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Viewing Christology from the Image of Feminism: A Theological Approach

Dr. Temitope T. Bello

Senior Lecturer, Department of Religious Studies Ekiti State University, Ado- Ekiti, Nigeria

Abstract:

People claim that Christological teaching is of man's image that is the reason for this paper. The main concern of this paper is to x-ray the critiques of women as Christ image.

This paper will go into the history of Christian theology on feminist and inclusive Christology. The author will try to explain how symbolism of Christ cannot be that of women. Question will be raised in theology as well as other disciplines. The author wants to raise dust on the question that can the central of Christianity support the full personhood of women. The author of this paper will however study how women's experience is pluralistic and deeply influenced not only by gender or by race, but class and culture. The author will also explain the possibility to develop a Christology which will affirm female embodiment. This is also going to be feminist critique of Christology. This paper looks into some general statements of feminism womanhood and outlines issues that needs further research and experimentation in order to deepen the understanding of who we are as human beings. Most especially the African women experience, focusing on the facts and feeding of women in African and women in the Church.

The writer is looking at the re-imagining of Christ to reflect Christ symbolic Christians seeing Christ as women. He will also think and write toward inclusive Christology.

This essay illustrates some of the general statements above and outlines issues that need further research and experimentation in order to deepen our understanding of who we are as human beings. First, I describe women's experience, focusing on the facts and feelings of women in Africa and of women in the Christian Church. Feelings of women in Africa and of women in the Christian Church. Next, I examine the assumptions underlying these experiences, pointing out an ordering of society that assumes that the concept of maleness encompasses the whole of human being. I discuss the effect of language and of Christian anthropology, and attempt to understand the reason for our acceptance of the status quo. Finally, I review feminism of the Christian variety in order to highlight some aspects of its liberative perspective, which will enable all to begin the March toward full humanity.

Keywords: *Christology, inclusive, women image critique feminist*

1. Introduction

1.1. What Is Feminism?

Feminism has become the shorthand for the proclamation that women's experience should become an integral part of what goes into the definition of being human. It highlights the woman's world and her worldview as she struggles side by side with the man to realize her full potential as a human being. The complex nature of feminism often goes unrecognized as people focus on the demand for linguistic changes. (That demand too needs serious consideration as we shall see later.) Feminism then emphasizes the wholeness of the community as made up of male and female beings. It seeks to express what is not so obvious, that is, that male-humanity is a partner with female-humanity, and that both expressions of humanity are needed to shape a balanced community within which each will experience a fullness of being. Feminism calls for the incorporation of the woman into the community of interpretation of what it means to be human.

But feminism is not the word of the female; it is the word of all who are conscious of the true nature of the human community as a mixture of those things, values, roles and temperaments that we divide into feminine and masculine. It is the word of all who seek a community in which all will be enabled to attain the fullness of their being.¹ Feminism then is part of the whole movement geared to liberating the human community from entrenched attitudes and structures that can only operate if dichotomies and hierarchies are maintained. Its reappearance in the West is a signal that even if we do not feel oppressed as a result of race or class and do not feel exploited, we may still not be living our full potential as human beings simply because we were born female or male.² Feminism stands for openness, creativity, and dynamic human relationships. It has apostles among both men and women, people who believe that the question of gender has more to it than biological operations and who admit that the "female" principle and perspective have not been explored sufficiently, while the "male" has been overused to the point of stagnation, thus plunging us all into a status quo that defies analysis.³

2. Inclusion of Female in the Theology of Christology

Christology claims a universal significance for Christ. Contemporary Christologies struggle with the implications of this claim, raising questions about the inclusivity of Christology from many perspectives, including questions arising from Jewish –Christian dialogue, dialogue with other religions, and most recently ecological concerns. My focus is on the inclusion of women in our understanding of Christology.

The image of Christ is ambiguous for many contemporary women, serving both as a source of life and as the legitimator or oppression. Women have found and continue to find comfort, strength, and courage through their faith in Christ while at the same time, the image of Christ can be interpreted as a symbol of male dominance and female submission. As women become aware of the patriarchal and an drocentric bias of Christianity, the fact that the central symbol in Christianity is a male savior raises basic questions about the nature of humanity and divinity. What is the significance of the maleness of Jesus? Does it support the view of the male as normative humanity? Does it reveal God as male? How has the symbol been used in the praxis of the community? Is it possible to develop a Christology which is non- and rocentric, a Christology which is truly inclusive of women and men?

The history of Christian theology is not reassuring in regard to such an inclusive Christology. Christ has generally been presented throughout the ages as the male revealer of a male God whose divine authority supports the patriarchal structures of Church and society. Nor does the present praxis of the Christian Churches encourage Christian feminists who would like to retrieve the Christ symbol. Fundamentalist groups continue to preach the headship of Christ over the Church in order to uphold male headship in the family as well as in the church. The Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches use the maleness of Jesus as a reason for not recognizing the leadership gifts of women. Ordained women in other Churches suffer from the patriarchal patterns which endure not only within society but also in their Churches. A visit to the art gallery, where we are able to see how succeeding ages have imaged Christ, reinforces the view of the male as dominant, the female as supportive. The young mother is portrayed on her knees before her infant son while the sorrowful mother stands with other women at the foot of the cross. The message from all sides is that women's role is one of support for men.⁴ History, contemporary Churchpraxis and art all present images of Christ which legitimate the subordination of women. It is not surprising that for some contemporary women there is no place for Christ. Naomi Goldenberg expresses the conviction of these women.

Jesus Christ cannot symbolize the liberation of women. A culture that maintains a masculine image for its highest divinity cannot allow its women to experience themselves as the equals of its men. In order to develop a theology of women's liberation, feminists have to leave Christ and the Bible behind.⁵

Can women who have experienced Christ as a source of life, and ho continue to find in the image of Christ strength and courage in their own struggles for justice, abandon the symbol which has shaped their religious response to life?

In the past it might be argued that women were included within the lower part of male humanity and in this way were included in the incarnation and redemption of Christ. But in our day, the Aristotelian biological basis for the view of the female as a "defective" male cannot be used to support Aquinas' argument that Jesus' maleness was an ontological necessity. Maleness no longer represents universal generic humanity. This fact is acknowledged by many disciplines as the androcentric nature of knowledge itself is recognized and challenged. Philosophy, theology, anthropology, psychology, sociology, history, literature – all have considered the male as normative humanity and the female in relation to the male.⁶ As women become active subjects in all these disciplines, this an drocentric view of humanity is no longer tenable. Changes in our understanding of human raise questions in theology as well as in other disciplines. What would Christology be like if it were truly inclusive? Perhaps even more important, how might popular devotion image Christ in ways that do not contribute to male domination? Can the central image of Christianity support the full personhood of women?

I speak as a middle class, black Nigerian. I cannot pressure to speak for "women," but I have listened to some women's voices as the y confront images of Christ and either reject or transform those images. These voices are not only North American but also Asian, African, and Latin American. I am becoming conscious of the strong voices of Nigerian women who are proposing a womanist theology and Christology that is emerging from their experience as black women.⁷ I am also conscious of the voices which I have not heard, even within my own country, and my own city-voices of African women, native women, immigrant women, poor women.⁴ this paper reflects on what I have heard.

2.1. Women's Experience

Studies of women's lives show that women's experience is pluralistic and deeply influenced not only by gender by race, class, and culture. Among the diverse experiences of women, some areas are common and underlie the way women are confronting and transforming Christology. Three areas of experience seem to be particularly formative: the experience of female embodiment, women's experience of oppression, and women's experience of interrelatedness. Women from different situations will experience their embodiment, their oppression, and their interrelatedness differently, but these three areas of women's experience – often ignored, denied, or subsumed under male experience – are being claimed by women today and are thus becoming the ground for new understandings of human life and new insights into the Christian tradition.⁸ They raise central questions about the way that Christology has functioned and they point to ways that it must be rethought.

The first of these areas of experience that of female embodiment, has been viewed within the Christian tradition in a negative way. Western theology has been viewed within the Christian tradition in a negative way. Western theology has been based on a dualistic world view which placed history over nature, soul over body, male over female. In this dualistic view, women have been identified with nature and with the body while men have been identified with spirit. Our bodies

were viewed by the "Church fathers" as "the gateway to hell," an attitude which continues to be reflected in pornography and is implicit in much of modern advertising. A positive view of female embodiment which does not identify women with body nor view biology as destiny, but which takes the importance of the female body seriously, is crucial for Christianity. Christianity is an incarnational religion, but it has often been uncomfortable with the body, particularly the female body. Many women, including theologians, are writing from the experience of their own bodies, drawing on images of birth, of nourishment, of women's suffering and joy. For some women, the consciousness of the sacredness of the female body has led to a rejection of the image of Christ. Rita Nakashima Brock articulates the problem as they experience it.

The doctrine that only a perfect male form can incarnate God fully and be salvific makes our individual live in female bodies a prison against God and denies our actual, sensual, changing selves as the locus of divine activity.⁹

The question must be addressed: Is it possible to develop a Christology which will affirm female embodiment? In an effort to provide this, some women are searching for new images of Christ and for new approaches to Christology.

Women's experience of oppression is the context in which women confront images of Christ. Women in all parts of the world are becoming aware of the systemic oppression of women in every culture. The ways that this oppression is experienced differ radically throughout the world but one common question arises from reflection on the experience of oppression. Does the image of Christ encourage a passive acceptance of suffering, or does it provide energy to engage in the struggle against evil?

Voices from the third world offer new insights from the perspective of persons who are conscious of their place at the bottom of society. They turn to Christ as one who was despised, who died as a criminal, and who willingly associated with the marginalized, including women. They turn also to his mother, a poor woman, an unwed mother, a refugee, a widow, the mother of a convict. They see themselves not only as standing by the cross, but as on the cross.

It is not only in the third world countries that women are oppressed. Patterns of domination and submission vary but they are present world-wide. Feminist studies are exploring the structure of oppression in the light of race class, and gender and are discovering global connections within the web of oppression. Can we find in the symbol of Christ hope in our struggles for justice for ourselves and all women? Christology in the past and present has supported structures of dominance and submission. The headship of Christ over his body, the Church, reflected in the headship of the husband over his wife, has legitimate male dominance and female submission. The language of Christ as servant has encouraged submissive attitudes, especially among the powerless. Can Christology help women to address structures of domination and submission or does the image of Christ contribute to the victimization of women? Can Christology be empowered for all women?

The experience of interrelatedness is one which feminist writers ascribe to women.¹⁰ Women have traditionally found identity in relation to others as mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters. As women become more aware of themselves as autonomous historical subjects, the values of interrelatedness continue to shape women's consciousness and are reflected in efforts to reshape Christology. In the past, the single male individual could represent all humanity. Today an emphasis on concreteness recognizes the particularity and limitations of each human life while at the same time we are becoming more aware of our interrelatedness – not only to one another in our global home, but to the generations who preceded us and to those who will come after us. This awareness of interrelatedness is extending to all of creation, reaching beyond planet Earth to embrace the cosmos.

As women move from a position of inferiority and domination to one of equality and full personhood, ways of relating to one another in family, society, and Church are being challenged. Hierarchical images of domination are being replaced by images which stress interdependence and mutuality. These images refer not only to human relations but to our relationship with nature. The subordination of women and nature is being recognized in all its destructiveness.¹¹ Our very survival as humans demand new ways of being and of being-in-relationship with one another and with nature. Can Christology be open to such a future or does it bind us to the past?

2.2. Women's Experience: Africa

Women's experience of being persons primarily in relation to others – as mother or as wife – predominates in Africa. A woman's social status depends on these relationships and not on any qualities or achievements of her own. Christiana Opong's research involving university students shows that young women of today in Africa still see themselves and are seen by their male counterparts as 'somehow owned by their men who support them. They are economic attachments to men; their wage is seen as supplementary.' Thus, the traditional norm within which women are expected to earn an income and to provide for at least part of their own as well as their children's needs is perpetuated. So is the norm that makes housework the exclusive responsibility of women.¹²

V. W. Turner's analysis of the "transitional rites for Ndemba girls" shows women to be pawns in sociopolitical games and alliances. The woman is the one who moves from one community to another as a result of the virilocal nature of marriage. The Nkanga marriage ritual has a "political value as an integrative mechanism." "But because at the same time it deprived other groups, such as the "elementary family," minimal matrilineage and often the village of a useful member, it involved loss and disturbance in a local field of kinship relations." Although the woman's personal growth strengthens the wider field of politico-kinship relations, "it confers benefits on the outside group," the loss suffered by her local group is seen as a short-term loss because "her children would come back to the lineage of their mother. ... Thus, today's loss would be tomorrow's gain".¹³ What happens to the woman as a person is never discussed. Matriliney may give the impression of the structural dominance of women in certain parts of Africa, but (even where the marriage is not virilocal) no real power resides in the hands of the woman. As to political power, even the matrilineal, matrilocal Asante are not matriarchal. Busia points out that for political purposes the matrilineal bond is significant. But it is so only insofar as the Ohemaa (the queen

mother) nominates the Ohene (the ruler). In today's Ghana and in the context of modern political power struggles, the maternal line is irrelevant. No real political power comes from one's birth by a particular woman. One may become an Asante ruler or head of the Abusua, yes, but a modern politician, no!¹⁴

As to the religious role of women: much as I would like to join the chorus of voices that points out women's prominence in traditional cults, experience prevents me from doing so. Traditional African has many cults from which women, sometimes even girls, are excluded, and some whose practices women may not even see. The Oro cult of the Yoruba people (boys who have just completed the seclusion and ritual that mark their transition to adulthood) is examples. Granted there are exclusive cults and rituals for women (widowhood rites, for example) but I have yet to come across one ritual that takes place in the daytime and that decrees that no males should see it. In addition, the supposed ritual impurity of the menstruating woman places her outside full involvement in religious ritual for almost half her life.¹⁵

Traditional sex roles in Africa operate in such a way as to make both women and men economically productive. However, women make pots that are sold cheaply; men make ritual objects and carvings that are highly regarded. Men plant yams; women have to be content with cassava. The technology that modifies men's labor is welcomed; the modernization of women's work is viewed with suspicious – African women still grind and pound the hours away women in African did not need wars to make them workers – they have always worked. The question is, what kind of work, and how has it been valued by society? What initiatives have we women been allowed? How much brain power is needed to carry on in the way I have been socialized?¹⁶

The human spirit, even in Africa's tightly regulated culture, cannot be completely subjugated to community decree. Thus, in spite of all women have broken through and insisted that the community is the poorer for putting shackles around the feet of their contribution; it does not exonerate the African continent from the charge of sexism.

2.3. Women's Experience: The Church

Responding to a question on the participation of women in Church practices and the place of their special needs and concerns in the agenda of the Church, an African woman wrote: "The women are very much concerned about the Church, but the Church is not so much concerned about women." This blunt statement underlies the existence of powerful Christian women's associations such as the YWCA. In lay Christian organizations the integration of women and men reflects the human community in a realistic manner, though one cannot say the same for their involvement.¹⁷ Church women are the acknowledged backbone of the Church's boards and when they do more often than not, they are to represent "women's interests." A woman finally became influential in the World Council of Churches: Twila Cavert, a Presbyterian woman from the United States and a member of the YWCA. She confronted Visser'tHooft, the first General Secretary of the council, with the fact of women's contribution, and worked to have studies on the subject of women undertaken in preparation for the First Assembly of the WCC.¹⁸ Olive Wyon, a British theologian, had been invited as a theologian to help with the preparation of studies for the First Assembly and was asked to give "some time to the women's study".¹⁹ The early history of the WCC shows the special efforts that had to be made in the provisional constitutions of Utrecht and of Amsterdam in order to insure the inclusion of the "laity – women and men." The male clericalism inherent in the structures of the Church demanded this. A quota of one-third laity (women and men) was agreed upon. This goal has yet to be reached. As W. A. Visser't Hooft observed, "too few Churches are willing to carry out in practice what the whole ecumenical family has so often said about the place of laity, men and women, in the life of the Church".²⁰ After more than thirty years, women still have to make a special case to secure 12.5 percent of the seats at the Assembly of the WCC. Women have always needed advocates (such as Madeline Barot and Brigalia Bam) in the WCC Secretary, "untiringly" reminding the WCC and its member Churches. The Church has never tried to build a dynamic community of women and men. I never cease to be astonished at how little we have actually accomplished in community-building. The young people of Amsterdam 1948 (the WCC constitutive assembly, whose theme was "man's Disorder and God's Design")²¹ attended as a shadow Assembly; the women featured in the deliberations as a "concern" (WCC 1948, 29-30). This "concern" was part of Committee IV, which deliberated on "Concerns of the Churches." These include: the life and work of women in the church; the significance of the laity in the Church; the Christian approach to the Jews' Christian reconstruction and inter-church aid.

I wish to explore how these three areas of experience – female embodiment, female oppression, and female interrelatedness – challenge our ways of imaging Christ and demand that we transform these images and rethink our Christology. The work has already begun. But before considering some of the constructive attempts to transform Christology in the light of women's experience, it is necessary to look at the problem. What are the critiques which have been raised and which must be considered by all who desire Christianity to be "good news" for women?

3. Feminist Critique of Christology

One of the strongest reactions to the image of Christ is that of Mary Daly who in her 1973 book, *beyond God the Father*, was already calling women to move "beyond Christolatry" to a world without models: As a uniquely masculine image and language for divinity loses credibility, so also the idea of a single divine incarnation in a human being of the male sex may give way in the religious consciousness to an increased awareness of the power of Being in all persons.²²

In response to those who admit that the Christ symbol has been used in ways oppressive for women, but that it need not be so used, Daly replied:

If the symbol can be "used" that way and in fact has a long history of being "used" that way, isn't this an indication of some inherent deficiency in the symbol itself?²³

It is not just that the symbol is male, and in Daly's words: "If God is male, then the male is God."²⁴ It is particularly the image of Jesus as sacrificial victim which Daly sees as destructive for women. She points out that the qualities that Christianity idealizes, especially for women, are those of a victim: sacrificial love, passive acceptance of suffering, humility, meekness, and so forth. Women are not able to measure up to this impossible model nor are they able, in the Catholic Church, to identify ritually with Christ's sacrifice as priests. "Thus, doomed to failure even in emulating the victim, women are plunged more deeply into victimization." They are encouraged to imitate the sacrificial love of Jesus, but they remain identified with Eve and with evil.²⁵ Daly's confrontation with images of Christ led her to a definitive rejection of Christianity. By imposing a male model from the past, Daly is convinced that Christianity prevents women from discovering God, or "New Being," incarnated in the present in their own lives.

The doctrine of the atonement raises special problems in Christology. We have considered Mary Daly's critique that Christology has encouraged women to be victims. Rita Nakashima Brock argues that Christology supports the patriarchal family by its language of father-son. She refers to God the Father's acceptance of his son's death as "cosmic child abuse," writing that the "father allows, or even inflicts, the death of his only perfect son."²⁶ It is all too easy for Christology to glorify suffering and to discourage the acceptance of personal responsibility for one's own life. As women become autonomous subjects of history, the myths that have encouraged women to be passive victims within families and society are being shattered. Is Christology such a myth, or can it offer women the energy, courage, and hope to work for change and, if necessary and possible, to move out of oppressive situations?

These concerns must be addressed by those who are unwilling to reject Christianity and its central image. While acknowledging the difficulties, a number of feminist theologians have undertaken the task of transforming images of Christ in the light of women's experience. The pioneering work of Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza has been particularly helpful in developing a critical hermeneutic that uncovers the oppressive and the liberating aspects of Christianity for women.²⁷ Rosemary Radford Ruether was one of the first systematic theologians to undertake the task of "liberating Christology from patriarchy."²⁸ Rita Nakashima Brock has attempted "the feminist redemption of Christ."¹⁷ Patricia Wilson-Kastner even suggests that Christology and feminism can be mutually enriching.²⁹

I will consider some efforts to rethink the central image of Christianity in the light of these concerns, addressing three questions in considering each attempt: does it affirm female embodiment? Does it reject victimization based on patterns of domination and submission? Does it enable women to move from the past into the present and future?

4. Transforming Images of Christ

To re-image Christ requires courage and creativity. Carter Heyward describes what needs to be done and why it must be done:

To re-image Jesus is to claim the authority to play freely with both Scripture and subsequent tradition in order to comprehend our own existence. To re-image Jesus may involve letting go of old images, "letting the dead bury the dead" and bringing Jesus to life – that is, to our life together. It is to sketch images of Jesus within, and for the benefit of, our communities – of seminarians, women, gay people, black people, poor people, whoever our people are. Our images do not necessarily reflect Mark's image, or John's or Augustine's, or Luther's.³⁰

To re-image Jesus for the benefit of women demands that women's voices be heard.

The early Christian communities remembered Jesus in many different ways according to their own situation and community needs. No one image was adequate, and so we find many different images and Christologies within the New Testament itself. This pluralism has continued throughout the tradition as succeeding ages transformed images of Christ according to their needs. In our day, Christian women are re-imaging Jesus and beginning to develop Christologies which take women's experience seriously. As women reflect on Christ in the light of their gendered experience, new insights into the meaning of Jesus the Christ for the lives of twentieth-century women and men are emerging. Women's prayers, poems, songs and stories reflect changing images of Christ and provide a resource for further theological reflection.³¹

We turn now to some constructive attempts to work out an inclusive Christology; I shall describe five approaches to Christology in contemporary feminist theology. They are:

- Envisioning Christ's humanity in female terms
- Envisioning Christ as the incarnation of female divinity
- Beginning from the Jesus of history as prototype
- Beginning from the Jesus of history as iconoclastic prophet
- Relocating Christology in the community.

5. Woman Christ

The image of Christ as a woman is shocking for some twentieth-century Christians, as was evident both in New York and in Toronto when sculptures of the crucified woman were presented to congregation.³² Image of the Christa, Christ imaged as female, and particularly as crucified woman, provide strong visual reminders that women are finding creative ways to reimage Christ. The Christa invites the viewer to see Christ in a female body and to recognize that God suffers in the suffering of women.³³

In spite of the shock many Christians experienced in seeing the image of a female Christ, the image of Christ as woman has a long history in the Christian tradition.³⁴ There are references to Christ as mother in the writings of Clement, Origin, Irenaeus, John Chrysostom, Ambrose, Augustine, Bernard, Anselm, and numerous other traditional theologians. Christ as woman was particularly popular during the middle ages in the writings of both men and women as a way of emphasizing the humanity of Christ. Divinity was associated with maleness, humanity with femaleness. Christ, who had no

human father, took his flesh from Mary – a fact that led a number of the mystics to refer to the flesh that Christ put on as in some sense female. Caroline Walker Bynum, in her study of medieval writers, shows that both men and women say the female body as food and female nature as fleshly. Woman was to man as spirit was to flesh. Thus, both men and women described Christ's body in its suffering as a mother giving birth and feeding her children from her own body.³⁵

Julian of Norwich in the fourteenth century was the theologian who most fully developed the image of mother to describe Jesus' nurturing love for all humanity.

But our true Mother Jesus, he alone bears us for joy and for endless life, blessed may he be. So, he carries us within him in love and travail, until the full time when he wanted to suffer the sharpest thorns and cruel pains that ever were or will be, and at the last he died. And when he had finished, and he had borne us so for bliss, still all this could not satisfy his wonderful love.³⁶

She then described how our mother Jesus continues to nourish us through the Eucharist.

Our medieval sisters and brothers saw human mothering as a sacrament of divine love. Their view was based on a stereotype of the female or mother as generative and sacrificial, bringing forth her child in pain, and as loving, tender, and nurturing, feeding her child from her own body.³⁷ From their experience of human mothering, they were able to express the mystery of the Word made flesh, of Christ's sacrificial death, and the Eucharist. In doing so they gave meaning to their own lives, especially to the reality of suffering and of service.

The image of Jesus as mother in the tradition has drawn on the experiences both of being mothered and of mothering. These experiences continue to provide a rich source for reflection by contemporary theologians. From a context of extreme oppression, African theologians Elizabeth Amoah and Mercy Amba Oduyoye reflect on the Christ as woman and African. In a society where childless women are despised, Christ is seen as the one who liberates women from the assumptions of patriarchal societies. "The Christ of the women of Africa upholds not only motherhood, but all who, like Jesus of Nazareth, perform "mothering" roles of bringing out the best in all around them."³⁸

The image of Christ as woman offers an avenue for taking women's embodiment seriously, and recognizes in the experience of giving birth and nursing powerful symbols of Jesus and of his saving work on Calvary and in the Church, particularly in the Eucharist. This image also arises our women's experience of oppression, particularly in third world countries where women often bear the total responsibility for children and family. For these women, finding food, and the water and fuel with which to cook it, are exhausting activities. Those who struggle for survival live close to birth and death and to the endless task of providing food. Jesus as mother expresses a strong sense of relatedness – perhaps one of the reasons that our medieval sisters and brothers as well as our third world sisters have found it a helpful image for Christ.

Woman Christ includes the female in the image of Christ's humanity. However, it is androgynous rather than truly inclusive. The inadequacy of androgynous Christologies has been demonstrated by Reuther:

The very concept of androgyny presupposes a psychic dualism that identifies maleness with one-half of human capacities and femaleness with the other. As long as Christ is still presumed to be, normatively, a male person, androgynous Christologies will carry an androcentric bias. Men gain their "feminine" side, but women contribute to the whole by specializing in the representation of the "feminine," which means exclusion from the exercise of the roles of power and leadership associated with masculinity.³⁹

Conclusively, as an androgynous Christology, woman Christ gives positive meaning to women's embodiment but does not allow women to represent full human potential, nor does it challenge the structures of submission and domination. It may provide strength in the present but it does not open up the future. In the search for an inclusive Christology, I turn from one which includes the female in the male humanity of Jesus to a Christology which draws Christ's male humanity into the female image of divinity.

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- xxxvi. Ibid p. 56
- xxxvii. Ibid
- xxxviii. M.A. Oduyoye (1986), Hearing and Knowing Theology Reflection on Christianity in African. Orbis Books. Mary Knoll N. Y. p. 122.
- xxxix. Ibid p. 125.