



## East African Journal of Traditions, Culture and Religion

[eajtr.eanso.org](http://eajtr.eanso.org)

Volume 5, Issue 1, 2022

Print ISSN: 2707-5362 | Online ISSN: 2707-5370

Title DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37284/2707-5370>

**ENSO**

EAST AFRICAN  
NATURE &  
SCIENCE  
ORGANIZATION

Original Article

### Christological Reflections: A Biblical Perspective.

Dr. Peter Lee Ochieng Oduor, PhD<sup>1,2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Africa International University, P. O. Box 24686, 00502, Nairobi Kenya.

<sup>2</sup> Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology. P. O. Box 24686, Karen, Nairobi Kenya

\* Author for Correspondence Email: [pastorodurlee@gmail.com](mailto:pastorodurlee@gmail.com)

Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37284/eajtr.5.1.567>

#### Date Published: ABSTRACT

02 March 2022

#### Keywords:

Christology,  
Messiah,  
Messianic Expectation,  
Son of Man,  
Son of God.

Scholarship on Christology plays a critical role in the formulation of theology because of the central role of the question of Christ in the task of doing Theology. Christology intertwines with other doctrines in theology and is also a strong link to all the theological branches. In this regard the question of the accurate source of our Christological formulation comes to book with our study examining the bible as an authentic primary source for Christological reflections. The study captured the wealth of resources on Christology hidden in the biblical narrative awaiting studious scholarship to unearth the fortunes therein. An appreciation of the essence of the scripture in Christological conversation will propel the discipline towards authentic and accurate Christological reflections.

#### APA CITATION

Oduor, P. L. O., (2022). Christological Reflections: A Biblical Perspective. *East African Journal of Traditions, Culture and Religion*, 5(1), 15-25. <https://doi.org/10.37284/eajtr.5.1.567>

#### CHICAGO CITATION

Oduor, Peter Lee Ochieng. 2022. "Christological Reflections: A Biblical Perspective". *East African Journal of Traditions, Culture and Religion* 5 (1), 15-25. <https://doi.org/10.37284/eajtr.5.1.567>.

#### HARVARD CITATION

Oduor, P. L. O., (2022) "Christological Reflections: A Biblical Perspective", *East African Journal of Traditions, Culture and Religion*, 5(1), pp. 15-25. doi: 10.37284/eajtr.5.1.567.

#### IEEE CITATION

P. L. O. Oduor., "Christological Reflections: A Biblical Perspective", *EAJTR*, vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 15-25, Mar. 2022.

#### MLA CITATION

Oduor, Peter Lee Ochieng. "Christological Reflections: A Biblical Perspective". *East African Journal of Traditions, Culture and Religion*, Vol. 5, no. 1, Mar. 2022, pp. 15-25, doi:10.37284/eajtr.5.1.567.

## INTRODUCTION

Christology is very significant in the Christian doctrine because of the central role it plays in the establishment of an accurate Christian doctrine. Ezigbo (2013, p. 140), elaborates that if theology is human discourse about God, the unique contribution of Christianity to theological discourse hinges on what it says about the identity of Jesus Christ and his relationship to God. The credibility of our theology rises and falls on our perception of the question of Christ. Tillich (1948, p. 124), is keen to emphasize theology as an expression of the faith of the church and it restates the paradoxical statement, Jesus is the Christ, and considers all its presuppositions and implications. Faulty understanding of Christ ultimately leads to a faulty and erroneous theological position. In like manner the correct Christological position helps in the establishment of a valid theological reflection. Christianity has Christ at its very core, so that if Christology is concentrated on a study of Jesus Christ, it is not so much a branch of Christian theology as it is the central theme as is articulated by Macquarrie (2003, p. 3). It cannot secure a better expression than that of the true test of our Christianity being the position we hold on who Jesus Christ really is to us. It is therefore not amazing that many of heretical positions spring from a faulty Christological position. Christology can therefore be considered as the bedrock on which Christianity stands.

Despite the magnitude of importance inherent in Christology in its independent capacity, it is captivating how it intertwines with other doctrines in theology. Thompson (1978, p. 2), cautiously elaborates by an emphasis of what this understanding does and does not mean: it does not mean that there is no theology except Christology and that all other theology is absorbed into it; it means rather that all aspects of theology and dogmatics must be dynamically related to this living and concrete centre and be determined throughout by it. Theology Proper cannot be divorced from Christology because of Christ being the second person in the trinity. Bibliology cannot ignore the person whom all scriptures attest to in the person of Jesus Christ as it seeks to portray the plan of God to bring salvation to humanity through the work of Christ. Pneumatology cannot be ignorant to

Christology because the two have a strong correlation. The principal work of Christ which was and is to save man from the captivity of sin could not be achieved without the role of the Holy Spirit. Barth affirmed the same when he states that to speak of the atonement is to speak of course of Christology because to him Christology is not only a discussion of person of Christ but also His work which are inseparable, a conviction expressed in Barth's doctrine of reconciliation according to Bender (2013, p. 109).

Soteriology has a strong link to the life and works of Christ especially to his sacrificial death on the cross that grants provision to the gift of salvation through the Holy Spirit. Salvation to humanity is impossible without Christ and true as the scriptures attest, He is the only way to reconcile man to God after the entrance of sin. Gerald O'Collins, Daniel Kendall (1996, p. 85), together agree that when contemporary theological works deal with the suffering and death of Jesus, there is a regular failure to discuss how Christ made peace through the shedding of his blood upon the cross. Consequently, Christology has a strong bearing on ecclesiology because of the relation that Christ has to the church. Ferreira (1998, p. 2003), refers to it as the Christological ecclesiology that underscores the close relationship that exists between the Johannine community and the Johannine Jesus and correctly implies that Johannine ecclesiology is a function of Christology.

Christ is both the founder and the foundation upon which the church is built. Mathew 16:18 and 1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 3:11 attest to that in the strongest terms. By virtue of His death and resurrection Christ has become the corner stone on which the church is built as is stipulated in Acts 4:11. In His capacity as the founder of the church, Christ sent the Holy Spirit who activated the church into a functioning entity as clearly demonstrated in Acts 2: 33. Similarly, eschatology is related to Christology in the sense that one of the key subjects it addresses is that of the second coming of Christ, resurrections, of the judgements, of the millennium and the final state of affairs of all things. Moltmann's theology according to Bauckham (1995, p. 9), confirms that the resurrection of the saints assures us that the future is not constructed out of the latent tendencies of the present; neither is it a totally nebulous future devoid

of all specific content but rather it directs us to the eschatological lordship of Christ over the creation.

### Source of Accurate and Stable Christology

Having observed the magnitude and the centrality of Christology in the Christian faith, it is of paramount importance to acknowledge the rightful source of our understanding if we are to attain to the place where we can affirmatively confirm that our Christological understanding is stable and accurate. Scriptures serve as our primary source for Christological understandings. Goergen (2003, p. 13), echoes these sentiments in the affirmation that since the primary source for Christological studies are biblical the first obligation involves biblical exegesis and hermeneutics. This is of paramount importance especially in our present dispensation that is characterized by spirited attempts to discredit the credibility of the scriptures and the emergence of various extra biblical literatures like the *Davinci Code* whose interest is to portray the person of Christ in a negative light. In an era that is exposed to variant options with regard to the narrative of Christ, we ought to be deliberately firm in our resolve of having scripture as our canon in the narrative of Jesus Christ. It is therefore significant to stipulate that accurate Christology rests on a careful study and interpretation of the scripture. The scriptural record grants us the assurance of historical authenticity of the narrative of the birth, life, death and resurrection of Christ. Schweitzer (1952, p. 1), while acknowledging the strong contribution of German theology in the matter of the critical investigation of the life of Jesus, affirms that the history of the critical study of the life of Jesus is of higher intrinsic value than the history of the study of ancient dogma or of the attempts to create a new one.

### CHRISTOLOGICAL BEARING ON THEOLOGICAL BRANCHES

Christology intertwines all branches of theology; it is highly seen in exegetical theology traditionally referred to as biblical theology. Accurate Christology depends on a good understanding of the scriptures. Exegetical theology according to Thiessen (1979, p. 18), in this respect would come out handy especially its preoccupation with the direct study of scriptural text and the related

subjects as help in the restoration, orientation, illustration, and interpretation of the text. Christology contributes immensely to historical theology that is primarily concerned with the task of tracing the history of God's people in the Bible and of the church since the time of Christ. In its endeavour it interacts with matters origin, development and spread of true religion and also with its doctrines, organizations and practices according to Thiessen (1979, p. 19). Systematic theology is inevitably clear in its association with Christology because it builds on the materials assembled by the exegetical theologian and historical theologian arranging them in a logical order under the heading of Christology in the discipline of theology (Thiessen, 1979). Christology dominates practical theology that is keen to treat the application of theology in the regeneration, sanctification, edification, education and service of men. It is keen to apply to practical life the things contributed by the other three departments of theology (Thiessen, 1979).

It is important to acknowledge that theology is comprehensive 'striving to give a coherent statement of the doctrines of the Christian faith, based primarily upon scriptures, placed in the context of culture in general, worded in contemporary idiom and related to the issues of life' (Erickson, 2000, p. 21), similarly the same with Christology. As demonstrated earlier it has to be biblical having the scriptures as its primary source and utilizing tools and methods of biblical research. Christology is systematic in the sense that it draws from the whole bible rather than utilizing individual texts in isolation from one another, Christology relates various portions of scriptures to one another to coalesce the varied teachings into harmonious or coherent whole. Christology must be contemporary in that it must use language, concepts and thought forms that make some sense in the context of the present time. Christology is practical as it relates to living rather than just a position of belief. It is in this respect that our study desires to submit its contribution in the conversation of Christology scholarship from the Bible.

### Biblical Christology

The scriptures are very vocal in the transmission of Christ all the way from the Old Testament as all had

some conceptions, they expressed concerning the Christ who was to come in the future. The New Testament saw the fulfilment of the prophecies as concerning Christ. Our biblical journey starts by focusing on the messianic conceptions that are dominant in the Old Testament as well as an evaluation of their significance and connection to Jesus Christ. The Old Testament audience looked forward to one who would come as the fulfilment of the prophecies in the person of the anointed one of God to reconcile humanity with divinity on the gap and enmity instituted by sin through the building of a bridge that would make possible man's accessing the realm of divinity without limitation or hindrances. It is first and foremost of significance importance to have a general understanding of the messianic title that was ascribed Christ in the Old Testament. We seek to understand the etymology of the word and the bearing it brought to the Old Testament audience with regard to Christological perceptions. This will enable us to have a picture of the concept that ran in the minds of the Old Testament characters when they spoke and looked forward to the advent of the Messiah.

The term Messiah in Hebrew is מָשִׁיחַ that is transliterated as *māšīaḥ*; in Greek the term Messiah is μεσσίας that is transliterated as *messias* (wikipedia.org). It is also worthy to look at the term in the Arabic language that constitutes language of one of the religions that lay claim to Abrahamic heritage. It is referred to as مسيح, which when transliterated would be *masīḥ* (wikipedia.org). All these terminologies in their understandings carried the meaning of a saviour whose agenda was that of liberation of a specified group of people (wikipedia.org). Van Groningen (1990, p. 17-18), observes that the root of the noun *māšīaḥ* is the verb *māšaḥ*, which generally carries the meaning of 'smear' or 'anoint'. He further alludes to the fact that the common usage of *māšaḥ* is to express the idea of anointing, which speaks of the broader concept as including the promises of salvation and the person fulfilling these; in the narrower sense, the concepts refer to the bliss bound up with the king God has sent.

A further observation is that this division of the wider and narrow conception has elicited enormous amount of debate among the scholarly world with Van Groningen (1990, p. 20-22), demonstrating that

the scriptures do not limit the messianic references to the narrower view. In summary to the scholars understanding as concerns the wider and narrower views in the *māšīaḥ* concept, it is within the scriptural sanctions to hold the distinction between the two views. In other words, the narrower and wider conceptions are inseparable elements as the elements included in the wider conception are presented, initially, more positively and clearly than the definitive elements of the narrower conception. The concluding observation that settles the truce is that the conception of the term in its initial stages was not the revelation of the messianic concept but as this revelation progressed and unfolded the various human messiahs who along with events and phenomena, portrayed, prefigured or foreshadowed the great coming Messiah and his work, increasingly gave clarity to the messianic concept and with time it came to designate Him and His work according to Van Groningen (1990, p. 22-23).

Hengstenberg (1970, p. 9), observes that the promise of the Messiah was a means of retaining the people in their allegiance to the Lord, in times of calamity, thus Isaiah shows the unreasonableness of the fear that the state would be entirely destroyed by the Assyrians, from the fact that, the people from whom the Messiah would spring could not be thus destroyed. It was also a means of promoting genuine piety and true devotion to God as the prophets were keen to distinguish between the pious and the ungodly. They proclaimed that the Messiah would bestow rich blessings upon the former, but by his righteousness punishment destroy the latter. It is therefore in the interest of general knowledge that there was a strong sense of messianic expectation on the part of the Old Testament characters that had a great impact on their lifestyle from religious, social, economic and political lifestyle. It is in this respect that we now focus on both the Old and New Testament to capture the mode of the expectation among the different audiences that lived in these two distinct dispensations.

### Old Testament Messianic Expectations

It is in the public domain that this is a subject that is quite expansive and can demand a writing of its own. This is because of the numerous occurrences in the Old Testament that demonstrate expectation of Messiah who would come to deliver humanity

from the captivity instituted by the problem of sin. In the interest of time and space, our study focuses on characters we believe holds significance and attempt to evaluate their magnitude. Our first stop is in Genesis 3:15: “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.” (NIV) This has been widely viewed as the *protoevangelium* or the first gospel as it is the first account of the gospel of redemption. This position according to Van Groningen (1990, p. 110-111), is a correct position but still demands consideration of the basic elements that constitute the message of this passage. The heart of the message is the response of God to the fall with three emphases coming to the limelight.

First, the text is a proclamation of the continuing sovereignty of the Lord as man is abdicated and God is not, God sovereignly sought out the fallen sinner evoking their confession and He proclaims his ultimate redemption and restoration plan by which his authority and power over the tempter (s) would be fully demonstrated but in this instance, He proclaimed his continued sovereign rule over the cosmos and mankind. Secondly, there is the proclamation of the love of God as never before which is a love for the disobedient, offending, rebellious, and guilty mankind. This dimension of God’s love is widely described in scripture as ‘grace’ which is to be sovereignly revealed and would be realized in the outworking of divinely posited hostility and full effectuation of the curse pronounced. Thirdly, is the evident administration of God’s justice as God shows that He will deal with the tempter according to his holy will and plan and the way in which the tempter will be dealt with and the final consequence of this act will be commensurate with what he himself has done. He will be struck; he will be crushed and thus incapacitated to an extent; and he will eventually die. God’s will and plan will be carried out fully and divine justice executed thus the result of the tempters tempting mankind will be undone.

Hengstenberg (1970, p. 13-14), also observes that as the mission of the Messiah was necessitated by the fall, so the first obscure intimation of Him was given immediately after that event and is found in the sentence denounced against the tempter, which cannot be rightly understood, until we have

ascertained who the tempter was. In the acknowledgement that it was a real serpent, it is no less so that he was the principal tempter but only an instrument, employed by an evil spirit with which she was acquainted. Arguments from tradition in support of this position include the tradition of the fall of our first parents preserved in the sacred books of the Persians according to the Zendavesta, the parents of the human race, Meschia and Meschianeh were created by God pure and good, and destined for happiness on condition of humility, obedience to the requirements of the law, and purity in their thoughts words and deeds. But betrayed by the cruel ‘Ahriman, who from the beginning sought only to deceive,’ they fell from God and forfeited their happiness by eating fruit. From the same source, Ahriman springs from heaven to earth in the form of a serpent; and another distinguished evil spirit is called the serpent Dhu. Among the Jews as well tradition has it that Satan was concerned in the temptation of our first parents. In latter Jewish writings, Sammael, the head of the evil spirits, because he tempted Eve in the form of a serpent, is called old serpent or simply the serpent as is well articulated by Hengstenberg (1970, p. 14-15).

Lastly what brings out with clarity the agency of Satan in this transaction is the New Testament testimony with Revelations 12:9, the leader of the evil spirits is named ‘The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him’ (NIV). Hengstenberg (1970, p. 17), further analyses that Christ was to be tempted by the prince of this world, in order that, by his persevering resistance, He might despoil him of his dominion over it, shows that Adam also was assailed by the same tempter, and by being overcome laid the foundation of this dominion. Van Groningen (1990, p. 112), affirms that the proclamation thereof and demonstration of the Lord’s sovereignty, grace, and justice brought a message of conflict, victory, restoration, life, and continuity of fellowship and service, a proclamation of hope.

Looking at the promise that God gives Abraham along with his response in word and deed with regard to its messianic import in as much as the word messiah does not appear. There are elements of the narrower and wider views regarding the

denotation of the concept of the Messiah, first as one of Terah's sons, is of the genealogical lineage of Shem, Noah, Seth, Abel, and the woman. As the seed, he was a friend of God, but more he was chosen and called a representative of God to serve as God's specifically designated, separated, appointed, and qualified agent. Secondly, Abraham was to be the seed from who was to issue forth a numerous seed which is to be specifically benefited by God's appointed and qualified servant, and an integral aspect of the messianic concept. Thirdly, the service which Abraham was to render is a distinct aspect of the messianic concept as Abraham, the seed, was called upon to generate a seed which would issue into a numerous seed. He was to serve as mediator between the Sovereign Lord and all the people of the world. The specific mediatorial task was to be a blessing, that is, God's blessing made available through Abraham and his seed as is narrated by (Van-Groningen, 1990).

Hengstenberg (1970, p. 26), observes that the undeniable meaning of the promises to the patriarchs' is that through their posterity salvation should be conferred upon all the nations of the earth. The nature of the blessing, however is not accurately defined. He further elaborates accurately:

*But even the Patriarchs themselves must have inferred from sure indications, that temporal blessings could have been intended only so far as they are the necessary consequences of spiritual blessings, and as true religion never fails to improve the outward condition of man. They could not have supposed that the promise referred to mere temporal blessings, because they could have perceived no method by which such blessings could be conferred upon the heathen through their posterity. Further, how could they think, that all the nations of the earth were to obtain temporal blessings through them, when it had been foretold that their posterity would be the source of temporal calamities to not a few of the heathen nations, by reducing them to subjection (Hengstenberg, 1970).*

Moses is a central figure in his dispensation. He comes with many actions and practices that are of great importance in the subject of messianic expectation, but we focus on one of the prominent expressions and discuss on the same. We examine

Deuteronomy 18:15 as Moses raises the expectation of his audience to expect one who would supersede him in greatness and impact. This must have been mind-boggling for his audience considering the high esteem that they held Moses as a prophet who accomplished what no other man of his time accomplished. For Moses to assert that there was one who was to come of a greater pedigree than himself seems to be a strong Messianic emphasis from the paradigm of Moses and makes him function in the realm of a type of Christ. Scholars are in agreement that the reference in the phrase "a prophet like unto me" is Moses referring to himself as a prophet and by consequence functioned as a messianic agent. What has been debated has been the identity of this prophet with five submissions to answer the enigma. Van Groningen summarizes these positions as first that a consideration of the New Testament references, writers has said "the prophet" refers directly to Christ, an assertion that does not take the context seriously and fails to consider Israel's need for a prophetic mediator in Canaan.

Secondly, scholars also in due consideration of the context which is a staunch warning against false prophets find these to be reference to the prophets to be raised up in the nation of Israel. This bears a measure of truth that Moses had in mind the great need for Israel to have a prophetic institution, but a denial of the messianic work in the Old Testament is not defensible according to Van Groningen (1990, p. 252). Third is a position fronted by Hengstenberg (1970, p. 40), who believes that the reference primarily to be to Christ and to the prophets secondarily. The fourth submission is that of Kline (1963, p.101), who borrows the line of thought of John Calvin in considering the reference to be two-fold: to that of the prophetic line and that of Christ the Messiah. This position clearly puts a distinction between the Christ who is the culmination of prophecy and the prophetic institution and order of the nation of Israel. The last submission is one that is strongly held by scholars such as Gloag, Mack and Craigie. Gloag (1879, p. 137-138), observes that the prophetic institution is spoken of directly as an institution which would serve in the unfolding of Yahweh's messianic program in the Old Testament which culminates in Jesus Christ the promised Messiah. Craigie (1976, p. 262) supports his position that it expresses most fully the prophetic

character of the Old Testament and acknowledges the progressive unfolding of Yahweh's messianic plan. The view is also clearly stated at length and quite expansively in the New Testament. In summary Van Groningen (1990, p. 253), alludes that,

*"...Moses was a messianic mediator in the old covenant. He carried out the three main functions of the messianic mediator – being a prophet, priest, and king. Although these were closely interwoven in Moses' work, the offices, nevertheless, became clearly distinct and defined. The revelation concerning these offices and the unfolding of the messianic concept came from Yahweh, not from the neighbouring religions and cults. Messianic revelation in the time of Moses was unique, the precedent for all messianic revelation given to Israel via the poets and the prophets to come."*

David is a key character with regard to messianic expectation and a strong link to the anticipated messiah. He is a strong typological figure of the anticipated Messiah and it is not mere coincidence that Jesus is fondly referred to as the son of David. The legacy of David was wealthy especially regarding the unification of the nation and leading the nations to its zenith seasons regarding success against enemy invasions, prosperity of the nation and the individuals as well as peace from rather potential hostility. The expectation from the general population of Israel was that the advent of the Messiah would bring back the hay days of the Davidic legacy in terms of the prosperity and peace of God people against any form of aggression. Van Groningen (1990, p. 314-315) acknowledges that in as much as there is any mention of the Hebrew term *māšīaḥ* (Messiah) in 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel 7 and its parallel text 1<sup>st</sup> Chron. 17:1-15, it is of importance to note that when David was addressed and when he prayed he was aware of the fact that he was the anointed of Yahweh that is attested to by the fact that he uses various terminologies which have a genesis in the context of his anointing e.g. taken from the pastures, chosen of Yahweh, made to be ruler and prince. This brings to perspective the understanding of Messiah in the narrow definition that was a depiction of a king that was anointed by God into office. No wonder the emphasis therein is on persons- David, his son and his future sons (Van-Groningen, 1990).

However, one should not assume absence of the narrower view as it is present by implication in the same narrower view as it talks of the reign of the royal one (Van-Groningen, 1990).

The question to be answered is whether or not the prophecy revealed to David refers directly to Jesus Christ? The scholarly world is divided in their response, Hengstenberg (1970, p. 148), affirms to a group of scholars who are of the opinion that the promise refers to Christ alone and one of the contributors to this notion is Calovius. Others in the realm of the church fathers as Augustine (17.9) perceived that it had a double reference that of the near and distance future. Others observe that Solomon may not be altogether excluded but Christ is chiefly intended. The position of (Hengstenberg, 1970), is that those of the opinion that the prophecy captures both Solomon and Christ are right though they present their case incorrectly, because the correct view was that the reference was to David's house as an "ideal unity". Van Groningen (1990, p. 316-317) offers a solution that the best way to handle this contention is to concede that the messianic reference in this passage is first of all to Solomon and to the sons to be born to David's and Solomon's descendants. This dynasty was to be established firmly and for perpetuity because from this dynasty, Yahweh would accomplish his purposes on behalf of his people and He would do this through the Messiah, the Christ, the Lord who would come forth from the dynasty Yahweh established with David and his seed.

Lastly, we look at the messianic expectation in the prophets. This study finds it prudent to use the principle of representation by identifying one among the prophets to represent the rest and discuss briefly one of his prophetic utterances that point towards the Messiah. The prophecy by Isaiah concerning the suffering Son in Isaiah 52:13-53:12 would serve as a good pick to interact with. With regard to Isaiah 52:13, there two ways of looking at it from the scholar's perspective, some have interpreted it as having a connection with the foregoing and others as a beginning of a new portion that has nothing in common with the portion that preceded it. Hengstenberg (1970, p. 231), approves the former as being the more correct as the prophet in the foregoing section was utterly concerned with the near deliverance from the Babylonian exile. But

in the same figure of temporal deliverance, the spiritual one was concealed. As the humiliation of the Son of man was the greatest possible, as he was abhorred by all those who beheld him in that condition, so will his glorification also be equally remarkable as people and kings will submit to him with the deepest reverence as expressed by Hengstenberg (1970, p. 232).

The conclusion that is drawn from Prophet Isaiah's prophecies concerning the Davidic messiah and the Servant is that Isaiah's prophecy is about one person, namely the promised Redeemer, the Seed of the patriarchs, the promised Son of the Davidic house as is analysed by Van Groningen (1990, p. 645). The stressing point is that if one were to interpret the text of Isaiah as well as the Messianic passages produced prior the final conclusion would be that the suffering servant is the Davidic Messiah and the Son of man (Van-Groningen, 1990). This comes out as a strong advocacy for the narrower perspective of the messianic expectation. It can be affirmatively stated that the Old Testament ends in a high gear of anticipation of the Messiah believed to come in the order of Moses to deliver God's people from captivity; in the Order of His father David to restore the royal legacy; and the order of Elijah of bringing a culmination to the prophetic institution in the nation of Israel characterized by power. We can only wait to see the situation in the New Testament if this expectation is met by the first advent of the messiah.

## NEW TESTAMENT CHRISTOLOGY

The New Testament sees the fulfilment of lots of the Messianic prophecies that were given in the Old Testament in the person of Jesus Christ. His experiences and events that happen in His life is a testament to what was prophesized by prophets earlier and expressed by typological figures that preceded the coming of Christ. Particular incidences of significance include but are not limited to the virgin birth, works and miracles, teachings and death and resurrection. The best way to handle this expansive subject is to examine the titles of Christ.

### Titles of Christ in the New Testament

There are many titles that Christ himself used in reference to himself and those that people used in

reference to him in the parameters of the New Testament. This study addresses two titles dominate the New Testament intending to get the root meaning of what they meant to the audience then and the development that these titles has metamorphosed to what it means today in the Christian circles. The two titles are that of the Son of God and the Son of Man.

### Son of God

The Nicean creed states in part:

*"We believe... in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten from the Father, only begotten, that is, from the substance of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, of one substance with the Father, through whom all things came into being, things in heaven and things on earth, who because of us men and because of our salvation became incarnate, becoming man..."* (Kelly 1960, p. 215)

This captures the title used in reference to Christ in the New Testament era in no unequal terms with any reference. It correctly links Christ to divinity. The phrase 'Son of God' was widely used in the ancient world and the meaning of the phrase in Jewish and Greek writings has been surveyed several times in recent years. Dunn (1996, p. 14-22), submits to us a range of meanings that this phrase held in the ancient world that springs from the legendry heroes of the Greek mythology, the oriental rulers especially Egyptians, famous philosophers like Pythagoras and Plato, angels or heavenly beings, Israel or the Israelites, the king etc. he further gives the concluding remark as concerning the subject that the title as applied to Jesus would not necessarily have carried in and of itself the connotation of deity. So too the degree of caution observed by those from within the Jewish tradition, including those influenced by the wider categories of Hellenistic philosophy and the lack of pre-Christian parallels which might have provided a source for the Christian doctrine of incarnation, should make us equally cautious about offering hasty hypotheses concerning Hellenistic influence on the first Jewish Christians.

A comparison of the opening phrases in the Nicene Creed, and the emerging picture from the New



Testament, portrays a considerable development in early Christian belief of the understanding of Jesus as the Son of God. The striking fact that we examine by exploring the New Testament traditions and documents on the best chronological scale available to us is a clear development in first century Christology: where in the beginning the dominant and only conception was of an eschatological son ship, already enjoyed by Jesus during his ministry but greatly enhanced by his resurrection, at the end of the first century a rather more clear conception of pre-existent divine son ship has emerged, to become the dominant and often the only emphasis in subsequent centuries (Dunn, 1996). Our study establishes that the conception carried by the term from this development has since been to establish the link of Christ with divinity to a great extent. This is in agreement with Howard (1990, p. 123), who affirms that in the title 'Son of God', we encounter a title in which the relation of Jesus to God is especially prominent and in which the concept of deity is present.

### **Son of Man**

As the title 'Son of God' has been linked to its affirmation to divinity, the 'Son of Man' has been associated to His humanity. Many Christians find no problem in the proclamation of Christ as God but problems emerge at the quest to emphasize on the humanity of Christ. A study of incarnational Christology at least from the second century AD would hardly think that the title 'Son of Man' had any relevance to the inquiry because from the second century onwards it always bore the denotation of Christ's humanity in contrast to His divinity as is articulated by Dunn (1996, p. 65). However, it is important to note that in the Gospels, the title bore a much fuller significance than that, but the enigma is the significance precisely and what the original sense and the phrase in the sayings of Jesus is a subject of a heated debate (Dunn, 1996). Two factors that enable us to cut across much of the debate is the significance of the phrase for Jesus' own self-consciousness and claims about himself. Dunn (1996, p. 66) affirms that it is undisputable that Jesus on many occasions used this phrase to identify himself identified specifically in the 'Jesus sayings where one version has 'I' and another 'the Son of Man' for instance Matt. 5:11 and Luke 6:22. Secondly is the tradition-history behind

the phrase sayings as presently intentional to identifying Jesus as that 'Son of Man' mentioned in Dan. 7:13ff:

Casey (1978, P. 241-259) observes that the usage of the similar phrase in Psalms 8, and repeated in Ezekiel on few occasions, by Jesus Himself to refer to Himself and by John in Revelations 1:12-18, has been the cause of much discussion of the origin of this phrase, its various usages, and its development in Jewish and Biblical thought. Young (1949, p. 241-259) has captured the widely held view that the phrase expresses the humanity that is to mankind as frail and weak and is therefore taken to designate Christ as the humiliated one according to Van Groningen (1990, p. 815). Van Groningen (1990) critiques this position from the stand point that the study of Psalm 8 shows the phrase as referring man as royal in person and as given a royal status, likewise the study of the Ezekiel version is not in any way meant to emphasize frailty, weakness or humility. The context of the usage of the phrase in Daniel also does not seek to suggest the same because the person in question is transported as deity, and comes into the presence of an eternal one. He does not come as a lowly one, but rather as a royal dignified person.

Dunn (1996, p. 81-95) has observed in conclusion that in the Jewish non-Christian sources, there is no evidence of a 'Son of Man' concept in pre-Christian Judaism. From a Christian understanding, the concept of Jesus as the pre-existent Son of Man cannot be dated prior to the latter stage in the second century. Elsewhere the identification of Jesus as the Son of Man or Danielic 'son of man' seems to have made no impact or left no trace other than the Johannine writings. Howard (1990, p. 123), also submits to us that there is no easy solution to the 'Son of man' problem, and there is no consensus of opinion among scholars. But it may be claimed that the view that Jesus spoke of himself by means of this phrase offers the least difficulties, and in this we have a valuable insight into his self- understanding.

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Christological reflections are paramount for the theological formulation of the Christian message. Judging the Christological significance to theology, we need to evaluate our Christological reflections

against a reliable and verifiable source. The question of the source becomes a significant one in the process of understanding correct Christology. It can be established that sound Christology rest on the accuracy of the primary source of its construction. The scripture stands out as the primary and accurate source for the crafting of biblical Christology. Therefore, it is vital for us to answer the Christological question that stands out in Mathew 16:13 from the parameters or confines of the scripture. Biblical Christology appreciates the presence of Christological input in the entirety of scripture from the Old Testament to the New Testament. This calls upon theologians interested in Christology to lay more emphasis on the biblical understanding to facilitate accurate Christological formulation. There is a wealth of information of Christology around the Old and New Testament that awaits diligence on the part of scholarship to unearth the treasure hidden within. Once we establish a biblical Christology the study recommends the usage of secondary resources in Christological scholarship especially to address the question of the historical Jesus. In similar fashion the study recommends scholarship of a Christology that is contextual and relates to the African setting.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Augustine. *De civitate Dei*. "17.9".

Baukham Richard. (1995). "Theology of Jürgen Moltmann." Bloomsbury Academic.

Bender J. Kimlyn. (2013). "Karl Barth's Christological Ecclesiology." Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers.

Casey Maurice. (1978). "The Son of Man: Interpretation and Influence of Daniel 7." London: SPCK.

Craigie C. Peter. (1976). "The Book of Deuteronomy." Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Dunn D.G. James. (1996). "James Christology in the Making: A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation, second edition." Grand Rapids, Michigan: James D.G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making: A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the*

*Doctrine of the Incarnat* William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

Erickson J. Millard. (2000). "Christian Theology." Michigan: Grand Rapids: Baker Books.

Ezigbo I. Victor. (2013). "Introducing Christian Theologies, Volume One: Voices from Global Christian Communities." Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers.

Ferreira Johan. (1998). "Johannine Ecclesiology." A&C Black.

Gerald O'Collins, Daniel Kendall. (1996). "Focus on Jesus: Essays in Christology and Soteriology." Leominster, Herefordshire: Gracewing Publishing.

Gloag J.Paton. (1879). "The Messianic Prophecies." Edinburgh: T& T. Clark.

Goergen J. Donald. (2003). "The Mission and Ministry of Jesus: Volume 1 of Theology of Jesus." Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers.

Hengstenberg W.E. (1970). "Christology of the Old Testament." Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publications.

Howard I.Marshall. (1990). "I. Howard Ma The Origins of New Testament Christology, Updated Edition." Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press.

Kelly J.N.D. (1960). "Early Christian Creeds." Longmans.

Kline Meredith. (1963). "The Treaty of the Great King." Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Macquarrie John. (2003). "Jesus Christ in Modern Thought." Hymns Ancient and Modern Ltd.

Schweitzer Albert. (1952). "The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of Its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede." Lulu.

Thiessen Clarence Henry. (1979). "Lectures in Systematic Theology." Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

Thompson John. (1978). "Christ in Perspective: Christological Perspectives in the Theology of Karl Barth." St. Andrews Press.

Tillich Paul. (1948). "Paul Tillich: The shaking of the foundations." Charles Scribner's Sons.

Van-Groningen Gerard. (1990). "Messianic Revelation in the Old Testament." Grand Rapids Michigan: Baker House.

wikipedia.org. "Messiah". wikipedia.org: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Messiah>

YoungJ.Edward. (1949). "The Prophecy of Daniel: A Commentary." Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.