it is in the New Testament that God carried out the real events that supersede all that were done in the old covenant, for the holistic salvation of mankind. For William,

> Their minds were still on the feeding of the crowd, and inevitably that turned their thoughts to the manna in the wilderness. They could hardly help connecting the two things. The manna had always been regarded as the bread of God; and there was a strong Rabbinic belief that when the Messiah came he would again give the manna. The giving of the manna was held to be the supreme work in the life of Moses, and the Messiah was bound to surpass it. 'As was the first redeemer so was the final redeemer; as the first redeemer caused the manna to fall from heaven, even so shall the second redeemer cause the manna to fall'[260]

With this historic knowledge, the Jews challenged Jesus to produce bread from God in order to substantiate his claims of being the Messiah. This crowd did not regard the bread which Jesus had fed the five thousand as bread from God. This claim is a great claim to them and so they challenged Jesus to prove it. Roger notes it this way,

> This radically revised interpretation of Scripture is characteristic of the conflict between Judaism and Christianity in the first century. Both appealed to the same Scriptures (what Christians now call the Old Testament), but radically different interpretations arose from the same passages. Christian faith affirmed that Jesus himself, and the Holy Spirit (v.27) provided believers with the "true" interpretation.[261]

What the Father now gives is described as being the true bread- (***τὸν ἀληθινόν τὸν ἄρτον).*** This true bread is from Heaven. Verse 33, reads that ***ὁ γὰρ ἄρτος τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστιν ὁ καταβαίνων ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καὶ ζωὴν διδοὺς τῷ κόσμῳ***-(For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.). In this verse, Jesus symbolically used the bread to describe himself to be the bread that came from the heaven. The barley bread is made from the assumed low quality source, yet it gives energy and sustains life. Just as the bread gives energy and sustains, Jesus as 'the true bread'- (***τὸν ἀληθινόν τὸν ἄρτον)*** may not have come in the form that they have expected, but because he came from heaven into the world, he consists in giving and sustaining life. This explicit reference of himself to be 'the true bread'-(***τὸν ἀληθινόν τὸν ἄρτον)*** was developed in a grounded form in verse 35ff. In verse 34, this crowd demanded that the Lord gives them that bread always. Verse 34 concludes the self-centered response of the crowd in this section. The way the Lord himself has described the function and the essence of the bread enticed them, hence at this point they demanded that the bread should be given to them always. Their desperation in wanting the gift, while despising the giver is also here captured as the fulcrum of the problem. They shouted, ***Κύριε, πάντοτε δὸς ἡμῖν τὸν ἄρτον τοῦτον.*** -Lord, give us this bread always" as if they now understand the true import or significance of the bread and the commitment and discipleship that should accompany that. It was for Jesus to be giving them bread always that motivated them to have wanted to take him by force to make him their king. Now again, after Jesus took time to describe to them the kind of bread God gives through him, they desperately wanted that bread always. Roger notes here that,

> Their misunderstanding of the true bread is a retreat to Judaism and a withdrawal from the trusting faith in Christ that was described as the work of God. It is also very similar to the remark of the Samaritan woman in 4:15, "Sir, give me this water in order that I might not thirst nor come here to draw." By this request the crowd confirms Jesus' accusation of verse 27 that they are only interested in the bread that passes away. They are willing for Jesus to constantly provide barley loaves as in the feeding of the five thousand.[262]

This their demand also shows that they have not come to understand Jesus and the symbolic truth he wants them to understand. But when Jesus responds to their challenge to repeat the miraculous signs-(***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***) by placing a demand of discipleship on them, they would quickly change the subject back to their unceasing quest to see him perform more signs for them to believe.

John 6:35-50 presents Jesus as making the claim that he is, the Bread of life (***Εγώ εἰμι*** -the I am saying) but the question that comes to mind is what does Jesus mean when he declared that he is the bread of Life? This question revolves around what is bread and what is life as meant by Jesus. Bread sustains life, without it life cannot go on. Life on the other hand means something that is far more than mere physical existence. Life has physical and spiritual sides. Since life is more than physical existence, the life that Jesus gives and sustains is the spiritual life in which a new relationship with God is consolidated based on trust, obedience and love. This relationship is only made possible only by Jesus Christ. Only through Jesus that one can access this life time relationship with God. It implies that without Jesus there may be existence, without one living life. Following this, if Jesus is the essential of life, he may than be described as the bread of life.[263]

From verses 35 to 50 explicitly identify Jesus to be the bread of life-(***Εγώ εἰμι ὁ ἄρτος τῆς ζωῆς***). Jesus is the true Bread (v.32), as against the adumbrated one given by Moses in the Old Testament. Having previously described the ontological nature of this bread (verse 33- for the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven), John went on to also describe the functional nature of this symbolic bread (that gives life to the world). In Jesus as the bread of Life is consistently emerged his two natures: his ontological and functional character. The life which emanates from Jesus as the bread of life takes care of the present and the future, it is in fact continuous. It is in verse 35 that Jesus says (***εἶπεν αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς***,) explicitly to the crowd, that he himself is the Bread of life. Jesus used these Greek words ***Εγώ εἰμι ὁ ἄρτος τῆς ζωῆς*** (I am the bread of life) to explain to the crowd who he is. This, he did since they could not understand his person and essence through the signs (***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***) that he had performed. This declaration that comes from Jesus remains the truth about himself. This truth has been hinted from the first half of this chapter. Jesus knowing his audience, gradually from verses 22 to 34 made veiled statements that led up to this statement. The crowds' demand in verse 34 for Jesus to give them again this bread always suggests that, they even at this point, still misunderstood the signs (***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***) Jesus wanted them to see and understand. It was due to this misunderstanding that gave John's Jesus the leverage

to explicitly make the ***Εγώ εἰμι***-I am declaration in verse 35. It is in this same verse 35 that Jesus concluded his interpretation of the symbolism behind the bread. The crowd had pointed it out to him that it was 'he' Moses who gave them bread in the Old Testament, but at this point Jesus interprets it that it was God the Father that gave them Manner (v.31). Again, Jesus points it out to them that they should not read 'gave-***ἔδωκεν'*** but 'gives-***δίδωσιν***' in verse 32 to indicate the continuity of what God gives in the person of Jesus. Then in verse 35 Jesus clearly implies that those who were seeking him should not interpret "bread" to be manna, rather that they should see the symbolic bread as Jesus himself. Implied from the above is that the Father is giving Jesus as the bread the true source and sustenance of life in the world.

It is this ***Εγώ εἰμι ὁ ἄρτος τῆς ζωῆς*** – I am the Bread of life that is the first major 'I am sayings' in the Fourth Gospel**.** Jesus' first use of '***Εγώ εἰμι***- I am' which is seen in 6:20 was not used in its predicate form, though was used in its absolute sense, but this underlines the significance of the ***ἐγώ εἰμι*** by emphasizing "do not be afraid." It is then in 6:35, that one sees the first of the series of uses of '***ἐγώ εἰμι***'with a predicate (***Εγώ εἰμι + ὁ ἄρτος τῆς ζωῆς*** =I am + the bread of life). Other 'I am sayings' with the predicate include: "I am the Light of the world" (8:12), "I am the door of the sheep"(10:7), "I am the good shepherd"(10:11), "I am the resurrection and the life"(11:25), "I am the way, the truth and the life"(14:6), and "I am the true vine"(15:1). In each of these I am sayings, ones sees Jesus describing his relationship with the people of the world. Just as with the ***Εγώ εἰμι ὁ ἄρτος τῆς ζωῆς*** =I am the bread of life, Jesus is seen describing himself to be the bread of life not in the sense that the physical content of bread is the chemical make-up of Jesus' body. Instead, the statement, "I am the bread of life" clearly pinpoints what Jesus can be for people. In the case of "the bread of life", Jesus is to consistently function as the true source of humans' physical and spiritual nourishment and sustenance. Jesus as the bread of life is the provider and guarantor of eternal life. Jesus used what is common from his world, drawing from its symbolic meanings to explain his ontological and functional natures to the people of the world. For example, bread which Jesus used to describe himself was as of then the basic foodstuff in the ancient world generally and most particularly in Palestine. The fundamental idea which would naturally come to the mind of the original audience to whom

Jesus first described himself to be the bread of life- ***Εγώ εἰμι ὁ ἄρτος τῆς ζωῆς***, would be their idea or world view of bread as a source of nourishment and sustainment of life. This is seen that Jesus having explained to them that the bread he would continuously give to them would nourish them eternally, they then in verse 34, exclaimed that this Lord who owns this type of bread should give it to them always. This their statement is grounded from their worldview of bread and its functions in their body.

Some Biblical scholars have established Old Testament allusions that relates to the theological import or significance of Jesus describing himself to be bread. These allusions are seen in the wisdom tradition and in the prophetic writing of Isaiah. The examples of these allusions are seen in the following: In Proverbs 9:5, personified Wisdom invites, "Come, eat my bread, and drink wine which I have mixed for you." Similar words of invitation may be found in Isaiah 55:1-3, "Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and you labor for that which does not satisfy? Hearken diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live. . ." This verse in Isaiah relates to what Jesus said in the later verse of 35, which reads ***ὁ ἐρχόμενος πρὸς ἐμὲ οὐ μὴ πεινάσῃ, καὶ ὁ πιστεύων εἰς ἐμὲ οὐ μὴ διψήσει πώποτε.*** - Whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. In both, there is an invitation to individuals who are thirsty and hungry to come. Roger relates here that,

> Against the background of these verses the remainder of verse 35 becomes clear. The invitation to come to Jesus is an invitation to come to the Wisdom of God, to God himself. The concept of believing, so important to John, and the concept of coming to Jesus find their meaning in the passage of Isaiah -"hearken, ...delight ... and incline your ear."[264]

The contents of Proverb 9:5 and Isaiah 55:1-3, reveal the adumbrated wisdom and prophetic sayings that were fully unveiled in John 6. Verse 35 being the climax explicitly unveiled Jesus to be the Wise One through whom individuals are invited to identify with the Wisdom of God. In the same vein, Isaiah's idea of "hearken …delight …and incline your ear" relates to the emphasized concept of believing and the

concept of coming to Jesus. These concepts are so important in John, consequently John consistently emphasized on them. With these Greek words ***-ἀλλ᾽ εἶπον ὑμῖν ὅτι καὶ ἑωράκατέ [με] καὶ οὐ πιστεύετε-*** in verse 36, John introduces, the concept of 'believe'- ***(πιστεύώ)*** which is very important in the theology he is advancing. Here , though the Jews have seen the prophesied Messiah, though they have witnessed the signs that clearly unveiled who Jesus is and even though Jesus himself have unambiguously declared who he is to them, yet they did not come to believe!

A close reading of verses 37-40 explains the idea of invitation first introduced in verse 35. What the crowd does, is known as ***ζητεῖτέ με*** 'seeking for me'. 'Seeking for Jesus', Jesus designates 'coming to me' '***πρὸς ἐμὲ ἥξει'*** (v.37). Anyone who will respond to the invitation of coming to Jesus, are to be conscious of the truth that coming to Jesus has two facets: responsibilities of doing so and the intrinsic and explicit challenges of identifying with Jesus. Jesus said prophetically, that "***Πᾶν ὃ δίδωσίν μοι ὁ πατὴρ πρὸς ἐμὲ ἥξει,*** -all that the Father gives Me will come to me. Though it is one issue to come to Jesus, another important issue that follows is the responsibilities that are required to remain in him. Coming to Jesus requires commitment to remain in him. It requires commitment and discipleship to come to Jesus, those who God the Father gives, will still come to Jesus and remain or abide in him. Due to the human sinful nature, it is not natural for people to respond to Jesus on their own initiative and human ability. William noted that,

> It is those whom God has given him who come to Christ. God not only provides the goal; he moves in the human heart to awaken desire for him; and he works in the human heart to take away the rebellion and the pride which would hinder the great submission. We could never even have sought him unless he had already found us.[265]

It is God that gives anyone who comes to Jesus the ability to respond to the invitation to come to Jesus and remain in him. This enabling grace over powers the human nature of sinful desires and persuades the person not only to come to Jesus but most importantly to 'remain in him' as he also will remain in the believer. Again, though God gives (***δίδωσίν***) all – (***Πᾶν***) to Jesus, the human will is not converted by force. There remains that stubborn nature which enforces human beings to refuse the salvational offer of

God through Jesus. The one thing which sets back the power of God unto salvation is the rebelliousness of the human heart. Life Jesus offers is optional, it is there for the taking or the refusing, it is not offered by force. But the Greek word ***Πᾶν*** was used in its neuter form, in which it means everything,' rather than personal construction (everyone who), seems to emphasize the universality of his gospel. Also the use of ***Πᾶν ὃ δίδωσίν μοι ὁ πατὴρ πρὸς ἐμὲ ἥξει*** seems limiting. In its limiting sense, it means that only the individual whom the Father gives, comes to Jesus. But then, it does not stop at that, it also implies predestination. The ending part of this verse '… and whoever comes to me I will never cast out…'(***καὶ τὸν ἐρχόμενον πρός με οὐ μὴ ἐκβάλω ἔξω***) opens up its all-inclusive intent. ***ἐρχόμενον***- a verb, used in its participle present middle or passive deponent accusative masculine singular form implies that the invitation is continuous (active) and open to anyone who comes to Jesus. 'Anyone' indicates a wide spread arm, always ready to extended a hearty welcome to anyone who comes to Jesus. Verse 38 states the reason there is a consistent, hearty welcome from Jesus to anyone who comes to him. The reason is because, Jesus came down from heaven not to do his own will -but to do the will of God the Father that sent him (***τὸ θέλημα τοῦ πέμψαντός με***). It is the will of the Father, that human race who had lost their place in the original creation plan of God be restored to him through Jesus Christ. And for this course, God the Father sent His only begotten Son, Jesus to be the medium through which all men can be reconciled to God. Verse 39 brings into lime light the desire of God, which is that nothing be lost' of all that God has given Jesus. This 'nothing be lost' in verse 39 relates to the event that took place in verse 12 in which the fragments were gathered up "so that nothing will be lost." It is the will of God that Jesus preserves and raises up on the last day anyone who genuinely comes to him.

In verse 40, Jesus furthered his explanation on the will of the Father, as it relates to the people, their responsibilities and as it relates to his function as the Son of God. Verse 40 reads***, τοῦτο γάρ ἐστιν τὸ θέλημα τοῦ πατρός μου, ἵνα πᾶς ὁ θεωρῶν τὸν υἱὸν καὶ πιστεύων εἰς αὐτὸν ἔχῃ ζωὴν αἰώνιον, καὶ ἀναστήσω αὐτὸν ἐγὼ ἐν τῇ ἐσχάτῃ ἡμέρᾳ.*** The will of the Father (***τοῦτο γάρ ἐστιν τὸ θέλημα τοῦ πατρός μου***,) is consistent as implied in this phrase. This consistent desire of God is that anyone who

looks to or beholds the Son- (***θεωρῶν τὸν υἱὸν***), believes in him -(***πιστεύων εἰς αὐτὸν***), should have eternal life ***(ἔχῃ ζωὴν αἰώνιον***). The whole verse 40 revolves around a personal construction. Roger captures it this way,

> The will of the Father is that everyone who is seeing Jesus and who is believing (present, continuous tense) in him might be having (present, continuous tense) eternal life. Furthermore, Jesus will raise such a one in the last day. Here, Jesus is the source of life - now and in the last day. This is the exposition of the claim, "I am the bread of life."[266]

What the Father wants is continuous, what Jesus came to do is continuous and the response of believe and faith from individuals who come to Jesus is also required to be continuous. Coming to Jesus is open to all but only those who continue in consolidating believing faith will remain in him. Coming to Jesus and believing him places emphasis on 'remaining in him'. Anyone who comes to Jesus, who believes in Jesus and remains in him would have eternal life (***ἔχῃ ζωὴν αἰώνιον***). The eternal life that is inherent for believing and remaining in Jesus is God's kind of Life (***ζωὴ***). God's kind of Life (***ζωὴ***) is the life one can enjoy only when one is 'in Jesus'. Anyone who does not have a believing faith in Jesus cannot live and enjoy God's kind of life. It is those who have eternal life that Jesus will raise up on the last day (***ἀναστήσω αὐτὸν ἐγὼ ἐν τῇ ἐσχάτῃ ἡμέρα***).

Verse 41 reads ***Ἐγόγγυζον οὖν οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι περὶ αὐτοῦ ὅτι εἶπεν, Ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ἄρτος ὁ καταβὰς ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ***, - Then the Jews murmured at him, because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven. This verse describes or presents the reaction of the crowd when they heard in detail what Jesus meant by claiming to be the bread of life. Their reactions that predicted the failure of the Jews in their supposed relationship with the expected Messiah include the following; they based their judgement of Jesus on human values and on external standards, the Jews murmured, they listened, but they did not learn and they resisted being drawn to God. The Jews in this context reacted by grumbling. The Greek word used is ***Ἐγόγγυζον***, it relates to the Hebrew word used in the Old Testament to describe the Israelite's murmur against God. This crowd responding to Jesus' grounded exposition about his ontological and functional natures, by murmuring - ***Ἐγόγγυζον***, implies unbelief which constitutes disobedience to the

word and commands of the Lord. Unbelief is the core sin in John. This crowd like the people of the Old Testament sinned by murmuring instead of responding by believing in Jesus to be the One sent into the world by God to restore humanity to God.

John in his gospel uses the Greek words ***(οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι)*** – 'the Jews' to designate those who oppose Jesus. John here describes those murmuring in response to Jesus' words, as 'the Jews' ***(οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι)***. Jesus' claim that '***Ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ἄρτος ὁ καταβὰς ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ,'*** - "I am the bread that came down from heaven," formed the most offensive claim that motivated their murmur response (v.41). How could he claim to have come from heaven ***(καταβέβηκα ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ),*** since they know his hometown, and his parents (v.42). They assessed Jesus based on human values and by external standards, they produced the fact that he was a carpenter's son and that they had seen him growing up in Nazareth. They could not understand how this boy they know very well, who came from a poor home could possibly be a divine messenger from God. For these murmuring Jews, it is not possible for him to be the son of Joseph and Mary and also claim to have come down from heaven. Lindars note here that "The Jews' objection was really a matter of 'the scandal of the incarnation'."[267] Unknown to the Jews, God's greatest message came through a Galilean carpenter hence they disregarded it. Noteworthy is that John's perspective is the theological revelation that Jesus though born of human parents came to earth from heaven. This remains the first thing anyone who comes to Jesus must be cognitive and believe about Jesus as indicated in the prologue of John's gospel. In every generation, the questions about the natures of Jesus have always revolved around the affirmation of the deity and humanity of Jesus. It is this question that both Jewish logic and world view could not explain. This informs why they found it difficult to believe Jesus, hence their murmuring response. Jesus knew about the intents of their hearts.

In Verse 43, Jesus ordered the crowd to stop murmuring among themselves. In verse 44, Jesus further grounds his position about those who would come to understand his person, and come up to the level of believing in him. Verse 44 reads ***οὐδεὶς δύναται ἐλθεῖν πρός με ἐὰν μὴ ὁ πατὴρ ὁ πέμψας με ἑλκύσῃ αὐτόν***, -No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him …implies that it is anyone who

has received the revelation from God about the person and function of Jesus, that can only through believing faith come to Jesus and remain in him. No one can come to Jesus unless the Father draws him. The idea of God engaging in diverse means to draw people to himself did not start at a scratch in the New Testament, it can be traced to the Old Testament (Jer. 31:3 and Ho. 11:4). William notes here that,

> Only those accept Jesus who God draws to him. The word which John uses for to draw is ***helkuein***. It is the word used in the Greek translation of the Hebrew when Jeremiah hears God say,… 'with Lovingkindness have I drawn thee'(31:3). The interesting thing about the word is that it almost always implies some kind of resistance. It is the word for drawing a heavily laden net to the shore (John 21:6,11). It is used of Paul and Silas being dragged before the magistrates in Philipi(Act 16:19). It is the word for drawing a sword from the belt or from its scabbard (John 18:10). Always there is this idea of resistance. God can draw men and women, but their resistance can defeat God's pull.[268]

God in expressing his great love for Israel accounts for the direct and indirect moves He undertook in the Old Testament so as to draw his people to himself. Anyone who murmurs against the drawing of God, rejects the love of God who attempts to draw him or her to Jesus. This particular Jewish crowd committed an error by deeming their understanding of Jesus to be more important to them, than believing and submitting to the love which God has sent in the person of Jesus, this is regrettably, being repeated frequently. In verse 45, which reads, ***οὐδεὶς δύναται ἐλθεῖν πρός με ἐὰν μὴ ὁ πατὴρ ὁ πέμψας με ἑλκύσῃ αὐτόν, κἀγὼ ἀναστήσω αὐτὸν ἐν τῇ ἐσχάτῃ ἡμέρᾳ***… using this quotation, Jesus in John references Isaiah 54:13 which reads "And all thy children shall be taught of the LORD; and great shall be the peace of thy children (Isa 54:13). Jesus in John consciously but theologically omits 'your children' and reads it as "they all" so that this gospel would be expanded from Israel to have a universal appeal.

Verse 45 continues to reveal that it is those who are taught by God that the Father would draw to Jesus. This Jewish crowd, because they have rejected the drawing by God, were taught of God, and they could not understand Him. They have not heed God's word, they have not learned of him and so they do not have the persuasion empowered by God to come to Jesus. But it is ***πάντες*** - everyone who has heard and learned from the Father that comes to Jesus. Even now, it is anyone who hears from the Father, obeys him and who learns by becoming a disciple that can only come to Jesus. The main reason Jesus is to be approached to, is because he is the only one who has seen the Father and has come from God**.** Again,

verse 47 emphasizes the significance of 'belief' for anyone who comes to Jesus to access eternal life. Anyone who comes to Jesus, has to believe in Jesus to be the One sent from the Father whose works consolidate a plat form for eternal life. Following this, it is important to note that to refuse the offer of Jesus is to miss life in this world and in the world to come**.** To accept Jesus' offer is to find real life in this world and glory now and in the world to come. Examining the repetition done in verse 48 down, William noted that,

> John is doing what he so often does. He is not giving, or trying to give, the actual words of Jesus. He has been thinking for seventy years about what Jesus said; and now, led by the Holy Spirit, he is giving the inner significance of his words. It is not the word that he reports; that would merely have been a feat of memory. It is the essential meaning of the words; that is the guidance of the Holy Spirit.[269]

Jesus in verse 48 repeating his claim of being the bread of life, points to a strong emphasis he thereby establishes. His nature of being 'the bread of life' (***ὁ ἄρτος τῆς ζωῆς***) is continuous. Jesus will continue being the bread of life for anyone who believes in him. The person who believes in Jesus will access God's kind of life now and in the hereafter. These are encapsulated in Johannine's realized and futuristic theology of eschatology. In verse 49, Jesus continued his elaboration on the argument, first introduced by the signs seeking Jews. It was in verse 30-31 that the Jews asked Jesus for more signs (***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***) which they would see and believe him. They also confronted him with their history that even their father ate the manna in the wilderness. They explained that it was Moses that gave them bread out from heaven to eat. Jesus here acknowledged that Moses gave them bread during the old times, but Jesus emphasized that God the Father is now consistently giving bread out of heaven to those who would believe in him. It is in response to this argument that Jesus makes it clear to them that their fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, but they died. They ate of the earthly loaves which sustains and nourishes the physical man and his material needs but does not guarantees their spiritual wellbeing that would enable one to access eternal life. All those who ate of the manna died because, the natural bread cannot guarantee eternal life. Jesus having explicitly claimed to be the bread of life (35;48), in verse 50, establishes that the type of bread he is, is the

one that came down from heaven, that anyone who eats of this bread, may not die. Roger captures it this way,

> The Jewish ancestors had eaten the wrong bread in the wilderness and they died. Verse 50 begins just like Exodus 16:15, "This is the bread [which the Lord has given you to eat.] But no longer is it manna, but Jesus that God gives to eat, and the one who eats this new bread will not die.[270]

John 6:50-59 presents a new dimension to the discourse that describes what it means to eat and drink Jesus. Jesus is ***ὁ ἄρτος*** - the Bread that if one eats, he or she will not die. Jesus is presented here as the bread of life from heaven, and that none can live but by not eating his flesh and drinking his blood.[271] Verse 51 is explicit in presenting Jesus' body to be the bread that if one eats, he or she will live forever. Jesus' ***σάρξ*** -flesh is the bread that he will give for the life of the world. The flesh of Jesus in this context refers to Jesus' complete humanity. It is still in this sense that John in his first letter, declares that 'Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus is from God' in fact, the spirit which denies that Jesus has come in the flesh is of the antichrist (1 John 4:2-3). John here emphasizes that those who come to Jesus must grasp and never let go the full humanity of Jesus, for it was real that he lived in the flesh. Jesus' humanity include his personified examples, sufferings and death. Jesus lived as the holiest man and he conquered as a man. Those seeking and coming to Jesus must identify with his humanity. Eating Jesus' flesh ***(σάρξ)*** is enshrined in identifying with the humanity of Jesus. The idea of eating Jesus' flesh ***(σάρξ)***, may have been understood in a literalistic and cannibalistic way, but understanding it this way will mean distorting what Jesus was explaining to the Jewish crowd. The crowd's reaction by disputing among themselves and saying "***Πῶς δύναται οὗτος ἡμῖν δοῦναι τὴν σάρκα [αὐτοῦ] φαγεῖν;***" which is translated "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" showed that they misunderstood what Jesus said because they understood it from its literalistic and cannibalistic point of view. The Jews having not understood what Jesus meant, establishes the question of how best should the idea of Jesus' flesh presented as the bread of life for the people of world be understood? Should it be understood as the institution of the Lord's Supper in John's gospel? If

John wanted this sign and discourse narrative to refer to his own way of capturing the Lord's Supper, then through the miraculous sign he demonstrated he was indirectly and through the discourse directly telling them that if you want life, you must come and sit at that table where you eat that broken bread and drink that poured-out wine which by the grace of God, brings you into contact with the love and the life of Jesus Christ.

But then, it is important to note that John has no explicit account of the Last Supper. This is established because John in his gospel only brings in the Lord's teaching about the Last Supper. He did not fix it in the narrative of the upper room, rather he placed it in the narrative in which Jesus fed the five thousand. John by removing his idea of the Lord's supper from the synoptic upper room could imply that 'for the true Christian, every meal has become a sacrament whether eaten in the upper room or upon a greenly grassy hill; whether the meal is the lowly barley bread or even more. For John every meal in the home in which people come to Jesus; be it a humble home, in the richest palace, beneath the sky with grass as the carpet, represents a sacrament. Here, John seems to see the Lord's Supper that is beyond limiting the presence of Christ to an ecclesiastical environment and a correctly liturgical service. Again for John, any Christian meal represents the bread which speaks of the flesh that points to the humanity of Jesus while the wine represents the blood that speaks real life. Thus, in John's gospel the communion table, the dinner table and the picnic (eating out side) on the seashore or the hillside are all the same. They are all the same in the sense that through all of them those who wish to come to Jesus may in partaking taste and touch the bread and the wine which brings them to Christ and Christ in them. It is John's intent that followers of Jesus find him and identified with him. In this John's assumed thought line, he did not belittle the sacrament rather he expanded it, so that as Jesus' followers partake of him in the communion table in his Church, as they go out to the wider world, they could as well find him and he in them, everywhere where men and women meet together to enjoy the gifts of God.[272]

Flesh speaks of the real humanity of Jesus, while his blood stands for the life. Life is in the blood. In the Jewish thought William noted,

> The blood stands for the life. It is easy to understand why. As the blood flows from a wound, life ebbs away; and to the Jews, the blood belonged to God. That is why to this day a true Jew will never eat any meat which has not been completely drained of blood. 'Only, you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood' (Gen9:4). 'It is blood, however, you must not eat' (Deu. 15:23).[273]

The world view of the Jews holds that one should not drink blood, but here Jesus clearly states that they should drink his blood so as to have life, this they could not reconcile with what they already known. And so, Jesus stressed that they must and not as a matter of choice drink his blood. Taking in his ***αἷμα*** -blood by a believer implies the life of Jesus being taken into the very center of one's being, and that life becomes transformed to belong to God. Jesus declaring that his true followers must drink his blood (***πίητε αὐτοῦ τὸ αἷμα***) means that they must take his life into the very core of their hearts. If Jesus enters the human heart then the one that receives him can feed upon the life and the strength and the dynamic vitality that Jesus gives to those that in believing faith have identified with him. Jesus saying that those who seek and come to him must drink his blood implies that "You must stop thinking of me as a subject for theological debate; you must take me into you, and you must come into me; and then you will have real life."[274] This also refers to 'abiding in Jesus' and 'Jesus abiding in' a believer. Following this, for Jesus, eating his flesh and drinking his blood have to do with one feeding ones' heart, soul and mind on his humanity. It has to do with revitalizing and renewing one's life with Jesus until one is filled with God's kind of life.

Jesus' response to the crowd's question in verse 53, further grounds what he means by one eating his ***σάρκα***- flesh and drinking his ***αἷμα*** –blood. It establishes what would happen to those who would not willingly accept to eat his flesh and drink his blood. It is in eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Jesus that one can access real life. This verse therefore denies life -***ζωὴν*** to those who will not identify with the flesh and the blood of Jesus by not consuming them. Verse 54 declares that it is only anyone who eats (***τρώγων*** –to eat) Jesus' body and drinks the blood of Jesus (***πίνων***- to drink) has eternal life. ***Τρώγων*** – to eat and ***πίνων*** to drink were verbs used in their singular forms, they express that it is individuals (individualism in John) who crunches on the flesh and drinks his blood that would have eternal life, and Jesus will raise such one on the last day- ***τῇ ἐσχάτῃ ἡμέρᾳ***. Verse 55 affirms that Jesus's flesh and blood

are real food and real drink. Partaking of Jesus is the only way to real life. The benefit of eating and drinking the flesh and blood is stated in verse 56- ***Ὁ τρώγων μου τὴν σάρκα καὶ πίνων μου τὸ αἷμα, ἐν ἐμοὶ μένει, κἀγὼ ἐν αὐτῷ.*** – the benefit one gets by eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Jesus is that, that person would live in Jesus and Jesus would also live in that person. It seems here that John pictures the idea of partaking of Jesus as being done through the Holy Communion. The consumption of Jesus into the life of the believer gives 'eternal life'-(***ζωὴν αἰώνιον***). For John, it is important that one who comes to and believes in Jesus should abide in Jesus- ***(ἐν ἐμοὶ μένει)***, even also as Jesus abides in him. Directly or indirectly, the meaning of the feeding of the five thousand and the following discourse point out that eating the flesh of Jesus is one of the ways of assimilating Jesus into one's life. The explicit implication of verse 56 shows that identification with Jesus must have to do with eating Jesus' flesh and drinking of his blood, it is in doing so that a believer can abide in Jesus and Jesus in the person. Roger notes here that,

> …The Eucharist re-enacts for the Christian the Passover, the feeding of the five thousand, and our hope for participating in the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (the Messianic banquet). As such John wants believers to know that their life comes via the flesh and blood Jesus.[274]

What Jesus was explaining about himself emphasizes the valued place of personal relationship in John's Gospel. The significance of personal relationship in John is here shown by the use of ***τρώγων*** (to eat) and ***πίνων*** (to drink) in their singular and participle present active forms. Coming to and believing in Jesus in John involves individuals taking decisions to do so being persuaded by the help of the Trinity. Verse 57 is seen presenting the Johanine theme of 'sending and being sent' which is implied by this Greek word ***ἀπέστειλέν***-sent. It is the Living Father that sent Jesus to come into the world of men. As of the time Jesus was physically living in the world, he lived in the world because of the Father who sent him and also lives only to fulfill his will. And so, God sent Jesus, Jesus lives because of the Father fulfilling his will, consequently anyone who identifies with Jesus by feeding on him will also thereby live because of Jesus. Anyone who feeds on Jesus will live daily representing Jesus. Verse 58 re-echoes Jesus's emphasis on himself being the bread that came down to the earth from heaven. The bread (flesh) of himself which he

offers is not in any way to be likened or compared to the type of bread Moses offered to those he led, which they ate and died. The kind of bread, his flesh which Jesus offers, anyone who consumes it will not die but live forever. Verse 59 mentions the synagogue in Capernaum (***συναγωγῇ ἐν Καφαρναούμ***) as the location where Jesus had this discourse with the crowd.

Verses 60 to 71 presents the last response of the crowd after they had listened to the lengthened discourse Jesus had with them. From another purview, these verses presents the last material of Jesus' ministry in Galilee according to the gospel of John. At this point, many of his disciples took offence at the spiritual truth he was showing them.[275] The crowd deemed the discourse of Jesus to be hard to understand. These verses also showcase an important shift in Jesus' public ministry. Jesus had a successful public ministry, but towards the end of his public ministry, the Messiah who rejected being made a king enters a time of declining popularity. Verse 60 implies that even those who were among the crowd perceived what Jesus declared about himself to be 'a hard word'- ***σκληρός ἐστιν ὁ λόγος οὗτος***·. In this context, the Greek word ***σκληρός-skleros*** does not just mean 'hard to understand' but it implies 'hard to accept'**.** The crowd have heard Jesus making the claim of being the very life of God and God sent down to the earth from heaven and that no one can live real life without submitting to him, they know what he meant by that.

Though the disciples-***τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ*** - have been learning from Jesus for a while, though they have seen signs- ***σημεῖον (sēmeion)*** of who he is. Though through the lengthened discourse Jesus has tried to persuade them to believe in him. Yet the crowds and the disciples seem not to understand the declaration of Jesus about himself. They showed their in ability to understand or accept Jesus' words by asking a rhetoric question-***τίς δύναται αὐτοῦ ἀκούειν;*** Who can hear it? ***ἀκούειν*** could imply hear, listen, accept. Since they, who were learners, who had been following Jesus could see Jesus' declaration to be a hard saying, how could others come to accept this Jesus' saying- they wondered. Verse 61 points to the omniscient nature of the author of this gospel, he seems to know what Jesus knows in himself. Jesus perceived in himself that even his disciples were murmuring about his self-declaration, he then asked them, does this cause you to stumble? They may have understood Jesus' claim of being the bread of life

that came down from heaven and that people should eat his flesh and drink his blood from its literal view point. But the issue they had seems to be of how to accept this claim Jesus exclusively made about himself. William notes that,

> Here we come upon a truth that re-emerges in every age. Time and again it is not the intellectual difficulty which keeps men and women from becoming Christians; it is the height of Christ's moral demand. At the heart of all religion there must by mystery, for the simple reason that at heart there is God. In the nature of things, we cannot ever fully understand God.[276]

The real difficulty the people who come to Jesus experience is of two folds. First it demands an act of surrender to Christ which goes with acceptance of him as the final authority; and secondly, it demands a moral standard of the highest level. And so, though the crowd have heard Jesus make exclusive claims about himself, they understood what he meant by those claims, but the difficulty they had was to accept them to be true, with all its implications. And till this day, many are obstinate in accepting Christ not because that he puzzles their intellect, though they may cover that up by claiming that they don't understand him –but because he challenges their lives.[277]

And so, what people really find difficulty doing is accepting his claims and not understanding his claims. Jesus knew about their inability to accept the spiritual truth about him, then he explicitly questioned them. Since they were doubting what Jesus said about himself being the bread that came from Heaven, Verse 62 presents Jesus as daring them with these Greek words ***ἐὰν οὖν θεωρῆτε τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἀναβαίνοντα ὅπου ἦν τὸ πρότερον;*** - Then what if you were to behold the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? Jesus confronts them with what will soon happen as the sign that would finally prove to his disciples the true nature of his claims about himself. Jesus will soon be arrested, killed, die, resurrect and ascend into heaven and they would witness them. Consequently, in a prophetic manner Jesus dares them that they would see him going back to where he came from. It implies that since they found it difficult to believe that Jesus is the bread, the essential of life, which came down from heaven, then they will have no difficulty in accepting that claim when some day they see him ascending back to heaven.

Jesus forecasts his ascension. It is in the death and resurrection of Jesus that his claim will be mainly guaranteed. His claims will be proved, even though he would be killed, he would die to fulfill his passion that is in line with the will of the Father, he will not remain dead. He would arose from the dead and would ascend to Heaven before the eye of his disciples. His disciples would be finally transformed by the post resurrection events.[278] When he eventually died, he did not die for a lost cause. He not only resurrected but he also ascended for he is the Son of God indeed. Jesus in the future would be vindicated by the fact that he would risen again and the miracle of resurrection remains the highest miraculous sign performed in Jesus. The resurrection of Jesus which the disciples witnessed persuaded the disciples to believe even more to the claims about Jesus' ontological and functional natures.

Verse 63 goes back to further persuade them to understand the spiritual truth Jesus was expounding to them. The discussion Jesus had with the crowd was not an ordinary one. The words which Jesus declared before this crowd unveils its values from its main purpose and its goals. For Jesus the words he has spoken to them are Spirit and in them are life. It is Jesus who tells and shows humanity what real life is; who puts his Spirit in the one who believes in him and endues him or her with divine ability to live out his kind of life. Anyone who follows the leading of the Spirit, the Spirit gives him life. The essence of life or living takes its true value from its purpose and its goal. And so, it is Jesus Christ alone who gives people who come to him true purpose in life and power to live out that purpose defeating all oppositions that come from within and without. For one to follow the demands of the flesh which goes with unbelief profits the person nothing. Verse 64 emphasizes the issue of unbelief with these Greek words-***ἀλλ᾽ εἰσὶν ἐξ ὑμῶν τινες οἳ οὐ πιστεύουσιν***. -But there are some of you who do not believe. Jesus knew that many people in the crowd do not believe the spiritual truth, which he has unveiled to them. Jesus looking at the multitude and being God knew those who do not believe in him and in the exposition that he had expounded before them. Even Judas who would later betray him, Jesus knows the intents of anyone who seeks or comes to him. Jesus knew him even beforehand, who would betray (***παραδώσων***) him. The issue of unbelief about the truth of the nature of Jesus' ontology has always been an issue for people of all generations. Because

of the nature of human beings and their tendencies to in unbelief respond to the truth about Jesus, John's Jesus emphasizes again in verse 65 that ***"οὐδεὶς δύναται ἐλθεῖν πρός με ἐὰν μὴ ᾖ δεδομένον αὐτῷ ἐκ τοῦ πατρός***.- no one can come to Me unless it is granted to him by the Father. Anyone who will seek Jesus and come to him, believing who he is ontologically and functionally remains only the person that has received the revelation from the Father of who Jesus is in essence and function.

From verses 6:66-71 many left Jesus. But Peter on behalf of the twelve professes steadfast faith in Jesus and Jesus as a prophet he pronounced one of them to be a devil. Verse 66 presents a foreseen response of many of the multitude who had been following him, because they could not understand nor accept what Jesus presented before them. At this point of the discourse, as many could not understand, accept and or were offended by what Jesus declared about himself, many of Jesus' disciples withdrew from walking with him anymore. William notes here that,

> There was a time when people came to Jesus in large numbers. When he was in Jerusalem at the Passover, many saw his miracles and believed in his name (2:23). So many came to be baptized by his disciples that the numbers were embarrassing (4:1-3). In Samaria, great things happened (4:1,39,45). In Galilee, the crowds flocked after him just the day before (6:2). But the tone of things had changed; from now on there was a growing hatred which was going to culminate in the cross. Already John launches us on the last act of the tragedy. It is circumstances like these which reveal people's hearts and show them in their true colours. In these circumstances, there were three different attitudes to Jesus.[279]

In their defection, they left for various reasons. Some went back because they were looking for more signs (***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***) and were not ready to fulfill the demand of seeking Jesus with a commensurate required discipleship and commitment. Others went back because they have only come to collect and not to give him anything. And so, when it came to suffering for him and giving him themselves completely, they quit. It is important to note that nobody can give so much as Jesus. But if seekers or followers of Jesus are coming to him solely to get and never to in giving back to him respond to his ethical demands, then they will certainly turn back. Most times, those who come to Jesus do not remember that in following him there is always a cross to experience. Still others went back because they saw clearly that he was heading to destruction. To them, Jesus cannot challenge the authorities and be making exclusive claims which the Jews see as being blasphemous and get away with it. Since he was heading for disaster, getting out from

following him was deemed the best option. Those who defected at this point were best to be understood as 'fair-weather followers.' Those who left wouldn't have defected if Jesus' career was still on the upward way, but because they have sensed at the early stage the shadow of the cross, they left him without looking back. Following this, it is important to remember that all along the public ministry of Jesus which has been successful till this point when discipleship and commitment were required from them, at this point records a time of declining popularity. Many people in the crowd turned back and no longer walked with Jesus.

Jesus was not surprised about those who were leaving but looking at his twelve disciples (***τοῖς δώδεκα***) who were in-between taking decision, he asked them "***Μὴ καὶ ὑμεῖς θέλετε ὑπάγειν***; " –"you do not wish to go away as well?" He deliberately asked the disciples he had first selected at the beginning of his public ministry this question to test them. Would they desert him, just as the multitude had done? Peter on behalf of the disciples was determined to remain with him hence, his positive response to Jesus' question. Some assume this Peter's response here to be John's version of Peter's great confession at Caesarea Philippi (Mark 8:27; Matthew 16:13; Luke 9:18). This seeming down point in Jesus' ministry reveals overt loyalty of Peter's heart towards Jesus and his mission. For Peter there is no one else to whom one can go to, so as to access the Word of life. Noteworthy is that Peter's loyalty was based on a personal relationship he has with Jesus Christ. As a person who is following Jesus among others, though there were many things he has not come to fully understand about this person he has been following, sometimes like every other persons, he was bewildered and puzzled. But having walked with him for a while, there were many experiences and revelations he has seen about Jesus for which he would willingly die for Him. Christian theology which John developed from his reflections about the person of Jesus is the one to be consolidated based on a personal response to Jesus Christ. It is not consolidated on philosophy which people must accept nor is it a theory which people must give allegiance to. And so, the theme of individualism is explicitly demonstrated in Peter's response to the question Jesus directed' to them. Peter responding to Jesus' question said "***Κύριε, πρὸς τίνα ἀπελευσόμεθα;"-"*** Lord, who will we go to?" Peter here used

question to answer question. He asked this question because, they were not like many in the crowd who were just following Jesus for the signs he would continue to perform for their material gains, Peter like the other 10 disciples were determined to continue walking with Jesus because Jesus has the words of eternal life. He was more concerned about accessing eternal life than achieving his material needs. Anyone who would persevere in following Jesus despite the difficulties one sees in walking with Jesus, is the one who is more attracted to Jesus because of the spiritual gains the person would gain which does last from now till eternity, than the desire to achieve material gains. And so, the twelve at that moment determined to continue walking with Jesus because of the words they hear from him which would guarantee them eternal life. Peter in Verse 69 further explains that in having walked with Jesus, they have come to believe (***πεπιστεύκαμεν***) that Jesus is the ***ὁ ἅγιος τοῦ θεοῦ***- the Holy One from God. They were able to come to believe because they have come to learn of God, they received the revelation of who Jesus is from God. They were drawn to Jesus by God. The twelve were picked (***ἐξελεξάμην***) by Jesus, they remained and continued walking with him apart from Judas who was also called to fulfill a divine function. Jesus in doing the will of God chose them though one of them will be a tool in the hand of the devil but then he (Judas) would eventually be fulfilling the will of God without knowing it. By mentioning the betrayer, Jesus being God who is all-knowing spoke prophetically about the role Judas the son of Simon Iscariot will play, though he was counted among the twelve.

The summation of what John established and summary in the discourse Jesus had with the crowd seeking for him, is that Jesus is the Bread of Life. It is everyone who believes in him that will have life, God's kind of life that guarantees eternal life. The Jewish ancestors had eaten the earthly bread which is not the true bread in the wilderness, hence they all died. Now Jesus is the true Spiritual bread that if one eats he or she will have eternal life. Though Jesus expounded the truth about his ontology, many in the crowd understood what Jesus explained to them from its literal cannibalism point of view. Consequently many of them murmured, and never came to believe neither because of the signs (***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***) that they had seen nor because of the discourse they had with Jesus. Signs (***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***) may not always draw

beneficiaries or witnesses to Jesus, those who come to Jesus and stayed carrying the cross of the required discipleship and commitment in belief: those who persevered in remaining in Jesus are only those who received the revelation of the ontology of Jesus from the Father. Those who come to Jesus and believe in him are those who are given to Jesus by God. Many who came looking for Jesus just for sensation, could not carry the weight of the ethical demand of discipleship and commitment in belief required in following and having a walk with Jesus. Consequently, the concluding verses of this lengthened chapter 6 present many of the disciples as rejecting these words of Jesus which is endued with power to guarantee them eternal life, if they would continue believing in Him. In response to Jesus' exposition, in the process of this discourse, they murmured and refused to believe like they did in verse 41. When Jesus explicitly and no more symbolically declared himself to be the bread that came from heaven, that his flesh is to be eaten and his blood to be drank for one to have eternal life- this they could not take. They described the categorical sayings of Jesus about himself as being a hard saying. They responded by withdrawing from him. Peter as the leader of the twelve disciples, who had been walking and learning from Jesus responded on-behalf of himself and the other eleven. Peter made a significant confession of faith. Peter affirmed this 'believe'- ***πιστεύώ*** theme that is very important to the Johannine theology. The disciples came to believe in -(***πιστεύητε εἰς***) Jesus not because they have the natural ability to do so, but because they have over time been taught by God who also enabled them to believe and respond to Jesus' word in an unswerving believing faith. It is only the Spirit of God that makes the words of Jesus come alive so that they can become true food and drink for anyone who believes in Jesus. Anyone who responds in faith to Jesus' signs (***σημεῖă-sēmeia***) and spirit filled words will be empowered to overcome the difficulties that come as a corollary of following or walking with Jesus. Many among the five thousand who sought for Jesus because of signs (***σημεῖă-sēmeia***) at this point could not follow Jesus anymore. Those who responded to Jesus in a consolidated believing faith got so committed that this response became a matter of life and death for them. They ended up sacrificing their lives for this course and they achieved its promised glorification.

3.10.4.3 The Purpose for which John wrote (John 20:30-31)

The purpose for which John by way of redaction wrote his gospel is explicitly made known in John 20:30-31**.** First in verse 30**,** which reads ***Πολλὰ μὲν οὖν καὶ ἄλλα σημεῖα ἐποίησεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἐνώπιον τῶν μαθητῶν [αὐτοῦ],*** John the evangelist, clearly stated that there are other ***σημεῖα*** -signs which Jesus performed that were not selected, edited and document in his gospel. John said that many signs Jesus permformed were not written in his gospel- ***ἃ οὐκ ἔστιν γεγραμμένα ἐν τῷ βιβλίῳ τούτῳ·*** The gospels were not written solely as the history and biographies of Jesus. Thus, when people approach the gospels as mainly history and biography, they are thereby approached in the wrong spirit. Those who read the gospels can only learn and be blessed from them when they read them not primarily as historians seeking for information, but as men and women seeking God.[280] Just as the gospels were not meanly meant to be biographies of Jesus but appeals to take him as savior, Master and Lord, likewise John in his autoptic gospel never intended to pen down a biography of Jesus. John through his reflective writing established and consolidated the theological truth about Jesus.

Verse 30 implies that John was selective in the signs - (***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***) he chose to include in his gospel. John did not intend to document day to day actions of Jesus. It is quite clear that the gospel of John was never set out to give a full account of the life of Jesus. In selecting out of the wonder arousing deeds Jesus performed and said, the gospels evangelists (though with their underlined similarities and differences) included in their gospels- established characteristics of what Jesus was like and the kinds of things he was always doing. John the evangelist like the other gospel writers did not give his readers an all-inclusive account of everything that Jesus said or did, but was very selective because of the theological point each of them aims to prove. The autoptic writer in clear statement, declared in verse 30 that there are other signs (***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***) Jesus did that he did not record for a certain motive.

This gospel was reflectively and theologically thought-out before the writer set out to write. As a well-planned write up, John carefully with all clarity of words, sums up the aim of the gospel he has written. William Barclay notes here that "no passage in the gospels better sums up the aim of the writer than

this"[281] The aim of this gospel in verse 31 is written in these unambiguous Greek words. The Greek words ***ταῦτα δὲ γέγραπται*** make reference to the signs John theologically included in his gospel.

Since he does not intend to write all that Jesus did, he used these Greek words ***ταῦτα δὲ γέγραπται-*** But these are written - to introduce his explanation of why he chose the ones he recorded. The reason for which John wrote include that ***"ἵνα πιστεύ[σ]ητε ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ἐστιν ὁ Χριστὸς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ,*** - so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.***"*** The first reason is revelatory while the second is evangelistic. John wrote so that his readers would come to believe in Jesus to be the Christ who is the Son of God. The idea of believing in Jesus to be the Son of God is not something a natural human being can do with his natural ability. But the idea of 'believe' is an important theme in the gospel of John. Consequently, he writes to persuade by using signs to prove to his audience that the ultimate thing is for them to believe in Jesus to be the sent One from the Father. The aim of writing this gospel was not just to give some selected information about Jesus but to through its words that are spirit inspired, encourage individuals to accept Jesus who gives life to whosoever that would believe in him. And so, John systematical portrayed Jesus to be the one who speaks, teaches and acts, and heals so that his audience can easily believe and accept Jesus to be the expected Son of God. "***Πιστεύσητε***"- "That you may believe" is a verb used in its subjunctive form, it expresses wish controlled by one's willpower. In this verse "***πιστεύσητε***"- "that you may believe" implies that one is not to be forced to believe, believe here is to be done consciously. Stating the second reason he wrote, he declares that ***καὶ ἵνα πιστεύοντες***- and that believing … ***πιστεύοντες*** is a verb used in its participle present active nominative masculine plural form. This verb ***πιστεύοντες*** -believing has to be continuous. It is in continuous believing that one may have life in Jesus' name-***ζωὴν ἔχητε ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ***. It is in continuous believing that one might find the secret of real life.[282]

3.10.5. Exegetic Conclusions: Comparing the Synoptics Accounts of the Feeding of the Five Thousand with Johannine Account

The synoptics presented preceding information that it was the news of how Herod killed John the Baptist that made Jesus to take his disciples and withdrew from the crowd. But John did not start narrating his account of Jesus feeding the five thousand with the stories of how John the Baptist was killed. John commenced narrating his account by noting that a great multitudes were following Jesus because they were seeing the signs (***σημεῖă-sēmeia***) which he was performing on those who were sick. The synoptics did not categorically present Jesus' miraculous performances as signs (***σημεῖă-sēmeia***). The synoptics implicitly presents the declaration of Jesus as the I am (***ego elmi)*** and the confession of the disciples after they had witnessed the miraculous feeding of the five thousand and the miracle of Jesus' walking on the sea, they worshiped and declared that he is of a truth the Son of God who is to come. John explicitly presents the wonder arousing deeds of Jesus as signs (***σημεῖă-sēmeia***) having underlying meanings that reveal the person and the function of Jesus as the anointed One from God. John agreed with the synoptics by stating that multitudes were following Jesus about. John was the only Gospel writer that stated the reason the multitudes were following Jesus about. To John, the crowd were following Jesus because of the healing miraculous-signs they had seen him perform on those who were sick. John mentions the Passover feast that was at hand around the time when the miraculous feeding of the thousands took place. Matthew and Mark documented that Jesus saw the crowd and had compassion on them, he started teaching and healing the sick among them. Then as the day was getting late the disciples suggested to Jesus to send the crowd away so that they go into the villages and towns to buy food for themselves. Jesus in the synoptics having heard their suggestion commanded them to give them something to eat. But in John, Jesus was the one who initiated the idea of getting the crowd fed. When Jesus saw the crowd,

testing Philip he asked him, where they were to buy bread that the crowd may eat? Just like in the synoptics-there was the mention of the two hundred denarii worth of bread not being enough to feed the crowds, this was also represented by Philip in John when he responded to Jesus that two hundred denarii

worth of bread will not even be sufficient for everyone to receive a little. The synoptics declared that they have five loaves and 2 fishes without stating the source from which those food items were gotten. John went further by mentioning that those food items were gotten by Andrew from a lad. John also named the type of bread which Jesus miraculously multiplied to be a barley type of loaves. All the gospel writers affirmed that the number of loaves and fishes that were available cannot feed the multitudes.

In all the synoptics, Jesus commanded the disciples to instruct the crowd to sit down on the ground in the desert. But in John, Jesus fed the crowd on a greeny mountain top. All the gospel writers affirmed that it was about five thousand men that were miraculously feed, Matthew at this point noted that, that figure was aside women and children. John could have implied that by noting that about five thousand men sat in circles, on the grass at the command of Jesus. This implies that Jesus miraculously fed more than five thousand people. When Jesus collected the five loaves and two fishes, the synoptics noted that Jesus looked up and blessed, brake and shared to the disciples, but in John, Jesus took the loaves and fishes and simply gave thanks. In John, Jesus himself distributed to the crowd who obeyed his instruction and were sited on the grass. Noteworthy is that the miracle took place in the hands of Jesus. All the gospel writers affirmed that the five loaves and two fishes which normally should not have been enough to feed the crowd, miraculously the crowd ate and were filled. While the synoptics documented that the disciples on their own gathered the leftovers, but in John, Jesus commanded that they gather up the leftover fragments so that nothing be lost. Mark noted that even with the miracle of the loaves that the followers of Jesus did not understand who Jesus is. It again warranted them to witness the miracle of walking on the sea for the disciples to confirm that Jesus is truly the anointed Son of God and to worship him. But in John, after the miraculous feeding, those who witnessed the sign Jesus performed manifested a superficial belief and thereby declared that of a truth Jesus is the Prophet who is to come into the world. Jesus perceived what they had in mind. He knew that they misunderstood the miraculous sign, following this they wanted to take Jesus by force to make him their king that would be their political leader in the order of King David of the Old Testament. Because of their misunderstanding of the sign- ***σημεῖον (sēmeion)*** Jesus performed,

Jesus withdrew again from them and went to the mountain alone. Like the synoptics, the Johannine evangelist also followed up the miraculous sign of feeding of the five thousand with the miracle of walking on the sea. It is also in this account of the miracle of walking on the sea that John secondarily introduced his first "I am"- ***ἐγώ εἰμι*** saying though it is not as explicit as those of the other "I am"- **(*ἐγώ εἰμι*)** sayings in John. When Jesus miraculously got over to the other side, John brought up the aspect of the narrative about the multitude still coming to Capernaum seeking for Jesus. Though the multitude wanted to know how and when he got to the other side of the sea, Jesus rather confronted them by declaring that they were seeking him not because they have understood the signs that they had witnessed, but because they ate of the loaves and were filled. From this point, Jesus had a long conversation that culminated in him declaring himself to be the bread of life and he made demands of discipleship on those who come to him, who seek to follow him, to get their desired miracles and or to have eternal life. For John, the wonder works of Jesus carry underlying symbolic meanings (***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***) that reveal who Jesus is to his followers. Hence at the end of John 6, those who understood the claims of Jesus from its materialistic point of view- withdrew from following him. They withdrew from following Jesus because they wanted him to be Messiah who will consist in giving them bread, but they do not want to be committed enough so as to be his disciples. Those who understood the miracle from its spiritual point of view remained with Jesus. They eventually got so committed with Jesus to the point that they gave their life for his course and were thereby glorified.

3.10.6. Lessons Drawn from the Exegesis of the Miraculous Sign of the Feeding of the Five Thousand in the Context of John 6

3.10.6.1. Jesus does not desire anyone to be seeking and following him just for Miracles Acquisition:

Jesus does not want his seekers and followers to be obsessed with the miraculous. Jesus does not want anyone to develop a superficial faith that only seeks for what one would get from him without consolidating a commensurate committed believing faith in him. Jesus knows the dangers inherent in anyone following him just for his functional nature without identifying with his ontological nature. Following this, Jesus condemned the theological identified act of people, out of desperation to access

miracle becoming his seekers and followers (Joh. 6:2,26). This therefore consolidates that anyone who wants to seek and follow Jesus should learn not to do that out of obsession to access miracles.

3.10.6.2. Miracles are Signs (*Σημεῖᾰ-Sēmeia*) with spiritual meanings revealing Jesus to humanity: Jesus uses his miraculous imparts on that which someone has surrendered to him to point to himself. He wants people who benefited or who are benefiting from his miraculous demonstrations to look beyond the physical aspects of that miracle. He wants people to see the spiritual aspects (***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***) and thereby be drawn to him for their eternal salvation.

3.10.6.3. Jesus can test his own to help them grow in Faith: It should be noted that there is a big difference between testing and temptation. The Lord does not tempt his people to sin but he could test them to help them grow in faith in him. It is the devil that tempts and hopes to use that to draw people away from trusting God. In testing, Jesus already knew what he would do! In testing Philip and any other disciple Jesus aims to help the person grow in their ability to trust him. God also desires that his followers pass any test that may come their ways.

3.10.6.4. Seeing things the way Jesus sees them: Those who follow Jesus are to depend on the leading and commands of Jesus not minding the situation. When Jesus asked Philip how they would feed the multitude, he leaned on his own rationality and logic (John 6:7) because he has not started seeing things the way Jesus perceive or wants them to be understood. As a human being he is, he reasoned that no amount of human striving could fed the multitudes. Human rationality and logic prevent followers of Jesus from growing in faith in Jesus. From this context no pragmatic result came from the disciples' rational and logical efforts. The means through which Jesus fed the multitude by-passed human efforts. This indicates that all good things come from God and not from man's effort. Though God may involve human beings in his works, yet he is the One who equips the work.

3.10.6.5. The Ontology of Jesus Displayed: Jesus' ontology is revealed through his functional nature. In this miraculous sign, Jesus revealed his ontological nature and not just his functional nature. He is God and greater than human needs. Jesus' greatness is displayed when one reflects on how he fed the crowd with few loaves and fishes. Feeding the five thousand showed that Jesus is big enough to provide abundantly humans' finite expectations and spiritual needs. There is no human need that God can not sufficiently meet so far as it is within the confines of his will. Those who follow God through Jesus must learn to trust God completely, he is more than able to provide for the needs of the people of the world.

3.10.6.6. Giving thanks to God even in the times of Needs: Jesus depended on God completely and gives thanks to him even in the face of a seeming impossibility. Jesus hereby teaches his authentic followers how to respond in times of needs. By Jesus responding in thanksgiving, he demonstrates giving gratitude for blessings yet to be received. This stands out in this context. In the face of a seeming difficult situation Jesus looks up and gives thanks to the Father. He did not dwell on the difficult nature of the situation. He looks away from the situation and focuses on the Father on whom he has an intimate relationship with. Focusing on the magnitude of a problem, one could see only impossibility. When followers of Jesus fail to look up they are bound by the limitations of their own resources. Followers of Jesus are also to daily learn not to be focusing on the physical magnitude of the problem, they are always to set their mind and consciousness focused on the Father. Authentic followers of Jesus must learn to be encountering each of their daily problems by lifting up their eyes to the Lord. This is said because when Christians fix their gaze on the Lord Jesus- the seeming problems becomes smaller because nothing is impossible for him. It is crucial to persevere in focusing on the Father and giving thanks to him in the face of every situation for he knows how best to handle the needy situation.

3.10.6.7. Jesus increases any sacrifice anyone offers to him and uses it to bless the person and many others: Through the sacrificial provision of just two fishes and five loaves of barley bread by the lad- Jesus multiplied them to feed the multitudes including the lad. This demonstrates that human possessions and attributes which someone can submit before the Lord are never too small to serve him. The meagre

provisions humans sacrifice to God- be it gifts in form of money or talents, God can multiply it and use it to bless the person and so many other persons in return. Little is much when God is in it, God specializes in using ordinary things to create extraordinary things. Simply put, Jesus is more than able to amplify human offerings and use same to bless the person who offered the sacrifice and many others.

3.10.6.8. The Ethic of Obedience to Jesus: In John, the ethos of obedience is one of the required ethics in genuinely following Jesus. In the face of the seeming difficult and needy situation established in the context of John 6, Jesus instructed his disciples to order the crowds to sit down in groups of circles. The disciples obeyed Jesus and did as he instructed. The needy crowd also obeyed the order that they should sit in groups of circles. This points at the truth that those who follow and work with Jesus must be obedient to his instructions and commands. Just as the disciples were obedient to Jesus' instruction to order the crowd to sit down, likewise- followers of Jesus must learn to bring their lives to God in a spirit of obedience and sacrifice. One who is obedient to the commands of the Lord will never be disappointed.

3.10.6.9. Being sensitive to the needs of other people: Jesus looking at the multitude perceived them to be hungry and vulnerable. Jesus seeing the multitude, saw the need that needs to be met. What then is to be done to this need? There was a need, what there is to do is simply to meet the need. Jesus makes moves to immediately meet the need. The Church as individuals or groups should learn to have eyes that see the vulnerable situations of the people around them whether they have come to believe or not. They are to be moved to help in finding solutions to the felt needs of the people around them. They are not to look away or be only concerned about themselves.

3.10.6.10. Emulative Worthiness of Jesus' Compassionate Disposition: Jesus sees the multitude and initiates that they be fed. Jesus was motivated by love, understanding and compassion. As he feels for their spiritual needs, he also feels for the physical welfare of the people of the world. Jesus delights in meeting the needs of people who make out time to seek him. Though they have not identified with him by consolidating an authentic faith in him, yet he was touched by their vulnerabilities. The Church as an

individual and or as a group should be motivated by genuine compassion when they engage in providing solutions to the felt needs of the people around them. They are not to be inspired by other ulterior motivations. This is said because the Church without mercy and compassion is best to be described as a fraud.

3.10.6.11. Neither Jesus nor his Disciples enriched themselves from the Miraculous Ventures: This miraculous sign demonstration was not a financial opportunity neither for Jesus nor for his disciples. None among them tended to generate profit from hoarding some of the bread or fishes and selling them after wards to some of the hungry multitude. People should not be making merchandise of God's gifts. Jesus collected the available food item, multiplied it and gave it back to the needy ones. This what is expected from both individual Christians and the Christian communities? Gifted Christians should not be making merchandise of the gifts of God in their lives. Spiritual gifts are given freely and freely they should be used for the benefit of the Church and the society. Church founders and leaders should not be accumulating the sacrificial offering collected from their followers for their selfish gains. They are not to be enriching themselves there with. They are to learn from Jesus by giving back to the society. Jesus would not have been able to impact in the lives of the thousands that came in contact with him, if he had accumulated or kept for himself what the boy brought. He did not keep for himself what was given to him rather he multiplied it and used it to solve the needy situation. The Church is not supposed to be a social club where people gather to entertain themselves. Rather the Church should develop eye that are open to see the needs of the people in the community and as well develop willingness to meet those needs. All it takes involves having the eyes that see the needs, developing a large heart to meet the needs, and the Lord will multiply what is provided in order to meet that need.

3.10.6.12. Let there be no Waste: **Jesus' Economic Standard Worthy of Emulation:** Jesus does not want any of the leftovers to be wasted. He commanded the disciples to gather the leftover bread and fishes and 12 baskets were gathered. These 12 baskets were not allowed to waste. Followers of Jesus are to learn

not to waste anything the Lord has blessed them with. Every gift from the Lord should be used to the Glory of the Lord to the latest.

3.10.6.13. The Superiority of Spiritual Bread over Physical Bread: Jesus does not want the crowd to keep seeking and following him just for the physical bread that fills them up for a short time. He wants them to be desirous of the spiritual bread of life that comes to those who believe in him so that they will not hunger again. Jesus does not want his followers to be following him just because of the material things that they would get from him. He wants them to be more desirous of the spiritual satisfaction. And so, they are to work more for spiritual food that would sustain their spiritual life and as well guarantee them eternal life.

3.10.6.14. Construing a Balanced Understanding of the Ontological and Functional natures of Jesus: Jesus wants his followers to have a balanced understanding of his ontological and functional natures. He does not want people to approach him just because of the miraculous signs that they want him to do for them. He wants them to through his functional nature understand what he is revealing about his ontological nature.

3.10.6.15. Miraculous Signs (*Σημεῖă-Sēmeia*) are Revelatory and Evangelistic in Natures: The signs behind each miracle reveal something about the person of Jesus as the Son of God. From the stand point of the established miraculous signs' revelatory roles- it is intended that the miracle recipients understand what is being revealed about Jesus. As it relates to evangelism, it is intended that as miracles points to Jesus to be the Son of God - it therefore aims to persuade the miracle receivers, witnesses and or readers to accept Jesus to be the Son of God for their eternal salvation. Miraculous signs also persuades the recipients, witnesses and readers to consider accepting the demands of being a committed follower of Jesus.

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CHAPTER FOUR

THE QUEST FOR MIRACULOUS SIGNS IN JOHN'S GOSPEL AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE GOSPEL COMMISSION OF THE CHURCH IN NIGERIA

4.1. The Gospel Commission and the Church in Nigeria

The history of the salvation of human kind has shown that Mission is the heart beat of God. Fubara-Manuel notes that "the Bible and the history of the Church tell the stories of God's missional engagement with the world."[1] The Bible in both its Old and New Testaments emphasize that from the foundation of the world that God has been in the mission business of restoring mankind to himself. Bible theology reveals that God is a missionary or a God with a mission. Ituma discussing the mission *dei* documents that "God was the first missionary."[2] In compassion, God initiated mission from the very beginning when the first man and woman deviated from his original plan for creation. This mission started by God was fully manifested by the Lord Jesus. Jesus is the missionary sent by God. Rudolf Bultmann discusses this as "the sending of the Son"[3] While Hans Conzelmann discusses it as "the Son as sent." [4]

The language of the gospel of John emphasizes that Jesus was sent from God (John 5:36), that is why it is also highlighted that Jesus possessed the nature of God (1:1-3), in essence and in function. The manner in which the works of Jesus were paralleled with those of God consolidate that his works identify him to be One sent from God (5:36).[5] Jesus having been sent is now sending his followers with the help of the Holy Spirit to carry on the gospel commission in the same way he modelled. Like the synoptic evangelists (Matt. 28:18-20, Mark16:15-18, Luke 24:45-49), Jesus also issued the gospel commission in John's gospel (20:21-23). Gospel commission[6] was therefore continued by the early Christians and it is still on, in the interim as the Church is waiting for the ***Parousia***-the second coming of Christ. The mission started by God was characterized by many signs -**(**אוֹת- ***'ot*)** and "wonders" (מוֹפֵת ***-mophet***) (Ex 7:3;Deut. 4:34).

The mission of God fully manifested by the Lord Jesus was replete with miraculous "signs"-(***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***). The mission continued by the early Christians was accompanied with "miraculous signs"-(***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***), "Wonders"-(***τέρατα -Terata)*** and "Mighty works"- (***δυνάμεσι -Dunameis***- Acts 2:22). The mission which the Christians in this interim are carrying on is the one also being accompanied by diverse forms of Miracles. Christians engaging in mission mandate of the Church are participating into what God is highly interested in and that which embodies doing his will. It is important to note here that the Church in Nigeria is still in the interim participating in the mission mandate of the holistic Church.

In this era, God is still in his mission mandate but he is using human agents to execute his mission activities, hence he endues his word in the mouth of his plenipotentiaries with miraculous power. Following this, Christians are co-workers with God in his mission business. As noted by Ituma, "the Christians are only co-opted to share in the ***mission-dei*** by God himself."[7] Participating in the mission mandate of the Church is a humble self-understanding of the responsibility of the Church that represents the kingdom of God on earth which is founded on powerful miraculous manifestations. Since the Christians are only co-opted, accounts for the reason the mission mandate of the Church is till today endued with the miraculous manifestations. Agha in his words writes that "Christian mission means sending Christians out to proclaim the gospel of Christ to the unconverted throughout the world, according to the great commission by Christ"[8] Christians sent out are to proclaim the gospel of Christ in power. Christians as the body of Christ were saved not to remain idle in the interim as they await the second coming of the Lord Jesus, instead they are to engage in compassionate work geared towards the salvation of others who are yet to be saved. This is to be noted because even when the already redeemed Christians were yet unconverted, God in his compassionate nature had patience for them, until the day they accepted the illumination of the Word of God in their lives. Hence, mission becomes the responsibility of every Christian.

Mission, therefore is the main task of the body of Christ which is the Church. God in his divine strategy is using the Church to work out his salvational plans. This is why mission is the main mandate of the Church. Diara noting the essence for which mission is constantly channeled to the world explains that "mission is a holistic human and environment-friendly concept meant to touch all of the spiritual, physical and social life of the people."[9] In missions, the major emphasis is on the salvation of the human soul, but also the physical and emotion human needs are not over looked. Hence, other human needs and wants may also be miraculously met. Consequently, the concept of mission aims to recover a holistic faith founded on the platform of compassion that is not motivated to exploit but are done with genuine course. It is through the mission mandate of the Church that it is possible that God's ruler-ship and kingdom can be extended to those who are suffering because of the consequences of sin, suffering and death. The miraculous acts which accompany the mission mandate of the Church in this era affect every aspect of the human life which includes spiritual, physical, social and emotional needs of the suffering people. In the regards of the above, Baldwin notes that, "the Church's ***raison d'eter*** is to proclaim, Christ's kingdom in word and deed, until that day when the kingdom of God has become the kingdom of our Lord and his Christ"[10] Following this, it is important to note that preaching of the kingdom of God is to be done both in words and of powerful miraculous acts and a true Christian living. The power actions required in mission are to be backed with genuineness and of pure motivations. Though, the concept of mission has been variously defined, its meanings revolve around bringing back the original plan of God for creation; which was lost at the very beginning, when the first man and woman sinned. All the miraculous acts which the divine and other human agents demonstrated in the mission moves to salvage humanity were inspired by divine motivations to restore man to God and for the wellbeing of human beings. Many compassionate miraculous acts were modeled by God in the person of Jesus as an inextricable part of his mission which were characterized by unique natures and attributes.

4.2. The Natures and Attributes of Jesus and the Miraculous Signs *(σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia)* he modeled for the Church in Nigeria

In the first century era, the mission mandate of Jesus, was one characterized by diverse forms of miraculous acts. Jesus in carrying out his mission mandate, modeled a typical compassionate miraculous acts which has unique natures and attributes. The nature of a thing as explained by Hornby, is that it undercovers the basic qualities of a thing, its types or kinds.[11] Though the "esoteric nature of religion as human existential trait, makes miracle a little bit difficult in establishing its true natural characteristics per se…,"[12] the nature and attributes of the miraculous signs performed by Jesus can be typically unraveled from the miraculous sign of feeding the five thousand as preserved in Gospels as it relates to the gospel commission going on in the world, with special reference to the mission of the Church in Nigeria. The intrinsic qualities or natures of Jesus' miraculous signs include the following: He is divine and has supernatural power, expression of compassion, care for both humanities' spiritual and the physical needs, attracts crowd, could engender faith and believe, it is eschatological and establishes religious theological signs. These attributes will be discussed below:

4.2.1. **Jesus is Divine and has Supernatural Power:** John in the opening lines of his gospel introduces Jesus Christ as the Word (John 1:1). It is to be observed that the phrase "in the beginning" seems to echo Genesis 1:1. It suggests, that John's intent for sourcing from Old Testament was to show the power of Jesus Christ by tracing it back to the omnipotence of the Creator of the world**.** It is seen from John's perspective, then that he was introducing Jehovah of the Old 'Testament- a being of such power, might and dominion. It could be inferred that John's gospel is centered on the omnipotence of Jesus Christ**.**[13] Consequently, the ministry of Jesus was one characterized by power. Jesus the Messiah[14] is the means through which the will of the Father was communicated and is being communicated in power. In every phase of his ministry he demonstrated the power of God. This is exemplified that the manifestation of power is evident in the multiplication of the five barley bread loaves and two fishes (John 6:11).[15]

The ontology of Jesus as one with God the Father explains the source of this miraculous power with which he wrought many wonder arousing deeds in his earthly ministry which historically took place during the first century era. In other words, Jesus' ontology reveals the source of his functional power. Driving from the unique relationship Jesus has with God the Father, Jesus consolidates that as his father is working that he is working (John 5:17). Being one in essence with God, he does not only have the nature of God in him, he is God himself. In the trinity, he is God the Son! The compassionate miraculous signs Jesus demonstrated in his earthly ministry have their source, capacity and authority to act, come only from God the Father. Jesus has a supernatural power which is beyond the natural realm. Consequent to this, the miracles Jesus demonstrated have the character or behavior of occurring beyond expected natural limits, expectations and understanding of people. Jesus' miracles operated in the level that aroused admiration, wonder or astonishment. Thus, the supernatural power which Jesus manifested in his miraculous acts expressed his nature as God. The all-encompassing theme of the gospel of John proves that Jesus is God whose works express the will of the Father. They occur by the power invoked by the command, or by the prayer, and thanksgiving to God.[16] In the pericope of John 6, Jesus is the giver and sustainer of life. The miracle of the loaves and fishes illustrates that Jesus possessed the supernatural power to multiply. God who is the initiator of mission, sent Jesus with supernatural power to demonstrate in fullness his will in mission. Jesus in turn, having executed his divine work being endued with supernatural power also sends his followers in Nigeria to carry on the mission mandate in fullness of his supernatural backing.

4.2.2 Jesus' Miracles are the expressions of Divine Compassion: the miraculous signs which Jesus demonstrated in his earthly ministry were motivated by compassionate love. Compassion demonstrated by Jesus is unique from the form of acclaimed compassion which men in their natural state can demonstrate. Leo Babauta notes that "compassion differs from other forms of helpful or humane behavior in that its focus is primarily on the alleviation of sufferings."[17] The kind of compassion modeled by Jesus cannot be equated with other humane feelings like empathy, sympathy and pity. For Dacher, compassion is different from empathy because in his own understanding, empathy "is the mirroring or understanding

of another's emotion."[18] Empathy is the kind of emotional feelings which professionals like social workers show to their clients. For sympathy, Meelhuysen, explaining the difference between sympathy and compassion notes that "the one who sympathizes, sees and feels, but does nothing. The one who has compassion, sees, feels and then does something about the need."[19] Again for pity, Donald DeMarco writes that "pity is more closely associated with an aesthetic sensibility than with love, is devoid of hope. This is why a sufferer welcomes compassion but despises pity."[20] It has to be noted that the three humane mental states briefly explained above seem to share the same characteristics together. Empathy like sympathy and pity are all about feelings. But compassion is all about actions to alleviate the suffering of another carried out in agape love. The power with which Jesus demonstrated compassionate miracles, can only come from God. The secret of the power with which Jesus worked among the people of his days was that he went about his work not in cold sense but in active compassionate actions. It is in divine motivated compassion that Jesus expressed his nature as God. MacArthur writing about Jesus and compassion notes that "the miracles of Jesus were demonstrations of divine power to prove that he was God. But at the same time, the miracles of Jesus were… connected to some expression of compassion, to demonstrate the compassionate heart of God."[21] It is in Jesus that God personified compassion. In other words, in Jesus is demonstrated God's model of compassion.[22] Accordingly, compassionate love could be traced to all Jesus thought, said, taught and did in his earthly ministry. It is obvious, therefore, that genuine compassion was a strong motivation in his earthly ministry. Peggy Jo Wobbema opines that "a significant aspect of Christ's ministry is His compassion toward those who are suffering. Jesus' model of ministry focused on God's concern for the physical, social and spiritual needs of others."[23]

The model of Jesus' compassionate miraculous acts is intended to affect every aspect of the recipient's life. In this regards, Iheanacho notes that "miracles are expected to have long physical and spiritual effect on the recipient granted such grace…miraculous actions signify the power of a benevolent deity."[24] The benevolent nature of Jesus can be described as the feeling that moves ones guts or bowels. MacArthur describing how Jesus was being constantly moved by compassion notes that "it churned in His stomach,

it hurts him. This is the compassion of God."[25] Jesus' compassion can be equated to a mother's deep hurt feelings for her suffering child. MacArthur listing factors that draws the divine compassion notes that "human ignorance draws the compassion of God. Human weariness draws the compassion of God. Human suffering draws the compassion of God."[26] The nature of Jesus' compassion presents him as one who cares for human ignorance, physical wariness, suffering and most importantly for all human beings' eternal souls. It should be noted that he did not only care for the spiritual destitution of men, but their physical needs as well appealed to the compassion of Jesus Christ. Thus, when he heals, feeds and or proclaims the divine truth, they were all done in genuine compassion. Jesus initiated the ways or methods he adopted in helping those he miraculously met their needs. As unraveled from the exegesis of the context of the feeding of the five thousand in the gospel of John, the miraculous feeding of the crowd was initiated by Jesus himself. Though it was not explicitly noted in John's account of this feeding of the five thousand that Jesus was moved by compassion but his described action of seeing the multitudes coming to him and he initiating the move to feed the crowd, implies compassion. This his action implies or connotes compassion, though not mentioned but it was acted out.

Miracles are God's providence for man. Providentially, God works in diverse supernatural means so as to sustain humanity in their daily affairs.[27] Therefore, miracles of God through Jesus are of high moral character as pertains to their circumstances, and their purposes. In general, faith is not always required for performing miracles. For instance, faith is absent as evidenced by the fear of the disciples at Christ stilling the tempest (Mark 4:40), at Christ walking on the waters (Mark 6:51), at the large catch of fish (Luke 5:8-10), and in the miracles of expelling demons. In some miracles, Christ requires faith, but faith is not the basis of the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand (John 6:1-15). The context of the feeding of the five thousand was a typical life situation in which Jesus exercised His power and authority. Through the compassionate miracles he performed he aimed to point the crowd to signs that would reveal his ontological and functional natures.

4.2.3. **Virtues of Love, Humility, Patience, Grace and Selflessness**: The intrinsic qualities of love, humility, patience, grace and selflessness characterized Jesus' attitude towards his earthly ministry. In the mission mandate, there is a significant place and immovability of love. Genuine love can never be removed from the mission mandate of the Church. It is with sacrificial love that the perfect will of God is consistently revealed to mankind. For miraculous demonstrations to be void of Agape love, it would be worthless. Akpan Amaowoh defines 'agape' as "the total unselfish love that has the capacity to give and keep on giving without expecting in return."[28] It is this agape characterized demonstrations that originated from the divine nature that categorizes the moves of God through Jesus to alleviate human suffering and to engender the everlasting platform that would earn mankind salvation. Consequently, it is in agape love that God feels and acts out his emotions for all human kind. It was because of the tender loving affection which Jesus has for humanity that motivates him to accompany his earthly ministry with miraculous signs to back his teaching of the mystery of the word, with a main purpose of restoring humanity to their lost relationship with God. First, it is because of God's love that he gave the world Jesus, his only begotten Son (John 3:16). It was in emulative humility that Jesus being God left his heavenly domain and condescended to human nature so as to be able to establish a platform for holistic salvation of mankind. In his modest, respectful and lowly nature he answered the call of God the Father, and accepted to be sent to the world as a human, though his divine nature also was fully preserved so as to salvage humanity. Being God and also having the human nature he understood the human needs and frailties.

Leadership, service and sacrifice are virtues inherent in the nature of Jesus' person and miracles he performed. Okwueze explains that Jesus sacrificed the five loaves and two fishes given to him and used them to feed five thousand people.[29] This sacrificial virtues in the aspect of leadership is lacking in this era, especially among the many acclaimed plenipotentiaries of God in Nigeria. Sacrificial leadership is also lacking in the contemporary Nigerian society. Amaowoh notes here that "it is no gainsaying that the contemporary Nigerian civil society, in particular, and the world in general, is desperately in need of leadership by example."[30] Emulate-worthy is that it was in sacrificial leadership that Jesus led people who

were his followers for one reason or another. It was in patience that Jesus handled the crowd in John that were seeking or following him with mixed feelings or motivations. Their low understanding, obstinacy, and murmuring which they consistently exhibited, Jesus was never provoked rather in a graced manner he engaged them in an elongated discourse. Jesus aimed to use dialogue to explain to them the symbolic meaning of the miraculous sign he demonstrated before them which they have failed to understand its underlying meanings. In front of this multitude who he described as those who were looking for him simply for the things they would get from him, he maintained a calm attitude. It was by the nature at work in Jesus that endued him with the grace to remain consistent in showing goodwill and infinite, love and mercy to even those who did not only come to believe in him to be the promised Messiah but were dogged in opposing him. He could curse them, but he did not. It was his selfless nature that made him to never be self-centered, instead he cared much about others. Jesus was self-sacrificing. Because of the virtues in him, he was always sensitive about other people's needs and pains. Jesus understands human sufferings and he cares. He takes up result oriented miraculous actions in order to solve the pains or problems of the sufferer.

4.2.4. Jesus' Miraculous Signs attract Crowds: Ugwu Collins documents that "crowd actually is one of those words that seem to be simple to define and subsequently understand. It is a concept that has to do with many people clustering in a place for one mission at a given time.[31] Crowd has to do with a massive concentrations of human beings in a given place and time. An interesting thing about crowd formation most of the times is that it is not an organized congregation. The individuals that form a crowd may or may not have one interest at hand. It is the object that interests a crowd that they press themselves to. The person and the ministry of Jesus attracted large crowds to him for diverse reasons as observed in John 6. In the earthly ministry of Jesus, he demonstrated compassionate miraculous signs to multitudes and in some other instances on individuals. The miraculous signs which accompanied Jesus' earthly ministry manifested the attribute of attracting not just specific individuals to him but large crowds were pulled towards him because of the wonder arousing activities he was doing. Rick Reinckens noted that "A crowd

of men is a pitiful sight. It represents so much of sorrow, so much of pain, so much of sin."[32] The unquantifiable problems of men are showcased in the crowd. The sight of crowd of men does always move Jesus to take compassionate acts in other to salvage them from one form of suffering or another. Though many persons may as a part of a formed crowd approach him but Jesus desires that each get committed in discipleship with him on individual bases. This is so said because it is "whosoever" or "anyone" that believes in Jesus that would not perish but would be given eternal life (John 3:16). The mission of the Church in Nigeria is still in like manner attracting crowds with diverse motivations.

4.2.5 Care for both humanities' Spiritual and Physical needs: The focus of the miraculous signs of Jesus has been on humanity. Iheanacho documented that "a noted aspect or nature of miracle is its target or object. Man is the object or focus of miracles whether religious, financial, political, intellectual or spiritual."[33] Mankind is the receiver of miracles, human needs are met and human sufferings are alleviated through the supernatural miraculous interventions. Human beings have both physical and spiritual needs. At the point that the first man and woman sinned, they lost their relationship with God. The nature of sin also attracted suffering and death for humanity. And so, the diverse supernatural acts of God were set rolling so as to alleviate humanity from suffering. From the OT accounts, God used diverse forms of miraculous signs and acts to solve the physical problems of man. But the supernatural moves of God has not been just to meet the physical needs of man rather his focus has been on the spiritual needs of man. From the beginning, God's salvational plan has been to meet the spiritual needs of humanity through diverse means. This spiritual need is to be met for humanity by establishing an everlasting platform for the salvation of humanity from the consequences of sin and suffering. And so, God uses Jesus to consolidate a platform that if one identifies with him, the person would be graced to have a restored relationship with God.

Miracles point to God's kingdom and the restoration of creation. When Jesus heals, feeds, opens the eye of the blind and so on, he is by theological implication restoring the creation to the form he had originally orchestrated it to be. John designates the miracles of Jesus "signs."[34] And so, in being conscious of spiritual

restoration, the supernatural moves of God in the affairs of mankind is not lopsided but balanced. This balanced character of Jesus' nature of miracles is seen fully demonstrated in the feeding of the five thousand recorded in the gospel of John. The crowd that came seeking Jesus for diverse reasons, Jesus in welcoming them met their physical needs by feeding them and as well, met their spiritual needs by revealing the symbolic meaning of the sign he has just performed before them.

It is important to note that the sheer volume and close proximity of the miracles in the Bible served significant purposes in God's redemptive plan at the time. However, this point does not mean that miracles have ceased today. God is still in the business of meeting the needs of the people of the world miraculously. It is important to emphasize that Jesus' miracles in the Bible days served dual purposes of meeting humans' physical and spiritual needs. In this era, in the Nigerian society, Jesus' miracles are still directly or indirectly persuading the recipients or witnesses to accept and believe in Jesus. Genuine miracles still taking place in this era are still purposed to function in persuading individuals to identify with Jesus in genuine committed spirituality, and in discipleship remain in him for their eternal salvation.

4.2.6 Miraculous Signs could engender Faith and Believe, and even Unbelief: Miracles can lead people to develop faith in God. It can lead people to develop a consolidated trust in God**.** The miracles Jesus demonstrated have the characteristics of persuading recipients and witnesses of his miraculous signs to believe in him to be the promised Messiah (John 6:14). The disciples of Jesus who were called at the beginning of his ministry, witnessed the many wonder arousing signs he was consistently performing in their presence. The miraculous signs they witnessed persuaded them to gradually grow in consolidating faith in Jesus. Miracles were matched with discourses Jesus used to make his disciples to come to fuller understanding of the symbolic underlying meanings they connote. Over time they began to gradually come to ground their belief and faith in Jesus (John 6:69). In the context of John 6, towards the end of the elongated discourse Jesus had with the crowd and his disciples, it was only the disciples that remained with him because they witnessed the signs -(***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***) that he was doing and their faith and belief

in Jesus was being grounded. Their faith in Jesus was later in climax consolidated in Jesus after the fulfillment of the all-encompassing sign of the cross-resurrection events![35]

The miraculous signs do not always achieve its purpose of establishing and consolidating a believing faith in the heart of the miracle recipient(s) and the witnesses around. The crowd in John's gospel, who were not only seeking but were at a point following him about, witnessed some of the signs that Jesus was performing, but they did not accept the underlying symbolic meanings, which those miracles connote(John 6:26). Though, some of them were the miracles recipients and some others witnessed the miraculous signs, yet they were not persuaded to come to belief. Even in this era, signs do not always succeed in engendering faith in the miracle receivers, witnesses and readers.

4.2.7 It establishes Religious Theological Signs and has to do with Realized and Futuristic Eschatology: the inherent nature of the wonder arousing deeds of Jesus in John's gospel were that they were depicted to connote theological symbolic signs. It is obvious to every student of John's gospel that the nature of supernatural acts Jesus demonstrated were that they functioned in unveiling who Jesus is ontologically and functionally. The miraculous signs demonstrated by Jesus were marks pointing or unveiling Jesus to be God who has come to function as the anointed king, priest and prophet in order to restore those who would come to believe in him to be God. Again, the miracles demonstrated by Jesus are eschatologically connoted. Eschatological connotation implies that the wonder arousing supernatural acts of the divine are theologically expected to yield a long physical and spiritual effect on the recipient. The effects of miraculous signs are saddled with a theological responsibility of persuading the recipients or the witnesses to take conscious decision about one's soul in its relation to death, judgment, heaven and hell. Genuine miracles endure in generating more than a superficial and temporary interest. Genuine miracles consolidate abiding effects. The miracles of Jesus were never denied during the apostolic age, nor even in the immediate ages beyond. The realized and futuristic effects of the miracles of Jesus are still abiding even in this age.

4.3. Non Cessation of Miraculous Signs in the Mission Mandate of the Church in Nigeria

There are views on whether miraculous gifts are to abide with Church till the end of time or whether they are specifically designed to be only a temporary phenomenon serving a concluded purposes? These questions are to be considered from its two contexts. Some scholars advance that genuine miracles are no more part of today's world. Those advancing this opinion believe that the Old Testament miracles authenticated Moses and the prophets as men of God. Afterwards that the New Testament age was authenticated in Christ and his apostles by the miracles that are being attributed to them.[36] And from that time till now that miracle has ceased. Wanyne attempting to prove that miracles are not to be part of today's world explains that "If it can be established that those early miracles do corroborate the testimony of Christ, and those commissioned by him; and further, that the recording of these events in the New Testament was designed to perpetually accomplish that function, then it stands as demonstrated that the repetition of such signs is not needed today."[37] To him, this fact is exactly affirmed by John the evangelist when he documented that the "signs" of Christ, are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (John 20:31). Roberton supporting the above idea explains that the New Testament "has had precisely this effect of continuous and successive confirmation of faith in Jesus Christ through the ages."[38] For this group of believers, they hold that since the miracles of the Bible continue to accomplish their original purpose, there is no need for a repetition of them today. For them miraculous signs are not being replicated in this age.

There are many others who claim that God is still working miracles today. They believe that the record of miraculous signs of Christ in the New Testament are sufficient to establish faith in Jesus, but they still hold that God is still performing miracles in every era as a sign to prove himself to the people of the world, so as to draw them to himself. They hold that since the Lord is as powerful today as he was in the first century, that he can and is still performing signs today. In support of non-cessation of miracle, Grudem notes that,

> The authority to work miracles and to cast out demons was not confined to Jesus himself, nor did miracles die out when Jesus returned to heaven. Even during his ministry, Jesus gave authority to heal the sick and to cast out demons not only to the Twelve, but also to seventy of his disciples.[39]

It holds that in every era God is doing supernatural works in the midst of the people of the world with special reference to Nigeria. In Nigeria, daily, individuals and Churches are testifying of miraculous and providential visitations from God. God is still intervening in the world he created doing wonders. Just as miraculous signs happened in the New Testament days, it is still happing in every age. John piper notes that,

> It is perfectly clear that in New Testament times, the gospel was authenticated in this way by signs, wonders and miracles of various characters and descriptions… was it only meant to be true of the early Church?...the scriptures never anywhere say that these things were only temporary-never! There is no such statement anywhere.[40]

Though this question is not to be answered only emphasizing on the power of God, God's will on its part still unravels that God still wills to be performing miracles today! This is said because, God still wills that the needs of the people he created be met, he is still motivated to alleviate the pains of the suffering and he still does wonder arousing acts so as to save those he wills to salvage.

It should be noted that there are no compelling scientific, philosophical, or theological reasons to write off the possibility of miracles, whether healings or exorcisms or similar.[41] It is the position of this researcher to affirm that supernatural miracles are still being performed in this era, in the world with special reference to Nigeria. Just as in the New Testament era, those who watched the ministry of Jesus were seized with amazement at the miracles he performed(Luke 5:25), and the apostles in the early Church regularly performed signs and wonders among the people(Acts 5:12).[42] Though it seems to be a characteristic of the New Testament Church that miracles occur,[43] since this era is a continuation of the New Testament era, God is still in the business of performing wonders in the lives of the inhabitants of the world. In John (14:12), Jesus declares that of a truth that anyone who comes to believe in him will not only do the works that he does, but would even do greater works than these he was doing, because he would go back to the Father. Greater works cannot just simply mean more works.[44] The 'more works' which followers of Jesus

will do is an all-encompassing connotation of the "greater works" done by those coming after Jesus point to the new eschatological order established by Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension."[45]

Though, in this era, God may not will again to feed humanity with physical 'manna' from heaven, though he is powerful enough to do such feats again, he is still doing wonder arousing deeds in the world in other diverse ways. Even if humanity many not be frequently witnessing extraordinary miraculous events, God is still active. God is active in the regular (natural) processes humanity experience every day. In diverse miraculous ways God calls people to himself as his Church grows and expands. God is active in miraculous ways among people, others may not know around the world. Whether or not a Christian is privileged to witness obvious miraculous, supernatural events, Christians are required to be confident that God is actively at work in the world, bringing people to himself, bringing glory to Jesus and building his Church.[46] God is still active in his Church in Nigeria. Though God is still active in his Church in Nigeria, but he does want his Church to become obsessed with the quest for the miraculous.

4.4. The History of Christianity and the Problem of Obsession with the Miraculous in Nigeria

Christianity is a recent imported faith to Nigeria. History has it that "Christianity came to Nigeria in the 15th century through Augustinian and Capuchin monks from Portugal."[47] It was on September 24th, 2012 that Christians across the federation of Nigeria marked the 170th anniversary of Christianity in the federation.[48] The dynamism of how Christianity has advanced in the last 100 plus years in Africa with special reference to Nigeria is an interesting history. It is estimated that Nigeria[49] has a populations of about 198 million people[50] and approximately 60 per cent are Christians-25 per cent of this number are nominal Christians.[51] Many so-called Christians identify with Christianity in theoretical appellation and not in practicality. Ukoaha observes that there is nominalism and syncretism in the Church today.[52] In their nominal approach to Christianity, many people attend Church and claim to be Christians only by name or nomenclature but not in practice.

It should be noted as Agha explains that the advent of Christianity in Africa is not a recent happening nor is it a byproduct of colonialism. This is said because early enough the origin of African Christianity can be traced to the apostolic days. Christianity has thrived in Africa for almost five hundred years before the 7th century when Islam was born, which caused a turning point in the development of early Christianity in North Africa. With the passage of time, the force of Islam not only almost dried up the whole flow of Christian life in North Africa, but also during that era, it totally swept away all forms of missionary activities in Africa. The history of African Christian missions can be divided into two major phases. These two major phases include, the early era that continued into the medieval and the modern phases. The early phase was the period of the early Church's missionary expansion to the northern part of Africa beginning, most likely from the 1st century era. The medieval phase can be traced to the period when the Portuguese missionary enterprises thrived in Africa. The modern phase was the era of the missionary ventures which came to the continent as a result of the abolition of slave trade in the 19th century.[53]

The advent of Christianity in Africa is accessed not to be a recent event and a byproduct of colonialism. Somehow still, history has it that it was through the colonization of African in which Nigeria is located can be traced to the inception of the last century that mediated the introduction of Christianity (Catholics, Angli-cans, Methodists, Baptists etc) to the African soil.[54] The history as it relates to Nigeria has it that during the 15th century era, the Catholic faith was first introduced to the South/South region of Nigeria by the Portuguese missionaries and traders. Prince Henry the navigator who was the brain behind the Portuguese explorations, wanted the Roman Catholic missionaries to carry the gospel to the coast of west Africa where they have established trading centres.[55] But the act of combining missionary activities with business ventures was related to the emergence of slave trade in Africa which in turn distorted its spread and its mission goals.[56] Agha noted that "it was greed and avarice that motivated the European adventurers and the apostolic zeal of European missionaries to come to Africa."[57] Both European traders and some of their missionaries were engaged in trade and slave trade. Some of the missionaries abandoned their mission work of capturing souls for Christ to capture souls for Satan.[58] The Europeans were much more

interested in tapping both mineral and natural resources of the African people, consequently Africans were subjected to undue suffering. In summation, they came into Africa for God, Gold and Glory. And so, greediness consequently contributed to the failure of the first white missionary work in Africa.

The emergence of slave trade made Africans to become more immersed with the practice of their African traditional practices. It was due to the pains and struggles associated with that era of slave trade that reactivated an increase in African practiced religions. In their practiced African religions, they were passionate in seeking for a true God or gods that can be solution-oriented[59] towards their numerous problems. Their needs mostly revolved around how to ensure a food supply, how to secure shelter and safety from the surrounding dangers and how to ensure the ongoing life of his family or tribe. Religion for the Africans arouse out of the attempt of man to find the satisfaction of his deepest needs.[60] In their quest to identify and relate with the true God led them to take and accept the rivers, seas, stones or rocks, trees, totem animals (snakes, lions. Tortoise, Elephants etc.) as gods.[61] Agha, explains that "totemic veneration is valued because of the believe that the spirits that protect the clans of tribes dwell in some particular animals and plants."[62] These animals they believed in and worshiped passionately. It is also believed that the spirits of these their religious elements in turn possessed them and tormented their offsprings even onto the fifth, sixth generations down the family linage.[63] Consequently, Africa in which Nigeria is domiciled was perceived as a dark continent. Because Africa has been assessed to be a dark continent, the Europeans came in to colonize Africa- making attempts to introduce western education and civilization. To achieve their goals, they enforced civilization which they thought was synonymous with Christianity.[64] While the 15th century missionary attempts of the Portuguese failed to consolidate its mission goals, it was in the 19th century that Africa again began to experience a resurgence of missionary work.[65]

The above gives the context in which the Africans found themselves before the European Clergymen missionaries came into African soil to evangelize it. But in doing that, they came along with traders and soldiers who were to protect the administrators and as well give protection to the traders and the so called

missionaries. The Americans were at that time focused on witnessing a fire-branded versions of evangelism its spread started from California to New York, from Houston to Fargo (North Dakota). The American men of God who engaged in witnessing the gospel then were described by Robert Liardon as "men and women endowed with stranger than fiction like miracles literally recreated Christianity, the type practiced in the days of Jesus Christ."[66] They were motivated by the saying of Jesus documented in John 14:12-21 which posits that those who would keep loving and believing in Jesus would do greater works than Jesus did, because Jesus has to go back to the Father.[67] These American professed plenipotentiaries of God held that Jesus never said "Good bye" to anyone at the end of his earthly ministries. Rather, that Jesus assured his faithful followers that anyone who keeps on believing on him will do 'greater works' than the ones that he himself did because he would return back to the Father. To these Americans, anyone who would continue in loving the Lord by keeping his commandments, the Lord will show him or her love by supernaturally manifesting himself to them. Bill Johnson[68] explains that if Jesus Christ could do all He did as a Spirit-moved man, then Holy Spirit indwelt Christians should be able to exceed the greatness, the quality, of Jesus' miracle workings. For him, Jesus' statement is not that hard to understand. Greater simply means 'greater.' and that explicitly, the works he referred to are signs and wonders. Noteworthy is that many try to explain this verse as referring to faithful followers of Jesus doing works greater in quantity and not in quality.[69] But Jesus' emphasis on 'greater works' may boarder on quantity and not on quality as Johnson is positing. This is so advanced because no other acclaimed 'greater works' the Holy Spirit will do in any age using any human being as a vessel will surpass Christ's works as the only begotten Son of God. Jesus as the only begotten Son of God died on the cross and thereby paid for all humanities' sins. No other work can surpass this in quality. The 'greater works' plenipotentiaries of God do in every age will be greater in quantity of conversions of souls when compared to the ones done by Jesus. This can be so, simply because Jesus had to go back to the Father! More conversions of souls will be done by the Holy Spirit using human beings as vessels. It is this Johannine theology (14:12) that

informs why many American ministers hold firm to the premise that they would not only do miracles but that they would do greater ones than Jesus did.

The history as it relates to the Nigerian Christianity antiquity has it that by 1970, amid the practicing of the African Tradition Religion the Christian faith that was introduced in Nigerian soil was gradually going down the drains. The passion was going down and this was shown by the minimal attendance of people who were attending to Churches. Church leaders and pastors seemed to be at lost on what to do so as to salvage the situation. It was at this point that the American pastors came in a strong form into Africa to missionize it. These American pastors introduced a vibrant form of evangelism.[70]

One of the strategies which they used in carrying out their vibrant form of evangelism was to sponsor bright young African pastors to America to study the act of contemporary Christian religion. Those that were lucky to be sent to study had intensive exposures in America. When these Nigerian pastors trained abroad came back, they re-introduced a more aggressive form of Christianity and new brand of worship, consequently, the seemingly dying Christianity was again aggressively kick-started again. It was in this context that Nigerian Pentecostalism was born. While those in American were addressed as 'evangelicals', these acclaimed Nigerian fire brands prefer to call themselves or be identified as 'Pentecostals'.

As of then, Late Rev Benson Idahosa in his vibrant nature was the most outstanding minister among many others that planted many Churches within a very short time. His being vibrant in all ramifications attracted many people to his Church. His success attracted enormous envy among the other seeming passive God's plenipotentiaries of the conventional Churches. Consequently, he was attacked from all angles and different dimensions. Idahosa who later became an Archbishop not minding the envy and critical attacks he was confronted with continued opening Churches all over the South and North central states in Nigeria. Idahosa is seen by many as the father of faith movement in Nigeria. Idahosa and other Church founders and leaders who were doing well also trained many pastors of other Churches and became their mentors.[71]

It was observed that Archbishop Idahosa's doctrine in his vocation and vibrant nature of spreading the gospel favored healing, and teaching. It was claimed that "There was lack of revival fire, evangelism and miracles in the older Churches."[72] And these being absent amongst the conventional pastors attracted many followers to him and other acclaimed plenipotentiaries of God even till date. The introduction of "deliverance ministry" followed after the death of Idahosa. The deliverance ministry claims to have the power of casting out demons from the possessed one or place. The effect of deliverance involves freeing the individual and the place from danger of inherent obstacles that could have hindered growth and success.[73] Even though one has claimed that they have repented and that they are now born again, those in deliverance ministry hold firmly that until a deliverance is conducted on an individual, that no true cleansing and acceptance can be said to have taken place. They argue that,

> most misfortune ranging from all sorts of ailments, divorce, abortions, untimely death, destiny distortions and all manner of manipulations are all consequences of inherent unclean spirits that were acquired as a result of association with ungodly things (shrines, idols, etc) and dedicating births of a baby, pregnancies to marine world and sinful lifestyle.[74]

They claim that Mark 5:2-13 is very explicit on the need for deliverance for everyone who has come to accept Jesus, considering the religious and socio-cultural history of the Africans. Just as Jesus casted out the legion of demon from the madman, likewise those who have come to believe in Jesus must need to be delivered so that they can access the blessings of God. Many other acclaimed ministers of God disagree on this.

There is also the group of the Pentecostal pastors that advance that anyone who has come to become born again by accepting Jesus, that he or she have been set free from all the powers of darkness and therefore would not need deliverance any more (John 3:3). Those pastors who preach against the need for deliverance were accused to be envious of those who claim to have the power and the anointing of doing deliverance. This informs one of the reasons there are many cases of envy and bickering going among some of the so-called men and women of God in Nigeria. Yet these professed men and women of God

present themselves to those suffering from one form of problem or another as having the solution to their problems.

Also few decades away, there was also the introduction of health and wealth gospel[75] which was fueled by abject poverty that had plagued and ravaged many Nigerians after the civil war. Ukoha observed that "the prosperity gospel appears to be a perverted, distorted and deficient gospel that pushed aside the scriptural teaching of salvation and holiness and replaced it with undue emphasis on material possession."[76] Health and wealth gospel is thriving in Nigeria, but many are troubled by many questions. Theological critical minds are bothered with these questions, does God will that the true believer in Christ must be in good physical health? If the Christian does not experience these blessings, must one assume that he or she is outside the will of God? [77] The answers to these questions may or may not be readily available, but people believe what they want to believe. It is proposed that "the teachings of health and wealth preachers have also been greatly influenced by belief in destiny, predestination as taught in African Traditional Religion"[78] To these health and wealth preachers, people should be rich and be prosperous in all their dealings so far as they have identified with Jesus Christ.

American prominent leaders who projected and are still projecting the development of prosperity theology include, E. W. Kenyon**,** Oral Roberts net worth 2018 – $5.2 billion,[79] A. Allen**,** Robert Tilton $100 million,[80] T. L. Osborn**,** Joel Osteen -*$40* Million,[81] Billy Graham net worth 2018 – $25 million, Creflo Dollar net worth 2018 – $27 million**,**[82] Jesse Duplantis $50 million dollar[83] Kenneth Copeland net worth h 2018 – $25 million, Benny Hinn net worth 2018 – $42 million, Bishop T.D. Jakes net worth 2018 – $147 million, Joseph Prince net worth 2018- $5 million,[84] Reverend Ike[85], Kenneth Hagin- net worth $140 million,[86] Bishop Eddie Long net worth *$6.5* million,[87] Bishop Dale Bronner $10 million,[88] Pastor Joyce Myer- 25 million dollar,[89] Pastor Paula white *$5* million,[90] Pastor Darlene-$800,000[91] and a host of innumerable others.

In Nigeria, the list of prosperity preachers include the late bishop Benson Andrew Idahosa,[92] Bishop David Oyedepo with 2018 proposed net worth of – $150 million,[93] E. A .Adeboye with 2018 proposed net worth of $39 million, Chris Oyakhilome with 2018 proposed net worth of $50 million, T.B. Joshua with 2018 proposed net worth of $10 million,[94] Chris Okotie,[95] Pastor Biodun Fatoyinbo, Rev Funke Adejumo, Pastor Matthew Ashimolowo[96] and a host of uncountable others. The prosperity gospel preachers believe in 'seed sowing' as the main principle of receiving miracles from God.

Those who advance this prosperity preaching believe that those who are suffering, are suffering because they have not identified with the form of Christ of faith or word of faith that they are preaching about. To them, those who are suffering have not sown enough seed faith to identify with the God they are preaching about. They persuade their followers to believe that success is determined by their faith. Most of these prominent Church leaders and workers teach their followers that Christians who have faith cannot be poor, that it is against the will of God for them to be poor. In response to this teaching and religious nature of Nigerians, it has been estimated that 92% Nigerian Christians agree that "wealth and material blessings are based on one's faith."[97] Those who advance the 'wealth and health gospel' re-package their gospel that is a "designer gospel message" in the forms that they sense would satisfy their followers 'felt needs.' Their re-packaging of the gospel has moved beyond traditional Pentecostal practices of speaking in tongues, prophesying and healing to the belief that if not immediately, then soon, that God will provide-money, cars, houses, and even spouses, if they respond in faith to their preaching. What they are preaching to their teeming followers because of the widespread hunger for meaning consist in 'God wants you to be rich.' Send money as 'taking a step of faith' and God will bless you 100 folds or 1000 times in return. Name it and claim it and so on.[98] All these are another gospel. The gospel they are presenting is different from the gospel Jesus modeled in the gospels. Colson Pearcey describes this form of prosperity theology as the "the most poisonous gospel of our time.[99] With this form of gospel many Nigerians who are blind spiritually are deceived, and manipulated. Many are living in bondage, because they are enslaved spiritually, morally and financially and they are not even aware that they are enslaved! Because these

teeming followers of these acclaimed men and women of God do not know the truth, hence they are ignorant of what has been provided for them through the life, ministry, death, resurrection and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Instead, they have remained in their spiritual slavery (John 8:31-32).

It should be remembered that "the revival that hit Nigeria in the early 70s laid emphasis on repentance, salvation, holiness, healing, faith and evangelism."[100] But in this era, these prosperity preachers persist in directly or indirectly persuading their followers to focus on material possessions. The health and wealth preachers twist the scripture,[101] by preaching ***eisegesis*** rather the required proper ***exegesis*** and sound exposition of the Word of God. Those who are using the Word of God for lucre and for profit persist in using pragmatic psychological philosophies for attaining success and for solving the felt spiritual needs rather than the sound exposition.[102] But in the long run, with their ***eisegesis*** they end up in giving their followers false hope. They claim that the gospel promises followers of Jesus 'best life now.'[103] Emphasis on prosperity has influenced many acclaimed Christians to believe that if they could exercise enough faith and pray hard that they could get whatever they desire even if they were living in sin.[104] But the truth of the gospel which is in turn established by the history of salvation record in the scripture consolidate that it is the promise of Christ's return and the anticipation of the resurrection of the dead that should form the bases of the Christian hope. This consists of the blessed hope true followers of Jesus have in God. This hope is centered in Jesus. Noteworthy is that one of the last things the devil wants to see are relationships that are dedicated to keeping Christ as their focus. Hence, the devil directly or indirectly has master-minded the focus of the Church which in this era has shifted from Jesus and the significance of the Cross to material possession acquisitions. In this era, their basic message is that "it is God's will and plans to free all believers from sickness and material poverty."[105] Their heaven is on earth. They persuade people to repent and be givers to their ministries so that they will become prosperous. By so doing, they undermine the significance of Jesus, the cross and eternal salvation in the mission mandate of the Church. But because many Christians have not discovered the truth about prosperity and poverty, hence they are being continuously deceived. The ploy of these acclaimed plenipotentiaries of God in Nigeria is working

because many of those who profess faith in Jesus in this era are biblically ignorant and gullible and that is why 'god-want-you-rich- thology'[106] is a booming business for those who are into Church business.

Many Nigerians believe that they have the need for healings, deliverances, protection and prosperity. It was the needy situation of most Nigerians that motivate them to consist in questing after the miraculous. Hence, Nigerians are solution oriented people. It is the above background that recounts how the Nigerian acclaimed plenipotentiaries of God started and began to run diverse forms of Church businesses, claiming to have powers to heal, deliver and to be doing miracles. But one wonders, on whether their real objective in participating in the mission mandate of the Church is actually to win souls for the kingdom of God or is it to fill their belly and to satisfy their materialistic needs.

It should be noted that it is the presence of the Holy Spirit that manifests in healing and deliverance miracles that attract unbelievers to Christ more than any form of inducement. And so, with the presence of the Holy Spirit who empowers the spreading of the gospel and manifests in healing and deliverance, many who were supposed to remain unbelieving were attracted to the Church. In this era, many Nigerian able bodied men and women claiming to be called into the Church business to become ministers of the gospel are doing so with mixed motivations. Over time they began to claim to be miraculous like Jesus himself, other miraculous men of the bible days and those great American pastors like "John Lake, Smith Wigglesworth, A.A. Allen, William Branham and a host of others. They imitate the characteristics of the American pastors in performing, and advertising the occurrence of diverse forms of acclaimed great miracles, incredible casting out of demons and deliverances, the types that took place in America, but one cannot be sure of the sources of their powers. But it was unfortunate that those who were opportune to have travelled to USA to learn, who came back and began mentoring other pastors did not pick the entire act of evangelism line sinker and hook[107] both from Jesus the model, other human plenipotentiaries of God in the Bible and Americans they learned from. It was love that motivated Jesus, the miraculous Bible men and some of the American evangelicals in their engagement in the mission mandate of the Church. But agape love and compassion are faded off and are almost non-existent among most pastors and even

in most Churches in Nigeria. Many of the acclaimed men and women of God live ungodly life -they fornicate, lie, steal, kill, some are occultic etc. Most of these acclaimed men and women of God envisaged gains in participating in the mission mandate of the Church. Many Nigerians are participating in the mission mandate of the Church for their selfish gains.

And so, many Nigerian pastors seeing the assumed gains in engaging in Church business, now claim to possess powers to be performing miracles. Some of these pastors idolize themselves as demi gods to be feared and highly respected by their gullible followers. They advertise and market their founded Church with the testimonies of miracles they claim to have performed in their Churches. Following this, the teeming suffering and solution oriented Nigerians move from one Church to another trying to access these miracles they are marketing without the commensurable desire to develop a lasting relationship with Jesus Christ. Miracles became the bait or inducement to get these teeming half-baked acclaimed followers of Jesus to become a member of a targeted Church.

The proliferation of Churches with its consequent stealing of converts, many of the so-called men of God became suspicious of themselves. Some of them do not have good relationships, hence they are in enmity with each other. Some of them mount their pulpits and openly call fellow pastors un-printable names. Most of the so called men and women of God, who are "doing well" in their Church businesses display their amassed wealth by the kind of jets, cars, houses, dressing, auditoriums, Church seating capacities, that are credited to them. Most obvious is that their Church businesses were set up and managed in a way to satisfy the families of the founders. The characteristics they are consistently manifesting have predisposed them to be directly or indirectly turning the mission mandate into a commercial enterprise.

These observations have gotten many who are spiritually alert to the overturn of the Church goals to not only become troubled, but some are asking many questions, some are critiquing, while some are praying to God to revive the mission mandate of the Church again in this era. While some are praying for the Church, some others have become cold towards developing relationship with God. With the help of

advanced technology, many professed Christians now prefer to sit in the comfort of their living rooms to be listening to their chosen live broadcast of Church proceedings on Sundays. In so doing, they believe that they are keeping in touch with their faith. Consequently many are just keeping in touch with their faith but are not committed by consolidating a personal relationship with Jesus' ontology. And so, this accounts for reason why there is high religiosity yet the issue of high moral decadency in Nigeria. People in this era, tend to only want to approach God through any means just for what they would get from him. Many practice syncretism and yet are claiming to be Christians. The significant number of those claiming to be following Jesus, they are just more interested in want he can do for them as a sign that he is the Messiah as it relates to his functional character. They are not ready to be committed in him first and fore most because of his ontological nature. The above sums up the religious situations of Christian faith in Nigeria.

4.5. Functional and Ontological Natures of Jesus and the African Quest for the Miraculous

The Jews conceived the idea of the expected Messiah in terms of his pragmatic roles. The pragmatic roles here begs the question of "what difference does the Messiah make in the world? Their idea of the promised coming Messiah is pragmatic because of the troubles in form of political and religious oppressions they were encountering in the history of their existence. In response to their innumerable troubles, God through the prophets promised them the coming of the Messiah who will function as a King (Isa 24: 23: Zech. 9:9; 14:9), Priest and Prophet. Those who were anointed a priest or prophet by God in their history, were for specific tasks, eg Moses was an anointed prophet (Deut 18:20) and a priest (Numbers 11:11-21).

Through the specific functions of this Messiah they will be empowered like in the days of David and as well be empowered to dwell securely in the land of Israel (Isa 11:11-12; 43:5-6: Micah 5:4), and they will have peace. Till today, it is because of the expected functions of the promised Messiah that make most of the Jews to refute that Jesus is the expected Messiah. They believe this because, the acclaimed enemies of God and Israel have not been totally defeated, there is still consistent wars and oppressions against Israel,

death has not been destroyed and the world is still in a state of chaos. For the Jew, the Messiah who is the expected anointed one, interpreted as "***christos***" in the New Testament must fulfill all their expectations for him to be accepted to be the promised Messiah. Noteworthy is that the Jews who have not come to accept Jesus to be the promised Messiah are living in delusion. Functionally, they did not understand that Jesus have carried out the Messianic roles as the Divinity has orchestrated it. Hence, in his function as One with God, he did not use the trademark formula of the prophets which is "thus saith the Lord." Instead, He spoke in His own authority. Noteworthy again is that in function, Jesus goes beyond the function of the priests in the tabernacle. He mediated between God and man being sinless.[108] In his divine function as the Messiah, he became the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29).

Africans like the Jewish people were and are still more interested in the functional Christology, unlike the Greeks who were more interested in nature or an ontological Christology.[109] Functional categories of the nature of Christ is the main approach through which Africans in their quest to understand and categorize Jesus Christ identify with him. Because of their solution oriented nature, they are most tended to approach Jesus from the Christology from below because in contrast to his ontological Christology, functional Christology places a greater emphasis on the "deeds" or "actions" of the Messiah. The New Testament gospels emphasized that Jesus did visible actions which include healing the sick, feeding thousands (John 6), teaching authoritatively, raising the dead (John 5:21; 6;40), showing the ability to exercise judgment (John 5:19-20) etc. It is noted that these "deeds" or "actions" presented Jesus as one who is able to perform the same functions as the God of Israel. In the same manner the Messiah that would make meaning or be attractive to an African questing to find meaning for his or her life must be the One who can solve his problems.

In diverse forms, many problems afflict Africans. On a large scale, they include but not limited to poverty, sickness, ignorance, oppressions, corruption etc. Hence, Africans with special reference to Nigerians, are solution oriented people. And so, any form of religion or God advertised that would solve their problems is highly patronized. Many Pentecostal pastors have the understanding that Nigerians are solution oriented

and so, they use it to exploit their gullible followers. They use their acclaimed spiritual power or gifts to be performing miracles as a bait to attract many questing for the miraculous to be their followers. Also, they use the idea of miracles to be keeping their members within their folds. In the followers quest to get Jesus to be functionally effectual in their lives by solving their problems the way they desire it, they have been misguided. Many have experienced horrible experiences. The end result is that the ontological nature of Jesus is being undermined. They do not want Jesus, the Revealer to reveal God to them so that they can develop a deeper relationship with Him. No, what they want is Just miracle! In not wanting to identify with the ontological nature of Jesus but only desiring to get their problems solved by Jesus, underlines the problem. The salvational connotation of miracles as signs are undermined when material satisfaction is the main goal of those who desperately quest to access the supernatural activities, which only the divine can do. In as much as identifying with Jesus from his functional nature is not sin in itself, but there is the need to strike a balance between the functional and ontological approaches to Jesus.

Onwu explains that Christological approaches in Africa has to do with identity and place of Christ, ***imago Christi***, in African society.[110] For the Africans, Jesus as One with God must be presented to them in way that would help them to rediscover God who alone is creator, redeemer, savior and Judge. This they best appreciate through approaching Jesus on the basis of his functional roles. Jesus' functional roles unveil what He will do and continue to do in the lives of his followers that signify his ontological nature. Ontological nature explains identifying with Jesus as the only true Revealer of divinity and humanity. Buttressing the above, Ezigbo argues that a befitting way to approach and explicate the Christ-Event for African Christianity is the construe of Jesus as the Revealer of divinity and humanity. Ezigbo sees a revealer in this context to be the individual who possesses the ability to mediate and interpret humanity and divinity.[111]

Although most of the existing Revealer Christologies focus on revelation, they concentrate on Jesus's divine nature and give little or no attention towards analyzing Jesus' human nature. Ezigbo argues that an adequate Revealer Christology (especially designed for the African contexts) will construe Jesus as

simultaneously revealing (that is, mediating and interpreting) divinity and humanity for the purpose of creating and sustaining the God-human relation.[112] Establishing and consolidating the above understanding will help Christians to guard against creating a false dichotomy between the person of Jesus Christ (ontological Christology) and his work (functional Christology). This indicates that an adequate Christology must hold the person and work of Jesus together as the two features of the Christ-Event and should discuss or apply them as the two indispensable aspects of an entity. This is seen that in the earthly ministry of Jesus, some of his teachings, his Claims and miraculous activities unveil his mysterious theological dual identities.

4.6. Nigerians and the Christological Debates

It is important to note that "Christology is undoubtedly the most advanced topic in sub-Saharan Africa. Over the years, Christology is still being developed in the sub-Saharan Africa.[113] Christology asks the question of who is Christ. Who the Christ is, is dual in natures: Christ has ontological nature and functional nature. Jesus Christ confronts the world inhabitants as a 'revealer' of divinity and humanity.[114] Jesus' ontological nature, unveils his essence as God while his functional nature defines what works he can do as One who is divine. Nigeria which is one of West African countries, prefer to approach the Christ of God from his functional nature, and most often almost undermining his ontological nature. It is important to note that "Africans are not interested in the Christological disputes that border on the natures of Christ but in his person which has to confront their live, their experiences and their environments."[115] Nigerians are solution oriented people. And so, many Africans or to be specific -Nigerian theologians and self-professed plenipotentiaries of God attempt to advance interpreting and explaining Jesus Christ from his functional point of view. They highlight that relating the person of Jesus Christ to the Africans (Nigerians) must be done in the ways Africans can be at home with the person and the function which Jesus had done and is still doing (to befit their local context). As far as the Christ-Event is concerned, what the Nigerians who are Africans are most attracted to is the solution-oriented aspect of Christology.[116]

Nigerians as Africans are more interested in the functional nature of Jesus Christ, because of the precarious social conditions, indigenous worldviews that constitute the unique encounter the Africans had and are still experiencing. All these were informed by the versions of Christianity propagated by the West and some existential issues that daily confront many Christians in Nigeria as one of the African countries. Onwu notes that "definitely, in Africa, we are in need of life, protection, love, care, provision, deliverance, from evil spirits and demonic powers."[117] Nigerians as Africans are always in needy situations. Because of their needy situations, they are always vulnerable and under-developed. The African situation is all-encompassing precarious. The African situations and particular circumstances that define the context of Africans in their precarious situations include dehumanization, disgrace, oppression and colonized conditions of African peoples which were the consequences of their contact with western slave traders, colonialists and missionaries among others. And so, many attempt to interpret Jesus Christ as the One who identifies with the oppressive conditions under which most African peoples lived.[118] It is due to the African's prevailing socio-political, economical situations, that it is consistently required that the Bible and Christianity be studied afresh in order for Africans to discern for themselves the true meaning of the Christian message as it relates to them as being part of the people Jesus came to redeem.

Christologies in its wholesome characteristics are weaved together into a complex political, cultural, economic and religious web. A helpful way to unpack this complexity is to locate it within the broader historical context of the emergence of what has been described as 'African theology[119] or theologies.' It is the corollary of these theological explorations that resulted in the development of numerous Christological and theological typologies. African theologies is proposed because it is argued that the "existing theological discussion in Africa cannot be described in the singular due to the variety of issues that inform the discussions."[120] Bolaji Idowu summarizes the underlying tasks of African theology by the theologians by noting that,

> We seek, in effect, to discover in what way the Christian faith could best be presented, interpreted, and inculcated in Africa so that Africans will hear God in Jesus Christ addressing Himself immediately to them in their own native situation and particular circumstances.[121]

To respond to the dehumanized and oppressive conditions of many African people motivates some theologians and professed plenipotentiaries of God to interpret and appropriate Jesus Christ intelligibly and culturally or locally. Some advance that for Christianity and its message to become relevant in any African community it must be contextualized, for it is contextualization that is the primary tool of interpretation that makes the Bible and the Christian experience most relevant and powerful.[122] Some others have construed the liberation, salvation mission and Christologies that are suppressive and oppressive, bearing in mind that they have the right to formulate their own Christology that unveils their own response to who Jesus is to them. Noteworthy is, to the Christian community in Nigeria, Jesus is the savior to Nigerians. But the religious world view of Nigerians when it relates to salvation is that, it is the ***sitz-im-Leben*** which is the concrete life of the Nigerians, in their daily lives and experiences that Jesus Christ comes to offer them deliverance as Saviour.[123] It is important to mention that it is important to reflect Nigerians' consciousness as to who the Messiah really is to them. As Greene reflects concerning the missionaries of the enlightenment age noted that at some point "Jesus ceased to be regarded as the ***Logos*** incarnate, or the Divine Son of the Father and became instead the great example of moral excellence or the simple teacher of common sense religion"[124] applies to what is happening in this era. Nigeria, like other Christian communities in the world, the self-professed plenipotentiaries of this age undermine the nature of Jesus as the incarnate Son of God, rather they have developed their own well pleased designer Christology that majors on solution oriented-Christology. Noteworthy is that, however one choses to interpret and appropriate Jesus the Christ as informed by confronting theological, cultural, religious, anthropological, political and socio-economic contexts and issues that uniquely confronts Africa with special reference to Nigerians, Jesus not only remains simultaneously the question but the lasting and enduring answer to the precarious problems and situations. In the contemporary federation of Nigeria,

many people perceive Jesus to be only a means to the solutions to their numerous problems. Victor Ifeanyi Ezigbo observed that,

> In Nigerian Christianity, many theologians and Christians who do not have any formal theological training perceive Jesus Christ primarily as a solution to the problems that confront humanity. As a solution, they expect Jesus Christ to inspire some theological discourses that will deconstruct and overthrow Western theological hegemony, to rekindle the quest to preserve some indigenous traditions, to liberate the oppressed, poor and powerless, to expose the oppressors and all evildoers, to liberate and protect people from the attacks of the malevolent spirits, and to save people from being eternally separated from God. But what these solution-oriented Christologies have overlooked is that the Christ-Event is a paradox for it creates simultaneously a problem and a solution for the Christian community which confesses that God has revealed God's self in this event.[125]

Solution oriented Christologies or Christology is not all that Christian faith is consolidated to offer. The troubling question therefore is how can the solution-oriented Christologies of Nigerian Christianity be balanced? But then Jesus came into the world and executed his mission work of mediating and interpreting divinity and humanity for the purpose of enacting and sustaining a relationship between God and human beings.[126] Jesus in presenting himself to the world balanced his natures. He was fully human and fully God. On the contrary, in these days, most acclaimed ministers in Nigeria, strive to be known as the miraculous worker so as get the crowd attracted to their ministry. They strive to persuade their followers to believe and develop faith in them. Directly or indirectly, their emphasis gradually shifted from the person of Jesus, who is the center of the Christian faith and experiences. It is being undermined that "the history of human salvation is rooted in Jesus Christ."[127] The works of these acclaimed plenipotentiaries give them away as subtly or cleverly attempting through diverse ways to capture the minds and souls of their followers so as to consolidate a believing faith in them. P. A. Lim noted that sadly, they do not lay enough emphasis on personal intimacy with God and waiting upon him-to reveal to them the specific calling and gifting that God had prepared for them.[128] Their attitudes towards the mission mandate of the Church have resulted in many not being committed in believing in Jesus. Hence many professed Christians in Nigeria are solution oriented Christians, who being gullible persist in hoping to access their desired miracles. At the long run, many of these acclaimed followers of Jesus in Nigeria are either nominal or syncretic Christians.

4.7. Current Experiential Ministry Models in Nigeria

Nigeria is a religious country in which religious ventures are thriving. In Nigeria, there are uncountable number of men and women that claim to be called by God and were mandated to be engaging in diverse forms of evangelistic and business ventures. They would always have visions or mandates which motivate their unique callings and ministries. There are innumerable number of Churches and ministries that lay claim to have been instituted by God to disciple people for diverse purposes. The idea of miracle is valued for diverse reasons. There are millions of Nigerians who are attracted to these acclaimed men and women of God and the ministries they founded for diverse reasons. In this subdivision, this researcher reports her participatory observed ministry models of some applauded plenipotentiaries of God in Nigeria as they relate to the topic under study.

Rev. Fr. Camillus Ejike Mbaka was born in Amata Ituku in Awgu local government area of Enugu State. He is a Roman Catholic Church Priest at Our Lady Parish Emene of Enugu Dioceses and the Spiritual Director of Adoration Ministry Enugu Nigeria. He was ordained a priest of the Roman Catholic Church on July 29, 1995.[129] On the 26th of July 2019, Rev. Fr. Ejike Mbaka celebrated his 24 years anniversary in the Lord's Vine yard.[130] Rev. Fr. Mbaka is perceived by thousands of people to be a plenipotentiary of the miraculous Jesus, hence he is the miraculous minister that have many followers from all walks of life who believe in his ministry. Uncountable number of persons flood to his adoration center to participate in his programs, and be graced to access their desired miracles. Many are fans of his gospel songs. Many buy his prayer recharge cards and other materials so as to identify with the God he presents to them, so as to access their desired miracles. To explain how Fr. Mbaka is associated with the term miracles Amensupernews notes that,

> That God works miracles through Fr. Mbaka is an understatement. Uncountable numbers of people give testimonies of diverse miracles they receive through Fr. Mbaka's prayers. Some of these are too real to be true and that is why they are published with the phone numbers of the testifiers in every edition of Amen Supernews for all who may care to verify them. Every Friday Night before his second vigil mass, people file in a long queue to testify the miracles of God in their life through Fr Mbaka.[131]

Apart from being associated with miracles, he also makes categorical statements on the political issues of the federation of Nigeria. [132] He is seen as a prophet by those who are fans of his prophetic utterances, those who seek healings and miracles, they believe in his person and ministry as coming from God. He has a large following because he has presented himself to be the miraculous. Many people have testified of receiving their desired miracles for having identified with his programs and prophesies, prayers, preaching, teachings, talks, music ministry, programs etc. His ministry is similar to the neo Pentecostal outlooks. The spiritual director on 9th April invited the public to his 2019 Good Friday/ Holy Saturday of healings, deliverances and miracles. He advertised the program to be a powerful healing, deliverance and miracle packed event.[133] He declared that anyone coming should not come alone. Those coming should invite their family members and friends. This program held on 19th to 20th April 2019, each day, it starts from 6pm and lasts till dawn. This program held at Adoration Permanent Site, Umuchigbo Iji-Nike Enugu. On the days this program held, thousands of persons from far and near flooded the venue being expectant that their desired needs will be miraculously addressed. In this programe, like in the other programs he often organizes- he is the plenipotentiary God uses to address the needs of those who adheres to his spiritual directions. Many of his followers who have identified with his person and ministries, have testified of having received their desired miracles.

Rev. Fr. Dr. Paul Obayi is a Roman Catholic priest who also doubles as the Spiritual leader of Okunerere Adoration Ministry (OKAM). The vision that motivates his ministry is propagating the gospel of Jesus Christ to all the world through Church services, crusades, workshops, radios and television outreach. His ministry reaches out to the less privileged by engaging, participating in and encouraging charitable and benevolent activities. His mission statements include to preach and teach the word of God, thereby bringing people to Jesus Christ and into membership in his family, and making people reign in life by being in union with Christ through the Gospel of the kingdom of God. He also offers OKAM Charity and Health Care Service, OKAM farms limited and OKAM International Comprehensive School. It is claimed that his ministry has reached out to more than 12 thousand persons. It is also claimed that his ministry has

attracted more than 451, 000 members, more than 12 thousand testimonies and 14 thousands miracles have been attributed to his ministries.[134]

Bishop David O. Oyedepo is the president and founder of Living Faith Church Worldwide Incorporated. The ministry is also known as Winners' Chapel International. Before he founded his ministries, he had a great vision which he narrates thus,

> …behold, as I knelt down to give thanks… the encounter began! This lasted for eighteen hours. In that great vision, I saw a lineup of the afflicted and oppressed, broken, beaten, battered, the blind, the lame and the wretched. I saw all kinds of deformities, that I was greatly bewildered. I heard their wailing as they filed past me. Their groaning was so intense that I could almost feel their pains. I could not help it, and so I began to cry and sob along with them. "Lord, what is this?" I asked. I head God say to me…and from the beginning it was not so and now, the hour has come to liberate the world from all oppressions of the devil, through the preaching of the Word of Faith; and I am sending you to undertake this task.[135]

When he rose from that encounter, he shared his vision with few of his friends on the 8th May in 1981.The ministry was thereby founded on a defined mandate. The liberation mandate which they also call the commission of Bishop Oyedepo's ministry include: the task - to liberate mankind from all oppressions of the devil, the target is the world, the tool is the preaching of the word of faith and the time is now.[136] Bishop Oyedepo having received the liberation mandate from the eighteen-hour long vision he became fully persuaded of God's call upon his life and ministry. Daily there are many living proofs of the mandate of God upon his life and ministries. Emanating from this mandate, across the nations, are testimonies of liberation of mankind through Bishop Oyedepo's word of faith messages, books, tapes, magazines and other periodicals are most humbling.[137] Bishop Oyedepo is a man of God, many believe him to be gifted with miracle working power. Consequent to this, he has thousands of people who believe in his ministries. Most of these thousands of people from all walks of life who believe in his ministry are attracted to him and his ministries because of the miracles that are attributed to his person and ministries. In Living Faith Church, miracles testified are documented and used to attract more people to the Church's programs and partnerships. Aside from holding Sunday Church services, and other weekly programs which thousands attend, many have testified of receiving their desired miracles, there are other business ventures that are

attributed to him. He organizes yearly program titled "Shiloh" which holds at his ministries headquarters located at Canaan Land Ota-Ogun State, Nigeria. From Nigeria and from other parts of the world, thousands of people expectant of miracles attend this program. Bishop Oyedepo establishes the idea of 'Shiloh program' from what God said in first Samuel 3:21 which reads "and the Lord appeared again in Shiloh: for the Lord revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the Lord".[138] Shiloh 2015, was declared 'the season of turnaround encounters.' During the Shiloh of 2015 like in every other Shiloh programs, many came out and testified to having received their desired miracles. Examples of miracles testified include: four years prostate cancer humiliated, triplets after 20 years of waiting, miracle marriage, 10 years marital spell broken, divine visitation, healed of heart condition, 25 years sinusitis healed, three years osteomyelitis healed, strange eye disease healed, 15years impotence gone and so many others.[139] Every year, thousands of people from different countries of the world attend this program for diverse reasons. Some attend this program to identify with the word of faith which Bishop Oyedepo and other assisting men and women of God preach in order to access their desired miracles, some attend to hear the Word of God that may lead them to salvation, and still some attend because others are attending. Some who could not travel to Canaan Land still identify with Shiloh program by watching the events through Shiloh viewing centers.[140] Bishop Oyedepo has many of his Church branches who follow his lead and pattern of ministry meticulously in many countries of the world.

The researcher attended and in participation observed the worship model of Winners' Chapel Nsukka Sunday service which held on Sunday 18th August, 2019 in the Church auditorium located at No. 1, Winners' Chapel Way, Behind GT Bank Nsukka. The first service held by 6:30 am while the second service took off by 8:45 am with Igbo interpretation. Prior to this Sunday service, people were invited to this Sunday service with a flier which reads "Winners' Chapel, Nsukka cordially invites you to her special Anointing for financial Breakthrough service in conjunction with Yoruba Thanksgiving Day". This financial Breakthrough service promised to feature song, dance, drama, word feast and anointing to tackle complicated issues of life. The host minister was Pastor Johnson Audu, assisted by other anointed men of

God.[141] Documented on the back of the invitation flier was a testimony of financial turnaround, testified by bro Ejike E. Ejike testified that,

> Before now, I couldn't pay my shop rent of five hundred thousand naira (#500,000) per annum, and the landlord was always shouting and embarrassing me publicly. As a result, whenever I made an attempt to preach about Christ at the market place, I was ridiculed. Hence, I always go elsewhere to evangelize. When the covenant Hour of prayer started. I came to Church every morning and prayed to the God of Bishop Oyedepo about the issue. In May 2015, the Landlord told me that we would write an agreement that I was unable to pay the money by the end of June, he would take legal actions against me to recover his money. I pleaded with him not to write the agreement, but he insisted. So, we wrote it. As we wrote the agreement, I knew that my God never fails because the shop is being used for Winners' Satellite Fellowship (WSF). All through that period, I remained steadfast in faith, maintained a joyful countenance and still engaged in soul-winning. Miraculously, on June 30, which was the last day of the agreement, God showed up! A man called and gave me a contract to supply furniture worth twelve million, One Hundred and Sixty Thousand naira (12,160,000). To the glory of God, I was able to pay the rent from the profit I made from the business. Indeed, God is in Living Faith Church.[142]

This testimony of financial turnaround was documented on the flier for the invites to read and be persuaded to attend to the Church services. To also help the invitees, transports were made available at some designated locations for people to attend the special anointing for financial breakthrough service. Other services which were prototypically patterned this way include, Covenant day of Long life and Communion service which held on Sunday 9th Sep, 2018 with Pastor Vincent Obami as the ministering resident Pastor and other anointed men of God.[143] There was also a testimony of divine healing testified by Sister Favour. There were other services themed Covenant Day of Fruitfulness (23rd Sep, 2018) with testimony testified by Sis Nen,[144] Special Anointing Service and Covenant Day of Breaking Generational Curses (Sunday 16, Sep 2018) with testimony testified by Isaac Godfavour,[145] Covenant day of Laughter (7th Octo, 2018) with testimony testified by Sis. Nene O.J., Covenant day of Settlement, thanksgiving and dedication service (30th sept 2018) with testimony testified by Sis. Nene O.J.,[146] Mantle Impartation Service, and so on. In another branch, Sunday service flier with the picture of the resident pastor was published and it reads Living Faith Church Agbor, aka Winners' Chapel Int'l. Where God is at Work Now! Ministering: Nwagu Okenwa and other anointed men of God, Presents: 3rd Wonder Sunday/Special Anointing Service Sunday 21st July 2019. (Come with a bottle of Olive Oil and a list of things you want

to say enough is enough to) 1st Service 6:30am and 2nd Service 8:30am at Church Auditorium 223, Old Lagos/Asaba Road, B.B. OWA. What to expect: expect the reversal of the irreversible, expect the release of long awaited desires, expect the healing of both curable and incurable sicknesses, expect the end of misfortune and storms, expect the breaking of yokes/ family evil pattern and expect the anointing for exploit.[147] All these special service programs are backed up with Bible quotations and traditions. People are expected to participate in faith and access their desired miracles.

The Assemblies of God Church is one of the classic Evangelical Pentecostal Churches in Nigeria. The Assemblies of God is the world's largest Pentecostal denomination. The Assemblies of God Church is not a one man owned Church, she has its origin in 1934 in Nigeria.[148] The Church has its headquarters in Enugu, Nigeria with branches in all states of the federation of Nigeria. The Assemblies of God, Nigeria has a population of about 3.6 million adherents and members worshipping in over 16,300 Churches in Nigeria.[149] Daily many people are joining the Church while some are leaving for diverse reasons. Many who join the Church do so for salvational needs and the need for supernatural interventions of God in their lives. Many who leave the Church -join the neo Pentecostal Churches, those who leave the Church, do so for diverse reasons. Due to the significance of miraculous signs in the Church's mandate, the Assemblies of God Church is still laying emphasis on supernatural interventions in the lives of their members and the people of the world. The Church believes in divine healing of the sick as a privilege for Christians today and that it is provided for in Christ's atonement.[150] A typical programe organized by one of its branch Church which was used to address the spiritual needs of the people they invited so as to reach them with the gospel is the program which Assemblies of God Church Obollo-Afor described as 4 days of divine impartation and presented as "A 4 day revival tagged Grace to Excel". This revival programe was planned to feature salvation, life giving messages, prayer showers, divine impartation, signs and wonders and lots more. This programe held on 31st August to 3rd Sept 2017 at Assemblies of God Church located opposite Prince Eze Hospital, Old Oturkpo Road Obollo-Afor. From Thursday to Saturday, the program starts 5pm- 9pm. On the Sunday, final day of the programe, it started by 8am and

ended by 12noon. The miracle agents include the host pastor and the guest speaker's: evangelist Michael O. Chiemerie, and Apostle Vincent E. Nzeakor.[151] Many of the Church members and those who were invited attended the program. The messages delivered were patterned in the ways they believed would empower the crowd that attended the program to receive the grace to excel in every area of their lives. Another program emphasizing the need for miraculous intervention of God in the affairs of mankind was titled 'Visible Proof Season 3' themed 'Fruitfulness'. This program held in September 29th to 1st October 2019 at 3/5 Assemblies of God Avenue off 158 Ikot-Ekpene Road, Ogbor-Hill Aba. The host pastor was Rev. Ngele Paulinus while the guest minister was Rev. Dr. Don Odunze.[152] Many members of this Church invited both the members of other Churches and those who are yet to be converted to any Church to this program. This program which starts by 8am in the morning and by 5pm in the evening time was well attended by many people who desired to be fruitful in every area of their lives. The ministers' messages emphasized that to be fruitful is a command and not an advice. They assured those who attended the program that the time of this programe was their season to be anointed with the anointing of being fruitful. The guest speaker prayed for those that attended the programe that the forces of fruitfulness respond to them from that week.

Bishop Apostle Chinasa Nwosu is the founder of the Royal Church Worldwide, the Church arm of Chinasa Nwosu Ministries International. He started his Church on Sunday the 26th July 1992 in his rented one room accommodation at Ogbonda's Compound, in Woji village, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria. He is a trained Chemical Engineer. He graduate from the University of Benin, Edo State, Nigeria. He rejected mouthwatering offer to work in a multinational oil company but through acclaimed God's calling turned a gospel preacher. He claims that the apostolic mandate in his life as given by God is "I have anointed you, go and deliver my people…,…raise the poor of the dust, lift up the beggar from the dunghill, set them among princes and to make them inherit the throne of glory"(1 Sam 2.8). Through the dynamic ministry of Bishop Apostle Chinasa Nwosu and his other assistants many people, families, communities and cities have been delivered and transformed, thousands have been changed from failures

to success through his unique ministrations, teachings and preaching of the word of God.[153] Bishop Apostle Chinasa Nwosu is believed to be a plenipotentiary of God who is gifted with the power to deliver people possessed by the power of the devil. Bishop Apostle Chinasa Nwosu stormed Ibaa Clan in Emohua Local government Area of Rivers State, Nigeria for community deliverance and Cleansing on 28th September 2019. The program started by 10 am at State school 1.[154] Many people from that community and beyond attended the program so that their land and their individual lives would be delivered from the grips of the devil who seeks to steal, kill and destroy. Through Bishop Apostle Chinasa Nwosu as the plenipotentiary of God- evil altars, shines, ornaments have been destroyed.

Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries was founded by Dr. D. K. Olukoya. Apart from overseeing the affairs of the Church, Dr. D. K. Olukoya and his other anointed men of God like Pastor Uzor B. Enemanna frequently organize programs that are aimed to address the spiritual and physical needs of their adherents and others they invite. On 20th Sept 2019, they invited people to the program they themed "Weekend Deliverance". This particular "Weekend Deliverance" held on 20th September by 8:00pm in their MFM Channel 8 branch. This program was organized in the way they claimed that it featured healing, salvation, deliverance, breakthrough, baby boom, divine connections, baptism of favor and miracles. As instructed, many people attended the program fasting so that they could access their desired miracles.[155] Dr. D. K. Olukoya and Pastor Uzor B. Enemanna organized as always a programe they termed "Witchcraft Must Die". This program holds every Tuesday by 6:30 am at Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries Channel 8, beside Zuma Bakery, Kubwa in Abuja, Nigeria.[156] Many people who believe that they are being attacked by witches attended this programe in anticipation for deliverance and spiritual empowerment. Dr. Olukoya and Pastor Enemanna were the plenipotentiaries God used to kill the witches and destroy the works of witches in the lives of those who in faith attended and participated in the program.

Dr. Olukoya the general overseer of Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries and Pastor Edwin Etomi the regional overseer of Mountain of fire and Miracles Ministries Kubawa Abuja Region 5, Nigeria, organized another evangelistic program they titled "September to Remember… my Season of

Enlargement". The program which held from 25th to 29th September was organized with the target that the thousands of the people who attended the program would experience salvation, divine repositioning, enlargement, divine supply and deliverance.[157] At their Church auditorium in Kubwa many people gathered by 5pm on 25th to 27th and on Sunday 29th by 7am to participate in the program and obey the spiritual directions of the much-admired miraculous ministers so as to access their desired miracles. The messages and prayers were channeled to buttress the theology that, that particular season was their season of enlargement. Many people testified to having received diverse forms of their desired miracles.

The Lord's Chosen Charismatic Revival Church is a Christian ministry founded by Pastor Lazarus Muoka on the 23rd December 2002. The three fold vision upon which the calling of Pastor Lazarus Muoka is anchored include to engage in grass root revival all over the world (Mark 16:15-17), revival of the apostolic Christian experiences among the body of Christ (1 Peter 2:9-10) and revival of heavenly consciousness in the Body of Christ-Heaven at Last (Matthew 6:33).The ministry claims to be ordained with the mandate and endowments to awaken the conscience of human race towards the realization of the vital grace of God which enable people to make heaven at last. To fulfill their mandate, they embark on the 10 billion souls winning ventures in Nigeria and other parts of the world.[158] To achieve their mission goals, they organize different types of evangelistic ventures to bring the gospel to all lost souls thereby telling them of the wonderful love of God. A typical program this ministry organizes is Mgbidi International Crusade, 2019. This program was a four day program titled "what God has determined shall be done". It held from 3rd to 6th January, 2019 starting by 8am daily at Chosen International Secondary School Mgbidi, Imo State.[159] Pastor Lazarus Muoka was the plenipotentiary God used to minister to thousands of people that attended the program both from within Nigeria and from other countries of the world. From this program's turn of events, many testified of receiving instant miracles.

David Ibiyeomie is a celebrated plenipotentiary of God called to establish the kingdom of God here on earth through infallible proofs. While David Ibiyeomie was in the Word of Faith Bible Institute, an arm of Bishop Oyedepo's ministries in 1995, he got a very clear vision to establish and run Church based

ministry. Based on this vision, he founded Salvation ministries-the Home of Success on Sunday April 13th 1997. Being successful in his Church based ministry, David Ibiyeomie now pastors millions of worshippers who are spread all over the globe through his television ministry, online ministration and with over 350 satellite Churches within and outside the country and over 450 pastors assisting him.[160] To him, miracles are proofs that God is at work in the lives of His people. He organizes annual program titled 5Nights of Glory.[161] His programs are attended by thousands of people. In one of his programs, he testified of a man who has been unable to walk for some years who began to walk without his aids when the power of God impacted healing on him. Due to the increasing rate of miracles being attributed to his person and his ministries, thousands of people in need of miracles and salvation flood to his Church. They flood to his Church to identify with his person and ministry so as to access their desired miracles. During one of his evangelistic ventures, he stormed Aba for the programe he themed "Aba Miracle Crusade". This Aba Miracle Crusade with David Ibiyeomie as the miracle agent held from 26th to 27th Sept 2019 by 4:30 daily, at Abia State Polytechnic.[162] Thousands of people attended the program expectant of receiving their desired miracles. David Ibiyemomie himself was the plenipotentiary God used to supernaturally demonstrate instant miracles that the blind's eye was opened, growth in the body disappeared, deaf ears opened etc. David Ibiyemomie again is planning and inviting the public to plan to attend another evangelistic venture he themed "Enugu Miracle Crusade" which would feature word, salvation, deliverance, Healing, miracles etc. The crusade was publicized to start on 28th and end on 29 November 2019 by 5:30pm daily. Because of the large number of people expected to attend the crusade, it was publicized to hold at Michael Okpara Square, Enugu.[163] During the Sunday service of 29th September, 2019, themed "Covenant Factors for Endless Success"[164] David Ibiyemomie announced that Salvation Ministries' next Sunday service 6th of October 2019 would be Sunday service of "Festival of Miracles."[165] This service of "Festival of Miracles" held across first service 6:am, second service 7:30, third service 9 am, fourth service 10:30am and fifth service-12:00Noon at Salvation Ministries Plot 17

Birabi, G.R.A. Phase 1, Port Harcourt and all her Satellite Churches Worldwide. As the services were going on, many people testified of having received instant miracles.

Dr. Dan Ozoko is the pastor of Prevailing Word Assembly also known as the Jesus House International located besides the Motherless Babies Home along Ugwuawarawa road Onuiyi Nsukka. Dr. Dan Ozoko also engages in rural evangelical outreach programs. To fulfil his calling, he organizes different kinds of evangelistic ventures so that many would be drawn to God through God's prevailing word. Prevailing word Assembly presented a faith training programe which was themed 'Words'. The highlights of the program included heavy teaching, prayers, faith miracles declarations and worship unlimited.[166] The program held from 2 to 4th November, 2018 at Jesus House International located beside Motherless Babies home along Ugwuawarawa Road, Onuiyi Nsukka. The host pastor Dan Ozioko invited Prof Kontein Trinya as the guest speaker. Many people attended the programe so that they can be trained on how to grow in faith. Both Pastor Dan Ozioko and Prof Kontein Trinya as the plenipotentiaries of God were used by God to train those who attended the programe to grow in faith in Jesus. Many who attended the programe testified to having received their desired miracles. Again Pastor Dan Ozioko invited people to attend his Church's programe which he titled '5 hours in God's presence' which would feature special intervention prayer service. To ground why there is need for people to attend his program, he asked these rhetoric questions in the invitation flier: are you tired of lack of progress in your life? Is your marriage threatened by divorce or outside forces? Are you confused, not knowing what to do again? Are you tired of your life? Are you depressed or feeling rejected on all sides? Are you battling with thoughts of suicide? What are those forces limiting you?[167] These questions indicate that people who are troubled by these issues need special divine interventions. This advertised special intervention prayer service held on Tuesday October 1, 2019 by 7am prompt. Many people who attended the programe testified of having received miracles.

Bright Amuche is an uprising acclaimed prophet who is also known as Nwa Ebube. He is the founder of the New Salvation Evangelical Ministry also known as 'City of Wonders'. As a Church founder, he organizes programs so that people would identify with the God of faith he preaches and have their spiritual and physical needs met. In one of the programs he organized, he invited evangelist Daniel Ibeh and Senior Prophetess Benedict Obiakor as guest minsters. They ministered in his programe he titled three days of Family Liberation, themed 'Back to Sender.'[168] The programe started on 25th and ended on 27th September 2019.The programe starts by 10pm. The program held at the Church auditorium located at Flight 7 Nkwo Inyi, Oji River Local Government Area of Enugu State Nigeria. Many people attended the programe with the expectation that they would be liberated from influences that are negatively impacting their lives. Some people who attended the programe testified that they received their desired miraculous interventions in their lives.

Summarily, what is to be observed from these experiential ministry models in Nigeria, is that they have some things in common. Each of the ministry model has one or some people that present themselves as being called by God, who gives them a defined vision to participate in the mission mandate in a unique way and as such are given miracle working powers. Being called by God they are miracle agents through whom the divine still performs supernatural works in the lives of people. These applauded men and women of God start Churches, ministries, numerous evangelistic ventures and businesses. They use everything within their reach (E.g. Social media, telecasts, Newspapers, fliers, billboards, books etc) to advertise their mission, evangelistic and business ventures. They expect themselves to have large followers because they believe that they were called by God. Because they believe themselves to be called by God and as well endowed with miracle working powers, they often use the idea of miracle to be attracting followers, members, audiences to their person and to their ministries. These ministers groom themselves to be cognitive of the spiritual, economic, social, political and theological questions and issues that are confronting people in their situations in lives. The Spirit of God reveals these problems to those that are genuinely called and as well endues them with supernatural wisdom and power to provide solutions. God

uses them to supernatural meet the needs of the people in the world as he carries on his goal of restoring mankind to himself. The pseudo men and women of God use the knowledge of the situation in life of people to attract needy and solution oriented people to themselves. They leverage on the peoples' vulnerability to achieve their ulterior motives. Following this, most of these acclaimed plenipotentiaries design their messages, teachings, prophesies, prayers and social gospels ventures to address the needs of the people. On the other hand, the teeming populations in Nigeria who are vulnerable and gullible because of the pressures from the vast number of problems confronting them are attracted to these celebrated men and women of God who package, present and advertise themselves as being God's agents of miracles for their lives' positive turnarounds. Consequently, many Nigerians in their religious dispositions are solution oriented people who are majorly attracted to these acclaimed plenipotentiaries of God so as to access their desired miracles. The above experiential situations consolidate why there is glaringly the theological identified issue of the significant number of the acclaimed seekers and followers of Jesus in Nigeria being obsessed with the quest for the miraculous. Most of these seekers and acclaimed followers of Jesus endeavor to approach Jesus from his functional nature while they are either consciously or unconsciously undermining his ontological nature. In their preoccupation with the quest for the miraculous they are daily experiencing both of its positive and negative implications.

4.8. The Observable Erroneous Objectives of the Current Ministry Models in Nigeria

Highlighting the purposes of miraculous signs (***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***) in the ministry of Jesus Christ and as observed in the apostolic age are crucial and cannot be overemphasized. There are implicit intentions for which miraculous signs (***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***) were preserved and coherently stressed in the gospel of John. It is to be noted that the design of miraculous signs were intended to be consistent with the lofty and all-encompassing theme of redemption plan.[169] Why was Jesus' ministry backed with miraculous signs-(***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***)? Why did the ministerial activities of preaching by the disciples of Jesus confirmed by signs? (Mark 16:20). Why did Jesus assure his disciples-that those who will continue to believe in him-he empowers to do the greater works (John 14:12)? What are the significances of miracles as signs for

the ongoing gospel commission of the Church? Miraculous signs (***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***) in the gospel of John were intended to achieve two major goals. The two-fold major goals include the manifestation and revelation of God's glory and for evangelistic purposes. In other words, the purposes of miraculous signs include to validate divine revelations, they are part of divine revelations and they are God's living interaction with humanity.[170] These major purposes of miraculous signs (***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***) were specifically highlighted in John 20:30-31. It is in John 20:30-31 that John implicitly declared that "Jesus did many more miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." It is to be inferred as noted by Adel Mohammed El Naggar that John's aim in writing his gospel is two-fold: Revelatory and evangelistic.[171]

The miraculous work and word signs make up the major contents of the gospel of John. El Naggar notes that "John's record is characterized by a series of both word signs and work signs. The word signs are the famous "I am" declarations. Jesus affirmed: "I am ...""[172] These signs were by way of redaction consciously and theologically selected, collected, edited and incorporated into the gospel with the aim of revealing and demonstrating "that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God." It is because of the revelatory role which those selected declarations and wonder arousing actions were intended to demonstrate that made them to function as signs- (***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***). It is this all-encompassing aim for which John wrote that explicitly demonstrates how he sought to prove that Jesus is the Christ, the Savior of the world. To have Jesus fully revealed to be God, John employed the use of the statements of witnesses (e.g. such as John the Baptist 1:29,32-36, the Samaritan woman and villagers 4:39-42, Jesus 8:13-14 and God Himself 8:17; 12:28-30), accounts of the life, ministry and wonder arousing deeds and his declarations, discourses about himself and accounts of His eventual death and resurrection. To unveil to those who do not have understanding of spiritual things to comprehend the underlying symbolic meanings the signs- (***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***) connote, only John among all the gospel writers, used sermonic discourses of Jesus to shed more light on the meaning of the messages behind the miracles that took place. Where the performed sign-

σημεῖον (semeion) is not understood, John's Jesus used sermonic discourses to try to open the eye of their understanding. It is to be noted that "No New Testament book is stronger in arguing the case for the deity of Christ."[173] Really, the signs- (***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***) in the gospel of John establish the divinity of Jesus. Though miraculous signs- (***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***) did not succeed in persuading all who received or witnessed it to believe, however-these miraculous signs- (***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***) that Jesus performed and his word declarations convinced many that he was/is the Messiah. Indeed, the Gospel narratives testify in well-expressed eloquence the deity of Jesus.

The second aim for which John wrote his gospel was for evangelistic purposes. Through the miraculous signs John documented, he wants his audience to read them, and come to know the true identity of Jesus. Jesus' functions define his ontology. Christian faith is spread through a crusading zeal of introducing people to Jesus, for them to come to believe in him to be the Son of God. If people come to know Jesus' ontology through his functions, they may have life in his name. Persuading people to establish and consolidate a believing faith and remaining in Jesus is the focal emphasis of evangelism. And so, an important underlined purpose for which John employed the use of miraculous signs- (***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***). John's introduction of Jesus to his audience was for them to come to a fuller knowledge of Jesus for their eternal salvation.

The above establishes the significance of miraculous signs in the gospel of John. However, when the above objectives for which John employed the use of miraculous signs (***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***) as one major tool for reaching his audience and introducing Jesus to them are theologically compared with the objectives of the contemporary acclaimed evangelistic ventures and Church leaders who claim to be called into the ministry of the mission mandate of the Church, they do not commensurate. Miracles as signs (***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***) confirmed the authenticity of the ***didache*** and the ***kerygma*** of Jesus and his disciples. For the disciples, preaching Christ, and the demonstration of miraculous signs functioned in bringing awe to their audiences. It is true that the apostolic or mission mandate enjoyed the assurance of the accompanying

miracles (John 14:12; Mk 16:17-18), the objectives for which this assurance was given were also stressed in John's gospel.

Having highlighted the Johannine theological objectives of miracles in the mission mandate, the next course of action for this study, calls for the reflective evaluation of the objectives of the current ministry models promoting miracles in Nigeria. What then are the objectives of the significant number of these acclaimed servants of God participating in the mission mandate of the Church in this modern era? Unravelling their objectives would make bare their goals for engaging in mission mandate of the Church. Most models of miracles currently being promoted frequently in Nigeria and in other parts of the world are not like the Bible times miracles which always had worthy motivations. The erroneous observable objectives of the current ministry models promoting miracles are traceable to these wrong motivations:

4.8.1. Personal Interests: These days' miraculous signs are being done for the purposes of personal aggrandizement, glorification, embellishment, puffery and boasting. The miracles as signs (***σημεῖα-sēmeia***) Jesus modeled validates his claim of being the Son of God and encapsulates doing the will of God (6:38), but the erroneous observable objective for which many acclaimed miracle workers join the ministry is to achieve their personal interests. Wayne explained that "Those performing wonders in the first century did not do so for the purpose of enhancing themselves financially—unlike the wealthy "faith-healers" of today."[174] Significant number of these celebrated ministers are not motivated by love to go into the ministry for humanities' salvation. For most of these applauded miracle workers to achieve their selfish interests directly or indirectly, they focus on preaching on health and wealth gospel. Following this, it has been observed that "central to these modern-day miraculous models is health and wealth gospel. These two concepts encapsulate issues such as deliverance from all sorts of cures, regaining the lost treasure, freedom from demonic oppression et cetera."[175] These miracle workers bearing different titles (e.g., reverends, fathers, daddies, apostles, bishops, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers) use miracle as a bait to draw to their ministries gullible followers who are desperate for miracles. To maximize their personal interests, these acclaimed plenipotentiaries claim and make boast of possessing miraculous

powers. They boast that their places of worship are miraculous grounds. Resane notes here that "Miraculous powers are associated with a particular personality or a cultic Centre."[176] Because of this 'power' which these acclaimed miracle workers claim to possess and the miraculous nature of their worshiping grounds, those seeking for miracle embark on pilgrimages to the acclaimed locations to access the advertised miracles. This tendency of people going to an acclaimed miraculous location to meet with a miracle worker questions ones true faith in the omnipotence and the omnipresence of God. It is this tendency that creates current scenario, were miracles are the magnet towards the preacher instead of miracles as signs (***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***) drawing people towards God. Hence, pilgrimages to a particular geographical location or a human figure have become a norm. This model demands ecclesiological scrutiny.

4.8.2. For Fame and Ministerial Call Confirmation: Most acclaimed ministers of God in Nigeria desire to be popularly known to possess the power of God. Bidemi Oyelade documented that "many of these prophets . . . want to make names, they want their voice to be heard, and they want to create awareness and recognition at all cost so they abandoned the real purpose of evangelization."[177] To most Nigerian acclaimed men and women of God- being endowed with the power of performing miracles confirms that they were truly called into the ministry. They believe that if they are known to have the power to be performing miracles, that they will be the most sought after from all the four corners of the world. And so, those people that are in Church business are most popular when they claim to be able to stimulate and effect faith healing in people's physical, financial and social health. Those who make such claims have a throng of followers who are desperately seeking to access their desired miracles.[178] They advertise their acclaimed miracle so as to make themselves to be renown. They make bold their faces on the bill boards, fliers, stickers, advertise their acclaimed miracles on air using media houses and social media. Many have actually become renowned from their advertised miracles. These acts unswervingly or indirectly make bare their hidden intentions for engaging in the Church business.

4.8.3. **To attract Audience/Crowd**: Most acclaimed ministers of God in Nigeria, use miracles to attract audience to hear what they claim to offer. Don. O. Akhilomeh, noted that "In Nigeria, we have examples of Church leaders who "claim similar abilities and soliciting for similar large followings."[179]An example here in Nigeria is the self-proclaimed prophet T. B Joshua who is renown because of the numerous miracles which are attributed to him and for which he uses to attract audience from both in Nigeria and all other nations of the world. As he wiggles his hand toward the congregation….the large audience immediately gives a corresponding reaction in expectancy of their desired miracles.[180] Human beings are naturally attracted to wonder arousing events. Due to the sin nature in man, always he is made anxious by one form of trouble or another. He needs solutions to his numerous needs and so any glimpse of means of solving his problems becomes a most sought after. Many who desperately need to solve their problems are most readily available to give audience to those who use the name of Jesus to claim to offer solutions to their problems. Since miracle is among the real thing in African Christianity, many of the so called miracles today are fabrications intended to attract crowds and make money.[181] Because of their wrong value for miracles, the majority of the so called miracles are used as baits to lure people to their various Churches. S. O. Abogunrin noted what is Observed in Nigeria that "people appear in their thousands in Churches and crusade grounds (both Christians and non-Christians), not seriously seeking after Christ or spiritual food, but for miracles . . . healing miracles have actually become the 'real thing' or the most current issue in African Christianity today."[182] These professed men and women of God use miracles to get gullible people to magnet towards them, instead of the people being drawn to God himself. It should be noted here that most acclaimed miracle workers in Nigeria unveil their objective of declaring themselves to be called of God into mission mandate when they use miracle as a bait to attract audience or crowd to their ministry.

4.8.4. Perceiving and Presenting Miracles as the End in Themselves: another well-known wrong motive for which most people in Church business employ ability to be performing miraculous sign is for the acclaimed spiritual gift to serve not as a means to an end, but as the end in themselves. They use the spiritual gift of being able to be performing miracles to enrich themselves, become powerful, famous etc. Miraculous sign is supposed to bring a deeper knowledge of Jesus that should lead to eternal salvation of the miracle recipient's soul, instead they use miraculous gift as a means to be merely meeting their material benefits. In this case, material aspects of miracles serve as the end in itself. Being ignorant, many of those chasing after the miraculous expect these miracle to be the end in themselves. Miracle is the end point of what they are expecting from Jesus, on the other hand they undermine the need for eternal salvation of their souls. Even when they have accessed the miracle, they do not grow in their faith in Jesus for who he is ontologically. They do not identify with Jesus' ontology because doing that would place a demand of being disciplined in following him and so they are not willing to be committed to him.

4.9. The Typology of Miraculous Signs in Nigeria

It is the fulfilment of the gospel commission that forms the central reason for the existence of the Church. The gospel of John is a gospel of missions. Through diverse supernatural means, God initiated mission as a means to restore humanity back to his original creation plan. After the Old Testament accounts, God in Jesus continued his mission of restoring human-race to himself. Many miraculous signs-(***σημεῖă-Sēmeia***) were orchestrated by God to validate the person and the message of Jesus so as to persuade those who may wish to believe in him to be saved. In power, Jesus carried out his Messianic ministry and sent his disciples and is now sending those who have believed in him into the world to carry on the gospel commission. Jesus in sending his then disciples and his contemporary disciples, in backing them, he gave the surety of his abiding presence everywhere the disciples went and would go (John 14:12). Following this, the New Testament account showed that "along with this Church growth was the manifestation of God's power in miracles and wonders."[183] The helping presence power of God in the person of the Holy Spirit which was evident in their ministry yielded the corollary of the manifestation of mighty works -

δυνάμεσι **(*Dunameis)***, signs -***σημεῖᾰ*** (***sēmeia***) and wonders -***τέρατα*** (***Terata)*** that helped the early Church to start off with a rapid growth. Power demonstration was an integral part of Jesus' ministry and those of his disciples, it should be noted that it is inherent in the life of true believers of every generation.

The premise grounded here is based on the theological establishment that miracles are still possible. Just as the plenipotentiaries of God are used by God to continue performing miracles, the Devil is also using some who claim to be the plenipotentiaries of God to be performing pseudo miracles to deceive many. Keller and Keller noted that "not only can God and his plenipotentiaries perform miracles and signs, but so can the devil and his demonic angels, and even false prophets and the Antichrist."[184] Many acclaimed ministers of God are directly or indirectly performing wonders in the name of Jesus misleading the gullible solution oriented seekers of Jesus in Nigeria. As it is important to underline the significance of miraculous signs in the gospel commission, it should be noted that miracles have fundamental two types: genuine miracles and pseudo miracles. In view of the above, it is noted that "while recognizing the blessings of miracles, the Bible also declares that Christendom will be beset by false workers performing miracles. These, among others, are presented as a sign of the end."[185] Under this subsection, this study will briefly look into the two types of miracles. This subdivision will explore the genuineness and falseness natures of miraculous signs as they relate to the gospel commission of the Church in Nigeria.

4.9.1. Genuine Miraculous Signs and Miracle Workers: Wonderful act that arouses wonder, awe is to be defined to be miraculous when the wonder arousing act is orchestrated by the divine supernatural power which does have religious symbolic underlying meaning(s) and purposes. As Mauntner explained, "miracle means to be astonished, to wonder, to admire an event which could not or would not have occurred in the ordinary course of nature but is brought about through the deliberate intervention of the supernatural being."[186] For a miraculous sign-(***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***) to be genuine, it must be orchestrated by God. Miraculous signs in their original and unpolluted form, are beyond nature and they are solely counted

as the basic acts of God. Even when human beings can give explanations about how it occurred, it is still to be seen as that which only God orchestrated. Buttressing the above, Berkhof explained that,

> The distinctive thing in the miraculous deed is that it results from the exercise of the supernatural power of God. And this means, of course, that it is not brought about by secondary causes that operate according to the laws of nature. If it were, it would not be *supernatural* (above nature), that is, it would not be a miracle.[187]

From the Old Testament account, God in his nature has been orchestrating actions that are clear to human's understanding and those beyond human's understanding for diverse reasons. One of the long standing reasons why God demonstrate supernatural acts is that "they are the visible heralding of the salvation which frees men and redeems the world.[188] In compassionate love, supernatural acts have been orchestrated by God so as to restore mankind to God and to alleviate human sufferings. Genuine miracle performance were continued in the ministry of Jesus. Noteworthy is that there were others in Jesus' days who were doing actions that were arousing wonders but they were not of God. Some even accused Jesus of demonstrating miraculous signs by the power of Beelzebub (Luke 11:15). But the miraculous signs-(***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***) performed by Jesus were the ones that were demonstrated in fullness of the nature of God's power and will. Jesus being God as John's gospel convincingly proved, performed miracles only God can do. His apostles and disciples were also endued with spiritual gifts that predisposed them to also demonstrate supernatural deeds that were in accord with the will of God. The miracles they performed were theocentric, christocentric and resulted in returning all glories to God. The miracles they performed helped the then Church to grow.

Genuine miraculous signs come from God in response to the prayers of His people, thanksgiving to God, and it can also occur in its own accord for His own glory. Though God sometimes uses human tools to continue performing acts that are wonder arousing, it should be noted that "No matter who is the vessel God uses to bring about a miracle or healing, it is God Who is to get the glory for it (John 2:11; 11:4)."[189] Genuine miracles are Christocentric and not egocentric. When human vessels are used by God to demonstrate his supernatural acts, it is still done with the main purpose of arousing interest or pointing

people towards God. Its intent is never to arouse or point people towards the performer or an agent. Genuine miracles expresses the will of God. Genuine miracle takes the audience by surprise, they are not stage managed. Those who God genuinely uses to continue in doing his wonder arousing acts in the past and in this modern era are those who understand that one who may be termed the ordinary is not graceless, nor is grace abandoned in the midst of extraordinary signs and wonders.[190]

Modesty guides the miracles that are purely genuine. Kelebogile T. Resane noted that "Modesty must prevail as Christ; the great miracle worker himself respects the dignity of humanity."[191] Jesus never touched private parts of those who encountered his miracles, he never asked them to undress before him so that they would show to the witnesses their afflicted part of their bodies, he never asked anyone to swallow snake, to drink deadly concoctions to prove the power of God at work in him, et cetera. Those who God uses to perform genuine miracles do not rob people of their possessions under the guise that the Lord says give away your money or property by faith so that God will bless you! They are not those who expose a large number of acclaimed Christians who are not rooted in faith to the dangers associated with the health and wealth gospel. They are rather most mindful in preaching the kerygma of the Church to these thirsty souls in order to persuade them to come to the knowledge of Jesus which is endued with the power of salvation. It is in compassion and outright modesty that Jesus handled those that were his miracle recipients and witnesses. The code of belief here established is built on the premise that genuine miracles are still possible. Characteristics of a Genuine Miracle that distinguishes them from feigned, faked miraculous signs include that the miracles are theocentric, independent of secondary causes, are credible with demonstrable facts, sensed by perception, have credible witness(s) and are demonstrated for worthy motive. Pseudo miracles is the opposite of genuine miracles.

4.9.2. Pseudo Miracles and Fake Miracle Workers: The premise that miracles are still possible in every era comes with the corollary that miraculous occurrences have the tendencies of either being genuine or false. Supernatural actions have been established to be traceable to God who is omnipotent and who also uses his plenipotentiaries to be executing his compassionate and evangelistic wonders in the world. It is

important to note that the nature and the functions which are the characteristics of God's works can be falsely duplicated. The devil and his plenipotentiaries are directly or indirectly replicating the divine compassionate supernatural actions consolidated with the aims of restoring mankind to God, and alleviating human sufferings. Though supernatural acts can only be traced to God, the devil and his cohorts are also in the business of performing assumed wonder arousing actions that are aimed openly and or ultimately to cause humanity to remain estranged from God.

Evidently, in the world of today, with special reference to Nigeria, there are many occurrences of wonder and awe arousing manifestations that when people witnesses them, they many not certainly describe whether those wonders come from God or from the devil. Those wonder arousing actions assumed to be miracles may so closely look like what God can use his human plenipotentiaries to do. Theologically, the wonder arousing works they perform and advertise are the veiled works of the devil and his human instruments. The wonders they demonstrate are counterfeit of God's reality and workings within humankinds and in the world. Adelowo Felix Adetunji noted that "We are in the midst of the great controversy between Christ and Satan… Magic or sorcery, on the other hand, is satanic in origin and works by coercion through manipulation and tends to boost the ego of the magician."[192] Many perform Magic and sorcery under the guise of performing miracles and many have been deceived. Pseudo miracles are deceptive in nature. Characteristics which these miracles and those that perform them manifest- unveil their real motivations. It also generates the need to question or unravel the ethical, theological credentials that authenticates what they are performing.

Their veiled motivations account for the reasons there are many false miraculous signs in the world with special reference to Nigeria. Kelebogile T. Resane noted this about South Africa "There is a proliferation of miracles in the Neo-charismatic Churches in South Africa and elsewhere."[193] Also in an alarming rate, acclaimed miracles are proliferating in Nigeria, though it is also happening in the whole globe.

The case of Nigeria and the explosion of miracles is a special case. People outside the borders of Nigeria are puzzled by acclaimed 'Miracles' that are happening in Nigeria. It is because of the miracles which some Church founders and others in Church business are advertising and attributing to themselves that are attracting people beyond the borders into Nigeria in quest to access their own desired miracles. For example many people from different countries in the world are always ***en route*** to Nigeria to visit T. B. Joshua so as to access their miracles. They, like the crowd in the context of John 6 visit T.B. Joshua because they see him to be a miraculous man of God, they go to him to seek for miracles and not that they want to be committed to Jesus. In September 2014, many miracle seekers that came from South Africa into SCOAN in Nigeria seeking for miracle lost their lives in the collapsed SCOAN building. Resane notes that,

> The South African society went through writhing pains of agony and grief because of the loss of about 80 lives on a pilgrimage to Lagos, Nigeria, in September 2014. The historic tragedy of the collapse of Pastor T. B. Joshua's church guesthouse on the 12th September leaves theological analysts with the question of people crossing the borders to seek the *miraculous* experiences at a particular *cultic* centre.[194]

It is horrific and unfortunate that this set of people in their desperation to access miracles eventually met with death. This sends a bad signal, resulting in many being critical towards this acclaimed Nigerian prophet.

Those who chase after miracles think that miracles are the mark of spirituality or that they are inconsonance with theological correctness. The performing of miracles does not indicate the theological sign of authentic discipleship. This is so said because theologically, the spiritual gift of performing of miracles is only but one of the corollary ***charismata***. The power to be performing miracles do not operate on its own. The performing of miracles must be accompanied by other spiritual gifts. The other accompanying spiritual gifts serve to verify or confirm their authenticity, validity and theological correctness. It is because of the tendency of a miracle to either be genuine or false that subjects the performing of miracles to spiritual discernment. Spiritual discernment scrutinizes a miracle with the sole purpose of determining whether the acclaimed miracle is either a demonic manifestation or a theological

authenticated miracle. Because miracles do not verify themselves, they would always need an external extraordinary authority like the canonical stipulations to validate them. Acclaimed miracles are to be subjected to discernment because fakes and deceits are rift in today's Neo-charismatic circles.[195]

Those who claim to have the power to be performing miracles and acts of genuine miracles should be synchronically aligned with exemplified characteristics of the miracles modelled by Jesus and his followers in the Bible. This is so said because the character of most of these acclaimed miracle workers are not typical of the modelled miracles of Jesus and his true followers. Some celebrated men and woman of God in Nigeria are popularly known to be performing wonder arousing deeds but their characters do not depict them to be authentic disciples. The morality and character of some of these miracle performers do not adhere or conform to the biblical orthodoxy. Yet these miracle performers still have teeming number of followers. It is important to stress this, that someone is performing miracle does not all the time validate that the performer is a true disciple of Jesus.

Significant number of acclaimed followers of Jesus in Nigeria have formed the habit of running around looking for where miracles will be orchestrated or demonstrated for them. They are also of the habit of believing those who perform them to be true disciples and representatives of Jesus. This results in the proliferation of the demonstration of the acclaimed wonder arousing signs. Fake miracles are human orchestrated. It is worthy of mention that most of the events knighted miracles are human orchestrated. Most of the miracles testified and advertised in Nigeria are human orchestrated and hence are false miracles. They are false because they are human initiated to solve the felt needs of their followers. False miracles are known when these acclaimed empowered men and women of God directly or indirectly become the person their devotees look up to and not on God. Genuine miracles function by pointing people towards God and not towards the performer or the agent.

In Nigeria, many acclaimed miracle workers use miracle as a bait to attract people to themselves. They idolize themselves, hence they make their devotees to either adore or worship them. By idolizing themselves these acclaimed men and women of God undermine the theological validation that it is God who is the prime mover in the orchestration of miracles. Some of these idolized miracle workers have a particular geographical locations that serves as their *centre cult*. They advertise or make boast that their *centre cult* are associated with miraculous power or anointing. They persuade those seeking for miracles to acknowledge and have faith in their cultic places of worship as being divinely anointed to be miraculous centres. People seeking for miracles at their behest or at the point of their needs embark on pilgrimages to these acclaimed miracle centres so as to identify with the anointing in that place and access their desired miracles. Those who persuade people to have faith and to access their desired miracles in their presumed anointed places and those who tie their faith to these locations question their faith in the omnipotence and the omnipresence of God. Jesus himself in John declared that those who worship him must do that in Spirit and truth (John 4:21-24). Faith are not to be tied to geographical locations for any form of physical and spiritual salvation, faith should be firmly centered on Jesus the Christ. Noteworthy is that miracle seekers are not seeking Jesus to worship him, they are only seeking him and identifying with him for them to keep accessing their desired miracles.

Jesus Christ never received any reward after any miracle he performs. But these false miracle workers demand for their pay through requesting that seed faith, vows, donations, offerings, and tithe be paid to them. They demand for paying of these different forms of offering as if the blessings of God solely depend on them to happen. Though, they claim that thanksgiving offerings, vows and donations are returned to God, but they keep accumulating these returns until they could describe themselves to be dangerously rich. It is from the accumulations generated from the rewards they get from their devotees that financially empowers them to be rich.

Jesus never called people to come and witness a miracle, but many of these false miracle worker advertise their miracles and use it as a bait to get more devotees or followers. Many television stations have a large number of telecasts of tele-preachers claiming to have the powers to be performing miracles. These modern-day acclaimed miracle workers believe that it is through the media that they would have a wider range of audience and followers. Modern-day miracles are in most cases used as the magnet towards the preacher instead of a propeller towards God. Many of those who claim to be the plenipotentiaries of God use these acclaimed miraculous manifestations to draw people from the mainline Churches to their own newly formed Churches. Resane noted that "Christians from mainline Christianity abandon their ***catechesis*** and ***paradosis*** to pursue these manifestations."[196] Some who leave the mainline Churches and classic Pentecostal Churches joined the neo-Pentecostal Churches for them to have quick access to their desired miracles. The quest for the miraculous manifests the corollary of people moving from one Church to another. Many are moving from one Church to another seeking to identify with where the celebrated miracle is happening.

The false miracle workers shy away from teachings that focus on discipleship, living a holy life, walking in patience and love with God based on proper hermeneutics. Rather, they mostly concern themselves with health and wealth messages. They are so committed to material blessings that the place of the need for eternal salvation is unfortunately undermined. Most of them are motivational preachers inciting the ear and minds of their audience. Those who are ignorant of the Word and the will of God concerning their situations are subjected into horrible experiences just for them to access their desired miracles. Under the guise of false miracles the gullible poor are exploited, and the gullible rich are used.

The above considered observations necessitate consistent need for the examination of the essence, validity and the authenticity of any testified miracle and any acclaimed miracle worker. There are spirit inspired observable characteristics that are directly and or indirectly revealing the false nature of these counterfeit miraculous signs. The characterization of false miracles and performers are to be summarized on the bases of this premise that they constitute "false teachings, false Christ, false prophets and false miracles."[197]

4.10. The Characteristics of Pseudo Miracles and Fake Miracle Workers

4.10.1. False Miraculous Signs are Egocentric and not Christocentric: an underlying symbolic sign that unravels the falseness nature of a miracle is whether the emphasis of the miracle centers on the self-ego of the acclaimed plenipotentiary. The character of self-ego denotes one whose interest is only in his or her personal needs and wants and not caring about other people. He does not care about the highest authority that should be. Many of the acclaimed miracles attributed to the so-called men and women of God are superlatively egocentric in nature. They formulate their own form of doctrine to suit their personal interest and to tickle and excite their audience, so that they can be dancing to their tunes. They founded their so-called Churches for their personal gains and interests.

Describing these false miracles and miracle workers Resane noted that, "both their ecclesiology and Christology are always on personal convictions rather than in the hermeneutical principles of the Bible, their ministries are exceedingly egocentric in structures, methods and objectives."[198] They are more conscious of building gigantic Churches in urban cities, using fleet of cars, using armed men to be guarding themselves, wearing the most expensive clothes, shoes, wrist watches and establishing a guaranteed means of giving their wives and children qualitative life. All these mentioned above boarder on their selves' gratifications. They are less compassionate about the spiritual and physical welfare of their followers, they are more concerned about getting more followers and acquiring more wealth. This is typical of many Nigerian acclaimed men and women of God who are into Church business for wrong motivations.

4.10.2. The Gospel of Health and Wealth and False Teaching: False miracles are based on false teaching and or preaching. Resane noted that "absence or shallowness of theological insight is replaced with unconventional practices tagged miracles….emphasis on physical blessing sought over spiritual blessings."[199] In Nigeria, significant number of acclaimed men and women of God who are into Church business who focus more on material acquisitions base their teachings and preaching on shallowed

theological insights. The dangers of the gospel of health and wealth abound. But because of their veiled intents for which they entered into Church business, their teaching or preaching always boarder on health and wealth. Many people are desperate about health and wealth issues. Being cognitive about that, these false acclaimed men and women of God use health and wealth preaching to be exploiting the needy. They are very smart in making sure that their business must have to be yielding desired profits. They exploit those who need bodily healing, and those who are desperate about acquiring more material possessions. They make use of the social cultural and economic situations to be putting the minds of their audience under fear. They persuade them to persevere in doing their behests for them to access their desired supernatural interventions. They train them to be thinking that their biddings must be followed tenaciously for them to access their needed miracles.

To achieve their veiled intents, they refrain from warning the people about the dangers associated with persistence in living in sin. When they condemn sin at all, it will be so that, the miracle seekers can access their desperately sought out miracles and not to desist from sins so that they could access eternal salvation. They dwell in making people to see or understand that the world is to be enjoyed! They are not to think about going to hell or going to heaven. For them heaven is on earth! Since the earth is the heaven they must be bodily healthy and wealthy in order to enjoy it. They persuade their gullible followers that they must have faith. The faith they enforce their devotees to adhere to requires them to persevere in living their lives according to their biddings for them to live on earth with their desired miracles. Many Nigerians are victims of this described situation in the name of religion.

4.10.3 The Acts of Manipulations: Many of these acclaimed miracles are characterized by acts of manipulations. The fake miracle workers, orchestrate actions empowered by their hidden devilish sources. Adetunji documented that,

> Magic or sorcery, on the other hand, is satanic in origin and works by coercion through manipulation and tends to boost the ego of the magician. Some of these "miracles" tend to follow magical principles and rituals. However, since mystical powers, such as magic, are condemned in the Bible, it comes to the church in the garb of miracles and wonders[200]

They perform these acts in the ways that they are embellished as the miraculous acts of God. In covered manipulative means- they perform, testify and advertise falsified acclaimed miracles as having been performed by God through them. Some of the acclaimed miracles are stage-managed. They persuade their audiences to believe that they are the monopolies or custodians of the power to be performing miracles in their lives. In Nigeria, there are many Church leaders who claim to have abilities to be performing signs and wonders and they are using it to be soliciting for large followings.[201] For some of these acclaimed men and women of God, they could engage in manipulative acts that lead them into syncretism that fuses different religious doctrines or beliefs. They merge magical power with the practice of Christian faith. They use their fabricated miracles to attract crowds and make money. And so, it has been noted that "the majority of the so-called miracles are used as baits to lure people to their various Churches.[202]

In their manipulative characteristics, they fabricate magical wonder arousing feats as the works of God. They invent and advertise false testimonies in order to build and prune their self-ego as the Church founder, overseers, bishops, pastors, reverends, apostles, prophets or prophetesses etc. In relation to the above premise, Ellen White noted that "Satan and his angels will come down with power and signs and lying wonders to deceive those who dwell on the earth and, if possible the very elect. The crisis is right upon us."[203] In Nigeria, many manipulations are consistently advertised and testified as genuine miracles so as to attract the gullible ones. Most of the so-called miracles are used to draw the unemployed, busybodies or the plain curious, and ignorant people that are too weak to think and explain their daily problems in clear terms.[204] It is noteworthy that today in Nigeria, there is hardly a well-known denomination or ministry that is not linked with the performance of miracles.[205] It is hard to distinguish between them to know the one that is genuine or the works of manipulations. Works of manipulations attract Nigerians due to the religio-cultural setting which encourages them in their needy situations to desire for miracles to cure sicknesses and resolve other worrying situations. It should be summed here that fabricated miraculous signs are characterized by false teachings, false Christs, false plenipotentiaries and false miracles.

4.11. **The Essence/benefits of Miraculous Signs in the Gospel Commission in Nigeria**

Much attention in recent years has been directed to the significance and function of signs in the gospel of John.[206] The significance of miraculous signs accompanying the gospel commission in Nigeria can never be over-emphasized. This is because the gospel commission was initiated in the supernatural power of God being demonstrated in the world for the salvation of those who would come to believe in Jesus. The mission commission having been initiated in power, is still being carried on in power. The miraculous power of God is being daily manifested in Nigeria. Like in John's gospel, the genuine miraculous signs are benefiting by not only bringing people to belief and or to confirm beliefs already held, but also it functions in deepening the faith of those who believe in Jesus. Miraculous signs are daily leading people to a faith which specifically affirms Jesus as "the Christ, the Son of God"(John 1:49). Hence, the mission commission of the Church in Nigeria is not being devoid of the genuine miraculous signs. The significant roles the occurrences of genuine miraculous signs play in accompanying the gospel commission in Nigeria are evident in the confirmation and demonstration of the power of God, Church growth and consolidating a believing faith in those who come to believe, and alleviating the suffering of people the world.

4.11.1. Confirmation and Demonstration of the Power of God: the saving grace of God is set rolling through the spreading of the gospel which is one of the major aspects of the gospel commission. The preaching, teaching and genuine Christian living are all pruned by the demonstration of the power of God through his plenipotentiaries. Signs and wonders do not save. Signs and wonders are not the power of God that leads to salvation. Signs and wonders are not in competition with the Word of God. Genuine signs and wonders do not work against the saving power of the Word. Signs and wonders do not succeed all the times to point its recipients or witnesses to God. John piper opined that signs and wonders do not transform the heart-any more than music or art or drama which accompany the gospel. What changes the heart and saves the soul is the self-authenticating glory of Christ seen in the message of the gospel.[207] This is to be equated to eating and drinking the blood of Jesus which guarantees one eternal salvation as declared by Jesus himself in John 6. It is important to note here that,

> Even if signs and wonders can't save the soul, they can if God pleases, shatter the shell of disinterest; they can shatter the shell of cynicism; they can shatter the shell of false religion. Like every other good witness to the word of grace, they can help the fallen heart to fix its gaze on the gospel where the soul-saving, self-authenticating glory of the Lord shines.[208]

This idea is to be noted because, God through his supernatural demonstrated signs can do more in a minute than man which his organizing capabilities may or may not achieve in a donkey's years. Though signs and wonders are not the saving Word of grace, but they are God's secondary testimony to the Word of his grace. Signs and wonders are not only God's witness to his Word, signs and wonders also accompany those who are in Jesus living out the true Christian living. One of the means of grace needed in this generation is the extraordinary demonstration of power by signs and wonders. Lloyd-Jones explains that,

> what is needed is some mighty demonstration of the power of God, some enactment of the almighty, that will compel people to pay attention, and to look, and to listen… when God acts, he can do more in a minute than man with his organizing can do in fifty years.[209]

Miraculous signs have the capacity to draw peoples' attention to God, who persists in doing his wonders in the lives of people and in the world at his own will. Though, some miracles being testified and advertised in Nigeria are fabricated and orchestrated by some celebrated miracle workers, it is still crucial to note that God is still accompanying the mission mandate with signs and wonders. God is still using the supernatural demonstration of his power to confirm his word being preached, taught and lived out by his committed disciples in the federation of Nigeria. This is so said, because though Nigeria is a religious nation with a high rate of moral decadence, God still have people who are like his earthly disciples in John's gospel- who are tenaciously persevering in consolidating their believing faith in Jesus.

When the true disciples, who hold firm to their faith in Jesus pray for signs and wonders to happen, God according to his will may sometimes make them happen so as to confirm his Word and work. When true disciples of Jesus pray for miracles to happen, it is not to be rated as being wicked and adulterous. This is said because their seeking for the occurrence of signs and wonders is likened to that of the missionary efforts of the first century Christians whose motivations did not contradict the sufficiency of the gospel which is endued with the power of God that leads to salvation.

The prayer of the followers of Jesus who desire to have miraculous signs to confirm their word and work of God in their lives is to be indicted as being done with a wrong motivation when the demand boarders on being desperately seeking for more and more signs from God. This they do with a resistant heart to persist in simply covering up an unwillingness to yield to the persuasion of the Word of God that could lead them towards consolidating believing faith in Jesus. The plenipotentiaries of God who come to him with sincere heart that are longing for vindication of God's glory and the salvation of sinners may have their desires honored by God in accordance with his will. There are many genuine miraculous healings, provisions, providences, deliverances, etc which God is consistently doing in order to confirm his Word and work in the federation of Nigeria and in the world at large. It is through genuine miraculous signs that God uses most of times in Nigeria to compel people to pay attention to him and be drawn back to Him, from their speed lane to destruction. It is through genuine miraculous signs that God most of the times positions the gospel to receive fresh authentication in this modern day as in the days of the first century era.

4.11.2. Miracles and Church Growth: Working of miracle is an integral part of the gospel commission. Working of genuine miracles have played and it is still playing significant roles in the spreading of the gospel, Church planting and Church growth. There is no doubt that the working of miracles (signs and wonders) most of the times helped bring people to Christ. For John Piper, there are numerous accounts in the Bible where miraculous signs helped in bringing people to a fuller knowledge of Jesus. The effects of miracles on Church growth, and planting cannot be overemphasized.[210] In the context of John 6, it was miraculous signs that attracted the Jewish crowd to him.The reason the Church prayed so passionately in Acts 4:29-30 for signs and wonders to happen is because God was using them to bring multitudes to Christ. The working of miracles drew multitude to the Church. Even in this era, in Nigeria the working of miracle is still drawing multitude to the Church. However, this comes with both positive and negative effects. Following this, in every era, any religious group that claims to be able to stimulate and effect faith healing in people's physical, financial and social health are not only popular but do

attract throngs of miracle-seeking people.[211] Nigerians are solution-oriented religious people. Nigerian society is a precarious society, its citizenry are subjected into too much poverty, ignorance and diseases. Most of them go to any where they can quickly access their needed solutions. With these people seeking for miracles filling up Churches, it is assumed that Churches are growing. Both Churches in Nigeria are only growing in numerical strength and not in qualitative terms.[212] This growing number of followers of Jesus in Nigeria are typical of the crowds in John 6. Ellen G. White captures this situation this way,

> The people did not seek Him [Christ] from any worthy motive; but as they had been fed with the loaves, they hoped still to receive temporal benefit by attaching themselves to Him. . . . Seek not merely for material benefit. Let it not be the chief effort to provide for the life that now is, but seek for spiritual food.[213]

The significant number of acclaimed followers of Jesus in Nigeria like the Jewish crowds in John 6 consist in seeking and following Jesus because of the signs that they had witnessed him perform. They persist in following Jesus just to have him continue performing more and more signs for their immediate gratification. Following this increase in the number of people professing to be followers of Jesus S. O. Abogunrin observes that,

> People appear in their thousands in churches and crusade grounds (both Christians and non-Christians), not seriously seeking after Christ or spiritual food, but for miracles . . . healing miracles have actually become the 'real thing' or the most current issue in African Christianity today.[214]

Miracles occurring as signs place demands on the receivers, witnesses and readers to believe in Jesus and be committed in him. The significant number of people in Nigeria claiming to be followers of Jesus are not ready to be committed with Jesus by consolidating a balanced understand of his functional and ontological natures. This results in many of the acclaimed Nigerian followers or seekers of Jesus being half-backed or syncretic Christians. The situation persists that in Nigeria, Christianity is understood more in terms of religion rather than in terms of Spirituality. Accompanied with this increase in numerical terms of those who claim to have identified with Jesus is the proliferation of the acclaimed plenipotentiaries of God, Churches and testified and advertised miracles. Most of those in Church

business lay more emphases on health and wealth gospel, from which huge amount of wealth is accumulated for the construction of more Church buildings and for self-gratifications of those who own the Churches. Onwn notes in this regards that,

> Presently much emphasis is also on erecting massive Church buildings but genuine conversion is still lacking. There is so much denominational rivalry, hatred and disunity; so much greed among Church leaders. Too much churches and religious sects bringing about multiple problems for society instead of blessings of peace, harmony and love.[215]

The supernatural power that is at work in the Church does not aim to achieve increase in the construction of massive Church buildings. It is given to help the Church achieve the gospel commission goals. It still functions in confirming the Word and the work of God and helping estranged human creations become restored and reconciled to God.

4.11.3. Alleviation of Human Sufferings: At the heart of the problem of suffering are questions about the nature of God. One of the natures of God expressed in Jesus is that he is compassionate. In his compassionate nature, Pete Moore observed that "on each of the nearly 30 occasions recorded in the four Gospels that Jesus meets people who are unwell, he acts to relieve their suffering physically by restoring their health."[216] As well as curing diseases, Jesus acts against other forms of sufferings. For example, Jesus feeding the multitude in the context of John 6 was for him to meet their physical need and as well, he used it- to reveal who he is ontologically to the multitude. Like the world of the Bible, the Nigerian society, in this era is also beset with sufferings derived from ignorance, poverty, diseases and political oppressions and so on. Following this, one of the reasons God engages miraculous-signs in his mission moves is to alleviate the suffering of any one- he wills to show mercy or compassion. In this era, God is still using his plenipotentiaries to perform supernatural acts so as to alleviate people from one form of suffering or another. Just as it was in compassionate love that Jesus performed the miraculous sign of feeding the five thousand, he is still in compassionate love miraculously meeting the physical needs of the people in the world.

4.11.4. Miracles are the Signs of the Realized and Futuristic Eschatology: John's gospel boarders on believing in Jesus and having eternal life. John used miraculous signs as marks pointing to who Jesus is functionally and ontologically. Jesus, who is being pointed, is the One that if anyone believes in him, the person's eternal life is now already realized and the promised future eternal salvation guaranteed if the person continues believing. The Jesus event introduced the eschatological era. Following this, John presented 'believing' as an eschatological phenomenon because it remains the only proper response to the eschatological event.[217] believing in Jesus is the only work one is to do so as to be given salvation. It is to be noted that the eschatological revelation surpassed all previous revelations. It demands for the decision to follow Jesus no matter what it costs. In developing the theme of belief, John emphasizes the experience of salvation and the nature of the person of Christ.[218] John theologically guided the truth that the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith are one. To John, consolidating faith is the proper response to the revelation in Jesus who is the Christ. John carefully gives a detailed theological nature of faith in relation to the historical revelation in Jesus. To achieve this, John carefully composed his gospel to capture Jesus being consistent in engaging in discourses that are full of exhortations to belief and that are full of promises to believers. John emphasizes faith for it is by it that men and women can enter into a living relationship with Jesus Christ. The faith required is not the superficial faith, but the authentic faith that leads one to become commited to Jesus which also results to eternal life. Authentic faith leads the believer to life and unbelief to condemnation (Joh 3:16-18).

The reward of consolidating faith in Jesus is captured in John in the form of dual realties of eternal life: realized and future eschatology. Eternal life is the reward to anyone who believes and remains in Jesus. Eternal life is the end result of the process of redemption. John's idea of 'eternal life' is what the synoptics emphasized as 'the kingdom of God.' The concept of 'eternal life' is one of the greatest contributions of the Johannine theology to the New Testament. Because of its significance to his theology, with the concept of 'eternal life' the Gospel begins (1:4) and ends (20:31).[219] John used 'Eternal life' interchangeably with 'the life' which he used 17 times in the Gospel and 6 times in his first Epistle. In the New Testament

thought, John emphasizes his theologized reward of eternal life to consolidate not just a future event (3:19; 5:25; 12:31), but also a present reality (3:16; 5:24; 6:47). The 'realized' eschatology as it relates to judgment in the Gospel of John (5:20b-30) is known to have been popularized by C. H. Dodd. John captures both the realized (John 5:20) and the futuristic (5:28-29) eschatology in his gospel. Under the futuristic emphasis, John captures Jesus declaring that "an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come forth, those who have done good to a resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to a resurrection of judgment (5:28-29). Eschatology as a future event boarders on the second coming of Jesus which is the ***parousia***. Those who continue in believing in Jesus will at the end of all things be rewarded with resurrection of life while those who have done evil by not believing in Jesus will receive the reward of 'a resurrection of Judgment.'

Under the 'realized eschatology' Jesus in John declares that anyone who hears his word and believes him who sent him has eternal life, he does not come into Judgment, but has passed from death to life (5:24). 'Has eternal life' in this verse implies present continuous. It is life already possessed that is continuous. John connotes here that those who have come to believe in Jesus are already enjoying eternal life as their present reality. In this sense, salvation starts off as a present experience of the life of God in the life of a believer. It is to be seen that,

> Salvation includes a present experience and in this sense it is realized, or, more accurately, is a continuous process of realization. Such specific future events as the ***parousia***, resurrection, and judgment point to a coming consummation which will introduce features that are beyond present experience.[220]

In John, sin is simply rejecting to believe in Jesus, anyone who does not believe has been judged already. Judgment to John refers to the sifting and separation that classifies men according to their spiritual attractions. But already, daily, men and women are through their character of acceptance or rejection of the person of Christ classifying themselves. The true Judgment is already a reality and this is predetermined by the nature of one's response to the person of Jesus. The Judgement is based on the acceptance or rejection of the person of Jesus. Anyone who accepts Christ is of the light while anyone

who remains obstinate in accepting Jesus to be the Son of God will remain in darkness (3:19). Those who believe in Jesus are 'in Jesus' while those who are unbelieving are 'of the world'. There is no in-between in John. It is either one believes in Jesus or not. John in his reflective creativity realized that the principle of eschatology is already universally and inevitably in operation; and this, is the present spiritual reality.[221] In judgement, the sifting or separation has been done. The reality of the already presence of the gift of eternal life is seen when one understands the miraculous signs which God daily performs in the midst of the people of the world, who have come to believe in Jesus to be the Son of God given for their holistic salvation. It is to be noted that in John, the miraculous-signs that are being demonstrated in this age, the beneficiaries, are experiencing the realized kingdom of God. They are enjoying the kingdom present in miraculous signs.

Anyone who sees the signs and identifies with Jesus in this life will immediately begin to enjoy eternal life, if that person remains in faith that could extend to the end of redemption process which is eternal life. Following this, the significance of miraculous sign that achieved its theological goals is both present and future in outlook. From the present (realized) outlook, salvation includes a present experience and in this sense it is realized, it is a continuous process of realization. Authentic faith consolidated from miracle experience guarantees one's rewards during such specific future events (eg. ***parousia***, resurrection, and judgment) point to a coming consummation which will introduce features that are beyond present experience.

Miraculous sign also functions as the route to faith that would in the last day guarantee eternal salvation to the miracle recipient. Miraculous sign is not just for immediate gratification, it has direct or indirect eschatological implications in the synoptic but in John, signs are divinely empowered acts or words which demand a decision for or against who Jesus is, that is, the preexistent one sent from God.[222] The decision is to be taken now and not to be delayed. In the gospel of John, signs do not occur in order to adumbrate the coming kingdom (that is in the future). This is said because for John, the incarnation of Jesus means

that the kingdom is now present.[223] Daily, Christians live the life of the kingdom of God by faith in Jesus as the Son of God. C H. Dodd points out as life relates to eternal life that "In the context of the gospel of John, life …connotes "eternal life" (John 3:15-16;4:13-14) which begins here and now, though death occurs even for the believer."[224] Following this, one finds out that important terminologies and theologies running all through in the gospel of John include, faith, believe, life. Eternal life etc.

In applying the above New Testament theological establishment to the Nigerian setting, miraculous signs are significant for any Nigerian who believes and consolidates an authentic faith in Jesus. Realized eternal life would in the long run extend to the fuller manifestation of these facts in the future that culminates in the second coming of Jesus (6:27). But any Nigerian acclaimed follower of Jesus who would keep receiving and witnessing supernatural interventions of God and persist in being obstinate in consolidating an authentic faith in Jesus, the reality of the gift of God's kind of life (***zoe***) is eluding that person in this life and the life that will be culminated in Jesus at his second coming. Anyone who refrains from believing in Jesus is judged already and he or she stands condemned even at the consummation of all things.

4.12. The Negative Effects of followers of Jesus in Nigeria Questing after Miraculous Signs

The affirmation that God is still in the business of doing wonder arousing miraculous signs in the world accounts for the reason behind the claim to many feats of miracles being advertised in this era, with special reference to the modern Nigerian Christianity. Wayne noted that "a perpetual power of working of miracles would in all ages give occasion to continual impostures"[225] of miracle feats in the world. Though, through the working of miracles many are being attracted to Jesus, the tension that consolidates is whether the one who comes to Jesus to receive miracles, understands the symbolic meaning behind the sign and thereby comes to believe through the help of the Holy Spirit, his attestation to Jesus' Sonship. John in his gospel clearly stresses that an individual or a community believe when they are by faith empowered by the Holy Spirit attest to Jesus' Sonship. It is the Holy Spirit that directs the believer to understand the signs that point Jesus to be the Son of God who is the transcendent reality. Signs contribute to the stages of

faith; but they are never the end in themselves, they are the means to the end which is being given the gift of eternal life. A community of faith or an individual that relishes miracles above the God who gives them is on the wrong track. The signs they see dazzle and blind them to the God who loves and extends eternal life (17:20-26).[226] If the one who has received miracles from Jesus, did not come to understand and identify with Jesus to be the Son of God, the person then sees the miracles to be the end in themselves.

It is to be pointed out here that signs and wonders may follow believers who obey the Holy Spirit and continue in following Jesus in commitment. The question that this arouses is, are genuine believers supposed to chase after signs and wonders? It is theologically dangerous for believers to go about seeking for miracles. The danger, however, arises when one or a Christian community exalts supernatural signs and wonders above holiness (correct living) and doctrine (correct beliefs).[227] In the Nigerian society, a current occurrence in the modern Church is running after the miraculous. Many in the name of following Jesus are pursuing signs and wonders. Should true followers of Jesus who are committed to God be pursing signs and wonders? Jesus in John (6:26) rebuked and confronted the crowed that were seeking and following him just because of the miraculous signs they desire to get from him for their immediate gratification. Jesus does not want people to identify with his functional nature while undermining his ontological nature. He does not desire that his followers be preoccupied with the quest for the miraculous. Noteworthy is that excessive preoccupation with signs and wonders has its dangers. Many dangers abound when people tend to come to Jesus just for what they would get from him. In Nigeria, many are desperate in seeking and coming to Jesus, not to remain with him or in commitment to keep following him. Hence, there is the situation of increase in religiosity but decadence of spiritual morality. The negative effects of followers of Jesus questing after miraculous signs are analyzed below.

4.12.1. Poor Spiritual Growth: One of the major adverse results of coming to Jesus just to access ones' desired miracle is that the person many not grow in genuine faith in Jesus. Spiritual growth is not an easy journey. But individuals who are committed to Jesus must grow in their faith in him. Following this, it has been noted about spiritual growth that,

> Everyone is bound to his spiritual growth journey which is long and difficult. Many tests and obstacles, which very often appear impossible to overcome, are standing in your way … pushing you to learn and to grow, making you a better human being and helping you to take a certain lesson in order to move on.[228]

Growing in faith is a continuous act and it is not for those with superficial faith. Many Christians possess superficial faith, this accounts for the reason they are not in discipleship committed to Jesus. Any follower of Jesus who is obsessive with the quest for miracle(s) have superficial faith and will not grow in genuine faith in Jesus. Spiritual growth consist in one identifying with Jesus by believing that he is the Son of God and daily growing in having intimate cordial relationship with the Trinity. It implies establishing a profound relationship with God and growing in that relationship. For a start, one who is to have a flourishing relationship with Jesus needs to have an understanding of the revelation of who Jesus is functionally and ontologically. He or she then needs commitment to continue in abiding in Jesus. He or she would also need determination being helped by the Holy Spirit to remain committed till the end. It is the relationship that requires one to keep growing daily from one level to another in communion with Jesus. It must be consolidated on genuine commitment. Genuine commitment is daily consolidated by one adhering to Johannine ethics of love, faith, obedience and gospel commission participation. In this relationship, one is committed in self-sacrifice to God. It does not consist in one's desperate search for what one would get God to do for one's immediate gratification, while undermining one's need for eternal salvation. This relationship, if it is at all developed, may become retarded or destroyed because of one's attitude towards miracles. If one is always looking for ways to get the divine to meet his or her needs in desperation, the spiritual insights will not develop or would be undermined. In their poor spiritual growth, they may not have understanding of what the perfect will of God is for their troubling situations. The level of one's spiritual growth is unveiled through the level of Christian living one daily manifests. Acclaimed men and ministers of God in Nigeria who are desperately seeking to be identified as the miraculous, have spiritual fruits they manifest which in-turn unveil their poor spiritual lives, though this may be unknown to them. In their ministry, they claim that they were called into, they manifest high level of selfishness. They seek to become rich, famous, powerful, building gigantic auditoriums, buying jets, being followed

by large number of people, conducting many number of services every Sunday etc. Their messages become diluted just for them to get what they desire.

The spiritual lives of Church goers are negatively affected when they are obsessed with the quest for miracles. By becoming obsessed with the quest for the miraculous, they may not enjoy a flourishing relationship with the Trinity. All their desperation focus on how they are to access their desired miracles. In this level of spirituality, they would end up being gullible and easy to be fooled and deceived by the plenipotentiaries of the devil. In this superficial form of spirituality, people who claim to be followers of Jesus tend to appear religious with conscious and unconscious intent to access their desired miracles. They are people who live a spiritual life without being religious while religious people could fail being truly spiritual as they are unable to follow the divine command of love.[229] On a significant level, It is this level of spiritual people that make up the large number of those claiming to be followers of Jesus in Nigeria. This also accounts for why there is a high level of religiosity without a commensurate morality,[230] instead high level of moral and ethical decadence are being consolidated. It is to be summarized here that those who quest to be miraculously richer materially, most of the times end up being poorer morally and spiritually. Many Nigerian Christians are religious people who fail being truly spiritual because they are unable to follow the divine command to love.

4.12.2. Miraculous Sign may fail to Consolidate Authentic Faith in Jesus: Faith in Jesus Christ is the first principle of the Gospel of John. Miraculous sign may as well fail in guiding one to develop a consolidated authentic believing faith in Jesus. One of the major negative effects of coming to Jesus just to access ones' desired miracle is that even when they are blessed with a miraculous sign from God, still they may not develop a consolidated and committed believing faith in Jesus. This has been described as when 'signs fail.'[231] Signs fail when people who come to Jesus to experience signs may have been shown the signs, but they fail to see the spiritual symbolic underlying connotations. Because they did not see the sign, it failed in achieving its theological goals. The theological expectation that- they having seen the sign should come to the knowledge of Jesus and in commitment identify with him, will not be achieved.

It should be noted here that "The signs do not automatically produce faith. They by no means exhibit ***ex opera operato.***"[232] A miracle as a sign drives its significance and power from the Christ's work he worked. In Nigeria, acclaimed followers of Jesus that are desperately questing after the miraculous consist in behaving like the crowd in the context of John 6. Though they were shown signs that were enough to guide them to believe, rather they did not come to develop a personal level of a committed relationship with the Jesus. All they persist in doing constitute in asking for more miraculous-signs to be performed before them. From the time immemorial to this age, one of the diverse reasons God performs miraculous signs is to showcase concern for holistic needs of man. God persist in doing miraculous signs even in this era, so that His goodness towards humanity can persuade them to turn from their sins and be restored to him. Even when they receive all kinds of miracles their hearts so desire, most Nigerians still refrain from being committed enough with Jesus to the point of turning-off from their sins and turning to God wholly. Unfortunately, in this era, many acclaimed followers of Jesus are taking God's miraculous blessings, goodness, mercies, providences etc for granted. By so doing, they are replicating the characteristics of the crowd in the context of John 6. They had seen healing signs Jesus had performed, they were miraculously feed, yet they were still demanding to be shown more signs for them to know whether they will come to believe in him. Jesus out rightly condemned- this attitude of those claiming to be his followers desperately seeking him for their material satisfaction. Jesus wants people to respond to his supernatural interventions in their lives by repenting and being committed and by consolidating an authentic faith in him. It is therefore, theologically dangerous for one to have received miraculous signs from God and yet they do not bring them nearer to God.

4.12.3. Perceiving the Miracles to be the Ends in Themselves: Another damaging result of professed Christians seeking, coming to and or following Jesus just to access their desired miracle is that many of them end up in seeing the miracles as the ends in themselves. The danger here is that the miracle seekers do not want to have any personal commitment with Jesus but they need him to perform their desired miracles. Though it is noteworthy that it is important that through miraculous signs the recipients' needs

are met, but its main goal is to bring the recipients to the knowledge of Jesus that would guide the recipients to believe in Jesus to be the Son of God. But when the focus of the recipient is just on the material benefits of the miraculous signs, it yields undesirable results. This comes with a number of other negative corollaries. Seeing miraculous signs as the main end in themselves subject people to be gullible and easy to be deceived. This is one of the reasons Nigerian Christianity is on a significant level not yielding commensurable gospel commission desired results.

4.12.4. Church Doctrines Compromised: Another resultant outcome of people who claim to be followers of Jesus being obsessed with the miraculous is that the core tenants of the Church's doctrines could be compromised. It is important to the Church and mission mandate that sound doctrine be upheld at all costs. P.A. Lim, in 'off the Map' notes that,

> To imply that the Word should play a less important role in the believer's life for the sake of greater supernatural experience—that we should be willing to be "led by the spirit" and follow "off the map" if we want to be more adventurous and venture into the realm of the miraculous—is another gospel.[233]

Some acclaimed men and women of God preach and teach "another gospel" in their desperation to be popular as the miraculous. On the other hand, significant number of those chasing after miracles accept false preaching and teaching just for them to access their desired miracles. The Word of God, which is the power of God unto salvation is supposed to be held fast and preserved intact in its unadulterated form. Some acclaimed plenipotentiaries of God in Nigeria, do not watch their lives and doctrines they propound closely with the dictates of the Word of God (1Tim 4:16). They live their lives contrary to the tenets of the Word of God. Out of their acclaimed zeal, they may or may not know when they have in their speed lane swerved "off the map" of the tenets of the Word of God.

It is quite unfortunate that many applauded men and women of God in Nigeria have directly or indirectly compromised the teachings of the Church just to prove the point or demonstrate the acclaimed power of God they possess. Lim observed that "when one is so obsessed with seeking supernatural power-that one throws doctrine and good sense out of the window-bizarre, spooky and wacky things can happen."[234]

When acclaimed men and women of God are toiling with the Word of God Just to make ends meet, funny and horrible things do really happen. Shallow teaching and preaching are dished out by false men and women of God to shallow souls that are in need. By toiling with the Word of God, in most cases both the acclaimed plenipotentiaries and their gullible followers do swerve off from the map of the doctrine of the Church. In swerving off from the map of the doctrine of the Church, they arm themselves with entertainment doctrines or practices, health and wealth (prosperity) gospel, motivational preaching and teachings that are beyond the sanction and bounds of the Word of God. Even when some Christians would see that the doctrine of the Church is being undermined or compromised by the Church they attend, yet they are excited by the acclaimed witnessed, testified or advertised miracles. Lim noted that "Personal charisma and miraculous signs keep many enthralled and excited even if truth is compromised."[235] The gullible being mesmerized by miracles many not be conscious of what they are doing, to the point that they may unconsciously be willing to compromise the doctrine of the Word of God. These problems associated with the quest for the miraculous point to the truth that it is not every manifestation of the Spirit that should be trusted. It should be summed here that the conscious or unconscious tendencies of acclaimed followers of Jesus being obsessed with signs and wonders to the extent that doctrine and the use of one's sound mind are set aside-pave the way for Christians to be deceived by diverse spirits.

4.12.5. **Opening up Oneself to Deception and to be possessed by Diverse Spirits**: One of the dangerous outcomes of followers of Jesus being obsessed with the quest for the miraculous is that they would be physically and spiritually opened up to be deceived by diverse spirits. Questing after the miraculous have a high tendency of leading the person to deceptions and counterfeits. It is to be noted that when Nigerians who claim to be seekers and followers of Jesus, seek the gifts rather than the giver, they do directly or indirectly open up themselves to deception and be possessed by diverse spirits. Followers of Jesus who are gullible, are so mesmerized by wonders associated with the signs. In their poor spiritual level- they lack the discerning Spirit to know the difference between the wonder works of God and the wonder works of Satan.

True Christians are to be followed by signs and wonders.[236] Those who go about seeking miracles are not depicting the character of a true victorious Christian living. Those who claim to be followers of Jesus in Nigeria but are obsessed with the quest for miracles are daily living at the mercy of deception by diverse evil spirits inhibited people, who claim to be the plenipotentiaries of God but are working directly or indirectly for the devil. Adopting the position of followers of Jesus questing after the miraculous, lands one into deception that goes hand in hand with the following: letting one's mind to be on passive mode, letting aside discernment and downplaying of doctrine and scholarship findings.[237] With these, directly or indirectly, those who claim to be the followers of Jesus would be tools in the hands of the enemy and or be mesmerized by the enemy of the Church, the devil. In Nigeria, many have become possessed by the evil spirits because of the diverse spirits possessed persons and places they are running to- looking for the miraculous.

4.12.6. **Syncretism**: Another negative effect of followers of Jesus in Nigeria being obsessed with the quest for miraculous-signs is professed followers of Jesus attempting to adhere to differing religious beliefs so as to access supernatural interventions either ways. Syncretism has to do with someone attempting to uphold the dictates of more than one religion for one reason or the other. Many professed Christians in Nigeria live with dual religious outlooks. Explaining this state of religious affairs Osadolor explained that "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.[238] It is obvious that many acclaimed Christians devote themselves, not only to Jesus Christ, but also to other indigenous religions. Those who practice syncretism, join in singing songs and praying in the Church-demonstrating that they are showing allegiance to Jesus Christ. But their one leg is outside the Church - trending other hidden places in search for meaning and solutions. Some of these syncretic Christians act in the manner that unveil that they have trust and belief in some of the teachings of the indigenous religions. No follower of Jesus can adhere to any other religion and still be a true follower of Jesus. Anyone who is practicing syncretism has not truly identified with Jesus.

In Nigeria, many among the multitude that are claiming to be followers of Jesus are practicing syncretism. In practicing syncretism, some patronize or identify with traditional religions or Islamic religion, cults, mystery or spirit religion and still profess to be followers of Christians. Those practicing syncretism have one leg in Christian faith and the other leg in other religions. Nigerians who claim to be Christians who practice syncretism have their hidden intent(s). They want to have their needs or desires met by all-means. If what they are seeking solutions for is delaying in Christian faith, they run off to other means to have their needs met. If they were patronizing other means to have their needs meet and they are delaying, they would immediately revert to Christian faith. The quest for the miraculous has made many acclaimed followers of Jesus in Nigeria to be practicing syncretism.

4.12.7. Denial of Realized and Eternal life: In John, eternal life is realized now and it continues till eternity for anyone who would be committed in his or her faith in Jesus**.** Those questing after miraculous signs at the expense of their spiritual welfare will not access eternal life now and in the here-after. Eternal life in Redemption is the end in itself for which any true follower of Jesus aims to achieve. It is important to note that John consciously started his gospel with this God's kind of life (1:4) and still ended his gospel with emphasis on the life which only God can give anyone who believes in Jesus (20:31). John using 'the life' (***he zoe***) 17 times in his Gospel, he still stresses on 'eternal life'. The adjective "eternal" brings out mainly what is implicit in the noun "life." Life is the ***summum bonum.*** Values and priorities are established in an ethical system to consolidate the highest good for life. To John, the highest form of life is experienced in the reality of the fellowship with God. It is this kind of life which authentic fellowship with God consists and this achieves the highest idea of being "perfect truth in perfect action.[239] This kind of life is the life Jesus' personality and events embodies. Jesus Christ himself is "the life" (Joh 14:6). Following this, Jesus is the bestower and the source of this life (Joh 14:19) and the bread that sustains this life (6:35). The kind of life Jesus offers is the one that would last eternally. Jesus came so that people who would accept him for 'who he is' to have this life abundantly (Joh.10:10). This life is both the realized and the futuristic essence of being in Christ Jesus (Joh. 5:19). But many who come to Jesus without a

sincere motive cannot access this God's kind of life now and in the here-after. Nigerians who claim that they are following Jesus, who are half baked Christians cannot enjoy the life which God through Jesus offers to his own. Following this many professing Christians do not have God's kind of life in them. Hence significant number of Nigerians are simply religious people who do not live out victoriously God's kind of life.

4.12.8. **Half-baked and Nominal Christians**: Half-baked followers of Jesus do not possess the vital characteristics (repentance, faith, commitment, obedience or love) which should make up the Christian personality, rather they persevere in following Jesus just for what they would get from him. Half-baked Christians are nominal Christians. They are only Christians by name and not by character. Nominal Christians are half-baked Christians. Nigerians who are half-baked followers of Jesus have consciously or unconsciously refused to identify completely with Jesus. They are not committed to him. Half-baked Christians are ones that go about desperately seeking for the miraculous. All they want is the functional aspect of the Messiah, they care less about his ontological nature. When miraculous signs of God are demonstrated, to achieve physical alleviation of pain and suffering, its main focus is that, that person comes to the fuller knowledge of Jesus as the Son of God who was sent to do a historic work that guarantees for humanity a platform for salvation. Gullible Christians who are easily deceived will not access the life which Jesus offers to his own now and in the here-after. The negative effect of people being half-baked Christian is that they are easily deceived by wonder arousing works of the agents of darkness.

4.12.9. **Proliferation of Churches, Ministers and Miracles:** The negative effect of significant number of Nigerians being obsession with the miraculous has resulted to the increase in the number of those who claim to be plenipotentiaries of God in these last days. Many have seen running Church as a very lucrative business. Bidemi Oyelade explains that,

> The establishment of Churches in Nigeria today is considered to be one of quickest ways to amass wealth. As a result of this, questionable churches and prophets are springing up. As "many of these prophets . . . want to make names, they want their voice to be heard,

> and they want to create awareness and recognition at all cost so they abandoned the real purpose of evangelization which is preaching to prophesy.[240]

It is so obvious that many Nigerians who are in Church business are wrongly motivated. With business in mind, many are engaging in the Church's mission mandate being motivated by diverse forms of erroneous motivations. Many joining in the Church business as the plenipotentiaries of God resulted in the multiplication of Churches and acclaimed miracles in Nigeria. Nigeria records among the nations of the world in which many of its citizenry are full time ministers of God, as they claim to be. A significant number of those who claim to be called ministers of God in their differing capacities, lay claim to being spiritually gifted to be performing miracles.

In Nigeria, there are examples of Church founders and ministers who claim to have the ability to be performing miracles and who are soliciting for large followers.[241] This accounts for the reasons: every day there are acclaimed testimonies, and advertisements of miracles as a validation that they are of God and are working for the expansion of the kingdom of God. Along with the increase in number of those who claim to be men and women of God with miraculous powers is also the issue of the proliferation of Churches in Nigeria. Akosah-Sarpong observing the rate of Church proliferations in Nigeria noted that "West Africa has the highest concentration of spiritual Churches focusing on miraculous manifestations on the continent."[242] Every Tom, Dick and Harry are setting up Churches at every nooks and crannies in Nigeria.[243] They claim that the reason behind their emergence and expeditious growth was that God called them and or they lay claim to divine visions and dreams. Also most of them emphasize deeper biblical interpretation.[244] These Church founders claim to be gifted with all spiritual gifts[245] but they may or may not be called by God. Most of them were called in the ministry by greed and inordinate ambition to acquire wealth overnight. At the center of it all is the quest for the Miraculous in this modern Nigerian society. Because of the known values of miraculous signs in the mission mandate of the Church, there are many claiming to be miracle workers, and there are a significant number of those who are in need of these advertised miracles. Consequent to these, in Nigeria miracle has become the real thing in this era.

4.12.10. A Charismatic Leader can become an Object of Hero Worship: Another recurrent negative effect of acclaimed followers of Jesus being obsessed with the quest for the miraculous is the tendency for these acclaimed plenipotentiaries to be consciously or unconsciously idolized and worshiped. These Church leaders and workers who believe themselves to be charismatic package themselves and speak as if they have become God themselves. In the exalted positions they have place themselves, they directly or indirectly subject their followers to be idolizing them. Their gullible followers in their passive state of mind, idolize them as their father in the Lord, Papa, Bishop, apostle, prophet -who is infallible. Lim noted that,

> A charismatic leader can become an object of hero worship that he can be seen to do little or no wrong. An inordinate emphasis on power, miracles and the realm of the supernatural keeps everyone too excited to question whether all these happenings are above board, scripturally speaking.[246]

Their gullible followers obey teachings, instructions, and commands of their revered minister, so that their desired miracles can take place. In idolizing their celebrated ministers of God, some gullible members or followers have been by fraudulent means dispossessed of their material possessions, some sexually abused, some possessed by diverse spirits, some have lost their lives etc. It is dangerous for followers of Jesus to be desperate to access miracles. In so doing, many have encountered horrible experiences.

4.13. The Nature of Jesus' Miraculous Signs in John 6 compared with the acclaimed Plenipotentiaries and their acclaimed Miracles in Contemporary Nigeria

The natures of the miraculous signs of Jesus unravel the characteristics of the model of a typical miraculous sign he performs. The lessons drawn from the modeled miraculous signs performed by Jesus are the ones that are supposed to also characterize the acclaimed demonstrated miracles in this modern Christendom. But then the idea of the mission mandate of the Church being backed by miraculous signs seems not to be yielding commensurable characteristics as modeled by a typical miracle of Jesus. To analyze this, comparison will be done by examining the person of Jesus as the miraculous, the character of those disciples who came to believe in Jesus and the character of the crowd who did not come to believe though they had seen the miraculous signs performed by Jesus.

4.13.1. Jesus the Miraculous and the Modern Acclaimed Miracle Workers: It has been established above that the earthly ministry of Jesus was one characterized with the performing of wonder arousing feats and teachings. It is the wonder arousing characteristics of Jesus' deeds that presented him as the miraculous in the first century world. Wayne Jackson noted that "Even ancient enemies of Christianity, like Celsus and Porphyry, admitted that Jesus did certain extraordinary deeds; they suggested, of course, that it was mere "magic." Their charges, however, are indirect testimony to the supernatural works of Christ."[247] Studying the intrinsic qualities of a typical miracle Jesus performs as the miracle worker, one would see characteristics that show that he is God and that he is from God. The nature and the characteristics of Jesus as the miraculous include following: Jesus is divine and has supernatural power, Jesus' miracles express divine compassion, Virtues of love, humility, patience, grace and selflessness, Jesus' Miraculous signs attract crowds, Jesus' miracles care for both humanities' spiritual and physical needs, Jesus' miracles could engender faith and believe, and even unbelief, It is eschatological and establishes theological signs. These characteristics are supposed to characterize the miracles which are celebrated by many modern miracle workers. Many Church leaders, Church overseers, bishops, pastors, ministers and some lay Church members lay claim to having been gifted with supernatural powers to be performing miracles.[248] Many of the so-called modern miracles they lay claim to, do not meet the criteria that are modeled by Jesus Christ. In their claim to possess miraculous powers, the intrinsic characteristics that are typical of the person and the miraculous deeds of Jesus are not seen modeled by these acclaimed ministers of God.

Jesus did many miraculous signs-(***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***) with the authority and power that is from God (14:10). It should be seen that "the manner in which the works of Jesus are parallel with those of God make it clear that his works identify him as One sent from God (5:6)."[249] Jesus is from God and he is endued with power of God. Being endued with the power of God, he was consistent in doing the will of God. The ministry of Jesus was executed in power that is from above. Jesus' power is greatest of all other powers. But many of these modern applauded miracle workers source their powers from the kingdom of darkness. Jesus'

wonder arousing feats and teachings were motivated by genuine compassion. But then, many of these admired acclaimed possessors of miraculous powers are not motivated by genuine compassion. Some of these much-admired miracle worker being compassionless subject their gullible followers into diverse forms of horrible experiences in order to extort their resources from them so as to enrich themselves.

Jesus the miraculous manifested the virtues of love, humility, patience, grace and selflessness. These virtues were evident in his earthly ministry. It should be noted here that "some believers have been endowed with the ability to perform signs and wonders (Mark 16:17-18, John 14:12)."[250] However, significant number of the modern acclaimed possessors of miracle working powers do not manifest these virtues. What they exhibit is the love for material things which they intend to amess for their selfish gains. In place of the virtue of humility, most of them are rather immodest, arrogant, boastful, proud, engaging in sexual sins. Some are cult members, from which they source their acclaimed miracle working powers. Habitually, they brag about them being gifted with supernatural powers to do wonders. Some of them are carried away by pride. In pride, they think of themselves to be superior to others who they rate to have less spectacular gifts.

Jesus had patience with God, in a long suffering patience he lived out the will of God for sending him into the world to execute the climax work that guarantees for mankind eternal salvation. Jesus had patience with the crowd and individuals that came in contact with him. In a graced patience he taught them the mysteries of the kingdom of God and performed wonder arousing deeds when they were needed with the sole purpose of persuading them to believe and consolidate their faith in him to be the Son of God. These virtues of humility and patience are lacking in the lives of many of these acclaimed ministers of God, who brag about themselves possessing the powers to be doing miraculous signs.

An evident character of the person of Jesus is that his essence and functional natures attract crowds to him (Joh. 6:2). These crowds that were attracted to him, he never exploited at any point in time in his ministry. The acclaimed miracle workers in this era, the characteristics of their acclaimed spiritual gifts also have

crowds attracted to them. These crowds that are attracted to their ministry, most of these acclaimed plenipotentiaries exploit them so as to achieve their selfish gains. Jesus in his earthly ministry executed compassionate works that were focused on caring for both humanities' spiritual, emotional and physical needs of the people that were drawn to him (John 6). Onwu noted that "the power of Jesus was the power 'to do good' The salvation he brought to the poor was both physical and material on the one hand and spiritual on the other hand."[251] None of the needs of mankind was left out. He was deeply concerned for anything that causes man suffering and distorts man's relationship with God, in compassionate actions he worked to ensure for humanity a platform for holistic salvation. But comparing this balanced nature of the ministry of Jesus with what one observes among those who boast to be the miracle workers in this era, one observes that many of these acclaimed miracle workers are only mindful of the physical needs of those who flood to their Churches or ministries.

The miracles Jesus performed function in engendering belief and faith in his followers who continued working with him. In some other cases, the miracles do not always succeed in engendering faith and belief in Jesus. Many who witnessed the miracles he performed did not come to belief in him to be the Son of God (12:37). Likewise in this era, there are many who claim to have come to believe in Jesus because of the miracles that they have received or witnessed. There are many others who only have come to believe in Jesus because of the miracles they receive from him, they have not grown to become his committed disciples. There are still those, though they have received or witnessed one miracle or the other, yet they did not and would not come to believe in Jesus to be the Son of God given for the their holistic salvation. Following this, it will not be an understatement to state that significant number of many acclaimed followers of Jesus in Nigeria are nominal Christians. In most cases, they identify with Jesus because of their desired miracles they keep hoping to receive from him.

Jesus' wonder arousing deeds in John were signs pointing to who Jesus is. In John, signs were divinely empowered acts or works which point to who Jesus is functionally and ontologically. Signs in John demand a decision for or against who Jesus is (6:30). Jesus is ontologically the preexistent One sent from

God, and this his functions consistently revealed. Miraculous signs ***(σημεῖă-sēmeia)*** performed by Jesus encompass both the realized and futuristic eschatological in nature. The realized kingdom of God in John connotes that the incarnation of Jesus implies that the kingdom is now present. On the other hand, the miracles were to function in leading the recipients and witnesses to think beyond the happiness and enjoyments that the miracles generate- to think or meditate on their souls, in its relation to death, judgment, heaven and hell. They are to meditate on how the miracles they have received or witnessed were to make them come to understand the symbolic signs of who Jesus should be to them ontologically and functionally. But these contemporary acclaimed miracle workers subtly make their adherents to be more focused on the material blessings, happiness and enjoyments that they would enjoy from accessing their desired miracles. Many feats are being flaunted by so-called modern men and women of God as miracles. The devil is using these acclaimed miracle workers to attempt to deactivate the gospel or the mission mandate of the Church by their theological additions, subtractions or substitutions. Significant number of these acclaimed plenipotentiaries of God in Nigeria are not warning sinners of the implications of living in sin. Rather, they are using miracles as baits to attract crowds to their Churches or programs and to keep them within their folds. They do not teach about the significance of holiness, engagement in genuine evangelism nor do they preach about the awaited rapture-their focus is on health and prosperity. They are Christ-deficient. Most of them claim to be miracle workers but lack the virtues inherent in the nature of Jesus the model miracle worker. Consequently, their activities are full of wickedness and greed for wealth and power. They quest for power from cultic sources. They feed their congregation with stage managed miracles, motivational talks, and comedy which would at the end lead them to eternal damnation.

4.13.2. The Disciples-Those that came to Believe in Jesus and the Genuine Believers in Nigeria: From the beginning of Jesus' ministry he gathered some Jewish disciples to himself. They were not numbered among the crowds who were also Jews. They were consistently designated the disciples of Jesus (6:3) in opposition to the Jews. These disciples followed Jesus, they witnessed the signs (***σημεῖă-sēmeia***) Jesus were doing, but while they were watching, on many occasions they lacked understanding at first. Jesus

being aware that they lacked understanding of the symbolic meanings of the signs (***σημεῖă-sēmeia***) that they were witnessing, he gradually taught them about the underlying symbolic meanings and through his teachings their eyes of understanding began to open. Jesus through his teachings, gradually opened their minds so that they could understand the scriptures that is being fulfilled before their eyes. Gradually they grew in consolidating their belief and faith in the person of Jesus as the promised Messiah. These disciples continued following Jesus despite the difficult mysteries inherent in the underlying symbolic meanings Jesus was expounding to them. They not only remained with him, they continued with him even when others left him (Joh.6:66). They were drawn by God, hence Jesus called them (Joh. 6:44). The disciples answered and identified with Jesus because they were taught by God (John 6:45).The believing disciples were those who did not see or presume the signs (***σημεῖă-sēmeia***) they had witnessed to become the end in themselves. They were those in whom John 20:31 fulfilled in the lives, in that, the signs (***σημεῖă-sēmeia***) they received or witnessed produced genuine faith in them and they consciously and single-heartedly became convinced that Jesus is 'the Christ, the Son of God'. They were those given to Jesus by the Father (Joh.6:37), who witnessed the signs and understood them to be the means to the end. The end here being identifying with Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the Living God (Joh. 6:69).

In this era, there are still a number of followers of Christ who are still remaining true with the Lord. This group that came to believe differed from the group that did not come to believe, because they were open and receptive to the signs (***σημεῖă-sēmeia***) revealed through the working of miracles, which is different from pursuing supernatural phenomena.[252] In the case of the disciples, it was Jesus that called them, they obeyed and in discipleship followed him. This minute number of believers did not refrain from remaining in him, rather they continued walking with Jesus even in the face of diverse forms of persecutions, with exception of Judas Iscariot. Like these disciples, there are still few in every age with special reference to the contemporary Christians who are drawn to Jesus by the Father (6:44). They are the ones who follow Jesus because they have been given the revelation and the power to be his followers. They are committed to Jesus, yielding themselves in self-denials and cross carrying that are the corollaries of following Jesus.

They are those who remain with Jesus because he has the words of eternal life (6:68).They were and are not following Jesus for the miraculous signs (***σημεῖă-sēmeia***) that they would get from him. They were and are not 'give me', 'give me' Christians. They were and are the ones who have identified with Jesus Christ because of his ontology and not just for his functional nature. They are the ones who are carrying their cross daily following the Lord in love, obedience and making other required sacrifices. They are the ones who are conscious of the Cross-resurrection event and its influence in their lives now and in the hereafter.

In this group of believers in Jesus, signs (***σημεῖă-sēmeia***) for sure contributed to the stages of their faith, but they do not embrace it as the end in themselves. Though, many a times, believers in this group feel that they are missing out from the acclaimed fun that are going on in this world, but they are more drawn to God through Jesus because of the hope of glory that is set before them, from now till the end of all things. They are drawn to Jesus in faith because of the influence of the Holy Spirit, hence they are spiritually empowered to attest to Jesus' Sonship. It is the Holy Spirit that helps the true disciples to witness a sign and understand that, that sign is pointing beyond itself, that it is pointing to the transcendent reality that is God himself. They are the ones who by virtue of their belief in the Son will have eternal life now and would be raised up in the last day (Joh.6:40), this is the cherished hope of believers!

4.13.2.1. Stages of Signs -(*Σημεῖă-Sēmeia*) of Faith in the Disciples in John 6

Signs in John can function in persuading those drawn to Jesus to believe in him (6:69; 20:31). The signs which the disciples witnessed helped in bringing them to consolidate their belief and faith in Jesus. Robert Kysar designates it "Seeing is Believing – Johannine Concepts of Faith"[253] There are five identified stages that helped the disciples to ply on the road to faith in Jesus as the Christ and accepted him to be the promised Messiah (6:69). At this point, it will be helpful to identify five stages on the road to faith using the disciple in the context (paradigm) of John 6. In John 6, there is a person (Jesus) identified as a miracle worker(6:2).There were the crowd that were seeking for Jesus and were following him about because of the miracles he was doing (6:2, 26) and there were those John consistently described as Jesus' disciples

(6:3). It is this group of people, distinguished from the crowd, those whom John the gospel writer consistently designated as 'the disciples of Jesus' that this study in this subdivision will carefully analyze how they grew in believing faith in Jesus. These disciples except Judas Iscariot grew from believing to consolidating their faith in Jesus to be 'the Son of God'. The idea of proposing this five stages of signs of faith in the disciples will be developed from Studyjesus.com.[254] The five stages that the believing disciples passed through in growing in faith in Jesus include:

4.13.2.1.1. The Predisposition to believe that Jesus Possesses Extraordinary Powers: The first stage of faith is the predisposition to believe that Jesus possesses unusual powers. The disciple who were called by Jesus, in following him being groomed by his words and signs -(***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***) that they were witnessing gradually they came to believe that Jesus possesses supernatural powers. These disciples of Jesus had already seen other signs-(***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***) he had performed, they were inclined to expect the extraordinary from Jesus in this context that they had their fears (6:7,9). And so, when the instruction came from Jesus to the disciples to make the crowd sit in a recycled form, they obeyed the instruction (6:10).

4.13.2.1.2. A Person's or Group of Peoples' Strong Faith Providing a Catalyst: The faith of another (or others) is a catalyst for a chain reaction of faith in the presence of a sign. In this context Jesus had faith in himself for he knew what he would do (6:6). Jesus has a consolidated faith in God, hence in the face of this seeming impossibility, he gave thanks to God for what he was yet to do. Also the disciples' faith and obedience of the crowd served as a catalyst to the performance of the miracle (6:10-11). Here the sign (***σημεῖον-sēmeion)*** occurs as Jesus broke the bread he collected from the lad, shared both the bread and the fishes in the presence of the obedient disciples[255] and the seated crowd. Not only did all the people ate and were satisfied, also there were left overs that were gathered. It should be noted that Jesus had faith in the relationship he has with God the Father, the openness of the disciples by obeying the instruction to order the crowd to sit down and the crowd obeying the instruction to sit down, in this context functioned as the catalysts required in this stage for the miracle to take place.

4.13.2.1.3. A Sign Commences with a Common and Ordinary Physical Entities: It was with a common and ordinary physical entities (five barley bread loaves and two fishes) that the sign ***σημεῖον (semeion)*** was commenced. But then, something extra ordinary occurs to that entity as a result of Jesus' simple prayer of thanksgiving to the Father, which brings the influence that is beyond the physical. Therefore this sign -***σημεῖον (semeion)*** arouses wonder, a puzzle. But just arousing wonder was not what it was intended to achieve. It was intended to function as a sign ***(σημεῖον-semeion)*** that is a mark or pointer to something beyond itself. But, some who witnessed it did not come to understand what happened. The multiplication of the physical entities (five bread and two fishes) were actions only a caring God can do. A large number of people who would have been dismissed from a section they had with Jesus- to go home hungry were rather fed both spiritually and physically. The ***σημεῖον (semeion)*** is not to arouse wonder and awe for its own sake. Rather, it functions as a genuine sign from God revealing Jesus as God sent, it is a symbolic anticipation or showing forth of a greater reality of which the ***σημεῖον (sēmeion)*** is nevertheless itself a part.[256] As a form of sign, it is for the bread and fishes to multiply that required the influence of power from beyond the natural. However, it also symbolizes the rate of the availability of the spiritual sustaining which has been made available through the saving grace that God has made available for humanity through his gift of Jesus to the world. The saving grace is more than enough to satisfy any one who identifies with both the body and the blood of Jesus in faith. As shown here, the sign ***σημεῖον (semeion)*** therefore points beyond itself, the sign ***σημεῖον (semeion)*** here points to Jesus as the bread that sustains life. The miracle commenced with physical entity but the disciples did not see the bread and the fishes to be the end in themselves.

4.13.2.1.4. An Openness to Perceive the Transcendent Dimension to which the Sign Points: With people for whom signs -(***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***) create belief one discovers a curiosity, an openness to the prospect that there is more to the specific word or action than meets the eye. This is evident with the disciples of Jesus. They have seen that the signs-(***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***) they had witnessed Jesus perform were empowered by the powers reaching in from God himself. Though at some point, they lacked understanding

of the symbolisms and the spiritual teachings Jesus was putting forward to them, afterwards, they promised to remain with Jesus when the multitude decided to desert him (6:68-69). The disciples in their ever primed expectancy and openness not only believed in him, they held on to their believing faith in Jesus even when others do not have reasons to do so. They have nowhere else to go they claimed. And so, they would rather remain with him for they discovered that he has the word that would guarantee for them eternal life. In this context of John 6, their growing faith has not reached the apex, but at least at this point, they were confident to declare their faith in Jesus (6:69). It is after the cross-resurrection event[257] that their faith in Jesus would be firmly and consistently reach its climax. Mention worthy is that "even after the resurrection, signs from earlier moments etched indelibly on their memory, additionally deepened faith (2:18-21)"[258] It is the signs-(***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***) which John had witnessed which he reflected over time in his committed relationship with Jesus, that he picked upon to write and thereby establish and consolidate his theology. Following this in John, signs-(***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***) functioned to heighten the faith of the disciples who already possessed a measure of faith before then. It is stressed here that, sign deepens the faith of those who already have begun a trust relationship with Jesus. The faith of the disciples in Jesus was that they did not only believed in him, but they were committed in him as a person.[259] The sign-***σημεῖον (semeion)*** of miraculous feeding of the five thousand is not the reality, rather the ***σημεῖον*** pointed to the reality of who Jesus is-'Jesus is the sent One from God'. This ***σημεῖον*** having pointed to Jesus as the Son of God therefore demands faith in him.

4.13.2.1.5. A Profound Conviction that Jesus is the Son of God, sent to reveal God for the Holistic Salvation of mankind: In the context of John 6, it is established that Jesus is the "the Christ, the Son of the Living God (6:69)", this is the climax of this indication for the disciples. This declaration shows that they have come to understand who Jesus is presenting himself to be. The disciples have come to understand the sign ***σημεῖον (semeion)*** of the bread, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God! This is typical of what John used all the signs (***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***) he selected and incorporated in his gospel to prove-that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God who gives life and sustains it. Jesus is the true prophet that

gives himself as the true bread (6:32) that sustains life from now till eternity (6:51). Jesus here presents himself as the true bread one must eat and 'the drink'. One must consume the body and the blood of Jesus in order to enjoy life divinely sustained from now till eternity.

It is simply enumerated that the five proposed traditional catalog five stages of faith are (1) a predisposition to believe that Jesus possesses extraordinary powers, (2) a person or group of persons' strong faith providing a catalyst, (3) with physical entities the sign commences, involving both event and contextual and theological interpretations, (4) an openness to perceive the transcendent dimension to which the sign points, and (5) a profound conviction that Jesus is the Son of God, was sent to reveal God, and to die for the sins of humankind.[260] It is unraveled here that the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand replicate the same path to faith.[261] Like the disciples, Christians of all ages and all over the world with special reference to the Contemporary Nigerian Christians implicitly or explicitly -under go these stages in their faith walk with Jesus.

4.13.3. The Unbelieving Jewish Crowd and the Nigerian Crowds Obsessed with the Miraculous:

In John 6, those that did not come to believe though they have seen the signs performed by Jesus were described as the the crowd**.** The context of the feeding of the five thousand (6:2) indicated that a large multitude were seeking and following Jesus because of the miraculous signs ***–(σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***) they had seen that he has been preforming (6:2). The number of people seeking and coming to Jesus kept increasing until they formed a large crowd. This crowd had seen Jesus perform the sign ***-σημεῖον (semeion)*** of miraculous healings. This crowd also were supernaturally fed. This miraculous feeding of this crowd was explicitly captured as a sign ***-σημεῖον (semeion)*** in 6:14.

Though, this crowd were shown signs ***–(σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia)*** that have evidences unveiling who Jesus is ontologically and functionally, for want of authenticity of the their Judaistic faith, that is out of their religious connoted passion and prejudice, many in the crowd rejected the symbolic signs ***-(σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia)*** that pointed to the natures of Jesus. Though the large crowd continued seeking Jesus for diverse reasons,

noteworthy is that the majority of them were looking for Jesus to perform more signs –***(σημεῖă-sēmeia)*** for their immediate gratification**.** For even with more signs they would not still believe. They were just expecting more signs –***(σημεῖă-sēmeia)*** from Jesus for their immediate gratifications. Having experienced the ***σημεῖον (semeion)*** of the miraculous feeding and yet they did not come to believe. Jesus condemned the obstinate Jews who did not believe in Him after seeing His powerful miracles as having no excuse for their disbelief (John 15: 22, 24).[262]

Following this, it should be noted that, the crowd did not come to believe in Jesus because of lack of evidence but because of their own passions and prejudices they resisted the proof the miraculous signs – ***(σημεῖă-sēmeia)*** connote. Unfortunately, notwithstanding the fact that they had witnessed and experienced the multiplication of the loaves and fishes they did not perceive the power of God that is being demonstrated before their eye. They were so closed off, they unwittingly proposed as an example of a sign of Moses' Manna, oblivious to the food Jesus miraculously supplied.[263]

Most typically in John's gospel, those who failed to believe are the Jews, the world (7:7; 16:9) and Judas (6:64). Those who Jesus accused of seeking him for only what they would get from him represent the crowd of people (***ochlos***), John mostly described as the Jews (6:41). John uses 'the Jews'-(***hoi Ioudaioi***), as if it is synonymous with unbelief (5:10, 38; 6:26; 7:48; 8:44-45; 9:18; 10:22-26). The way the gospel of John represents the Jews, in that it contains some very harsh statements directed against the Jews, makes the gospel considered to be 'anti-Semitic or anti-jewish rhetoric.'[264] The Jews' (***hoi Ioudaioi***) which the gospel of John consistently made mention of in different passages seem to refer to three different groups of people which include

> A) Specifically and only to the "**Jewish leaders and authorities**," rather than to the people as a whole; B) only or mainly to the people living in the geographical territory of Judea, that is, "**the Judeans**"; C) to all members (or some or any in general) of the ethnic/religious group of people still called "**Jews**" today.[265]

John uses the term ‘the Jews’ to refer interchangeable to the ethinic Jews and to the chief priests. John mostly speaks of ‘the Jews’ where the synoptic Gospels speak of the Sanhedrin (compare John 18:3, 28-31 and Mark 15:1).[266] These three groups (Jewish leaders, the Judeans and the ethnic Jews) who in differing contexts most often described as the Jews were represented either negatively, positive or neutrally (neutral instances include 7:15; 10:24; 11:26-27 and instances where Nicodemus seeks Jesus, defends Jesus, helps bury him 3:1-15: 7:50-52: 19:39). But ‘the Jews’, the gospel author mostly seem to represent on the negative stand are those who opposed Jesus, sought to kill him (5:18; 7:1-10; 8:1-22, 8:40; 10:29-33; 11:8; 18:14; 18:28) and never came to believe in Jesus. But there are instances where some positive comments were said about the Jews (4:22;19:40). Though later, some Jews also believed 11:45, but many did not confess for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue (12:42-43). Felix Just captures the verses about the Jews this way,

> We should also recognize that not all of these verses are harshly negative, but some say very positive things about the *Ioudaioi*, while others could be classified as "neutral" statements. Some say nice things about "the Jews" and/or the Jewish religion, some simply give factual information, while others do betray harsh/hostile attitudes.[267]

It follows that one who is studying the verses and the surrounding passages in which the concept of ‘the Jews’ were used should ask which of the above groups is most likely being referred to in each case, underlining whether the usage implies positivity, negativity or neutrality. John dangles between deliberately using the same term ‘the Jews’, for the Jewish authorities of Jesus’ time and for the hostile inhabitants of the Judea in his own time.[268] It is important to note here that John never intended to refer to the Jews as an ethnic disgrace, and neither does his first readers understood his theological assumed anti-Semitic references to connote denunciation of all descendants of Jacob. Rather, it should be taken as a form of a technical or loose designation. John used the term ‘the Jews’ for Jesus’ opponents. That is, Jesus in John use the term “the Jews” to refer to those who rejected him and his message, and not exclusively the nation, priestly and lay leaders.[269]

Though the author and narrator of John's gospel used the term 'the Jews' 71 times, while the synoptics used it only 16 times, it is those who failed to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God that were in John condemned. For it is the Jews who are on the side of the world, that were referred to as those who do not believe. The Jews were described as the part of the world not just because, they persecuted Jesus and sought to kill (5:16-18; 7:1; 10:31, 39; 11:8, 53), were untrue to their tradition or Torah(5:39-40; 7:19; 8:39-44; 10:31-39) but majorly because they failed to understand and believe in Jesus (3:1-4; 6:52; 7:35; 8:57). And so, the possible referents in their different contexts include all Jews apart from the distinguished disciples, the religious leaders at the time John wrote, the majority of the Jews at the time John wrote and the combination of the leaders and / or the masses at the time of Jesus' ministry who did not come to believe in Jesus.[270] They were condemned because 'unbelieve' in John is emphasized as consisting all that sin connotes. Sin in John is being obstinate in accepting and consolidating ones belief and faith in Jesus as the Son of God. Unbelievers in John may acknowledge the wonder arousing supernatural works of God(6:14-15) but because they are doing that out of mixed motivations, this makes the intended sign to fail from achieving its main theological intended purpose or purposes. It is noted that,

> Unbelievers in John confess the God of Israel and his mighty deeds, past and present. **Belief fails**, the **signs collapse**, rather because these descendants of Abraham do not perceive divine Sonship in Jesus. Jesus exhorts the crowd to labor for a different food supplied by the Son of man (6:27).[271]

In the context of Johannine account of the feeding of the five thousand, the narrator's theological use of 'the Jews' is seen in his mention of the crowd in verse 6:2, and verse 22 and his eventual shift from the crowd (verse 22) to the Jews in verse 41.[272] They ate of the loaves miraculously multiplied, at the point Jesus declares that he is the bread of life, they responded by murmuring. Murmuring here is an indication of their unbelief. Some of this obstinate Jews crossed to the other side of the sea still seeking for Jesus. They ate the loaves and were filled and so they came for more. Perhaps, if he feed them yesterday, he could feed them again and so they kept seeking for him. But Jesus reprimanded them for being persistent in seeking for him though they did not understand the signs behind the miracles that he had performed but

because, they desired that their immediate need be miraculously met. Jesus did not reprimand and leave them to perish in their folly, rather he exhorts the crowd to labor for the different food supplied by the Son of man. This crowd demanding to know the work they are to do, did that with mixed feelings. This is said because even if they come to know, they will not want to engage in righteous labor for it would require them to make a conscious decision that would result in them becoming committed to Jesus. But this crowd never wanted to get committed with Jesus, all they wanted was to get their desired needs met. They do not have what it is required for them to access the meat that would not perish. Those who are unbelievers labor to achieve those things that do perish (6:27). The work Jesus requires those who are unbelieving to do so as to be engrafted in him is to "see the sign" that is to understand or recognize and identify with the transcendence in his ministry. For John, the work of God is to believe in Jesus whom God has sent for one's holistic salvation (6:29). But, it is this 'believing in Jesus' that this crowd seeking for Jesus did not do. Since they failed to believe in Jesus, John declares that they are condemned now and forever (3:18).

The then world like this present world was a needy world. People have diverse forms of problems worrying and distressing them. Some were politically oppressed, some hungry, some sick and others desiring to hear this great teacher and so on. There are many who in this present age, particularly in Nigeria, who are following Jesus the Lord for the miraculous signs–***(σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia)*** that they would get from him and not to get committed in him. It has been estimated that 92% of the the teeming population claiming to be followers of Jesus in Nigeria are nominal Christians. Like in the days of Jesus, the endeavors of the modern Church has attracted a large number of persons to Jesus for diverse reasons. In Nigeria like every other part of the world, many acclaimed plenipotentiaries of God and lay professed believers have gotten themselves identified with the Church. They have identified with the Church with mixed motivations, some have genuine motives while some others are selfishly motivated. Some have identified with one form of Church or another, ministries or another and attend one form of program or another. They identify with Christ not because of who he is ontologically but because of what they would get from him. Many Nigerians identified with the Church not to be the Church but to be questers of what the Church has to

offer for their immediate gratification. They do not want to identify with the ethical demands of being a follower of Jesus. Consequently, this group of acclaimed believers appear to be gullible and easy to be tossed about by any wind of subtle but diluted messages from those who claim to be the plenipotentiaries of God. Like the unbelieving Jews, this kind of group of acclaimed believers in Nigeria- even when they have received miracles from the Lord, they are not completely persuaded to develop a believing faith in Jesus Christ for the eternal salvation of their souls. They are only solutions oriented. Significant mumber of those claiming to be seeking and following Jesus, like the crowd in John, would not come to believe and grow in faith, even when they have been shown signs ***–(σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia)***. All they want is to access more miracles for their selfish gratifications. Even when they persist in following the Lord, they do so without wanting to be discipled. Those who continue in being unbelievers in Jesus have been judged already, neither do they access realized eschatology nor would they do have everlasting life (6:47).

4.14. The Ethical Requirements in Following Jesus

The natures of the person of Jesus attract crowds to him. The realism of the person of Jesus attracting crowds to him is not only unique to the narrative of the context of John 6. In every era, the person of Jesus is characterized with crowds being attracted to him because of his functional nature. Jesus is the Savior and he is a miracle working God. The miracle Jesus performs demands positive response by the miracle receiver to make a decision for or against identifying with the person of Jesus. The problem is not in a person or crowd 'coming to Jesus.' The problem is the person making a conscious decision of consolidating an authentic faith in him and following him as he leads the person by the way of the Cross. But many people are not ready to 'come to Jesus' and continue 'to follow him' because of who he is ontologically.

In the context of John 6, many came to Jesus and received or witnessed the miraculous signs he performed, but when he explained to them the details of what it implies to eat his body and drink his blood so that they can have eternal life, many of them deserted him and did not walk with him anymore. Likewise in

this era, many are coming to Jesus, sticking around him just for the miracles he would keep performing for their material satisfaction at the detriments of their spiritual welfare. But in approaching Jesus, his functional and ontological natures are to be balanced. It is dangerous to seek and approach Jesus just because of the miracles he performs. Noteworthy is that it has been established above, the negative effects that result from people seeking and following Jesus just because of the wonder arousing feats he would perform to solve their material needs. The ontological and functional natures of Jesus place demand on any one that comes to him. In John's gospel, miraculous signs were meant to point individuals to God. When miraculous-sign succeeds in pointing people to God, it consolidates a balanced understanding of Jesus's functional and ontological natures. This is said because miraculous signs in John place demands on the miracle recipients, witnesses and readers of the gospel.

Those who come to Jesus, who would by their conscious decision accept him to be the Son of God are required to be exuding some moral behaviors. In John's gospel, the expected moral behaviors expected of those that follow Jesus are designated as Johanine ethics. Though it has been proposed by some scholars that there is a lack or absence of ethical material in the gospel of John, it should be noted that a major clue as to the essence of ethical injunction in John is given in the context of John 6.[273] The idea of John's ethics is implicitly imbedded within his narratives and intricately intertwined with his theology.[274] The idea of what is good and sin (ethics) is not vague in the context of John 6. This is established from what transpired between Jesus and the crowd that were seeking for more signs. It is read that after the crowd crossed the Sea and met Jesus on the other side of the sea, they recognized him as an established teacher –Rabbi (6:25). They desired to know when he had gotten to that location. Jesus who was not ready to answer their 'when' question, rather he confronted them with what he has observed about them. He confronted them with a categorical statement. Jesus categorically declares to them that he is very sure that they were seeking him, not because they understood the signs his miracles unveil, but that they were seeking him again because they ate of the miraculous multiplied loaves and fishes and were satisfied (6:26). Having made this uncompromising declaration, Jesus placed a demand on them- by commanding them not to persist in

going about the works that would attract for them food (material things) that perishes. Rather, that they should engage themselves in working for food (spiritual satisfaction) that lasts forever. Jesus himself gives this spiritual food because he is the One sealed by the Father. This crowd still wanting more clarifications from Jesus, desired to know about what he would require them to do so that it will be -that they are doing the works of God. This verse 28 constitutes an ethical question= "what shall we do, that we may work the works of God?" Since they are not to be coming to Jesus just for him to be performing miraculous signs for their immediate gratifications, this question now boarders on the required behavior those who come to Jesus are to be radiating so as to please God and as well receive eternal life.

This context establishes the question of what is 'sin' and what is 'good' to be done by someone who comes to Jesus. The synoptics answer to this question in the context of Mark (10:17) focuses on the requirements of the Law, but for John, he made a shift from the law to the person of Jesus as his subsequent reaction indicates (John 6:29).[275] Jesus states consolidating a believing Faith in him as the major work one has to do so as to please God and as well receive eternal life. The moral codes designated to be Johannine ethics required from any Nigerian who comes to Jesus to consolidate an authentic and salvific faith that will be analyzed in this study include believing faith, sacrificial love, discipleship and commitment and intimacy with the Holy Spirit.

4.15. The Johannine Ethical Requirements for Authentic Followers of Jesus in Nigeria

4.15.1. Belief and Faith: The context of John (6:29) establishes that the essential deed that is required from any Nigerian who comes to Jesus is "believe." Consequently, believe that leads to consolidating faith in Jesus is the first and most crucial action required to do the work of God. Without the deed of faith in Jesus, one cannot fully associate with Jesus.[276] John 6:28 is an ethical question that seeks to discover the works people will do to please God. Though the crowd had in mind the demanded obedience to the law when they asked this question, but the 'good' Jesus now demands from them is beyond the realm of their Jewish law and its required works. Jesus sums their plural 'the works-***τὰ ἔργα***'(6:28) to a single 'work-***τὸ***

ἔργον '(6:29). The emphasis of the crowd was on several deeds they were doing under Judaism, but Jesus' answer shifts the focus from several ethical requirements to a single action.[277] Belief is now the singular work people are to do when they encounter Jesus, because God requires it. Simply put, Faith is the moral effort someone will act that is in accord to God's will. Consolidating believing (active continuous verb) Faith (noun) in Jesus remains the basic ethical requirement that should characterize the action of those that come to Jesus. Those who refrain from consolidating an authentic faith in Jesus will remain in moral darkness and die in their sin (John 3:17; 8:21, 24).[278] In John 'sin' constitutes every act of unbelief in Jesus (John 16:9). The 'sin of unbelief' is the opposite of faith, it excludes a person from everything Jesus has to offer such as eternal life and it attracts condemnation now and in the here-after.

A critical studying of the Johannine gospel unveils its literature to be one specially enriched with direct and indirect drawing of attention to what faith is in Jesus. Consolidating an authentic salvific faith in Jesus involves full acceptance of the message of Jesus as well as his person, which includes his identity and his origin from God as 'his Agent'. Salvific faith in Jesus according to the gospel of John is therefore a self-sacrificing, intellectual, and existential acceptance of the message and person of Jesus to the extent that it completely transforms the person to become saved. Noteworthy is that faith is not Salvation-it is only the means of attaining it.[279] Consolidating salvific faith in Jesus functions in construing a balanced understanding and application of Jesus' functional and ontological natures.

In explaining the function of faith, it is the verb rather than the noun that constantly reoccurs in John's gospel. The verb form (believe) clearly stresses the continuous active aspect that is being majorly theologically underlined. Consequently, it is established that the gospel of John was written to inculcate and strengthen faith. It is only by faith that men can enter into a living relationship with Jesus Christ. This faith leads to life and unbelief to condemnation (John 3:16-18).[280] This faith has its bases on "believe in-***πιστεύητε εἰς***", this is seen from the special significance of the often recurring of the preposition ***'eis'*** (into,in) after the verb 'believe'. Jesus is the one to be "believed in". Following this, the relationship with Jesus develops and grows from knowing to believing and to a consolidated faith in him. It is important to

note here that "when Jesus is the object of faith… this introduces the idea of personal trust that goes beyond the simple idea of belief."[281] Believe should persuade one to consolidate faith in Jesus. John stresses the all-encompassing believe in Jesus for one's realized and eternal salvation. In John's gospel, one of the main ethical demands of following Jesus is the follower developing belief and thereby consolidating faith in Jesus. Applying this to the Nigerian christiendom, it signifies that Nigerians who are to be consistent in following Jesus must consolidate an authentic believing faith in Jesus. It is important to note that "New life is established when one sincerely identifies with Jesus. This new life is one lighted only in small steps, which require faith in following along with, but not ahead of, Jesus Christ."[282] To prove and consolidate the believing faith in Jesus to be the Son of God - John employed the theological tools of miraculous signs, word signs, and the narratives about the Jesus events. Consolidating believe that leads to faith is an important quality of being an authentic follower of Jesus so far as Johanine gospel is concerned.

It is in consolidating an authentic faith in Jesus that many Nigerians who are obsessed with the miraculous have a problem. Significant number of those professing to be followers of Jesus in Nigerian are solution oriented Christians. Ezigbo noted that,

> Nigerian Christians face the challenge posed by pragmatism. Many theologians and lay Christians tend to explain Jesus Christ only in terms of what he can do for them, such as providing solutions to their cultural, political, social, and religions problems.[283]

In their solution oriented dispositions, significant number of Nigerians can do anything just to access solutions to their needs and wants. They stick around Christian faith just because of the material gains they would get from Jesus. But they are not ready to be committed with Jesus by consolidating an authentic in him- because of the demands associated with doing that. Following this, many acclaimed followers of Jesus in Nigeria claim to be disciples of Jesus yet they do not have in them the authentic believing faith in Jesus. They do not want to follow Jesus in faith it requires. If they have faith at all, it is a superficial kind of faith. In following him, they want to get all benefits that one should get for 'being in Jesus.' But Johannine theology upholds that anyone who chooses to be a disciple or follower of Jesus must do so

bearing in mind the assured fellowship that continues forever with Jesus Christ in His Home called Heaven (John 3:16, 14:1-13). As well, anyone who chooses to follow Jesus in faith needs to consciously count the cost. In following and learning from Jesus, one needs to be cognitive of the truth that his life on earth was one filled with trials and sufferings (John 15:20) but also one of great joy in doing the will of God the Father (John 15:9-11; 14;1-3). Consequently, anyone who wants to follow Jesus in genuine believing salvific faith must have a balanced understanding of the place of suffering in Jesus. The truth is that though- anyone who believes and develops a consolidated faith in Jesus will enjoy living life of great joy in doing the will of God the Father, however there is also the place for persecution(16:33), trials and suffering for those who are in Christ Jesus. It is only in being comfortable with the significance of both suffering and enjoying in Jesus that shows that authentic faith has been consolidated. This is said because suffering is bound to be experienced in coming to Jesus. With a believing faith, one would then be able to not only walk alongside of Jesus Christ, but he would be helped by the Holy Spirit to daily begin to walk more and more as Jesus modeled. It is summed here that for any Nigerian who wishes to keep following Jesus, must do that by consolidating an authentic faith in his or her walk with Jesus!

4.15.2. **Sacrificial Love**: An important Johanine ethic is the command to love. Christopher W. Skinner documented that,

> A cursory reading of the Johannine literature makes it immediately clear that love is an abiding theme across the entire corpus. The various terms for love (*agapaō, phileō*, and their cognates) appear over one hundred times in the Fourth Gospel and Johannine Epistles.[284]

Love is an important theme and it underlines Johannine theology. John's theology emphasizes that Love is the sum of all that is positively right; righteousness the antithesis of all that is wrong, in character and conduct. All these in God point to the ethical perfection of God. Love is primarily a disposition, a moral quality of the will.[285] The nature of God which is expressed in his communication of that which is life and the revelation of that which is light unveils the two great attributes of Righteousness and Love. Love is essentially the nature of God. It is from love that all other moral attributes proceed and in which they all

unite. The motivator of all of God's action in the redemption history of the world inhabitants is love. And so, John labors to stamp on the minds of men that only in righteousness and love can they walk in the light and have fellowship in the life of God. In John's gospel, love that is genuinely expressed to Jesus as the Son of God is one of the required ethics of following Jesus Christ and remaining in him while righteousness embodies antagonism to all sin. God is love himself. It is the Love of God that Jesus embodies and expressed sacrificially.

Practically in history, the love of God is embodied in Christ's self-sacrifice. The divine love is manifested in the magnitude of its gift – God's only begotten Son. Though the world had not been devoid of the compassionate love of God, but the inhabitants of the world have never before been shown this kind of love, until the Jesus events. To explain this, it has been noted that "The world had never been without love; but till Jesus Christ came and laid down His life for the men that hated and mocked and slew him, it had not known what love in its greatness and purity could be."[286] Therefore, the redemptive work of God climaxed in Jesus, embodies God's sacrificial kind of love. It is in redemption that perfect love is expressed (Joh 3:16). In self-sacrifice Christ laid down his life for humanity. Following this, the theme of Love is emphatically expressed in the gospel of John. The Trinity is the initiator of what ***agape*** love is and should be. Jesus being God ontologically and functionally, first loved humanity. It is after man had sinned that God in his loving nature began to engage in the mission of restoring man to himself. Through many supernatural ways- God made moves to consolidate for mankind a platform for holistic salvation. His compassionate-love motivated mission was climaxed in the Jesus event. The spring of divine action in salvation was love which is poured out toward men (1 John 4:7). It is love that moved the incarnate Jesus in his ontological and functional natures to execute God's salvational plans. By implication of John 6: 26, Jesus wants people coming to him to do so because they love him and not just because of what they would get from him. Jesus as God is to be loved- first based on his ontological nature, then secondly because of his functional characteristics which is made available for the holistic salvation of mankind. Human race therefore, is the focus of the salvation motivated moves of God.

On the part of humans, in John, whoever has made a conscious decision to be a committed disciple follower of Jesus, is required to respond to God, by foremost loving Jesus for who he is ontologically (6:36). The love expressed and required in John is unique when compared to the love expressed in the world. Nygren noted that "A marked distinction must be drawn between this Christian concept of love and the contemporary …concept, which did not distinguish between love and lust."[287] The kind of love that worldly people and those who are falsely professing to be Christians are expressing are not agape kind of love. The affection that is not God's kind of love is what many are professing consciously or unconsciously.

Many Nigerian acclaimed plenipotentiaries do not love God, yet in the name of their love for God and as instruments in God's hands they are deceiving the gullible ones who are desperately seeking for miracles. They are simply compassionless and represent a great fraud. Some of those who are questing after miracles do not have a committed relationship with Jesus neither do they have the revealed understanding of what it means and requires to have a believing faith in Jesus as the incarnate Son of God. Even when they have been taught or have become cognitive of what it takes to be a genuine follower of Jesus, they relent or slack from opening up and yielding themselves to the Spirit of God, to daily take them through the processes of discipleship. The fulcrum of the problem, which is associated with the obsession with the quest for the miraculous is the undesirable false kind of love which one who is coming to Jesus has developed in his or her heart. Many come to Jesus with fake or selfish motivated love, there are still the few who come to Jesus with genuine love for his ontology.

In Nigeria, there are many who are like the crowd in the context of John 6 who in coming to Jesus would not believe him, nor love him for who he is but for the miraculous signs that they would consistently want him to perform for their material satisfaction. Those who profess to follow Jesus but do not genuinely love him will not grow in the knowledge of him. E.K. Lee noted that "such love would imply a downward movement, from the level of divine perfection to a lower level."[288] It is because many professed Christians in Nigeria do not genuinely love Jesus that is why they are not committed in him. Rather, what they have

is a superficial love that consistently seeks for more signs. Considering the above, Onwu observed that that 'The Church in Africa is yet to arrive in converting many people to Christ."[289] This he categorically documented because Christianity is only growing in a country like Nigeria only in terms of numerical strength but not in qualitative terms. Because of the lack of the ethics of genuine love many who are actively engaged in the gospel commission of the Church are into it as a business just to enrich themselves. They have seen Church business as a lucrative means to amass wealth. Because of lack of genuine love, Nigeria have not been genuinely evangelized. This has resulted in the conversion of many half-baked professed followers of Jesus.

4.15.3. **Discipleship and Commitment:** Discipleship is the act of learning, believing and following the teachings of a leader, a philosophy, or a religion. Jesus in his earthly ministry had people he called to himself to learn from him and live like him. Those Jews Jesus called were consistently designated disciples in John (Joh. 6:3). Living a life learned from the life modelled by Jesus is a characteristic of Jesus' followers. The first set of 12 persons Jesus called were his original disciples. Jesus groomed the 12 and his other followers in a way that they would not only learn from him, but also that they live out the life he has modelled before them for others to observe and may come to believe in him. It is to be noted that "New life is established when one sincerely identifies with Jesus. This new life is to be consolidated on a committed personal relationship with Jesus. Living the new life as a disciple of Jesus embodies Johannine idea of "remaining in him" or "being in him."[290] In the context of John 6, when Jesus unveiled to the crowd following him of the demands of having a part in him, those who were not authentic disciples withdrew from following Jesus. The disciples of Jesus in accepting Jesus to be the Son of God –were engrafted in Jesus, they were in Jesus and they remained in him except Judas Iscariot (6:70-71). Though Jesus performed many signs and wonders before his disciples, he does not desire that they dwell on the physical aspect of the miracle. Rather, he desires that they should learn from the underlying symbolic meanings that were being unveiled through his demonstration of miraculous signs. He also desires that they live out his modeled life they have learnt from him being guided by the Holy Spirit. It is important

that followers of Jesus are groomed to become authentic disciples. Jesus in grooming his followers to be his disciples did not undermine their will power. He gradually made them to be cognitive of the challenges associated with being his disciples. He calmed the enthusiasm of those who were eager candidates for discipleship by making them to consider its cost.[291] In the context of John 6, Jesus made those seeking and claiming to be following him to know that they must eat his flesh and drink his blood so as to have a part in him(6:53). When the disciples and the crowd deemed Jesus' declarations about himself to be 'a hard saying', many left him, he asked his disciples, will you also go away? He did not negate their will power. He did not force them to keep following him. He wanted them to know what are required in following him and he wanted them to follow him willingly. But many modern self-professed plenipotentiaries of God do not make the multitudes who follow them on the basis of the quest for miracle to know about the demanded cost of discipleship. Bob Deffinbaugh noted that,

> This is also a danger in the matter of discipleship. Repeatedly, our Lord cooled the enthusiasm of eager candidates for discipleship by urging them to consider its cost. In evangelical circles today, there seems to be a trend in the opposite direction. We urge people to be saved and to become disciples of our Lord, highlighting its benefits and blessings. We conceal the true cost of discipleship and any liabilities in the fine print, if we mention them at all.[292]

Many new converts in Nigeria and Africa as a whole at the point of conversion were only told about benefits and blessings inherent in one surrendering one's life to Christ. They were not equipped with the information of what it will cost them to be committed disciples of Jesus. They were not told that it will cost them everything for them to consolidate an authentic faith in Jesus. Because authentic gospel preaching is rare, because the radical demands of Christ are often ignored, because many in Church business are growing Churches by catering for carnal desires, consequent to these exist an almost innumerable crowd of people who identify themselves with Christianity, but have little knowledge of Christ. Because of the way most of those seeking and following Jesus Christ in Nigeria were converted, they do not value following Jesus more than their life itself. They do not understand pragmatically what it means to daily die to self- interests because of their faith in Jesus. Following this, they tend more to

place material possessions above being committed to Jesus Christ. This is said because the disciples of Jesus in the context of John 6 exemplified placing their commitment to Jesus above material possessions (6:68).Those who desire to genuinely follow Jesus in the path of discipleship, can only do that by being committed to Jesus' ontology as epitomized by his Word.

Again, there is the need for any follower of Jesus to consider the cost of discipleship. If one would not count the cost, the person could become easily discouraged or falsely disillusioned. It is important to be acquainted with not just the challenges associated with discipleship but also the benefits of being Jesus' follower. In John, a critical mind would underline the requirements of discipleship outlined by Jesus himself. Jesus knew that he would carry his cross and that those following him would also carry their own crosses. Crosses here connote a believer in Jesus being divinely strengthened to deal with his or her burdens and problems and still consolidate authentic faith in Jesus' ontology. It involves eating his body and drinking his blood. It takes understanding the sufferings that are associated with being in Jesus (16:33). It involves staying with him even when the going becomes tough and not departing as many of his disciples who left him when they could not take in his hard saying (6:66). It has to do with bearing fruits (15:1ff). He also afore informed his followers that it is only those who would withstand being casted out because of him and still remain in him that would remain being his disciples (16:1ff). Following Jesus does not begin with God performing miraculous signs and ends with performing signs. Followers of Jesus in Nigeria seem to slack in being cognitive of the theological requirements of 'being in Jesus'. They are not conscious of the truth that there are crosses to carry, there are wars to fight so as to remain in Jesus: so that at the consummation of all things they can be graced to have a part in Jesus. For every follower of Jesus in every age, with special reference to the acclaimed followers of Jesus in Nigeria, it is established that it takes withstanding the hard sayings and real life situations associated with being in Jesus like the disciple (6:67-69) to be committed in 'remaining in Jesus'.

4.15.4. Intimacy with the Holy Spirit (The *Paraclete*): The person of the Holy Spirit is uniquely developed in the Johannine writings with special reference to the gospel of John. The person and the role of the Holy Spirit is significant in John and cannot be over emphasized. Bill Mounce documented that, "It is in the sphere of the teaching about the Spirit that John's contribution is especially noteworthy, for there is more about the activity of the Spirit in this gospel than in any other."[293] Simply put, John's gospel is characterized with an exalted view of the Spirit. Following this, John in his theology, places a strong emphasis on the person and role of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the ***Paraclete*** who is the advocate, encourager and a guide sent by the Lord. In John's gospel there are five sayings in which the Spirit is referred to as the ***parackletos*.** The passages in John's gospel that discusses the person and the functions of the ***Paracletos*** include the following John 14:15-17; 14:25, 26; 15:26, 27; 16:5-11, 12-15. The Greek "***parakletos***" means "One called alongside to help, as a legal term it means to advocate, it may in its most general sense mean the 'Counselor'.

The Spirit in John speaks about proceeds from God and he is the parting gift accompanying the glorification of Jesus. John in his gospel presented Jesus as the One on whom the Holy Spirit remains and also the One who baptizes with the Holy Spirit (Jon. 1:32-34). The Holy Spirit is in a sense another self of Jesus, hence Jesus himself described him as 'another Counselor'. Jesus was the ***parackletos*** when he was here on earth. But when he was about to end his own earthly mission work, he promised those who would believe in him the gift of another ***parackletos*** for them not to live like orphans. The work of the Holy Spirit is focused on the continuation of the work of Jesus Christ. The personality of the Holy Spirit was not denied in John's gospel, for he cannot take the place of Christ unless he is a person and so the basic idea of the Paraclete is 'personal'. The promised 'Spirit' is identified as the counselor who is the Spirit of truth (15:26; 16:13). The major objective of the Spirit is the glorification of Christ (15:26), another ***paracklete*** is coming depends upon the cessation of the earthly ministry of Jesus.[294] It is the coming of the Spirit that helps in the continuance of the ministry started by Jesus (16:5-11), hence the

Spirit empowers its continuation. The role of the Spirit chiefly consists in bringing conviction to the world as it concerns sin, righteousness and judgment.

The ***Paraclete*** is a helping presence that functions in illuminating the believer's ignorance. He functions in persuading the unbeliever to believe and the believer he persuades to consolidate an authentic faith in Jesus. It is because of the roles of the Holy Spirit that made John to speak of the Holy Spirit early in his gospel as the source of the new birth that makes people the children of God and allows them to partake of the kingdom of God now and in the here-after. The authority of the Spirit to function is not of his own (16:12-15), he is to work for the glory of Christ and declare things concerning him. His ministry was and is therefore to be entirely Christ centered. Towards the end of Jesus' ministry, after his death and resurrection, in the upper room Jesus breathed on the disciples and declared that they should "receive the Holy Spirit" (20:22). For John, intimacy with the Holy Spirit is an important requirement of following Jesus Christ, remaining in him and carrying on the gospel commission. Again, the activities of the Spirit is an integral part of the Johannine presentation of Christianity. John himself may have been conscious of the fact that his own knowledge of the teaching of Jesus was derived from the Spirit's leading. Since, Christianity was and is to be a dynamic faith and which would source its power from the Spirit, the Holy-Spirit is therefore to be given to the Church by the Lord of the Church. Consequently, one sees that from the onset of Christian experience, the Spirit's activity is dominant in the entire process of regeneration. Holy-Spirit is given at Jesus' request to believers. It is therefore the Holy Spirit that does the work of conviction and not just the demonstration of the miraculous signs. One must not be a miracle-worker or a recipient to prove that he or she is an authentic follower of Jesus Christ. Renato Cardoso noted that "Everyone who is of God has the authority to perform miracle. But not everyone who performs miracles is of God."[295] Performing miracle does not guarantee the level of ones' true spirituality. In John, it is in the Spirit that the true worship of God takes place. Identification with Jesus in a way that worshiping him takes place in the spiritual realm surpasses the claim to possess the miraculous working power, the desire

to access miracles and any claim to worshiping God in an acclaimed designated anointed geographical locations(4:23).

Some Church founders, workers and lay members in Nigeria claim that their geographical location for worship is divinely anointed for miraculous works, and so that all the people of the earth should gather there to worship. But as John indicates in his gospel- the proper worship of God cannot be limited to Mount Zion and Mount Gerizim, and indeed both are surpassed and replaced by worship in the Spirit (4:21-24). John advances theologically that true worship is essentially to be done in Spirit. John the evangelist, consciously explicates to his future readers that Jesus will send his Spirit to indwell in the believers as they live in the interim working and waiting for the ***parousia*** (7:39,14:15-17,14:26). It is important to note that God himself wants believers to be his true worshipers in Spirit. W. F. Howard points out that "the initiative is with God, who seeks such worshipers, and himself bestows the Spirit of truth."[296] The teaching of Jesus on the subject of man's approach to God assumes this spiritual nature of God. Because God is Spirit, those who would sincerely worship him can only succeed in doing that in the realm of Spirit. It is therefore Johannine ethics that one who approaches God –should do so from the spiritual point of view. Seeing signs takes place in the Spirit. It takes the spirit's leading for a miraculous sign receiver to see and understand the sign Jesus is showing to the person.

It is important to note that, the Holy Spirit is given to those who love and keep his commandments (14:15). Loving and keeping God's commandments point to being committed to Jesus. The deeper intimated aspect of God's relationship with men is brought vividly to the forefront through the relationship with the Holy Spirit. It is those who remain committed to Jesus that enjoy the Spirit's presence. It is neither those who mislead people by the use of manipulative miracle works nor those who go about chasing after the miraculous that enjoy the helping presence of the ***Paracletos***. The people Jesus promised giving his Helping Spirit are those who have in commitment remained in him. This explains why many acclaimed plenipotentiaries of God in Nigeria who lay claim to being the miraculous do not manifest the

characteristics of the life possessed by the Holy Spirit. Neither do they genuinely love God nor do they keep his commandments. They are in Church business just for their belly and to achieve their other conscious and unconscious wrong motivations, this is regrettable. John the evangelist consolidates that for any Nigerian acclaimed follower of Jesus to be committed to Jesus, that the person must consolidate an intimated relationship with the Holy Spirit in his or her faith walk with Jesus.

4.16. Implications of the Quest for the Miraculous by the Acclaimed Followers of Jesus in Nigeria

The significances of miraculous signs in the gospel commission of the Church in the redemption history cannot be overemphasized. The theological proposition that the occurrence of miracle has not ceased have been advanced and held tenaciously by many followers of Jesus in Nigeria. In this era, though it is established that God is still supernaturally intervening in the affairs of the world inhabited by mankind, noteworthy is that his wonder works have been duplicated by the devil and his plenipotentiaries. Significant number of acclaimed Church leaders, ministers and lay members are obsessed with the quest for the miraculous. Exploring the phenomenon of the followers of Jesus being obsessed with the quest for the miraculous, findings have suggested that political, cultural, economic, social and religious connoted factors are the major implications. The problem of many acclaimed God's plenipotentiaries and lay followers of Jesus in Nigeria demonstrating the characteristics of being obsessed with the quest for the miraculous has also directly or indirectly attracted negative consequences. These implications of the followers of Jesus in Nigeria being obsessed with the miraculous are below discussed under the following sub-headings: socio-cultural implications, socio-political and socio-economic implications and religio-cultural or theological implications.

4.16.1. Socio-Cultural Implication: Socio-cultural implication seeks to understand and explain why humans behave the ways they do.The religious phenomenon of significant number of Nigerian acclaimed seekers and followers of Jesus being obsessed with the quest for the miraculous directly or indirectly involves social and cultural inferences. The socio-cultural implications of Nigerians being obsessed with

the quest for the miraculous unveil the beliefs systems, customs and practices within Nigerian cultures and societies that affect the thoughts, feelings and behaviors of professed Nigerian followers of Jesus. It is to be noted that there are socio-cultural circumstances influencing most individuals in Nigeria to be approaching Jesus Christ from his functional character as the Messiah while undermining his ontological nature.

Nigeria is a country with a multicultural society that has over 250 languages.[297] Nigeria has more than 1150 different native dialects and ethnic groups. From among these dialects, the six largest ethnic groups include Hausa and Fulani in the North, the Igbo in the Southeast, and the Yoruba predominate in the Southwest, the Tiv people of North central Nigeria and the Efik-Ibibio. Edo people who are mostly Christians are most frequent in the region between Yoruba and Igboland. The many other ethnic groups found throughout the country but most especially in the North and the Middle-belt are often described as the minorities. Because of the diverse forms of ethnic groups and multiple number of dialects -there are predominantly internal wars, religious riots, killings, oppressions, hardships, corruptions etc. These also account for the reasons why each of these ethnic groups or in their individual bases hold tenaciously to their religious beliefs and practices, as means of seeking for solutions and protections. Mostly, traditional Fulani and the Hausas are predominantly Muslim. The Igbos, Efik, Ibibo and Annang people are predominantly Christians. For the Yorubas, they are equally likely to be either Christian or Muslim.

Nigeria is a representative of African cosmology. Predominantly most Nigerians like every other Africans are notoriously religious. The indigenous religious practices still remain important to most Nigerians. The citizenries experience hostile and wicked experiences which may arise from the interaction of the physical world and the spiritual world. Nigerians live in a precarious situations. Chinwokwu noting the issues that most often confront them and for which they always tend to address listed, "…the forces of evil and wickedness, witchcraft, death, drought, sickness, failure, flood, childlessness, epidemic, war, poverty, marriage, destiny blockade, lack of favour, unemployment or any other kind of setback or misfortune and from all that limit and hinder them."[298] When they are caught up with any problem, some may resort to

divination, sacrifice, traditional medicine and protective charm in order to cope with the wickedness, violent nature and or any uncertainties of life. Some others tend to approach God for either complete personal and or community deliverance. Some of them nurse the fear that ancient obnoxious covenants contracted by their forebears are binding in their lives and or that parental curses as a result of parental crimes committed knowingly or unknowingly may have been following them and their children and that their attacks will continue unabated unless they are delivered or cleansed. Following this, many people move from one Church to another and from one ministry to another questing to have divine encounter that would deliver them from effects of evil covenants and curses.

Success in all areas of life and great accomplishments are highly valued in Nigeria. The desire of most Nigerians is to attend to the height in life in which they will be accepted, regarded and valued in the society. Nigerians have value for family life style and high value for highly accomplished persons hence most individuals are desperate to make it in life. For them to be successful and valued they are always confronted with need for marriage, need for children, need to be gainfully employed, need to be wealthy in material possessions, need to be hale and hearty etc. It is this consciousness that informed the motivation that is consistently demonstrated by many, which propel them to tend to become obsessed with any source that would add meaning to their desired lives. Consequent to this, some tend to approach God through any means that would aid them to meet up with their dream or desire of becoming accomplished in life. Concerned with these values some tend to be syncretic in order to access any of their desired success in any facet of their lives. Even when they claim to have been converted to the Christian faith, they can still out of desperation resort to any quick means just to get solutions to their needs.

In the most African worlds, with special reference to Nigeria, the people tend to believe that when things are not going well with someone, that someone or an evil spirit may have been responsible for that. Consequently, they tend to always find ways to have a personal identification or relation with God or any other means they hope to source for help when the need arises. It is therefore observed that the concept of saving among the people is a very dynamic one and it manifests in times of desperate needs. God in this

respect becomes the last resort, the final and last arbiter to whom they turn to when all other ways and means have failed them.[299] But significant number of Nigerians approaching God through Jesus just for them to find solutions to their numerous problems have subjugated their form of Christianity to be one characterized as solution oriented Christianity. Solution oriented form of Christianity results to these professed Christians consolidating a form of superficial form of faith in Jesus. It is therefore from this background that they tend to hold tenaciously to the belief that Jesus as savior has come to offer them deliverance from their ***Sitz-im-Leben*** – concrete life situations which they experience daily.

Their religiosity is also observed being imbedded in their daily songs, in which their inspirations most often is sourced and geared towards God who can solve their problems. In their religious nature, frequently their indigenous religious practices and beliefs are blended with Christian beliefs. This directly or indirectly results to syncretism. Nigerians are solutions –oriented people. It is natural for Nigerians who are like every other Africans to find their solution in religion, most especially African Christianity.[300] And so, they are quick to patronize any religion that would solve their problems. In relation to them being solution oriented, accounts for the reason they are characterized with the obsession with the quest for the miraculous. In their obsession, many have become so gullible that they often fall victims in the hands of those who could perform wonder arousing feats. In their religiosity, yet there is increase in the rate of moral decadence.

4.16.2. Socio- Political and Economic Implications: The political and economic factors as they relate to the history of the country Nigeria have been underlined as part of the negative inferences that are consequent to the issue of significant number of Nigerians being obsessed with the quest for the miraculous. Till few decades away, Nigeria as a nation has been known to be self-sufficient in producing enough food to feed its population. But since the time petroleum production and industry began to boom in Nigeria, the Nigerian government over-looked agriculture and focused more in investing more of the national resources on the new petroleum production. Oil production is known to be Nigeria's largest industry in terms of output and revenue. The immediate corollary of this national action was that

agriculture as the main means of sourcing national economic growth began to suffer and dwindle. The nation that used to export agricultural products, all of a sudden began to need to import even food she was able to produce.

Historically, it is noted that since the 1960s, Nigeria's economy has been based on oil production. Being a leading member of organization of petroleum exporting countries (OPEC), she enjoyed the oil-rich economy that led to a major economic boom for Nigeria during the 1970s. Nigeria that used to be poor became the thirtieth richest country in the world.[301] It will not be an overstatement to say that Nigeria was one of the countries that were enriched through economic gains made from the sales of petroleum and its byproducts. But the mismanagement of the gains from the sales of oil and its byproducts by the succeeding governments over the past years resulted in the present economic situation of the federation of Nigeria. It is therefore observed that it will not be inconsistent to believe that the government is responsible for the social ills[302] that are being experienced in Nigeria. The poverty level that has taken over the nation can be traced to the governmental influence Nigeria has experienced over the years. In this era, due to the consistent fall in oil prices and other factors like severe corruption, political instability and economic mismanagement, have landed Nigeria to a poverty level worse than she use to be from the era of her independent. Since then, the government has failed in providing adequate welfare package for its citizenry. Nevertheless with the restoration of civilian rule in 1999, Nigeria has been making moves to reform the economic situation. Though the economic reform is ongoing, the economic situation has landed the nation into a high rate of unemployment, high inflation, and corruption. In a general assessment, it is estimated that more than a third of the population are living under the poverty line.[303] Poverty is a serious problem in the world with special reference to Nigeria.

This national poverty occasioned by the fall in oil price and many other factors affecting every facet of the country has empowered Church business to be thriving in a developing country like Nigeria. It is observed that "Nigeria is broke politically, strategically, morally, and a completely bankrupt country. Poverty level has grown, 85 million Nigerians are extremely poor, we have now become the poverty

capital of the world."[304] The religious lifestyle of Nigerians were and is still among the areas most negatively affected. Following this, economic situation of Nigeria, directly or indirectly resulted to the increase in the affinity of its masses to religion. Okai noted that, "therefore, to establish their personhood in a society that depersonalized them, Africans found their solution in religion (African Christianity)."[305] And so, for over three decades, Christian religion has been serving as the opium of the masses. In this regard it is traced that,

> Notably, the 1980's period made it obvious that it was economic downturn that gave birth to such Christian Churches and groups. The new Church groups therefore became somewhat an escape route for the teeming population of Nigerians, more especially the youth, who could no longer find future in Nigerian polity and society.[306]

Because religion is the opium of life,[307] it promised the suffering masses hope of achieving prosperity through supernatural means despite the economic situation. The Christian faith has positively functioned in consolidating hope in the suffering masses. It has helped them to consolidate a coping strategy in the midst of their suffering situation-in-life. Supporting the above stance Okai noted that,

> The multiple African independent churches that dotted the Nigeria scenario have in no small measure assisted Nigeria and Nigerians in coping with the freezing socio-economic situation of the 20th and 21st century and defined Nigeria as the most peaceful and enduring nation in the world. Imagine a Nigeria without this new wave of Christianity?[308]

And so, many got attracted to religion like the Christian faith that promises them hope and prosperity in the midst of the economic situations in the federation. Achunike observed that "the upsurge of Pentecostals has made some people claim that only two things are viable in Nigeria today: selling petrol and planting new Pentecostal churches."[309] In this era, planting of Churches and establishing ministries or so-called prayer houses, have been established to be one of the main means through which some people make ends meet. This established background accounts for the reason in Nigeria, many old and young people claim to be called as full time or part time ministers of God. Agha u. Agha explains that most of these people claim that they were called by God and were moved by the power of the Holy Spirit to plant new Churches or ministries. Meanwhile, before the civil war and during the period of oil boom in 70s in Nigeria, hardly did any young man opt to become a pastor of any Church except those called genuinely by God to serve

him. Parents even objected to their children going to be trained to become pastors. They equated Church work with poverty.[310] Due to high rate of poverty and high rate of unemployment or better still lack of better opportunity for people to achieve their dreams of amassing wealth and power, many have been consciously or unconsciously motivated to go into Church business, with the cover that 'God called them into ministry' and that God has anointed them to be performing miracles. Agha further tracing the root cause of unemployment in Nigeria noted that,

> The long period of military rule during and after the civil war in Nigeria (1966-1996) ushered in unemployment in Nigeria and this in turn brought about poverty and untold hardship and misery on both old and young. Unemployment with its attended evils has affected the socio- economic, socio-political and socio-moral spectrum of the Nigerian society. It has contributed to too many people becoming perpetual armed robbers and kidnappers. Today everyone wants to be a politician in order to make fast money instead of serving humanity. Unemployment in Nigeria has become the bane of the society. It is therefore one of the causes of proliferation of Churches in Nigeria.[311]

Following this, it has been observed that "one of the most remarkable trend of the last decade among Christian population of Nigeria has been the rise of the so-called 'charismatic' or Pentecostal movements."[312] This has in-turn resulted and is still resulting to the proliferation of Churches and those who claim to be called into the ministry. Quite unfortunately, many joined the ministry being selfishly motivated. Being selfishly motivated to join the ministry for economic reason has resulted in the literal mushrooming of new Church organizations between the last decades in the Nigerian geo-social and political landscape. They have formed and are still forming a great company of new religious and social political force in Nigeria. In the regards of the above, Fayomi describes Nigeria as a "fertile soil for the growth of independent Churches with all its crises and opportunities."[313]

The proliferation of Churches in Nigeria came with it a considered mix-feelings of joy and anxiety, it has many positive and negative implications. The positive aspects of the proliferation of Churches in Nigeria has helped in the areas of "rapid evangelization, development of new leadership, promoted specialization in ministry and enhanced the provision of an atmosphere in which human problems are at times solved."[314] While its negative effects in Nigeria include personal clashes, unhealthy competition for convert via

homiletical propaganda, lack of unity, monetary crises, heresies, fanaticism and bickering.[315] It has also resulted to many of these acclaimed plenipotentiaries sourcing power from diabolic means for them to be powerful enough to be performing miraculous signs so that many can be persuaded to be attracted to their Churches or ministries and programes. Some others dilute the gospel of the Church that is embedded with the power of salvation. Due to the economic situation, there are some acclaimed ministers who openly declares that "God called them to make people rich." Many of these self-professed bishops, apostles, prophets embrace the wealth and health gospel while consciously or unconsciously undermining the redemptive gospel mandate of the Church. In engaging in prosperity preaching- many acclaimed ministers of God in Nigeria have on a high rate enriched themselves to the detriment of the poor or struggling members or followers who sow in faith with the little they have so as to have the divine supernaturally intervene in their desired situations. Some of these acclaimed prosperity preachers have established, schools, hospitals, banks, hotels or restaurants, publishing houses, estates etc. from which they generate more income for themselves and their immediate family members. While their members or followers do not have any share from the short or long term accrued interests. The gullible members are persuaded to keep investing in such projects so that God will bless them financially or otherwise. They spend some of the money they collected from the members to print posters, flyers, advertise their programs and supposedly their acclaimed miracle and testimonies as baits to get more members or followers. They sell whole lots of things, ranging from acclaimed holy water, recharge card for prayers, holy oil, Holy Communion wine and bread, wrist bands, stickers, calendars, mantle materials and so on for people to use them to access their desired miracles while they are directly or indirectly enriching themselves from the accrued gains made from the sales of those things.

Most of the people who work in many of such Churches are under paid, the amount they are paid are not commensurate to what other equivalent establishments pay workers who do same work. Those who are paid at all are co-opted ministers or lay workers while significant numbers of others like Church cleaners, ushers, choir members and so on are brain washed that they are doing the services to God. It is in Church

business that one sees whole lots of people working, few are paid little money while many others are not paid for the services they render committedly due to the religious world view, that they are doing the services to God and that it is God who will reward their services. But the Church founders and general overseers are directly or indirectly gaining and enriching themselves from the services they render.

Many Nigerians have become so gullible because of the economic situation of the federation. In their gullibility, they do anything their acclaimed bishops, religious daddies and mummies, prophets, pastors, fathers etc persuade them to do so that they can be supernaturally blessed to be rich or healthy. Some very poor ones use their insignificant money to buy all that their acclaimed men and women of God sell to them so that they can access their desired miracles. They engage in paying diverse forms of financial partnerships in order for God to pay them back one hundred fold or even more. In so doing, they impoverish themselves. Some other Church members invest their time and resources in the Church business, while they wait on God by faith to pay them by blessing them financially and otherwise. Some others engage a lot of their time in going to Church programs instead of investing their time in the things that would yield economic increase to them. Most of these people who are gullibly by being this religious may not have identified with Jesus in faith. Many of them have not developed a personal relationship with Jesus. They do not want to identify with Jesus because of his ontological nature but they are more tended to approach him from his functional nature. This constitutes the fulcrum of the problem associated with the significant number of Nigerians being obsessed with the quest for the miraculous from the socio-economic perspectives.

4.16.3. Theological Implication: Theology unveils diverse ways through which God has revealed himself to humankind. It is the study of ways through which God has over time been revealing himself to man. Theology has shown itself to be the opposite of religion that unravels ways through which human-beings have sought to discover God. In theology is embedded and is unraveled the ways God wants man to interact with him and as well with other fellow human beings in worshiping and serving him in the world

he created and orders. Through diverse supernatural means God has continued to reveal himself supernaturally to both the Church and the people of the world as signs pointing to himself.

Theologically, God through supernatural means intervenes in the affairs of humankind. His supernatural interventions in history can be traced from the point when the first man and woman sinned and lost their place in the original creation plan of God. The whole humanity share in the consequences of the sin introduced into the world by Adam and Eve. The resultant consequences of sin are suffering and death. God engages in compassionate miraculous moves so as to restore man to himself and to reinstate man to his original place in creation. In the divine's miraculous moves, he chiefly aims to employ the wonder arousing effects of miracles to bring humanity to the platform on which they are to be eternally saved and to alleviate suffering in the world. Jesus in both the synoptic and autoptic gospels as the emissiary of God, was presented as having performed many miracles which many people witnessed during the first century era. It was John the evangelist that chiefly sees the miracles of Jesus as signs which the underlying meanings they underline unveil the ontological and functional natures of Jesus as the Messiah sent from God who is also One with God the Father.

Theologically as stressed in the gospel according to John, Jesus did many miraculous signs which were witnessed by his disciples and some other multitudes. All the miracles he performed were not documented in his gospel, but the ones John selected, by way of redaction edited and incorporated in his gospel were chosen and employed to prove and persuade his audience -so that they may come to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. It is his intention that his audience(s) should read about the miracles, understand the underlying symbolic meanings behind the signs and thereby come to believe in Jesus and as well have life in His name. Theologically, the essence of miraculous signs are revelatory and evangelistic. Chiefly, miraculous signs function to reveal the ontological and functional natures of Jesus to the people of the world. Secondly, it functions evangelically to bring people to believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God. It is also evangelistic, in the sense that as the signs are observed, people may be persuaded to come to believe and through continuance in believing may have life in his name.

A typical miraculous-sign which John documented is the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand with five loaves and two fishes. In this miracle, Jesus' characteristics as the miraculous were unveiled, the characteristics of his disciples and that of the crowd were also revealed. Jesus in John expressed displeasure with the act of the multitude who came to him for just what they would get from him. Because they seek and come to him just for what they would get, when they saw the miraculous signs he performed they only partook of the material aspect of the miraculous signs and failed to understand or accept the underlying symbolic signs which the miracle stressed or unveiled. At the point- Jesus unveiled to them that it would require them eating his body and drinking his blood for them to remain in him, the multitude left him, only his disciples remained with him.

This Johanine theology- on how Jesus envisions his wonder arousing deeds and how he wants people to see and understand them have implications for the Church in Nigeria. Jesus as the miraculous is the model of what his true plenipotentiaries should be like. Jesus was motivated to feed the crowd to draw them to come to fuller understanding of his person and function and come to believe in him for their eternal salvation. It also stresses that those who seek and come to Jesus are required to grow from believing to consolidating authentic faith in Jesus. When Johannine miraculous-signs theology is compared with the significance of miraculous signs in this modern Nigerian Christendom, they do not commensurate. Significant number of those who claim to be the plenipotentiaries of God in Nigeria do not manifest the modeled character of Jesus. Jesus was motivated in his miraculous demonstration by genuine compassion and passion to do the will of his Father. But instead, significant number of these modern day acclaimed miracle workers are the plenipotentiaries of the devil. Some of them are conscious of the truth that they are working for the devil while many others are unconscious of the truth that they are tools in the hands of the devil. Many of them are in the ministry for the selfish purpose of amassing wealth for themselves, becoming famous, being idolized, being powerful etc.

Theologically, significant number of the teeming population in Nigeria that are desperately seeking and following Jesus for divers reasons are just like the crowd in the context of John 6. Many professed

followers of Jesus are not ready to identify with or know Jesus personally. They are just doing what other people in the crowds are doing. Many acclaimed Christians in Nigeria are therefore following Jesus just for what they would get from him. Following this, the numerical strength of those who claim to be seeking and following Jesus is so high but few are really in the class of the typified disciples of Jesus as established in the context of John 6. Many of those who profess to be followers of Jesus in Nigeria are not authentic believers, this is said because they are not ready to be his disciples and be committed with him. Hence, there is the situation of increased rate of religiosity in Nigeria and also a high rate of moral decadence. In Nigeria, people are seeking and identifying with Jesus, with the sole purpose of wanting to identify with his functional characteristics as the Messiah without wanting to identify personally with his ontology. It was this typical character that Jesus saw demonstrated by the crowd following him in the context of John 6. Jesus did not only indicted them but also he engaged them in a lengthened discourse with the intention of opening their eye of understanding, yet they deserted him. It should be noted that the wonder arousing deeds of God in the salvational history was climaxed in the Jesus events. In Jesus, and through human instruments, God continues his miraculous intervention in the world inhabited by mankind. It is summed here that the negative theological implications of the quest for miraculous signs by the professed followers of Jesus in Nigeria is that many want to access their desired miracles without identifying personally with Jesus because of the demand that will be thereby placed on them, this constitutes the fulcrum of the problem.

4.17. Recommendations (Hermeneutical Solutions)

4.17.1. Seekers and followers of Jesus in Nigeria should refrain from desperately questing after Miraculous Signs: Jesus categorically reprimanded the crowd that crossed boundaries seeking him just for miracles. Jesus does not desire that his followers become obsessed with miracles. Followers of Jesus being preoccupied with miracles expose themselves to the danger of consolidating a superficial faith in Jesus. This study strongly recommends that those who are followers of Jesus in Nigeria should refraining from every act of desperately questing and or being obsessed with miracles. In questing after miracles

they are bound to experience horrible experiences which range from being gullible, being duped of their material possessions, being possessed by evil spirits, some one may loose his or her life from the processes of questing after the miraculous, and being eluded of the realized and futuristic rewards of being in Christ. Jesus wants his followers in Nigeria to grow in developing a personal relationship with him that would guarantee them access to both the realized and futuristic eternal salvaged life.

4.17.2. Consolidating a Balanced and an Authentic Salvific Faith on the Functional and Ontological Natures of Jesus: Jesus wants anyone who comes to him to have a balanced understanding of his functional and ontological natures. John's theology proves that the functional nature of Jesus as the Messiah unveils and reveals his ontological nature to the people which in-turn persuades them to believe in him for their eternal salvation. It is the functional nature of Jesus that unveils and reveals his ontological nature to the people who come to him. Firstly, Jesus' identity is that of deity- God in essence and truth among his people. Therefore Jesus's deity and power are inseparable. It is theologically proved in John that Jesus' divine identity and incarnation co-exist. These theological establishments are demonstrated by miraculous signs documented in John's gospel. Therefore any Nigerian who comes to Jesus must not be desperate to only approach him from his functional nature. Approaching Jesus in faith should not just be based on a temporary element of reality. Those who want to identify with Jesus in faith should do that on the basis of identifying with Jesus' essence as God, then other things can follow. In application to the religious Nigerians, anyone who claims to be a follower of Jesus should not only be seeking Jesus just for the miraculous signs that they intend to be getting from him for their immediate gratifications. Nigerians who are seeking and following Jesus should endeavor to consolidate a balanced authentic believing faith on the functional and ontological natures of Jesus. This is recommended so that followers of Jesus in Nigeria can access both the realized and futuristic gift of eternal life which Jesus offers to any one that remains in him.

4.17.3. Focus on Soteriological Works of Christ and on Non-Material Acquisitions: Miracles have spiritual significances. They have their significant place alongside the other soteriological works of Jesus Christ. Jesus wants his followers to focus on the spiritual sustaining that comes from him that would lead them to partake in the eternal life which he offers through his salvational works. Based on this motif, Jesus admonished the crowd that were seeking for him just for the miracles to rather not labor for material things that perishes. Jesus' disciples remained with Jesus and did not desert him because they were focused on the non-material acquisitions they would get from Jesus that would guarantee their eternal life. In seeking and following Jesus, Nigerian believers should endeavor to focus on the non-material underlying revelations about Jesus that spiritually sustains one and guarantees one's realized and eternal salvation. Based on this establishment, it is suggested that Nigerian followers of Jesus should endeavor to set their minds on non-material things that they would access, which would give them the grace to access both the realized and futuristic salvation. This can only be done by identifying with the essence of Jesus and the dynamic soteriological works of Jesus Christ. Through the demonstration of miracle Jesus aims to offer man holistic salvation, though physical gains may become immediately apparent. This is profered so that followers of Jesus in Nigeria would not for any reason be disappointed in Jesus.

4.17.4. Construing a Balanced Understanding of the Central Significance of the suffering in the Cross and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ in the Faith Walk with him: It is important to note that the cross is first to be identified with a symbol of shame, humiliation and suffering before it is to be interpreted as a source of victory. Following this, it should also be noted that there was the cross and all it implies before the resurrection with all it implies. But then, it is on the death and resurrection of Jesus that the Church is founded and consolidated**.** Christian faith is consolidated on the significance of the place of suffering in the faith walk with Jesus which culminates in the overall victory consolidated by the resurrection of Jesus Christ for all believers. In the context of the feeding of the five thousand in John's gospel- suffering may be related to 'eating his body' and 'drinking his blood'. Those who follow Jesus must have a balanced understanding that they must eat his body and drink his blood- that is they must

identify with his death and resurrection so as to have part in him. Suffering is not out of place in Christian faith. It is in suffering that Christians are refined. Those who persevere in their walk with the Lord even in the face of suffering are the ones that Jesus promised eternal life now and in the here-after.

Considering this establishment, this study recommends that followers of Jesus in Nigeria should not be deceived by the peddling 'cross-less messages' that the plenipotentiaries of the devil in this era are using to be deceiving the ignorant and the gullible ones. Christians in Nigeria should know that it is not out of place for Christians to suffer. For Jesus, having identified with all the forms of human vulnerabilities promised those who would persevere by remaining in him to partake in his all-round victories and as well to enjoy salvation now and in the here-after. Genuine plenipotentiaries of God in Nigeria should persevere in proclaiming the centrality of the significance of the Cross and the resurrection of Jesus Christ in the gospel commission of the Church in Nigeria.

4.17.5. Understanding and Exposing the Dangers Associated with the Health and Wealth Gospels: Health and wealth are treasured in Nigeria. Hence, Nigerians' world-view holds that health is wealth**.** Consequently, wealth and success are highly valued. In Africa as a whole, with special reference to Nigeria, health does not relate to only the lack of sickness. In their world view, sickness is understood as not being primarily a resultant of physical symptoms but that they are majorly traceable to spiritual roots and causes. To Nigerians, Health and wealth encapsulate well-being in their holistic sense. Because they have a high value for health and wealth most Nigerians can cross boundaries to access them. It is therefore not an overstatement to categorically declare that among the major reasons Nigerians move from one Church and ministries to another include to access the divine authorization and favor to be healthy and to be blessed till they become well-to-do. But health and wealth constitute the material blessings that true followers of Jesus must not become obsessed with. There are natural and theological principles that one can adhere to in order to access them. People who are hardworking can be blessed to be wealthy. Those who eat well can be blessed to be healthy.

From theological perspective, health and wealth come from God to the people of the earth. It is on whom the Lord will show mercy, that he will show mercy. Nigerians who are followers of Jesus should endeavor to understand the natural and spiritual principles behind health and wealth. Jesus feed the crowd because he wants to feed them. It was not their desperation that moved him to feed them. Followers of Jesus in Nigeria are therefore not to be desperate about health and wealth. Being desperate to access the miracles as the advancers of the health and wealth preach, many have unfortunately bemoaned of how they were robbed of their possessions under the guise of 'the Lord says give away your property or account balance' for them to be wealthy or healthy. Many encounter more horrible experiences. Nigerians are hereby advised to learn to keep following Jesus in faith that has works instead of moving from Church and ministries to another looking for a quick way to become healthy or wealthy.

4.17.6. **Heart Transformation and Regeneration**: miracles do not start and end in themselves. Miracles are not the end in themselves. Miracles function as means to the end which is heart transformation consolidated in redemption. Miracles represent a form of visible or tangible expressions of Jesus' teachings which may help one to come to belief and to access eternal salvation. If one yields oneself to be transformed based on the miraculous experience one must have had- then the spiritual significance of that miracle is thereby achieved. It is in redemption that the significance of the miraculous signs which the Trinity daily performs in order to persuade humanity to come to the knowledge and acceptance of Jesus as the Son of God is climaxed. It is only one- whose heart is transformed and regenerated that could access the life which Jesus through his death and resurrection offers. Followers of Jesus in Nigeria are to yield their hearts to God to be transformed as they daily experience supernatural interventions in their lives. This is so recommended because- it is heart transformation and regeneration that could persuade people to refrain from being desperate in questing after the miraculous and will enforce the spirituality that could reduce the level of moral decadence in Nigeria. Transformation in the heart of the significant number of those who profess to be Christians in Nigeria will consolidate an improved reformation in the economic and political situations in Nigeria.

4.17.7. Spiritual Discernment and Scrutiny of Miracles and acclaimed Miracle Performers: Discernment of miracles and miracle performers have to do with individual Christians or community of faith wisely reflecting, evaluating or contemplating on whether a miraculous phenomenon has occurred in agreement to the Word of God**.** Individual Christians and the community of faith have the right to discern miracles in order to establish whether they are genuine or fake**.** This is recommended because miracles cannot validate themselves, they must be open to spiritual discernment and scrutiny**.** Miracle is one of the real things in todays' Christendom in Nigeria. But many feats advertised and testified in this era are stage managed. Miracle is lucrative for Church business. Church business is one of the easiest ways to amass wealth in Nigeria. Consequent to this**,** many in this era have joined in the mission mandate of the Church for wrong motivations. Many have soiled their hands just for them to have the power to be performing miracles and thereby become famous and as well attract crowds to their Churches or ministries. Some of the miracles they testify and or advertise tend to follow magical principles and rituals. It is noteworthy that because mystical powers such as sorcery and magic are condemned in the Bible, it is now repacked and brought into the Church business in the form of miracles and wonders. Miracles are not supposed to be advertised but in this era it is advised using the media, flyers, bill boards or posts etc. Because of this, it is crucial that the morality and the character of these so called acclaimed performers of miracle should be subjected to the scrutiny of the biblical orthodoxy.

The morality and the character of the applauded miracle workers in Nigeria should be subjected to the examination of the biblical canon. This is suggested because, the acclaimed performers and the act of miracle itself supposed to be synchronically aligned in adhering to the canonical stipulations. Genuine miracles adhere to canonical stipulations. But fake miracles do not adhere to the canonical stipulations. Fake miracles are orchestrated in the ways the performers can achieve their short and long term ulterior motives. Many acclaimed miracle performers in Nigeria manifest behaviors that expose them as the agents of darkness. Many perform their acclaimed miracles by the authority of demons. By their fruits they are recognized as the plenipotentiaries of the devil and they are therefore not of God. It is therefore

recommended that the followers of Jesus in Nigeria engage in examining the essence, validity and the authenticity of both acclaimed miracles and acclaimed miracle workers themselves. Miracles are to be scrutinized in order to discern the power behind its manifestations. In discerning miracles, they are to be theologically critiqued. Following this, it is important that those operating under the demonic authorizations be exposed so that their ignorant devotees can thereby be warned and may be liberated.

4.17.8. Being an Authentic Disciple of Jesus rather than being a Miracle Obsessed Disciple: In the journey of faith walk with Jesus, it is demanded that one submits oneself completely to Jesus as his disciple. Being an authentic disciple has to do with being completely sold out to Jesus, being ready to learn from him in humility and in perseverance. Being a disciple of Jesus constitutes living a certified theologically defined lifestyles. It requires active obedience that consolidates worshiping God by doing what pleases him. It discourages passive obedience that consolidates worshiping God by consciously seeking to be pleased with what God does for their immediate gratifications.

Being an authentic disciple demands that one submits his or her life completely to the divine's will and ways. It requires a lifestyle of walking with Jesus in total obedience to his precepts, commands and remaining committed in him. It has to do with following the way of the Cross being led by the Holy Spirit. It is a lifestyle of trusting Jesus no matter what happens, because one lives by the assurance that he alone knows what is best for the person. Being an authentic disciple of Jesus is consolidated by staying in an intimate relationship with Jesus, worshiping him simply because he is God in essence, dedicating time in studying the Bible and humbly seeking for more of him in prayers. It has to do with counting the cost and being consciously willing to daily carry ones' cross and be persistent in following the Lord. Consolidating the teaching on discipleship based on proper hermeneutics is very important. Authentic discipleship is gradually inculcated in the lives of the believers through proper hermeneutics of the word of God by the genuine men and women of God. Based on all that being an authentic disciple of Jesus requires, this study therefore recommends that the acclaimed men and women of God in Nigeria should be more focused on

the evangelical act of disciplining their members according to the teachings of the Bible. Disciplining their members will empower them to be knowledgeable about the things of the spirit. It will profit them instead of being obsessed with miracles.

4.17.9. Evangelism based on the Undiluted Gospel and Proper Hermeneutics: The New Testament world is full of miracles. From Jesus to the apostles, miracles thrived in their mission engagements. But it is not miracle that is the power of God unto salvation. For the gospel commission of the Church- it remains that it is the Word of God that is the power of God unto salvation. Miracles, the preaching and teaching of the word of God go hand in hand. Both miracles and the kerygma worked symbiotically in the salvational history. This is seen that Jesus' miracles, teachings and or preachings worked cooperatively in persuading the evangelized to identify in an authentic faith in him as the Son of God. In John, Jesus used miracles to reveal his identity. If they did not understand the revelation underlying in the miraculous sign- Jesus would also employ the use of discourse teachings to categorically unveil his ontological nature. But in this era, because many acclaimed plenipotentiaries have joined in the gospel commission to achieve ulterior motives, many are consciously or unconsciously diluting the canonized gospel. They preach diluted gospel and wrongly apply the word to the addressed situations. Many of them are simply preaching 'another gospel'.

This 'another gospel' consolidates that the evangelized should identify with Jesus so that they prosper. Most preachers do not tell their adherents to identify with Jesus so that they can access the eternal life that he offers through his death and resurrection. Through their diluted gospels they persuade their followers to become obsessed with miracles. They relent from teaching their followers about the dangers of sin, theology of the cross and the cost of discipleship. Those preaching 'another gospel' are either deliberately or unintentionally doing that to achieve their desired selfish goals. The effect is that many are thereby deceived. The ignorant and gullible ones are easily deceived. The ignorant and the gullible are thereby subjected to diverse forms of horrible experiences. Based on this establishment, this study recommends that preaching the gospel be based on the true theological teaching of the gospel. Preachers in Nigeria are

hereby recommended to engage in preaching of the gospel driving its meaning from pure exegesis that is based on proper hermeneutics. Those who engage in the endeavor of training pastors should inculcate the theology of the cross, and the essence of discipleship in them. So that when they pass out of the theological schools and as they engage in the mission mandate they can as well inculcate these important theologies in their members.

4.17.10. Academic Writings and Arguments Exposing the Dangers Associated with Citizens of Nigeria being Obsessed with the Miraculous: Through academic writings and arguments pragmatic solutions have been proffered on issues causing societal problems in the world. In most cases it has been observed that academic writings and arguments are often ineffective because their proffered solutions are not being read and not adhered to. It is said that for Africans, that if one wants to hide something from them – that it should be written down. Most Nigerians as Africans do not have the habit of reading. Following this, even when the most pragmatic research findings and solutions are penned down many would not access it because of the dearth of reading habit. Though this study is not stressing this negativity associated with academic writings, rather it is the recommendation of this study that enlightened scholars take up the challenge of writing quality researches exposing the dangers associated with citizens of developing countries being obsessed with the miraculous because of their religiosity. Biblical exegetes, theologians and scholars have the intellectual capacity to carry out researches that would be both contextual and hermeneutical that could enlighten spiritual thirsty Nigerians. These materials are to be written and popularized in a form that connects with both the Church founders, leaders and the lay Church members to read and be properly informed about the dangers associated with people being obsessed with the miraculous.

They are to establish a constructive theology of health, wealth, restoration, charismatic endowments, and the significances of the power of God in the mission mandate of the Church. This is advised because in an African country like Nigeria, power to be performing miracles are seen as the validation of the person,

the power of Jesus Christ and his other human agents. It is therefore important that theology and scholarship interest itself in this required exposition and thereby explicate the significances and the true meaning of the mighty deeds and wonder arousing deeds of Jesus and his person. This is recommended because it is required in this era that theologians and scholars who are genuine Christians find ways to use their grounded knowledge to spread the information on what is proper and improper and or unsafe way of interpreting and applying the Scripture as it relates to the entirety of the gospel commission. It is also important to note that the significant number of those preaching and following 'another gospel' may be good and godly people who are convinced that what they believe is truly what the Bible teaches. Most of these acclaimed plenipotentiaries of God develop their teachings and preaching from their personal experiences, ideologies, feelings and beliefs. But many of them do not know the science of proper exegesis and proper hermeneutics. It is possible that through the exegetical hermeneutical works of grounded theologians and scholars, Nigerians could be enlightened to learn of the dangers associated with acclaimed ministers and lay followers of Jesus being obsessed with the functional aspect of the Messiah while undermining his ontological nature.

End Notes

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[142]Loc.cit.,

[143]Invitation Handbill for winners Chapel, Nsukka Covenant Day of Long Life and Communion Service which held on Sunday 9th Sep, 2018 with Pastor Vincent Obami as the Presiding Minister and other anointed men of God. Testimony of divine healing testified by Sister Favor was documented at the back of the flier.

[144]Invitation Handbill for Winners Chapel, Nsukka for Covenant Day of Fruitfulness (23rd Sep, 2018), with Pastor Vincent Obami as the Presiding Minister, testimony testified by Sis Nen.

[145]Invitation Handbill for Winners Chapel, Nsukka Special Anointing Service and Covenant Day of Breaking Generational Curses (Sunday 16, Sep 2018), with Pastor Vincent Obami as the Presiding Minister, Testimony testified by Isaac Godfavour.

[146]Invitation Handbill for Winners Chapel, Nsukka Covenant Day of Laughter (7th Octo, 2018) with Pastor Vincent Obami as the Presiding Minister, testimony testified by Sis. Nene O.J. and Invitation Handbill for Winners Chapel, Covenant day of Settlement, Thanksgiving and Dedication Service (30th sept 2018) with Pastor Vincent Obami as the Presiding Minister, testimony testified by Sis. Nene O.J.

[147]Sunday Service Flier with the picture of the resident pastor reads Living Faith Church, Agbor aka Winners' Chapel Int'l. Where God is at Work Now! Ministering: Nwagu Okenwa and other anointed men of God, Presents: 3rd Wonder Sunday/Special Anointing Service Sunday 21st July 2019. (Come with a bottle of Olive Oil and a list of things you want to say enough is enough to) 1st Service 6:30am and 2nd Service 8:30am at Church Auditorium 223, Old Lagos/Asaba Road, B.B. OWA. What to expect: expect the reversal of the irreversible, expect the release of long awaited desires, expect the healing of both curable and incurable sicknesses, expect the end of misfortune and storms, expect the breaking of yokes/ family evil pattern and expect the anointing for exploit.

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[151]Invitation Handbill for Assemblies of God Church Obollo-Afor presents 4 days of Divine Impartation and A 4 day revival tagged "Grace to Excel". Features salvation, life giving messages, prayer showers, divine impartation, signs and wonders and lots more. Date: on 31st August to 3rd Sept 2017 at Assemblies of God Church located opposite Prince Eze Hospital, Old Oturkpo road Obollo-Afor. From Thursday to Saturday, the program starts 5pm- 9pm-On the Sunday 8am. The guest speaker's evangelist Michael O. Chiemerie, and Apostle Vincent E. Nzeakor.

[152]Invitation Handbill for Assemblies of God Church was titled 'Visible Proof Season 3' with themed 'Fruitfulness'. This program held in September 29th to 1st October 2019 at 3/5 Assemblies of God Avenue off 158 Ikot-Ekpene Road, Ogbor-Hill Aba. The host Pastor was Rev. Ngele Paulinus while the guest minister was Rev. Dr. Don Odunze.

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[154]Invitation Handbill of Bishop Apostle Chinasa Nwosu Community Deliverance and Cleansing Ibaa Clan in Emohua Local government Area of Rivers State, Nigeria on 28th September 2019. Time: 10 am at State school 1.

[155]Invitation Handbill for "Weekend Deliverance" held on 20th September by 8:00pm in Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries Channel 8 branch. Features healing, salvation, deliverance, breakthrough, baby boom, divine connections, baptism of favor and miracles. Ministers: Dr. D. K. Olukoya and Pastor Uzor B. Enemanna.

[156]Invitation Handbill for Dr. D. K. Olukoya and Pastor Uzor B. Enemanna programe themed "Witchcraft Must Die". Date: Every Tuesday by 6:30 am at Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries Channel 8, beside Zuma Bakery, Kubwa in Abuja, Nigeria.

[157]Invitation Handbill to Dr. D. K. Olukoya and Pastor Edwin Etomi programe titled "September to Remember… my Season of Enlargement". Date: 25th to 29th September at Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries Kubawa Abuja Region 5, Nigeria, features: salvation, divine repositioning, enlargement, divine supply and deliverance.

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[159]Invitation Handbill for Mgbidi International Crusade, 2019- A four day program titled "what God has determined shall be done". Date: 3rd to 6th January, 2019. Time: 8 am at Chosen International Secondary School Mgbidi, Imo State. Minister: Pastor Lazarus Muoka.

[160]David Ibiyeomie "Salvation Ministries" https://smhos.org/david-ibiyeomie/ Retrieved on 10/4/2019

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[162]Invitation Handbill for David Ibiyeomie's evangelistic programe themed "Aba Miracle Crusade". Date: 26th to 27th Sept 2019 by 4:30 daily, at Abia State Polytechnic.

[163]Invitation Handbill for David Ibiyeomie's evangelistic programe themed "Enugu Miracle Crusade." Date: Thur. 28th –Fri.29 November 2019 by 5:30pm daily, at Michael Okpara Square, Enugu. Featuring: Word, Salvation, Deliverance, Healing, Miracles etc.

[164]Invitation Handbill for Sunday Service themed "Covenant Factors for Endless Success" Ministering: David Ibiyeomie, Date: Sunday service of 29th September 2019, First Service 6:am, Second Service 7:30, Third Service 9 am, Fourth Service 10:30am and Fifth Service-12:00Noon at Salvation Ministries Plot 17 Birabi, G.R.A. Phase 1, Port Harcourt and all her satellite Churches worldwide.

[165]Invitation Handbill for Sunday Service of "Festival of Miracles" ministering: David Ibiyeomie, Date: 6th of October 2019, First Service 6:am, Second Service 7:30, Third Service 9 am, Fourth Service 10:30am and Fifth Service-12:00Noon at Salvation Ministries Plot 17 Birabi, G.R.A. Phase 1, Port Harcourt and all her Satellite Churches Worldwide.

[166]Invitation Handbill for Prevailing Word Assembly titled a Faith Training Programe, themed 'Words'. Highlights: heavy teaching, prayers, faith miracles declarations and worship unlimited. Date: 2 to 4th November, 2018, Venue: Jesus House International located beside Motherless Babies home along Ugwuawarawa Road, Onuiyi Nsukka. The Host Pastor: Dan Ozioko, Guest Speaker: Prof Kontein Trinya.

[167]Invitation Handbill for Prevailing word Assembly's 5Hours in God's presence themed Special Intervention Prayer Service, Ministering Pastor Dan Ozioko, Date: Tuesday October 1st 2019, Time:7.00am Prompt, Venue: Jesus House International located beside Motherless Babies home along Ugwuawarawa Road, Onuiyi Nsukka.

[168]Invitation Handbill for the New Salvation Evangelical Ministry also known as 'City of Wonders' programe titled three days of Family Liberation, themed 'Back to Sender', Ministering Prophet Bright Amuche, Guest Minsters -Evangelist Daniel Ibeh and Senior Prophetess Benedict Obiakor, Date: 25th - 27th September 2019, Time: 10pm.Prompt, Venue: City of Wonders located at Flight 7 Nkwo Inyi, Oji River Local Government Area of Enugu State Nigeria.

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[170]3lotus.com, Loc.cit

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[175]Kelebogile T. Resane, Miracles in the Neo-charismatic Movement: Historical and Theological Critique, http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S2074-77052017000100028

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[202]Geoffery Ekenna, "Miracle and Magic," Newswatch, April 19,2004,15

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CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE AND CONCLUSION

5.1. Summary

This study examined the problems associated with followers of Jesus in Nigeria being obsessed with the quest for miraculous signs-(***σημεῖă-sēmeia***). The work analyzed the characteristics and natures of Jesus as the miraculous, the disciples that came to believe in Jesus to be the Messiah sent from God and the crowd that did not come to believe, though they were seeking and following Jesus about because of the miraculous signs-(***σημεῖă-sēmeia***) that they had seen him perform as documented in the context of John 6:1-15. This research was based on the rationale that a large crowd were following Jesus just for the material gains that they would get from him and not because that they have come to believe in him and were ready to walk with him in commitment. John the evangelist in his autoptic gospel by way of redaction consciously, selected and edited and employed the miracles stories as ***σημεῖă***-(***sēmeia***) to prove and persuade his audience to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. John's evangelistic intention remains that if any one comes to believe and remains in having a believing faith in Jesus to be the Messiah from God, that he or she may as well have eternal life in Jesus.

Wonder arousing deeds of Jesus were captured and designated signs (***σημεῖă-sēmeia***) in John's gospel. They were established to theologically carry an underlying symbolic meaning(s). The feeding of the five thousand is a typical wonder arousing deed of Jesus which John theologically designated sign -'***σημεῖον***' (***semeion***). He used the signs (***σημεῖă-sēmeia***) he documented to communicate to his audience that Jesus is the Son of God who can satisfy both their spiritual and physical needs. But the crowd in this Johannine context were not concerned about the spiritual underlying symbolic meaning the miraculous sign-'***σημεῖον***' (***semeion***) Jesus demonstrated before them connotes. They sought Jesus only for the signs (***σημεῖă-sēmeia***) that he would perform to alleviate their suffering or to meet their material needs. But

neither do they want to understand him, accept him, come to believe nor do they desire to remain commited to him. This misappropriation of the significance of the miraculous signs Jesus performed in the fourth gospel relates to the misappropriation of the significance of miraculous signs in the gospel commission going on in this era, with special reference to the Nigerian Christendom.

In Nigeria, the gospel commission of the Church is going on in power. Daily manifestations of the power of God behind the gospel commission has proved that like in the previous era and even in this age that the miracle power of God have not ceased. God is still in the business of backing up his mission mandate with supernatural interventions demonstrated in the lives of many in the Nigerian federation. Just as Jesus was the miraculous Messiah who came from the Father to do his will, many have arisen in this Nigerian society to claim to be the plenipotentiaries of God. But when one compares the characters and natures that Jesus modeled as the miraculous with the typical lives and the ministries of most of these acclaimed called ministers of God in Nigeria, the research found out that they do not commensurate. Jesus has been motivated to be performing miraculous signs -(***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***) by love, compassion, and consciousness to be doing the will of the Father. He performed miracles for the recipents and witnesses to come to believe in him so that they may have eternal life. But in this era, neither do most of these acclaimed Nigerian plenipotentiaries of God live their lives as those called by God nor do they engage in the mission mandate of the Church as modelled by Jesus. Unlike Jesus, most of these acclaimed Nigerian plenipotentiaries of God are compassionless, self-conscious, and business minded. Also, it was established that they have seen the mission mandate of the Church as a lucrative business and so they persist in using miracle demonstration as a bait towards attracting followers and making ends met. They see miracles as the end in themselves rather than valuing miracles as one of the means to the end which is eternal salvation. This attitude has resulted in the undermining of the main significance of miraculous signs (***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***) in the mission mandate of the Church.

5.2. Contribution to Knowledge

This work innovatively explored the theological identified phenomena of significant number of Nigerians' acclaimed followers of Jesus being obsessed with the quest for the miraculous. In a novel attempt, the work established that Nigerians in their religiosity live in a precarious situations. Hence, they are solution oriented people who are more tended to seek and approach Jesus the Messiah from his functional nature while undermining his ontological nature for their holistic salvation. It is in the unique technical way the context of John 6 in which Jesus fed the crowd who came to him because of the signs they had seen him perform, the discourse Jesus had with the crowd and his disciples who did not understand the underlying symbolic meaning of the signs and John's (20:30-31) explicit declaration of the purpose for composing his gospel which has sign as its underlying theme, were hermeneutically applied to the theological issue of followers of Jesus in Nigeria being obsessed with the quest for the miraculous lies the novel contribution of this research to the existing body of knowledge. The specific contributions of this research to the existing body of knowledge include the following:

1) Having exegetically assessed the significances of miraculous signs as demonstrated and proposed by Jesus in John's gospel and critically investigated the current ministry model in Nigeria, this research work has innovatively established the reasons why an average Church leader, those that follow their leadership and even those who are not Christians in Nigeria, are obsessed with the quest for miracles.

2) The study also contributed scholarly by exploring the experiential ministry model of some of the acclaimed plenipotentiaries of God in Nigeria and thereby established the observable erroneous objectives of the current ministry models in Nigeria.

3) This work has theologically and contextually unraveled the dangers associated with acclaimed plenipotentiaries of God and professed followers of God being preoccupied with miracles. It also

contributed scholarly by spurring both the Church leaders and the lay acclaimed followers of Jesus to refrain being preoccupied with miracles.

4) The work established the direct and indirect socio-cultural, socio-political and economic, and theological implications of the quest for the miraculous to the mission mandate of the Church as a body of Christ in Nigeria.

5) In this work's novel attempt, the contextualization achieved its targeted goals and therewith proffered hermeneutical solutions to the theological identified problem of Nigerians' acclaimed plenipotentiaries and professed followers of Jesus being obsessed with the quest for the miraculous.

5. 3. Conclusion

It is deduced that from the first century era till this present age, that the functional nature of Jesus the Messiah attracts individuals and crowds for diverse stimuluses. But Jesus have functional and ontological natures. It has been established that because of economical, political, sociological, cultural, religious and theological influences many Nigerians tend to approach Jesus from his functional nature while undermining his ontological nature. John the evangelist presented Jesus as demanding that people who come to him, should do so with a balanced understanding of his functional and ontological natures. This he demands because his functional nature unveils his ontological essence as the Son of God he is and places a demand on the people of the world that they should in coming to Jesus believe in him to be the Son of God for both their realized and futuristic eternal salvation. It is therefore established that John wrote to prove the significances of the divine Sonship of Jesus by employing miraculous signs-(***σημεῖᾰ-sēmeia***) and stressing faith in him.

To emphasize the divinity of Jesus, John employed the use of miraculous signs (work signs), discourses - 'I am sayings' (word signs) and the Jesus event to unveil the divinity of Jesus so that people may come to believe in him and thereby be saved. In employing signs, if the targeted did not come to understand what is being revealed about the functional and ontological natures of Jesus, then the next strategy was the use

of discourses in which Jesus makes a categorical declaration about himself. The implicit intentions for which miraculous signs were preserved and coherently stressed in the gospel of John were revelatory and evangelistic. It is revelatory in the sense that it reveals the divinity of Jesus and it is evangelistic in the sense that through miraculous signs people are persuaded to consolidate an authentic believing faith in Jesus to be the Son of God and thereby be saved.

The work established that the intrinsic qualities of Jesus' ontology and functions are lacking in the lives and ministries of most of those who claim to be the plenipotentiaries of God in Nigeria. This is consequent to the issue of the proliferation of the acclaimed miraculous events and those who claim to be miracle workers in Nigeria. Though, it is theologically established that the mission mandate of the Church is to be backed by miraculous signs but the mission mandate of the Church is not yielding desired mission results because many false men and women plenipotentiaries of God are engaging in the mission mandate of the Church with wrong motivations. Significant number of those that lay claim to being miraculous are selfish, they use the idea of being miraculous to be attracting crowds to their Churches or ministries and programes and thereby enriching themselves. Unlike Jesus, significant number of the modern self-acclaimed plenipotentiaries of God engage in the mission mandate for personal aggrandizement, for fame and show of their acclaimed gift of the power of God. They advertise miracles and use them as baits to attract and keep their members within their folds. They perceive and present miracle as the end in themselves. The miracles they perform are egocentric and not Christocentric. They focus on health and wealth gospels and acts of manipulations etc. It is obvious that their motivations are wrong. Their acclaimed miracles are fake because their characteristics do not cohere with the tenets of the Christian doctrines and traditions. Their motivations are hindering the mission mandate from achieving desired results as modeled by Jesus.

The work also deduced that as the number of the authentic disciples of Jesus were insignificant when compared to the number of the teeming crowd following Jesus based on a superficial faith also relates to what is happening in Nigeria Christendom. Significant number of religious people in Nigeria are professing to be followers of Jesus being desperately obsessed with the quest for the miraculous. They are

not ready to be committed with Jesus in an authentic salvific faith that would guarantee them the grace to access the holistic salvation Jesus is daily offering them. It is established that all they want is how to get identified with Jesus so that they can be accessing their desired miracles. The teeming religious populace in Nigeria with superficial faith in Jesus were adjudged to be typical of the crowd in the context of John 6 who did not come to believe in Jesus but persist in following Jesus just because of the material things they would get from Jesus. They want to identify with Jesus' functional nature as the Messiah, but they do not want to have anything to do with his ontological nature and the ethical demands that are essential in genuinely following Jesus. Because many professed Christians in Nigeria are solution-oriented, many of them are nominal and or syncretic Christians. Because they are more obsessed with the quest for the miraculous, they record poor spiritual growth, manifest superficial faith in Jesus, and they see miracles as the ends in themselves. It is established that miracle obsessed Churches and acclaimed followers of Jesus compromise the canonized traditional doctrine of the Christian faith. Their Church founders or leaders are revered as their hero and many of them are openly or indirectly worshiped. Many acclaimed followers of Jesus in Nigeria practice syncretism. Some of the so-called Church founders or leaders source their acclaimed miracle working powers from diabolic means. In this case, both the acclaimed Church or ministry founders and their devotees open up themselves to deception by diverse spirits. As such, they are denied of the eternal life now and in the here-after.

It is established that the ethical requirements in following Jesus include consolidating a believing faith in Jesus, being dogged in doing God's will, identifying with Jesus based on sacrificial love, being a committed disciple and having an intimate relationship with the Holy Spirit. It is unfortunate that the significant number of those professing to be Christians in Nigeria are not committed in adhering to the ethical requirements of following Jesus but rather they are obsessed with questing after the miraculous. Professed followers of Jesus in Nigeria being obsessed with the miraculous has manifested a resultant negative socio-cultural, socio-political, socio-economic, religio-cultural and theological implications.

This study therefore submits that for followers of Jesus in Nigeria to become authentic followers of Jesus, they should refrain from questing after the miraculous. They are to be desirous of submitting their hearts to be transformed and be regenerated by the supernatural power of God. They should seek Jesus and consolidate authentic faith in him. They should consolidate a balanced understanding of Jesus' functional and ontological natures. Those desperately seeking and following Jesus should be more conscious of focusing on his soteriological works. They are to consist in construing a balanced understanding of the central significance of the Cross and the resurrection of Jesus Christ in faith. They are to have spiritual understanding and be consistent in exposing the dangers associated with the gospel of health and wealth. Because a miracle could either be genuine or false- they should not slack in discerning and scrutinizing advertised miracles and acclaimed miracle performers so that they should not be deceived by every celebrated occurrence of miracles. They should be committed to Jesus by being his authentic disciples instead of being miracle obsessed disciples. In engaging in the mission mandate of the Church- they should be committed and dogged in preaching the undiluted gospel based on proper hermeneutics. Christian exegetes, theologians and scholars should be persuaded to be engaging more in academic writings that will focus on exposing the dangers associated with professed followers of Jesus and other citizens of a developing country like Nigeria being obsessed with the miraculous.

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Handbills for Programs, Advertisements and Invitations

Handbill for advertisement of the Adoration Ministry Enugu Nigeria (AMEN) Program titled Good Friday/ Holy Saturday of Healings, Deliverances and Miracles. Date: 19th&20th April, 2019.Minister/Host: Rev.Fr. Mbaka Ejike. Venue: Adoration permanent Site, Umuchigbo Iji-Nike, Enugu

Handbill for advertisement of the On the Ground documented Testified Miracles for 2015 Shiloh Turnaround Encounters at CanaanLand.

Handbill for advertisement of Turnaround Testimonies from Encounters at Shiloh Viewing Centres 2015.

Invitation Flier for Winners' Chapel, Nsukka for the special anointing for financial breakthrough in conjunction with Yoruba Thanksgiving Day, Sunday 18th August, 2019 at Church Auditorim No: 1, Winners' Chapel way, Behind GT Bank Nsukka- 1st service-6:30 am, 2nd Service-8:45 with Igbo interpretation- featuring song, Dance, Drama, word Feast & Anointing to tackle complicated issues of life-Ministering Pastor Johnson Audu and other anointed men of God.

Invitation Handbill for winners Chapel, Nsukka Covenant Day of Long Life and Communion Service. Date: Sunday 9th Sep, 2018, Pastor Vincent Obami as the Presiding Minister and other anointed men of God with Testimony of divine healing testified by Sister Favor.

Invitation Handbill for Winners Chapel, Nsukka Covenant Day of Fruitfulness Sunday Service, Date: 23rd Sep, 2018, with Pastor Vincent Obami as the Presiding Minister, testimony testified by Sis Nen.

Invitation Handbill for Winners Chapel, Nsukka Special Anointing Service and Covenant Day of Breaking Generational Curses. Date: Sunday 16, Sep 2018, with Pastor Vincent Obami as the Presiding Minister, Testimony testified by Isaac Godfavour.

Invitation Handbill for Winners Chapel, Nsukka Covenant Day of Laughter, Date: 7th Octo, 2018, with Pastor Vincent Obami as the Presiding Minister, testimony testified by Sis. Nene O.J.

Invitation Handbill for Winners Chapel, Covenant day of Settlement, Thanksgiving and Dedication Service, Date: 30th sept 2018, with Pastor Vincent Obami as the Presiding Minister, testimony testified by Sis. Nene O.J.

Invitation Handbill for Living Faith Church, aka Winners' Chapel Int'l. Ministering: Nwagu Okenwa and other anointed men of God, Presents: 3rd Wonder Sunday/Special Anointing Service, Date: Sunday 21st July 2019. 1st Service 6:30am and 2nd Service 8:30am at Church Auditorium 223, Old Lagos/Asaba Road, B.B. OWA Agbor.

Invitation Handbill for Assemblies of God Church presents 4 days of Divine Impartation and A 4 day revival tagged "Grace to Excel". Date: 31st August to 3rd Sept 2017 at Assemblies of God Church located opposite Prince Eze Hospital, Old Oturkpo road Obollo-Afor. From Thursday to Saturday, the program starts 5pm- 9pm-On the Sunday 8am. The guest speaker's evangelist Michael O. Chiemerie, and Apostle Vincent E. Nzeakor.

Invitation Handbill for Assemblies of God Church was titled 'Visible Proof Season 3' with themed 'Fruitfulness'. Date: September 29th to 1st October 2019 at 3/5 Assemblies of God Avenue off 158 Ikot-Ekpene Road, Ogbor-Hill Aba. The host Pastor was Rev. Ngele Paulinus, Guest minister was Rev. Dr. Don Odunze.

Invitation Handbill for Bishop Apostle Chinasa Nwosu Community Deliverance and Cleansing Ibaa Clan in Emohua Local government Area of Rivers State, Nigeria on 28th September 2019. Time: 10 am at State school 1.

Invitation Handbill for "Weekend Deliverance" Date: 20th September by 8:00pm in Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries Channel 8 branch. Features healing, salvation, deliverance, breakthrough, baby boom, divine connections, baptism of favor and miracles. Ministers: Dr. D. K. Olukoya and Pastor Uzor B. Enemanna.

Invitation Handbill for Dr. D. K. Olukoya and Pastor Uzor B. Enemanna program themed "Witchcraft Must Die". Date: Every Tuesday by 6:30 am at Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries Channel 8, beside Zuma Bakery, Kubwa in Abuja, Nigeria.

Invitation Handbill for Dr. D. K. Olukoya and Pastor Edwin Etomi program titled "September to Remember… my Season of Enlargement". Date: 25th to 29th September at Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries Kubawa Abuja Region 5, Nigeria, features: salvation, divine repositioning, enlargement, divine supply and deliverance.

Invitation Handbill for Mgbidi International Crusade, 2019- A four day program titled "what God has determined shall be done". Date: 3rd to 6th January, 2019. Time: 8 am at Chosen International Secondary School Mgbidi, Imo State. Minister: Pastor Lazarus Muoka.

Invitation Handbill for David Ibiyeomie's Evangelistic Program themed "Aba Miracle Crusade". Date: 26th to 27th Sept 2019 by 4:30 daily, at Abia State Polytechnic.

Invitation Handbill for David Ibiyeomie's Evangelistic Program themed "Enugu Miracle Crusade." Date: Thur. 28th –Fri.29 November 2019 by 5:30pm, at Michael Okpara Square, Enugu. Featuring: Word, Salvation, Deliverance, Healing, Miracles etc.

Invitation Handbill for Sunday Service themed "Covenant Factors for Endless Success" Ministering: David Ibiyeomie, Date: Sunday service of 29th September 2019, First Service 6:am, Second Service 7:30, Third Service 9 am, Fourth Service 10:30am and Fifth Service-12:00Noon at Salvation Ministries Plot 17 Birabi, G.R.A. Phase 1, Port Harcourt and all her satellite Churches worldwide.

Invitation Handbill for Sunday Service of "Festival of Miracles" Ministering: David Ibiyeomie, Date: 6th of October 2019, First Service 6:am, Second Service 7:30, Third Service 9 am, Fourth Service 10:30am and Fifth Service-12:00Noon at Salvation Ministries Plot 17 Birabi, G.R.A. Phase 1, Port Harcourt and all her Satellite Churches Worldwide.

Invitation Handbill for Prevailing Word Assembly titled a Faith Training Program, themed 'Words'. Highlights: heavy teaching, prayers, faith miracles declarations and worship unlimited. Date: 2 to 4th November, 2018, Venue: Jesus House International located beside Motherless Babies home along Ugwuawarawa Road, Onuiyi Nsukka. The Host Pastor: Dan Ozioko, Guest Speaker: Prof Kontein Trinya.

Invitation Handbill for Prevailing word Assembly's 5Hours in God's presence themed Special Intervention Prayer Service, Ministering Pastor Dan Ozioko, Date: Tuesday October 1st 2019, Time:7.00am Prompt, Venue: Jesus House International located beside Motherless Babies home along Ugwuawarawa Road, Onuiyi Nsukka.

Invitation Handbill for The New Salvation Evangelical Ministry also known as 'City of Wonders' program titled three days of Family Liberation, themed 'Back to Sender', Ministering Prophet Bright Amuche, Guest Minsters -Evangelist Daniel Ibeh and Senior Prophetess Benedict Obiakor, Date: 25th - 27th September 2019, Time: 10pm.Prompt, Venue: City of Wonders located at Flight 7 Nkwo Inyi, Oji River Local Government Area of Enugu State Nigeria.