In this chapter we deal with the attitudes towards Jesus. Religious attitudes based on the Christian tradition cannot help but speak about Jesus as a significant aspect of its belief system. Christians profess that Jesus is the messiah or the saviour not only of the Christian believers but also of all humankind. However, looking at this same tradition, one may note that there are discordant claims about Jesus which already started since the time of the apostles. In Marks gospel, Jesus asked this key question to his disciples: “Who do you say that I am?” (Mk. 8:27). Since then, this same query had been unremittingly raised, discerned, debated, re-constructed, or even tussled upon throughout history. Sadly enough, the answer to such question did not always yield a positive and unifying end. History is replete with examples showing how Christians break up with believers of other religions, with advocates of non-religious convictions, and even among their fellow Christians by virtue of their belief in Jesus Christ. Dutch history is neither spared from this discordant and conflict-ridden past. Indeed, for several centuries, the claim for Jesus seems not to sow unity but rather division in the community, resonating the very words of the master himself who once said: “Do you think that I have come to bring peace to the earth? No, I tell you, but division!” (Lk. 12:51). The ‘Jesus controversy’ continues to haunt and divide people. In the present-day Dutch society, we may ask: Is Jesus a source of unity or division? Let us suspend our answer to this question to the later part of this work. Meanwhile, let us first deal with the main question that we set for this chapter: what are the attitudes of our respondents towards Jesus, and what is the social location of these attitudes? Given the highly secularized Dutch situation, what images of Jesus may prominently appear among our respondents? To what extent do believers identify themselves with the traditional belief in Jesus? Is it more likely that these believers are no longer fixated to the orthodox or traditional teachings but have rather transformed, modified, or perhaps transmuted their attitudes toward Jesus in order to suit the new situation? Given the plurality of religious attitudes which are made available to the contemporary Dutch believers, is it not unlikely that believers may have
in mind not just a mono- but a dual or even poly- images of Jesus in the wake of Christological pluralism that may characterize the contemporary Dutch church?

Let us find someillumination to these queries in what follows. We shall proceed in this chapter by presenting a theoretical perspective of the images of Jesus in section 3.1; then we shall put forward the results of the research findings on the empirical part in section 3.2, and finally, we shall look at the social locations of our respondents’ images of Jesus in section 3.3.

### 3.1. Images of Jesus from a theoretical perspective

In this section, we will discuss the theoretical images of Jesus through the distinction we made between ‘tradition-bound’ Jesus images (section 3.1.1.), ‘hermeneutic-oriented’ Jesus images (section 3.1.2.), and ‘humanistic’ Jesus image (section 3.1.3).

One can assume at the outset that there are varieties of attitudes towards Jesus which may be present among the contemporary Dutch Catholics. But the question is: how can we identify these attitudes in such a way that we can classify them and substantiate their existence through our empirical investigation? So as to address this problem, we shall take into account three general divisions of these attitudes towards Jesus from a theoretical perspective, namely: the tradition-bound images, the hermeneutic-oriented images, and the humanistic image. Let us describe the main characteristics of these three general strands of attitudes towards Jesus which we construct in this study.

It should be clarified at the onset that when we construct this general division for our study of the various attitudes towards Jesus, we do not intend to make a distinction based on a chronological position of these discourses in the history of theological thought. Rather, we take this broad distinction in order to underscore how each Christological discourse takes into account the two poles of doing theology, namely tradition and human experience (De Mesa & Wostyn 1990:5–18). Thus, when we speak of tradition-bound Christologies, we refer to theological assertions about Jesus which take the classical tradition (traditum) mainly as the source of Christian faith about Jesus while more or less putting aside today’s contexts which permeate the actual belief in Jesus among ordinary Christians. In contrast to the tradition-bound Christology, hermeneutic-oriented Christologies regard human experience