

Christology from African Perspective and Rationale for Pluralities

Mark Ayeye Giwa
(Ph.D. Candidate, Nasarawa State University, Keffi, Nigeria)

Abstract

Christology from an African perspective seeks to reinterpret the person and work of Jesus Christ in ways that meaningfully engage African cultural experiences, socio-political realities, and spiritual worldviews. Unlike classical Western christological formulations that emerged from Greco-Roman philosophical categories, African Christology is rooted in the lived experiences of communities grappling with poverty, oppression, communal identity, and the quest for holistic salvation. Thus, African theologians present Christ as Healer, Ancestor, Liberator, Chief, and Elder Brother-images that resonate deeply with African cosmologies and social structures. These contextual models demonstrate that Christ's relevance is best understood through categories that speak directly to the existential challenges of African Christians.

The rationale for pluralities in Christology arises from the recognition that no single Christological expression can fully exhaust the mystery of Christ. The diverse cultural contexts within which Christ is encountered necessitate multiple interpretations that highlight different dimensions of His person and mission. African pluralities in Christology are therefore not contradictions but complementary perspectives that enrich global theological discourse. They affirm the universality of Christ while allowing particular communities to articulate their unique experiences of his saving presence. This plurality also reflects the multicultural nature of the global church and also aligns with contemporary theological movements that value experiential approaches to Christology.

Keywords: Christology, African Christology, Plurality, and Inculturation

Introduction

African Christianity has experienced astronomic growth since its advent in African soil. It is also not news that until in recent times the Gospel message was propagated by non-Africans and by implication, accommodating the Christian faith-message has not been without challenges amongst Africans. That is not to suggest that Africans do not believe in the personality of Christ on whom Christian faith and message is hinged on, but the struggle has been on understanding Jesus from the perspective of their realities or experiences; it is on that ground that African christological debate has grown to find a place in the academia (and even informally amongst Africans with no formal theological exposure or training). It also a fact that African soil is home to numerous ethnic groups with diverse differentiation of tribal as well as lingual multiplicity; in view of that reality, Christ has been interpreted differently from place to place. Hence, it is common to find different interpretations of who Jesus Christ is because the experiences of African people differ from one community to another. Multiplicity of interpretations of who Jesus is does not in any way suggest duplication of different kinds of Jesus but it is an indication that the same Jesus is understood differently. This research seeks to explicate the justification of different thought-pattern surrounding the personality and works of Christ among African Christians.

Statement of the Problem

Traditional Western christological models dominated theological discourse in Africa, often reflecting philosophical and cultural assumptions that do not fully engage the lived realities, worldviews, and socio-religious experiences of African communities. As African Christianity continues to grow rapidly, many believers struggle to relate to Christ through categories that appear to be foreign or disconnected from African cultural symbols, communal structures, and existential concerns such as poverty, oppression, disease, and spiritual warfare. These disconnect raises questions about the adequacy of inherited christological frameworks in addressing African spiritual and social contexts.

Furthermore, African theologians have developed diverse and contextually rich interpretations of Christ—such as Christ as Ancestor, Healer, Chief, Mediator, and Liberator—yet these models are sometimes viewed with suspicion or dismissed as syncretistic. This brings to the fore the challenge of theological legitimacy and the need to demonstrate that plurality in Christology is both biblically grounded and theologically valid. The key problem, therefore, is how to articulate a Christology that is truly meaningful to African Christians while also maintaining fidelity to the universal significance of Christ.

Methodology

In order to provide a well-articulated interpretive account of how Christology is understood from an African perspective and why multiple christological expressions emerge within African theological discourse, the researcher chose descriptive method of research. This method is considered appropriate and suitable because it enables the researcher to give vivid description and also analyse existing phenomena without short-changing any information to suit the purpose of the study. Since it is highly theoretical, data is sourced from scholarly books, conference papers, journal articles among other texts and documents considered useful for the task.

Who is Jesus to Africans?

Similar to the experience of Jesus' disciples when he (i.e. Jesus) posed the question of his identity and their struggle to respond to the question, it is undeniable that Christians all over the globe till date still grapple with that same question (most likely in different forms) contending to make meaning—of who Jesus' identity is. African Christians have in same vein struggled to appropriate the right response to that same question posed by Jesus himself. Christology from African perspective is not a protestation per se but a frantic effort made to understand or appropriate the right place to the person and works of Jesus Christ in line with the realities or lived experiences of the people of the continent.

In other words, the personality and works of Jesus Christ still remain foreign to many (if not most) of African Christians. That is not to suggest a denial of his personality or works by Africans but the crux of the matter is, if Jesus is the saviour or Messiah of the world, how does he fit into the daily lives of African Christians (and by extension, all Africans) who have had to contend with socio-economic, cultural, and political issues (or challenges) amongst other things?

In addition, the quest continues to grow because, African Christians are aiming at accommodating the personality of Jesus Christ, that is not farfetched from the fact that, Africans are to a large extent familiar with God as a divine being but Christ is still quite foreign or strange. The above view can hardly be separated from the manner in which the person of Jesus Christ was presented by early (Western) evangelisers; invariably, it is a struggle targeted at making Jesus “one of us.”

Christopher Magezi and Jacob T. Igba, in their work African theology and African Christology: Difficulty and Complexity in Contemporary Definitions and Methodological Frameworks underscored the fact that:

... Africans are familiar with God; however, Christ is an unfamiliar concept. The newness of Christ in African religiosity was worsened by the emergence of Christ with the early Western missionaries that presented Christ as a Western saviour interested in the worldviews and

problems that arise from the Western world. . . . It is apparent that many African people are not cognisant of how the Christ that the church preaches addresses their existential challenges arises from their traditional African worldview(s) (4).

Adjudging from the view advanced by Magezi and Igba, the duo attest to the fact that Africans are conversant with whom God is in their religious cosmos (or experience) but they are unfamiliar with Jesus. Their submission sheds light to the quagmire in which most African Christians have most times found themselves (i.e. easily believing the existence and power of God, but teeters with who Jesus is and the role he plays or should play in their lives). They added that such mind-set is not unconnected with the foreignness in which Christ was presented to Africans by Western missionaries; it is on that note that Christology from African perspective becomes imperative.

African Christology is a field of study within Christian theology that seeks to understand the person and work of Jesus Christ in light of African cultural and historical contexts. It explores how the Gospel message can be communicated and understood in a way that is meaningful to African people and how Christ can be seen as relevant to African issues, struggles, and hopes.

African Christology is diverse, and it reflects the different theological traditions, cultural practices, and historical experiences of the African continent. It draws on the insights and perspectives of African theologians, pastors, and scholars, as well as the insights of biblical scholars and theologians from other parts of the world.

In addition, African Christology addresses various issues, such as the significance of Jesus' life and teachings for African cultures, the role of Christ in African history and liberation, the relationship between Christianity and traditional African religions, and the implications of the Incarnation and the Atonement for African theology and spirituality, in other words, African Christians do not have problem with the nature (human-divine) of Christ but focuses on understanding how relevant his personality is to African milieu.

In view of the above, James Okoye in his work *Inculcation and Theology in Africa* advanced that: "Two differences mark African Christology. In the West Christology deals with who Christ is or sometimes with his human-divine consciousness; African Christians' interest in Christ is relational, what he does for me, how he relates to me. Tied somehow to this is the question of focus. The titles which an African confers on Christ express a relationship in the present, not the past" (72).

Inferring from Okoye's position, African Christians are more concern with how Jesus Christ fits into their community, realities and experiences (or sufferings); this could be in terms of Christ's relevance to the daily challenges confronting their lives. In furtherance of the foregoing, it is important to state that Christ's nature (especially his divinity) is not in contention or debate in the mind of an average African Christian, but the struggle is to understand how Jesus (who is the saviour of the world or humanity) shares in the plight of Africans and the role he plays in alleviating same. In other words, the interest of African Christian is to understand the relational position of Christ in his/her life; that is, he/she seeks to establish or comprehend (rather) how Christ as a person connects to him/her world or realities (Emmanuel Orobator, *The Quest for an African Christ*, 79-80).

Expiating further, Orobator has sustained that: It was Jesus of Nazareth himself who posed the definitive Christological question when he challenged his disciples: "Who do you say that I am?" (Mark 8:29 parr.). . . . This quest has burgeoned with remarkable intensity over the centuries. . . . This Christological quest has not been absent in the perspective of the still nascent African theology and Christianity. Inarguably, the name of Jesus, although relatively new in Africa, has gained 'popularity' on the lips of many African Christians. But it is equally true that millions of African Christians continue to grope for an appropriate Christological identity which can effectively lend support to their profession of faith, which faith is confronted with the challenges of African traditions, cultures and customs. The pertinence of this

Christological quest cannot be underestimated (The Quest for an African Christ, 75-76). Assessing Orobator's view, it is obvious that Christology is an age-long discourse that has had different considerations and approaches depending on the context. Interestingly, African Christians have also had their fair share of the on-going discourse considering the fact that they (African Christians) are on the quest to finding the answer to the question posed by Jesus Christ to his disciples. Such craving to finding answers (undoubtedly) arises from their experiences and quest to understanding how Jesus is the "Christ or Messiah" to Africans (especially in the face of prevailing circumstances) of the continent. In other words, christological discourse from African perspective is not only timely and relevant but it is a progressive effort being made by African theologians whose duty among others is to make the person and mission of Jesus comprehensible to African Christians. Suffice it to say then that, African Christological discourse is a necessity if the personality and works of Jesus are to be understood and assimilated beyond lips confession (about Christ) among African Christians.

Highlighting the view above, Orobator added that:

What African Christologists are engaged in is the arduous and imperative task of developing a clear conception of the person of Jesus Christ. Simply put: they seek to make Jesus Christ feel at home within the framework of the ordinary experience of African Christians. This preoccupation is evidenced by the nature of the models employed. The common element one discovers in these models is the fact that they are derived from categories which are authentically African and speak im-mediate to the African's consciousness (81).

Evaluating the submission above, it is obvious that African christological discourse is a work in progress embarked on by (but not limited to) African theologians all in their bid to finding the identity of African Christians within the Christ-person and mission space. Following from above, is the insinuation of Orobator that, different models exist through which the answer to the age long question is being sought after. That has been evident in the various modes and

models of viewing or expressing who Jesus is, or better stated, the role he (i.e. Christ) plays among each group of people has found expression (s) in diverse means and ways. Such diversity is not to be unexpected since there are diversities of experiences among Africans.

Rationale for plurality of African Christologies

Speaking of Africans, it is imperative to note that:

In the first place we must realize that Africa is not one in culture as such. In Malawi, for instance, a bride takes the bridegroom to her parents' home. In Nigeria this is defeatism. Within Nigeria, some tribes carry loads on the back, others on the head. Some tribes eat dogs, but not donkeys, others vice versa . . . It is rather better to speak of expressing Christianity in the language and practice that a particular society at a particular time could understand. We can do that in our respective groups . . . (Byang Kato, Christianity and Culture, n.p.).

Extrapolating from Kato's assertion, it is a relevant caution to understand that encapsulated in African continent is a vast array of people of different cultures and religious dispositions among other things who are striving to pledge their allegiance on Christ as Lord, and in order to make any meaningful impact on the lives of African Christians such markings must be borne in mind. That is, African Christians seeks to express their faith in Christ in diverse ways, it will therefore be erroneous to want to fuse their diversities into a single mode—such approach may hinder the rooting of Christ in Africa.

Inferring from Kato's postulation on the plurality of Christology, it is a fact that, different generations or groups of people have always expressed their conceptions of who Jesus is or what he meant to them in ways and forms best understood by them. By implication, the question of "Who do you say that I am?" continue to have different responses or answers from people of different backgrounds based on their understanding of Christ's personality and function.

In addition, it is important to stress that whatever disposition that the church fathers held and passed same to generations after them came

from a worldview of particular culture or experience. That is not to suggest in any way that, there exist different Christ to different people of the globe, rather Christ is one and the same to all people who have pledged their allegiance on him. However, Jesus Christ is encountered, experienced and expressed differently in light of people's realities; hence, the existence of Christology from African perspective and the rationale behind its plurality (Emmanuel Martey, "Christological Foundations of the New Testament and Contemporary African Christology" 93).

One response to the question of the basis for plurality of African Christologies that resonated among many scholars is the fact that "plurality of African Christologies is grounded in biblical precedence. . . Christians understand Jesus' critical question, "Who do you say I am" (Mk. 8:29), to be addressed to individual and generation in every context (Stinton, 29)." Simply put: people of different contexts attempt to Christologise in accordance with their immediate situation or reality. Suffice it to say that, religious experience of two individuals may not be the same, and should they (i.e. those individuals) be required to offer an account of their experiences, variations may abound. In other words, the rationale for the multiple Christologies is not as a result of different people attempting to bring to the fore different Christ, but an expression of how Christ have been experienced or understood differently.

Diane B. Stinton has further highlighted on the rationale for plurality of African Christologies when the author quoted John S. Pobee who stressed that multiplicity of Christology is as a result of:

... People's attempt to articulate and portray the Christ who confronts them or whom they have experienced or met on a Damascus Road. And they do that articulation from their being and as they are. So one ... can expect different and varying emphases in that articulation, differences determine by one's experiences, by one's heritage, by one's gender, by one's race. The encounter on the Emmaus road is not identical with the encounter on the Damascus Road (29).

Pobee's view according Stinton is in consonance with what has been said earlier. That is true, considering the fact that, hardly would any religious encounter bear same manifestation among people of different context. Experiences among people of different backgrounds, heritage, gender and race may likely not be the same, and in that regard, formulation or expression of Christology should not be expected to have same outcome. For instance, a look at the people of Nigeria alone gives an idea as to the likelihood of multiplicity of Christology. It is important to note that "Nigeria's large population is very diverse, consisting of over 200 different ethno-linguistic groups" (Falola, 4), and that being the case, it will be erroneous to lump these diverse ethnicities and cultures together and assume them to have a single Christology. With the instance as given above, it only points to the fact that Africa will no doubt have numerous formulations or existence of diverse Christologies.

In view of the foregoing, another reason is given for the existence of African Christology in its plural form. Lending her voice again, she opined that, the quest for christological understanding akin to a given context has contributed in great measure to the plurality of Christologies in Africa. Stinton observed that:

... Rationale for plurality of Christologies is found in a shift in theology of mission that occurred in the mid-twentieth century. David Bosch explains in a clear contrast between the "era of noncontextualization" in Protestant and Catholic missions and the new approach. The former method, lasting until approximately 1950, entailed theology (in the singular), being defined once and for all and then "indigenized" into third-world cultures without losing any of its essence. Hence, Western theology, as the dominant theology was regarded to have universal validity and was exported in its "unaltered – and unalterable forms" to the younger churches overseas. In contrast, "contextualization" assumes the "experimental and contingent nature of all theology" (Jesus of Africa, 30).

A critical look at her observation points to the fact that, it became necessary for a paradigm

shift from serving a well garnished Christian theology that have been far from quenching the thirst and hunger of Africans to a more relevant one. In plain terms, the reality for change in the approach of thinking (theologically) for Africans soon gave way to allow Africans experience Christ and think for themselves. It became inviolable to make room for contextualization of the gospel as time went by. That is, instead of spoon-feeding the younger church abroad with an “already-made” theology which left the people with a void because of the foreignness of the content, Africans began to theologize for themselves, hence, the rationale for plurality of African Christologies. And having given the instance of how populated the continent (of Africa) is, it is only proper to expect that there exist plurality of Christologies in Africa.

Suffice it to say then, that, “given the diversity of contexts in Africa, it is natural to expect African Christologies “each cultural context has come up with its own understanding of who Jesus Christ is for them in their given cultural, religious and political reality.” Conclusively, “No one Christology may encompass all the aspects of the subject” (Stinton, 30). Going forward, it is obvious that there are myriads of factors which form the basis for multiplicity of Christologies in Africa, therefore, it is only appropriate to speak of Christology in African Christianity bearing the peculiarities of the people that make up the continent, otherwise any author that embark on any discourse that neglects such reality may have embarked on a futile journey. In other words, it is only wise that acknowledgement be made to the fact the continent houses hundreds of ethnic diversities whose view of Christ cannot be the same or captured by a single christological expression.

African Christology and the Significance of Inculturation

Inculturation holds a significant place in the discourse of African Christology. That is, to fully grasp the on-going debate about Christology in Africa the importance of inculturation must be highlighted. It is a fact that the utmost desire at the heart of evangelizers of Christian gospel is the reception of the message by their audience; that is, Christian evangelizers

desire that those who hear the gospel message believe and accept the new pattern of life presented to them. Nevertheless, it is important that the message that is presented finds a point of penetration/catena; that is, there is (just as it was) the need to have a connecting ground between what the people are (or were) used to (or already know) and the new way of life. Simply put: in order that Christianity gain ground in any given community there is the need for mutual engagement between the culture of the people and biblical culture in form of the Gospel. In other words, Inculturation of the gospel is a necessity if the Christian message is to make any meaning to listeners (especially to Africans).

Laurenti Magesa in his book Anatomy of Inculturation: Transforming the Church in Africa has advanced that:

From the Christian theological perspective, Inculturation is understood to be the process whereby the faith already embodied in one culture encounters another culture. In this encounter the faith becomes part and parcel of this new culture. It fuses with this new culture and simultaneously transforms it into novel religious-cultural reality. In practical terms, this process involves the interaction of mutual critique and affirmation. It entails acceptance or rejection of thought forms, symbolic and linguistic expressions and attitudes between the faith-cultures in question. This process is usually primarily instinctive and popular, without much systematic planning and arrangement to it. But can also be promoted and enhanced by institutional study and direction (17).

From Magesa’s submission, the process of Inculturation is one that is mutual and must be deliberate, it is a moment of critical engagement between varying belief systems. And in regards to the Christian faith, it encounters an already existing system of belief (s), rituals and patterns and seek to bring change which may come in forms of modification, alterations or otherwise; this occurrence is rather unconscious or (better stated) unplanned. One fact that must be established is that, this new culture which meets an already existing one agrees to simmer into

what has already been established when it is accepted.

Dennis M. Doyle in *The Concept of Inculturation in Roman Catholicism: A Theological Consideration*, shares similar view when he maintained that:

Inculturation is the term that Catholic leaders and theologians have used in recent decades to denote a process of engagement between the Christian Gospel and a particular culture. The term is intended conceptually both to safeguard the integrity of the Gospel and to encourage sensitivity to various cultural contexts. Inculturation as a theological notion has been specifically associated with John Paul II's strategy for evangelization, including what is known as the "new evangelization" that focuses on cultures that had traditionally been Christian but which are now not clearly so (1).

Doyle's postulation is clearly structured. In the sense that the approach defines what Inculturation sets out to achieve which is Christian Gospel's engaging another culture other than its own in a bid to establishing its (the Gospel's) roots in a strange land and culture. In addition, it is worth mentioning that, inculturation set out to pursue such goal taking into consideration the sensitivity of new culture that is coming in contact with. In other words, Inculturation (certainly) does not have domination or elimination of an existing people's way of life as its agenda, but strives to find a place to be accommodated without any given culture necessarily losing its authenticity or virtue.

In further advancing the discourse, John A. Onimhawo and Peter O. O. Ottuh in *A Critical Study of Inculturation and Evangelization of African Culture* submitted that:

The term, "inculturation" either as a process or a concept is very difficult to define. For this reason, many definitions and explanations have been advanced. Most times some scholars have employed such terms as adaptation, Africanization, accommodation, indigenization, incarnation, acculturation, contextualization, etc., to connote the term, "inculturation." In the logical sense of it, none of the above terms can alternate inculturation. For some, inculturation is God's self-revelation from a people's cultural

perspective, tradition and life and the same people responding from the same perspective. Others define inculturation as the activity of the church, at a particular place in time, to present and live the Christian message faithfully in languages, signs, and symbols and actions which speak to the people in so convincing way that they naturally and readily identify with it and whole heartedly participate in it and contribute to it (93-94).

Deducible from the authors' assertion is the fact that, the concept or its process comes with some attendant challenges, which among others include near to none universality or having a single (most) acceptable operational definition. Onimhawo and Ottuh stated further that, some scholars have adopted other terms to mean inculturation, however; in their argument none of those concepts can substitute for inculturation. The latter part of their submission holds some sense worth noting, which is the fact that, inculturation is viewed by others as a process of the church presenting the gospel within a particular culture borrowing relevant characteristics or icons of same place and culture which are in tandem with the message of the gospel in order to convincingly present the gospel to people of a particular place and culture. Two variables that stand out in their view are people and culture; by inference it is not out of place to add that in other for the message of the gospel to find a thriving ground within a given context, the way of life (cultural disposition) of the inhabitants must be given adequate attention.

It is important to reiterate that the existence or divinity of Christ is not (and has not been) a subject of contention among African Christians, it is obvious that the Christian Gospel found a fertile soil among Africans (Orobator, *The Quest for an African Christ*, 79-80).

However, it is essential to emphasize that:

To establish the reign of Christ in Africa means to start from the most basic elements of black culture in order to revitalize modern life. It is essential, in fact, that the impact of a truly inculcuated Christianity should be made plainly manifest to the African who has been and still is prey to injustice, disease and other social evils. In which way can Jesus be an African among the

Africans according to their own religious experience? This is the question which a truly African theology must solve. Christology thus understood and taken as a starting point will eventually lead towards a truly African ecclesiology where all the traditional charisms will be given their full rights (Benezet Bujo, African Theology in Its Social Context, 9)

From Bujo's point of view, the significance of Inculturation to deepening the roots of Christianity in Africa cannot be overemphasized. He is (in other words) advocating for a theology (Christology) that resonates with the pain of Africans and understands their yearnings for a just and sane environment (such that is cutting across different strata of the society. Bujo's call is hinged on the fact that, any theology that will make sense to Africans must be one that reflects the realities of Africans.

Furthermore, he is campaigning for a functional Christology if the reign of Christ is to make any meaning. That is to say, Christ must be known to Africans far beyond just his (Christ's) name, for only then can the Church in Africa be said to have taken its roots—the gospel message must be relevant to the realities of African Christians. Simply put, contextualization (as some prefer to refer to inculturation) is cardinal to the growth and understanding of the Christian faith in Africa and for that reason effort must be made in order to deepen the roots of Christianity in Africa via Inculturation.

Bitrus A. Sarma in his work *Reading the Bible in Africa: Understanding and Applying the Message*, has further lend his voice in amplifying the significance of presenting Christ within the context akin to Africans; he humbly submitted that, in order for the gospel message to make any meaning, it must be preached within context. In further buttressing his postulation, he quoted Beverly Zink-Sawyer who maintained that "When we take a look at the history of preaching since New Testament times, we may be surprised to discover an ever-present concern for communicating the gospel in a manner that will be understood by those who hear" (214).

Inferring from Sawyer's position as captured by Sarma, it is deducible that the gospel thrived on

the wings of Inculturation considering the fact that the New Testament account which contain Christ's message had a multi-culture or context outlook when it was preached from the cradle. Sarma further evinced that Sawyer "begins with Jesus to demonstrate how the gospel message was deliberately encased in familiar language and imagery" (214). It can be said based on what Sarma is attesting to, that, Jesus was sensitive to every cultural peculiarity when he preached the gospel—Jesus ensured that every cultural setting had its own approach with which the gospel found a spot to connect ("language and imagery").

Steven B. Bevans in *Models of Contextual Theology* portrayed that: "Inculturation is fundamentally Christological because it echoes the incarnation—the Word becoming flesh in a specific context. Theology that fails to engage with culture risks presenting a Christ detached from the realities of the people." (55). The Christ who is a Friend and Brother is well sought for: and any presentation of him (i.e. Jesus Christ) far from one who identify with any given culture (and Africa in particular), is likely to be misunderstood, misrepresented, and misinterpreted or utterly rejected. For Africans it is the Christ that hears the groaning of their hearts contained in their prayers and songs that finds a dwelling among them.

In addition, Maluleke Tiyinko believes that: "A truly African Christology must engage the concrete realities of African life, including its cultural and social systems. This is the essence of inculturation, where Christ is not an alien figure but one who assumes and redeems the African identity" ('Half a Century of Christian Theologies,'10). An inculturated Christology brings Christ closer to the culture and reality of a people, and it is in that vein that African Christology attempt to bring the message of Christ face to face with the culture of the people. And gladly so, Christ's salvific invite does not segregate or profile one culture over the other, rather his invitation cut across board to every clime and culture. It is in that thought that: "Inculturation ensures that Christ is seen not as a foreign saviour but as one intimately connected to the African worldview" (Charles Nyamiti, *Christ as Our Ancestor: Christology from an*

African Perspective, 45). In simple terms: inculcation paves way for the accommodation of Christ among Africans as he interact with the culture of the people, and the Christ who is no alien to African culture will no doubt permeate faster than imagine within the ranks of African Christians. That is made possible because: "Inculcation is a Christological task because it mirrors Christ's mission: embracing human culture to transform it from within. Without this, Christology risks becoming a doctrine disconnected from lived experience" (78). Christology when birthed from the loins of interaction with culture smoothens the rough path that is required by the Gospel-message to thrive; summarily, Christ readiness to pitch his tent with the sick, dejected, poor and oppressed Africans as the message is made friendly with their cultures gains acceptance into the hearts of men.

Nevertheless, it is significant to heed the caution of Yusufu Turaki in Foundations of African Traditional Religions and Worldviews when he observed that, "It is important not to confuse syncretism with what is called the theology of incarnation or Inculcation. Inculcation is a positive thing, intended to deepened understanding and meaning by use of indigenous language or symbols" (160). Such call became imperative as there is the likelihood of equating Inculcation and syncretism to mean same thing or even dismissing it; it is obvious from Yusufu's submission that, Inculcation is valuable in deepening Christian faith through the use or employment of indigenous language or symbols in order to make the Gospel relevant to the people.

Conclusion

Christology from an African perspective helps us understand Jesus in ways that make sense within African culture, history, and daily life. It shows that Jesus is not only a figure in the Bible but also a living presence who understand the pains, hopes, and struggles of African people. African Christology presents Jesus in different shaded such as healer, ancestor, liberator, king, and life-giver. These images help Christians relate the gospel to their own experiences,

especially in areas of community life, poverty, sickness, injustice, and spiritual needs. In this way, Christ becomes close, familiar, and meaningful to African believers.

The rationale for pluralities in Christology means that there can be many valid ways of understanding who Jesus is. This is important because different communities experience Christ differently based on their culture and context. Africa is a continent with many cultures, languages, and traditions. Therefore, a single expression of Christology cannot speak to everyone in the same way. Plurality allows each group to interpret Christ in a way that is true to Scripture but also relevant to their local realities. It also encourages respect, dialogue, and unity among Christian groups, even when they express their faith differently.

Inculcation plays a key role in this process. It means bringing the Christian message into African culture in way that transform both the

gospel message and the cultural practices positively. Thorough inculcation, African symbols, stories, music, community life and values are used to express faith in Christ without loosing the core message of the gospel. This helps Christianity take deep root in African soil. In conclusion, Christology from an African perspective, supported by the rationale for pluralities and guided by inculcation, enriches the global understanding of Christ. It helps African Christians express their faith fully and meaningfully while remaining faithful to the universal message of Jesus.

Works Cited

Bevans, Steven. B. Models of Contextual Theology. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002.
Bujo, Benezet. African Theology in Its Social Context. Nairobi, Kenya: Pauline Publications Africa, 2003.

Doyle, Dennis M. "The Concept of Inculcation in Roman Catholicism: A Theological Consideration" University of Dayton, Religious Studies Faculty Publications, 2012, 1- 13.
https://ecommons.udayton.edu/rel_fac_pub/102.

Accessed on 13th February, 2022.

Falola, Toyin and Matthew M. Heaton. *A History of Nigeria*. Cambridge University Press, UK, 2008.

Kato, Byang. *Christianity and Culture*. Kisumu: Evangel Publishing House, 1975.

Magesa, Laurenti. *Anatomy of Inculturation: Transforming the Church in Africa*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2004.

Magezi, Christopher and Jacob T. Igba. "African theology and African Christology: Difficulty and Complexity in Contemporary Definitions and Methodological Frameworks". *HTS Teologise Studies/Theological Studies* 74 (1), 2018.

Maluleke, Tinyiko. "Half a Century of African Christian Theologies". *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, Issue 122, 2005, 4-23.

Martey, Emmanuel. "Christological Foundations of the New Testament and Contemporary African Christology" *Ghana Bulletin of Theology*, Vol. 1. 2006, 83-93.

Nyamiti, Charles. *Christ as Our Ancestor: Christology from an African Perspective*. Gweru: Mambo Press, 1984.

Okoye, James. "Inculturation and Theology in Africa" *Mission Studies*, Vol.XW-1&2, 27&28, 1997, 64-83.

Onimhawo, John A. et al. "A Critical Study of Inculturation and Evangelization of African Culture." *International Journal of Integrative Humanism*. Vol. 9 No.1 2018, 93-97.

Orobator, Emmanuel Agbonkhimeghe. "The Quest for an African Christ: An Essay on Contemporary African Christology" *Hekima Review*, No.11, 1994, 75-99.

Pobee, John S. quoted in Diane B. Stinton, *Jesus of Africa: Voices of Contemporary African Christology*. Nairobi, Kenya: Pauline Publication Africa, 2004.

Sarma, Bitrus A. *Reading the Bible in Africa: Understanding and Applying the Message*. Jos, Plateau State: Yakson Printing Press, 2015.

Stinton, Diane. *Jesus of Africa: Voices of Contemporary African Christology*. Nairobi, Kenya: Pauline Publication Africa, 2004.

Turaki, Yusufu. *Foundations of African Traditional Religions and Worldviews*. Nairobi: International Bible Society, 2001.

Zink-Sawyer, Beverly quoted in Bitrus A. Sarma *Reading the Bible in Africa: Understanding and Applying the Message*. Jos, Plateau State: Yakson Printing Press, 2015.