Part Two: Christological Paradigms and Social Transformation

CHAPTER FOUR

THE CHALLENGES FACING CHRISTOLOGICAL PARADIGMS FOR PEACE AND MUTUALITY IN THE NIGERIAN CONTEXT

4.0 Introduction

I will argue in this chapter that Christology can offer a framework for addressing the problem of peace and mutuality but such a presupposition raises some critical questions for us today. The Christological question “who is Jesus Christ?” is confronted by at least four major factors in Nigerian Christianity. These are the Nigerians’ view of Jesus Christ in relation to peace and nation-building, the question of the uniqueness and finality of Jesus Christ, the problem of evil and suffering, and the question of Christological Approaches. All of these have a direct bearing on the response that will be proposed in Chapter Six. I will address these issues one after the other in this chapter.

How do we talk about Christology today? is a vital question for a balanced Christological conversation. In modern times, Christology needs to be mindful of conflicting claims which modernity, pluralism and various world religious traditions have had upon Christian faith in answering the question, who is Jesus today?1 These challenges invite theologians to adequately engage different views that emerge in the current Christological conversation. Hans Küng is right when he argues that “the christological debate that has persisted since the dawn of the modern age has not yet been resolved.”2 The new face of the controversy on Christology does not confront the discourses on the Christ-event in the praxis of faith only; it is disputed in the academy with different scholars proposing new insights for interpreting Christology in view of the developments in human knowledge and culture.3

3 Paul F. Knitter, for instance, in his Introducing Theologies of Religions (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2002), proposed four models of the theology of religions which include replacement model, fulfilment model, mutuality model, and acceptance model. All of Knitter’s models affect Christological interpretation. A collection
In fact, every attempt to answer some questions marks the beginning of other questions. Nevertheless, all these questions help us to clarify our understanding of Jesus Christ, and how His life and mission affect humanity today. A brief clarification on the questions arising from Christology further strengthens our theology as a faith seeking understanding. There are certain questions that challenge Christology and these have been given deserved attention.  

This chapter develops by discussing the Nigerians’ perception of Jesus Christ on peace and mutuality. The focus is on how many people in Nigeria expect Christians to translate their faith profession in Jesus Christ into the knowledge that can be used for engaging the nation’s situation. How such an anticipation can be actualised in a pluralised context leads to a discussion on the uniqueness of Jesus. The chapter further takes up the notion of Christology and evil, especially in the context of Nigeria, and how it affects the Christological paradigms for peace, mutuality, and coexistence. The subject of possible Christological approaches as it relates to the content of the next chapter will be considered in the last part.

4.1 Nigerians’ View of Jesus Christ in relation to Peace and Nation-Building

I contend that there is a bond between peace, mutuality, and nation-building. A nation can only be built in an atmosphere of peace and mutuality. The pertinent question in this part is: How do Nigerians perceive Jesus Christ regarding their situation in the quest for peace and mutuality? Many Nigerians operate on a Christological presupposition in relation to the Nigerian situation. They believe that if properly presented by the Christian body, the teachings and life of Jesus Christ can offer a transforming influence on the nation’s challenges, not only in search for peace and mutuality and other perennial problems. There are indications that such a presupposition can become a reality.

Emmanuel Katongole has wrestled with whether Christianity is powerful enough to save Africa despite its mammoth Christian population. The response to that concern, in Katongole’s thought, can be found in a positive recognition of the role of the Christian mission today and how that can be translated into the context of daily experience. He warns that we...
must exercise caution not to allow the present situation of the church “dull our imagination and blind us to the resources which Christianity can provide for social reconstruction.” Hence, to unleash the full impact of Christianity on socio-political and economic issues entails widening the current understanding of being church and a reconstruction of the social imagination. Then, the church will bear a true mark of a community for formation of mission and social transformation. In the long run, it will not be the concern of the African church or its theology alone but the prime apprehension of the Christian church everywhere in the world.

Exploring the role of Christianity in the making of African nations is not totally new. This awareness is increasing because of the African perception of the dominant functions of religion in human existence and society. ‘The African Christianity Project’, sponsored by the Centre for the Study of Christianity in the Non-Western World in the University of Edinburgh, and several collaborating African institutions between 1992 and 1995, for instance, focused on Christianity and its social transformation. The project was dedicated to the themes of development, peace, and reconstruction, and what Christianity has to contribute to that process.

The African Christianity Project demonstrated, among other things, that theology can contribute to the making of the African nations in practical terms. As Sarah White and Romy Tiogco succinctly argued, Christian theology can channel a path of development, peace, and reconstruction by initiating paradigms that will bridge the gap between the profession and the praxis of Christian faith.

The place of Christianity in the current situations of African nations is also gaining momentum in the international community as a commendable pathway to curb the many struggles of Africa. A partnership between the churches in Africa and the World Bank is one example of the recent advocates of the input of Christianity in solving the many problems of the African nations. They jointly organised a conference that concentrated on alleviating poverty in Africa, co-sponsored by the Council of Anglican Provinces of Africa (CAPA) and the World Bank. This conference attracted one hundred and fifty-seven participants from twenty-one African nations (including Nigeria) and nineteen Christian denominations in

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7 Sarah White and Romy Tiogco, “What has Theology to do with Development, Peace and Reconstruction?” in *The Role Christianity in Development, Peace and Reconstruction*, eds. Isabel Apawo Phiri, Keneth R. Ross and James L. Cox, 10-29.
Nairobi, Kenya, between 6th and 10th March 2000. The conference was crucial because the organisers realised that the churches in Africa can contribute in no small measure to the rebuilding of the African continent and their individual nations directly. Participants at the conference deliberated extensively on the progressive state of poverty among African states that is caused by economic, social, and political factors. However, the place of the Christian church came to the fore when the participants discussed relevant tools for ameliorating the complex situations of African nations.\(^8\)

It is common knowledge today that Nigerian Christians maintain their faith as a channel for survival. Even those who are not directly connected to a Christian community devise a means of associating with one in times of difficulty. They depend largely on the church as an institution. This sense of reliance is not only to provide support, succour, and courage to face unpleasant situations but also a route of escape. The church is often valued above political and other social institutions today. This situation presents an opportunity to the Nigerian church to act decisively as a catalytic agent for social change and transformation. There is no controversy about what the role of the church is regarding the condition of members and the nation’s at large. The church is at an advantage because of its recognition within the Nigerian society.

The church can use its moral authority and ethical standards to influence changes in attitudes about how we should tackle the problems of poverty and injustice, gender inequality, and corruption. In order to do this, the churches must become agents of transformation, using their influence to demand better governance and public accountability. Churches can also work to help poor people obtain justice by providing legal aid. However, these efforts should not be at the cost of the role that churches have played in helping poor men and women ensure their survival.\(^9\)

It is crucial to note that the person of Jesus Christ is central to whatever importance the Christians and non-Christians have attached to what Christianity may contribute to the life of the Nigerian nation.\(^10\)

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\(^10\) The Christian churches have gradually evolved as the source of solution to the problems of Africa. This assertion can be substantiated, in addition to earlier references by a collection of essays edited by Paul Gifford which highlighted the role that churches and its leaders have played in strengthening democratic process in different African nations. See Paul Gifford, ed. *The Christian Churches and the Democritisation of Africa* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995). See also Terence O. Ranger, ed. *Evangelical Christianity and Democracy in Africa* (Oxford: Oxford
The major issue that confronts Nigerian Christianity is not the biblical identity of Jesus Christ but how the gospel identity of Jesus Christ is sometimes perverted in the praxis of Christian faith. For instance, relegating the identity of Jesus Christ to the status of a solution provider, and the manner in which church leaders have mixed political motif with the gospel message are indications of the current hindrances to how Jesus can be presented to restore hope to the Nigerian situation. The scandals in the Churches are making people become critical and cynical about the state of the church in Nigeria. It is rather a disappointment to some church leaders. At the same time other church leaders express hope concerning Nigerian Christianity. Bishop David Olutoye, leader of a Pentecostal church expresses a similar view of disappointment and hope in an interview with one of the national dailies.

I want to say that pastors in Nigeria have failed and disappointed God. We have left the upper room where we can hear from the Lord on behalf of the nation, to help our president to know what to do. If the church has not failed God, Boko Haram would not have had any power to do anything. But as I said before, revival is coming.11

Olutoye decries the current developments in which the church has become more political at the expense of her prophetic responsibility to the nation. This may be a representative of the majority view in Nigeria at the moment. This is because it is assumed that the church should have adequate influence on the nation because of the proliferation of churches and the universality of the Christian message. The church leadership is supposed to be the mouthpiece of God to the nation. The church ought to serve as the channel for the passage of divine instructions to the political leaders instead of joining a political alliance with the political office holders.

Two categories of church leaders are identifiable when discussing Nigerians’ disposition to the political affairs. There are those church leaders who are politically inclined due to material gains and affluence. These people promote politicians with no visible measures to criticise and challenge them and their activities for the good of the citizens. The people view

University Press, 2008). Paul Gifford, *Christianity, Development and Modernity in Africa* (London: Hurst & Company, 2015). There are two plausible ways to interpret the contributions of Christianity to the social space bearing on the person of Jesus Christ. On the one hand, it is possible to consider Jesus as purely a moral and ethical teacher. On the other hand, one can propose to emulate the totality of the life, teaching, ethical and moral disposition of Jesus as the Saviour of humanity. It is this second dimension that I follow here.

them as abetting corruption as they hardly speak against the unwholesome policies of the government. This group has attracted the attention of the political elites. The second group are the non-partisan church leaders. They distinguish themselves as uncompromising agents of truth within the Christian body. These people can speak publicly on government activities or political situations. They maintain some distance from the immediate happenings in the political terrain. Nonetheless, this group gets involved in politics but in the best interest of the nation. This is the group Olutoye referred to as those who would bring revival in the nation.

I have argued above that the perception of the many Nigerians about the identity of Jesus Christ may enhance the use of Christological paradigms to contribute to Nigeria’s search for peace and mutuality. The above assertion brings some difficulties for Christological paradigms. Besides the problems which confront the Nigerian Christians in relation to the national situation and their perception of Jesus Christ, there are challenges which Christology has to wrestle with in every human situation today. How the theologian can navigate through these challenges will determine the outcome of the theology and its social engagement. There are four key problems that I identify: the uniqueness and finality of Jesus Christ, the question of evil and suffering and Christological paradigms, and Christological approaches in relation to Christological paradigms. To these problems and associated issues that threaten Christology I now turn in the rest of this chapter.

4.2 Christological Paradigms for Peace and Mutuality in relation to the Question of the Uniqueness and Finality of Jesus Christ

“Christianity’s implicit claim to unique superiority, as the central focus of God’s saving activity on earth, has come to seem increasingly implausible within the new global consciousness of our time.”12 This is the first conundrum that opposes Christology and the Christological paradigms for peace and mutuality in a multi-religious context.

In Christian orthodoxy, the uniqueness of Jesus Christ means that Jesus is different from all other ‘saviours’ in world religions in the totality of His mission to humanity. He is the one and only Saviour, in whom the salvific vision and mission is fulfilled. Jesus is the reconciler between God and humanity. It is this unique and salvific mission that also establishes Him as

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the conclusiveness or ultimate of God’s love and revelation. For Christians Jesus is the climax of God’s love and self-disclosure to humanity. The major question that relates to this consideration is: To what extent can we speak of Jesus’ uniqueness and finality to warrant the use of Christology as a model for peace and mutuality? The first part of the question of Jesus’ uniqueness and finality is not new in view of the developments in the Christological studies and the critique of the relationship of Christianity to the non-Christian religions in the twentieth century. It is a relevant but certainly not a new question for most Nigerian Christians. It is the second part that is pressing, to warrant the use of Christology as a model for peace and mutuality, regarding this study.

The question of the uniqueness of Jesus and how to respond to this uniqueness has become a prime concern of the theology of religions. How this question may be resolved remains a challenge for Christology today. Different theological positions have developed in response to the question of Jesus’ uniqueness. Four theological positions are dominant today. They are: Exclusivism, Inclusivism, Pluralism, and Particularism. I want to look at each of these positions in the current situation in Nigeria.

4.2.1 Exclusivism

One of the major critics of Exclusivism, John Hick avers that

If we define salvation as being forgiven and accepted by God because of the atoning death of Jesus, then it is a tautology that Christianity alone knows and teaches the saving truth that we must take Jesus as our lord and saviour, plead his atoning death, and enter into the church as the community of the redeemed, in which the fruits of the Spirit abound.¹³

Exclusivism asserts that Jesus Christ is exclusively unique, and by extension, Christianity embodies the ultimate self-disclosure of God to humanity.¹⁴ Every other religion is perceived as an error. There are different interrelated formulations in this view.¹⁵ For instance, when Karl

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¹⁴ Paul Hedges, *Controversies in Interreligious Dialogue and the Theology of Religions* (London: SMC Press, 2010), 20 has argued that since this concept involves a range of beliefs formulated at different stages of Christianity but with a central theme, it should rather be seen in a plural sense. The same can be said of other positions too.
¹⁵ Both the Protestants and Roman Catholics have different modified forms of exclusivism. Their views are articulated differently but they contain certain assumptions that well qualify them ultimately as exclusivism. For
Barth wrote that religion apart from revelation is an unbelief, and that revelation is an abolition of religion, Barth expressed an exclusivist notion of Christianity over other religions. As Alan Race writes, “undoubtedly, the predominant attitude of the church through Christian history has been to regard the outsider as in error or darkness, beyond the realms of truth and light.” It is a position of the superiority of Christianity to other religions as Biblically referenced in such passages as Acts 4:12 and John 14:6: “Salvation is not found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.” “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except by me,” which are used to support this point.

The premise of the exclusivism thesis is found in the nineteenth century Protestant missionary involvement in Africa, China, Latin America, and the Pacific Islands. Christian mission was conceived as a rescue strategy for the teeming adherents of other religions who were presumed to be heading to hell without Christ. Exclusivism as a theological position was predominant for most of the first nineteen centuries of Christianity’s existence.

The middle of the twentieth century marked the swinging of the pendulum. Jacques Dupuis notes some of the factors that influenced a theological shift for most theologians.

It must be acknowledged – with due shame on our part – that for many centuries both theology and the official teaching of the church gave a mainly negative response to that question...Today we ask how such negative opinions could prosper and remain received doctrine for so long.... How could he[God] have allowed the majority of the human beings in the world, all created by him with the same destiny of union with him, to be lost forever? Furthermore, how could he have allowed his universal plan of salvation to thereby be deprived of realization in the history of humankind?

The initial question that permeated theological discourse was on salvation and whether persons of other religions can be saved without personally expressing faith in the Christ-event. The question had changed from the possibility of an individual salvation in view of the work of God in Jesus to the possible positive values in various other religions.

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16 Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* Vol1/2 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1956), 280.
The Bible passages upon which exclusivist claims were based have also been reinterpreted in the contemporary scholarship by those who consider Exclusivism improbable.\textsuperscript{19}

If Exclusivism is sustained as a normative response to Jesus’ uniqueness what is the fate of the world's populous religions and the multitudes who have died before the fullness of the time of the coming of Christ and the proclamation of the gospel? These and other questions remain unanswered in this first approach. The key emphasis from the exclusivists’ perspective is the personal expression of faith in the Christ-event rather than a universal affirmation of salvation. The impact of this view on Nigerian theologians and Christians is huge and it will be discussed later.

4.2.2 Inclusivism

The second response to the uniqueness of Jesus is that Jesus Christ and Christianity do not have the monopoly on revelation and salvation, although the salvation plan is never fulfilled in other religions aside from Christianity. The Inclusivism position holds that the people of other religions can be saved through Jesus without personal faith in him. According to Alan Race, who developed this category, inclusivism “is both an acceptance and a rejection of the other faiths, a dialectical 'yes' and 'no’” to other religions.\textsuperscript{20} “It claims to represent a definite position that seeks to take proper account of the available evidence: biblical, experiential, historical, missiological and so on.”\textsuperscript{21} From the middle of the twentieth century some theologians began to advocate an open, receptive, and collegial attitude from Christians and Christian missions to other religions.

The defining events that led to a popular acceptance of Inclusivism propelled a rethink of how to express the relationship of Christianity to other non-Christian religions. First, the new scientific discoveries, the expeditions, the discovery of the ‘New world’ in an age when

\textsuperscript{19} Maurice Wiles, \textit{Christian Theology and Inter-religious Dialogue} (London: SMC Press, 1992), 8. Maurice Wiles, for instance, has argued that the statement in John 14:6 is to be understood as referring to the Logos incarnate, the very distinct terminology traceable to the Fourth gospel. “Like other statements in the same gospel (such as 'before Abraham was, I am),” Wiles argued, “it is to be understood as referring to the Logos, the light who lightens everyone, rather than to Jesus, the first-century historical figure.”

\textsuperscript{20} Alan Race, \textit{Christians and Religious Pluralism}, 38.

the gospel was assumed to have already been preached in the 'whole world' raised the consciousness of theologians to whether all those who did not hear the gospel would be condemned to hell. By then, some theologians were convinced that the axiom 'no other name' could no longer hold sway. Second, the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) signalled a 'radical change' in the theology of the religions. Vatican II argued for a change of direction in Christian theology with regards to the Christian perception of and relationship to other world religions. Effect of this change is most visible in the Roman Catholic Church and its theology. Then, the various religious traditions were considered as having operating grace and the truth of Christ. The documents of Vatican II, for instance, Nostra Aetate, “the Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions,” Lumen Gentium, “the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church,” Ad Gentes, “the Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity” detailed most of the often quoted Council decisions to support an inclusivist stance.

The people of other religious traditions, to use Karl Rahner's phrase, can encounter salvation albeit anonymously without an explicit expression of a personal faith in Jesus. Paul Knitter opined that the Council “stands as a watershed” by carrying on the tradition “in clearly new directions” in that “more resolutely than ever before, the council affirms the universality of grace and salvation, stating that even expressed atheists who follow their conscience are moved by grace and can partake in eternal life.” Theologians such as Raimundo Panikkar, Karl Rahner, Jacques Dupuis, among others have held this position.

The Inclusivism view is not without some creative tension, especially with God's salvific plan. The point of departure between the Exclusivism and Inclusivism is the openness and sympathetic view of the religious other. But this openness has also caused a series of mutually inconsistent statements which are linked together on this view. This is very glaring in the Vatican II documents. Nostra Aetate, in urging a change of relationship with other religions, affirms the normativity of the Christ-event for humanity. “In him [Christ], in whom God

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22 Dupuis, Christianity and the Religions, 3.
26 Raimundo Panikkar, The Unknown Christ of Hinduism (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1965). Panikkar states on page 58 that “Hinduism is the starting-point of a religion that culminates in Christianity.” It is one of the well-known fulfilment models.
reconciled all things to himself (2 Cor. 5:18-19), men find the fullness of their religious life.”

The document further extols whatever is noble in other religions. Yet, in *Lumen Gentium*, there is a strong affirmation of the Church as a necessity for salvation of all. “Basing itself upon scripture and tradition, it [the Council] teaches that the Church, a pilgrim now on earth, is necessary for salvation: the one Christ is mediator and the way of salvation; he is present to us in his body which is the Church.” These two positions are contrasted with what the Council presented in *Ad Gentes*. “Hence the Church has an obligation to proclaim the faith and salvation which comes from Christ… Everyone, therefore ought to be converted to Christ, who is known through the preaching of the Church, and ought, by baptism, to become incorporated into him, and into the Church which is his body.”

However, to reconcile the difficulties of the Vatican II documents Jacque Dupuis has pointed out that the pastoral approach of Vatican II in its documents was influenced by the debates on ‘fulfilment theory’ and the ‘presence of the mystery Christ’ going on about the time of Vatican II. The Council technically supported neither one. Later in the chapter I will point out the difficulties that some Nigerian theologians had with the inclusivist view.

### 4.2.3 Pluralism

Pluralism, as a response to Jesus’ uniqueness, maintains that there cannot be only one and a common path to 'salvation'. As an option in the theology of religions, pluralism “assesses at least some other religions as equally genuine and salvific on the basis of norms and criteria that are understood to be universally valid.” One major name that readily comes to mind regarding religious pluralism is John Hick. Hick used the proverbial blind men who held different parts of an elephant to illustrate different religions to the Ultimate Real. One holds the tail, another holds the tusk or trunk, another yet holds the leg. When asked what the elephant felt like, one described the whole elephant as a snake, another described it as a ploughshare, and another yet felt it was a living pillar and so on. Hence, each blind man holds different parts of the same

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28 *Nostra Aetate, Documents of Vatican II*, 739.
29 *Lumen Gentium, Documents of Vatican II*, 365.
30 *Ad Gentes, Documents of Vatican II*, 817, 821. The Vatican II’s strong affirmation of operating grace in other religions and its exhortation to evangelism has continued to be a source of tension and irreconcilable difference in the post Vatican theology of religions. One main question that comes out of this is: are other non-Christian religions included in the understanding of the Catholic Church? Further, one asks how can a tradition that started separately from Christ finds its fulfilment in him and through his soteriological provision.
elephant, an ultimate *noumenon* or Real. Each person can only have a bit of the reality.

Drawing on this analogy, each religion (like the blind men) experiences and expresses different aspects of the Real until the *eschaton*, when each of the blind men (religious adherents) would see clearly and the truth would have been attained.33 Hick proposed a Christological “Copernican Revolution”, a paradigm shift from the orthodox Christian point of view. The incarnation in this way is viewed as nothing but a mere myth fabricated through the memories of the earliest gospel writers that the early church exalted highly because of the soteriological notion they associated with it.34

If, selecting from our Christian language, we call God-acting-towards-mankind the Logos, then we must say that all salvation, within all religions, is the work of the Logos and under their various images and symbols men in different cultures and faiths may encounter the Logos and find salvation. But what we cannot say is that all who are saved are saved by Jesus of Nazareth. The life of Jesus was one point at which the Logos... has acted; and it is the only point that savingly concerns the Christians; but we are not called upon nor are we entitled to make the negative assertion that the Logos has not acted and is not acting anywhere else in human life.35

Jesus remains the gift of the limitless love of God to the world, though not in any way unique from other “enlightened Beings” like Buddha, Brahma, and others. For Hick, the incarnation is one of the many expressions of Logos with each manifesting itself in different religious traditions and recognised by different names as understood by those traditions. In *An Interpretation of Religion*, Hick stressed that

The great world faiths embody different perceptions and conceptions of, and correspondingly different responses to, the Real [the religious ultimate] from within the major variant ways of being human; and that within each of them the transformation of human existence from self-centredness to Reality-centeredness is taking place. These traditions are accordingly to be regarded as alternative soteriological ‘spaces’ within which, or ‘ways’ along which, men and women find salvation/liberation/ultimate fulfilment.36

Like Hick, Ernst Troeltsch submitted that apart from the universality of God's plans of salvation, God's love is inherently present in every human person and can be attained through

different paths. The pluralists’ or radicalists’ view perceive Jesus as one of the many ways. A pluralist’ view of Jesus’ uniqueness is therefore, not what someone has that others do not but what makes up a person’s identity. The major weakness of pluralism with regard to the uniqueness of Jesus is the explanatory reductionism.

For the most part this view has not had much of an impact upon Nigerian theologians, as will be seen in greater detail later.

4.2.4 Particularism

Whilst Harold Netland among other theologians has applied the term ‘particularity’ as Exclusivism, and other theologians have suggested an additional fourth position in the theology of religions, Paul Hedge has insisted that the particularity category is more plausible. Particularity refuses to consider the study of religion as a universal norm or category. As a post-modern and post-liberal worldview, it engages the study of religion as a particular and unique entity. “It rejects pluralism, which it sees as speaking of universals; regards inclusivism as incoherent, because it tends towards a view that every ‘religion’ is essentially similar in nature;

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39 See Netland, 232-237. ‘Explanatory reductionism’ is a situation whereby a person proposes a second-order theory that attempts an explanation of a first order religious phenomena through the use of categories or terms that are fundamentally different from how they appear within the particular religious tradition. The major fault of the pluralists is that they reinterpret the main Christian doctrines in categories that suit their proposition.


and is not exclusivism, because that may not be what is within God’s plans.”

Particularism stresses the distinctiveness of a religion so that in the end no commonality can be established between two religions.

It is an approach that emphasises that ‘each faith is unique’ and “alterity is stressed over similarity, as seemingly common elements in religious experience or doctrine are regarded as superficial.” The extreme end of this is that distinctiveness of each religion is established and it is impossible to compare two religions or equate them. One can hardly speak from the perspective of other religions other than one’s own. This last approach seems to be a modified version of the pluralist view. Following Particularity the uniqueness of Jesus is very difficult to establish since one can only speak as it appeals to one’s view.

It will take a separate research project to assess the effects of all of the above positions on Christology. Suffice to say that Exclusivism, Inclusivism, and Particularity have something to say on the uniqueness and finality of Jesus in different ways. The pluralists “do not -- for various but related reasons – [deny that] their Jesus is not unique and final.” Pluralists are radicals because they deny any uniqueness and finality to Jesus. The Exclusivists depend highly on revelation or ontology and manifest a low dependence on history. The Inclusivists maintain a low dependence on revelation but emphasise interpretation of history and human experience, “seen as the process of divine action and disclosure, determines everything else.”

Particularists emphasise the facts of human experience, historical facts and data which can be known about Jesus.

So, who is Jesus and how is He unique? This question will be answered depending on the standpoint of the analysis. An analysis of the various positions above reveal that there are critical questions in each of the positions. The Exclusivists insist on the uniqueness and finality of Christ as an allegiance to the criteria for early orthodox Christology. Approaches of other ‘christologists’ today will either fall into relativising the uniqueness and finality of Jesus or affirming His humanity only. Considering the proposition of Inclusivism and Pluralism, Jesus

43 Hedges, “Particularities: Tradition-Specific Post-modern Perspectives” in Christian Approaches to Other Faiths, 112.
46 Cowdell, Is Jesus Unique?, 17.
47 By this I mean that the Christian orthodoxy was formulated on the premise that Jesus Christ was unique and final regarding God’s revelation to humanity.
48 Docetism – affirmed that Jesus is divine, he only appears to be human. From an ancient Greek concept of logos,
is portrayed as a model for ethical and moral standards. And He does not differ from humans in essence but by degree.\textsuperscript{49}

\textbf{4.2.5 The Uniqueness of Jesus Christ Among Nigerian Theologians}

The positions of Exclusivism, Inclusivism, Pluralism, and Particularity as enunciated above are expressed in the Nigerian religious views in relation to the uniqueness of Jesus Christ, and Christianity and other religions. These positions are affirmed with some overlapping among Nigerians. The best way to articulate the uniqueness of Jesus Christ among Nigerian religions was seen in the background to the debate of Nigerian theologians in the 1970s. Most of the conversations during this debate centred upon the notion of revelation as a central theme to religion. The late Nigerian Evangelical theologian, Byang Henry Kato, affirmed the need for Africans to formulate a theology that is culturally, religiously, and contextually responsible. The bone of contention for Kato is whether to affirm the fulfilment thesis or discontinuity method in how earlier theologians had appropriated the Bible in their theological construction. To Kato, many of the African theologians have “failed to see the unique nature of Biblical revelation.”\textsuperscript{50} It is this revelation that establishes the uniqueness of Jesus Christ. The redemptive revelation in Jesus creates an incomparable difference between Christianity and numerous religions that exist in the world. In view of this, Kato insisted that “the Bible must remain the basic source of Christian theology. Evangelical Christians know of only one theology – Biblical theology – though it may be expressed in the context of each cultural milieu.”\textsuperscript{51} The uniqueness that Kato advocates is a total uniqueness of Jesus that is affirmed in the New Testament.

E. Bolaji Idowu treated revelation as one entity in most of his works.\textsuperscript{52} Idowu makes no clear distinction between general and special revelation. For instance, Idowu worked with a notion of general revelation and argued that God has revealed himself to humanity everywhere

\textsuperscript{49} Carl E. Braaten, \textit{No Other Gospel! Christianity among the World’s Religions} (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1992), 84-85.


\textsuperscript{51} Kato, “Theological Anaemia in Africa.”

and such revelation draws humankind into a relationship with God. In this way no specific group of people can lay a claim to an absolute God’s revelatory knowledge. No clear case can be made for the uniqueness of Jesus following Idowu’s perception. One major deficiency in Idowu’s works is that his views are always caught-in-between biblical ideas and those of African traditional religions. However, Idowu’s methods cannot be separated from the predetermined purpose of his writings.

4.2.6 The Uniqueness of Jesus Christ and Christological Paradigms

I will further argue that despite the religious multiplicity in Nigeria, Christians have an option of Exclusivism upon which the Christological paradigms can be built. There are different responses to the notion of Jesus’ uniqueness among Nigerians. Most evangelicals uphold an exclusivest position as reflected in Kato’s view. They will argue that the revelation of God in Jesus of Nazareth in a specific historical context and time is normative for humanity. To them, other religions do not have salvific capacity. Evangelicals have and are always trying to trace their roots back to and lay a claim on biblical fidelity. The same idea is preserved by the mainline Protestants, though with brief modifications. From this standpoint what seems to aid the Evangelicals is the ontological necessity of Christ, so that the Christ-event is given prominence as a necessity for the emancipation of humanity. So, “in order to experience salvation, one must enter into a historical or physical contact with Christ.”

It is very difficult to associate one particular view to a Christian body as all of the positions on the uniqueness of Jesus are scattered across different church groups in Nigeria. But when most Nigerian Christians speak of plurality of religions, it is more in a description of emphasizing the religious diversity or multiplicity present in Nigeria. They do not acknowledge that all Nigerian religions have equal valid truth in all the existing religious traditions in the nation. Those who advocate an exclusive view do so because of the motif of Christian

54 Idowu’s works focused on advocating a suitability of ATRs as a continuity for Christianity. This assumed purpose informed his methodologies and arguments in all his theological works.
55 A typical grassroots Nigerian Exclusive view is to be found in the World Evangelical Fellowship’s Manila Declaration of 1992, where the particularity’s position was contrasted to pluralism and universalism. See, “The WEF Manila Declaration,” in The Unique Christ in Our Pluralistic World, ed. Bruce J. Nicholls (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker, 1994), 14-15.
56 Knitter, No Other Name, 105.
mission. There will be no solid biblical foundation for Christian mission unless they affirm the uniqueness and finality of Jesus Christ.

The various positions above are problematic for appropriating Christological paradigms for peace and mutuality. This difficulty lies in how to present Christological paradigms for peace and mutuality that focus on the Nigerian situation in the face of the conflicting religious truth claims. The religious space in Nigeria is very fragile. Hence, one needs to exercise caution not to allow such a presentation to trigger violence because of the context. Besides, it also requires thoughtfulness not to jeopardise the emphasis on the uniqueness of Jesus Christ as an indispensable part of biblical Christianity. Nigerian theologians and Christians have realised this as a major setback to theological articulation and any contribution that may come from the Christians. Lucien Richard has also echoed a similar concern:

It has become apparent to many Christians that the contemporary pluralistic mind must be confronted and that other religious traditions can no longer be viewed in a negative or condescending way. These religions are recognised as having their own integrity and impressive achievement. In their vitality they refuse to be disqualified by Christianity’s claim to be the one and true way to God.

The current approach by Nigerian Christians to the multiplicity of religions is to consider other religions as having valuable elements but yet, deficient in the inherent truth that is proclaimed in Christianity. Hence, the notion of Jesus’ uniqueness and finality of God’s love to humanity is challenged in the praxis of Christian faith at all levels in Nigeria. It has made the pursuit of Christian mission an increasingly difficult task or better still, a task to be pursued courteously. The problem of interreligious dialogue cannot be totally separated from this.

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58 The various episodes of violence outlined in Chapter Two informed the fragility of religious space especially in northern Nigeria. They show that any religious view can be easily misunderstood. In view of this, I will address how the proposed Christological paradigms can be applied as a mission for peace, coexistence and mutuality in Nigerian Christianity in Chapter six.

59 Lucien Richard, What are they Saying about Christ and World Religions? (New York/Ramsey: Paulist Press, 1981), 2. Lesslie Newbigin also shares the same concern that in a pluralistic society when discussing ‘the gospel among religions’ what position would Christ and Christians assume? Newbigin uses the metaphor of a staircases which symbolize how human beings advance in their knowledge and commitment to God’s purpose. This staircases have the cross at the centre. Newbigin proposes that Christians need to come down from their stairways to meet the adherents of other faiths for dialogue on certain issues as a way of emptying themselves. See Lesslie Newbigin, The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 160-189.

60 The shift in the Christian theological discourse from exclusivism to inclusivism and pluralism has two major cardinal aims. It fosters openness of Christianity to other world religions for a possibility of interreligious dialogue. This promotes a better understanding and appreciation of other religious traditions. The notion of dialogue particularly reflects in the works of the pluralists like John Hick, (whose works are cited extensively.
How can the Christological paradigms for peace and mutuality be effective in Nigeria when the majority of Nigerians portray Jesus as absolutely unique and as the finality of God’s revelation to humanity in the face of the plurality of religions? A distinction has to be drawn between a proposition that is meant for missionary propagation and that which has a motif of mission for peace and mutuality or better still that is instrumental in the formation of mission theology for the 21st century Nigerian Christianity. A choice has to be made as one realises that there is no and there cannot be a consensus on the uniqueness and finality of Jesus again in Christianity. This is a conundrum that Christology will continue to grapple with. Most non-Christian Nigerians would affirm that Jesus is unique on a moral or an ethical level. Since Christianity encompasses a diverse understanding of that uniqueness, everyone does not have to affirm the same understanding in totality for Nigerian Christians to have a lasting and transforming influence on nation-building, given the current reception that Christianity has enjoyed in the nation. This offers a possibility of applying Christology to the issues of Nigeria’s quest for peace and mutuality. The life, mission, teachings and ethics of Jesus – which culminate in the totality of the Christ-event – have great implications for Nigerian Christians and non-Christians alike. This ought to place a necessity on the Christians in Nigeria to take up their faith commitment in Jesus from the level of the individual search for a solution to the level of a corporate societal transformation.

Lesslie Newbigin has recommended that discussing the finality of Jesus is a matter of standpoint which should be affirmed with an abeyance to other religions, a stand outside of any religion. “It is possible to claim that Christ is the end of all religion, and that therefore this standpoint is one outside of the religions.” The hidden truth about this method is that since Christ occupies the centre of Christianity, it operates on an assumed judgemental position against other religions. For Christian theology, the uniqueness of Jesus and his finality have been attached to the incarnation. This has been the solid foundation upon which the Christian doctrine and Christological orthodoxy such as those of Nicæa and Chalcedon were formulated. It poses much difficulty for theological articulation today in the face of changing human culture


61 What I mean here is that the Christological paradigms will be based on the notion of Exclusivism. However, it is not directed towards the missionary goal of conversion which forms the tussle and religious scrambling in Nigerian religious space.

and religious plurality. The difficulty that is outlined here is not to one particular group. Further, responses from the theology of religions contain many ambiguous views. It cuts across the four positions since each of those positions attaches a degree of uniqueness to Jesus Christ but considerably differ in a statement regarding his finality. A case will have to be made for a unique and final Christ so as to aid the proposed paradigms in this study.

4.3 Christological Paradigms for Peace and Mutuality in Relation to Evil and Suffering

The third Christological difficulty that I identify with the Nigerian situation and this study is how best to reconcile the Christian understanding of the redemption in Jesus Christ which was motivated by love and the power of God and the reality of evil and suffering that confronts the Nigerian people. My aim here is not to provide an elaborate discourse on the problem of evil and suffering, power, love, justice, and redemption through Jesus Christ as might be broadly discussed in the fields of philosophy of religion and theology. Rather, I am considering how Nigerian Christians have interpreted their experiences of evils and sufferings which have manifested themselves as religious violence, disruption of social space and vandalism of property and killings.

The traditional understanding of evil and suffering poses an impasse for theistic belief. Why would an omnipotent, omniscient and all-loving God exist, yet there is a prevalence of evil and suffering of diverse magnitude in the world? The proffered options in the fields of theology and philosophy are vast but they can be summarised into three. In the Augustinian understanding of theodicy, the concept of the fall of humankind from an original state of innocence and righteousness is central. The Irenaian understanding of theodicy proposes that the gradual creation of a perfect and complete humanity through life is through an imperfect world. However, the process theodicists affirm that God in fact exists but He is incapable of

63 Richard, *What are they Saying about Christ and World Religions?*, 3.
65 The problem of evil and God’s justice, power and love is termed as Theodicy in Philosophy and Theology.
66 A long Greek tradition traceable to Epicurus (341-270 BC) synthesises the problem of evil with the existence of God in this way: “God either wishes to take away evils, and is unable; or He is able, and is unwilling; or He is neither willing nor able, or He is both willing and able. If He is willing and is unable, He is feeble, which is not in accordance with the character of God; if He is able and unwilling, He is envious, which is equally at variance with God; if He is neither willing nor able, He is both envious and feeble, and therefore not God; if He is both willing and able, which alone is suitable to God, from what source then are evils? Or why does He not remove them?” John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love* (London: Macmillan, 1966), 5, citing *The Writings of the Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1951.
preventing evil occurrences in human beings and in the process of nature.\textsuperscript{67}

In the same manner that the problem of evil and suffering threaten theism it also confronts soteriology and redemption. Part of this challenge is the biblical portrayal of God's presence and power in the midst of the reality of the suffering of the Son of God on the cross when he cried out, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' Could the Father not have allowed him to actualise the fullness of the plan of salvation without having to go through that suffering?\textsuperscript{68}

\textit{4.3.1 Nigerian Christians’ Perception of Evil}

Nigerian Christians’ perception of evil and good is connected to their philosophical view about the universe. Evil and good link together in an ontological relationship to morality. Laurenti Magesa has traced the essence of life and being to the wholeness and unity of life among Africans.\textsuperscript{69} Everything is done because of life. Life is considered sacred and must be sustained as such.

Viewed from the above perspective, the concept of evil and suffering is not only an opposite of good. Evil consists in anything that is life threatening or that disintegrates the harmonious existence in the human community and creation. Anything that endangers well-being is evil. “Evil means anything that is injurious, painful, hurtful or calamitous.”\textsuperscript{70} An abstract concept of evil does not exist for Nigerian Christians. It is more concrete with physical manifestations.\textsuperscript{71} Hence, the killings, social vices, social disruptions and every other form of opposition to peace and mutuality will be interpreted as evil and suffering.

There are at least two ways Nigerian Christians have constructed a theology of evil and suffering in relation to redemption. First, they sometimes locate the concept of evil within the spiritual universe of Africans. African cosmology is a complex reality that is favourably

disposed to the notion of good and evil. The universe is believed to be spiritual with little or no
demarcation between the physical and spiritual realms. Influence of this spiritual nature can
either be positive or negative. The malevolent powers produce evil results while benevolent
forces yield good effects. This is a broad concept of duality, a constant wrestling between good
and evil. This view holds that evil constantly targets God's work and his activities in the world.
And since Christians are the redeemed of God, created to reveal His power and presence, the
forces of evil continually attack them.

Second, evil is perceived as a derivative of human wickedness. It involves a wilful
misuse of influence, power, position or money in ways that become inimical to life and the
well-being of persons in the human community. This also corresponds to the Augustinian
theodicy. Moral decisions in various aspects of society will always have a chain reaction to
human life, the situation, and the nation at large. The specific daunting question arising here is
what difference does salvation make in moral choices that affect the nation’s peace?

One reason for this dilemma is that the gospel is sometimes presented with ambiguity.
People are erroneously invited to accept Christ’s offer of salvation with emphasis on what God
has done and can do in Christ. The power of redemption is so emphasised in some Nigerian
churches that some Christians can think that coming to Jesus will automatically end their
problems. However, they face the reality, after a period of time in their Christian journey, in
the form of persecution of faith, insurgences and disruption of the peaceful atmosphere. Such
individuals often feel dejected. They ask the question; why would Christians in Nigeria
continue to suffer fierce and unabated attacks despite their faith and commitment to Jesus Christ
and the church, when the all-loving, all-knowing, and all-powerful God has redeemed them in
Christ Jesus? The churches’ response has been to point to the biblical righteous suffering such
as Jesus Christ and Job as consolation.

But the sufferings of Jesus, Job and those of Nigerians are not in the same category.
The suffering of Jesus is redemptive, for instance. It was necessary for the sake of God’s
coming Kingdom and cannot be equated to evil and suffering that Christians experience in their
lives. “Christians must insist emphatically that the cross of Christ does not mean a simple
affirmation of all suffering and, furthermore, that God’s final purpose with his creation is not
exhausted by Christ’s suffering on the cross.”72 As showed earlier, the questions related to the

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problems of evil have been grappled with at different times in human existence. But my concern here is how to respond to these questions in relation to the Christological paradigms so that the outcome will be transforming and enriching. This is a concern that may tempt some to deny faith if not properly handled.

It is rather a costly assumption to say that if anyone comes to Christ, all experiences of evil and suffering will be over instantaneously. I have called it an assumption because the gospel never promised an automatic termination of challenges of life once one accepts Jesus Christ’s offer of salvation. What the gospel promises is the abiding presence of Jesus in every situation of life. The implication is that the theology of evil of some Nigerian Christians is gradually changing in view of the scriptural provision.

The unfolding events in Nigeria over the years have provoked a radical remodification of the concept of evil and suffering in relation to the power of redemption. It has steered many Christians to a progressive understanding of the Christ-Event vis-à-vis the problem of evil. Their challenges have opened a fresh understanding of salvation and redemption. There is an increased knowledge of why Christ has redeemed humanity back to God and the need for Christian responsibilities here on earth. Furthermore, the events in Nigeria offers not only a space for ‘justifying’ Jesus Christ in the face of human suffering and challenges but ultimately points to God, who is to be glorified and celebrated despite the unsatisfying experiences of life. The changing view of Nigerian Christians may be summed up as follows: (1) Jesus is God incarnate and all-powerful; (2) Jesus knows all their existential concerns; (3) Jesus can rescue them in all their troubles; (4) The response of Jesus Christ to them in their situations of suffering would depend on His pre-determinate counsel and purpose. (5) Jesus would still prove His power eventually in His own way and time for His own purpose and glory. This progression in understanding the Christ-event afresh in the light of the everyday experience has strengthened more Christians to remain steadfast in the face of evil and suffering.

Many of the Nigerian Christians would still celebrate the omnipotent character of God in the face of a negative happening. However, they sometimes question the effectiveness of the redemptive power when faced with evil as a social enigma. They affirm that evil does not proceed from God.73 Nigerian Christians find it difficult to deny the omnipotence of God in

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73 This belief may have been influenced by the Judeo-Christian concept of God. It is a sharp contrast to some traditional Nigerian beliefs about God, good and evil. The traditional Nigerian understanding of the Supreme Being and his divinities is that they are not wholly good or totally bad. God and his divinities can do both good and evil on purpose. See Balogun, “The Nature of Evil and Human Wickedness in Traditional African Thought,”
Jesus Christ unlike those who embrace process theodicy.

The problem of evil and suffering is ultimately a battle that is both spiritual and physical, between good and evil. It is believed that some days the good shall prevail against the evil, Jesus through His redeeming power shall eventually triumph against the children of the evil one. The situation invites the church to a response of hope to the nation. The problems of evil and suffering raise challenges for Christology, it also presents some difficulties for Christological paradigms as models for peace and mutuality to the Nigeria crises situations. But these will be addressed later in the Thesis.

4.4 Christological Paradigms for Peace and Mutuality and the Question of Christological Approaches

My argument in this section is that formulating a Christology for peace and mutuality necessitates an approach that incorporates the dominant praxis views. This will be taken up in detail in the next chapter. However, the starting point for developing such a Christology are the basic assumptions underlying the theological formulation and how they resonate with the context. Since the mid-twentieth century, theological method has been subjected to two main approaches. These approaches are known as ‘high’ and ‘low’ Christology or ‘from above’ and ‘from below’. For instance, Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen clarifies these two methods thus:

Christology from above begins with the confession of faith in the deity of Christ as expressed in the New Testament. Christology from below begins with an inquiry into the historical basis for belief in Christ. In other words, the approach from above takes the theological interpretation of Jesus Christ as found in the New Testament as its point of departure for determining the meaning of Christ for our own times. A theologian who uses the approach from below goes behind the theological interpretation of the evangelists, Paul and other New Testament writers and attempts to ascertain for himself or herself the historical and factual foundation of christological claims.74

The Christology “from above” method emphasises the kerygma (proclamation) as delivered to the early Christian communities as the source for a human understanding of Jesus in his context. It seeks to emphasise the divinity of Jesus more than his humanity. If the ‘below’

method is considered, it seems to be focused on the analysis of the historical Jesus as the basis for the formulation of Christology.

John Macquarrie has outlined major ways in which modern Christological statements should be different from the traditional notions. One of the areas identified is his Christological approach: ‘If there is any truth in the idea of incarnation, then this must mean meeting people where they are, and in a secular age that means meeting them on the level of their everyday humanity.’75 Macquarrie says that orthodox Christology was high Christology, resting on the divinity of Christ. He argued that the developments in the human society today require a shift of a Christological starting point. It should commence from the humanity of Christ.76 Whilst the orthodox Christology began with the divinity of Christ, it tried to balance it with a good emphasis on the humanity of Christ.

A balanced approach for theologising seeks to systematise both approaches in the process of theological enquiry. To concentrate solely on the ‘from above’ method is to have a divine Jesus that is of little or no relevance to the common human situation and experience, since the divinity of Jesus is stressed to the extreme. In the same way, to dwell on ‘from below’ approach is to concentrate too much on the humanity and experience of Jesus Christ. Taking one approach and excluding the other raises multiple questions. Kärkkäinen observes concerning this problem.

The basic problem of the from above approach is the foundation of faith: How do we know we believe in the right Jesus? What about other figures with similar claims? The basic problem with the from below approach is that faith might be dependent on changing results of historical study and objective certainty is difficult to reach.77

The question of a Christological approach has generated different opinions among the Nigerian theologians. Theologians like Bolaji Idowu,78 Enyi Ben Udoh,79 Chris Ukachukwu Manus,80 and Justin Ukpong81 are well disposed to the low Christology. Other Nigerian theologians who

75 John Macquarrie, Jesus Christ in Modern Thought (London: SMC Press, 1990), 343.
76 Macquarrie, Jesus Christ in Modern Thought, 343.
78 Idowu, “God”.
advocate the high Christology like Byang H. Kato and Yusuf Turaki are always suspicious of their counterparts on the other side because of the gap I already mentioned. This tension is also to be seen in the dichotomy between the praxis of faith and theological formulation in the academy. For instance, in a critique of the concept of an ancestor - which some African theologians have developed to depict Jesus in an African cultural milieu - Yusuf Turaki observed that Jesus transcends any human cultural assumptions, and his nature of existence cannot be in subjection to a human category. Hence, “He is above the cyclical rhythm of nature as He is the Creator of nature. He transcends the powers of nature and cannot be subject to them. Furthermore, Jesus the Messiah is neither an ancestor nor 'one of them'. He did not originate from within human nature. He is the Creator.” Hence, every theological approach should take cognisance of its contextual implications.

The approach that I take in this study confirms Kärkkäinen's statement that “one can take a both-and approach.” I will begin from a high Christology. But why start with high and not low Christology? It must be acknowledged in the theological reflection today – irrespective of one’s theological approach - that – Jesus Christ is first and foremost divine before his physical manifestation in the flesh. I will seek to synthesise the loci of the high and low Christological approaches together. I will do this for a few reasons.

First, any relevant and responsible Christological formulation in Nigerian Christianity must be conscious of the local experiences and how such experiences are being interpreted through the lens of faith in the person and power of Jesus Christ. It starts by reflecting on how people experience Jesus in Nigerian Christianity. Nigerian Christians predominantly experience and express Jesus as a divine being. This expression of Christology should not be separated from a Christological approach to justify the discussion that follows in chapter five. Second, there is no dichotomy between the humanity and divinity of Jesus in Jesus' discourse among many Nigerian Christians. It is only in the academia that the contentious quest of the humanity and the divinity of Jesus is being raised. The question that saturates the local level in the search for an answer to the challenge of mutuality is how to make Jesus encounter the world of every Nigerian Christian daily. This implies that the question of the dichotomy of the divinity and humanity of Jesus – which is a reality – is often taken for granted. Hence, these views must always guide the thinking of the theologian in Christological formulation.

83 Kärkkäinen, Christology, 14.
4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has identified some challenges that may confront any Christological formulation in the Nigerian context. These problems cannot be overlooked if the Christological paradigms will be effective. The core of what has been discussed in this chapter surrounds the identity of the person of Jesus Christ and how it relates to the theological reflection. This identity further reflects Jesus’ mission for humanity in all ages.

It is therefore necessary for the theologian to know these challenges and how they affect the context of theologizing. The knowledge of the context and possible obstacles to theological formulation is a guide in selecting an appropriate method. All of the problems that confront Christology in a particular context may not be answered satisfactorily but they call the theologian to action.

This is true at the praxis of Christian faith. Our Christological statements, convictions, approach and context of christologising raise more questions than answers. One good opportunity that comes from this experience is that it propels further thinking about the person of Jesus Christ that is sometimes taken for granted. It is hoped that this chapter will have given an insight into “possible opening” in the context of the Christological paradigms proposed in the next chapter.