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In Mark 8:27-32, Jesus ask his disciples this question about His own identity: “Who do you say that I am?” Peter responded without hesitation: “You are the Messiah.” This question is still relevant today.

Any attempt to answer the question “Who is Jesus Christ?” is an attempt toward developing a Christology, an interpretation as to who Jesus really is in every context and situation. If Peter understood Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah of his contemporary Jewish thinking, the African response to the question must reflect African consciousness. In answering this question, each people, community and individual write their own fifth gospel.

Africans have not been left out in responding to the question “Who do you say that I am?” Thus, in Africa today we can talk of a litany of Christological titles, along with an extensive description of the 'African Christ': Ancestor, diviner, chief, guest, warrior, healer, family member, initiator, liberator, black Messiah, life giver, mediator, and chief/king. The list is endless. These expressions indicate the way African Christians are seeking to find meaning in their encounter with Jesus Christ; and all these account for the recent assessment of African Christology as the “center-piece” of African Christian theology.

One of the renowned Christological titles of Jesus in

Africa today is “*Jesus as Liberator*”. This title emerged out of the need to address the human deprivations which we have in Africa. The late Cameroonian theologian, Jean-Marc Ela is one of those who articulated this understanding of Jesus as Liberator. Jean-Marc Ela considers the sufferings of the crucified Christ as a prototype of the sufferings of Africans and asserts that Africa is in dire need of liberation from economic and socio-political problems for which Jesus is the ultimate Liberator needed.

The situation of human deprivation exists in most sub-Saharan African countries. For instance, Nigeria is a country with over one hundred and sixty million people. However, about 92% of the population survives on less than 2 dollars daily, while about 71% percent of the population survives on less than 1 dollar daily. Poverty in Nigeria is extreme and the people are suffering greatly. Paradoxically, Global Christianity report on the size and distribution of the world's Christian population (December 2011) holds that 80 million Nigerians are Christian. Thus, in the light of these statistics, one can safely aver that a good percentage of 80 million Nigerian Christians live in and are experiencing abject poverty. The critical question driving this study research is, 'How relevant is Jesus in this situation of poverty and suffering?'

The research hence sets out to revisit the liberationist African Christology of Jean-Marc Ela and how it makes Jesus relevant in the Nigerian situation of suffering, as against some other Christologies that are more anthropological and pre-colonial. The research employs the analytical method that concentrates more on the process of the final result rather than according importance to the result. This method will help the researcher to wrestle with the questions: “who is Jesus to the (Nigerian) African? What is the relevance of African Christology to Nigerians who are suffering?”

The study reviews the *status quaestionis* of African Christology, with attention on some indigenous Christological monographs: Bénézet Bujo's *African Theology in Social Context* (1992); Enyi Ben Udoh's *Guest Christology: An interpretive View of the Christological problem in Africa* (1988) and Ukachukwu Chris Manus' *Christ, the African King* (1993). This review affords the research to offer the following contribution. The incarnation of

Jesus has implications and one of these is that theology must be contextual. Against the backdrop of poverty and exploitation in our African societies, only a Christology steeped in orthopraxis though remaining orthodox is relevant.

For that reason, the study elaborates on the Christology of Ela, '*Jesus as Liberator*'. Ela's Christological contributions espouse orthopraxis. Nevertheless, the study critically appraised Ela's contribution. From the critical dialogue with Ela, the study concludes that African Christology with all its achievements is lacking in practical relevance to life especially in the peculiar African context. Therefore, the study recommends a public theology for Africa. Consequently, the hermeneutics of who Jesus is in Africa should consider addressing the four spheres of life: politics, economy, civil society, and public opinion. Furthermore, the thesis calls for personal formation and social transformation to significantly alleviate human suffering.

In conclusion, a truly African Christology must be one that produces a doctrine which leads to God, and this doctrine must have practical consequences for the life that will return to God. Orthodoxy (doctrine) and orthopraxis (liberative ethics) are the two lungs that animate the Christian message.