



“Who Are You for Us, Jesu Kristi?” — excerpts from *Theology Brewed in an African Pot* by A.E. Orobator, SJ, Orbis Books, 2008

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Orobator, originally from Benin City, Nigeria, converted from his people’s animistic religious beliefs at the age of 16, and entered the Jesuit seminary at 19. He has been president of the Jesuit Conference of Africa and Madagascar and provincial superior of the Eastern Africa Province of Jesuits; he is the author and editor of many books and a frequent lecturer.

Excerpts from chapter 6, “I Said, ‘God Had a Son,’ but I did not say, ‘He Had a Wife!’ ”

“The name *Jesu Kristi* is relatively new in Africa. Africans did not call upon this name before the advent of the Christian missionaries. Nevertheless, *Jesu Kristi* has gained popularity on the lips of African Christians. In many parts of Africa, songs have been written, liturgies composed, and humorous stories told about Jesus in local languages. This popularity embodies a profound quest, namely, the quest for the true face of Jesus. I use the words “true face” deliberately. **I wish to show that the Africans’ quest for “who Jesus is for us” cannot be satiated by simply adopting Christological formulas and models developed in foreign cultural contexts.** Some people might object: “It doesn’t matter. Jesus transcends culture!” Not quite. Jesus subsumes culture! These are two different understandings.

How can we recast the alien and expatriate images of Jesus Christ in the mold of the rich and colorful African religious and cultural worldview in order to discover an authentic and meaningful African identity and personality of Jesus? This question is not academic; it represents an ongoing search for a *Jesu Kristi* who will be able to respond to questions posed by Africans themselves.

.... So far, the result of this quest, at least in the African theological circle, is a striking litany of Christological titles, models, and proposals, along with an extensive job description for the African Christ. We have, for example, the following models or proposals: ancestor, diviner, traditional healer, healer, chief, guest, warrior, life giver, family member, initiator, mediator, intermediary, friend, loved one, brother, elder brother, ideal brother, universal brother, photo-elder, kin, kinsman, chief priest, chief elder, ruler, king, leader, liberator, black messiah, and so on.

.... **Why is Christology so important in Africa?** According to Nigerian theologian Enyi B. Udoh, if there is a problem of faith in Africa, that problem derives from the way we understand or misunderstand Jesus Christ. In other words, it is a christological problem. And what is this problem?”

Perhaps you will want to read this book and post a review on RE-SOURCE. Also, **click** <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0040563918819916m?icid=int.sj-abstract.similar-articles.1> to read a review of another of Orobator’s books: *Religion and Faith in Africa: Confessions of an Animist*, by Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2018