

**An Analytical Biography of Byang Henry Kato (1936-1975): His
Theological Legacy and Contribution to Biblical Hermeneutics,
African Christian Identity and Evangelical Theological Education**

By

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**The opinions expressed in this dissertation do not necessarily reflect the
views of the South African Theological Seminary**

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this dissertation is my own original work and has not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted to any institution for a degree.



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ABBREVIATIONS

AACC	All Africa Conference of Churches
AEA	Association of Evangelicals in Africa
AEAM	Association of Evangelicals in Africa and Madagascar
ACT/PEMA	Africa Christian Television/Proclamation de l'Évangile par les Médias en Afrique
ACTEA	Accrediting Council for Theological Education in Africa/Association for Christian Theological Education in Africa
AIC	Africa Inland Church
AIU	Africa International University
'A' Level	Advanced Level
ATR(s)	African Traditional Religion(s)
BBC	British Broadcasting Cooperation
B. D.	Bachelor of Divinity
C.E.	Common Era
CEF	Child Evangelism Fellowship
CLMC	Christian Learning Material Centre/Christian Learning Materials for Children
DTS	Dallas Theological Seminary
ECWA	Evangelical Church Winning Africa/Evangelical Church Winning All
EFMA	Evangelical Foreign Mission Association
FATEB	<i>Faculté de Théologie Évangélique de Bangui</i> (French translates into English: Evangelical Theology Faculty of Bangui)
GCE	General Certificate of Education
ICCC	International Christian Council of Churches
ICETE	International Council for Evangelical Theological Education

IFMA	International Foreign Mission Association
<i>Magnum opus</i>	The best or most important of one's work, production or writing as in this study.
NAE	National Association of Evangelicals
NEGST	Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology
NGC	New Generation Christianity
NIV	New International Version
NLT	New Living Translation
(<i>Sic</i>)	Latin for 'sic erat scriptum' which is to show that 'the phrase or word was written exactly in same way from the original source; especially when this has an error or words use in archaic sense, that may no longer be acceptable.
SIM	Sudan Interior Mission/Serving In Mission
STM	Master of Sacred Theology
SU	Scripture Union
TEE	Theological Education by Extension
Th. D.	Doctor of Theology
U. K.	United Kingdom
U. S. A.	United States of America
WCC	World Council of Churches
WEA	World Evangelical Alliance
WEAGA	World Evangelical Alliance General Assembly
WEF	World Evangelical Fellowship

ABSTRACT

This study was an analytical biography of a pioneering church leader—Byang Henry Kato (1936–1975)—in shaping African evangelicalism, in the subject area of Historical Theology. The purpose of the study was to explore Kato’s life story and theological legacy to contribute to leadership development and maturing of the church in contemporary Africa. Specifically, the study explores Kato’s biblical hermeneutics, Christian African identity and contribution to evangelical theological education in sub-Saharan Africa, using empirical and qualitative approaches, literary and field interviews.

Kato was a young Nigerian theologian and the first African General Secretary of the Association of Evangelicals in Africa (AEA), among other roles. He was renowned to be father of evangelical theology in sub-Saharan Africa. Kato was immersed African traditional religion, as a child and was on course for succeeding his father as fetish priest when he converted to the Christian faith. Kato rose from humble beginnings to a world class evangelical leader and scholar, before his tragic death by drowning.

Byang Kato made important theological contributions, contending for biblical fidelity on a number of issues related to relationship between traditional African religions and Christianity. He was opposed to much of what other influential liberal-leaning African theologians of his time taught. He raised an alarm and warned the Church in Africa about the theological pitfalls—syncretism and universalism and advocated for discontinuity with the African traditional religious worldview, especially aspects that were inconsistent with Scripture. Unprecedentedly, Kato helped to establish a number of premier theological institutions, to remedy the theological pitfalls in sub-Saharan Africa. Exploring some theoretical and biblical foundations demonstrated that Kato’s views were mostly consistent with mainstream evangelical perspectives. The findings and data collated formed the basis of constructing a corpus of theological material that characterised Kato’s theology, which I have dubbed as Katoan theology.

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CHAPTER 1

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 General Background for the Study

1.1.1 Introduction

Byang Henry Kato (1936–1975) hailed from the predominantly Christian area of Kaduna State in Northern Nigeria. As a child, he was dedicated as a fetish priest, became a Christian at the age of twelve and at the time of his death, he was reputed to be the father of evangelicalism in the contemporary church in Sub-Saharan Africa (Ferdinando 2007; Kapteina 2006; Ngong 2007:128; Shaw 2006:330; Macdonald 2017:18; Shirik 2019; Haye 1986:17; Bowers 2008). However, current theological discourse in Africa has failed to take the immense potential contribution that consideration of the theological legacy of Byang Kato could make in enhancing that discourse and maturation of the Church, from an evangelical perspective. Bowers (2008) reveals existing gap in exploring Kato's contribution to evangelical Christianity in Africa, and argues:

One might think that all there is to know about Kato has already been well rehearsed over the years. But not so. The fact is that not everything relevant about Kato has yet been adequately surfaced or sufficiently pursued. There is still room for further fruitful inquiry, rich opportunity for further professional research and exposition (2008:5 cf. Shirik 2019).

Of particular interest in this study is Kato's life history, his biblical hermeneutics, understanding of African Christian identity and contribution to evangelical theological education. In his polemics, he warned the church in Africa of insipid syncretism¹ and universalism² and advocated for evangelical theology. He outlined a blueprint for a

¹ Syncretism: What Kato described as syncretism was the attempt by proponents of African theology seeking to discover what the traditional religions are saying and to wed these pre-Christian, pre-Muslim religions with contemporary faith; an attempt to synthesize Christianity with African traditional religions, (Kato 1975a:55)

² Universalism- According to Kato: universalism means the belief that all men (sic) will eventually be saved, whether they believe in Christ now or not. Kato saw these two concepts (syncretism and universalism) as heresies and focused on bringing these to the attention of the Church in Africa.

remedy authentic biblical Christianity in Africa (Kato 1975a). It would appear from a broad assessment of the current state of Christian witness and praxes in many parts of Africa, that these preoccupations of Kato have contemporary salience. A summary of some of the pertinent background issues, such as the nature of the socio-political milieu which nurtured the common outlook of Sub-African Churches of his time, as well as the internal differences among the Sub-Saharan Christian theologians which sharpened his own theological worldview, will provide the context for the study and specifically indicate motivations why an analytical biography of Kato is long overdue (Shirik 2019). Prior to that, I set out a synopsis of Kato's life and ministry.

1.1.2 Synopsis of Kato's life and Ministry

Born and raised in Kwoi, rural northern Nigeria, Kato had an appreciable immersion and experience in African traditional beliefs and practices. As a child, he was exposed to traditional religious beliefs as fetish priest before conversion to the Christian faith. He had a blended educational experience; that is, he was educated in a regular mission school and at the same time self-taught. Kato studied on his own and took correspondence courses to sit and pass the General Certificate of Education ordinary and advanced level examinations, to gain entrance to Igbaja Theological Seminary and the London Bible College, respectively (Haye 1968:30,34). He raised a family of his own, with a Nigerian spouse and three children in the same community in which he was born. He also worked among his compatriots as teacher, had a career in print media as writer and counsellor, was a pastor, before launching on the international scene, for further and higher education and ministry (Haye 1986; Breman 1995:36-48).

The avant-garde of Kato's short earthly career was his role as the first African General Secretary of the Association of Evangelicals in Africa and Madagascar—AEAM (now Association of Evangelicals in Africa—AEA). As General Secretary, Kato also held the position of Executive Secretary of the AEA Theology Commission (Bowers 2016:2; Tienou 1982). Kato's work and contribution to the church earned him the distinction of father of evangelical theology in Africa (Kapteina 2006:61; Palmer 2004; Shirik 2019). Kato's role as General Secretary of AEAM lasted only about two years, before he died a tragic death by drowning in the Indian Ocean in Mombasa, Kenya (Haye 1986:91; Bremen 1995).

He is remembered for his concern about the theological trends and malaise in the Church in Sub-Saharan Africa and his vision about possible solutions to certain theological pitfalls (Kato 1975a). He took a critical and radical view of the theological trends espoused by many of his fellow African theologians, like John Mbiti, Bolaji Idowu, and Harry Sawyerr, among others. Kato for example, had concerns about the uncritical merging of African traditional religious beliefs with Christianity and beliefs and practices of African Christians that were inconsistent with the Bible. “Whether we call it Christo-paganism, syncretism or universalism, it makes little difference. The fact remains that New Testament Christianity is threatened in the continent due to theological and biblical ignorance” (Kato 1973a:1).

He planted the seeds for evangelical theology in his seminal work: *Theological Pitfalls in Africa* (Kato 1975a). Among other contributions, Kato crafted the blueprint for evangelical theological education in Africa (Bowers 2016; Nystrom 2020). His plan resulted in the establishment of the first two postgraduate theological schools to serve the whole of Sub-Saharan Africa, an institution for the standardisation and accreditation of theological education—Accrediting Council for Theological Education in Africa, (now Association of Christian Theological Education in Africa)—ACTEA and the Christian Learning Materials Centre (now Christian Learning Materials for Children)—CLMC, which produced curriculum and Sunday school materials for the nurture and development of children by the Church (Breman 1995; Bowers 2008:4-5; Ferdinando 2007:3). Kato’s contribution to theological education went beyond Africa; he made an important contribution to the global evangelical church as well.

A comprehensive and critical evaluation of Kato’s life and ministry no doubt includes, but not restricted to the socio-cultural factors that shaped his worldview as well as his formative experiences before and during his time as a minister of Christ. It is to a brief summary of this that I now turn.

1.1.3 The Socio-political and Cultural Context of Kato’s Ministry

The mid twentieth century, an era of emerging independent nation states in Africa, was an important turning point, not only in the political sense but also in religious, philosophical, theological and ontological terms. Africa’s quest for independence from colonial rule had implications for selfhood and dignity, Christian identity and biblical

hermeneutics for African Christians (Ezibo 2010; Nyende 2018; Turaki 2020). African Christian identity in this study refers to the composite worldview and self-understanding of the Sub-Saharan African Christian.

Being a vast continent, with multiple different cultural identities it is somewhat problematic to speak of a single African Christian identity. Nevertheless, it is reasonably safe to speak of a Sub-Saharan African identity, given the roughly contemporaneous shared experiences of Christianity, colonialism and political independence in the region. The North African section of the continent may be excluded from this identity, as it had radically different historical Christian experience non-contemporaneous with the Sub-Saharan region, and currently has a much more ingrained Islamic culture, very different from the rest of the continent. Accordingly, the study is restricted to Sub-Sahara region.

Pan African nationalists' quest for political independence and self-rule in Sub-Sahara Africa was therefore in tandem with the Church's desire for self-governing, self-propagating, self-supporting and self-theologising status (Adeleye 2012:378; cf. Mbiti 1989; Bediako 1992). The search was for authentic African Christianity, devoid of Western vestiges thus, became a common demand by some in theological circles.

As African peoples asserted their self-hood, any aspect of their lives that appeared to have been shaped by Western influence was viewed with suspicion. Religion is particularly central to the African psyche and therefore, Christianity, which had spread during the colonial era, through the effort of Western missionaries was subject of scrutiny. John Mbiti underscores the need for African theologians to weigh in on this and writes:

Missionaries who began the modern phase of Christian expansion in Africa, were more concerned with practical evangelism, education and medical care than with academic theological issues, and not prepared to face serious encounter with either the traditional religions and philosophy or modern changes taking place in Africa. The church here now finds itself in the situation of trying to exist without a theology (1989:232).

A particular strand of African Christian theological discourse emerged towards the end of colonialism and advent of independent nation states, which therefore tended to be nationalistic. Burgeoning African Christian theologians, especially those closely associated with the academic centres on the continent like Mbiti, Sawyerr, and Idowu,

tended to focus on the need to de-eurocentralise or decolonise the inherited theology from European missionaries (Ndiaye 2013:8; Sakupapa 2018: 406-424; Adamo 2011:1-10; Bediako 1992:386-425). They proposed a brand of Christianity and practice with a blend of African traditional beliefs with Christian faith. This trend, Kato opposed and thus set out a vigorous debate that came to shape and characterise his theological mission. Kwame Bediako for example devotes a substantial part of his *magnus opus*: “Theology & Identity”, criticising Kato’s opposition to the trend and focus of African theologians. These theologians appeared to have argued for a Christian identity, which ultimately was more Afrocentric than biblical, whereas Kato argued for more fully shaped biblical worldview.

While Kato was committed to Africanisation of the Church, he was concerned about “the insipid syncretism and universalism in the church in Africa” (1975a) and advocated for sound biblical understanding, matching Christian profession with practice. He argued for African Christians being ‘Christian Africans’ (1974a:296). Essentially, Kato’s argument was that the Christian identity was first in priority than national or ethnic identity or Africanness. He advocated for a discontinuity from traditional beliefs for the African Christian, especially regarding attaining salvation. Thus, African evangelical Christianity began to establish its own unique orientation that diverged from that imagined by others.

1.1.4 Emergence of Evangelicalism in Africa

The Reformation Movement and Protestantism in the sixteenth century were synonymous to evangelicalism. However, in the last five hundred years of the Protestant church, various traditions and denominations have emerged. Evangelicalism, which cuts across the different denominations, has taken on a distinct identity, among other traditions in the Church and mainstream Protestantism. Nevertheless, the precise meaning and identity of evangelicals is confusing, and thus the need for understanding who evangelicals and especially African evangelicals are. This no doubt goes to the heart of Kato’s contribution. In his disputations, he contributed to African understanding of evangelical or biblical Christianity. There are two strands of this problem.

1.1.4.1 Problem with definition of evangelical or evangelicalism

The word 'evangelical' is derived from the Greek word '*euangelion*'; which means the 'good news'. In this case, it refers to the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ (Wolffe 2015:25; cf. Stott 2003). Evangelicalism has been popularly defined by David Bebbington's quadrilateral characteristics, that is: (1) conversionism, belief that people need new life or be born again, (2) activism, the need to propagate the gospel, (3) biblicism, the inspiration, infallibility and errancy of the Bible and (4) crucicentrism, the crucifixion of Christ on the cross for salvation of people (Bebbington 1989:3-19).

However, the specific meaning and usage over time has been varied and become contentious. Evangelicalism as a tradition of Christianity, is currently such an emotive label and some well-meaning evangelical Christians do not want to identify themselves as such (James 2016; UK Evangelical Alliance 2011:18; Ewell 2015:48). The definition for evangelicals is even more nebulous when American Christianity is generally associated with evangelicalism. Kunhiyop (2012:xiii) alludes to this enigma when he states: "Others who see themselves as defenders of evangelical and biblical Christianity suspect that African Christian Theology must inevitably be liberal and syncretistic. But *African* is no more a synonym for liberal than *American* is a synonym to *evangelical*".

The Church in Africa is also not spared from the confusion and imprecision about the meaning and identity of evangelicals (Adeyemo 1989:5). Yet, it is exactly in this area that Kato's contribution to a concise definition of the word "evangelical" and certainly as may be applied to the African Christian, comes to its own. To begin with, the gap that exists about treating Kato's contribution in theological discourse in Africa is true about the definition, and therefore the contribution of evangelical theology in general (Breman 1995:19-29; Shaw 2006; Adeyemo 1989:5-12).

The Association of Evangelicals in Africa (AEA) did from its founding in 1966 struggle with divisions among the evangelicals, namely, separatists versus conservatives, historic and Pentecostal and Americans versus the rest (Breman 1995:35). However, what emerged as consensus for evangelical beliefs and what Kato asserted as non-negotiable beliefs were the following statements: (1) The infallibility of God's revelation in the Bible. (2) The virgin birth of Christ, (3). His vicarious death,(4) His bodily resurrection and (5) The personal, visible future return of Jesus Christ (Kato 1974c: n.

p.; cf. Breman 1995:27; Adeyemo 1989:7-8). This definition was nuanced by Tienou (1990:10), when he added:

In the complex and varied picture of African Christianity, evangelicals are to be found among the established and recognised denominations such as the Anglicans, the Methodists, the Lutherans, and the Presbyterians, as well as among the numerous so-called mission and independent churches of the continent. Historically, evangelicals are those who were faithful to the gospel of Jesus Christ. They understood it to include: (1) Humans' sinful condition before a holy God; (2) humans' need for salvation; (3) revelation of the grace of God in Jesus Christ; (4) the authority of the inspired scriptures; (5.) the necessity for a birth from above or regeneration and (6) justification through faith alone, apart from works.

Fifty years after the founding of AEA, the imprecision and diverse perception of evangelicals continue. In his keynote address at the Jubilee celebrations, for example, the President of AEA, Goodwill Shana (2016:4) stated:

The evangelical identity in Africa, while it has enjoyed steady growth and a credible reputation, has in recent times, suffered setbacks and confusion arising from the proliferation of churches and church leaders who share most, if not all, the fundamental doctrinal beliefs of evangelicals but have embellished them with counter-poised beliefs, doctrines and religious activities. These pseudo-evangelicals have embraced many aberrations including hyper prosperity, pseudo-prophetic shamanism, hyper supernaturalism, or miracles often resulting in personal deification and veneration of these charismatic leaders.

The current imprecision in defining the term “evangelical”, mirrors Kato’s original challenge. Thus, a close analysis of Kato’s approach to the problem at the dawn of African evangelicalism is likely to yield some pointers to how to address the current challenge.

1.1.4.2 Beginning of evangelical theology:

Kato derives his importance in being a leading voice and actor for evangelical theology (Ngong 2007:127; Shaw 2006:330; Kapteina 2006). The recent history of theological scholarship could be traced back to late 1950s and early 1960s. The Protestant church in Sub-Saharan Africa, starting with the first Christian settlement in Freetown in the late eighteenth-century, was evangelistic in doctrine and practice (Walls 2002:28; Bangura 2015; Adeyemo 1989:17-18). With the arrival of missionaries, the practice and liturgy of the church was shaped and led by Western expressions.

In the middle of the last century, agitation by Africans to break the shackles of colonialism and attain independence was an important preoccupation for African

leaders and scholars. Some African theologians started theologising as independent thinkers, and espoused Africanness and African values and understanding of Scripture. However, some people in the church embraced liberal views about the Bible and exalted traditional religious belief systems above biblical teachings. Some of the home churches in the West of missionaries in Africa became liberal or modernistic. These began to question the fundamental “doctrines of God, Christ, the Bible and salvation” (Adeyemo 1989:18). The writings of their theologians were influencing universities across the world to undermine biblical orthodoxy.

The birth of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in 1951, following the two World Wars, and its support for the historic churches in Africa exacerbated the perceived concerns of incipient liberalism or universalism. The All-Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) established in 1963, served as a major partner of the WCC on the continent and thus was viewed with suspicion by many within evangelical circles. African evangelicals therefore, felt the need to be united, based on sound doctrine and to maintain the historic Christian faith (Kato 1975a:138-151; Adeyemo 1989:18-23).

The sponsorship of the WCC included scholarships to African students to study abroad in liberal theological institutions (Kato 1975a). Citing from WCC Service Programme and List of Projects in 1965, Kato (1975a:139) wrote: “In 1965, AACC projects in Africa looked for 726,500 U.S. dollars from the World Council of Churches”. Furthermore, Kato noted: “Besides the massive support of projects in Africa, a sizeable number of African students are sent overseas each year for further education” (p. 139; cf. Bangura 2015:117). In an interview with a key evangelical leader in Sierra Leone, Rev. Dr. Joseph Saidu Mans, the researcher asked why the founding denominations of the Evangelical Fellowship were still members of the Council of Churches in Sierra Leone, fifty years later, after the former’s founding. He revealed: “We go to the Evangelical Fellowship for spiritual nurture and fellowship and to the Council of Churches for resources and scholarship to train our pastors”. This sponsorship scheme fuelled the suspicion of Evangelicals like Kato.

However, while people like Kato were not against training, they were concerned about the liberalism of the schools these African leaders were going to in Europe and America and the influence of their liberal and philosophical tendencies on the church in Africa, on their return. The training included theological education with aim of

entrenching liberal ecumenism, which brings to the continent “poisonous element”, according to Kato (1975a:140; cf. Kabongo 2018). “It is unrealistic to expect so many students from the Third World to digest Aquinas, Tillich, or Cone, and return home unaffected. It is naïve to expect the World Council of Churches to make such a massive investment in Africa without influencing African thinking” (Kato 1975a:140).

At the core of the concern of evangelicals in Africa and in other parts of the world, about liberal ecumenism, was the call by the German Philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche, before the end of the nineteenth century, that “God is dead!” (Fuller 1996:20). This was the deduction from the influence of the Enlightenment philosophy. The idea of God was no longer relevant with enlightenment. This is remarkably like contemporary era of secularism—the tendency to exclude God from human affairs or our world. The philosophical approach to doing theology—the so called “Higher Criticism” of liberal theology—was on the rise in theological departments in Western universities and denominational seminaries. This caused the theological compromise of the ecumenical movement; the deity of Christ was denied, the Bible was no longer relevant for many in the church, some called for changing the gospel to make it more relevant, a call for moratorium on sending missionaries abroad and social gospel was more a priority than proclaiming the gospel for salvation (Fuller 1996:20-21; Kimilike 2006; Bangura 2015).

Thus, the AEA (then AEAM) was established in 1966 (Kato 1975a; Bremam 1995; Bowers 2016). The key function of the AEA and the constituent National Evangelical Fellowships was to connect, equip and be a representative voice and common action (Foday-Khabenje 2016:6). With the birth of AEA, the way was paved for evangelicals to mount theological training programmes at all levels in the church (Kato 1973b; Bangura 2015). Central to this development was Byang Kato. His assessment of the church in Africa was that it was ailing from “theological anaemia” (1985:11; 1974:6-7; Kapteina 2006:64; Bangura 2015:109). Some of the prognosis of the ailing church Kato highlighted included: liberal ecumenism, many no longer took the word of God at face value, a dubious type of cultural revolution, first love which characterised the first generations of Christians in Africa had simmered down, ignorance of basic Bible doctrine as a major weakness. Liberal theology under the guise of African Theology seeking to solve the theological ignorance (Kato 1975a). Kato believed sound

theological education, undergirded by the Bible, was the greatest need of the Church in Africa (1974a:53).

Kato's contribution towards evangelical theological education in Africa is well attested. A few theological schools, for example, Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology (now Africa International University) in Kenya, the ECWA Theological Seminary in Jos, Nigeria, Faculté de Théologie Evangélique de Bangui, in Central African Republic and several others, have each erected some memento as a memorial to Kato (Bowers 2008:1; Kapteina 2006; Bangura 2015). However, Kato has received both praise and scorn for his theological views in African theological circles (Ngong 2007:128), creating a lot of debate even within evangelical circles, another area of contribution to which I now turn.

1.1.5 Kato and Intra-Evangelical Debates on Continuity

Another aspect of Kato's legacy is his role in debates within African evangelical circles itself that enabled a sharper definition of evangelical theology. Right from the start, Kato took a clear and categorical view regarding the nature and relationship between Christianity and African traditional religions, and of continuities and/or discontinuities between African traditional beliefs and Christian faith. The discontinuity view of Kato sparked off a debate in African theological discourse and this inevitably reflected itself in the question of what constituted an authentic African Christian identity. Kato pitched his arguments against leading African Christian identity proponents like, Bediako, Mbiti, Sawyerr, Musharhamina and Idowu, among others. Kato's opposition to the 'continuity' proposition led to him being portrayed as naïve and sometimes as a mouthpiece for Western missionaries (Bediako 1992; Bowers 2008; Simango 2018; MacDonald 2017).

The continuity/discontinuity debate, still prevalent in theological discourse in Africa had to do with the value placed on ATR beliefs in Christian reflections. This debate is also about the line between contextualisation and syncretism (Simango 2018; Kakabo 2006). Proponents of continuity base their argument about general revelation of the Supreme Being or God, in nature, history and conscience of people. There is some element of the divine nature of God in ATR since all people are created in the image of God. Change of religion does not alter this divine pursuit (Simango 2018:7). While

acknowledging divine image borne by all peoples and elements of manifestation of this in ATR, Kato argued this was not enough for salvation and advocated for discontinuity. He based his argument on the supremacy, all sufficiency and finality of Christ's atoning death and resurrection which made ATR unnecessary (Kato 1975a; Simango 2018:7; Kagabo 2006).

Many of Kato's opponents within Christian theological circles took the view that Western missionaries disdained African spirituality and introduced Christianity in Africa in their own cultural cloaks. They objected, and rightly so, to what they perceived to be that representative Christianity was being determined by what was typically Western. Like Walls, they complained: "The doctrines, liturgy, ethical codes and social applications of the faith were those prominent in the West" (Walls 2002:85). They in effect criticized the wholesale adoption of European culture and institutions. "The Christian community gathered in buildings looking like European parish churches, wore European dress and lived lifestyles influenced by European models" (Walls 1996:103). Shades of this criticism were directed towards those evangelicals like Kato who were less vocal in their objection to the colonial missionaries. Bediako asserts:

Byang Kato was most notable as the dissenting voice in the chorus of positive evaluations of African pre-Christian religious heritage. But in Kato's case, his response was complicated by a theological posture which rendered his appreciation of the heritage from the past problematic. His great achievement, however, consisted in a persistent affirmation of the centrality of the Bible in the theological task. Kato thus contributed a viewpoint of cardinal importance, even though his own acultural conception of theology in fact defeated the very purpose of theology as the struggle with culturally rooted questions (1992:xviii).

This is quite an important quote as it betrays three aspects of the nature of the differences of opinions between Kato and Bediako (and presumably some of Kato's other opponents), namely, (a) the debate on continuity/discontinuity in relation to African traditional religion and Christianity, (b) the extent and prominence to be given to the Bible as basis of Christian theologising (hence Biblical hermeneutics), and (c) how culturally bound theological reflections need to be in the African context. Kato's critics thus felt his theological contribution was inconsistent with independent thinking and lacked appreciation for African values and contextualisation.

However, followers of Kato hail him for providing a shaper definition of African Christian identity and believe he had an important message for the church in Africa. Evangelicals in Africa remember Kato for his theological legacy (Bowers 2008;

Ferdinand 2007; Shirik 2019; MacDonald 2017). He is remembered for his biblical views on Christian identity and practice and contribution to evangelical theological education in Africa. Kato did not only make a diagnosis but also prescribed a cure for the theological malaise in the church in Africa of his time (Bangura 2015; Bowers 2008; Simang 2018). A critical analysis and re-appraisal of the issues that Kato contended with and his unique contributions offer important avenues for appreciating the heritage of evangelical Christianity in Africa and so clarity to evangelical self-understanding.

Moreover, the issues of Kato's time highlighted above have significant parallels with the contemporary church in sub-Sahara Africa. Crucially, there are questions of African Christian identity, evangelical hermeneutics and significantly the nature and future of evangelical theological education in the continent (Shirik 2019; Young 111 2012; Turaki 2020; Bangura 2015; MacDonald 2017). Accordingly, this study argues that a critical analysis of Kato's legacy will make original contributions, which have potential to enhance evangelical Christianity in the African context.

1.2 Problem Statement

Contemporary evangelical discourse in Sub-Sahara Africa, especially on evangelical hermeneutics, evangelical theological education and African Christian identity; has failed to take the immense potential contribution that consideration of the theological legacy of Byang Kato could make to enhancing that discourse and maturation of the Church. The purpose for this study was to critically analyse the biography of Byang Kato and his theological contribution to biblical hermeneutics, African Christian identity and evangelical theological education and to identify important theological lessons for the enhancement of sound biblical reflection and practice on the continent.

1.3 Research Questions

This research seeks to investigate and articulate a portrait of an African Christian leader, his legacy and the influences that shaped his biblical world view and how he lived this out. It aims to study how he developed as fetish priest, dedicated as a child, to become an important evangelical Christian leader. The research explores Byang Kato's biblical hermeneutics, African Christian identity and vision for theological education, for faithful biblical practice without compromise in the church in Africa. To achieve this goal, I sought to find answers to the following questions:

1.3.1 Main Research Question

What theological contribution does an analytical study of Byang Kato's life history and theological legacy of biblical hermeneutics, understanding of African Christian identity and contribution to evangelical theological education make to contemporary biblical Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa?

1.3.2 Sub-Questions-To investigate this main question, I explored the following sub-questions:

- (1) Who was Byang Kato and what social, cultural, political and theological contexts and influences shaped his theological formation and views?
- (2) How did Kato's message on biblical hermeneutics, African Christian identity and Christian education impact evangelical Christianity in Africa of his time?
- (3) What is the Biblical and theological foundation for Kato's message on hermeneutics, African Christian identity and evangelical theological education?
- (4) What can the contemporary sub-Saharan Church learn from Kato's life and theological contribution to biblical hermeneutics, Christian identity and evangelical theological education, in shaping evangelical theology in Africa?

1.4 Hypothesis

Given the place of Kato as one of the pioneers of evangelicalism in the Church in Africa in modern times, he made a unique contribution in the shaping and development of evangelical Christianity. Thus, this study assumed that an analytical study of Byang Kato's life history, legacy and message on understanding biblical hermeneutics, theological education and African Christian identity will provide a corpus of unique theological constructs, important for enhancing contemporary biblical Christianity; matching confession with practice, for the maturation of the Church in Africa.

1.5 Importance of Study

One of the crying needs of African Christianity today is that of writing its history as an authentic discipline in Church History. When this is done, African Christian biography forms an important part of that history and pivotal in that exercise (Omulokoli 2019:7). In view of the dearth of literature on key African Christians, Omulokoli states: "Given

the critical role of African Christian Biography in the writing of African Church History, it is important that it should be undertaken seriously and urgently as top priority” (p. 7). This research is an attempt to contribute, in responding to this critical need, especially in the evangelical tradition of the church in Africa.

Kato’s theological development, biblical views and contribution to evangelical theological education is important historically and in the search for appropriate contextualisation and development of the Church in Africa. The debate about what constitutes authentic African Christian Identity and the question of ‘continuity’ and ‘discontinuity’ does not seem to have gone. Questions are still being raised about African culture and Biblical Christianity (Palmer 2004; Chalk 2013; Nihinlola 2013; Conteh 2014; Shirik 2019). African theologians therefore need to hear Kato’s reticence and misgivings regarding continuity and his proposal for cure of syncretistic practices in the church afresh. Africa is at the heart of global Christianity and African Christianity must be paradigmatic and be authentic (Centre for the Study of Global Christianity 2018; Shirik 2019; Green, Stephen T. Pardue and K. K. Yeo 2015; 2018).

Notwithstanding the contribution of Kato, very little is written about him and his particular contribution to evangelical theology, beyond passing commentaries especially about his singular opposition to the doctrine of continuity between aspects of ATR beliefs and Christianity, popularly espoused by other pioneering African theologians of his time. Research on life and ministry of Kato; how he made the radical change from ATR to become an outstanding evangelical Christian leader, what factors influenced his development, and others, have not been comprehensively examined (Shirik 2019; Bowers 2008).

Breman (1995) whose commendable contribution has served as a key source for information on Kato’s contribution only devotes thirteen pages of her work on the History of AEA on Kato. Bediako (1992) also devoted a chapter on Kato; but this is predominantly devoted to criticism of Kato’s opposition to continuity proposition and insistence on the centrality of the Bible in Christian theological reflection, which Bediako somewhat, pejoratively characterises as “Bibliology” (Bediako 1992:416). The only comprehensive biography of Byang Kato is that by Sophie de la Haye (1986), but this is a popular version about Kato’s life and not much from a critical historiographical

and theological perspective, for which Kato is remembered. Several other works on Kato are relatively modest treatment of Kato; mostly articles in journals, periodicals and magazines, like Tienou 1976, 1982, 1998; Bowers 1981, 2002, 2008; Ferdinando 2007; Kateina 2006, Palmer 2004, Turaki 2001 and Shirik 2019. However, MacDonald's PhD thesis (2017) was focused on Kato's Demonology, again, a fraction of Kato's theological contribution.

The main writing of Kato himself was a book published by the title: *Theological Pitfalls in Africa* (1975). The rest of his works were in forms of articles, speeches, letters, reports and written statements, not all of which have been publicised and thus not adequately analysed for their contributions. This results in lack of coherent appreciation of his unique contribution. Sadly, the voice of Kato on biblical orthodoxy was silenced by his premature death and it would appear as if his theological message had been drowned in the Indian Ocean and interred with his remains in his home in Nigeria. However, it will be argued and evidenced in this thesis, that the legacy of Kato has crucial role to play in theological reflections and certainly cannot be ignored by the contemporary church in Africa.

Notwithstanding, what constitutes Kato's theological legacy has not been well defined. The motivation for this research therefore was to explore the life, ministry and theology of Kato with a view to assessing his contribution to evangelical theology, and how the contemporary church in Africa could benefit from that contribution. The current growth of the church in Africa has also revealed newer challenges; moral, doctrinal, and theological deviations; which in many ways mirror some of the contextual circumstances of Kato's time. So, for example, the situation of the church in Africa is aptly described as a church that is a mile long and only an inch deep and the growth is said to be swelling and not a healthy growth. There is proliferation of all kinds of churches, fraught with all kinds of theological pitfalls (Osei-Mensah 1978; Niringiye 2014:2; Mokhoathi 2017; Cole 2019).

Furthermore, biblical illiteracy is a cause for concern in the church in Africa, leading not only to syncretic practices but distorting the biblical vision of prosperity for self-aggrandisement in what has become known as 'health and wealth or prosperity gospel' (Adeleye 2011; Niringiye 2014; Simango 2018; Bediako 1992). Thus, exploring

Kato's theological legacy, to draw lessons for contemporary authentic African Christian identity and sound biblical practice in the church in Africa is important.

1.6 Research Design and Methodology

The plan for the research is in two parts: the design and methodology. The design describes the type of research and outlines the different steps that were sequentially followed to accomplish the goal. The methodology describes the instruments used to collect the relevant information or data, motivated by the research questions. In addition, I use this section to provide the philosophical justifications and framework which shaped the design and methodology.

1.6.1 Research Design

This research is an analytical biographical study of the life and theological legacy of a key African evangelical Christian leader, Byang Henry Kato. The study falls within the discipline of Historical Theology (Smith 2013:138; Lassig 2004). Historical Theology, according to Domeris (2014:192) is the contextual study of the development of Christian theology over the centuries. While in most instances Historical Theology might be interested in the historical development of particular theological philosophies, it is sometimes also interested in the lives and contributions of individual theologians who helped in shaping that history (Meserve 1975:227-230; Fergusson 2018:131; van Tonder n.d:n.p.). Identifying the contributions and especially the legacy of important historical figures is essential. Not only does this provide the contextual finesse to the historical development of Christian doctrine in particular geographical regions but also serve as evocative mirrors for contemporary reflections. Also, self-definitions of adherents of the theological ideas are of interest to the discipline of Historical Theology.

This research belongs to this category of study in theological discipline, exploring as it does, the life and contribution of Byang Kato, an evangelical leader, in shaping evangelical theology in Africa. Given the range of issues for consideration, the study adopts an interdisciplinary approach, involving historical, sociological and theological methods (Haokip 2014:4).

A problem with biographical accounts is hagiography when the subject of the biography is unduly revered without the pre-requisite critical analysis and engagement with the sources (Greggs 2012:315). However, in terms of scholarship, the feature of classical theological biographies like Saint Augustine, Luther, Wesley, Dietrich Bonhoeffer and a wide range of theologians, make sound theological contributions (Meserve 1975; Ferguson 2006). These speak more about God and stories of lives which struggle to be faithful to God than they do about the individual (Greggs 2012:316; Cockerill 2002). In that way, the reader may have a feeling of resonance between her own life and that of the subject of the biography. Following a number of decades in which biographies were sometimes regarded as contentious, with regard to uncertainties on their crucial historiographical methodologies, there is now a strong ongoing revival in their roles in providing important windows to historical studies (Lassig 2004; Kaeser 2013; Forum 2014). As Lassig (2014:147) astutely argues, “Historiography has shifted from concentrating on structures and numbers to a cultural history that is sensitive to the individual, the unique, and the non-typical, and thus must bring “people” back into history”. The same argument may be made with regards to mapping out developments of doctrines in Church history, as well as identifying how influential individuals have helped shape the trajectories of Christian theological reflections.

The current study seeks to follow the basic premises of current historiographical principles. So, for example, making a case for biography as an acceptable research model, Brekus (2014:9) states:

One of the distinctive features of the modern world has been its reliance on experience as the basis of knowledge. Perhaps it is not surprising that Americans have become increasingly fascinated by the varieties of personal experience as they have become less certain about the meaning of human life. When we read about other people’s experiences, we try on different models of selfhood, experimenting with different identities and gaining a richer sense of the possibilities for our own. Experience offers us a way to determine the truth or, at least, our own personal truths.

Brekus further points out that the appeal of the biography is its multi-valency and strengths in its narrative style, its evocative descriptions of the past, focus on individual uniqueness, and its questions about experience. She points out that these can become weaknesses however, if not balanced by historical analysis (p. 9). It is against this firm theoretical background that I employed the tenets of analytical biographical

method in this study to critically analyse the life and historical circumstances of Kato for an interpretive pattern and application in contemporary context.

This main approach to the biographical analysis is therefore also a qualitative single case study (Barnes 111 2009:86). According to Creswell (2012:465), “case study is an in-depth exploration of a bounded system e.g. activity, event, process, or individuals, based on extensive data”. The theoretical foundation for case studies is in the fact that important lessons could be learnt from a single case (Sensing 2011:143). The case study is an invigorating method to vicariously learn and apply the lived experiences of others (Sensing 2011:147). Cases are learning tools that present narratives of lived and real experiences others can benefit from the experience of the character (p. 156). Another aspect of the case study approach is its potential for furnishing insights into contemporary issues. In other words, they enable the historian not just to examine the past in the light of the present, but also to seek ways in which the past may speak to the present. Since the research is not just interested in the past but also in how the past informs the present, the case study method offers immense advantages for the project.

Of significance are the debates and critical engagements with other theologians of Kato’s time as this tends to sharpen and clarify the protagonist’s beliefs and stance. As it is now nearly forty-five years since Kato’s death, the research explores current views about Kato’s Theological Corpus from his opponents. This helps in assessing the states and shifts of theological thinking in Africa.

The study is also exploratory; aimed at developing an in-depth understanding of Kato’s life and biblical hermeneutics as an instrumental case study (Creswell 2012:465-84). Thus, the approach is descriptive, qualitative and to a limited extent, ethnographic. The researcher is one of Byang Kato’s successors at AEA, even though several decades exist between them. Nevertheless, access to information, to people who were Kato’s contemporaries and family members and the fact that the researcher is going through similar experiences, enhances in depth exploration of Kato’s life and theological contribution.

The study was carried out in five steps. The first step describes the research problem and plan. Secondly, the study outlines an historical analysis of the life and ministry of

Kato, with particular attention to the areas of contribution; i.e. hermeneutics, evangelical theological education and African Christian identity, and how he addressed the challenge of dissonance in belief and practice in the church in Sub-Saharan Africa. Next, I sought to reflectively outline Kato's theological legacy regarding his theology and biblical hermeneutics, understanding of African Christian identity and contribution to evangelical theological education in Africa. The next and fourth step, critically engages with the biblical and theological basis for Kato's theological themes. In the final step, the thesis formulates a theological model, in response to the main research question of the relevance of Kato's theological legacy to contemporary challenges to Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa, as practical biblical guidelines for biblical Christianity in the African context.

1.6.2. Methodology

Each step outlined in the section above, designed to respond to the research questions, used appropriate method and instruments to collect the necessary data for analysis and interpretation. Generally, literary review, empirical field interviews and textual analysis were used in the study. In the first step, analytical, dialogical and comparative tools such as academic libraries and internet software were used in reviewing relevant material to describe the problem, outline plan of the research. The second and third steps involve an analytical biography of life of Byang Kato. Case study tools including review of Kato's published and unpublished work, other biographical materials such as the collections in the Kato memorial lectures; other works on Kato such as Breman (1995); Hays (1986); Bediako (1992); Bowers (2009); Shirik (2018); and Ferdinando (2007), among others, were examined. Also, interview of people who knew him and could provide relevant information about his life and ministry was conducted.

Interviewing as a tool is a way to gain insight into issues through understanding the experiences of the participants and the subject matter. "As a method of inquiry, interviewing is consistent with people's ability to make meaning through language" Seidman (1991:7). It is satisfying to biographical researchers who are interested in others' stories. Interviewing covers a range of practices; from structured interviews with pre-set and closed ended questions to open-ended and unstructured questions (1991:9). The interviewees included a purposive sampling of surviving family members

and professional colleagues. Examples of these interviewees were Kato's widow and daughter in Nigeria, Paul Bowers, and Yusufu Turaki, professional colleagues of Kato, among others. The interview was semi-structured and open-ended (Appendix A). A total of ten people, aged ranging from sixty-two and ninety-five years and from various backgrounds, were interviewed. What they all had in common was their encounter and knowledge of Kato. Two of the interviewees were theological scholars and each had written at least a couple of published articles on Kato. Kato's sibling, spouse, daughter, a childhood friend and mate in the rite of passage initiation, the King of the Jaba ethnic people in Kwoi, Kato's birthplace were interviewed. Respondents also included three others, including a fellow missionary in Nairobi and two other people from WEA network, who first met Kato at Lausanne Congress in Switzerland in 1974³. Data collected from these were captured in handwritten notes by the researcher and used as important source of information in the study.

It was providential that Kato's spouse, who had survived him as a widow for forty-four years, died at eighty, under two months after meeting her in Kaduna, at the home of her daughter. Precisely, the researcher was in Kwoi, Kato's birthplace, 22-23 March 2019, where the half-brother, childhood friends of Kato and the King were interviewed. However, the widow had taken ill and had been taken to Kaduna city by her daughter, where she was met on 23-24 March 2019 for the interview. Mrs. Jummai Kato's death was announced on 8 May 2019. Oral transmission has the disadvantage of distortion of facts with time and subjectivity (Omulokoli 2019). However, this is a critical source of historical information in Africa.

The next and fourth step deployed a survey of some relevant literary works on biblical hermeneutics and exegetical analysis of selected biblical texts that were key to Kato's formation, to articulate the biblical understanding of the theological themes. Examples of these passages include Genesis 6:9-7:24, a passage, which first connected Kato to Christianity; Jer. 8:11-22; a passage he preached on and Phil. 4:13, one of his favourite verses in the Bible (Haye 1986). Theological resources on the subject such

³ It was desirable to have in to have Kato's seminary classmates among those interviewed but researcher could not find any at the time of field research.

as Bible commentaries, encyclopaedia, bible dictionaries, books and journals were also used to anchor the biblical understanding of these themes. The fifth step included a reflective analysis and synthesis of biblical and theological insights generated by the data produced from the literary and field research. This final step responds to the main research question, identifying Kato's theological corpus.

The source of information or data required for this research was twofold; namely, (a), those from literary works or written sources and (b), those from interviews (oral histories). The literary collections included Kato's work and a bibliographical collection made available by ACTEA, among other written sources, were accessed, each evaluated for their historical authenticities, and the relevant works reviewed to collate necessary data for the research. Data was also generated from field interviews, using semi-structured interview tool, open-ended questions. This had the advantage of some flexibility and allowing for in depth probing to indeterminate responses but ensuring access to information that was essential to the study. The interview prompts were based on themes of Kato's theological themes and any aspects of his life the respondents wanted to talk about, as indicated in the interview protocol (Appendix A). The responses were recorded; transcribed, coded by themes for analysis and interpretation. Most of the interviews were conducted by face to face meetings and where this was not possible, this was done through video conferencing or WhatsApp calls and email.

Serious consideration had been given to organising focus group discussion where that could be done. This has high potential of yielding more insights than one-on-one interviews. However, given that several of the participants were older and scattered in different parts of Africa and outside Africa, it was not possible to do a group discussion. Nonetheless, this was mitigated by the amount of time and in-depth discussion I had with some key respondents. I spent half a day with Dr. Paul Bowers in his home in Charlotte, North Carolina in the United States and about the same amount of time with Professor Yusufu Turaka in Jos, Nigeria; talking about Kato in depth. I spent two nights with the family members, one night each in Kwoi and Kaduna. I was back in Kwoi two months later, in May 2019, for the funeral of Mrs Kato and connected with the family again.

There are ethical concerns about the interview tool for research. Interviewing as a process may for instance theoretically turn others into subjects whose words are appropriated for the benefit of the researcher (Seidman 1991:7). However, these concerns were mitigated by ensuring strict compliance with the ethical requirements for participants (Creswell 2012:588). In the first place, interviewees in this research were considered as equal partners and participants, in the project (Seidman 1991:8); they voluntarily consented to take part in the research and were treated with respect and confidentiality. There was no particular concern about disclosing their identity and quoting them with discretion. They were adequately informed about the purpose for and benefit of the research and were assured of the confidentiality required about their participation. While the kind of response to the open-ended questions may not be pre-empted, participants were informed about the nature of the interview, length of interview, mutually agreeable timeframe to accommodate the convenience of participants, for the exercise.

As one of Kato's successors at the AEA, I endeavoured to be objective in my assessment of Kato's theological position and mine on one hand, and the biblical and theological material in the academy on the other. Kato and I have thirty-four years between us at AEA and two other General Secretaries have served between us, i.e. from the time of his death in 1975 and my assumption of office as AEA General Secretary in 2009. My interest in Kato arose when I first read the historical background of the AEA School in Nairobi, Africa International University (then, the Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology) and multiple mentions of Kato in the brief historical sketch as the visionary of the school, founded in 1983, eight years after Kato's death. I advocated to have the history rewritten, arguing it may not be a fair reflection of the institution's history and thought the account was unfairly biased towards Kato.

However, that ACTEA and FATEB had similar history and memorabilia associated with Kato, were tangible in the institutions. My curiosity led me to wanting to know more about who Byang Kato was and why he was so revered and remembered. I bumped into Christien Breman's dissertation (1995): "The Association of Evangelicals in Africa: Its History, Organisation, Members, Projects, Localisation and Message",

where for the first time, got to know a little more about Byang Kato, further increasing my curiosity.

Unfortunately, I could not find a single work on Kato on the shelves of AEA schools, apart from the memorial structures and mention in background historical sketches. My curiosity turned to vexation, when I had the privilege to endorse a handbook, edited by Brian Stiller and others, under the auspices of the WEA; “Evangelicals Around the World: A Global Handbook for the 21st Century” (2015). A section of this book mentions eight people from Africa as: “Evangelicals You Would Want to Know” (Hickman 2015:227). Unfortunately, Byang Kato is not among the eight people mentioned. Ironically for me, I felt the opposite of what I felt about the AIU history. Shirik (2019:131) underscores this need and writes: “It appears that while his critics have misunderstood him in some aspects, his supporters also have not paid enough attention to his theological conviction and articulation”.

I sensed the need for a more comprehensive scholarly work to explore Kato’s life and contribution in the church in sub-Saharan Africa. With my self-criticality, the advantage I had to be involved with the various institutions that continue to remember Kato and access to his close surviving family members and colleagues, I opted to do this work and hence the ethnographic nature of the study.

1.7 Delimitations of the Study

This study is a single case study and limited in scope in terms of its generalisability. The research focuses on key experiences and messages of Kato, especially as it relates to only three key areas of theological issues identified in the study, i.e. his biblical hermeneutics, African Christian identity and evangelical theological education. Given the cultural diversity in Africa, Kato’s life experiences in navigating the traditional and cultural issues and to which he endeavoured to portray his biblical insights are limited in scope in application to all sub-Saharan Africa. Given the diversity among the different denominations in the Church as a whole and even among evangelicals, the influence of a single case on all is arduous. However, the apparently extensive influence of Kato’s pioneering work in the evangelical church in Africa is worthy of the study and an important contribution to classical or standard Christianity in the region.

The study has a focus on Africa but there is not a single Africa. A discourse on pioneering theology, Church and Africa, covering the life time of Byang Kato (1936-1975), may seem a travesty, given the place of Africa in the Bible, the Canon of Scripture and the shaping of classic Christianity, following the establishment of the Church in Palestine (Yamauchi 2004; Oden 2007). Therefore, the discussion is limited to sub-Sahara Africa, which itself has multi-cultural identities. Nevertheless, sub-Sahara has similar experiences of colonialism, Christianity and political independence, compared to the North African region. So, the North African region with a radically different and ancient Christian history and currently more aligned with the Islamic culture is excluded from this study.

1.8 Overview of chapters

The dissertation has six steps each corresponding to a chapter:

Chapter 1 - Introduction: This chapter describes the research problem, purpose, importance, hypothesis and design and methodology. The problem description includes a sketch of the background to the study, past and current practices in the church to illustrate how Christian beliefs or profession compare with practice and how this is impacting the church and how it is being addressed. The theoretical foundations and justification for biographical study as historical theological discipline is articulated.

Chapter 2 - Analytical Biography of Byang Kato. This chapter sets out the Life and ministry of Byang Kato; how he developed from a traditional fetishism as a boy to becoming a leading evangelical Christian leader. This is a narrative of the life story of Kato, his childhood, education, adulthood and ministry before his demise. The chapter also provides important socio-cultural and political contextual information of Kato's biography. Kato's accomplishment and failures are also highlighted.

Chapter 3 - Byang Kato's Theological Legacy of biblical hermeneutics, Christian identity and evangelical theological education. This chapter examines Kato's understanding of these three themes and how he applied them in practice and the impact on the church. The exercise draws on data from the literary review and field studies. It gives an overview of some of the issues Kato contended in theological debates for insights about his hermeneutics and Christian identity. Kato's contribution to theological education in sub-Saharan Africa and beyond is also highlighted. The

contemporary resonance with Kato's time is also explored. Efforts are also made to relate the discussion with current notions circulating in some Sub-Saharan African Evangelical institutions, e.g. the Akrofi-Christeller Institute of Theology, Mission and Culture (<http://www.acighana.org/site/>), influenced by the legacy of some of Kato's critics. In so doing the arguments and warnings Kato enunciated while he was alive are brought to bear again to the contemporary setting.

Chapter 4 – Biblical and Theological Foundation for Kato's Hermeneutics, Christian Identity and theological education. This chapter involves assessment of Kato's biblical perspectives and exegesis of at least two biblical passages that shaped Kato's life in general or text he used to preach, which serve to ground the dialogue and crucial to understanding his theological legacy. These include the following texts: Genesis 6:9-7:24; Jeremiah 8:11-22; and Philippians 4:13-19. The chapter outlines some standard theological and biblical approaches, against which Kato's messages are assessed for orthodoxy. A key aspect of this chapter is the critical engagement of the theological opponents of Kato who find significant continuity between African worldview and the mainstream Christian worldview.

Chapter 5 – A Model for Biblical Fidelity in African Evangelical Theology. The research culminates in formulating a framework for a unique theological model to harmonise profession of Christian faith and practice in contemporary African context. This chapter essentially outlines the contours of theological corpus that characterises Kato's theological contribution for evangelical orthodoxy in the African context.

Chapter 6 – Summary and Conclusion. This is the last chapter and summarises the thesis and its implications and make recommendations for further research. A summary of each of the preceding five chapters will be highlighted.

CHAPTER 2.0

A Synopsis of the Life and Times of Byang Kato

2.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the life and ministry of Byang Kato, from childhood to adulthood. How he developed from traditional religious beliefs and practices⁴ in an African context in Kwoi, the local government headquarters of the Jabal people in Northern Nigeria, as a boy, to becoming an outstanding evangelical Christian leader in the global Church. A portrait of Kato is painted, depicting various phases of his life, from birth and childhood, transition to adulthood, conversion and spiritual formation, education, family life, vocation and his tragic demise. An account of the various influences that shaped Kato's life and how he also impacted others and the church in Africa is also highlighted.

Kato is remembered as father of evangelicalism in Africa, with exceptional achievement in his short life of thirty-nine years (Ngong 2007:128; Haye 1986:17; Kapteina 2006; Bowers 2008:4; Shirik 2019). According to Bowers (2008:4), "Kato was no obscure, second-rate individual operating at the fringes of world Christianity. In evangelical structures of the time, he was a well-regarded member of its inner global leadership circles". Kato's influence and contribution went beyond polemics. He had a few important firsts in his life and ministry and contributed to stimulating sound theological education in Africa. These achievements set Kato apart and unveiling his personality, beliefs and self-identity is of interest and an inspiration for disciple-making in the Church in Africa.

The biography of Kato is studied with particular emphasis on his theological legacy, especially regarding his biblical hermeneutics, African Christian identity and contribution to theological education in Africa. The question of identity in theological

⁴ It is noteworthy that Kato's perspectives at ATRs was that this included, witchcraft, juju, magic, idolatry etc. (Kato 1975a:18-26; 1962a; 1962b; Macdonald 2017:18; Haye 1986:17).

discourse is important in the African context. A person's self-identity is mostly shaped by the person's personal experiences, society's assessment, and the self-internalisation of other persons' judgement (MacKinnon and Heise 2010; Kuwana 2018). Therefore, the socio-cultural, religious and political context plays an important role in the development of self-identity (MacKinnon and Heise 2010:163-198; Horowitz 2012). How Kato weathered extenuating circumstances to an outstanding Christian leader is a life worth exploring.

2.2 Sources of Information for the Biography

The main sources of information for the study was accessed from a comprehensive bibliography on Kato compiled by Christien Breman (1995:505-12) made available by ACTEA (ACTEA Tools & Studies series No. 16). The primary source was Kato's works, his books and papers. Secondary sources included several scholarly articles by Bowers, Palmer, Shirik, Ferdinando and Turaki, among others. Some information was also retrieved from AEA archives. Other works, relevant to the study also included John Stott's *Evangelical Truth: A Personal Plea for Unity, Integrity and Faithfulness* (2003), Thomas Oden's *The Rebirth of New Orthodoxy* (2015) and *The Rebirth of African Orthodoxy: Return to Foundations* (2016), Christopher J. H. Wright's (2006) *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative*, *African Hermeneutics* by Elizabeth Mburu (2019), Kwame Bediako's (1992) *Theology & Identity*, Yusufu Turaki's (2020) *Engaging Religions and Worldviews in Africa*, a popular biography of Kato by Sophie de la Haye (1986)—*Byang Kato: Ambassador For Christ*, among others, were helpful materials in this study.

Many of the papers of Kato and the biography by Haye were not necessarily peer reviewed and evidenced scholarly papers. They were either speeches or sermons by Kato, many of which were neither dated nor paginated. Kato's major work, his *magnum opus*: "Theological Pitfalls in Africa" a book version of his doctoral thesis and the thesis itself were also reviewed. Data was also derived from field interviews of people who knew Kato.

The study and writing of African Church History are based on a multiplicity of sources. Oral data is particularly important in the African context (Omulukoli 2019:7). Important historical information may be stored in the minds of people ready to be recalled and

not available otherwise in discernable manner. When this is not done in a timely manner, they are lost through death and buried with the individuals. Many of Kato's contemporaries would have passed at the time of this study. Nevertheless, a few survivors of Kato; friends, colleagues and family members who knew him, were interviewed.

The reliability of oral history has been a subject of debate and there are concerns about the limitations of human memory, even if those narrating the events were intimately involved (Perks and Thomson 1998). Interviews generate oral information, which is complimentary to documentary data (Sensing 2011:103). Surviving contemporaries of Kato may not be many and it was important that they pass on relevant information that may not be found in existing historical records before they pass on. Perks and Thomson (1998:ix) state: "Oral history has had a significant impact upon historical practice in the second half of the twentieth century. It has democratised the study of the past by recording the experience of people who have been 'hidden from history'".

To mitigate the concerns about reliability, the semi-structured approach, posing open-ended questions allowed the respondents to voice their experiences without any constrain from the researcher's perspective. These purposive groups were interviewed one-on-one and had no concerns for anonymity and spoke freely and articulately, in responding to questions on any issue (Creswell 2012:217-218; cf. Hirsch 1998:214-23). These generated data as part of the relevant information about Kato, in analysing his theological legacy. Next, the background into which Kato was born and was shaped is highlighted.

2.3 Socio-Political and Cultural Context of Kato's Time

Kato was born and raised during colonial era in Nigeria (1900-1963) and witnessed the end of colonial rule, when Nigeria gained independence from Britain in 1963 (Turaki 2010:113). He also lived through the Nigerian or Biafra Civil war; fought between the Federal Government and the Secessionist State of Biafra, from 6 July 1967-15 January 1970. The State of Biafra was mostly homeland of the Igbo tribe or people from the Southern Nigeria who felt they could not co-exist with the North-led Federal government.

Northern Nigeria was divided into two different regions; the far north, dominated by Islam with Fulani and Hausa, being the main people groups and the Middle Belt region to the South, dominated by Traditional African religion, with several ethnic groups. The far North of Nigeria is surrounded by Islamic countries farther north; with links to Algeria, Morocco, Libya, Egypt and the Maghreb and influenced by Arab civilisation. Before the arrival of the British rulers in Nigeria, Islamic colonialism in the early 1800s imposed their religion, expanding slave trade and creating a polarised society in the Northern states. There was social divide between Muslims and non-Muslims, with the former being the dominant force and subjugating the later. This stratification created a dominance-subordination relationship. The non-Muslims were treated as second class citizens by the Muslims (Byimui 2013:22; Turaki 2017; Abar 2019). Due to the recent Boko Haram incidents in Northern Nigeria, there have been a lot of studies exploring the historical socio-political context of the region (Moniruzzaman 2016:10).

With the divide-and-rule doctrine of British colonialists, the same division the Islamic occupiers before them created—the dominance-subordination relationship between powerful Muslims to the far north and the non-Muslims southward, in the Middle Belt and further south—were institutionalised (Turaki 2017:2). At the same time, the two different societies; the Muslim North and the non-Muslims to the south and closer to the Middle Belt, were merged into a single political region, i.e. Northern Nigeria (Turaki 2010 23-24). The Muslim North was the earliest occupied region by the British imposition and used the Islamic rulers as their viceroys to rule the rest of the country to the south through indirect rule, a strategy commonly used by British colonialism; setting up one group of indigenes against another and using a particular faction to exercise control over their compatriots at the behest of the British (p. 74-76). This is intuitive for understanding the genesis and current religious tensions and conflict in Northern Nigeria.

The Middle Belt, dominated by traditional ethnic groups was merged with the North and were subjected to ethnic, and religious hostility, slavery and wars of territorial expansion and annexation (Turaki 2017:24; cf Maigadi 1997). Culturally, Northern Nigeria was mostly Islamic and not so open to Christian missionary endeavours compared to the Southern part of Nigeria. The ethnic people who did not convert to Islam were less in social status; some were denied their basic rights and land. “Islamic

colonialism and slavery were crucial in defining the religion, culture, ethnicity and general social life of the region” (Turaki 2010:9). The imposition of the Islamic culture virtually replaced the traditional African culture. Contrary to current popular belief, “Christianity did far more to preserve African languages and promote African identity than Islam did” (Turaki (2010:43). The divisions and injustices created in the region by the Islamic leaders were reinforced under British colonial rule and at the time of independence, the non-Muslims were not any better and continued to be subordinated by the Muslims.

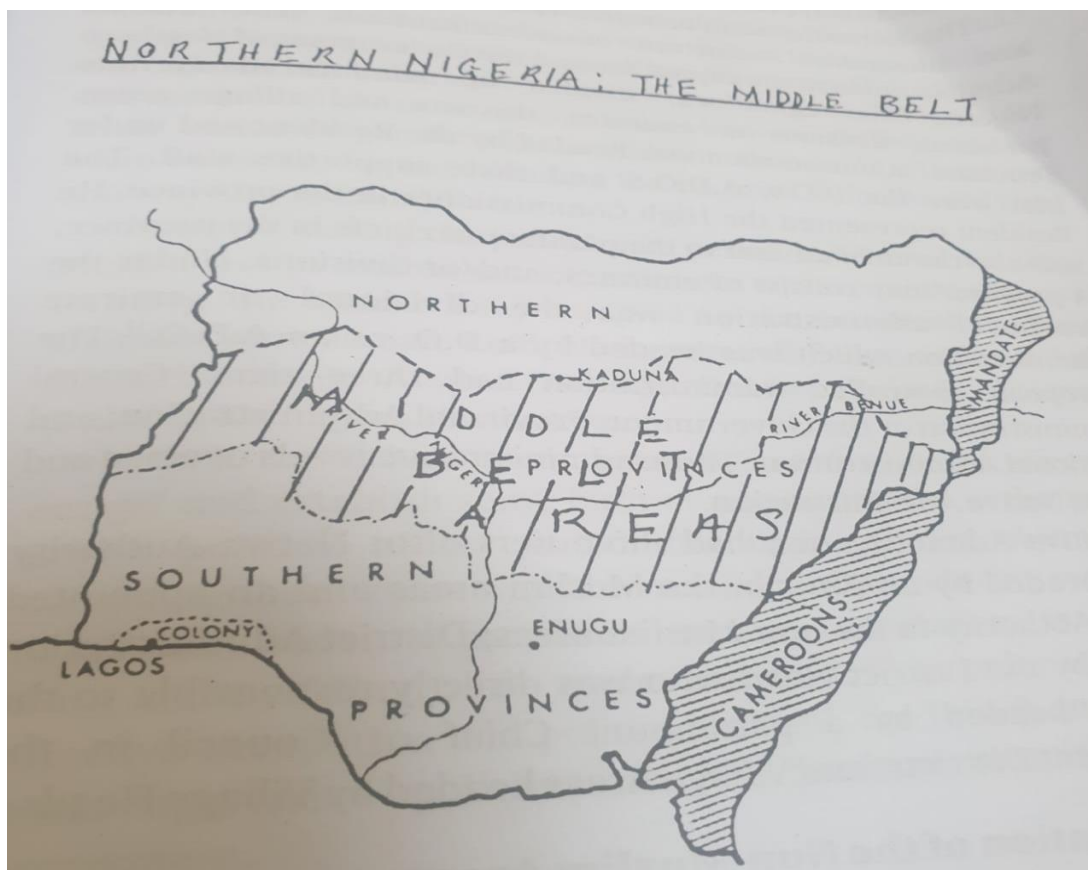


Figure: 1 Map of Nigeria Showing Northern Nigeria and Middle Belt in 1960s

SOURCE: Turaki 2017:81

Kwoi, the birthplace of Kato, is the administrative headquarters of the Jaba local government area in Kaduna State in the southern part of Northern Nigeria presently.

This region was associated with the Middle Belt where the Jaba ethnic group is found. “With an estimated over 350 ethnic groups speaking different languages, Nigeria is not only the most populous country in Africa, but it is also the most multi-ethnic society in Africa as well. Such ethnic diversity makes ethnicity an important element in the life of each ethnic group because it provides each group with a positive sense of self-identity, security, self-determination, and belongingness” (Maigadi 1997). The Jaba was one of the ethnic groups that was resistant to Islam and mostly followed traditional African religion and therefore, were a target in the Islamic raids to enforce Islam and for slavery. Jaba people are believed to be descendants of Africa’s earliest civilisation, with the archaeological discovery of the Nok terracotta heads in the 1990s, pointing to the existence of Nok culture, which dates back to 500 B. C. - 200 A. D. (Abar 2019; Turaki 2010:31; Byimui 2013).

The Hahm or Ham ethnic group is popularly referred to as Jaba people by the Hausa (Kato 1975a:27). The Hausa language is the dominant language of the people of Northern Nigeria and second language of the other ethnic groups. Jaba has remained as the most popular name for the Ham people. The Ham descended from the Nok culture of early Iron-age civilisation, dating back to 400 B.C. The archaeological findings of the Nok culture, the terra-cotta excavations of ancient pottery since 1936, establishes a firm link with the modern Jaba people in Kwoi local government area (Kato 1975a:28). The Middle Belt as a whole has been a target for attacks by Isamist Jihadist from the North. They stand in the way between Northern Nigeria and the Southern region, which is also mostly Christian.

Kwoi is also one of the earliest settlements for Christian missionaries in Northern Nigeria, especially from the Sudan Interior Mission—now Serving In Mission (SIM)—since 1910. The SIM, a conservative evangelical North American missionary organisation, founded in 1893, is a leading evangelical denomination in Africa with over ten million followers in Nigeria alone. The SIM founded the ECWA (Evangelical Church Winning All, formerly, Evangelical Church of West Africa) Church. In terms of denominational beliefs, ECWA is dispensational pre-millennialist and emphasise water baptism by immersion (*web: retrieved 14 March 2019*). Christianity was more acceptable to the Jaba people than Islam and further reason for the Islamic aggression even today. This is the Church Kato was baptised into, had his discipleship and basic

Bible and theological training before his undergraduate and postgraduate training abroad. The multi religious and political context may have contributed to shaping Kato. His experience of the Islamic influence and subjugation of smaller ethnic groups, including the Jaba by the Hausa on one hand and the treatment of the Western colonial systems and missionary influence on the other were pivotal. There were also the traditional and religious and cultural factors of his birth and upbringing. Lifestyle, like most African peoples, was communal (Maigadi 1997:84-85).

What has been said of Nigeria is true for other African cultures and it is against this background that Kato developed his biblical faith and dared to have a lone voice on a wide range of issues. The religious tensions might have shaped his boyhood self-image and how ministering as a Christian could have emboldened him. The more his context is understood the less difficult it would be in understanding Kato's development.

2.4 Birth and Early Childhood

Kato was born and bred in Kwoi, a rural town of about fifteen thousand people in the Sabzuro section in Kaduna State on 23 June 1936 (Baba 2017, Hays 1986:17). The Jaba people with their Nok ancestry have lived in the archaeological Nok area for at least two thousand years. There are no myths of migration from any other place. Folklore suggests they came from Bitaro, which is only four miles away. They also look to Njeng; twelve miles away, for their religious ancestry (Kato 1975a:28).

Kato's birth, nurture and childhood experiences, culminating in rite of passage from childhood to manhood may exemplify the experience of a traditional African child. Kato was the first child and son, therefore, heir apparent of Heri and Zawi Kato. Byang's middle name—Henry—was an Anglicised version of the father's name, Heri (Alemu Kato 2019). The father was a fetish priest⁵ of a local deity known as Pop-ku (Baba 2017). A few months after Kato's birth, he was dedicated as fetish priest, destined to succeed his father (Hays 1986:17). Worship of a deity is common in African traditional

⁵ Fetish: According to Kato: fetishism refers to a created object used by worshippers of African traditional religions. For example, use of charms and amulets, believed to inherit special spiritual powers for protection against malevolent spirits. However, fetishism is only an aspect of the ATRs as a whole. *Theological Pitfalls...* 1975, p.21-22

religions. Belief in a Supreme God as creator of heaven and earth and with power to kill is acknowledged in ATR (Kato 1974a). However, the Supreme being and creator seems to be far removed from the reality and people relate to lesser gods in their worship, a distortion of the valid concept of a Supreme Being (Kato 1974a). African spirituality or worship of the deity by African peoples has been referred to by various terms: animism, idol worship, paganism and heathenism, witchcraft, fetishism, magic, juju, primitive religion or ancestral veneration. A more comprehensive nomenclature for African religions is 'African Traditional Religions' (ATRs). There is no single religion of African peoples; rather there are multiple religions of different ethnic groups (Kato 1974a:16-28). Although there are differences in the way the diverse ethnic groups do their ritual and cultic worship, some common features can be identified and therefore an assessment of a particular African traditional region may provide an understanding of what ATR is. Thus, Kato (1974a: 28-69) describes the characteristics of Jaba religion as an example of ATR.

According to Kato (p.29): "Jaba do not have the fully-developed polytheism scholars sometimes claim for West Africa. But they do have the concept of a Supreme Being, a notion of future life, and some views of sacrifice". However, "the chief object of their worship is not Nom, the Supreme Being. Apart from verbal references, nothing in practice is done in connection with Nom. They do not worship Nom though they have him constantly in their language" (p. 33). Thus, like many other African cultures, the Supreme Being is approached through intermediaries or idols. Kato demystifies African Traditional Religions, which brings fear and controls the life of people. According to Kato, worship of the deity was humanistic and its motivation was for material benefits. The cult promised power and control and protection (Kato: 1974a:38; cf. Turaki 2017:37-39). The ultimate goal is neither the glory of the Supreme Being or even of the lesser gods, but that women and children may serve the needs of men (Kato 1975a:47). Followers believe that the world is full of spirits and are out there to hurt people and there are hardly good spirits (p. 47). So, the life of the Jaba person is dominated by fear. The graveyard is believed to be filled with the spirits of the dead roaming about; places of fear are numerous, including trees. So, at harvest, first fruits are placed at the tombs, or under a tree before human consumption. Failure to do so is to one's peril, incurring punishment from the spirits.

Exorcism is part of Jaba belief and practice. Some people specialise in casting out the evil spirits and rituals are associated with some sacred articles such as a drum, calabash and a locally made string instrument like guitar (p. 49). The exorcism is done at night and requires lots of food, singing and incantations; calling the name of the spirits in the possessed by the fetish priest. The possessed and other women would then break into dancing to the tempo of the music and song by the exorcist. The dancing will go on for at least two hours; the possessed would then fall down as if in coma, apparently out of exhaustion. She would wake up later revived and strengthened in the belief that the spirit has now left her. If the person is ever troubled by the spirits again, the exorcising practice is repeated. The Jaba religion and the world of the spirits could have had substantial impact on Kato and his attitude to mysticism.



Figure 2: Photo of Byang Henry Kato

Kato bears in his physical body and lifestyle, elements of authentic traditional African identity, epitomised by the prominent tribal marks he wore on his left temple (See Figure 2 above). African traditional marks caused by body piercing and cuts are not merely for fashion; these have spiritual connotation and inflicted with some blood-letting rituals with religious and social functions (Turaki 1999:92). The marks were not only for decoration but also, were marks of identity, protection from evil and were meant to be medicinal (Cullivan 1998). One of the characteristics of African traditions, with religious connotations, is the practice of bloodletting and the indelible scars that those raised in a typical African tradition carry on their bodies for the rest of their lives. The two slits or traditional marks on either side of Kato's temples gave him an authentic cultural identity.

Kato survived seven siblings who perished and his community believed he was saved or spared by the evil spirit or devil (Kato 1962a; Turaki 1999:18). Every effort was made to make young Kato grow up, appeasing the gods for his own safety. He learnt how to offer the first harvest of the crop at the shrine, the base of a sycamore sacred tree, where the spirits dwell and also learnt the art of offering sacrifices to the deities (Haye 1986:17). Relationship and worship of the clan gods was based on fear and not love as the God of the Bible, where the worshipper is admonished about love for God: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" (Matt. 22:37). Kato demonstrates sound knowledge of African traditional religions from his experience as a Jaba priest (Kato 1974a:28-67). Kato was also influenced by some cross-cultural values, when he encountered missionaries and experienced life in church and the mission school.

2.5 Dedication as Fetish Priest and Rite of Passage to Manhood

African traditional religious beliefs hold that the world is permeated with spirits and divinities who influence every aspect of a person's life for ill or for good. Rituals are means of appeasing these divinities and spirits. Diviners and witch doctors are believed to be close to the spirits and tend to go at extra length in the observance of rituals to appease the gods (Kunhiyop 2012:108-9). Rituals like child dedication were to confer on the child special blessings from the gods and avert curses. Also, rituals of this nature in the traditional sense is covenantal, and in Kato's case, required "bloody sacrifices, exorcism, curses, and trial by poison" (Nystrom 2020:2). Dedication

was ceremony marking the devotion of the child back to the gods of the clan. This could well be the case of Kato and the tribal marks on his temple could have been incised as part of the dedication ritual.

Dedication as fetish priest was cultic and a cardinal feature of ritual worship, among other rites; i.e. confession, prayers and sacrifices to deities, communal meals, ritual washing, ancestral veneration and blood-letting for ablution (Sawyerr 1968:119-21). According to Sawyerr, blood is life and is therefore used to establish, preserve or restore a blood-covenant relationship between all members of the family and between the deity or spirit and the worshippers (p. 121). Sawyerr (1968:128-29), went further to observe that the worship of ancestors and divinities by Africans falls short of Christian worship.

Some preachers today would call for deliverance at conversion to Christianity to nullify the influence of the spirits and divinities to which the person was dedicated as a child. There was no such deliverance ritual or ceremony in the case of Kato. At his conversion, he believed he had been saved from his past and trusted the efficacy of the salvation Jesus offers when people trust him. Kato appeared to be reticent about charismatic expression even of the Holy Spirit in his teaching. One wonders whether this is because of the spiritism he experienced in the Jaba religious practices, especially aspects that were inconsistent with the Bible.

Early childhood education shapes belief, values and accomplishment in the whole of life, helping the child to realise her full potential. The formative stages are categorized into four: infancy, early childhood, middle childhood and later childhood (Semenye 2007:39-49). In each category, a foundation will be built into its physical, spiritual, intellectual and emotional structure. Dedication of Baby Kato was a commitment to nurture the child into fetish practices. Cultural and historical traditions are transmitted orally from one generation to another (Kenyatta (1965: xvi). Byang was taught the art of offering sacrifices to the deities which inhabited votive objects. Kato was dedicated to being a fetish priest a few months after his birth. His nurture was oriented to this goal. His father was mentoring him and the programme of rites of passage recognised Kato's destined vocation (Haye 1986:17; Ferdinando 2007; Janssen (2008:n. p.).

The rite of passage required living in the jungle for a hectic one week; out of the reach of non-initiates and women, who were made to believe that the young initiates have been swallowed by the devil. The seclusion and exclusion from non-members, mostly women and children, was also meant to arouse fear in the women and children, who were made to believe that the initiate was in company with the devil and would be fearful. While this may sound like a hoax some engagement of ancestral spirits and deities, and blood sacrifices are characteristic features of the rite of passage rituals. “The mothers were required to provide enough food and drink for the devil until the devil’s stomach was so full as to vomit the young men out” (Haye 1986:18; cf. Janssen 2008; IKwubuzo 2009:143). The boys themselves would be indoctrinated to reinforce their invincibility and ensure they keep the secrets of the rituals for a lifetime.

Activities in the bush included indoctrination, disciplinary programmes, skilful arts and life skills to prepare the young boys for manhood and oath taking; not to divulge the secrets of the goings-on in the bush to non-members of the men’s society. Ikwubuzo (2009:140-42) observes: “Some of these cultural patterns of life are of mythic dimensions in that they reflect the myth that bind the society together in its people's psychological, social and religious activities”. These portend for valuable forms of education that establish the young adult as a responsible citizen. However, the underlying secrecy and hidden motivations and deceptions in the guilds may have contributed to this traditional systems and forms of education being relegated to an extent of being endangered.

The late childhood period in a person’s life was important formative period of development when values and beliefs are firmly implanted for a lifetime (Semenye 2007:47-49). Demonstrating traits of traditional fetish cultural beliefs would be expected in the later life of Kato. In his writings, Kato states his cognitive experience and knowledge of the Jaba tradition (1974a:30). Kato, like other Jaba tribal boys, was ready for transitioning rite from boyhood to manhood at the age of ten. At this stage of late childhood or puberty, the young person is spiritually prepared and open to instruction and able to discern what is right or wrong and with an enquiring mind (Semenye 2007). The goal of the initiation rite of passage was to prepare the young man for manly responsibilities; ready to start and run his own family. The ritual was a test of manhood and subjected to some drill and rough life in the bush for at least a

week. Generally, traditional education emphasised comprehensive aspects of human endeavours. The rite of passage was the means of training in adult skills in things like warfare, marriage, parenting and leadership. The young man is prepared for responsibility and given the opportunity to prove their readiness to take on adult responsibilities (Jusu 2016:1838); Ikwuagwu (2007:62). The initiates who have now graduated as men return to the village from the bush amidst singing, drumming and dancing and feasting of the entire village with guests from neighbouring villages (Haye 1986:17-18). Kato's experiences described here would be familiar in African folklore and literature, for example, Camara Laye, Chinua Achebe and others in the African writers' series. Thus, these experiences may typify what an average African boy goes through, certainly in Kato's time. The experiences are important factors in shaping one's worldviews with implications for Christianity. Byang was well on his way to succeeding his father, as fetish priest; having been thoroughly shaped and mentored in the tradition of his father.

Kato's birth and dedication to the deities and rites of passage from childhood to a fully-fledged adult male was an example of the African Traditional Religious belief system. He did not just read or hear about it but had a real immersion and experience of the belief system and at the earliest possible and impressionistic period of his life. To illustrate the indelible childhood impressions, Kato (197b:3) writes:

As a child I used to be very afraid of a graveyard. I am still not sure that I would be happy to spend a night in a cemetery. I think this fear comes from my pagan background, because I grew up believing that the spirits of the dead come back to haunt the living. This is a universal belief among heathen societies. But is it true? Do dead people come back as spirits?

Although he had been tested physically, spiritually, mentally and emotionally; through the demands of the cultic rituals and had been conferred manhood, the budding adult was still in the formative stages at the tender age of ten to twelve years, and open to other influences that could shape him for life. However, it is inappropriate to treat the young initiate as a child. The gap between a child and an adult is huge; it is not about the chronological age but rather the cultural status, the boy now assumes, after the rite of passage. The child would have grown through the impressionistic phase of life; yielding to acquiring conduct by imitation and prone to accept all that he has been

taught with tender conscience and strong impulse to obey and God-conscious (Barna 2009; 2018)

However, much of missionary education relegated traditional education and focused more on spiritual and less on social life (Ogunbado 2017:55). Formal schooling and attending Sunday school provided Kato the opportunity for encounter and conversion to Christianity. Essentially the Western educational curriculum focused on literary work, based on reading, writing, arithmetic, Bible Knowledge, aimed at producing Christians to read the Bible. Also, the education was aimed at preparing people to serve as clerks, agents and interpreters in the colonial administration and commerce (Ogunbado 2017). Initial objective of the missionary schools was gospel work among the natives. However, colonial government gave financial assistance and exercised control over the schools and educational system “formed the foundation upon which the educational systems of most African nations are built today” (Sulaiman 2012:

Kato had a comprehensive immersion in his formative years; educated in both worlds of the traditional culture and missionary education influenced by the colonial government. Kato found purpose for his life in committing to living out the truth of his new faith without compromise in elementary school.

2.6 Conversion to Christianity, spiritual formation and elementary education

In later childhood, Kato had an encounter with a lady missionary, Mary Haas in his village from the Sudan Interior Mission—SIM (Haye 1986:18). The independent SIM related churches in Nigeria came together to establish a single indigenous evangelical denomination known as Evangelical Church of West Africa now known as Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA) in 1954, Kato’s last year in primary or elementary school. The ECWA church is currently one of the biggest evangelical church denominations in Nigeria, with membership of over ten million (<http://www.ecwa.org.ng/about-ecwa/ecwa-history/>). It has been the dominant denomination in the Nigeria Evangelical Fellowship since its founding in 1965. The SIM missionary lady visited the village square many times and attracted the community through playing music on a gramophone which was placed on a rock, at the town square, close to Kato’s home then, in Kwoi. This was how Kato was first attracted to missionary activities and encounters. Mary Haas did not only play music but also preached the gospel in the

Jaba language, more likely Hausa, the lingua franca in Northern Nigeria. For the first time, Kato heard the gospel in his own language (Haye 1986:18). This enhanced understanding and may have made an indelible impression. The local church was also not far from the square and the Kato homestead. Kato also got interested in gospel stories he heard and was taught in Sunday School at the Church. The gospel message Kato heard in the village square several times, from the missionary, in his own language, was reinforced when Kato got enrolled in the elementary school, built by missionaries, at age twelve. Regular schooling in the missionary school, would be a distraction for the plans of Kato's father. It was not surprising therefore that for nearly a year, the father resisted the idea of enrolling his son in a Christian missionary school. Ironically, it was the grandfather who prevailed on Kato's father for the young grandson to enrol in the Christian school, thus jeopardizing the succession plan for sustenance of the fetish priesthood tradition.

Kato's heart was stirred when he heard a Bible story, told by his Nigerian teacher, about Noah and the ark and God's plan of salvation in saving Noah and his family (Gen. 6:9-8:22). Kato's understanding of the story made him come to appreciate the need for salvation of humans from the devastating consequences of sin and the way of escape or salvation offered by God in Jesus Christ. He saw the need to make a personal choice of accepting Jesus Christ as his Saviour that day, to escape the wrath of God as a sinner (Breman 1995:37; Haye 1986:19). Testifying about his conversion, Kato (1962:13) writes:

Finally a day came when I knew I had to decide what I would do. I had to face these facts: Juju could not save my soul. Juju demands bloody sacrifices—often human sacrifices. Juju demands torture, keeps women and children in fear. Juju priests claim they have the power of life and death over anyone who fails to give the required number of goats, rams, and cocks. These priests are a terror to everyone!

Kato was interviewed by a journalist on a tour in Europe about his faith and why he became a Christian. Kato's response was: "Well, when I was without Christ, I was of course religious - religious in the sense of worshipping idols. But when Jesus Christ was presented to me, I realized that He was the Way of Life - not just a way, but the only Way, and so I asked Him to come into my heart, in order that when I die, I may be sure of going to be with Him in heaven" (Kato 1974d; Idea 1974:n. p.).

While Byang felt forgiven by God and was now free from the consequences of sin, he incurred the wrath of his father and suffered the consequences. He was deprived of his livelihood; his father stopped feeding him and providing clothing for him. However, Kato endured the ordeal and as the first son of three Kato boys of the father, he had responsibility to mentor his two younger half-brothers⁶ and work on the family farm. Counting the cost for discipleship; following Christ was real and experiential. Kato's conversion to Christianity meant a rejection of the traditional religious practices he had been nurtured with since infancy. The decision to become Christian angered his father and aggravated the punishment meted out to the young Kato; he got beaten and denied food (Breman 1995:37). The implications on Kato turning his back on the cultural status would have far reaching consequences beyond immediate livelihood and punishment.

This is the fate of many young people, especially those on the continent from Muslim background and for whom Kato's experience is an inspiration. Accepting the Christian faith in school initially, Kato did not feel anything different had happened to him, apart from the punishment from his father who was hurt by his son's conversion. Quoting Kato, Haye (1986:20) wrote: "I was a Christian, but I knew constant failure. My testimony was a mockery to the name of Christ". This was an apparent reference that he was still living the old life of sin and had not experienced any change the new faith promised. The turning point in his spiritual journey and encounter with the Christian faith was when he got convicted of his sins, through listening to the preaching of the gospel during a SIM church conference in 1953. The speakers for the week-long conference or revival services were Gin Mai-Gari and Andarawus, missionary pastors from the SIM. These hold on to traditional values and beliefs generally held by evangelical Christians. The theme of the revival meetings was holiness and call for repentance from sin (Haye 1986:20).

Kato felt convicted by the Holy Spirit through the message and was moved to tears in repentance and to the point of sacrificing anything to follow Christ. He took off his shirt and laid it on the altar as a sacrifice and contribution towards the effort of the African

⁶ In Kato's context, and indeed in many African culture, these are real brothers. However, half-brother is to let the reader understand that the other two boys were from a different wife of Byang's father.

Missionary Society, for sending out missionaries (Haye 1986: 20-23; Breman 1996:138). He was also convinced about the voice of God and that God wanted more than a sacrifice of a shirt. God wanted his whole life and his commitment to go out as a missionary himself. According to Haye (1986: 20-27), Kato surrendered to God and invited him to use him as he would. In an interview with several respondents, this pietistic tendency of Kato was mentioned and respondents spoke about his passion for the evangelistic work of the Church and also his generosity to people even at the expense of his own family. In an interview with Rev. Ademu Kato for example, said that every time Kato returned from a trip back to the town, it took him nearly two hours to get to his home from the drop-off point to his home, a distance that would ordinarily take less than thirty minutes. He would stop by every household to greet the people and often to evangelise them.

Following Kato's conversion and encounter during the revival services, when he made a recommitment to faithfully follow Jesus, there was marked change in his life. This was also a time of a great revival in the church in Nigeria and in the West Africa region in general (Breman 1995:38). He was keen to attend Sunday school classes. He learnt how to listen to God's word, and how to apply God's word to his own life. Kato looked forward to the Sunday school lessons, not only to hear the word of God but also as a way of learning and improving his English language studies. He taught other boys what he learnt from Sunday school and even went to neighbouring villages to share the message he had learnt. Kato was serious about following Christ as a disciple and helping others to follow Christ, in obedience to the Great Commission by Jesus Christ to make disciples of all nations or people (Matthew 28:19-20). Kato also joined the Boys' Brigade, an interdenominational uniformed Christian youth organisation, with goal of character formation, through use of semi-military discipline with Christian values. He was also involved with Youth for Christ. By age eighteen, he was a company leader (presumably in the Boys' Brigade) promoted to the rank of sergeant, for hard work and leadership (Haye 1986:23). The regimental training of the Boys' Brigade was meant to reinforce obedience and faithfulness to the teachings in school and church, based on Christian values. He was particularly sensitive about drawing the line between traditional religious aspirations and the unbiblical view of compromise against what was authentically biblical Christianity (Kato 1974a:33). With Kato's

spiritual immersion in both African and Christian religions, he was knowledgeable enough to make comparison and make informed choices.

The beginnings of Kato's spiritual journey could have been influenced by his father, grandfather on one hand and on the other, Mary Haas, Nigerian teachers, especially the one who taught the story about Noah's ark and which contributed to Kato's conversion to Christianity. Hearing the gospel in his mother tongue by evangelical missionaries and disciplinary drills from Boys' Brigade. Just like the traditional dedication, initiation experiences, Kato was baptised and was a communicant member of an evangelical SIM local church. He read the Bible with enthusiasm and regularity. He searched the scripture to discern the mind of God and looked to it for guidance for his faith and conduct. Like his grasp of previous religious beliefs, Kato was vast in understanding his new faith. He was able to make a sound judgement and differentiate between the two religious views and not to mix the two, as demanded of the Christian faith. He chose to abandon his former religious worldview, associated with his old sinful life and unequivocally embraced the Christian Biblical view. This is particularly important, given the dominance of traditional religious worldview in the Church in Africa (Chalk 2013:11; Turaki 2001).

It is noteworthy that Kato stayed at home with his parents even when his parents objected to his new religious faith. The tendency in this kind of context was dualism. Most of the fetish priests were happy for their children to be engaged with the education and other opportunities offered by the foreign missionaries so long as the children continued to participate also in the home fetish rituals. Accordingly, Kato's continued stay at home then must have been challenging in his early years as a Christian. He must have been involved in day to day negotiations of this difficult situation of balancing the two masters. Therefore, that kind of situation may have contributed to developing his Christian character and appraisal of the value of ATR culture compared to his Christian faith and thus, his contrary view from others, in theological discourse later in his life. Recalling the bitter memories, Kato (1962:13) states:

My father cursed and swore. He got so angry that he swore by his juju never to buy me any more clothes. Both my parents cursed and abused me. I was very frightened and worried, but they did not care. Believe me—people who serve juju are hard hearted, cruel, wicked, and bloodthirsty. They are cruel to those who dare to oppose them. They try by all means to put terror into the minds of all who do not follow them.

His encounter with the gospel and discipleship as a young Christian proved to be effective and transformative and could be an important lesson for the church in Africa today.

Starting formal educational pursuit was an important turning point; though he was only a boy at age twelve, his cultural and life experiences had prepared him for manhood. As a young man, he was still open to nurture by other value systems. As an adult in the traditional sense, he was now in the position to fend for the family and assist the father on the farm. Apart from concern that schooling would be a distraction from his fetish priestly role, responsibilities for farming for the livelihood of the family was another of the father's concern and objection for Byang enrolling in missionary school. It took the grandfather's intervention to eventually prevail on the father to let the young Kato settle in school, one year later than his first attempt (Haye 1986:19).

Kato started primary school in earnest at the SIM school in Kwoi in 1948 (Haye 1986:114). Kato's commitment to his schoolwork was exceptional. He balanced his time between work and studies. He worked on his father's farm in the morning, attended school in the afternoon and worked part time for missionaries in the evening, to earn money to pay school fees and buy school supplies (Haye 1986:19; Breman 1966:135). He learnt how to cultivate crops like ginger, turmeric, bambara beans, cocoyam, cassava, millet and sorghum for subsistence (interview). Notwithstanding the hectic work schedule, Kato excelled in class and was often ranked the top student (Breman 1996:138). The current king of the Jaba people, Kpop Dr. Jonathan Danladi Gyet Maude in Kwoi was Kato's classmate and the King in an interview, confirmed that Kato was always top of the class. Kato's primary education laid a solid foundation and he propelled himself to Bible college, a tertiary institution, skipping secondary school.

2.7 Marriage and Family Life

Kato first met Jummai Rahila Gandu, who would eventually become his spouse, in Sunday School and they attended the same primary school. Jummai, also born in Kwoi on 22 May 1939, to his Highness Mal Gandu Maude and Dabo Kambo and was a princess of the King of the Jaba people, known as the *Kpop Ham* (Breman 1996:139;

Haye 1986:36). Jummai was raised by her grandmother. The mother, Dabo Kambok, had been kidnapped by a famous businessman, Kobo Nimen, when the King and father of Jummai died and when she was only two years old (Jummai's Funeral Booklet 2019; Haye 1986:25). Byang was loved by Jummai's grandmother as a Christian young man and was instrumental in encouraging her granddaughter to date Kato. Byang was in his third and final year at Bible College at Igbaja, when he got married to Jummai Rahila Gandu. Byang and Jummai wedded on 26th January 1957 (Haye 1986:25-26).

Byang's union with Jummai brought together two influential African traditionalists; the one from a traditional ruling house and the other from a traditional fetish background, likened to Queen and Priest. Jummai was of Jaba aristocracy and a princess, daughter of the Kpop Ham. Byang had been transformed from a fetish priest to a preacher of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Bible places importance on these community positions; priest and queen. The priest exemplified God's values and tasked to teach God's precepts to the people, while the king lived these values out and enforced them in the family and community. Jummai would be remembered for her sternness and forthrightness⁷ and Byang, for his hard work, sense of purpose and commitment to the things of God.

When Kato got married, he was finishing his three-year Diploma programme at Igbaja Bible College. He had also commenced home studies in earnest to prepare to sit 'O' and 'A' Level exams from London, for qualifying for matriculation in university. His new bride had also enrolled in the women and pastors' wives' programme. Before the end of the year of their wedding, their first child, Deborah was born on 20 October 1957. Their marriage was blessed with three children, a girl and two boys: Deborah, Jonathan and Paul, respectively, in fairly quick succession. Jonathan arrived on 19 December 1958 and Paul, the third and last child, followed on 11 October 1960.

The rigorous and ambitious educational pursuits of her husband and the early arrival of three children, in quick succession allowed Jummai only modest formal education.

⁷ Several people interviewed and who gave tributes at the funeral of Jummai Kato on 8 May 2019, including her children and members of the Girls' Brigade in Nigeria, mentioned her sternness and forthrightness.

She provided support for the husband when he was away, and she did more in raising the children and looking after their home (Haye 1986:32). Nevertheless, she attended the Girls' Christian Training Institute in Kwoi and did several short-term courses, including Child Evangelism Fellowship Institute in Paris, Pitman Examination, British Red Cross Society, London, The St. John Ambulance, National Youth Programme and The Girls' Brigade. With her typing skills, she did her husband's typing and served as Typist for the SIM. She was Matron for the ECWA/SIM Teachers' College Girls' dormitory. She would be remembered for a long and active service for the Girls' Brigade in Nigeria.

Kato raised his family on Christian values. He observed a daily discipline of Bible reading and prayer time at home, involving all the household. All three children came to personal faith in Jesus at the age of eight, seven and six respectively (Haye 1986:139). He involved the family in his pastoral and preaching ministry as much as possible. Deborah recalls, in an interview, how he would often mention them, the family members, to illustrate or recount experiences, to make a point in his preaching. He was fond of calling the family out to the stage, to sing before his sermon. "Apart from the whole family coming together for prayer, we were trained to read the Bible and pray on our own, using devotional materials" Deborah said. This is corroborated with Haye's interview with Deborah. At breakfast, their dad would ask them "have you had your devotion", before they had the corporate family devotion (Haye 1986:112).

The family would also pray together at bedtime. Kato narrates how his second son and last child, came to faith during one of the evening prayers. The Scripture reading was about the second coming of Jesus Christ (Matt. 24:37-44). Paul, the youngest child asked whether he would be taken away or left behind when Jesus returns. Kato used the opportunity to illustrate the gospel to the young child leading him to accept Jesus Christ as his Saviour (Kato 1975e:15). Kato took time to teach his children about Jesus Christ and was convinced this was the greatest need for every person and the duty of every believer to tell others about Christ. According to Deborah, two of his favourite subjects that rang through his sermons or speeches were leadership and salvation and his favourite leader he would mention was Yakubu Gowon, then the Head of State of Nigeria.

Byang Kato demonstrated a balanced view of his experiences; rejecting what he considered idolatry but also recognised positive values of the traditional system, that stayed with him. According to Deborah, he was known for “hard work, discipline and very focused”. His mantra, which he told the children all the time, according to Deborah, was: “Hard work does not kill”. This was a way of inculcating studiousness in the children’s schoolwork and at home. Also, the children were trained to share in the domestic chores. Each one of the three children had an assigned task they were responsible for and were expected to excel in both their home assignment and schoolwork. He wanted to give the children good education; they all went to the famous Rift Valley Academy, for children of missionaries, in Kenya. He also opened an account in the USA, where he started saving for the children’s education. The children generally remember him for his sternness and his love for his people. Their home was also opened to strangers and friends and often for fellowship, Bible study and prayer meetings.

In response to a question about culture, Deborah revealed how their American friends believed he was a chief because of his fondness for wearing his *‘babban riga’* (big gown), the traditional Hausa attire. He also liked traditional food from Kwoi, even on his travels and away from home. He did not spare the rod to discipline the children, even in America. According to Deborah, he was more of a traditional Jaba man. However, Deborah said he showed humility and servanthood in his leadership. He was accessible to all in the village and led many to the Christian faith, including his parents and siblings. He had a lot of admiration for General Yakubu Gowon, one-time head of state of Nigeria and led the country through the Biafra war. Oladipo (2018), names Gowon among fifteen exemplary and influential Christian leaders in the public square of all times in Nigeria.

Notwithstanding, the exemplary family life and with the exigencies of Kato’s preoccupations and career path, there were concerns about his frequent absence from home. The spouse was often left on her own, with the burden to care for the young family (Haye 1986:35; Interviews). To his credit, Kato made intentional effort to spend quality time with the family when he was home and created space for fun and play. When he died, they were together, except for the girl, who had travelled to Nigeria for vacation, at an exotic retreat centre on a beach on the Indian Ocean in Mombasa, for

family holiday and celebrate the birthday of one of the boys (Haye 1986:91-96). He had gone swimming with the two boys on the beach in Mombasa when he met his tragic death by drowning.

Jummai Kato (1939-2019) died an octogenarian and survived her husband for forty-four years. At her funeral on 8 May 2019, the Senator of Kaduna State, Northern Nigeria said: “As a princess many prominent men would have loved to have her as a wife, when her husband died at a very young age, but she would not give in to any possible suitors, in reverence for husband’s memory and legacy which she kept intact”. Similarly, the General Secretary of the Association of Evangelicals in Africa re-echoed similar sentiments and said: “If the Church could look up to the late Rev. Dr. Byang Kato for theological polemics and disputations; Mama Jummai provided us the practical theology of widowhood, single parenting (especially when life becomes dark; reechoing words of the children in their tributes and in apparent reference to their experience when their father passed), resilience, virtue, modesty and faithfulness”; the AEA General Secretary further stated:

Jummai obviously became the key for unlocking the treasures that appeared to have been drowned in the Indian Ocean and interred with the remains of the then burgeoning theological figure, who would then be remembered as the father of evangelical theology in Tropical Africa. Mama Jummai’s widowhood lasted 44 years, longer than the entire life time of the husband (Afroscope, AEA Online Newsletter, July 2019, retrieved 15 July 2019).

Jummai Kato is credited for co-owning and preserving the theological vision and legacy established with her late husband, for the benefit of the theological institutions in Africa⁸.

2.8 Further Education

Kato’s choice of a career would appear to have been predestined given as he was dedicated as a fetish priest few months after his birth. As a young man, he chose to go to Bible College when he completed primary school. This time, the training was as a priest in the Christian Church and as a Bible teacher and preacher, a training he would further pursue abroad and attain a terminal degree in theology. In an era when

⁸ Tribute by Prof. Randeeyi Ijatuyi-Morphe, Provost, Jos Theological Seminary and ECWA College of Education, Jos, Nigeria at his funeral.

many leading African Christians lived a life of religious pluralism, embracing traditional religious practices resorting to divination or witchcraft when in stress and anxiety (Sawyer 1968:19), Kato's detachment from this non-Christian and traditional belief system, and quest for authentic biblical Christianity was an exceptional African contribution to the global Church.

In the 1950-1960s, Christianity in Africa was at the cross-roads; with the resurgence of African consciousness and shaping of African Christian thought and practice. Most of the scholars of that time bought into the strand of Christian consciousness which was decidedly post-colonial while Kato appeared to have prioritised Biblical Christianity. That was the beginning of evangelical Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa. Kato became a prominent voice and advocate for sound biblical beliefs, with important contribution to evangelical theology on the continent. His quest for theological training started at Igbaja Bible College in Kaduna State in Nigeria, then to London Bible College in UK and then postgraduate studies at Dallas Theological Seminary in the USA. All three institutions played no small part in shaping Kato's distinctive evangelical self-understanding.

2.8.1 Bible College at Igbaja (1955-1957)

Kato demonstrated adult qualities while he was still a child and in primary school, demonstrated by his hard work and the way he handled his responsibilities. He skipped secondary education to proceed to a post-secondary institution to study theology in preparation to work for the church. He had committed himself to serve God as a missionary when he re-dedicated his life during the revival meeting in Kwoi in 1953. With the assistance of the local ECWA church in Kwoi, Kato enrolled at Igbaja Bible college in 1955 (Breman 1996:139). The Igbaja Bible College, established in 1941, was an important SIM established theological training institution in West Africa. Initially, the focus was on training in Biblical Interpretation and Preaching. It would go on to be the first Higher Education Institution of learning in Nigeria for the training of homebred African pastors and Christian educators. Many prominent evangelical Christian leaders and scholars, like Tokumboh Adeyemo, Victor Babajide Cole, Yusufu Turaki, Danfulani Kore, Musa B. Gaiya and Femi Ilesanmi are among the illustrious alumni of Igbaja Bible college. This is now a fully-fledged University, offering terminal doctorate degrees in theology.

Skipping the normal educational stages and opting for a short-term basic Bible college training, was characteristic of evangelical missions. The missions did not encourage more advanced biblical or theological training (Foday-Khabenje 2016: 110-12). However, one of the issues that Kato took to heart was sound education, especially biblical education, at the highest level of scholarship and he would not settle for less. As in his primary school days, when he stayed after school to work for missionaries to pay fees and books, Kato continued to work and study from early morning until late evening to earn money for the family (Haye 1986:25-26). In spite of all the family responsibilities, Byang excelled in his course work (Haye 1986:28).

On graduation, Kato returned to Kwoi with his family and lived and taught at the Kwoi Bible school. The Bible School in Kwoi was another SIM established Bible training school for the training of pastors. As a Bible school teacher, he wanted to advance his education, but this required further general education to qualify for matriculation in a higher institution for undergraduate degree. To attain the requisite entry qualification, he resorted to independent studies of his own and passed the ordinary and advanced level school certificates exams in 1961 and 1963, respectively and was qualified for entry to university (Haye 1986:115).

2.8.2 Undergraduate Education at London Bible College (1963-66)

Now armed with his 'A' Level qualification, Kato looked beyond what Igbaja offered him in terms of higher theological education. He was immediately able to gain admission to the London Bible College (LBC) in England. The SIM/ECWA scholarship Board offered him a grant for the studies, at the time, the most expensive scholarship the Board had ever granted, knowing the value or quality of education this would bring to the mission (Haye 1986:35-36). London Bible College, now known as London School of Theology, was world class evangelical theological school, established in 1943 in the heart of London. The school was established as a united action by evangelical Christians from all denominations in the UK, devoted to evangelical scholarship of the highest standard possible. The school was loyal to the entire trustworthiness of the Bible, without reservation of any kind. Its purpose is to equip men and women in the scholarly and practical knowledge of the Bible, train for work of the gospel—pastoral, evangelistic, teaching and missionary services. It is international and interdenominational and the largest theological college of its kind in

Europe. The London Bible College did not only train for scholarly and academic excellence but also, character formation and preparing the men and women and developing practical abilities for missionary work in the world. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=74bNsou_Dyc (Retrieved 27 July 2019)

Kato's enrolment at LBC in 1963, thus becoming the first person from Tropical Africa to do so, was itself an important achievement. Kato pursued the diploma in theology and continued to earn the Bachelor of Divinity (B.D.) degree from the London University, to which the LBC was affiliated for the award of degrees, in 1966. Kato was the first to enter LBC and graduate with a B.D from Tropical Africa (Breman 1995:40). By the time Kato was ready to travel abroad for further studies, the other two children (boys) had been born, Jonathan in 1958 and Paul in 1960. Jummai was left to look after the young children in Kwoi when Kato sailed to London to commence his studies. In the following year, Jummai joined him in London and the three children were left to the care of relatives (Haye 1986:40). While Byang worked to complete his B.D., Jummai enrolled in certificate course in Home Economics at the YWCA. She studied home management, sewing and culinary arts. She was also involved with the British Red Cross and attained certificates in First Aid. She also took evening classes in Typewriting. Both Byang and Jummai worked as Host and Hostess at an Inter-Varsity Fellowship hostel to earn extra money.

The London Bible School curriculum allowed for evangelistic activities outside of campus and Kato was actively involved in outreach, going with teams down south of London to Devon. Their home in London was also opened to their fellow Nigerian students in London. God used Kato's preaching and witness to bring people to faith in Christ, among them, local British people and fellow Nigerians. Kato successfully completed his studies in 1966 and he and his spouse were ready to return home to Nigeria. However, on their way back home, they passed through Paris to attend the Child Evangelism Fellowship Institute for three-month training course for children ministry workers/teachers. Both Byang and his wife were qualified Children Ministry workers (Haye 1986:40-42). This was an important step given the importance of children in the church though little attention or investment was made by the church in children's ministry. The family would be the immediate beneficiary of this when Byang was able to lead all three of his children to Christ when they were united again. Kato

returned home to teach at his alma mater, the Igbaja Theological Seminary in 1966. However, this was not the end of his academic training, he opted to go abroad again, this time to the United States of America, for postgraduate studies at Dallas Theological Seminary.

2.8.3 Postgraduate Studies at Dallas Theological Seminary (1970-1973)

Being the first African to earn a B. D. from London Bible College (Breman 1996:139) was good enough for Kato to establish himself as a theological leader on the continent, however, Kato could not be contented with a first degree; he took advantage of the next opportunity to proceed to the USA for graduate studies in theology. In 1970, he gained admission to the Dallas Theological Seminary, a well known conservative evangelical school, to pursue the degree of Master of Sacred Theology (STM) and completed the two-year programme in a year with honours. He immediately enrolled in the doctoral program and attained Doctor of Theology (Th. D) in 1974. Kato's completion of his course in record time was another first, for an African. Kato graduated with honours and distinction for the Master of Sacred Theology, winning the Loraine Chafer Award, for proficiency and best grade in Systematic Theology that year, 1971.

Kato saw the need for advanced theological education in Africa. He strove to achieve this for himself and push the evangelical church to biblical scholarship. Highlighting the need for the church in Africa, Kato said "the battle was for the mind" (1973b:n. p.) and states:

Theological education available so far for any of these varsity grads, has a strong view of African religions and culture. Almost all the 68 universities of the continent have a department of religions, where one can obtain up to a Ph.D. A search for peaceful co-existence among religions seems to be the basic concern of these religions. Thus, the graduates have come out with a call for softer and friendlier approach to Islam, African Religions and other faiths (1973b).

Thus, Kato was motivated to promoting biblical theological education at the highest level of scholarship and his quest to pursue a doctorate in theology.

Dallas Theological Seminary (DTS) founded in 1924, is a world class evangelical theology school. It is unreservedly committed to the inerrancy of Scripture as God's word. It affirms the "doctrines of evangelical orthodoxy in the framework of premillennial dispensational theology, derived from a consistent grammatical-historical

interpretation of the Bible” (Breman 1995:41-42). Dallas Theological Seminary prides itself for Bible-centred curriculum; all students are expected to take a course on all 66 books of the Bible, values mission and suspends a week of classes annually to observe world evangelisation emphasis. There is also emphasis on the Trinity and progressive sanctification. Also, it is known for its rigorous theology programmes and strong emphasis on biblical languages, Hebrew and Greek, to develop exegetical skills basic to inductive examination of scripture (<https://www.dts.edu/about/> ; Retrieved 27 July 2019).

The topic for his doctoral thesis was: “A Critique of Incipient Universalism in Tropical Africa”. The thesis was published a year later, in 1975 by Evangelical Publishing House, Kisumu, Kenya with the title: “Theological Pitfalls in Africa”. This work turned out to be Kato’s seminal contribution or *magnum opus* of his theological literary work (Bowers 2008; Breman 1995:368). The dissertation was an important contribution to scholarship, being the singular contribution from an evangelical perspective among a number of burgeoning theologians from a more liberal school of thought. Kato’s purpose was to alert the church about unhealthy trends taking shape in theology in Africa at the time. His perception was that conservative evangelical biblical Christianity was under threat and saw the need to encourage the church to conserve biblical orthodoxy. He states: “the pride of culture and undue respect for African Traditional Religions have already started to lead some churchmen astray” (Kato 1974a:ii). The dissertation recommends a ten-point plan as guide to preservation of biblical Christianity. Kato’s work sparked some controversy and disputations in African theological discourse that has not gone away (Bowers 2008; Bediako 1992; Mbiti 1977). Kato’s contribution and message to this discourse will be dealt with more extensively in the next chapter.

Kato did not only excel in his academic work but also, he was outstanding in social interactions and relationship with people. He won the Four Way Test Award; granted to the student ranked highest for personal relationship in and outside the school, with consistent Christian life and outstanding leadership qualities (Breman 1996:140). Kato deemed this to be his best accolade and motivated him to live up to the expectation (Breman 1996:140; Haye 1986:66). These virtues were collaborated by Paul Bowers, a colleague and friend at Igbaja Theological Seminary and AEA (Bowers 2008:3). With

Jummai, they also started a Good News Club for children from the neighbourhood for Children Evangelism Fellowship activities. They recorded eight children coming to faith in Christ and the children were a link between the Katos and the families of the children; establishing a discipleship relationship with these families (Haye 1986:67).

He opened the way for DTS to admit more students from Nigeria. His immediate successor at AEAM was Tokunboh Adeyemo, also from Nigeria. Adeyemo also followed Kato at Igbaja Bible School and DTS, respectively (Breman 1995:366). As a graduate student, Kato was offered a Teaching Assistantship and taught a course in Missions and African Christianity at Dallas Theological Seminary. He continued to be on the faculty at Dallas Seminary as visiting instructor, after his studies and return to Africa. With Kato's training, he became a champion for quality theological education not only for his fellow Africans but also, Western missionaries who came out to work in the mission field. According to Haye (1986:68) Kato said: "The day when just anything will do is past. Spirituality is no substitute for ignorance. A missionary should possess knowledge that can contribute to the progress of the country". His aspirations for the church were not just about the typical evangelical preoccupation of saving souls. He wanted to see the whole person transformed by the gospel of Jesus Christ. He was now well trained to return home with his family and serve his church and country and indeed Africa and beyond.

2.9 Vocation and Ministry

Byang Kato's active working life dates to 1958 following the completion of his course at Igbaja Bible College and up to his demise in 1975. This period covers the late colonial era, attainment of independence and the first one and half decades of the early years of self-rule, in the political history of Nigeria. Nigeria attained independence in 1960 and the first decade of independence was marked by violent military coup in 1966 and a civil war (1967-70). This was the context of Kato's growth and rise as a Christian leader. These were challenging times with lots of disruption to normal life.

Between 1958 to 1963, he taught at Zabol Bible Training School and Kwoi Christian Training Institute, after graduating from Igbaja Bible School and then worked at the African Challenge (Now Today's Challenge) in Lagos. He proceeded to London for further training from 1963 to 1966. On his return from his studies in London in 1966,

he was posted to the Igbaja Theological Seminary as a tutor. The following year he was elected as the General Secretary of ECWA Church, the post he relinquished in 1970 to proceed to the United States of America for graduate studies. This was another admirable move by Kato. Many Church leaders would consider the prestigious position of head of denomination to be the apex of their ministerial career and going back to become a student would be rare. In the first place, it was exceptional for Kato to have ascended to this position at age thirty-three, and to voluntarily relinquish it to go back to school with a family of five was unusual. However, this was a mark of Kato's commitment to theological education and attitude to leadership and trappings of high office. On completion of his doctoral work, he was appointed as the first African General Secretary of the Association of Evangelicals of Africa and Madagascar (now Association of Evangelicals in Africa) until his tragic death in Kenya on Friday, 19 December 1975 (Haye 1986:91-97).

Although his time on earth was relatively short, the scope of his work and accomplishments were wide and would be remembered for generations. Kato was faithful to the vow he made when he rededicated his life to God to serve God as a missionary and go where God wanted him to serve. The next sub-sections highlight more details about the full-time employment and positions he held, all within the ministry of the Church and particularly with the SIM/ECWA Church and the AEA.

2.9.1 Bible Teacher

Kato's teaching vocation can be traced back to the time he started going to Sunday School and Boy's Brigade. He would teach other boys in his neighbourhood who were not privileged to go to school, whatever he learnt in school, especially reading, writing and scripture verses he had memorised, both in English and Hausa. "Eager to improve his English, he attended an early morning Bible Class on Sundays. After church, he would go to a village to teach the boys God's word" (Haye 1986:22). A contemporary of Kato, now in his eighties, said in an interview in Kwoi: "Kato made me to be a better person and a farmer; he taught me to read my Bible in Hausa and today, I am an elder in the church and one of the leaders in the choir"⁹. Baba Leo, as the interviewee is

⁹ Interview with Mallam Leo Lim, Dakachin Sab-Zuro, Kwoi, Jaba Local Government Area, Kaduna State.

commonly known, is a member of the ECWA Central Church choir and plays a local musical instrument, known as 'molo', in the church.

After graduating from Igbaja Bible School, Kato was appointed as a teacher at the SIM Bible Training School in Kwoi. He taught in English and Hausa the main language spoken in the Northern region of Nigeria. At the Bible Training School, he also revived the ailing Boys' Brigade and started the Youth For Christ programme. The school provided a platform for him to reach out to young people. He introduced extracurricular activities like games and drama. His work attracted young people to the church and "the church grew fantastically" (Haye 1986:28-29). His superiors and colleague faculty members were well pleased with him. He looked out for needs in the school and was engaged in finding solution to meet the needs and always concerned that his people were built up in the Lord. He started a church paper or bulletin and a school choir and took out his students on Fridays to the marketplace for evangelism. On Sundays, he preached at outstations and sometimes in the main ECWA Church, with average attendance of about one thousand people. He was licensed as pastor while at the Kwoi Bible Training School.

Kato also did some farming, to augment his relatively meagre salary he received as a teacher. Kato's teaching approach was commendable, providing cognitive, pedagogic and practical learning experience for his students. Teaching, mentoring, coaching, preaching, farming and private studies occupied his time and he lived a very productive life. Kato was involved with his people.

On Tuk-Ham Day, Kato celebrated the cultural ceremony in a way that would be consistent with his Christian faith. The Tuk-Ham is an annual cultural festival, celebrated around Easter to mark the beginning of the farming season. The festival, celebrated with music, dance and feasting, dates back to 900 BC, under a theocratic ancestral religion (<http://www.hamculturalheritage.org> retrieved 28 July 2019). It is also the day of Ham, when the King, the Kpop-Ham, honours the deities of the Ham or Jaba people. Such festivals are not just social functions, they are also religious functions, including pouring of libations, veneration of ancestors and intermediary gods; practices Kato stood against in his theological disputations. Kato, aware of the spiritual implications, which were contrary to his faith, would instead, organise an

evangelistic festival or outing and mobilise his friends to go up the mountain to pray¹⁰. On Easter day itself, Kato established a practice of rising early in the morning to go up the mountain to see the sunrise. He mobilised friends and family members to march with him to the mountain top, observe the rising of the sun, sing hymns, proclaim the gospel message and say prayers before returning to the village. Kato was not just a Christian on Sundays, or academic theologian but endeavoured to live out his faith, notwithstanding social pressures from extended family members and the community. He also looked for innovative ways of showing respect for others and practising his faith without compromise. He was very much respected in his township and the community as a whole and continued to be engaged with them.

In 1966 Kato returned to Igbaja Bible College after attaining his B. D in London. The school was now offering four-year degree programme for the Bachelor of Theology degree. He taught a course in African Religions (Haye 1986:50). It is important to note that Kato took seriously African thought and long before his work rejected 'African theology'. His rejection was not necessarily a disdain for African thought and values, his contention and rejection were based on the definition and the goals for African Theology, the main proponents made, at the time (Kato 1975:53-68). According to Haye, Kato provided a clear understanding for his students and stated: "In the context of African traditional religions, the worship is merely an indication of an honest craving for God, which can be fulfilled only in the biblical revelation through the incarnate Christ who died and rose again. This should be the preoccupation of the Church in Africa" (1986:50). Furthermore, he taught his students:

Whatever would reflect the glory of Christ in his Church in Africa, and make the African feel that 'this is *my* faith' should be promoted. If there are any alien beliefs or practices mingled with Christianity, the answer is not to throw away the baby with the birth water. Rather, we should purge biblical faith in Africa for the Africans, since it is as much an African religion as it is a European religion (Haye 1986:51).

His theological work including his doctoral studies would be hinged on this understanding for the rest of his life. Kato demonstrated consistency in what he said and in what he did.

¹⁰ Revealed in an interview with family members

Kato was again moved after one year at Igbaja Bible College, when he was elected as ECWA Secretary General in 1967 but continued to return to Igbaja as an adjunct faculty member. His influence as a teacher at Igbaja had some outstanding impact on both colleagues and students. According to Haye when as a student, Tokumbo Adeyemo, listened to Kato during one of his return visits to Igbaja and he (Adeyemo) wanted to be like Kato and regarded him as a mentor (Haye 1986). Some years later Adeyemo wrote in the foreword of Kato's biography by Haye (Haye 1986:11-13):

I was a theological student when I had the privilege of hearing Kato, the prophet, for the first time...He predicted that for the next ten years (i.e. from 1972) the battle for the Church in Africa would be theological. He was right! His emphasis was two fold: the trustworthiness of the Word of God against all theological liberalism and the proper contextualisation of theology in African setting without adulterating the Gospel. It was his challenge that God used to propel me into the ministry.

It was remarkable that Adeyemo actually succeeded Kato as AEA General Secretary after the latter's tragic death and became the embodiment of Kato's theological vision.

Another great impact Kato made was working with Paul Bowers, a Cambridge trained theologian and an SIM missionary, on faculty at Igbaja.. He would later recruit Bowers to serve with him on the AEAM theological commission, specifically as the founding Director of the Accrediting Council for Theological Education in Africa—now, the Association for Christian Theological Education in Africa—ACTEA (Bowers 2016:10, 21). This dream was realised when Kato died, and Paul Bowers went on to establish ACTEA in 1976. Bowers would move on to pioneer setting up of the International Council for Evangelical Theological Education—ICETE. According to Bowers, ICETE itself was a theological initiative based on Kato's vision and under the auspices of the WEA (Bowers 2016:10).

Kato's teaching career also included his time in the USA, as teaching assistant, during his studies and taught a course in Missions. He returned to DTS after his graduation as an adjunct professor (Breman 1995:42). He continued to give lectures in various schools around the continent and abroad. At a time when many church leaders gave little priority to children's ministry, Kato took a keen interest in child evangelism. He and his wife were Child Evangelism Fellowship (CEF) trained teachers and had a

fruitful ministry among children, starting in their homes, with their own children and reached out to other children in the communities they lived. The investment in children at this level of leadership in the church was revolutionary and perhaps another first for Kato.

Addressing evangelical leaders as guest speaker, at the first AEAM General Assembly in 1969, Kato spoke on the theme: 'The Youth and the African Church'. The text was 'Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth'..., from Eccl. 12:1a, and he stated:

This great injunction presupposes that the youth has already got something to REMEMBER. Before we expect the youth to do his own part, therefore, the parents, the teachers, and other Christians responsible for bringing up children must be sure that they have given the youth something - the word of life which generates faith that accepts the free gift of eternal life. Here we want to see if the Church of Christ in Africa is fulfilling its task in filling the minds of the youth with something to remember (Kato 1969).

Kato's focus on children and youth was important, given the strategic nature of ministry to young people. Studies show that over eighty percent of born-again Christians got saved when they were children and the circumstances leading to their salvation were also influenced by fellow children. (Brewster 2011; Bush 2010:3; Barna 2009; cf. Mwithi 2016). Kato understood this and brought this to the attention of the church leaders. One of the projects of the AEA Theology Commission, envisioned by Kato is the Christian Learning Materials for Children (CLMC). The CLMC produces theologically sound and culturally relevant curriculum and materials for Sunday School for distribution in Africa.

2.9.2 Media and Writing Career

In 1959, Kato was asked to join the African Challenge Magazine production team in Lagos, then the bustling capital of city of Nigeria. He was responsible for responding to readers' inquiries and counselling and guidance for those who needed help. The Magazine received about two thousand enquiries per month, seeking counsel and help. Kato responded to the writers by return letters and during this time he developed his communication skills (Haye 1986:31). He had developed keen interest in writing and worked on the school magazine during his time at Igbaja Bible College and on the church paper (Haye 1986:26-29). He cultivated a habit of writing a journal and a diary,

recording details like prayer points, sermons and reflections on messages he preached or lectures, travel schedule and the different tasks he would be doing.

His editor-in-chief at African Challenge Magazine was affirming of Kato's contribution and he was offered an opportunity for further training in Journalism for a career in the media house. Kato turned down the offer, because he was convinced that his call was in pastoral ministry and would rather have more theological training for ministry of the Gospel. He convinced his boss that he would still be able to write articles for the magazine as pastor (Haye 1986:31). This was exceptional insight, as not many pastors in Kato's days would see themselves as writers and contributors of articles to magazines. Indeed, Kato, the pastor and theologian wrote several articles on various subjects and this is reflected in the ACTEA biographical document mentioned earlier in this work. A few booklets written by Kato were also published by African Christian Press and Evangel Press.

As General Secretary of AEAM, he had over two thousand people in his directory for circulating communication through the ordinary postal system. Even with the internet, the number of people on AEA emailing list in 2015, forty-five years later, did not match Kato's ordinary mail list. AEAM had a couple of regular publications, namely, Afroscope, the newsletter and Perception, occasional theological papers published for circulation. He wrote a booklet, 'The Spirits' for the African Christian Press, a small book; African Cultural Revolution and the Christian Faith', published by Evangel Press and a book edition of his doctoral thesis, Theological Pitfalls in Africa. He wrote his sermons, public presentations¹¹.

He was a prolific writer; he did not only write for church or Christian magazines but also open letters to the press, for the public and sometimes boldly and courageously addressed contentious issues. Following a meeting of the WCC in Nairobi and hosted

¹¹ A bibliography compiled by Christen Breman includes over 90 works. Some of these are short papers, sermon outlines and notes and his doctoral dissertation the most significant scholarly work Kato did.

by the regional counterpart, the AACC, the press published an open letter, critical of the WCC and AACC by Kato. Among other things, Kato (1976a: n. p.) wrote:

There are certain structures in the church with which you should be familiar. You have no doubt heard about the World Council of Churches (WCC) which held a big General Assembly here November 23 to December 10. Over 2000 delegates representing 280 different churches from around the world met to discuss the theme, "Jesus Christ Frees and Unites". The World Council of Churches and its affiliated body, the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC), represent what is known as Ecumenism. Their main concern is unity, and it does not matter very much what a person believes as long as he calls himself Christian.

Kato went on to highlight what he said were erroneous views expressed during the conference which he wanted the readers to be aware of and outlined fundamental differences between evangelicals and non-evangelicals. This was his last piece of writing and published posthumously. In the build up to the WCC General Assembly in Nairobi, the Target Newspaper carried stories about the seeming differences between ecumenicals and evangelicals, with the caption: 'Evangelicals' deny fighting WCC Assembly (Target, No 170 October 19-26, 1975d). Kato would not be silent; and wrote a rejoinder back to the editor. In his opening paragraph, Kato wrote:

Please allow me to comment on the article that appeared in the October 19—26, 1975 issue of TARGET under the caption, 'Evangelicals' deny fighting WCC Assembly. By putting the word Evangelicals in quotation marks in this title, you give the impression of having some reservations in recognising the Association of Evangelicals, of Africa and Madagascar (AEAM) as truly evangelical. We wonder why ... (Kato... TARGET (1975d).

He wrote personal letters to friends and partners as well. Also, he kept record of his salary and how he spent his money (Haye 1986:60). The writings of Kato have been the main source of information about what we can learn about his life and the past. In Kato's curriculum vitae¹², the following are listed as his publications: Contributor for Christ the Liberator, the report of Urbana '70, Editor of ECWA News (Nigeria), Consultant for Hausa New Testament Revision, Author of Articles in Africa Now, Evangelical Missions Quarterly, Kesho, Moody Monthly, Theological News, Today's Challenge, World Vision. Editor: Afroscope, Perception, AEAM, Author: The Spirits, African Christian Press, Ghana; African Cultural Revolution and the Christian Faith, Challenge Publications, and Theological Pitfalls in Africa.

¹² Curriculum Vitae on Dr. Byang K. Kato. Retrieved from the AEA archives.

Thus, Kato's literary work goes beyond his *magnus opus*, *Theological Pitfalls in Africa*, for which he is well known. In the first fifteen months of publication of this book, that is, from October 1975 to December 1976, Kato earned (posthumously) \$2, 236 (two thousand two hundred and thirty-six United States Dollars) in royalties¹³. This is quite impressive, even by current standards and more so then. The list of publications also reveals that Kato's literary output was not only scholarly and abstract but engaged contemporary and current issues.

Furthermore, we live in an era of information, the media and the minister's skills in engaging the society is so important. Kato took communication seriously and laid the foundation for evangelical scholarship and writing. The Hippo Books, an imprint of Langham Literature, partners with the AEA currently to produce scholarly theological materials from Africa. Most of these works would have a mention of Byang Henry Kato in their bibliography. Haye credits Kato for the continuing growth of the AEA. Quoting John Langois of the World Evangelical Fellowship then, Haye writes: "He was able to spearhead that organisation as a natural leader to whom Africans could relate. His academic success gave him standing. His uncompromising stand for biblical Christianity did much to strengthen evangelicals in Africa with a new confidence in the face of liberal and syncretistic pressures (Haye 1986:105-06)".

Apart from works of individual scholars, AEA sponsored the publication of a one-volume Bible Commentary—The Africa Bible Commentary— with a team of seventy scholars and pastors in 2006. AEA also collaborated with Oasis International to produce the Africa Study Bible; work that involved hundreds of Africans. Kato could be credited for laying a solid foundation for evangelical scholarly writing in Africa, which continues to thrive.

2.9.3 Pastor and Denominational Leader

At the heart of all his life, Kato demonstrated a call for ministry of the church. He chose to be a minister of the gospel and for that course, he went to Bible school to attain the highest-level qualification as preparation for ministry. He did not only train to acquire skills and competencies to minister but also to train other pastors, church leaders and

¹³ Letter from Evangel Publishing House to AEAM, ref. Letter 171/77 and dated May 31, 1977.

believers everywhere to do the same. Whether he was in public engagement or on the editorial team of a media house or in the academy as teacher, scholar or disputant, his message was clear, the good news of Jesus Christ, its uniqueness and only way for salvation.

While he was still teaching at Igbaja Seminary, Kato came to limelight in ECWA Church when he attended the General Council in 1967 and served as an interpreter for the Hausa speaking delegates from the North of the country. He was elected as the General Secretary of the ECWA, at the meeting. He was the first person from the north to hold the post. He left the Seminary and moved to the ECWA Headquarters in Jos, from where he worked as General Secretary, at the age of thirty-three. He was ordained as a minister of ECWA at the Bishara local congregation in Jos in 1968. He did more pastoral ministry as a licensed pastor than he did as an ordained minister when the call was to provide leadership for the denomination at headquarters. However, his passion for the pulpit and evangelism was not diminished despite his leadership and administrative tasks. He continued to see teaching and preaching as his primary call.

As General Secretary of ECWA, Kato had oversight role over one thousand two hundred local congregations, several educational and medical institutions and personnel including eight hundred pastors and one hundred missionaries in the ECWA/SIM work in Nigeria (Haye 1986:56, 58). Kato's tenure as General Secretary coincided with the Biafra Civil War in Nigeria. ECWA as local Church denomination was taking over more responsibilities from SIM. The war, among other factors, restricted movement into Nigeria of foreign nationals or missionaries. Pastors and other church workers and their families in the war zone were cut off from the headquarters in Jos.

Among other responsibilities, Kato's work was increasing involvement in relief interventions, along with their SIM partners. They launched three operations for emergency relief items, including medical, food and clothing and resettlement items and seeds and tools for food production. Operation Good Shepherd, located near the war zone, was a medical centre, Operation Dorcas provided clothing for the war victims and Operation Blacksmith involved local blacksmiths to produce farming tools

like hoes and shovels and distributed to resettling victims, with seeds and yam tubers for production of own food (Haye 1986:54-55). The programmes were also accompanied by evangelistic efforts, sharing tracts, counselling and preaching and mobilising relief food items from churches. On one of such visits to the war zone, Kato preached to a congregation of two thousand troops in Enugu (Haye 1986:55). When the war ended in 1970, ECWA also embraced the Government's Triple 'R' programme of Reconciliation, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction to contribute to its implementation. ECWA's involvement in the peace and reconciliation programme after the civil war was in psycho-social and trauma counselling. Kato was personally involved in counselling and ministering to people. He visited his members for the third time, and this time, to reunite and celebrate with those who had been cut off from headquarters during the war.

That a conservative evangelical Church could be involved with social intervention to the extent that Kato allowed was commendable. It was particularly noteworthy that Kato's relief intervention initiatives happened in pre-Lausanne (First Lausanne Congress in 1974) era, when the evangelical vision of evangelism and social action made a paradigm shift, and articulated a theology to embrace both these as integral to the mission of the Church. This was a shift from the practice of the then conservative church's sole focus on evangelism and church planting and leaving social interventions to para-church agencies. However, pinning gospel tracts on clothing before distribution, in Operation Dorcas, which had its base in Kato's living room (Haye 1986:54) could be problematic. Humanitarian workers may frown at this and consider as proselytism. Nevertheless, there is still ongoing discussion in evangelical circles about best practices in integral mission in the Church. The impact of these programmes would encourage SIM to duplicate this in South Sudan (then part of Sudan) when the civil war broke out in that country (Haye 1986:55).

In Kato's moment of rest and recuperation, he watched a documentary of SIM missionary adventures in taking the gospel of Christ around the world called: "They that are of Faith". According to Haye (1986:55-56), this was another turning point for Kato, he was left in tears and wrote in his diary:

I shed more tears than I have done in any religious service I could remember. The challenge—love of the white man for me—forced me to ask, "what have I done for my brothers?" I prayed and fasted. As I studied the Word, I realised that with God's help I

shouldn't let anything stand in the way of my fellowship with the Lord—be it food, friends or sex.

This informs Kato's attitude to the missionary enterprise. When many scholars, for nationalistic reasons, were not so complementary about missionary work, because of their attitude to ATR, Kato was deeply grateful for their work and the extent of the sacrifice they made to propagate the gospel. This does not in any way mean Kato was not aware of the lapses of the Western missionaries and that he was not critical about their work (Haye 1986:68, 70). As a matter of fact, he would often pick on his missionary colleagues when he insisted on quality of work, especially educational standards for church leaders. He was for instance critical about missionaries with poor educational background. If there was one area where Kato had conflict with both missionaries and local colleagues, it was about his uncompromising stance on issues of integrity, standards and encouraging pursuit of higher education for church leaders.¹⁴ Kato was convinced about the need to put together an organisational plan for his work when he attended a management seminar. He put together a five-year plan that was endorsed by the ECWA Board in 1968. The next five years saw this plan implemented and most of the goals were achieved. Predictably, goals included doubling of baptised converts and training of leaders from Bible School to doctoral levels (Haye 1986:58). He also put together a pastors' manual as guide to liturgies and ordinances of the church and other administrative guidelines.

Kato had his first contact with AEAM when he was included in the SIM/ECWA delegation to the AEAM Triennial General Assembly in 1969 in Limuru, the venue of the birth of AEAM three years previously. Kato was also one of the plenary speakers and in cognisance of his work with children and youths, he was asked to speak on the topic: Christian Education.

Kato was a lifetime learner; he saw the need for further education. Notwithstanding his enviable B.D. from London Bible College, he contemplated further advanced studies.

¹⁴ In a conversation with a respondent and one of the leaders of ECWA it was revealed that Kato did have clashes with some missionaries and local leaders as well on his uncompromising stance on standards and opened the way for higher education for many young people during his tenure as General Secretary of ECWA and some of these are in leadership or have retired from leadership positions in ECWA.

The opportunity came when the President of the Dallas Theological Seminary visited Nigeria as guest of SIM. The visitor facilitated seminars for ECWA pastors and leaders. The emphasis of the seminar was administrative and management competencies for church leaders, spiritual maturity and need to develop faculty and scholars for the Bible colleges. This struck a chord with Kato. This is how he engaged the visitor after the seminar and eventually submitted his application to pursue a two-year course in Master of Sacred Theology at DTS and was admitted. He informed the ECWA Board of this and declined renewal of his contract as General Secretary of ECWA. Kato left for postgraduate studies in the in 1970. His pastoral role in terms of preaching and teaching continued informally during his studies in US and his next full-time appointment would be with the AEAM.

2.9.4 General Secretary of the AEA (then AEAM)

Byang Kato was guest speaker at an AEA Christian Education Strategy Conference in 1973, and in the last year of his doctoral studies in the USA. The topic of his presentation was “The Needs and Problems Facing Christian Education in Africa”. The Christian Education Conference preceded the 2nd General Assembly of AEA. AEA has its roots in two missionary societies; the International Foreign Mission Association (IFMA) and Evangelical Foreign Mission Association (EFMA) which worked together in Africa since 1960, with the purpose of establishing evangelical fellowships in Africa (Breman 1995:6). According to Breman (1995:6-7) this was to counter the influence of the World Council of Churches that sought to unite the churches in Africa as one church organisation and were sponsoring African leaders to study theology in liberal schools abroad.

AEA provides a platform or relational space for the different evangelical denominations and organisations; necessary for common identity, action and voice for synergy and effectiveness in accomplishing the mission of the Church—salvation from the scourge of sin and transformed society in accordance with God’s purpose. It is a service agency for national evangelical fellowships, churches and theological schools aimed at equipping the local church for effective witness and transformation of their communities and the wider society through the gospel. The membership also includes International Christian Non-Governmental Organizations or development and missionary agencies based in Africa. Founded in 1966, AEA Headquarters is in

Nairobi, Kenya where it is registered as a Society or charitable Christian organization. AEA currently comprises 40 National Evangelical Fellowships in Africa. AEA is also one of the regional associations of the global evangelical movement—World Evangelical Alliance (WEA). The basis for unity and membership is affirmation of the historic Christian faith; authority of the Holy Scriptures of the sixty-six books of the Bible as the inspired Word of God, inerrant and infallible in all it affirms and as originally delivered (www.aeafrica.org - Retrieved 27 July 2019).

During the 2nd AEA General Assembly, Kato was one of the officials elected to lead AEA in the ensuing period. Kato was unanimously elected as the General Secretary and chief executive of the movement, the first African and only the second person to be elected to the post (Breman 1996:141). The post had been vacant for the last three years, as AEA could not find a suitable candidate, following the resignation of the first General Secretary, Kenneth Downing, an American missionary from the Africa Inland Mission. Kato had been elected as the Executive Secretary of the AEA Theology Commission during the preceding Christian Education Strategy Conference, when the Theology Commission was composed and presented to the Assembly for adoption. He would be famous more for his role as Executive Secretary of the Theology Commission rather than the *avant garde* post of AEA General Secretary (Breman 1995:141).

Kato's dual appointment conflicted with his declared purpose for pursuing further studies for academic leadership for his church's theological seminary at Igbaja. A compromise was struck when the AEA General Assembly approved ECWA's request for him to become an adjunct faculty member for at least two years and they graciously released him to serve AEA. Kato returned to USA to pack and relocate his family back to Africa and graduated Th. D. *in absentia* (Breman 1995:41) to assume work in AEA. He returned to Nairobi, Kenya at the headquarters of AEA. In Nairobi, the family was accepted into local church membership at the Nairobi Baptist Church on Ngong Road.

As General Secretary of AEA, Executive Secretary of the AEA Theology Commission and Adjunct Faculty, Kato had a hectic traveling schedule; teaching, preaching, writing and speaking. Kato was clear about AEA's objectives; he set out to accomplish its

task as the organisation's chief executive. Kato (1974b:55) stated the purpose of AEAM clearly:

The AEAM exists as a service agency to the national fellowships, churches and theological schools. It assists in a wide variety of evangelical projects and has helped sponsor such activities as seminars promoting church growth, church management, "New Life for All" and theological education by extension. It has also sponsored writers' workshops to produce programmed texts for pastoral training.

This succinct summary of AEAM's agenda then could be assessed to be the most profound contribution of AEA in its over fifty decades of existence. Kato criss-crossed the continent visiting almost every African country (Breman 1996:114), church leaders, speaking at conferences and lecturing in colleges and seminaries. In Central Africa Republic (CAR), for example, he met the then Head of State, Emperor Jean-Bedel Bokassa I to share his vision and need for a place to build an evangelical theological school for training of church leaders in Africa. He succeeded in having his request granted, when the Emperor offered a seven-acre plot of land in the nation's capital, Bangui, near the national university (Haye 1986:77). Kato had articulated a theological vision and programme for the training of leaders on African soil, to address the theological pitfalls he had identified on the continent in his doctoral research.

The plan included establishing two graduate theological schools to serve the French speaking and English-speaking regions of Africa respectively. He envisioned a curriculum designed to be relevant to issues on the continent and of standard of scholarship that would equip leaders to counter the heresies and promote biblical Christianity in the young church in Africa. The plan also included an institution to ensure maintenance of standards, accreditation and support for development of evangelical theological schools. This is how the first two evangelical theological graduate schools in Sub-Saharan Africa, i.e. Faculté de Théologie Évangélique de Bangui (FATEB), in Central Africa Republic, established in 1977, for the Francophone region and Africa International University (formerly Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology) in Kenya, established in 1983, for the Anglophone region were founded. Also, AEA established the Christian Learning Materials Centre (CLMC) in Kenya, to provide sound theological Sunday School curriculum. AEA also owns Africa Christian Television (ACT/PEMA) in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire with outreach to other Francophone countries, and the Association of Christian Theological Education in

Africa (ACTEA) which provides accreditation and other services for quality assurance to affiliated schools for sound theological education in Africa.

In the two years Kato served as General Secretary of AEA, he grew the number of national evangelical fellowships from eight to sixteen, with only three colleagues on staff. The voice of evangelicals became recognisable and heard across Africa and beyond and changed from being a small sideline fellowship for interaction of evangelicals to an influential continental organization and world Christianity (Haye 1986:106; Breman 1996:46-47). In his assessment of Kato's achievements, his successor, Tokumbo Adeyemo said:

Under his (Kato) leadership within the space of less than two years before his tragic death, AEA doubled its membership, improved the quality of its publications and services and thus became a force to reckon with. He literally placed the name AEA on the ecclesiastical map of Africa. For my first three years in office, the only way people knew what I was doing and the organisation I was working for was to mention the name Byang Kato (Adeyemo n.d. 8).

During Kato's time, two prime properties in Nairobi were also acquired for the work of AEA, through assistance from the Africa Inland Mission, in whose name the properties were held in trust until 2010, when the title deeds were transferred in AEA's name¹⁵. These included two villas on 1.2 acre plot near the city centre in Nairobi, which served as AEA offices and residence for AEA General Secretary and 0.8 acre plot in another part of the city, Riara Road, which was developed by his successor as staff houses.

However, he did not see the actualisation of the theological projects. The theological graduate schools, FATEB and NEGST, were established after Kato's death. Although he was instrumental in recruiting the first Director for ACTEA, Paul Bowers, it was a year later that ACTEA officially started operations, in 1976 (Bowers 2016:2; Tarus 2020:1). His successor picked these up and implemented them according to Kato's plan. Thus, Kato can take some credit for the fact that his plan was successfully implemented after his death. As matter of fact, there was a three-year gap between Kato and Adeyemo, his immediate successor. Kato also put AEA, representing ten million Christians in Africa, on the global map of evangelicals (Breman 1996:146).

¹⁵ AEA Board Minutes 2010

2.10 Background to Theological Debates

Kato's debates against theological systems, including ATR and some of its proponents, like, John Mbiti, J.K. Agbeti, Bolaji Idowu and Harry Sawyerr, among others, was an important factor for Kato's prominence in African theological discourse. Ferdinando (2007:6) states: "By his opposition to the AACC and theologians like Mbiti and Idowu, Kato was taking on the African ecclesiastical and theological establishment. He disagreed in print with those whose academic credentials were already established, risking opprobrium and ridicule".

Kato asserted that what was emerging as African Christian Theology was imprecise and was at best, theology of decolonisation; an amalgamation of Black Theology and Ethiopianist Theology (Kato 1975a:53-55). Thus, he argues that the emerging African Theology was unbiblical and that the aim was to synthesise Christianity with ATRs, which he said was syncretistic (Kato 1975a:55-56).

Therefore, Kato argues against Mbiti's alleged supposition that ATRs constitute well organised system and that the ATR worshipper has not only known God truly, but that he has worshipped him (p. 69). However, Kato noted: "Mbiti did not concede the possibility of salvation in ATR but holds the view of salvation for all men on different ground" (p. 56). Kato would identify this ground as universalism (p.57). Kato was also opposed to Mbiti's assertion when he writes: "Traditional religions neither send missionaries nor make proselytes; their strength lies in being fully integrated in all departments of human existence. As such, they cannot and need not be completely wiped out so long as those who follow them are alive" (Mbiti 1970: xiv). Mbiti was making a case for the Christian faith being continuous with African traditional religious beliefs and that the two are bound to go together. The 'Theology of Peaceful Co-existence', according to Kato, was championed by Bolaji Idowu whose thesis was that Africans believed in one God and explained away the pantheons of objects of worship or gods as only mediums to the one Supreme God (Kato 1975a:91). Harry Sawyerr on another concern posited that "the prayers of African Christians might in the providence of God lead to the salvation of their pagan ancestors" (Sawyerr 1968:112; cf Kato 1975a:179-80). Kwame Bediako (1992), after the death of Kato, did an important appraisal of Kato's work on the question of contextualisation and African Christian Identity. This work, among others, also contributed to the sustained debate

about the relationship between ATR and Christianity.

Based on the nature of these issues and the calibre of the opponents, Kato might have developed character and distinctiveness. The opponents were distinguished heads of department in leading universities in West and East Africa; following independence in the early 1960s. Kato himself highlighted ten reasons¹⁶, he saw as the challenge and the motivation for his work to address these (1975a:11-17).

2.11 Global Engagement

Apart from his studies in UK and USA, Kato was plenary speaker at the Inter-Varsity Missionary Conference at Urbana in 1970, with an audience of over twelve thousand students, while he was still a student himself, in the USA (Breman 1996:141). As General Secretary of AEA, Kato led the African contingent to the historic Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization in 1974. The Lausanne Congress was an important gathering of evangelicals from every part of the world that brought together 2,700 people, the biggest gathering of Christians ever at that point in the history of the Church. The meeting was convened by Evangelist Billy Graham and delegates were drawn from every known evangelical organisation. The objective of the conference was to create a movement for the evangelisation of the world—taking the whole Gospel to the whole world.

Kato spoke on two topics at the Congress: 1) Evangelism Opportunities and Obstacles in Africa, 2) The Gospel, Cultural Contextualisation and Religious Syncretism (Haye 1986:80). As will be analysed in subsequent chapters, these two topics were among his most significant contributions to the development of African Christian theological thought from evangelical perspective. He is certainly credited to be the first to introduce the subject of contextualisation in evangelical theological discourse (Bowers 2008:4). Ironically, Kato's critics perceived him to be against contextualisation, because of his opposition to the brand of African Christian theology that was promoted on the continent. However, Kato made clear that the contention was any belief or practice, in the name of contextualisation, that was not consistent with Scripture. He

¹⁶ The ten-point summary of Kato's theological concerns are enumerated in chapter three of this work which deals with Kato's disputations.

goes on to state his understanding of contextualisation: “By contextualise, we mean to make Christianity truly relevant in our situation and to make the African view himself welcome in the church. By that we are not dealing with the content, we are only dealing with a mode of expression” (Kato 1975:9)¹⁷. He further stated:

The eternal nature of God's Word covers the modern space age as well. While the thought patterns of God's revelation may and should be expressed to the Christians of various cultures in the manner they should understand, they should not be changed for the benefit of the hearer. Rather, the hearer should be taught some of the strange concepts. If the African or the Asian can be taught that egg is more nourishing than cassava or that there is vitamin in sunshine, he could be taught that salt is a symbol of righteousness (Kato 1974: n. p.)

Kato's presentation provoked further discussion post 1974 Lausanne Congress by the Lausanne Theology Working Group and hence, popularised the discourse on the subject of contextualisation in theological scholarship (Haye 1986:80).

Following the initial gathering of evangelicals from one hundred and fifty countries in Lausanne, a committee was set up to continue to mobilise and sustain the collaboration of evangelicals around the world for world evangelisation. Thus, Kato was elected to serve on the Lausanne Continuation Committee of the International Congress on World Evangelisation. He was also chosen to serve as Vice President of the WEA (then the WEF) and Chairperson of the organisation's Theological Commission (Bowers 2008:4, ECWA News 1974:4; Breman 1996:145). According to Breman (1995:417), Kato himself acknowledged the opportunity of meeting and connecting with top evangelical leaders around the world through these networks richly enriched his life.

Kato's passion for sound theological education was demonstrated by his personal development and training and establishment of theological institutions in Africa. He also proposed the establishment of a similar body for global evangelicals, culminating in the founding of the International Council for Evangelical Theological Education— ICETE (Bowers 2008:4). He was also a member of the Advisory Council of the Asia Theological Association (Breman 1996:145).

¹⁷ This message was given at NAE's (National Association of Evangelicals') Washington Leadership Briefing at the nation's Capital in January 1975.

2.12 Kato's Tragic Demise

Kato died by drowning in the Indian Ocean on 19 December 1975, at the age of thirty-nine. Given Kato's hectic schedule as General Secretary throughout the year, he saw the need to take some time off to relax and also use the time to prepare for his next trip abroad at a beach resort in Mombasa. He went to the resort with his family, except the daughter who had left days before for Christmas vacation in Nigeria. On the fatal day, he went swimming with his two boys while the wife stayed at the residence busy preparing meal for the family. The day was also the elder son's, Jonathan's seventeenth birthday. At lunch time, the boys preceded him to the residence and left him on his own. Curious that he had not come home to listen to the BBC news at 1300 hours, as he would normally do, they went looking for him but their search proved to be in vain; their father was nowhere in sight. The family raised alarm about his whereabouts and eventually the ultimate reality of his drowning in the waters of the Indian Ocean was confirmed, when the drowned body was recovered the next morning.

The news of Kato's tragic and sudden death shocked the Church around the world and the people of Kwoi, Kato's hometown, in disbelief (Breman 1996:143). "News of Dr. Kato's death spread rapidly and cables and letters by the hundreds poured into the AEAM office from every continent" (Haye 1986:102). The funeral service attracted hundreds of people. According to Haye (98): "The Boys' and Girls' Brigades formed a guard of honour stretching from the airport to the church, seven miles. A cavalcade of fifty-five cars followed the plain, wooden coffin in a slow procession to the church, where 1,200 people had packed inside, with many more sitting and standing outside".

The result of the postmortem was inconclusive about the cause for his drowning. He was known to be a good swimmer and speculations about his death were varied. Suggestion about being bitten by a poisonous fish was dismissed on grounds that there were no marks on his lifeless body. Another suggestion was that he might have died of exhaustion, given the frenzy of activities he was engaged in before retreating and continuing to work for his overseas trip in the following year. His people believed that his death was not an accident but must have been attacked by someone physically or done so through witchcraft (Breman 1996:142-43). One reason for the various conspiracy theories about the cause of Kato's death was due to the fact that the corpse, according to the people of Kwoi, was fully clothed when it was retrieved from

the water. In a letter, dated 13 February 1976, the SIM Area Director in Jos, Nigeria, Harold Fuller, wrote to the AEAM Administrative Secretary, Jim Halbert requesting an explanation in a quest to dispel the speculations and states:

The people of Kwoi cannot imagine that Byang Kato drowned by accident. They cannot understand why he was fully clothed, with his shoes on. Because they had heard he had many "enemies" (which term had been used metaphorically in connection with those who opposed his evangelical stand), they think that someone must have attacked him. Any detailed information which you can send, including a coroner's report will help dispel these notions.

Jim Halbert, who was standing in for the substantive AEAM Administrative Secretary, Eric Maillefer, who had proceeded on furlough, responded to Fuller's inquiry and writes:

Byang was not fully clothed. He had on his swim trunks, tennis shoes and his glasses. At low tide you can walk out on the coral from the shore, but it is wise to wear tennis shoes because some of the coral has sharp edges, and also because there are two types of fish which are poisonous. He always wore his glasses when he did not intend to swim. However, this time he changed his mind and did swim with the glasses. However, they were not on his body when it was found.

Nonetheless, the cultural assumptions among the Jaba people and many other African peoples are that nothing happens by natural causes. Kato (n. d.3: n. p.) reveals:

When I was a boy, a court of assizes was a regular practice in our family. Since nobody dies of natural causes according to the Jaba philosophy of life, an adequate cause must be sought in order to know how to try to save a sick child. So if a child was sick in the family, my grandfather would call for an early morning meeting to investigate the matter. He would use the language of pleas and threats for the culprit to make himself known. Anyone who knew the supposed witches seeking to devour the child was to declare it. Our grandfather would conclude, "If this sick boy dies, the culprit among you who has collaborated with the witches to snatch away one of us will face the same fate.

In any case, the widow was able to convince the family to accept Byang's death as the sovereign will of God and quelled the quest for divining through African traditional religious means so evil will befall Kato's presumed killers.

The corpse was flown to his home town for burial. The Jaba people in the Kwoi local government area had never seen so many landings of small aircrafts on the air strip, to this day. Forty-four years later, the day is remembered by the frequency of the plane landings, like no other time in Kwoi¹⁸. A long motorcade followed the funeral hearse,

¹⁸ During field interviews in Kwoi, people in their forties made reference to "that man for whose burial

from the air strip to the ECWA Church, in the centre of the town where the funeral and burial took place in the church compound. The Boys' and Girls' Brigades mounted guard of honour. The one thousand seat congregation had an overflow in equal number and with representatives from the evangelical community around the world at the funeral service.

In a personal tribute, as reported by Breman (1996:144), Bruce Nicholls, a well-known theologian from New Zealand, but then based in New Delhi, India as missionary, researcher and theological educator said:

I, with many, could not help asking why our heavenly Father had permitted such a tragedy, as it seemed that this was the hour when Africa needed him most. He was undoubtedly the most outstanding evangelical theological leader in Africa. Byang was a skilled biblical exegete, theologian and apologist...Byang was a twentieth century prophet, somewhat in the school of an earlier African, Tertullian; for while he was identified with Black Africa in its cry for liberation against unjust oppression, he was fearless in his denunciation of all liberal theology and philosophy that deviated from the authority of the Bible as the word of God.

Bruce Nicholls¹⁹ further stated: "We were together for the WCC Assembly in Nairobi. I grew to respect the clarity of his understanding of the issues being debated. Within the limitation of his status as an observer, he entered fearlessly into debate... Byang was also a preacher and a pastor" (Breman 1996:144). He was survived by his wife, Jummai and three children, Deborah, Jonathan and Paul and extended family. Jonathan and Jummai have joined him in death in 2015 and 2019, respectively.

2.13 Byang Kato's Accomplishments

Byang Kato was an accomplished young man, a husband, father, pastor, teacher, preacher, prophet, visionary leader and evangelist. The people interviewed recalled how Kato impacted their lives and the warmth and godly life of his family. His witness

so many planes landed here in Kwoi", without even making any reference to the man's name.

¹⁹ Kato had declined a formal invitation as a fraternal delegate to bring greetings to the WCC Assembly in Nairobi (1975) but declined and instead requested to attend the Assembly as an observer, a lower status, given to people who were not necessarily in close communion with the WCC.

saw his children, parents and other family members come to the Christian faith and conversion from African traditional religion (Haye 1986:44-45). What Kato did manage to accomplish before his untimely death was to set the stage for theological work among evangelicals; namely, by initiating the AEA Theological Commission and the various projects of the commission (Kapteina 2006:72. He laid the foundation for the bulk of AEA's ongoing task.

Kato was leading voice for evangelical Christianity in Africa. In the foreword to Kato's biography by Sophie de la Haye, Tokumboh Adeyemo (1986:11) writes:

He was a prophet. Like prophets before him, his voice was that of a lonely man in theological wilderness of his day. His life as a prophet was marked by courage, boldness, moral purity and discipline. His message was forthright, powerful, uncompromising but always compassionate. As often true of prophets, Kato lived before his time.

Palmer (2002:16) writes: "Byang Kato was a prophet in the early 1970s. He called attention to dangerous trends in Africa and worldwide. Although he was not without mistakes, his basic message was and still holds true". Kato believed biblical Christianity that was taking root in tropical Africa was under threat by liberal teachings in the church and was "the first African evangelical to attempt to engage with the African intellectual world, to participate in the principal intellectual project of African Christianity in his day. And the first to provide a published contribution in that effort" (Bowers 2008:5).

Kato had seen his community transformed by the Christian gospel and had personal experience of transformation. "The true gospel that has transformed the lives of some 30 per cent Jaba people must not be adulterated" (Kato 1974a:33). Kato's tribal people, the Jaba, like Kato himself had experienced the transformative power of the Christian gospel and was committed to preserving that true gospel he had received as a child. Kato said: "What is desired for Jaba goes for the continent and the world" (p. 33-34).

Kato's life and ministry represents a classic case for authentic African Christian theological reflection, from a predominantly African worldview shaped by the philosophical religious framework of ATR. He saw the need for sound theological training to equip church leaders to defend the Christian faith so that people will not be led away from the faith by heresies. Kato argued for Christianity that was truly African

and truly Biblical (p. 15). He asserted that Christianity must baptise African culture and that it is erroneous to reverse the order. He rejected veneration of ATR and affirmed the uniqueness of the gospel of Christ which alone provides the way for salvation.

Kato's life is an example and a model for African Christians in navigating socio-cultural and religious belief systems and leaving out an impactful Christian life. Breman (1995:417) observes that Kato had no examples of African theologians he would follow himself. His work in this regard, in his era, was a pioneering feat. His singular outstanding contribution to African Christian Theology was his insistent on the centrality of the Bible (Bediako 1992:413; Breman 1995:419). Kato's leadership was inspiring, courageous and dared to go where others shrunk from and confronted what he considered to be worldly. He acknowledged the lordship of Christ in his personal life, as evidenced in his family worship and a God-driven life (Breman 1995:416-7; Bowers 2008:5; Shirik 2019).

Kato's influence and contribution went beyond Africa. Shirik 2019:150) affirms:

Kato's strength also lies in that he was able to speak beyond the confines of Africa. I, as an Asian, more than four decades separated from Kato, and with very different challenges and struggles, can affirm many of the things he affirms. He and I can read the scripture together to come to a common understanding. In this aspect too, he has bequeathed to his readers a compelling argument that all theologies must not be contextual to the degree that they have no universal resemblance and application. God speaks to us through his words sometimes differently, but not contradictorily. Our cultures can enrich our reading of the text, but they can also blind us from seeing the truth. Kato seems to have a profound understanding of both the limitations of culture and the universal applicability of the text (Shirik 2019:150).

This is an important quote in understanding Kato's biblical understanding. The message of the Bible had a universal appeal, across cultures, ethnicities and races. While Kato wanted African Christians to understand and appropriate the message of the gospel, he wanted to do it in a way that does not trap the message in traditional African attire so that it would have no appeal to other cultures.

Among his many accomplishments included the establishment of renowned theological institutions, growth and increase in number of national evangelical fellowships in the region and acquisition of properties in Nairobi, for the establishment of AEA Headquarters and in Bangui, the home of the first evangelical theological graduate school in Sub-Sahara Africa. His legacy included the mentorship of many

future evangelical leaders; including Tokunboh Adeyemo, who succeeded Kato as General Secretary of AEA.

Notwithstanding the achievements of Byang Kato, he was a 'sinner saved by grace' (he had his failures and shortcomings). At thirty-nine years of age, Kato was youthful and was still maturing and gaining wisdom. He needed more time to build on the foundations he laid. There was some room for improvement (Bowers 2008:14; Tienou 2007; Shirik 2019). It is to these that I now turn.

2.14 Failures and Deficiencies of Kato

Kato, like all human beings, had feet of clay. Despite Kato's brilliant career, he had his own pitfalls. Criticizing a dead man is not an African thing to do. However, the study is a critical analysis of a life and inevitably, viewing both sides, strengths and weaknesses, in tension, authenticates the person's humanness. One of the regrets Kato had was when he left his family for further studies in UK. The wife followed him a year later and each of the three young children were left with different relatives to look after them, in three different cities. When the couple returned to Nigeria after their studies, they were heartbroken at the state and health of the children. They were emaciated and were not in robust health, according to Jummai (interview).

He was faced with the same situation four years later, after the couple's return from UK when he had to leave the family again to the USA for postgraduate studies. However, he endeavoured to have the whole family join him in the USA, this time. While they continued to live together as a family in Nairobi, during his tenure in AEA, Byang spent a lot of time away from home, on ministry assignments. In the barely two-year tenure, Kato travelled to almost all African countries, apart from his travels abroad. This caused some tension in the family and with a long-term impact on the older son (Haye 1986:108-10). His first son, Jonathan, was most affected by his daddy's absence from home. His pastor spouse and her time away from home on pastoral assignments, reminded him of his father and affected their marriage.

Kato was a workaholic. There were some conspiracy theories about his death (Haye 1986; Breman 1996:143). What seemed to be a more plausible supposition was that he died of fatigue; given his heavy work schedule. Thus, he would have been very

exhausted or burnt out, when he went swimming, even though he was a good swimmer. Despite Kato's zeal for biblical Christianity, there could have been ambiguities in some of his biblical interpretations. This work argues for lifestyle and actions or practice as means for theological insights. The way Kato handled and related to the church establishment on some of the issues, like ecumenism, some aspects of pietism, social action were problematic. His experience of ATR could perhaps have been appropriated more in engaging ATR worldviews for transformation.²⁰

2.15 Conclusion

Kato's story starts with humble beginnings, rooted in 'pagan worship' (his words), got converted to Christianity, grew and matured to an outstanding Christian leader before his life ended tragically. Africans live in the context of religious plurality and suffer for their faith, especially for conversion from other religions, such as Islam and ATR to Christianity. Also, the African Church has the challenge of mixing ATR with Christian faith—syncretism (Chalk 2013). Mburu (2019:7) states: "While obviously not coded into our DNA, worldview is so embedded in the social fabric that it is transmitted both consciously and unconsciously. We have all acquired the knowledge, values, morals, and skills we need to live harmoniously in our communities". The African traditional worldview dominates the biblical worldview and therefore, practices and beliefs are not always consistent with the Christian faith or what the Bible teaches.

The biographical sketch of Byang Henry Kato paints a portrait that commands attention. Kato was a true native of Kwoi, of Jaba ethnicity in Kaduna state in Northern Nigeria and of impeccable social standing. He was raised a fetish priest and married to a princess, daughter of Kpop Ham. He was a true African from sociological and anthropological perspective as he was well enculturated and established among his people (Kim 2019).

Kato converted to Christianity and experienced remarkable transformation as a young man, committing himself to the service of God for the rest of his life. With singular purpose, hard work and integrity he excelled through education and career. As

²⁰ Kato's biblical hermeneutics will be dealt with in the next two chapters.

minister of the gospel and Bible teacher, he was committed to the development of the Church. He was elevated to head his denomination and went on to become the first African General Secretary of AEA. He was known for his Bible-centredness and Christ-centredness. He was concerned about mixing the Christian faith with African traditional religions; thus, his warning message to the church in Africa about incipient syncretism and universalism. He proposed a solution to the theological challenge by promoting sound theological education in Africa. He laid a solid foundation to enable AEA to deliver on this vision through the structure in put place.

With exemplary leadership, Kato became the father of evangelical theology in Sub-Saharan Africa. He shared the gospel with his family members to come to faith and disciplined and mentored other people to grow in their faith and professions. His passion and pursuits in his Christian faith demonstrated some clear hermeneutical positions. His passion was to spread this in his quest for sound theological education in the church. In an interview I had with Manfred Kohl (WEA GA, Jakarta, November 2019), he said: “You need to reserve a whole chapter about the integrity of Byang Kato; he was a man of integrity. He meant what he said, did what he says he will do and an outstanding man of God, who gave his all to the service of the Church”.

Lessons from Kato’s life are particularly important for disciple-making in the church and around intergenerational leadership development. With the burgeoning youthful population in Africa and the lack of opportunity for young people to ascend to leadership, Kato’s story could be an inspiration for young people. Kato’s life as a Christian leader, as family man, life in church and community and larger society, all provide important lessons for faithfully engaging with the Bible, as Christian Africans. Also, with the pervasive and dominant African religious worldview, Kato demonstrates a life lesson about worldview change for African Christians. The genius of Kato’s story is the worldview change from ATR to biblical worldview.

The next chapter explores in depth, Kato’s contribution in three particular areas of theological and biblical understanding; that is, his biblical hermeneutics, perspectives on the question of African Christian identity and his contribution to evangelical theological education in Africa.

CHAPTER 3.0

BYANG KATO'S THEOLOGICAL LEGACY IN BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS, AFRICAN CHRISTIAN IDENTITY AND CONTRIBUTION TO EVANGELICAL THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

3.1 Introduction

Byang Kato was an established leader and a pioneer of evangelical theology in modern Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa (Breman 1996, Turaki 2001:33; Kapteina 2006, Bowers 2008; Shirik 2019). Kato was a young Nigerian Theologian and was praised by some scholars and castigated by others (Palmer 2004:3; MacDonald 2017; Shirik 2019; Ferdinando 2007). Shirik (2019:131) writes: "In spite of his brief career, he has left his imprint on the pages of African Christian history. He is not without his supporters and critics alike. It appears that while his critics have misunderstood him in some respects, his supporters also have not paid enough attention to his theological conviction and articulation". Given the context of Kato's time, his theological contribution was motivated and characterised by his fear for destruction of the faith of the young Church in Sub-Sahara Africa. Kato raised a unique prophetic voice to alert the church about heresies. He opposed much of the theological innovations of his fellow African theologians, whose aim was to restore African dignity and to give a more positive appraisal of the values and systems of ATR than Western missionaries did (Palmer 2004:11; Breman 1995:416-7; Ferdinando, Shirik 2019; MacDonald 2017).

He was critical about what was being taught and that it was syncretistic and universalistic. That is, mixing the two religions (Christianity and ATR) and belief about the salvation of all people, whether they believe in Christ or not, in this life. African traditional religions and concepts of God was being systematised without the Bible, making the Bible irrelevant to the vision of 'African Theology' (Kato 1975a:69-70; cf. Ward 2008; Maxwell 2008). Ferdinando (2007:124) writes:

A classificatory system which attempts to distinguish the principal responses taken by Christian writers to this issue, and one which has been widely adopted—albeit with modifications and reservations—identifies three major positions. Briefly, *exclusivist* approaches argue that salvation and/or truth is found only through an explicit knowledge and confession of Christ; *inclusivist* approaches argue that salvation/truth is found only in Christ but may be mediated through non-Christian religions or philosophies apart from any explicit knowledge of him; and *pluralist* approaches see Christ as simply one means of salvation and truth among many others.

Thus, some of the proponents for the positive evaluation of ATR tended to be inclusive or pluralistic—syncretistic and universalistic. For example, Kwame Bediako’s approach to ATR “tends towards inclusivism, parallel to his understanding of the approaches of Justin Martyr and Clement of Alexandria toward Greek philosophy. The gospel is saving truth, but that truth was known partially—and savingly—in the pre-Christian worship of African traditional religion” (Ferdinando 2007:124). Bediako himself, makes a positive evaluation of other African theologians, like Bolaji Idowu, John Mbiti, Mulago gwa Cikala Musharhamina and singled out Byang Kato as the notable dissenting voice and states: “Byang Kato was most notable as the dissenting voice in the chorus of positive evaluations of the African pre-Christian religious heritage...in Kato’s case, his response was complicated by a theological posture rendered his appreciation of the heritage from the past problematic” (Bediako 1992:xviii).

However, there were some others who believed, Kato laid the foundation for evangelical theology and made important contribution to promote sound evangelical theological education in Africa (Tienou 1982; Turaki 2001; Palmer 2004:3-4; Ferdinando 2007:135-37; Shirik 2019). Nevertheless, many of those who make a positive appraisal of Kato’s convictions appear to do so with some reservations and may not have done much to expound on Kato’s legacy. Ironically, it was one of his critics, Kwame Bediako, who has devoted substantial effort in evaluating Kato’s theology. A whole chapter is devoted to Kato’s theology in Bediako’s *Magnum opus*—Theology and Identity (Shirik 2019:132-33; cf. Bediako 1992:386-425). Later in this chapter, Bediako’s continuing influence and definition of a distinctive brand of African Christianity, which may not be in complete agreement with Kato’s views, will be highlighted. According to Shirik (2019:133), “Kato’s understanding of Christianity was driven by his conviction that the essential message of Christianity can, and should, be universally understood and constructed. It should then be adequately communicated

using contextual forms; therefore, acceptance or rejection of his contextual approach must consider this aspect". Both Kato's critics and supporters may have failed to deal with Kato's views and his theological framework satisfactorily, which are believed to be in line with evangelical ethos.

The historical context in which Kato worked was the late 1950s to mid-1970s; a time of cultural awakening or revolution which had welled up from the struggles for independence and freedom from the shackles of colonial domination. Pan Africanist scholars had been agitating for independence from colonial rule and starting with Ghana in 1957, a few African countries had just attained their independence. The colonial experience of suppression and lack of understanding and appreciation for the African culture by European colonial officials and missionaries was rife. In the struggle for independence, the call was to reject European influence and return to African cultural roots as part of the struggle for independence from colonial domination (Palmer 2004:6; Bowers 2007). The cultural revolution impacted not only political, economic and socio-cultural issues but also the church and theology. African scholars and church men and women began talking about African Christian Theology that was open to different interpretations. Palmer (2004) observes that this was a period of theological investigation and agitation. Biblical doctrines were being questioned (Ward 2008:77-82; Maxwell 2008; Palmer 2004:14). Many of the established churches with headquarters in Europe or America were less fervent in evangelising and focused more on social justice issues (Maxwell (2008:406).

The immediate post-independence era was therefore marked by three factors: (a) the resurgence of African consciousness that influenced Christian thought and practice, (b) the effects of the struggle for independence, raising the desire among some African scholars to separate themselves from Western Christianity and (c) the social pressures shaping popular Christianity in the period immediately around Nigerian independence, in the case of Kato (Githiga 2001; Palmer 2004; Maxwell 2008). Githiga (2001:3) states: "The failure of the Church as an institution to speak against colonial authoritarianism made nationalists to coin the phrase "*Gutiri ngurani ya Mubi*

*na Muthungu*²¹ (there is no difference between a settler and a missionary)".

This atmosphere could have played a role in Kato's subsequent endeavours and contribution to African Christian identity and defining the evangelical tradition in the protestant church in Africa. In other words, Kato's earliest adulthood was at the cross-roads of the shaping of African Christian consciousness, post-independence. In that respect, he turned out to be a resistant voice among several scholars at that time. While the others advocated for a strand of Christian consciousness that rejected Western missionary Christianity, Kato appeared to have prioritised Biblical Christianity, which admittedly had been handed down by Western Christian missionaries in Africa. It is that brand of Christianity Kato had experienced and had been nurtured in and which had transformed his life. Kato saw the need to raise a unique and prophetic voice in reaction to the theological trends in the church in Africa.

He was reputed to hold a radical conservative view of Scripture, different from his contemporaries, many of whom preceded him in the academy. His key message was a warning to the church, about the threats of incipient universalism and syncretism; losing the message of the uniqueness of the gospel of Christ and that the universalistic theology of the ecumenical movement would penetrate and destroy the church (Palmer 2004:16). Therefore, Kato used strong and prophetic language to address these concerns; courageously addressing the individual proponents of those issues he considered heretic. In particular, he singled out John Mbiti and Bolaji Idowu, among others. Kato (1975a:16): states: "there is another way of looking at the relationship between Christianity and African religions. It is not neo-colonialism to plead the uniqueness and finality of Jesus Christ". Kato sought for an authentic African Identity and biblical Christianity.

The debates were extremely important in shaping Kato's own self-understanding, and indeed directing his energies to defining evangelical Christianity and what would constitute the propagation and defence of the gospel in Africa. Thus, Kato put in check the perceived theological pitfalls creeping into the church in Africa by the liberal theologies espoused by his opponents. Kato's views were met with equally strong

²¹ Kikuyu expression, the Kikuyu is the largest ethnic group in Kenya, the tribe of the first President.

opposition and criticism. The appraisal of Palmer (2004:3-5; cf MacDonal 2017; Shirik 2019) of the various charges and castigation of Kato by various scholars include; radical discontinuity between ATR and Christian faith as charged by Kwame Bediako, extremist and rejectionist of African culture and alienated African or one who had lost his Africanness as charged by Bediako (1992) and Mercy Oduyoye (1986). Kato was also portrayed to be opposed to contextualisation and that he was a naïve theologian (Bediako 2004:49; Shirik 2019:132; Bowers 2008). However, Palmer (2004:3-5) defends Kato and observes that a critical study places Kato in the mainstream of Evangelical Theology in Africa. He justifies Kato's rejection of the term 'African Theology', given the context of the debate then and defended Kato's stance on contextualisation and that he was not opposed to it. On the contrary, Kato is credited for being one of the earliest scholars to introduce contextualisation in theological discourse (Bowers 2008:4).

Kato's disagreement was not only between him and the extreme ecumenists to the left but also, the extreme right conservatives, like the International Council of Christian Churches (ICCC). The ICCC and the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) have their roots in American fundamentalism. The NAE emerged as the classic evangelicals and collaborated with other evangelical groups around the world. The ICCC remained in the fundamentalists and separatist camp (Hinkelmann 2020:104-05; Stott 2003:19-24; Adeyemo 1989:7). Kato metaphorically referred to the rather disagreeable position he defended as 'meat in the sandwich'; caught in the middle of the extreme left liberal ecumenists and the extreme right separatists, the ICCC, with whom he shared most theological beliefs (Kato 1975b:17). The difference was in the legalistic zeal and belief in some form literal interpretation of Scripture (Hinkelmann 2020:105). Fundamentalist interpreted scripture as if they were direct recipients and do not attempt to analyse the context of the first hearers. According to Adeyemo (1989:7): "Fundamentalism refers to those who resist the liberal distortion of the Gospel through the tendency to modernise the Christian faith in order to make it more compatible with a non-Christian worldview or philosophy of life. Unfortunately, fundamentalism too often—not always—indicates a closed minded, defensive, reactionary theology and Church structure". According to Breman (1996:146), Kato states: "We are called names- 'neo-evangelicals' by the right and 'separatists' by the left. Missionaries have refused to have fellowship with me because I'm too ecumenical, and in other places I've been

called a separatist who has been deceived by American missionaries!". Kato went on to conclude: "Maybe we are in the right place when we are criticised by both sides" (Breman 1996:146). Kato clearly rejects the fundamentalist label and being a mouthpiece for Western missionaries or anybody and asserts his independent thinking. Some of his missionary friends were opposed to his academic pursuits (Kato 1974:n. p). Kato may have been shaped by influence of other people in the missionary enterprise, but it is unlikely that he was indoctrinated. He had a critical mind and was convinced about the direction he wanted to pursue and influence he wanted to bring to the church himself.

An outstanding contribution for which Kato is remembered is his lament about the theological trends in his *magnum opus*—Theological Pitfalls in Africa—a redacted version of his doctoral thesis and published in 1975. In this work, Kato outlined the various factors in the church that he thought would result in syncretism and universalism and warned the church to be aware of these. He named and delved into the theology or teachings by scholars, pointing out where their teachings were heretic or unbiblical. These harangues provide a helpful source of information in articulating Kato's own hermeneutics. Some scholars opined that Kato was reactionary and a complainer but did not offer any theological solution for his concerns (Bediako 1992; Oduye 1986; cf. Palmer 2004). However, Kato did not only raise concerns about the misleading theological trends in the Church in Africa, he gave a prescription to address the challenges. Kato tried to contribute to the efforts of the proponents of African Christian Theology by another dimension, a way of looking at the relationship between Christianity and African religions from an authentic biblical perspective (1974:11). According to Kato, the panacea was sound evangelical theological education in Africa and to which he made an important contribution. His objective was to defend the authority of the Bible and uniqueness and finality of *Jesus Christ*. "All who are not *in Jesus Christ* are lost, in accordance to *Scripture*" (my emphasis)²² and took seriously the debate about what he called "theological cancer" (Kato 1974:11).

²² Emphasis here is to note Kato's obvious accent on being Bible-centred and Christ-centred; short of the triumvirate evangelical mantra of Bible-centred—Christ-centred—Spirit-led. This is in no way doubting his encounter and belief in the work of the Holy Spirit, which he testifies of at his rededication and transformation.

The sustained theological debate in African theological discourse is a marker that Kato had some theological contribution to make and could not be easily dismissed, his theological points are worthy of consideration. This chapter seeks to explore these aspects of Kato's theological legacy, through the lenses of the theological debates. Also, the chapter assesses current situation in the church, in the light of the three theological variables, forty-five years after Kato's demise.

3.2 Kato's Hermeneutics

At the core of Kato's biblical Christianity is the way the place of the Bible in Christian thought and thus, biblical hermeneutics—"the art and science of interpreting the Bible; to uncover the message biblical authors wanted to communicate and apply it in the context of the reader" (Mburu 2019:1; cf. Baba 2016:3). The word hermeneutics is a derivative from the name of a Greek god, Hermes, who served as messenger in bringing the messages of the gods to people (Baba 2016:3-4; Sproul 1977:45). A key problem with the interpretation of the Bible is the presuppositions or worldview systems people have. These presuppositions may be unreliable for interpreting the scripture, especially when they are incompatible with the biblical worldview (Baba 2016; Chalk 2013; Mburu 2019).

Kato developed his hermeneutics after conversion to Christianity. He embarked on private study of both the English and Hausa Bibles and chose to pursue and develop a career in teaching and preaching the Bible. He pursued biblical and theological training, from diploma to doctoral level. He saw biblical training, including training in the original biblical languages as essential for enhancing exegesis. While study of other religions was necessarily, Kato's emphasis was Inductive Bible study as an exegetical method. He was influenced by the Dispensational theology he received from his training in eminent evangelical schools in Africa, Europe and America (Turaki 2000:133), among other factors. He would be influenced more by DTS, where he did both his Master and doctoral degrees in Systematic Theology. Kato also taught at DTS, renowned for its millennialist teachings on eschatology and where the faculty affirm and sign the articles of faith. The Seminary affirms the inerrancy and infallibility of Scripture and the incarnation and visible and personal return of Christ to the earth (Kirschner 2008:32-34). The dispensational hermeneutics of DTS must have influenced Kato's own hermeneutics. DTS held the view that Scripture was primarily

unity in theology with some secondary diversity. This diversity is explained by the progressive dispensational scheme that the Seminary espoused and trained students, like Kato. How this hermeneutical stance informed Kato's distinctive approach to engage the traditional worldview would be explored.

African intellectuals were concerned about the fact that Western missionaries did not understand the value of African thought and introduced the gospel to Africans as a civilising project and imposed Western cultural values. With the coming of political independence, there was the desire for independence of thought and way of life. Several African theologians tended to look more to ATR thoughts to inform their Christianity and way of connecting with and worshipping God, which the missionaries had ignored or demeaned. However, Kato's views and approach in addressing these concerns were different from many of his contemporaries. He elevated the place of the Bible for theologising and distinguished between ATR and Christianity. This section explores Kato's hermeneutics in three parts: (1) Kato's attitude to the Bible (Biblicism), (2) Exegetical approach and (3) Application of Scripture to issues he confronted.

3.2.1 Kato's Biblicism

Kato held divergent view on the authority, interpretation and application of the Bible from many of the African theologians of his day. He insisted that the Bible was the sole source of Christian theology. Of particular interest, is the doctrine and authority of Scripture, God's special revelation. Also, God's revelation in the person and work of Jesus Christ, salvation and the future home of the Christian. Kato's perspective about what the Bible is, was key to his hermeneutics. The assumptions people have about the Bible itself is a critical defining factor in the interpretation and application of Scripture.

Broadly, there are three basic views about the Bible; namely: the orthodox, the neo-orthodox and the liberal views. The orthodox view believes the Bible is the word of God and came to humans through divine inspiration of the Holy Spirit who caused it to be written in human language and in a particular context so, the readers and hearers can understand (2Tim. 3:16-17; 2Peter 1:20-21). Because it is God's word, it is infallible and inerrant in all it affirms. It is the supreme guide for faith and conduct.

Some nominal Christians hold a liberal view; that the Bible is a record of human religious experience and history of human interaction with God. They question the veracity of miracles and prophecies. For the liberals, inspiration of the Bible is not different from other works of people and therefore subject to error and fallibility. They rely on scientific and rational explanations of biblical narratives. The third position is neo-orthodoxy. These may partially affirm orthodox belief and reject liberalism. However, the neo-orthodox do not affirm the inerrancy and infallibility of Scripture and rely on allegorical tools for the interpretation of the Bible (Kunhiyop 2012:6-7; Kato 1975a).

Evangelicals hold to the orthodox view and maintain that human reason and tradition should all yield to the Bible, a position Byang Kato subscribed to. The rallying cry of the reformers that led to split in the church was the doctrine of *sola scriptura*, that is, the Scripture alone—the Bible has the sole authority and was the source of knowledge for Christian faith and conduct. Kato held this high view of the Bible and defended this to be the supreme source of information for African Christian theologising. According to Kato (1974c. n.p.), the liberals accept some parts of the Bible and reject others. The evangelical accepts all the 66 canonical books of the Bible as God-breathed, without error in the original manuscripts, faithfully transmitted and is absolutely trustworthy. Kato (1974c: n. p.) enumerates the following as the basis for the infallibility of the Bible: (1). Scripture claims to be "God-breathed" 2Tim. 3:16. (2). Men were used as vehicles to convey God's truth 2 Peter 1:19-21. (3). Prophets and apostles spoke that God gave them Ex. 7:1, Jer. 1:9; Psa. 2 cf. Acts 1:16; 4:25; John 16:13, 14. (4). Scripture quoted by Scripture as God's Word. Mat. 1:22, 2:15 and (5). Christ's authentication of inerrancy and permanence of the Scriptures. Jn. 10:35; Matt. 24:35; 1 Pet. 1:24, 25. Kato clarifies that inerrancy refers to the original manuscript originally given by God. Evangelicals believe in God's ability and promise to preserve his word, demonstrated by the way the manuscripts have been handed down from one generation to another and can affirm with Christ that "the Scripture cannot be broken" John 10:35 (1974c: n. p.).

According to Macdonald (2017:6): “Kato sets himself apart as a vigorous biblicist in a field rife with speculative musings, completely willing to speak in opposition to cultural norms when scriptural and communal knowledge seemingly conflict”. Others have referred to Kato for his high view of the Bible as bibliology (Bediako 1992). “Byang Kato was most notable as the dissenting voice in the chorus of positive evaluations of the African pre-Christian religious heritage” (Bediako 1992:xviii). However, Bediako credits Kato for his Biblicism and states: “His great achievement, however, consisted in a persistent affirmation of the centrality of the Bible in the theological task” (Bediako 1992:xviii). Many Christians and leaders in the Church in Africa may also lay claim to the Bible but their interpretation and application is dubious because the dominant influence of traditional worldview system; a supposition that preachers bring to Bible interpretation (Mburu 2019).

Biblicist or bibliology may not be very favourable descriptions of Kato as an evangelical. These terms may be derisory characterisation of believers who take the Bible literally and authoritatively without proper reflection and interpretation. Bomboro (2014:3) in a review by Christian Smith for example, states: “Smith identifies American biblicism as the principal encumbrance for missional efforts in our milieu, as well as the reason for pop culture’s perception of evangelical Christianity as absurd, anti-intellectual, and indefensible”. Some critics label biblicists as naïve but often these do not give the rightful place to the Christian Scripture. However, Bomboro (2014:84) states the evangelical view of the Bible and writes:

A truly evangelical reading of Scripture would be a gospel-oriented reading of Scripture, where the Bible’s in-built hermeneutic of christocentrism would override special interest interpretations; that self-presenting biblical hermeneutic already stands codified in at least two other extra-biblical sources of authority—“the canon of Truth,” and the classic, consensual interpretation of Scripture. These three things, together, preserve the Bible’s authoritative witness, nature, and content from fraudulent biblicist manipulations and misappropriations.

Kato’s theological goal was faithfulness to the Bible, the uniqueness and the Lordship of Jesus Christ in Salvation and redemption; the otherness of God as revealed in Scripture. Kato wrote: “The Bible must remain the basic source of Christian theology. Evangelical Christians know of only one theology-Biblical theology-though it may be expressed in the context of each cultural milieu” (1985:11). His view of the Bible was not just the book missionaries brought to Africa, but God’s unique revelation to the world (p. 12).

Kato's centring of the Bible in theology is consistent with the Reformation doctrine of *sola scriptura*. Christianity is the revelation of God as recorded in the Bible and key to the development of Christianity. Doing Christian or biblical theology must start with an understanding and experience of coming to faith in Jesus Christ. Thus, Kato's understanding of theology went beyond an academic exercise. Because of Kato's belief in the Bible and application, he did away with African religious worldview (Ngong (2007:116). He concluded that general or natural revelation had no salvific effect, and that salvation was only through Jesus Christ and rejected the African religious worldview.

Kato did not only demonstrate his biblicism, but also reveals some of his concerns and approach to the Bible and Christian faith. He concluded: "Theology in Africa is increasingly turning to African traditional religions rather than the Bible as its absolute source. A continuing effort should be to relate Christian theology to the changing situations in Africa, but only as the Bible is taken as the absolute Word of God can it have an authoritative and relevant message for Africa" (Kato 1985:42-43). The next two sections deal with Kato's exegetical approach on some theological issues he contended.

3.2.2 Kato's Exegetical Approach

Kato's encounter with Christianity was through hearing the word of God in his native language, Hausa. He recalls this as a critical part of his faith journey and continued to let people know what the Bible says about reality and the various issues he confronted. On a lecturing tour in Switzerland, 10-17 November 1974, a reporter asked Kato a personal question about why he was a Christian. Kato responded: "When I was without Christ, I was of course religious – religious in the sense of worshipping idols. But when Jesus Christ was presented to me, I realised that He was the Way, and so I asked Him to come into my heart, in order that when I die, I may be sure of going to be with Him in heaven" (Kato 1974a:vi). Kato's personal testimony is important in trying to understand his exegetical approach. As a child, he was impacted in the village square where he first heard the gospel and eventually came to faith in Christ, in the Bible class of his Nigerian teacher (Haye 1986:19). His keen interest in the Bible drove him to train in Bible schools that believe in the interpretation of the Bible from an evangelical

perspective.

Kato believed in the literal approach to interpretation of Scriptures; interpreting words and sentences in their ordinary and usual understanding (Kato 1975a:78). In a diatribe against Mbiti regarding the literal interpretation method of evangelical missions, like the African Inland Church (A. I. C.), Kato (1975a:80) argued:

While it is true that the A.I.C. has no “Lambeth Conference” to attend, no Vatican from which to expect pronouncements, it has theological, doctrinal, historical and ministerial connections with the universal church...The literal interpretation of Scriptures binds the A.I.C. with such great names as Ezra, Tertullian, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Erastus, Tyndale, Luther, Calvin and others.

Defining the literal method of interpretation, Ice (2009:1) states: “This means interpretation which gives to every word the same meaning it would have in normal usage, whether employed in writing, speaking or thinking”. This approach is also known as the literal grammatico-historical interpretation of Scripture. According to Kato (1975a:78): “Only by following the normal grammatico-historical interpretation would one be free from extreme subjectivism. To follow the allegorical method or to spiritualise normal concepts necessarily leads to the subjectivism and preconceived notions”. Literal approach he said, did not mean literalistic interpretation but to take the word of God at face value; a well-established protestant tradition (p. 78).

He held the dispensational view of eschatology, a doctrine with diversity of opinion among Christians. Opinions are split between postmillennialism, amillennialism and premillennialism with belief in the second advent of Christ (Kato 1975a:81-82; Ice 2009). The diversity of opinion even among dispensationalists, has caused some reticence about the literal interpretation of scripture as a defining tenet of dispensationalism and wider evangelicalism. The ridicule by critics of this approach could partly be because these may not be defining literal interpretation the way dispensationalists do and thus, their misguided conclusions and discretion. However, “many believe that they have been able to satisfactorily interpret the details of Scripture and harmonise their exegetical conclusions into a theology that is the product of consistent literal interpretation. On the other hand, there are many, inside and outside of dispensationalism, who see problems with such an approach” (Ice 2009:2). According to Ice (2009:1-2), dispensationalists owe a more thorough definition to Bernard Ramm and writes:

This is sometimes called the principle of grammatical-historical interpretation since the meaning of each word is determined by grammatical and historical considerations. The principle might also be called normal interpretation since the literal meaning of words is the normal approach to their understanding in all languages. It might also be designated plain interpretation so that no one receives the mistaken notion that the literal principle rules out figures of speech. Symbols, figures of speech and types are all interpreted plainly in this method and they are in no way contrary to literal interpretation. After all, the very existence of any meaning for a figure of speech depends on the reality of the literal meaning of the terms involved. Figures often make the meaning plainer, but it is the literal, normal, or plain meaning that they convey to the reader.

Ice highlights the confusion about the meaning of the term “literal interpretation” and how unconsciously the term has taken on four different meanings. Citing Vern Poythress, Ice (2009:2) writes:

First is “first thought meaning,” which is said to describe “the meaning for words in isolation.” The second kind he calls “flat interpretation,” by which he means an a priori commitment to an idea of “literal if possible.” Third, the one who uses grammatical-historical interpretation “reads passages as organic wholes and tries to understand what each passage expresses against the background of the original human author and the original situation.” His fourth type is “plain interpretation,” where one “reads everything as if it were written directly to oneself, in one’s own time and culture.” This is opposed to grammatical-historical interpretation.

Kato’s biblical understanding and interpretation was Christocentric. God has ultimately revealed himself to the world through the person of Jesus Christ, in his incarnation, life and ministry on earth, his death and resurrection. The guiding principle for interpretation of Scripture is “Christocentric Principle, i.e. all hermeneutical decisions are made subject to the centrality and authority of Jesus. His life, death and resurrection, together with his teaching and miracles, form the ultimate criteria for evaluating and re-evaluating all Scriptural interpretations and Christian hermeneutics” (Domeris 2014:187-88).

Kato’s hermeneutical approach was also informed by his lifestyle and way of living. Manfred Kohl (2019) in an interview stated: “Kato was more of a practical theologian, putting into practice what he believed and was not persuaded by either the left-wing, liberal theologians, nor the right-wing fundamentalist theologians. I always saw him as a man of the middle”. To question whether Kato was a theologian is to misunderstand his approach. In addition to the limited academic theological literary work, Kato’s theology was lived and observed by those who knew and met him. Turaki’s reflection on Kato in an interview (May 2019) revealed that Kato’s major focus was on humans; whether these had accepted Jesus Christ as their Saviour or not. If not, his first

concern was to share the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ with the person. Presentation and proclamation of the gospel was an imperative and great passion for Kato. His practical social life was people centred. He got to know people and found time to listen, know and follow them. Turaki himself was influenced by Kato to commit to serving the Lord, after listening to a sermon by Kato. Three other interviewees who were acquaintances of Kato, shared similar views about Kato's friendship and motivation to engage the Bible.

Kato also developed a daily devotional lifestyle for himself and his family. He nurtured private devotional relationship and fellowship with God. This included a daily reading and study of the Bible, sometimes with study aids, like the Scripture Union Daily Guide. The ministry of Scripture Union in Nigeria and indeed, most of West Africa contributed greatly to a revival in the Church, especially in the late 1950s and through mid-1980s. The Scripture Union daily Bible reading plan or method is a five step process; (1) Step one starts with prayer, to enter the presence of God and asking for help of the Holy Spirit for understanding the Scripture portion being read for the day. (2) Step two is a careful reading of the passage followed by (3) Step three, which is meditation, pondering some laid-out questions about the text. This step is backed by carefully exegeted notes or commentary for further insights on the passage; with cross references to related passages in the Bible, to help the reader understand how different parts of the Bible are related to one another. (4) Step four requires the readers response in prayer, turning the discoveries about God from the exercise into prayer and worship. The reader is encouraged to self-introspect and write down some application about what the Word of God means to one's personal life and situation and finally (5) Step five is application of the lessons learnt (Daramola 2020). The Scripture Union Daily Guide takes the reader through the whole Bible every three years and apply the inductive Bible Study method for exploring the Bible. The S. U. Bible reading notes are interpreted contextually and allow the scripture to be its own interpreter (Daramola 2020:ii). This was exactly Kato's approach and a helpful tool for discipleship and of contemporary relevance.

Kato kept a journal where he made entries about some of his reflections as he encountered the Scripture. Haye (1986:41-42) recalls from Kato's diary: "An entry in his diary at this time is revealing. Kato had highlighted the following: June 10 recorded-

list of sins he felt convicted by; “my great sins: 1. Pride, 2. Dishonesty, 3. Greed, 4. Temper”. And on June 20 the same year (one of his years in London), he recorded - “I am complete in him”. God had met a need”. Kato’s encounter with Scripture was experiential and I will now turn to his application of Scripture in his encounters with other theologians then.

3.2.3 Application of Scripture to Specific Issues Kato Confronted

This section explores Kato’s application of the Bible to life and issues he confronted. The assumption is that Kato applied his biblical understanding or biblical worldview in his polemics and debate with other theologians in Sub-Saharan Africa in his lifetime. To a large extent, Kato took on the Church establishment to contend for Biblical Christianity in Africa. The following section explores Kato’s engagement with some of the doctrinal and theological issues he contended for. His reflections were mostly reaction to what other theologians, mostly from the ecumenical community, notably, John Mbiti (1969, 1970, 1971); Bolaji Idowu (1962, 1973) and Harry Sawyerr (1968a; 1968b), among others, were writing and promoting in the church then (1975a; Palmer 2004:16). The themes of these polemics were primarily grounded on the relationship between ATR and Christianity, the authority of the Bible, salvation and question of identity. Kato held a contrary view from the other African scholars. which put him at loggerheads with them.

Kato enumerated ten challenges he perceived to be the driving force for theological heresies in the church then and the future, which also informed his disputations, namely:

- 1) Prevailing universalism in the homeland of missionaries from Europe and America to Africa
- 2) Search for solidarity of the human race
- 3) The emerging political awareness in Africa
- 4) Universalism as a tool for uniting people in Africa
- 5) Syncretism, the practice of more than one religion at the same time
- 6) Very religious people will surely be saved because of their zeal
- 7) Reformation of African religions

- 8) The new garb that African traditional religions were putting on promoted universalism
- 9) Biblical ignorance in the churches in Africa today and inadequate emphasis on theological education on the part of the missionaries.
- 10) The gregarious nature of the African; the African likes to congregate with others (Kato 1975a:11-16).

Kato identified the challenges as theological; and thus, theological pitfalls (Kato 1974a: 278-81; 1975a:16). Analysis of the ten issues highlighted could be categorised to fall under the three areas of Kato's theological legacy in this study; to do with African Christian identity and theological education and his overarching hermeneutics against universalism and syncretism in the church in Africa. First, I turn to his hermeneutics by examining some of the issues for which he confronted other theologians in debates.

3.2.3.1 African Traditional Religions and Christianity

Kato used his biblical understanding or worldview to confront and critique ATR and emphasised the uniqueness of the gospel of Christ. He affirmed that in ATR, followers were aware about the Supreme God or Being and as revealed in natural revelation. But the knowledge of God in ATR was not enough to connect with the Supreme God, except through lesser gods, created by humans and with no efficacious means for salvation. Any notion of using ATR or any other religious belief and means, apart from the unique revelation of God in the Bible and Jesus Christ, was rejected. Kunyihiop (2012:79) observes: "It is too optimistic to think that the perception and understanding of God in the African worldview is exactly the same as the understanding we derive from the bible". African traditional religions claim to give worship to the Supreme God but is also characterised by ministrations to spirits and ancestors and worship of the Supreme God included intermediaries. Mbiti (1989:58) for example writes:

Sacrifices and offerings constitute one of the commonest acts of worship among African peoples.... 'Sacrifices' refer to cases where animal life is destroyed in order to present the animal, in part or in whole, to God, supernatural beings, spirits or the living dead (ancestors- my addition). 'Offerings' refer to the remaining cases which do not involve the killing of an animal, being chiefly the presentation of foodstuffs and other items. In some cases, sacrifices and offerings are directed to one or more of the following: God, spirits and living dead. Recipients in the second and third categories are regarded as

intermediaries between God and men, so that God is the ultimate Recipient whether or not the worshippers are aware of that.

Thus, the question of salvation and the unique and exclusive claim for sacrificial death of Christ as the only means of salvation and access to God was placed in doubt.

Kato (1975a:181-82) writes: “Non-Christian religions prove man (sic) has a concept of God but they also show man’s rebellion against God (Rom. 1:18-23). God has redemptively become incarnate in Christ for the redemption of mankind, but only those who accept His offer of salvation can be saved (Rom. 5:17)”. Ferdinando re-echoes Kato’s stance and writes: “Conversion itself is an act of radical transformation, and not simply the realisation of a process already underway in the convert’s pre-Christian religious experience. The ubiquitous demand on all would-be Christians throughout the NT is to repent, which implies fundamental change from a former Christless, sinful way of life, including abandonment of former religious allegiances” (2007:134). Thus, Kato’s attitude to ATR was to advocate discontinuity. He appeals to Scripture to counter Mbiti’s assertion for continuity and writes:

In advocating that non-Christian beliefs (*like ATR*, my addition) be left to exist, Mbiti gives the impression that both Christianity and non-Christian (*ATR*) religions are valuable and deserve co-existing. The Apostle Paul declares, “And for anyone who is in Christ, there is a new creation; the old creation has gone, and now the new one is here” (2 Cor. 5:17, Jerusalem Bible; cf. Eph. 2:1-3)” (Kato 1975a:70).

Kato went on to further expound on what Paul meant: “He was able to say this only because he firmly believed that even the most religious person was considered dead and without God; this included Saul of Tarsus before the experience on Damascus road...It is impossible for a person with Paul’s conviction to see no need of scrapping the non-Christian beliefs” (p. 70). Kato did not see much value in bringing his experience and understanding of ATR into Christianity and advocated for a separation of the two faith.

Kato’s view has a potent salience to African Christianity even more today. For, the debates about self-understanding and a distinctly African Christian interpretations of Scripture, continue to engage the minds of scholars in Africa. Underscoring the problem of hermeneutics in the African Church Mburu for example poses the following questions:

Why is it that after more than one hundred years of exposure to Christianity, traditional practices such as witchcraft, ancestor worship and polygamy are still found in Africa? Why is it not uncommon to hear of pastors consulting witchdoctors to acquire more “power” for the pulpit and of Christians using witchcraft to grow their businesses? Why, if the statistics on corruption and unethical practices on our continent are to be believed, has there been so very little transformation of society? (Mburu 2019:3).

In response to these rhetorical questions, Mburu was quick to proffer a response and writes: “Many Christians, including those holding leadership positions in the church, live dichotomized lives. In other words, we as African Christians seem unable to understand how our faith should affect our everyday lives. It is as if we keep faith and life in two separate compartments” (Mburu 2019:3; cf. Chalk 2013). The result of this dualism is a weak church, with no moral authority and positive influence in society. Mburu argues that part of the problem is in the failure to interpret the Bible accurately and allow it to guide every-day life of the Christian (Mburu 2019:211).

Exploring further the challenge of profession and practice of African Christians, Chalk states: “If the churches in Africa are not preaching and teaching the biblical worldview, accepting it as their own, and living accordingly, their members will accept the new religion of Christianity without discarding the old conflicting beliefs. That, in missiological terms, is called syncretism” (Chalk 2013:5). He went further to state: “Unless the African Christian’s beliefs are structured by biblical worldview instead of the traditional African worldview, their behaviour will be structured more by traditional beliefs and Africa’s culture will not reflect predominantly Christian values” (Chalk 2013:11). No wonder then, it is popularly said of many majority Christian African countries, like Kenya: “eighty per cent Christian, eighty percent corrupt” and the rhetorical question is asked: “where are the corrupt people coming from”? It would appear therefore that Kato’s voice for a hermeneutic which emphasises discontinuity needs to be re-echoed even more today than his time. Domeris adds his voice and states that every reading of Scripture includes hermeneutical principles and rules on one hand and the artistic or interpretive reading of the text on the other but takes the help of the Holy Spirit as guide to the true meaning and application of the Scripture” (2014:178).

Kato made clear that he was not against culture, Christianity was birthed in a particular culture and should be expressed in every other culture, but without compromising the biblical intent and need for cultural transformation. Kato (1974e:n. p.) writes:

I am not denying the fact that natives of a particular culture potentially have more to contribute in their culture than an alien. But this is not necessarily so in all cases. I have benefitted very much from the studies of my culture carefully done by an American. Both natives of a culture and aliens to that culture who are committed to the evangelical gospel should all contribute to the worthy effort of getting the gospel truly rooted in every culture before the Lord of the church comes back to claim His own.

He gives the following guidelines in attempting to Africanise Christianity²³. In the first place, Africa was not one culture, and enumerates the following questions, as guidelines, for practice of Christianity in the African context, without compromising the faith:

(1). What is your motive in trying to "contextualize" or expressing Christianity in the context of Africa? Is it due to a reactionary attitude to the white missionaries or you want to do it basically in order to help Africans understand the gospel better? Col. 3:7. (2). Is it necessary to make that practice African? I Cor. 9:20 (3). Is it edifying, making people better Christians and help in evangelism and church building? I Cor. 10:23. (4). Does it contradict the ethical teaching of the Scriptures? I Thess. 5:22. (5). If you are an evangelical Christian, then remember Lausanne Covenant on the point of culture. (Kato 1974e:n. p.; cf. Lausanne Covenant 1974).

Kato held the view that "Christianity cannot cohabit with any foreign religion" and thought some African theologians were seeking recognition of the "so-called 'common ground' between Christianity and African Traditional religions. This, Kato said, was "where the battle is raging" and the basis for his confrontations (1974a:13).

3.2.3.2 Universalism and syncretism in the Church

Kato battled with Mbiti, a leading proponent and well-respected African Christian theologian, about eschatology. According to Kato, the sure future hope of Christians was being presented as utopia by the philosophy and eschatological teachings and perspective of Mbiti (Kato 1975a:69-89). Mbiti's perspective was that Africans did not think of a distant future and made the biblical realities about the eschatology only symbolic and allegorical (Mbiti 1989; Johnson 1973; Kato 1975a:77-85). Basically, Mbiti's argument was that because, as he judged it, the Akamba people in Kenya

²³ Africanise Christianity: Kato meant the expression of biblical Christianity in familiar African forms in the African context. Africans needed to feel at home with Christianity.

lacked a concept of future time, they, and therefore Africans in general, could not grasp future eschatological concepts such as the resurrection and the judgement. Mbiti's conclusion then was that such NT eschatological concepts needed to be jettisoned to fit the Akamba concept of time. It seems Mbiti's hermeneutics and application of Scripture starts from where the African worldview was and sought to adjust biblical concepts to fit it.

However, Kato's hermeneutics is directly opposite – application of Scripture starts from the Bible and the African worldview must be adjusted to fit the Bible (Kato 1975a: 77; cf. Turaki 2020). He thought that the approach adopted by Mbiti which prioritised African traditional religious concepts was tantamount to syncretism and underlines a universalistic notion of salvation. Kato affirmed his dispensational stance and belief in the imminent personal and visible return or second coming of Jesus Christ, any time (Titus 2:13; Matt.16:27; 24:30; 25:31). Kato concluded that Mbiti's teachings on the eschatological doctrines, such as sacramental, regeneration, resurrection and mediatorial judgement were unbiblical and views that lead to universalism and pitfalls Bible-believing Christians would do well to avoid (1975a:85).

Kato's worries about the universalistic tendencies in the church in Africa were not unfounded. Mbiti's Department of Religion from East Africa's premier university, the Makerere University in Kampala, had such an important influence in the region. They influenced the thought leaders and decision makers of emerging independent African nations and thus, their theological influence would impact the church negatively, at least from Kato's perspective. Similarly, across the continent there was the influential Ibadan University in Nigeria and Fourah Bay College in Sierra Leone, in West Africa, where similar religious philosophies were advanced. These scholars were among the first generation of African theologians and religious philosophers and those following them looked up to them for mentorship. Their works were growing in influence in Africa and across the world. However, Kato (1985:29-30) writes:

Even some of the most outstanding theologians in Africa have not avoided universalistic tendencies. Professor John Mbiti holds that all men (sic) will be saved in the final analysis. He affirms, 'There is not a single soul, however debased or even unrepentant, which can successfully "flee" from the Spirit of God (Psalm 139:1-18). God's patient waiting for the soul's repentance must in the end be surely more potent than the soul's reluctance to repent and turn to him (2 Peter 3:9). The harmony of the heavenly worship would be impaired if, out of the one hundred in the sheepfold, there is one soul which continues to languish in Sheol or the "lake of fire.

The department of religion, under Professor Bolaji Idowu championed what Kato called 'A Theology of Peaceful Co-existence' and messages were carried in an influential journal of theology, called '*Orita*'—which is a Yoruba word, and literally means, 'where the ways meet'— an interaction or meeting of the three dominant faiths ('ways') on the continent of Africa, i.e. African Traditional Religion(s), Christianity and Islam. According to Kato (1975a:94): "It is in the contents of this journal the basic philosophy of syncretistic and universalistic approach to the study of religions is best displayed" and notes further that Idowu's theology was based on the philosophy of universalism (p. 96). Idowu was one of the earliest proponents of African Theology; calling African Christian theologians to produce theology that satisfies the soul and spiritual needs of Africans. Professor Bolaji Idowu objects to localising theology, according to Kato. He would also eschew syncretism (p. 30). However, Kato was worried about Idowu's high view of Traditional African religions. Idowu objected calling ATRs 'idolatry' but rather the ATR objects of worship, in essence were ministers of God (Kato 1985:30; cf. Idowu 1962). Kato (1985:30) queried: "But if pagan gods are not idols, then what are they? Idowu claims with the adherents that these gods are ministers of the Almighty God. To recognise the reality of these man-made gods is to reject the scriptural view of these 'dumb idols' (Isaiah 2:8; 40:18-20; 41:7; 1 Thessalonians 1:9; 1 Corinthians 8:4-6)". Kato (1985:30) further argues:

While it is true that the pagan is conscious of the existence of a Supreme Being through general revelation, his vision of the Supreme Being is distorted because of original sin. The image of God in man (sic), though not obliterated, is disfigured to the point that he is considered dead in 'trespasses and sins' (Ephesians 2:1), until he receives new life in Christ. His worship of creatures rather than the Creator can be described adequately only as idolatry. What Africa needs is the unadulterated Gospel of Jesus Christ who declares authoritatively and finally, 'I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No man cometh unto the Father but by me' (John 14:6).

At the core of Idowu's theologising was the belief in evolution of religions. He believed all religions lead to God and that God is revealed in each culture and religion, in fact, to each person. Idowu argues in favour of the use of idols, as in the Yoruba religion, with pantheons of gods, in the belief that this practice was inevitable until religion

evolves to the point where images are no longer required (Galadima 2001; cf. Idowu²⁴ 1962; 1973)

Galadima posits that the African culture with the traditional religions must be part of the source of information for African Theology. “There are as many sources of African Theology as there are theologians: (1) The Bible and Christian Heritage, (2) African Anthropology, (3) African Traditional Religion, (4) African Independent Churches, and (5) African Realities” (2001:109; cf. Niringe 1987:44-45). On the other hand, Kato’s concern was that African theology should be done in ways that protected Christianity from syncretism (Galadima 2001:108-09; cf. Shorter 1986:14-15). Kato raised concern to let the church know that these teachings were contrary to Christian core belief; that God has definitively been revealed in the Person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God (Kato 1975a:91-93:104; cf Galadima 2001).

Kato was critical about the diverse sources of theology and his perspective was that the various sources of theology had the tendency to promote the syncretistic and universalistic approach to study of religions. In particular, he believed the other African theologians were looking to ATR sources for doing theology and using the Bible to support their deductions to systematise the ATR religion itself and wed this with Christianity (Kato 1975a:54-55). Underlying assumptions by his opponents were that all religions have a monotheistic concept and the same God in every religion; a God that can be served and approached by pantheons of smaller gods. The goal of Idowu’s teaching, for example, and as promoted by the *Orita Journal*, was also seen as peaceful co-existence of religions, rather than the ‘proselytising’ approach. The implication was that evangelism, as tenet of the Christian religion, may have to be shelved (Kato 1975a:92-93). Kato, characteristically, highlighted the unbiblical and humanistic nature of these theological endeavours. Kato (1975a:92) writes: “With all due respect to non-Christian noble ideas of a Supreme Being, the thesis that they are monotheists in the Biblical sense cannot be sustained. The only monotheism the

²⁴ Major works of Bolaji Idowu: *Olodumere: God in Yoruba Belief*, Doctoral Dissertation (1962); *Towards an Indigenous Church* (1965) and *African Traditional Religion: A Definition* (1973). Idowu also wrote scores and contributed chapters to books.

Christian can recognise in this New Testament era is the kind described by the Apostle Paul (1Cor.8:4-6)".

In an interview with Yusufu Turaki (27 May 2019), he opined that many African scholars placed Christianity on the same level without priority, with ATR and other religions. This approach tends to root religion in culture, philosophy and worldview of the people. Thus, Christianity is also rooted in the same social factors of culture, philosophy and worldview of humans. However, Turaki acknowledged that Kato differed in his understanding of religion and believed that values that shaped formation of religion is rooted in human culture, philosophy or human worldview but Christianity was not produced by these sociological considerations. Kato (1975a:92) writes:

If it is the same God in all religions, it is only a matter of common logic that all religions should seek a peaceful coexistence rather than a "proselytising" approach. If there should be any desire for influence, it should be sought in the idea of "presence" rather than "proclamation". In the final analysis, evangelism in the Christian Church will have to be shelved away. Admittedly, no one has suggested this, but it is a necessary corollary of a peaceful coexistence approach.

The source of Christianity is the revelation of God as recorded in the Bible Kato saw this as a foundation for any biblical hermeneutics. Kato (197a:262) asserted:

Persecution may not be the area where the battle will be fiercest, the devil has many avenues and he knows where best to succeed. Christo-paganism appears to be the area of attack within the next generation. The battle has started. The unique claims of Christ are regarded as eccentricities. The relativity philosophy is seeking to make the Scriptures only one of many revelations rather than a special revelation. Christianity is not repudiated but is given the largest room in the camp of religions.

Those who argued for a more exalted place for ATRs in Church did so in the name of African cultural revolution and thought that to do otherwise was un-African. Kato argued that this was a misconception of the word culture. Culture he said, was people's way of life and covers every aspect of a society's life and their relationship with nature (Kato n.d.3:7). He argued that "since religion is the heart of culture, a change in religion necessitates a readjustment in culture. Culture is examined considering Scripture and state what aspects are acceptable or not (p. 9-10). How Kato dealt with the two religions at a personal level is instructive.

3.2.3.3 *Conception of sin and salvation*

A fundamental issue at the core of Kato's contestation was the essential question of conception of sin, human need for salvation and the exclusive means of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ. "To be saved in the Judeo-Christian sense presupposes the lost condition from which salvation or deliverance is needed. What one is saved from determines the nature of salvation" (Kato 1975a:41). So, people's conception of sin is critical for their view of salvation. For some people, sin is conceived from a humanistic or religious perspective and this may be limited to social ills, thus the wrong view of salvation (Kato 1974a:42). If an anti-social act is all there is to sin, salvation can be attained by satisfying social demands.

If sin is only societal, the so-called social gospel must be the right solution. Therefore, the wrong conception of sin will result in the wrong view and remedy for salvation. Describing his understanding of the religion of his ethnic Jaba people and as typical of ATR religions Kato (1975a:42-43) writes:

To be saved in Jaba language is to be accepted. To be accepted is first of all in the community of the living, and then in the city of the dead. The way for the offender to be accepted by his fellow citizens is to pay the fine or take the punishment prescribed for him (sic). It may come in the form of exclusion from the tribal gathering or payment of so many goats and so much wine. Blood sacrifice is used in different occasions. It is usually for deliverance from the power of the evil spirits...For acceptance among the dead ancestors, the relatives of the deceased provide a feast three months after the person has died. Every year some food is placed on his tomb to assure the dead that he is remembered in this life.

Although Mbiti does not concede to the possibility of salvation in ATR, he argues for the salvation of all people—universalism, based on philosophical and allegorical interpretations of a transcendent God, the image of God in humans and God's kindness. He also believed the followers of ATR do offer authentic worship to the same God of Christianity (Kato 1975a:56; cf. Mbiti 1970). Ngong (2007:108-09) applauds Kato in his opposition to African Christian Theology espoused by his opponents and insistence that a stress on material well-being does not represent a Christian understanding of salvation. Ngong further states that in the salvific discourse in African Christianity, there is more emphasis on the material well-being than on God; a perpetration of the vision of African traditional religious culture and African Christian Theology (2007:107).

However, Ngong (2007:129) disagrees with Kato's biblical understanding of salvation that deals primarily with eternal salvation, issues of heaven and hell and disregards material realities; ignoring the very biblical teaching Kato placed so much emphasis. According to Ngong, Kato went to extreme in his defence of what he saw as the spiritual character of the biblical view of salvation, he draws a distinct line between the spiritual and the secular, thus undermining the importance of the material realm (p. 109). To limit salvation to the hereafter and undermine the importance of the present life was a misconception (Ngong 2007:122). This, Ngong said; "may actually serve to confirm the fears of those African theologians who claim that stressing the importance of the hereafter in salvific discourse inevitably leads to the undermining of the here and now" (p. 122). By Kato's own admission, social action and humanitarian considerations were deemed to be secondary to the mission of the Church. He saw the mission schools, hospitals, clinics that have run over the years by evangelicals as making contribution to humanity (Kato 1974a:272). According to Kato (1974a:272): "Christ puts the soul's salvation in reference to future life above earthly existence (Mark 8:36; Luke 12:5). The serving of tables must be given second place" (1974a:273). This could well be one of Kato's own theological pitfalls. In any case, the nature and practice of wholistic mission is still work in progress in the contemporary church. The Church needs to fly on both wings for effective soaring.

It is important to observe that Kato's rise to evangelical leadership predated the Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization in 1974, an important milestone and turning point in evangelical thought, not only in Africa but also the global Church ((van der Walt 2011:924; Foday-Khabenje 2018). Predating Lausanne, evangelicals were known for dualism; the sharp distinction made between the sacred and secular, the physical and the spiritual dichotomy and that the Church's priority and focus was what was spiritual. This started to change somewhat, after Lausanne, when the Covenant affirmed the integral nature of the gospel and mission of the Church as taught by Scripture. The earlier position of dualism is deemed to have come from cultural influences of Enlightenment philosophy, a non-biblical worldview that was prevalent in the Western world. However, van der Walt (2011:946) observed that Lausanne statement only succeeded in adopting 'the and-and' viewpoint instead of the earlier 'either-or' viewpoint. Van der Walt opined that the dualistic thinking was still inherent in the way evangelicals viewed reality and dualism itself was not rejected. "As long as

these worldview glasses are not replaced by a truly holistic, integral, biblical worldview, their (evangelical) theology will not change” (2011:946). However, it is to Kato’s credit that his social interactions with people, the high and low, were commendable. His leadership in the church and relief and material interventions, during the time of the civil war, speak for him, in terms of integral mission. What was clear is that Kato showed concern for social action, but the primary belief was to present Christ to everyone as the way to transform people and means for revolutionising the society.

Issues of social concern and social action were another area where some scholars opine that Kato’s reading of the Bible was problematic. In one of his lectures and discussions with students, Kato was asked to respond to the question whether it was right for Christians to drink beer or wine. He responded: “Every Christian is a priest and as such must refrain from drinking. No drunkard will enter the kingdom of God. The Holy Spirit is the one who leads us to abstain. Proverbs 20:1 says: "Wine is a mocker." We are God's temple and so must be holy.” (Kato 1969:5). Sometimes, Kato’s hermeneutics tended towards literalism and the fringes of pietism or fundamentalism, as in this case. While many evangelicals in Africa tend to be teetotalers, a categorical view that suggests a condemnation of drinking beer or wine is not necessarily a biblical position. Kato gives credence to the misapprehensions of his critics about his attitude to social action and biblical teaching on the subject when he posits:

Social concerns have their place in the Christian mandate. But the serving of tables must be given second place (Acts 6:2, 4). Affluence of the Western World is the best demonstration that for Christians to devote their time to social concerns at the expense of seeking to win souls for eternity amounts to fattening a calf for slaughter (1974a:273).

Many would argue that Christians do not necessarily have to devote time to social concerns at the expense of winning souls or vice versa but rather, the mission of the church is integral or holistic. The conception of mission of the church is not either/or but both. This can equally be supported by biblical references, i.e. Luke 4:18, 10:25-37; Matt. 25:31-46; Mark 12:29-31; Micah 6:8, among others.

3.2.3.4 Ancestor veneration and worship

Besides ancestor veneration, the destiny of those who died without the gospel and even before the missionaries came, also became a bone of contention in the

discourses. The positions of Kato's theological proponents were varied. Some believed their ancestors were in heaven because they were good people and religious. Kato rejects the veneration of ATR and argues; this is not due to lack of patriotism. "It is only to safeguard the unique gospel of Christ, which alone provides the way of salvation" (Kato 1975a:177). African culture is not all bad, but like all cultures, it is tainted with sin and needs to be redeemed.

Kato (1975a:179-80) cites the following ancestor salvation proponents and the reasons they advance for the salvation of those who died without Christ. Harry Sawyerr (1968; 1970; 1996) for example, believed that the prayers of African Christians may lead to the salvation of non-believing dead relatives, through the providence of God. He also counted on the omnipotence of God for salvation for all. In an interview with Aloysius Lugira (1973; cf. Kato 1975a:179), Lugira believed the religiosity and goodness of the ancestors on their own was enough reason to avoid hell. J. N. D. Anderson (1970:101-02) advanced that God's grace and mercy extended to the ancestors (Kato 1974a:274-76). John Mbiti (1971:148-49) calls for *Sanctorum Communio* in the sense of direct communication between the living and the departed saints. This involved the practice of offering sacrifices to dead relatives or ancestors, a form of ancestor veneration or worship.

However, Mbiti argues that these did not constitute worship but rather these acts symbolised "fellowship, a recognition that the departed are still members of their human families, and tokens of respect and remembrance for the living-dead" (Mbiti 1989:59; cf. Mosothoane 1973:86-95). Mosothoane states: "With the fellowship retained and nourished the ancestors, according to African beliefs, both continue their protective, providential and intermediary concern for the living and welcome the ministrations of the latter" (1973:93). Building on Mbiti's theology of ancestor veneration, Mosothoane (1973:93) states:

For Africans, as we have seen, this spanning of the chasm of death is expressed in the belief in ancestors. And in the Lord's Supper there is communion not only between believer and the Risen Lord, not only between believer and believer, but also an "in Christ" communion between living and departed members of the Christian fellowship. Instead of discouraging the idea of ancestors, it seems to us, the church should urge African Christians to communicate with their beloved ones who have departed from this life; and to do this within the context of the Christian Eucharist in particular.

Elaborating further on the cultic act of the ancestor veneration practice, Mosothoane (p. 94) states: “When a family makes sacrifice and offerings in honour of, and as a symbol of, their fellowship with their departed ones, members of the congregation ought to be invited to the feast and, where possible, the clergyman be invited to bless the animal etc. to be offered. The entire cult could be ‘baptized’ into the service of the Gospel, and remains of the dread of ancestors be removed”. Mosothoane backs his argument with the following Scripture references: Rom. 14:7f; 8:31-39; Heb. 12:1; 1 Thess. 5:10. Basically, the argument was that the implications of the death of Jesus Christ were enough to connect believers in Christ, dead or alive—the communion of saints—that these continue to be in fellowship and communication with the dead. With the ancestors who were not in Christ, Mosothoane (1973:94) states:

No ready-made solution is found in the New Testament, though a few texts may point the direction. I Pet. 3:18ff. seems to interpret the death and burial of Christ as making faith and salvation available to the unbelieving and disobedient dead, specifically those of Gen. 6—8. We cannot but ask, however, whether the application of this text does not go beyond the Genesis passage, and we strongly suggest that it does.

'Necromancy' is a term which means, conversing or consulting with the dead. In ATR belief, the dead people are still very much a part of this life. Some argue that the Catholic churches pray through deceased 'saints'. “But this is wrong for Christians to do” (Kato 1975b:25; cf. Isa. 8:19). Kato (1975b:25) observed:

I know that in 1 Samuel 28:7-25 we have the account of Saul consulting a witch doctor of Endor. It is a difficult passage, but let us realize that Saul was a backslider, a miserable and confused person, and when Saul inquired of the Lord, the Lord did not answer him (1 Samuel 28:6). Since the Lord did not answer Saul, he turned to Satanic sources. The end result was God's judgment by death for Saul and his sons, and defeat for Israel.

Kato rejects salvation for these ancestors on the grounds advanced by these theologians. He was emphatic in his conclusion about those who died before the advent or the gospel or for all who died without hearing the gospel and wrote: “The biblical answer to the question concerning those who died before hearing the gospel is to be that they go to hell. No one deserves to be saved in any case” (1974a:276-77). Kato (1975a:180) states: “There is no scriptural basis either for second chance repentance or for direct communication with the deceased”. According to Kato (1975a:180-81):

The more scriptural basis would rather be that if God had been dealing with any person apart from the gospel witness, He would provide the way for that would-be Christian to hear the gospel and accept it to be born again. The case of Cornelius is the precedent

(Acts 10:35) ...the members of the Adamic race are all stillborn (Rom. 5:12). Not one of them deserves to live. But the undeserving favour of God has made salvation possible through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ...Christ is universally available to all everywhere at any time. This is how far Biblical universalism goes. But its effectiveness applies only to those who receive the offer.

Kato argued that people are not saved on humane basis alone, outside what the scripture reveals and writes:

For the rest of the heathen who died before the advent of Christian evangelism, it is humanely wished that they found their place in eternal bliss. But the word of God gives no warrant for such view. Humanity does not live in neutrality. Since the original fall, the total race of Adam has been condemned to death (Rom. 3:23; 6:23). Salvation in the Biblical sense is the passing out of this death dungeon (John 5:24) into the dimension of life (Kato 1975a:180).

He concluded that there is no clear optimism for those who died without Christ and that what is certain is hell for them. Nevertheless, some of Kato's hearers may view his response as on this subject unsatisfactory. Kato's objection to his opponents may be based more on their ATR views espoused, rather than what the Bible says.

The suggestion about animal sacrifices and indeed to incorporate this in Christian worship was another characteristic of some ATR African theology. Kato demystifies the practice and writes: "Blood sacrifice is used at different occasions. It is usually for deliverance from the power of the evil spirits" (1975a:43). However, there is no meritorious benefit for use of blood of the animal and concluded that this should only make Christians "appreciate the assurance of rest and finality found in the Lamb of God slain before the foundation of the world (Matt. 11:28; Heb. 9:26; John 1:29)" (p. 43).

3.2.3.5 Liberal Ecumenism

Another issue that Kato engaged in his hermeneutics was liberal ecumenism in the church in Africa. According to Kato (1985:44-46), there were five leading issues in ecumenical theology the church needed to contend with: (1) The Bible becoming relative rather than normative. Experiences and other sources were becoming just as important as the Bible. (2) Salvation is interpreted in terms of political, economic and social freedom (cf. WCC 1974a:31). (3) The kingdom of God means a search for common humanity, irrespective of religion. "The old liberal concept of anonymous Christianity is now being revived in the African ecumenical movement. It is held that

even non-Christians are already Christians without realising it. The task of Christian missions is simply to make non-Christians aware of their salvation” (p 44). (4) Dialogue rather than declaration is the approach to evangelism. To declare the gospel to people of other religions is seen as arrogance. However, many evangelicals see dialogue as an opportunity for proclamation of the gospel. (5) A moratorium on missions is part of the liberation process. There is a call for cessation of mission activities flowing from the West to the third world.

Kato’s conclusion on these theological aspirations was: “Self-assertion is human, and anthropocentric theology, such as is promoted in ecumenism, fits this innate desire. One may expect the influence of ecumenical theology therefore, to spread in Africa, since it makes human experience the basic source of theologising” (p. 45). Kato (1985:45-46) remarkably admonished: “Evangelicals, for their part, must learn to move beyond the divinely revealed source to the human dimension where the action is. Holding the Bible as their basic source for Christian theology, they must discover how best to relate to the human situation in all areas, including the socio-politico-economic arena”.

Contrary to the criticism of opponents that Kato’s biblicism had an exclusive focus on the soul and spirit. It is apparent that Kato’s emphasis was always on the place and authority of the Bible in every aspect of Christian endeavour or theology. With many Africans’ post-independence leaning towards social communalism and strong call for unity in Scripture (John 17:21), one wonders where Kato stood on this matter?

Kato devoted three chapters of *Theological Pitfalls in Africa* on this subject. To his credit, he affirms the need and importance of ecumenism, in the non-technical sense and may include the whole inhabited world (Luke 2:1; 4:5; 21:26; Rom. 10:18). He traces the technical sense of the word ‘ecumenical’ to the ancient Church councils, which were also known as Ecumenical Councils (Kato 1975a:129). However, the objective of the ecumenical councils was for doctrinal purity, which helped to establish classical Christian doctrines (Kato 1975a:129). Nonetheless, Kato was concerned that modern ecumenical councils, such as World Council of Churches (WCC), was a drive for Christian unity at any cost and plays down the issue of doctrine. The assumption was doctrine divides but service unites. Therefore, the establishment of AACC, like

the WCC, with “minimal doctrinal basis for membership” was a worrying development; it provided room for easy accommodation of the developing theologies on the continent (p. 138-39). The AACC’s link with WCC became the channel for training of African Christians in liberal schools abroad, schools that rejected the doctrine of the infallibility of the Bible, developing what Kato calls liberal ecumenism, by fuelled universalism and syncretism (p. 139).

Kato was opposed to liberal ecumenism but affirmed the spiritual and visible unity of the church, in accordance to the prayer of Jesus Christ (John 17:21). However, the unity should be for those committed to Christ and his Word. The objective should not be abolishing the different denominations, it is unity in diversity. He encouraged membership in the National Evangelical Fellowships and that constitute the Association of Evangelicals in Africa. “Such fellowship seeks to unite Christians in each country in fellowship and service, and then also unites all Bible-believing Christians in Africa. This kind of unity among those who truly know the Lord and are seeking to serve Him is a Biblical unity (p. 170). The prevailing universalism then in the homeland churches of the missionaries in Africa and the push by the United Nations Organisation to unite people of all faiths, ethnicities, and political ideologies and that the same goals were being pursued by the African Union; anything for universal unity, was a concern (Kato 195a:13). Any talk about the biblical doctrine that condemns some people to hell because of sin, without Christ, tended to be unacceptable. Therefore, universalistic tendencies were encouraged in the church and as in modern day pluralism and relativism (Kato 1974a:3).

It is important to note that Kato’s confrontations with other theologians were regarding ATRs co-existing with Christianity in Africa. Kato refers to this as syncretism or ‘Christo-paganism’; “when church people made Scripture to be only one of the many revelations rather than the special revelation and gave Christianity the largest room in the one house of religions” (Kato 1974:13; 262). He said: “Dumping together fundamental biblical principles with the western culture and repudiating both, is an error” (Kato 1975a:175). This was Kato’s response to his opponents regarding the oft repeated derogatory charge that Kato was acting as a “Western stooge”, as his critique of ATR coincided with a similar critique by some Western missionaries. He also refutes assigning Christianity to be a preserve of the West and underscored the contribution

of Africans to first century Christianity and that Christianity has a home in Africa (175-76).

3.2.3.6 Continuity and discontinuity controversy

In the late 1950-1980s, considered to be post missionary era, African theologians wrestled with a localised theological construct—African Theology. This was in two parts; liberation theology motivated by the South African socio-political situation and apartheid and theology of integration. The latter sought to explore the indigenous cultures of African peoples, with particular focus on pre-Christian and pre-Islamic religious traditions. According to Bediako (1994:14): “the broad aim has been to achieve some integration between the African pre-Christian religious experience and African Christian commitment, in ways that would ensure the integrity of African Christian identity and selfhood”. However, the underlying assumptions, Bediako posits, was “the foreignness of Christianity and minimalist view of the newness of the Christian faith in relation to ATR, if the Christian gospel brought little that was essentially new to Africa in religious terms” (Bediako 1994:16; cf Mokhoathi 2017). In other words, the ATR beliefs had some knowledge about God, to be able to build on with the coming of Christianity and therefore, there was no need to discard those beliefs. In fact, according to this line of thought, the Christian faith was continuous with the newfound faith in Christianity.

Notwithstanding Kato’s deep involvement with idol worship as a youth, he saw no such positive assessment value to continue with ATR religion. On the other hand, there was no suggestion or evidence that Kato sought any special deliverance from the influence of the traditional religion, as is the tendency in some of the newer evangelical and Pentecostal churches in Africa. He demonstrated assurance of liberation from his father’s religion and radical commitment to his new faith in Christianity. His critics refer to this as ‘radical discontinuity’ and charge him with impertinence and lack of respect for African culture. Bediako (1994:16) writes: “Basing himself on a radical biblicism, Kato stressed the distinctiveness of the experience of the Christian gospel to such an extent that he rejected the positive evaluation of any pre-Christian religious tradition as a distraction from the necessary emphasis on bible truth”. That Kato was enculturated in ATR beliefs cannot be contested. His religious worldview Change to biblicism is an important consideration for Christian reflection in the African church.

Like his initiation into the fetish priesthood, Kato's inception into the Church is a critical step for Christian understanding and Biblical worldview. Unlike many of the disputants, Kato articulates a clear testimony of his conversion to Christianity. Kato alludes to drawing inspiration from Scripture for his radical worldview change and writes (Kato 1975a:174): "It is often forgotten that the twentieth century convert is not the first Christian to burn up the bridges linking him with his past life of idol worship. The first converts in Ephesus went to the point of literally burning their books of magic arts for the sake of Christ, thus breaking with their culture (Acts 19:23-41)". He writes: "where lies the unique claim of Christ which is supposed to supersede even kin relationships (Matt. 11:37-38). Should national pride or cultural heritage come before Christ?" (1974a:265-66). He insisted that culture has to be baptised by Christianity and not the other way around.

On the question of continuity of pre-Christian faith with Christianity, Kato asserts:

The knowledge of God through nature and conscience is evidenced by the fact that man (sic) has shown interest in religion per se. But his worship has only proved that man has turned to the worship of creation rather than the Creator. While it may be rightly claimed that the new revelation in Christ has not been discontinuous in the sense of God's general revelation, it must be added unequivocally that it is also discontinuous (1975a:155).

To a certain extent, Kato affirmed continuity because the 'God image' in humans has not been completely obliterated by sin. The saved sinner's life was continuous to some aspects of life that abide, because of the image of God in humans. The witness of our relationship with God and yearning for God (God shaped vacuum) could be basis for continuity when God finds us in Christ. Every person or human community or culture may and ought to manifest Godlikeness; however, all like sheep have gone astray and grope in darkness. Kato (p. 75) states: "To say that Africans, or anyone else, still have the vestiges of *Imago Dei*, by virtue of which they are still aware of the existence of the Supreme Being, is one thing. But to systematise the concepts and fill them up with quality of worship of God "in truth and in spirit" is foreign to Christianity". Therefore, the doctrine of 'Continuity' as espoused by the African Theology proponents, was rejected. The only way back to God is by crossing the bridge of the Daystar, the Cross of Jesus Christ. This discontinues the fruitless groping and ushered into a new life; as if born again; borne by the spirit. The hunger for God cannot be filled by human attempt to find God, such as in ATR or any other religion. Some African theologians have

embarked upon the task of formulating a theology for Africa. That Africans have a unique contribution to make to theological debates is undeniable. But the brand of theology being proposed includes features such as the use of sources other than the Scripture, giving these other sources equal standing with the Bible, the possibility of salvation in ATRs and a strong emphasis on things African for their own sake (Kato 1973a:11).

Kato's rejection of continuity was perceived to be synchronous with Western missionary attitudes and made others question the authenticity of Kato's African Christian identity and nationalism. This raised significant questions about his self-understanding as an African. Was he really reasoning like a true African? Did he understand what he was defending or had he been indoctrinated to magnify the voice of the Western missionary? Some scholars believed he was a mouthpiece for Western theologians or missionaries that disdained African culture and religion (Oduyoye 1986:62; Bediako 1992:386-425; Mbiti 1971). Thus, they questioned his identity as African and that he was a caricature of Western missionaries who held the same derogatory views about ATRs. The next section will explore Kato's response on the question of African Christian identity.

3.3 Kato's Contribution to African Christian identity

Kato's hermeneutics in the theological debates, explored in the previous sub-section offer some insight about selfunderstanding and Christianity identity. The quest for African personality or identity was at the heart of theological debates and generally occupied the thinking of Africans in general. The general perception about the impact of slavery and colonialism in Africa is that it resulted in loss of African identity and human dignity. The perception was that some western missionaries aided or at least abetted in these colonial activities and contributed to the dilution of African culture and traditional religions, leading to loss and search for identity of the African. Thus, the importance of the African Christian identity in African theological discourse and to which Kato made some contribution.. Kato (1985:52): argues: "The Bible addresses itself to the black man(sic) in his plight. It has done so in pointing out both the dignity and depravity of all men. It is the responsibility of Christian theologians to bring these facts to the knowledge of the public. According to the Bible, believers, under whatever human condition, are already liberated (Gal. 5:1)".

According to Lowery (2017:46): "Identity is primary among five key themes in African theology. Identity essentially functions synonymously with self-understanding, or self-concept...specifically an identity that is inculturated, liberating, full of life and shaped by community". The theological discourse on self-identity focused on social or communal identities—African and Christian communal identities. The first modern African theologians who contributed significantly to the African Christian identity debates were Mualgo gwa Cikala Musharhamina (1924-2012), a Roman Catholic priest from DRC and Kwame Bediako (1945-2008), a Ghanaian Presbyterian, among others. These advocated for a Christian message and community taking an indigenous expression. The basis for their theology was rooted in the character of God and the Incarnation and argued that Christian identity must be both universal and inculturated (Lowery 2017:50).

People's worldview and their assumptions about themselves and their realities are at the heart of their biblical interpretation and theology. Self-identity or Christian identity is a factor of a person's worldview or biblical worldview. Western ethnographers and anthropologists were the earlier sources of information and discussion about African beliefs and spirituality before late 1940s and early 1950s when indigenous Africans entered the field (Conteh 2014:3). The way Africa was portrayed tended to be demeaning, Western missionaries tended to have no understanding and respect for Africa's culture and value systems and thus Africa's dignity and unique identity was in oblivion. As a people, Africans themselves believed what other people said about them.

According to Kuwana (2018:3; 2013:22) a person's self-identity is linked to three factors, namely, personal experiences, social comparisons and internalisation of other's judgement. The bad experiences of African people in the hands of others who enslaved, colonised and portrayed them, caused Africans to have poor self-image. When Africans compared themselves with other races and peoples, they tended to believe they were inferior to others and internalised the poor judgement of other people about them to be true. This stereotyping and low profiling of Africans continues to be exacerbated by the media as the world is fed mostly with bad news from Africa. This results in negative internal judgement of Africans and loss of dignity and self-identity.

The identity question also evokes the sequential slavery and colonisation of Africans by Arabs, Europeans, Asians and Americans - a people long subjected to the intellectual guidance and direction of others. Most people recognise the fact that due to colonialism Africa lost a lot of natural resources but what is often not quite understood is that the biggest resource that Africa lost was its dignity and self-worth (Kuwana 2018:2). Colonialism brought with it the enforcement of Western culture, medium of education was the language of the colonial master, way of dressing and value system of the European masters was enforced as the acceptable way of life. There was no regard for African ways and values and their value system was demeaned and relegated.

In the struggle for independence, selfhood and cultural revival were critical elements of the burgeoning Pan-Africanists. Africa was characterised by an overwhelming commitment to self-direction and a revival of interest in Africa's heritage. Bowers (2008:3) observes the need to seek and explicate an African identity and authenticity against the domineering influence of Europe. Along with this came the determination to critique and renounce the West and affirm Africa's traditional life and assert African distinctive dignity and worth. This commitment to self-identity and resistance to its unwelcome political, economic, and cultural embrace, became the fundamental force for African self-reflection for much of the second half of the twentieth century (Bowers 2008:5; 2000:4).

It would appear however that the quest for authentic African identity, by African intelligentsia, paradoxically resulted in exacerbating the identity crisis. Assimilation of Western culture through education and way of life, informed much of their reasoning and yet politically, they wanted to distance themselves from anything Western and created a portrait of an 'African' that was truly not a true African. A vivid example about the educated Pan-Africanists, with the split personality or identity is Robert Mugabe (1924-2019), former President of Zimbabwe and renowned Pan-Africanist and known for his opposition to the West. A description of Mugabe by his biographer, David Blair (2002:25-26) states:

Mugabe took great care with his appearance, typically wearing a three-piece suit, and insisted that members of his cabinet dressed in a similar Anglophile fashion...Mugabe spoke English fluently with adopted English accent when pronouncing certain words. He was also a fan of the English game of cricket, stating that 'cricket civilises people and

creates good gentlemen...this cultivation of British traits suggested that Mugabe respected and perhaps admired Britain while at the same time resenting and loathing the country.

Anecdotally, some will say, these Western or European educated Africans were more European than the Europeans themselves (Lowery 2017:60). Kato found the ascriptions and value placed on ATR as basis for 'continuity' problematic. Ironically, the proponents of African Theology, who rejected Western teachings and espoused African traditional views for shaping their understanding of Christianity were themselves shaped and mentored in Western Schools.

The theme of a separate African identity has been a major intellectual engagement in African literature, African art, history, sociology, political science, economics, philosophy, jurisprudence, educational theory and theology. In each of these fields of study, much has been written about African self-identity and had become the core integrating motif of the African nationalist ideology, which enabled the achievement of independence, for much of the continent in the late 1950s and early 1960s (Bowers 2008:6; Crafford 1993:163-175; Viriri and Mungwini 2010:27-42; Wright 2002).

When African intellectuals ask questions about what it means to be African, African Theology sets itself to respond to the question about what it means to be an African Christian. And when the African intellectual turns to African traditional cultural heritage to explain its distinctiveness, African Theology proposed to look to Africa's traditional religious heritage for framing its own distinctive identity (Bowers 2008:6; Ngong 2007:114). For African theologians like, Idowu, Mbiti, Mugambi and Bediako, answering these questions has been taken to be the defining task of African Theology (Bowers 2008:6). The core tenet of these African theologians was that traditional African belief system was viable enough to evolve Christianity that was uniquely African (Mbiti 1977:30). Mbiti and others argued that African Christian converts need not set aside their cultural or traditional beliefs. Their newfound Christian belief system was continuous with their traditional beliefs. According to many of these scholars, conversion to Christianity did not necessarily involve discontinuity with the pre-Christian past, and they rejected the notion of discontinuity. The desire for African theologians was the quest for an identity that reflects on their spiritual and religious heritage. Underneath this quest is the impact on African culture and social structures of colonialism and the mission movement.

Kato saw the quest for the restoration of the African identity differently. In the first place, he questioned the reality of a single African persona. Commenting on the AACC Declaration in Kinshasa in 1971 about “the renaissance of African Personality”, as part of the search for identity and authenticity, Kato writes:

One gains the impression that African peoples enjoyed homogeneity and possessed single ethos in terms of African Personality in recent past. Now this loss is being recovered in ecumenism, according to the declaration. But apart from the solidarity of the human race, is there any evidence, written or oral, that all 1,000 peoples or tribes of Africa were one united group of people? (1975a:156)

According to Kato (1975a:21): “The Scriptures know of only two groups of people, the people of God and the people of the world (Luke 12:30)”. He repudiated a return to ATR and proposed “a third race”, consistent with his biblical understanding. He believed he was a citizen of heaven. By this he did not denounce his earthly citizenship and in fact advocated for a faithful heavenly citizenship that Christ will be proud of and a loyal earthly citizen that the national authority will rejoice for (Kato n.d.2).

Those who have given their life to Christ should have no room for any other. He banishes those things humans pursue most from the centre in our lives (Cockerill 2014:107). The nature of Christian conversion is a call out of pre-Christian culture or belief into a new life - born anew. Abraham’s call, paradigmatic of all Christian calling, was a call out of the world of the Chaldeans and Haran, respectively (Gen. 11:31; 12:1). It was a call to leave native land, relatives and go to the unknown, at God’s instruction.

The perceived goal of rejecting anything European including the Christian missionary gospel message, according to Kato, was a case of throwing out the baby with the bath water (Kato 1975a:175). Kato may appear to have admitted his assimilation but of a different kind as an African, a Christian African. He recognized an authentic life-changing message the Western missionaries represented but was not unmindful about excesses of some missionaries (Kato 1975a:175).

The charge against these theologians themselves is that they were in fact, espousing Western philosophical views and approaches to doing theology (Turaki 2020; Bediako 1982: xi-xii). If indeed the missionaries failed to engage ATR or at least tried to understand it from African perspective, the same cannot be said of Kato. He was

sufficiently immersed in ATR like no other person among the disputants. Kato was initiated as fetish priest few weeks after birth till he attained rite of passage to manhood before his encounter with Christianity or missionary religion. His rejection of certain cultural aspects could well be because of his personal experience and understanding of the ATR and cultural belief system, which is worth exploring. Thus, the subject of Kato's African Christian self-identity is at the core of his theology and sets him apart from his opponents. It is important to explore Kato's Christian self-identity as a key to understanding his hermeneutics and ministry, especially in evangelical Christian theological education in Africa.

Kwame Bediako, was one of the leading scholars who had done extensive work on the subject of African Christian identity (Bediako 1992; Lowery 2017:58). Bediako (1992:386-425) devoted a whole chapter, critically appraising Kato's view on the identity problem of the modern African Christian, which was at variance to other writers. Kato, he said, "embodied the very antithesis of the basic positions enunciated by the African theologians. Virtually everything he (Kato) wrote was intended as a reaction to, and a rebuttal of, much that went to constitute the "African theology" of the last two decades. For this, if for no other reason, Byang Kato's work compels attention" (Bediako 1992:386).

Kato and Bediako were in the same room at ICOWE 74, to discuss Kato's two papers presented at the Inaugural Lausanne Congress on the subject "The Gospel, Cultural Contextualisation and Religious Syncretism (1974:n.p.). Kato had outlined the theological challenge of syncretism and contextualisation, thus bringing the subject of contextualisation to the fore of evangelical theological discourse. According to Stephen Knapp, the recorder of the group discussion; Bediako's first reaction, among other comments, was: "What is the relationship between syncretism, exegesis, and hermeneutics (biblical and theological reflection)? I get the impression that the Congress is emphasizing giving of culture back to the Third World. What are the principles of biblical exegesis in relation to culture and contextualization?" (Knapp 1974:n. p.). In response to comments and questions (including Bediako's) about his paper, Kato said:

In some circles, this concept (contextualisation) questions the content of the Gospel itself. My understanding is that we should not throw away the word, but just be sure the meaning

is good. I would define contextualisation as "expressing the same unchanging Gospel within the context from which the people come." The revelational content is the same (propositional revelation) but communicated so that people will get the message. I would preserve syncretism as undesirable. Contextualisation does go beyond form. It includes, ideas, etc. (Knapp 1974:n. p.; cf. Kato 1974g:n. p.).

This must have been a particularly important interaction between the two theological figures in the African church as it would be clear in their contributions and ongoing debates about the relationship between Christian faith and African culture.

In terms of self-identity, Turaki opines that Africans define themselves by their ethnicity, affiliation, religion culture or geography. People cannot claim their ancestry, especially land, if they came from another geographical area and states:

Ancestral land is the political geography of traditional Africans. Each ethnic group in Africa has an ancestral land. Associated with this geography are the political ownership by each ethnic nationality, of its land and its right to control the land and rule itself within it, through its traditional chieftains. Thus, the rights to ancestral land are the rights of self-rule and self-identity (Turaki 2010:169).

Hence, Kato himself came from a rich and well-established African ancestry. He hailed from the Ham or Jaba ethnic group with one of the earliest and rich African cultural heritage - the Nok culture of early Iron-age civilisation (Kato 1975a:28). The Jaba people with their Nok ancestry, have lived in the archaeological Nok area for at least two thousand years. Kato prides himself with first-hand knowledge and greater understanding of the religion of Jaba people having been born and brought up in it (Kato 1975a:27). Kato's family homestead is located on 62 Mallam Yaki Street in the Sab-Suro area in Kwoi, where the widow lived in her own house with other family members in the homestead. Reverend Adamu Kato, a retired clergyman of the ECWA Church and younger brother of Byang, is currently the head of the Kato family and has his own house on the same homestead.

In terms of personal identity, before the technology for personal identification number (PIN) or the *huduma namba* (identifier issued to Kenyans from a single data base for all personal information), Kato bore his identity on his temple the Jabal tribal marks. According to Rev Adamu Kato, one could tell the gender, ethnic identity and the type of ritual for inserting the tribal marks, by special persons known as *wanzami*. The *wanzami* was a specialist, trained to do the incision, shaving and circumcision rituals. They used special knives to do the cutting and applied charcoal to stop the oozing of blood and herbs to heal the wound. The ritual involved incantations to the gods.

Byang Kato's marriage to a Jaba princess, Juma Rahima Gandu (aka Jummai), daughter of His Highness Mal Gandu Maude, the Kpop Ham or King of the Jaba people²⁵, further asserted Kato's traditional African nobility, heritage and social standing in the land of his birth. Four decades after his death, Kato is still remembered by many people, among the Jaba ethnic group in Kwoi, as one of their most illustrious sons. The researcher met and interviewed several people in Kwoi, contemporaries of Kato and some younger. Among the people interviewed was the current King or Chief of the Jaba people; the Kpop Ham, His Royal Highness, Dr. Danladi Gyet Maude (OON), JP. The Chief revealed he was classmate with Kato in primary school and referred to him as his brother and that Kato was held in high esteem, as the top student in class. Kato's spouse, would have been the one on the kingship stool (the throne), ahead of the current Kpop Ham but for the fact that she was a woman and had to defer to the male kin, next in line as tradition demanded.

Another respondent was an elderly man²⁶ in Kwoi, who claimed was Kato's mate in the bush when they did the traditional initiation for rite of passage together. in the same year. Now in his eighties, he praised Kato for his friendship and recalls how Kato influenced his life. It was intuitive when the respondent said: "we parted ways when Kato went to school and rose up to be a world leader but when he came back to the village, and he often did, we spent time together and he taught me many things. He taught me to read the Bible in Hausa and made me to be a good leader in church and a good farmer too". Both Kato and his friend went to the ECWA Church in Kwoi, where the later currently serves as an elder and sings in the choir.

Some people who never met Kato, remember him by one of the most notable events in the community, which they continue to recall, to this day. The news of Kato's death by drowning in a foreign land, Kenya, in East Africa, took the community by storm. The people of Kwoi were overwhelmed and awed when in a single day, they witnessed aeroplanes flying in and taking off from the small airstrip they had in the community,

²⁵ Biography of Mrs Jummai Kato, recorded in her funeral programme booklet, 25 May 2019.

²⁶ Interaction with this respondent was through an interpreter and could not explore further how Kato's influence made him to become a better farmer and better leader.

on the day of Kato's funeral. Never again have they seen the air strip so busy. My guide, remembers this day, as the day he first saw Kato's daughter who eventually became his wife. Kato's grave is the first and one of five prominent people buried in the First ECWA Church grounds at the centre of Kwoi. The town authorities in 2010 named a street after Kato; Byang Kato Road. There is also now in Kwoi, the Kato International Training Academy, founded by Kato's family and led by his surviving son, Paul. This is both a secondary school and football academy. Therefore, in terms of ancestral land, political geography, ethnicity and nationality, Kato was a true African of noble Jaba ethnicity, born and raised in the culture of his people and of Nigerian nationality.

Although Kato's African ancestry and birth is firmly established, the question of 'identity' and charge against Kato's non-African identity had to do with his views and attitude to African religions, culture or worldviews (Ngong 2007:107). Although Kato was raised as a fetish priest and a religious leader in the traditional sense, his conversion to Christianity may not necessarily mean a lack of appreciation and understanding of the African culture. However, his conversion to Christianity led to change in belief and perspective about spirituality and worship of the divine. He turned away from beliefs and practices of African traditional religion, especially when the rationale and practice was inconsistent with what Kato believed to be the Biblical view. Thus, he advocated for discontinuity and embraced the message and teachings of the Bible as the sole authority and basis for his understanding and conduct of his new faith. This change of religious view had implications for self-identity.

Self-identity for the individual, in the African context may be difficult to characterise. For a start, identity in African conception is communal and one's existence is in relation to others or the community. This way of life or philosophy is known as Ubuntu, African socialism and is profoundly relational (Mbiti 1975:175; Mburu 2019:36). The tendency then was to believe as the community did and the idea of personal freedom and individualism was treated with suspicion (Mburu 2019:37). Religion gives direction to people's culture and the whole scheme of life. Turaki (2001:11) states that a person's identity was in her or his religious beliefs, among other factors. Kato looked more to his new community of followers of Jesus Christ as his community for guidance and worship of God, even if Christianity was inherited from the missionaries and was

viewed with suspicion and as the Whiteman's religion. Kato was lonely in his views about his new found faith in Christ and argues: "If religion is what gives direction to life, Christianity must necessarily change the life-style or culture of the African. Where such a differentiation is not possible, two alternatives are called for. Either the culture is abandoned or Christianity is compromised" (Kato 1974a:175). Citing an example of Stonehenge in England, used for Druidism in pre-Roman era, the shrine remained for cultural reasons, when Druidism was outlawed. However, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the veneration of the shrine was revived and continues today. Using this analogy, Kato questioned whether it is worth preserving the juju²⁷ after conversion in Africa (Kato 1974:175)?

In any case, Kato was not unmindful about the challenge Africans faced in terms of self-worth and identity. His approach to the question was radically different; he portrayed himself as a proud African but unashamedly embraced biblical fidelity (Graham 1975)²⁸. Speaking at an interview abroad, his response to the question on culture and Christianity was:

But in Africa, the search for personality and the emphasis for human identity is coming out in the way of cultural revolution. Again, I am not being critical of altogether of culture. In fact, if it were not for your wonderful winter here, I would probably be wearing my national costume today. I am proud to be an African and I believe Jesus Christ saved me not to be an American Christian, but an African Christian and I'm proud of that. The Lord wants us to be happy with our society and loyal to our government. I am that way and I feel Christians should be that way, but there is a limit to my understanding of my own culture. Since I am a Christian, Jesus Christ has come into the center of my being now. This same Jesus Christ should be the one to show me what is good and what is bad in my culture (Kato 1974f:4).

Kato argued that Christian Africans need to give up cultural belief systems that were not consistent with biblical worldview, about understanding and worship of God. A mix of the two belief systems would result in syncretism and universalism. He condemns these practices as unbiblical and unchristian (Kato 1974f). He believed that true freedom and identity is found in salvation in Jesus; he stated:

[It] is actually in Christianity that we find the assertion of true humanity. Jesus Christ, in His incarnation, took the form of man (sic) and not so much one particular kind of man (sic),

²⁷ Juju: According to Kato, this is another term used to describe African traditional religions; one of the many terms that does not adequately describe ATR. The term is deprecatory and vague and refers to the objects of ATR worship, (1975a:23)

²⁸ Billy Graham in the Foreward to Byang Kato's Book: "Theological Pitfalls in Africa"

one racial kind of man (sic), but man (sic) in general. He also was born as an individual and that demonstrates the concern and interest that God has in redeeming man (sic) (Kato 1975h:4).

The dignity and true identity and value of the person is in the fact that we are made in God's image and God in His incarnation, identified with humanity. Bowers writes: "[A]s biblically-grounded evangelical believers, what our commitments call us to, whether in Europe or Asia or Africa or wherever, is neither to ignore our intellectual setting, nor to accommodate to it, but intentionally to understand and engage it for the sake of the gospel" (Bowers 2008:10).

Notwithstanding the belief that Africans have lost their identity, a critical challenge the Church in Africa has is the dominance of the African worldview. The African traditional worldview which the Western missionaries disdained or condemned is ironically more prevalent in the church today than a biblical worldview (Chalk 2013). Ordinary African Christians continue to hold beliefs and practices informed by traditional worldviews of ATR to address their existential challenges (Ngong 2007:114). Some theologians advanced that the African worldviews and spirituality must be explored even more. There is then the tendency to look back in time to explore what and how Africans lived before the intrusion of the slavers and colonisers and Western missionaries. So, for things sacred, many proponents of African theology are advocating for looking back in time, exploring religious beliefs and practices that African peoples cherished, even if these beliefs and practices are at odds with what the Bible teaches, or they try to impose these on the Bible and make-belief that these are African interpretations of the Bible. As the African has now attained independence, he is asking himself, "Who am I? He is seeking to assert his identity telling the rest of humanity, I am now a human being. I want to show you that I have arrived. Get off my back. I want my autonomy. I too am a first-class human being and not a second-class human being " (Bowers 2008: page?).

Kato found a new identity when he converted to Christianity. Notwithstanding the impact of all the factors that contributed to the loss of African heritage and religious values; slavery and colonialism, Kato found real freedom in Christianity. Kato's concern for biblicism went beyond nationalism. He saw himself firstly as a child of God in the world, but also a loyal citizen to his country, like no other. He wrote:

A Christian should be the most loyal citizen of his country because he is aware of the fact that God has ordained even a dictatorial type of Neronian rule. Moreover, as a citizen of two dominions, he knows what it means to submit to the higher power. But his belief in the absolute authority of the Word of God also forces him to acknowledge the equality of all men. That being the case, the awareness of the existence of other nations becomes imperative. Blind nationalism of Nazist type should have no place among Christians (Kato 1974a:268-69).

His primary identity was Christian, he was first a Christian before African. Born in Northern Nigeria, he experienced British Colonialism but also the enslaving of smaller tribes like his Jaba people by the predominant indigenous Hausa tribe. Kato was also raised in the best possible way, to embrace the African Traditional cultural values. With his conversion to Christianity, he adopted the biblical worldview as the predominant system. He continued to live in the African context and by every standard, he had the respect of the community and rose to be one of the prominent personalities not only in his community and country but in Africa and beyond (interviews).

Kato saw himself as a Christian African; authentically African but saved and transformed by the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Breman 1995:366). He was born again (John 3:3). The implication here was that he was now a new person, the old life was gone and a new life has begun (2 Cor. 5:17). He did not stop being a Nigerian African man but strove to live his life by biblical values and unlearn anything that was not consistent with biblical values. Therefore, Kato could have been conscious about the loss of identity, whether this was the traditional African identity or the Europeanised African. But he had found a new identity in Christ by new birth (John 3:3; 1 Peter 1:3-5, 23; 1 Peter 3:18-23) and now a new person with a new identity, as the Bible teaches. Aware of his African identity, he also was happy and proud of his new citizenship (Phil.3:20; Col.3:17). Kato said: "It is not neo-colonialism to plead the uniqueness and finality of Jesus Christ. It is not arrogance to herald the fact that all who are not "in Christ" are lost. It is merely articulating what the Scriptures say" (1975a:16). Kato's belief in Jesus Christ as Saviour was unshakable.

Like the Apostle Paul in the NT, every other gain or identity was a loss (Phil. 3:8), for Kato. In the abstract of his doctoral thesis Kato (1974a) wrote: "Christianity is unique. It creates the third race, a race called "the body of Christ", made up of people from all cultural background." Kato argued further: "The gospel content, of course, needs no addition or modification. It is because of this irreducible, immutable message, that

Christianity has produced the third race which cuts across all races and all peoples” (Kato 1974a:270-71). Kato proclaimed: “Let African Christians be Christian Africans” (Nystrom 2020:3). By this, he meant; when as an African you accept Jesus as your Lord, the Bible should be the judge for your conduct and culture. If the cultural practices conflict with the Bible, the biblical injunction stands and do not have to stick to culture. This, Kato insists was not to say, the Christian should abandon her own culture. The emphasis is on the supremacy of the wisdom and veracity of the word of God above any human wisdom, especially when these contradict Scripture.

Trying to understand how Kato would have identified or described himself, one could glean from the abstract of his thesis (Kato 1974a). He saw himself as African conservative evangelical theologian. The purpose for his theological engagement was to preserve biblical Christianity which he believed had become a vital part of the life of Christians in Africa. He wanted to be seen as a defender of the Christian faith in Africa and was proud of his Nigerian nationality. He figured out that church people were being led away from the truth of the Christian faith because they were prideful about culture and gave undue reverence to African traditional religions. He was not naïve and ignorant about ATR. He understood the nature of ATR from personal experience and doctoral research in ATR. Kato saw himself first as a Christian, then African—Christian African.

The plight of Africans in the hands of their white compatriots in apartheid South Africa was one of the key factors that drove the discourse on African Christian identity and African theology, which included Black or liberation theology from South Africa. Kato was asked about what he would do about the South African question and his response was:

We are now in the process to organize a national evangelical fellowship for the whole Republic of South Africa that would be multi-racial and interdenominational. We may come up against a wall, but I have been working in correspondence with both blacks and whites. If Bible-believing Christians pray and keep talking, we probably will achieve more success than a radical approach would. We can have the radical approach to government and non-church organizations. We see the work of the Church as conciliatory (Kato1975f:n. p.)

Kato’s transition from a predominant traditional worldview to biblical worldview involves hermeneutical keys espoused in the previous section. In the quest for identity, Kato prioritized his citizenship of heaven. In an address to Kenyan citizens on their

national day celebrated each year on December 12, to mark their independence from British colonial rule, known as Jamhuri Day (Kato erroneously referred to this as Madaraka Day which is celebrated on June 1, when Kenya attained internal self-rule or a republicanism), Kato outlined the meaning of a heavenly citizen. Exegeting a text from Romans 13:1-14 on the subject—Christian Citizenship—Kato admonished his audience to rededicate themselves for greater involvement in nation building. He reiterated the fact that Christian citizenship was in heaven (Phil. 3:20) but said: “while God should be given the first place in the believers life, the national government also deserves the loyalty of all citizens, the Christians included” (Sermon note, Christian Citizenship, n. d. 2:n. p.). He went on further to state:

The Bible too expects Christians to play a double role, first as citizens, then as Christian citizens (Rom 3:10). Christians and non-Christians alike, are subject to the governing authorities. Authority is not qualified, it is not indicated whether the governing authorities are communistic, or capitalistic. Whether it is multi-party state or one party, whether it is democratic or dictatorial (Kato sermon, n. d.2:n. p.).

The authorities themselves were subject to the rule of God and ultimately, God allows them to be in authority and God removes them when he wants to do so. The citizen’s responsibility is to show and ensure loyalty by teaching obedience and respect at home. Quoting Dorothy Law Nolte’s poem: ‘Children Learn What they Live’, Kato added: “If a child learns to walk with the Lord, he will not depart from Him (Pro. 22:6)” (Kato n. d. 2:n. p.). Loyalty to the government means law abiding and responsible citizenship, not just in fear of punishment but for conscience. Other obligations include paying dues and taxes, in appreciation of all government does to for an ordered society and public services.

However, Kato admonished the Christians to prioritize the moral development of individuals and the nation as citizens of heaven and to live lives worthy of the call of God, a life of holiness. Highlighting the life of Saint Augustine of Hippo, as an example, Kato wrote:

For many years he roamed from university faculty to the other, seeking for best philosophy in life. He wandered from one drinking bar to the other, from one prostitute to the other—all in search of the One Who still says “come to me all who labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest” (Mt. 11:25). With his life completely changed, he followed the warning of these verses (Rom 13:1-14) and separated his life from the thing done in the dark. He learned to live a life transparently honest (Kato n. d. 2:n. p.).

Kato also had the view that the Africanisation of the Church was also a secularist agenda and especially driven by ecumenism. He wrote:

In its push for secularization, there has been an urgent call for the Africanization of Christianity. What seems to be the meaning behind this is that African Culture should take precedence over the Bible. There has been a call to change the content of Christian theology, if necessary, to suit the African context (Kato African Cultural Revolution... n.d.3:34).

In summary, Kato saw himself as a true African, who had found Christ and given him true meaning to life. He had been set free from groping in darkness and hell bound. He believed this was the plight of every person and he contended for his fellow Africans by doing all he could to safeguard biblical Christianity on the continent. He identified himself as a ‘third race’ citizen; freeing himself from the split or dual personality of the African. He was ‘Christian African’; his new citizenship identity was superior to his African identity. He was mainstream conservative evangelical with dispensational post-millennial leaning; unapologetically Bible-centred and Christ-centred. He certainly valued his African identity and was never separated from his people, he rather reached out to connect them with Christ. Ngong observes: “There is no doubt that the past is important but to tie anyone’s identity essentially to the past is biblically, theologically, and philosophically problematic (Ngong 2007:135).

African Christian identity continues to be of interest. There are current debates to decolonise or even Africanise Christianity (Sakupapa 2019; Graham 2017). Kato’s contribution to the dialectic continue to have an appeal. Essentially, Kato’s hermeneutical principle is to look to the Bible for self-understanding of the Christian. He differentiates the message of the Bible from the messenger, the Western missionaries, especially in the African context. He also affirms the missionary intent of the Christian faith, thus, the particularity of the Christian call and the universal nature and missional intent of the call. His biblical stance is that African Christians ought to be Christian Africans—Christians, primarily before ethnicity, African.

African Christians must understand and accept the fact that African Traditional Religion (ATR) is not synonymous with Christianity. Even though the two religions share a lot in common, there are other areas in which they are at conflict. These areas of conflict establish the line between true practice of the Christian faith and its syncretistic practice. Syncretism sets in when African Christians ignore these conflict areas and consider them as complementary options to the Christian faith” (Otonko 2018:8).

Kato believed that the underlying cause for differences in hermeneutics was theological training or the lack of this. Talking about a church without theology, Bediako said: “This could only result from allowing, in the first place, for the existence of a pre-Christian memory in African Christian consciousness. For theology presupposes religious tradition, and tradition requires memory, and memory is integral to identity: without memory we have no past, and if we have no past, then we lose our identity” (1998:58-59). The suggestion here is that one’s identity as African Christian is defined by its past in the traditional religions, without which there is no selfhood. Therefore, Kato proposed a remedy for the misleading theologies or theological pitfalls in Africa— sound evangelical theological education. Underscoring the importance of theological education, Ananng (2018:117) states:

It is a primary vocation of theological educators to analyse, discern, and critique the forces shaping the socio-religious milieu of the contemporary Church, bring the unchanging truth of the Gospel to bear on illuminating these forces, employ their insights to predict future trends, suggest strategic responses and monitor the effectiveness of the implementation of these responses (cf. Budiselić 2016:131–154; Hendriks 2014:1–8; McKinney 2003:1–16; Phiri and Werner 2015).

The next section catalogues Kato’s endeavours for promoting sound biblical education in Sub-Saharan Africa.

3.4 Byang Kato’s Contribution to Evangelical Theological Education in Africa

Kato’s particular contribution to African Theological discourse is not only polemical or what he said but also about what he did and set out to do before his untimely death. A more holistic assessment of Kato goes beyond what he wrote or said in his key theological writing “Theological Pitfalls in Africa”; content of which was viewed mostly as alarm bells for the insipid syncretism and universalism creeping into the church in Africa. By this, Kato was engaging the academy with contemporary and relevant issues for theological discourse in Africa (Bowers 2008:8). His contribution went beyond merely warning the church but provided a recipe for overcoming the theological errors he identified. He articulates a vision for sound evangelical theological training on the continent as the pancea to the theological pitfalls.

Kato saw the need for theological education in the church in Africa at all levels, including children, informational and off site and home-based and above all, graduate level theological education. Speaking on the subject of ‘Christian Higher Education’ at

the First International Conference of Reformed Institutions for Christian Scholarship, Potchefstroom, South Africa in September 1975, Kato said:

A Church without a sound theological basis is like a drifting boat in a storm without an anchor. The wind of every doctrine is blowing against the Church today. The wind of contextualization is testing the relevance of the boat of Evangelical Theology. The ill-wind of ecumenism with its call for secularization of Christianity is proving very tempting to the average Christian. The wind of Black theology, with its legitimate quest for human dignity but without an adequate term of reference, appears convincing. The wind of African Theology with its rightful search for the African personality yet failing to see the unique nature of Christian revelation, is very appealing. For the ship of evangelical faith to stand the test of the times, it must be grounded on the hope of our fathers (Kato 1976b:3).

Thus, through the AEA Theology and Christian Education Commission (TCEC), he put together a strategic road map to lay the ground for a robust theological training programme on the continent. According to Kato, the result of a survey, conducted by the AEAM Christian Education Coordinator in 1972, revealed a worrying trend. The report showed that only thirty-nine per cent of the respondents believed the Bible is the sole authority of the Christian. Also, their response to the question: “what must a person do to receive eternal life?”, only thirty-eight per cent said he must believe in Jesus Christ (Kato 1974a:53). At that time, according to Kato, various estimates put the Christian population of Africa between 60-160 million people (p. 53). Given his preparedness for this, Kato was eager to launch a robust theological training on the continent to address the theological ignorance. Current state of the church may resonate with Kato’s era and need for theological training in the church in Africa. The need for theological training continues to be a critical challenge for the church, underscoring the importance of Kato’s contribution even then.

According to Bangura (2015:109-10; cf. Asumang 2018): “Recent studies indicate that the Charismatic Movement that began in the late 1970s and early 1980s is gradually becoming the most inviting face of the Christian faith in Africa. However, the pace of growth seen in the Christian faith far outweighs the available theological training institutions that prepare the leaders who will eventually preside over the affairs of these churches”. AEA Theology and Christian Education Commission (AEA-TCEC) consultation for theological educators, across the continent in September 2019 report states:

The original purpose and objectives of the Theological Consultation was “to provide a forum where theological educators can develop and implement a strategy to equip and strengthen the grassroots churches of Africa, particularly the leaders and pastors of African

churches where it is estimated that 85-90% of those leaders are untrained and undertrained biblically and theologically.

Corroborating this report, Re-Forma reveals:

Studies show that over 90% of all pastors do not have a formal theological education. According to statistics, that equates to well over 2 million Protestant pastors worldwide. In addition, every year thousands of new Protestant churches are established, very often without a trained pastor or preacher. The biggest crisis facing the evangelical, global church today is the fact that most pastors, missionaries, and Christian leaders are under-educated or not educated at all. Re-Forma has set as its goal to fundamentally remedy this situation. (<https://www.re-forma.global/> Retrieved 5 August 2020).

Theological education in Africa was a critical contribution in the role played by missionaries in the establishment of the church over the years. However, this effort in theological education was not without its shortcomings and especially for the evangelical wing of the Church. Theology and Doctrine have been part of gospel ministry in Africa (Kato: 1973:1). According to Kato, "Bible doctrine or teaching may be considered as theological instruction, perhaps with less philosophical reflection" (1973:1). He lamented the biblical ignorance and lack of emphasis on theological education by the missionaries. He wrote: "Seminary education is for pastors in North America and the Bible School and Bible Institute is for missionaries. So, a mammoth church has been established without the depth of theology that the church needs. Christian leaders were now vulnerable to the tactics of ecumenism with its basic universalistic premise" (Kato 1974a:8). It is unsurprising therefore that nearly half of his decalogue of proposals for mitigating theological pitfalls in Africa (1975a:181-84) were directly educational curriculum matters.

Theological education may not be lacking in the church altogether, Kato enumerates six initiatives he believed constituted the theological teaching programmes in the Church; namely: catechetical instructions, Sunday School, Women's fellowship, Bible teaching in schools, the family altar and theological institutions (1973c:n. p.). However, these programmes did not go far enough and were not effective. Kato postulated that the shortcomings had to do with the following: content or curricula, limited participation of potential learners, e.g. Sunday School was mostly seen as Children's programme, leaving out adult members of the congregation. The relevance of training materials for the African context and learning methodology are also highlighted as contributing factors for the low level of theological education. Other challenges were the fact that instructions were done in foreign languages and students learnt mostly by rote. The

quality of both teachers and students, were all possible shortcomings.

Kato stated that the root causes for the dearth in theological education were due to the influx of new converts; churches were not able to keep up with the pace of training of ministers, for the rapid growing numbers of converts. The method of operation and anti-intellectualism of the evangelical missions, unavailability of suitably qualified students and retention of trained students in the ministry of the church were all contributing to the lessening of theological education. Ironically, the indigenisation of theology was also problematic and left much to be desired, according to Kato (1973:4-7). The theological agenda failed to adequately address issues of African Traditional Religions and culture, polygamy, the Christian home, and the spirit world. Reflecting on Eta Linnemann's work (2001:177-209), trends in other parts of the world, Smith points out the rarity as a characteristic of evangelical theology and writes:

Due to the pressure to obtain acceptance amongst academic peers, many evangelical scholars adopt approaches that include presuppositions and methodologies that are subtly at odds with core evangelical beliefs. Both in their choice of topics and their selection of methods, evangelicals often conform to the more liberal ways of doing theology" (Smith 2013:15).

Kato saw the need for sound biblical and theological education as the church's greatest need in Africa. Kato's vision or model of theological education was grassroots upwards. He was concerned about providing commensurate theological education to ordinary Christians and from that level extends it upwards to higher levels. This was a distinctive of Kato in his generation. He clearly rejected the elitism of the liberal theologians of Africa and seemed more interested in keeping the Church's scholars as near to the rank and file as possible. Kato himself, exemplified a rigorous pursuit for sound theological education in the Church in Africa. Macdonald succinctly summarised Kato's theological educational attainment and writes:

From his youth onward, Byang Kato was vigorous in his pursuit of education. Despite the protests and gibes of peers, Igbaja Bible College was the path forward for Kato. Even after marrying Jummai during his final year, he still "excelled in the classroom" and juggled many responsibilities. He went on to secure his Bachelor's degree abroad at London Bible College, and by 1970, Kato was at Dallas Theological Seminary (DTS), earning his Master's degree. Due to his incredible persistence, he had his Th.D. from DTS by May of 1974. Supporting Christian education and the church of Africa continued to be his passion. He was a gifted writer with a host of articles – crowned by his greatest work *Theological Pitfalls in Africa*. At his height, he was considered "the most outstanding evangelical theological leader in Africa (2016:20).

Kato strove hard to forge ahead to acquire the highest level of theological education

in world class theological institutions; the famous London Bible College and Dallas Theological Seminary in the USA and the first to do so in the modern history of evangelicalism in Sub-Sahara Africa. Kato was not only trained for a terminal or doctoral degree in theology but also qualified and certified from the Child Evangelism Fellowship Institute in Paris, along with his spouse (Haye 1986:43). In the preface to Kato's booklet: *Biblical Christianity*, Tite Tienou (1985) highlighted the following: that Kato's whole ministry was directed toward the grounding and growth of biblical Christianity on the continent. As a student of the Bible, he taught others what he learnt. Kato was a Bible teacher; taught his peers and fellow believers in their native Hausa language at grassroots and in formal Bible Schools from basic certificate to graduate level courses in seminaries in Africa and USA. His Bible teachings were also reflected in his sermons, speeches and writings.

The *magnus opus* of Kato's writings was 'Theological Pitfalls in Africa', published by Evangel Publishing House in Kenya, which turned out to be the first of its kind, published by an evangelical scholar in Africa. *Theological Pitfalls in Africa* was the book version of Kato's doctoral dissertation. Other equally important works included: *African Cultural Revolution and the Christian Faith*, *The Spirits* and *Biblical Christianity in Africa*—a collection of papers and addresses Kato wrote (Haye 1986:105). These contributions were unprecedented at the time and were a unique evangelical voice in African theological and intellectual discourse in Africa then. Kato's theological articulations sparked and enhanced theological reflections which continue in current time. Byang Kato's disputations were motivated by what he perceived to be insipid syncretism and universalism in the church in Africa and driven by liberal theologies promoted in ecumenical circles in the World Council of Churches. He did not only raise an alarm; he astutely envisioned a remedy and put together a plan to address the theological malady in the Church in Africa, under the auspices of the AEAM.

Byang Kato's first contact with AEAM, was as a guest speaker. He spoke about Christian education at the first AEAM General Assembly in 1969. According to Haye, between Kato's first contact with AEAM in 1969 and the next speaking engagement in 1973, he wrote in a letter to the AEAM:

To me, the great need in Africa today is ministerial training, coupled with in-depth teaching in the church. We should make an effort to convince missionaries and Christian leaders that while evangelism should not be neglected, teaching the converts we already have

should be our priority. A well-taught Christian will become an evangelist (Haye 1986:74).

Tienou (1982:54) opined that 1973 was a critical turning point in Kato's career with the founding of the AEAM Theological Commission and Byang Kato appointed as the Commission's first Executive Secretary. Kato was also elected as the General Secretary of the AEAM, before the second AEAM General Assembly in 1973, came to an end. Thus, Byang Kato became the first African to lead the AEAM as its Chief Executive Officer and held the dual position of Executive Secretary of the AEAM Theology Commission and General Secretary/CEO of AEAM.

The purpose of the AEAM Theology Commission was to encourage the existing theological schools in the continent and promote more advanced training of Church leaders on African soil. While the evangelical Church's priority was evangelism and winning souls, with little attention to theological training, Kato emphasised sound theological education for ministers as *sine qua non* for effective evangelisation. Byang Kato was especially troubled by evidence of theological indifference and deviation within the church and sought by every means to strengthen theological life in Africa (Kato 1973). Not only was evangelical theological education necessary for evangelism but also, it was necessary for the soul of the Church. He believed that the battle for the soul of the Church in Africa was a theological battle. He was particularly concerned about the influence of liberal ecumenism in the church, making the church ineffective (1975). Some scholars fault Kato as alarmist and complainer, without providing any theological solution to the problems he raised (Bowers 1981:36). Reviewing Kato's "Theological Pitfalls in Africa", Bowers (1981:37) cites a newspaper editorial, which was also reviewing Kato's book and states:

A prominent religious newspaper in eastern Africa ran a review which calls Pitfalls 'alarmist in what it says and colonial in the perspective in which it is written'. It goes on to suggest that Kato, through mis-education, permitted himself to become a tool 'in the preservation and protection of neo-colonial interests', and goes on to charge: There is a theological pitfall in Africa from which we must climb out: the reactionary evangelical theology which has a capitalistic birthright.

These were serious charges especially in the immediate aftermath of colonialism. Kato was threatened with lawsuit by one of the ecumenical scholars that Kato believed, contributed to promoting theological errors in the Church in Africa (Bowers 1981).

AEAM Theology Commission's task was to consolidate, upgrade and coordinate theological education. AEAM had eighty-three theological schools on its mailing list then, but these had low standards and none of these offered programmes to graduate or Master of Divinity level. The Theology Commission from the onset, and under the leadership of Byang Kato, purposed to establish graduate schools to start training at M.Div. level in the continent (Kato 1973a:8). Highlighting the state of the Church and theological education in Africa, Kato observed:

By sheer number of trained theologians, liberalism presents a real threat. Although only about 1% of all students in Africa go to University as compared to 4.6% the world average, these university level people are the elite of the continent. They will be the administrators, financiers, military rulers, decision makers in every department of life including the church. Theological education available so far for any of these varsity grads, has a strong view of African religions and culture (Kato 1973:2).

Kato hatched a comprehensive plan for sound theological education in the Church in Africa to mitigate the theological malady (Bowers 1981:36-37). Following his election as AEAM General Secretary, Byang Kato was asked by his missionary colleagues and friends at the SIM in Nigeria about his long-range plan for the church in Africa. According to Nystrom (2020:1) Kato's response was: "African Christianity is being consumed by a dreadful disease...We must find a cure for our theological anaemia". Within an hour, Kato engaged his three friends and went on to outline his vision to address the theological anaemia. These included four items (Nystrom 2020:1-2):

- (1) Develop African evangelical scholars who would be writing and publishing their theological reflections in the African context.
- (2) Graduate schools on the continent where the African leaders could be trained and do not have to leave the continent.
- (3) A Theological Journal for the publication of theological ideas of the African scholars.
- (4) An accrediting agency to set standards for theological education and monitor progress of schools to maintain standards.

It is astonishing that even though Kato died two years later, his four-fold plan did not drown with him. Kato's plan for addressing the theological problems in the Church in Africa resulted in the establishment of the first two graduate schools for theological education in sub- Sahara Africa; viz: Faculté de Théologie Évangélique de Bangui

(FATEB) in Central Africa Republic, established in 1977 to serve the Francophone region and the Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology (NEGST), established in 1983, Nairobi in Kenya, to serve the Anglophone region of Africa (Bowers 2008:1). NEGST is now a fully-fledged university—Africa International University (AIU). FATEB has also grown its programmes with university level status and has established a second campus in neighbouring country, Cameroon. The plan also included the establishment of an accrediting body—Accrediting Council for Theological Education in Africa (ACTEA) now Association for Christian Theological Education in Africa (with the same acronym), established in 1976, to provide services in support of development of theological schools across the continent. Currently, ACTEA has 65 schools or Bible Colleges and Seminaries in 17 countries, across Africa, associated with it. With regard to Kato's vision for African evangelical scholars writing and publishing, books by evangelical African scholars could now be found on shelves in Libraries and bookshops, including the African Bible Commentary, edited by Tokunboh Adeyemo, Kato's successor, with contribution from seventy African scholars (Nystrom 2020:4). The African Journal of Evangelical Theology (AJET), based at Scott Christian University is a scholarly evangelical theological journal publishing articles and book reviews, relating to African theology, twice a year and widely distributed.

The Theology Commission which later merged with Christian Education Commission, also established a centre for development of sound biblical and contextualised curriculum for children under 15 years—the Christian Learning Materials Centre (CLMC) in 1981. The CLMC produces curriculum and materials for children aged 0-15 years and also provide training for Sunday school teachers and caregivers like grandmothers. CLMC now stands for Christian Learning Materials for Children and it is also a publishing house. The Theology and Christian Education Commission's plan also included Theological Education by Extension (TEE). The TEE is not only a cheaper way of providing theological education but also makes theological education accessible to students in their homes and environment. An assessment of the impact of these schools and initiatives, in the Church in Africa and beyond, could well reveal the extent of the important contribution of Byang Kato.

In considering the specific contribution Kato made to address the theological problem

of the church, it is noteworthy that he did not only strive to have sound education himself, establish theological institutions, but also, he encouraged, motivated and mentored his peers and younger leaders to grow in biblical education. A renowned African Christian theology educator, Tiete Tienou and a contemporary of Kato testifies:

My own introduction to the importance of theology in Africa dates back to the second general assembly of the Association of Evangelicals in Africa and Madagascar (AEAM) in January 1973 at Limuru in Kenya. It was there that Byang Kato became the first African evangelical leader to call attention to theological endeavours in our part of the world. The challenge he gave marked a turning point in evangelical theological development in Africa (Tienou n.d.:3).

Kato believed the Church's primary challenge was theological education or the lack of this and used every opportunity to change the situation. Bowers (1981:37) states:

He repeatedly charged African evangelicalism with 'theological anemia', and energetically exploited his position as general secretary of the Association of Evangelicals of Africa and Madagascar to try to change the pattern. He travelled and wrote and spoke constantly in the interest of an accelerated development of evangelical theological education at all levels in Africa. He deliberately sought out and encouraged young aspiring African evangelical scholars in their studies and work. He dreamed up programmes to stimulate greater theological involvement among evangelicals, programmes which are still emerging.

Kato's understanding of sound Christian education was not just about training in theological educational institutions, he advocated for youth development in the church. He stated:

Christian Education encourages the growth of various youth organizations in the church as well as those of the older people. A strong Sunday School, Youth Fellowship, Boys' Brigade, Girls' Brigade, Young Sword League, and other similar clubs that promote Christian teaching are given impetus by Christian Education" (Kato 1969:3). He advocated for pastors in seminaries to include courses related to youth work especially for urban ministries and churches (Kato 1969:4).

Kato's own development included the Boys Brigade and Youth for Christ. Byang Kato's contemporary, an Octogenarian and a respondent in this research said: "Kato taught me to be a better farmer and a leader in my church, although I did not go to school" (he meant formal schooling). Kato taught the ordinary folks the Bible in the Hausa language since his early days when he started learning the Scripture in the Sunday School; taught his own children and neighbours' children just as he did with adults everywhere he lived.

Kato's vision for theological education was not limited to the African Church but global.

This was particularly important, given the current state of the church globally. With the secularisation of the West, the church has been declining and at the same time, centre of the church is now in the global south, with Africa in the fore front. Asumang argues (2018:117-18):

The rapid growth of Christianity in the global south and the simultaneous but equally rapid decline of a secularised Christianity in the global north are linked, probably causally, but definitely in terms of their future trajectories. I therefore assert that instead of adopting an introverted postcolonialist outlook, as some theological educators essentially propose, seminaries in the global south must rather be consumed by the global dimension of the mantle that the Spirit is placing on them, and so seek to be imbued with his discerning wisdom for forming future leaders capable of steering the pentecostalised Church unto the kingdom's harvest fields and certainly away from theological graveyards.

Thus, Kato's self-understanding of his Christian identity transcended his Africanness. He was the first Chair or convener of the World Evangelical Fellowship—WEF (now World Evangelical Alliance—WEA) Theology Commission. Following the historic Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization in Lausanne, Switzerland in 1974, Kato was appointed to several important committees in the global Church. He was appointed Secretary to the WEF International Council, Chair and Convener of the WEF Theology Commission and member of the Continuing Committee of Lausanne. In his capacity as Chair of the WEF Theology Commission, Kato suggested the establishment of a similar institution to ACTEA, at a global level. This led to the birth of the International Council for Evangelical Theological Education—ICETE (Bowers 2008:4). During the official opening of the AEA office complex in April 2019, the AEA General Secretary paid glowing tribute to Kato's memory and stated:

Kato earned himself the accolade of father of evangelical theology in Africa. In his short two years as General Secretary of AEA, before his tragic demise by drowning on the coast of Mombasa in the Indian Ocean, Kato prophetically sounded the warning bells in his *magnum opus*— "Theological Pitfalls". Even more importantly, Kato articulated a theological vision to address the malaise in the Church. Five decades on, the core of AEA ministry continues to be the strategic objectives Kato outlined.

When FATEB marked forty years of its existence on 25 January 2017, the Head of State and President of the Central Africa Republic (CAR), His Excellency Faustin-Archange Touadéra was guest of honour and used the occasion to confer national honours on the leadership of the School and AEA, in recognition and appreciation for the work of the school in CAR and beyond.

Kato's initiative to launch theological programmes was strategic and may have contributed substantially to the growth of the church in and development of more theological schools in Africa. However, current state of the church suggests a dire need for theological training. Hadebe (2017:1; cf., Asumang 2018; Bangura 2015) observes: "Theological education as part of higher education has not escaped commodification. African theologians pioneered resistance against the hegemony of western theologies. However, there are additional factors driving commodification, such as high demand for training, that outstrip supply because of the phenomenal growth of Christianity and rise in Christian consumerism". Thus, the relatively few training schools and programmes are struggling for sustainability and many have been pushed to rebranding and shifting focus to become liberal arts schools, further diminishing the number of theology graduates they produce.

3.5 Summary of Kato's Theological Legacy

While some scholars are reticent about Kato's theological contribution and at best credit him for diagnosing theological problems but offering no solutions, a careful analysis of Kato's work could reveal important theological contributions. His *magnus corpus*; "Theological Pitfalls in Africa", indeed sounded an alarm about the dangers of universalism and syncretism. These were not unfounded complaints, the theological thought leaders in the church at that time were making inroads with their writings and academic work in influential universities. A more holistic assessment of Kato reveals his commitment to biblical truth, apostolic teachings and the historic witness of the church (Turaki 2001:137; Shirik 2019; Bowers 2004; MacDonald 2017). In particular, he addressed important theological issues regarding salvation and uniqueness God's special revelation, the Bible and salvation in Christ. He also demonstrated the witness and presentation of Christ in the context of non-Christian religions and cultures, especially in Africa (Turaki 2001:134-50; Shiriki 2019).

Kato took the study of Scripture seriously and championed the development of Christian leaders in the church. Not only did he assiduously pursue personal growth but also endeavoured to create institutions for higher theological education on the continent. Thus, his contribution cannot be discounted and indeed an important contribution to the growth and maturing of the Church in Africa. Kato's approach to theological education has implications and lessons to glean from. Theological

education has been identified as one of the greatest challenges of the global Church and calls for different and innovative approaches for curriculum design and teaching methodology. This is very much in tandem with Kato's approach, to evolve a strategy to train people at all levels.

This chapter has explored three aspects of his theological legacy, namely: African Christian identity, hermeneutics and evangelical theological education. On the question of identity, Kato saw himself as 'Christian African', a third race, different from the identity of his biological or natural birth and that of the colonising culture of the Western missionary. Kato refused to be drawn to the conclusions reached by other scholars of his time that the task of theology was a call to deal with culturally rooted questions of African- Christian self-identity. The basic proponents of African Christian identity conceived theology primarily as a response to missionary underestimation of the value of African traditional religions. Thus, it seems proponents of African theology were concerned about establishing how pre-Christian beliefs would lead them to Christ, in the same way as the missionary message from the Bible, even if packaged in Western culture. Kato maintained that you cannot throw the child (biblical message) out with the bath water (Western cultural nuances of the message). Kato saw conversion to Christianity as a rebirth; being born again of the Spirit and therefore a new creation. His new identity was primarily a Christian, a child of God and follower of Christ and a new creation, in accordance with what the Bible says (John 1:12; 2Cor. 5:17).

This was no denial of his Africanness nor a lack of understanding of his African culture. As a matter of fact, Kato's position was out of his profound understanding of his pre-Christian religion and his newfound biblical faith in Christianity. His assimilation in African traditional religion was unrivaled by his peers in the academy of his time. A radical conversion could well be from his knowledge of the deep menaces of his pre-Christian religion and embracing the message of his new faith has a lifeline of salvation and redemption to hold on to firmly. After all, this is the message of salvation; a call to Christianity is a call to come out of the past and even to launch out to the unknown. A positive response to this call is absolute faith in the one who calls and reliance on his goodness, love, infinite power and sovereignty. Thus, Kato's Christian identity was more important than his ethnicity or African identity.

Not everybody holds Kato in high esteem, contrary to scholarly literature in Africa. Even so, several decades after his death he is remembered in theological education cycles with esteem for his contribution to evangelical theological education in Africa. A visitor to renowned institutions like the Africa International University in Nairobi would notice the Kato Memorial Chapel as centre of worship for the university community. At the *Faculté de Théologie Évangélique de Bangui* (FATEB), in Central African Republic, the Kato Memorial Library is the centre of student life. In Nigeria, at the Jos ECWA Theological Seminary (JETS), the Byang Kato Research Library is the centre of attraction for the seminary community. Also, the Byang Kato Memorial Lectureship are held annually at JETS (Bowers 2008:1). Painting a portrait of Kato at the forty-first Kato Memorial Lecture, Baba (2017) stated: “Rev Byang Henry Kato, Ph.D., of a special class, a theologian, an erudite scholar, administrator and an exemplary Church leader, an astute facilitator, and promoter of Christian Evangelical Theological Education in Africa”.

Kato’s firm belief about the state of the church was “an implicit faith in God’s word and an absolute assurance in Jesus Christ, as the only solution to the sin problem, which is responsible for all human ills, is the only bulwark and offensive weapon of the Christian” (Kato 1974:277). Kato had a high view of the Bible, as the sole authority for faith and conduct. He affirmed the inerrancy and infallibility of the Bible. He demonstrated a biblical worldview; endeavoured to view reality in terms of what the Bible says. Western missionaries may have done things that did not show respect for Africans and their culture, including their religion. However, the evangelical doctrine of *sola scriptura* affirmed scripture as the sole basis and authority in matters of faith and conduct and has no place for tradition. If Western missionaries were misguided in applying Scripture through their cultural lenses, and therefore, supposed to be rejected, other cultures that have embraced the Christianity should not also be misguided, to view the gospel from cultural lenses, in ways that are opposed to the biblical narrative. This is particularly so, when African Christianity is becoming the normative in global Christianity.

Nevertheless, Kato did not do much in providing tangible approaches and theological reflections for spreading and preserving biblical Christianity in the continent. In any case, Kato’s actions and institutions he sought to establish, continue to make an

important contribution for the spread and preservation of biblical Christianity in Africa and beyond. The church continues to experience phenomenal growth. Nevertheless, the challenges Kato faced in terms of biblical illiteracy in the church continue to abound. I will now turn to giving Kato's own limitations or weaknesses and an overview of the state of the church in Africa, respectively, in the next two subsections, four and half decades after the death of Kato.

3.6 Kato's theological pitfalls

Reflecting on the core theological emphasis, a gap in the articulation of some essential evangelical doctrines were noticed, either by his silence or little emphasis in his proclamations or writings. These were considered as downside of the otherwise positive contributions, as highlighted in the previous section. For example, the triumvirate affirmation of Bible-centred—Christ-centred—Spirit-led; distinguishing nature of trinitarian ministry of mainline evangelicalism, may not have been sufficiently articulated. In Kato's teaching, a balanced emphasis of the Trinity, especially emphasis about the place of the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, compared to the accent Kato had on the place of the Bible and the place of Christ in the believer's life and in the Church.

Apparently, his pneumatology tended to be inadequate. However, this does not necessarily mean a lack of understanding or theology of the Holy Spirit as demonstrated in a section 5.3.8 in this study. His work on spirits²⁹, addressing what the Bible teaches about the subject of spirits, discussed the created and fallen spirits extensively compared to the time he invested on the Holy Spirit. In his critique of this work Macdonald (2017: viii) hails Kato for his contribution to demonology and writes:

Overall, Kato's work presents timely contributions for our demonological goals, especially considering the multicultural context. In an increasingly intermingled world, with many backgrounds being represented in multicultural Christian communities, Kato's demonology is a superior model. Human perceptions concerning the demonic are often inseparable from prevailing cultural attitudes, and the temptation to exalt one's own culture must be avoided, especially due to the new norm of multicultural churches, para-church organizations, and seminaries. Kato's demonology gravitates to the biblical material, and thus it delivers both challenges and affirmations to every party.

²⁹ Byang Kato. What the Bible Teaches About Spirits Booklet No. 5. Achimota pp1-34

The study may have given a good understanding about demons and evil spirits. Kato further goes on to talk about the good spirits and angels and the work they do; including “worship of God, doing God’s will, looking after God’s chosen people, serving Jesus and helping Christians” (Kato 1975b:8-12). However, the place of the Holy Spirit in the believer’s life and in *Missio Dei* could have been highlighted much more.

I cannot agree with Turaki more for the need to demonstrate here how the biblical worldview could engage the important subject of spiritism and impact on the African worldview. Belief in evil spirit is so pervasive in the African worldview that simply demystifying it at conceptual level may not be enough to bring about a change in worldview. Articulating the biblical teaching about the Holy Spirit would have been helpful, more so than guardian angles to bring about transformation in the mindset of African believers and perspectives about evil spirits. In particular, the place and work of the Holy Spirit, in the life of the believer and which Kato rightly recognises as God himself and like no other spirit. However, Kato himself does testify of the work of the Holy Spirit at his conversion, that led to his radical transformation from worship of idols and surrender to the Triune God.

Kato appears to give the impression that the gospel is limited to being cure for the soul or spirit of the person and anything else outside the spirit/soul concern is less of a priority for the gospel. This view does not fully express the potency of the gospel for God’s *shalom* and redemption of creation and the whole person. If believers in Christ should obey the second great commandment to love neighbour like self, meeting emotional, social and physical needs is inevitable and an integral part of the Good News of Jesus Christ. Often, love for neighbour cannot be about saving their souls only for future salvation, as much as this is of utmost importance. Biblical salvation points to the eschaton but not without justification and sanctification with full implications for life on this side of eternity. Thus, salvation involves the work of Jesus Christ who justifies and the Holy Spirit the sanctifier. The ministry of Jesus Christ, the Lord of the Church, demonstrates the balance between saving the soul and letting people have life and life in abundance (Luke 4:18; John 10:10).

However, debate about the priority and immediacy of evangelism over social action continues to be an important consideration in the church. The differing perspectives

are underlying assumptions for hermeneutics. Currently, many evangelical and biblical scholars seem to have a consensus for an integral or wholistic nature of the gospel. Important as salvation of souls is to gain eternal salvation, the gospel does offer wholeness to existential hopelessness of the human condition and indeed, the whole of creation. The nature of what the holistic gospel is or whether in fact, the word 'gospel' needs a qualifier, is another dimension of the debate (Masika n. d.:24-30; Lim 2020; Rutayisire 2020). In any case, Kato vindicated himself by his leadership and actions during the Biafra war in his country, Nigeria. His emphasis on sound education was unlike the pietism of his day that perhaps saw higher education as a worldly pursuit.

His engagement with political leaders in Zaire now DRC, for example, and the likes of Emperor Bukasa in CAR and deputations for AEAM, then as an organisation, were all pointers of one, who cannot be seen as only caring for the salvation of souls, with no concern about material well-being. Kato may not have considered his actions as gospel work, especially when it seems, he had a Bible in one hand, and gave relief items to the people with the other, a misnomer for a holistic ministry or humanitarian intervention. On reflection, it was lopsided theology, to focus on spirituality and be insensitive to the material or physical reality of people. At the intellectual level, soul winning was prioritised but in action developing people, who would then be catalyst to bring about transformation or revolution was a major consideration.

Another pitfall of Kato's theology was extreme pietistic tendencies that he demonstrated. In particular, the attitude towards ecumenism and especially AACC, as an institution could have been more positive and to encourage some dialogue and collaboration, without necessarily compromising his doctrinal and biblical position. The sentiments about wine or alcohol drinking and dancing or body twisting, could have been better moderated. The emphatic statements and biblical references and interpretations may not be on the fringes of mainline evangelicalism (Kato 1969a). However, given the context and time of Kato's ministry, the aftermath of the East African revivals and to a limited extent, West African revival, Kato's sentiments would be respectful of the evangelical community, even if not a sound biblical injunction.

A balance between work and family needs was a challenge for Kato. Spouses' emotional and social needs to ensure they adequately play their role especially, when

the father or husband is gone was an important consideration. While Kato may not have excelled in this matter, his experience brings out the need for things to avoid and those to embrace. Times he left the family to go abroad for studies (avoid) but endeavoured to reconnect with the family (good example to embrace). Kato died at an age and time when he was young and with remuneration system in the church, he could not have a home for the family.

Kato's voice was also silent on doctrines like the sacrament apart from a brief swipe at Mbiti and wrote: "Mbiti widens the gates of "heaven" through the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist. He declares, "Christian Baptism is the means of mediating the implication of Christ's Death and Resurrection, both on individual human and cosmic levels"" (Kato 1975a:86). Also, his position on the issue of women leadership in the church would not be mainstream, especially in the contemporary global church. His denomination, the ECWA Church did not ordain women. Kato (1973:n. p.) stated:

African Christians owe the missionaries a debt that only eternity knows. Through God's providence many a humble young lady from overseas has been used to establish a thriving church. For this we are grateful. Nevertheless, we must face the fact that many missionary ladies until recently outnumbered men 3 to 1; this is a rebuke for the older churches. This state of affairs is contrary to any New Testament precedent. In fact, it contradicts the Apostle Paul's teaching (II Tim. 2:9-15, I Cor. 14:34); this is not a criticism of the faithful lady missionaries who stepped in where men refused to go, but it is a fact that the New Testament does not give us a precedent of a church founded by a lady missionary.

Notwithstanding the fact that Kato had a missionary lady for a spiritual mother (mentor), he held the view that women missionary leadership was a misnomer. While there is no conclusive agreement in the church about the women leadership, current position tends to be in favour of women leadership as a valid biblical position.

In any case, while Kato was reacting mostly to the theological agendas of other theologians, in pointing out the theological pitfalls he saw in these theologies, he did outline his own theological beliefs on the issues he encountered in the process. Thus, there could have been some other theological subjects Kato could have deliberated, under a different set of circumstances. In his apologetics, the tendency was to engage theological subjects his opponents were preoccupied with, most of which Kato believed were heresies. Kato endeavoured to outline what he felt the biblical position was on those matters.

3.7 Current State of the Church in Africa in view of Kato's theological legacy

In the lifetime of Kato the Church in Africa was experiencing growth and like the population rate; the growth of the church continued at phenomenal rate to this day. According to Kato (1985:13) the population of Africa was nearly one hundred million with a Christian population about twenty million. However, there was no single graduate theological school on the continent. In 2018, Africa's Christian population was 631 million of a population of about 1.3 billion, according to the Centre for the Study of Global Christianity at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (www.globalchristianity.org retrieved 5 July 2019; cf. Otonko 2018; Jenkins 2011). Thus, Africa became the region with the largest number of Christians for the first time. Despite the phenomenal growth of the church, African society has not experienced the kind of transformation expected in a predominantly Christian society (Otonko 2018; Bangura 2015; Biri 2011). The gospel does not seem to have much impact by way of transforming the society. "There is the need for authentic emphasis on Christian beliefs and practices. Christianity in Africa must pursue a depth in the context of its shallow profession of the Christian faith. By the depth, it must seek to place value on Christian professions of the faith and Christian practices" (Otonko 2018:10).

Restating an anecdotal comment by an observer, Tienou wrote: "Africa is the fastest growing church in the world; it may also have the fastest declining church" (n.d.). Accordingly, Otonko (2018:1; cf. Walls 2002; Jenkins 2011) states:

This rapid growth in numbers of Christians in Africa does not often correspond with the authentic translation of the Christian faith in the daily affairs of the peoples. This incapacity of the Christian faith is seen in the inability of the growing numbers of Christians to transform the public space. The paradox of growing Christian presence and growing poverty, corruption, bad government, disease, failed service delivery and several dysfunctional states challenge the effective impact of this Christian presence. It seems the rhetoric of numbers has not translated directly into Christian practice.

The same challenges of syncretism, universalism and religious relativism the church faced in the first two centuries continued "to be the same in the twentieth century and will continue to be so in the future" (1975a:172). Every generation of Christians must be on guard to fight against the world's culture emasculating the Gospel regardless of where that culture is. The European or western Christian has as much the same battle as the African Christian. Syncretism is always a danger lurking at the door of every

Christian generation. What Kato's warning amounts to then is constant awareness and vigilance and Kato's prophetic voice needs hearing again as a wakeup call, as secularism and syncretism continue to be on the rise. The theological challenges the church continues to face in Africa are largely a question of Biblical interpretation. "The way people understand, translate and apply the message of the Bible in their culture, needs to be assessed with care. People are not without presuppositions shaped by historical, social and cultural processes (Macdonald 2017:11-12). The African traditional worldview is still predominant in the Church. In this regard, Kato's hermeneutics has much to contribute to today. What Kato saw as emerging Christopaganism in the church in his time, has become the more dominant face of the church.

Cole (2019:1) describes the church in contemporary times as New Generation Christianity (NGC). According to Cole, the NGC now dominates the landscape of Christianity in Africa. The NGC includes Pentecostal and Charismatic movements and could be found across all the confessional traditions and denominational divide. Some of these churches have made tremendous impact on the church around the world; they are seen to be scratching where people hitch; addressing or at least talking about felt human and societal needs and not just about soul and spirit. Unwittingly appropriating ATR worldviews and Western lifestyles, their theologies and practices are expressed in their hymnologies, prayers and proclamations. Some of the older historic churches are also adopting the same worldviews and theologies as part of the competition for numbers. Quoting Edwin Smith, Cole (p. 4) said: "The African is seeking practical ends in both his magic and his religions, he seeks to use the mysterious powers of nature for his benefit, or tries to ward off the harm that may cause him". Almost a century later, these observations may still be true in many contemporary African churches. Hiebert (1994:201) writes: "It is all too easy to make Christianity a new magic in which we as gods can make God do our bidding". Many in the church profess faith in Christianity but their reality and practices are informed by beliefs in ATR. The NGC has striking similarities parallels to ATR. The following table shows the comparison and similarities between NGC and ATR beliefs:

Table 3.1 Drawing a parallel between ATR and the New Generation Christianity

African Traditional Religions	New Generation Christianity
1. Religion permeates all of life	1. Religion addresses the social and material needs—Now, not just the future!
2. Nothing happens by chance	2. Causality of happenstances, especially adversity, is sought from one's past, including one's ancestors (e.g. 'breaking past covenants')
3. Diviners occupied prominent role as consultants on a range of life issues— birth, destiny, marriage, sickness, adversity, counteracting known and unknown enemies, etc.	3. The 'man/woman of God' plays the role of a modern-day diviner/consultant — sought after on a range of life issues (business, family matters, adversity, illnesses, etc.)
4. Belief in the efficacy of special objects sought from the diviner	4. Widespread belief in the efficacy of 'holy water,' special 'handkerchiefs' 'anointing oil,' etc. provided by the 'man/woman of God'
5. Fear of malevolent forces—seen and unseen, and the constant struggle to checkmate them	5. Ongoing fear of malevolent forces and the need to invoke 'the Blood of Jesus,' the 'Name of Jesus,' etc.

Source: Cole p.4

The table highlights the extent of the challenge about how well integrated the African traditional worldview abides in the psyche and practices of Christians in Africa. Biri (2011:1) writes:

Many Pentecostal or "born again" church services are characterised by the theology of "deliverance from powers of darkness" that ruin the life of a Christian. Located within the rubric of "powers of darkness" are African traditional religions and culture (ATRs). ATRs have been condemned by Pentecostals as demonic so a "born again" Christian needs a "total break from the past", supposedly achieved through its denunciation.

Paradoxically, what the church sometimes practices is no less than form of ATR practices but in the name of Christianity. Biri (2011:1) argues that "the traditional religion and culture inform Pentecostals and continue to be a source of reflection, meaning and purpose, manifesting in their theology and rituals in spite of the adversarial stance". This raises questions about the path for theologians and scholars for direction towards promoting authentic African biblical Christianity.

The missionary influence in the church in Africa tends to have waned. Meanwhile, the once heathen Sub-Sahara African nations, ripe for evangelisation and mission field to send European and American missionaries, has become a majority Christian region and a mission force of its own, to send missionaries to the same America and European nations and other parts of the world. Ward (2008:87): observes:

Ironically, both America and Pentecostals were commonly associated at the beginning of the twentieth century with a new world, an anti-colonial mentality. By the end of the twentieth century America seemed to be the chief bearer of a form of Western, Christian, neo-imperialism. Pentecostalism often does seem unashamedly to promote capitalism in its American expression. The gospel of wealth and prosperity may seem to appeal to crass forms of materialism.

The newer forms of missionary work in the African Christianity is characterised by Pentecostalism and American evangelism. The need is for the new majority church to propagate a gospel that is biblical and understood in other cultures. The next subsection will specifically assess the state of the theological categories of Kato's theological legacy in this study.

3.7.1 Contemporary Resonance of Kato's Hermeneutics, Identity and Theological Education

African theologians continue to debate approaches and their interpretations of the importance of pre-Christian religious beliefs and the way the Gospel of Christ is proclaimed in Africa. Turaki opines: "The dominant presence of the African traditional religions and their powerful religious worldview have ever posed great challenges to the presentation of the Gospel of Christ and the rooting of Christianity in Africa" (2001:135; Biri 2011; Otonko 2018). Thus, Christianity was mixed with cultural traditions and practices in the church were syncretistic. Turaki observes further: "The reaction of the non-Christian world is to relativise Christianity and make it at par with other religions. Plurality of religions and cultures means that none is unique or superior, that all are equal (2001:139). This mentality remains prevalent even among the hierarchy of leadership of the church in Africa.

African Christian theologians' search for identity may lead to the creation of African Christian Theology as a separate discipline. The primary goal for proponents of African Christian Theology seems to be peeling off the culture of Western missionaries and wrap in African culture, with no serious commitment to the Bible. Byang Kato saw

this move as counter-intuitive and perilous to the Christian faith. Kato writes: “If there is any need in the Church of Christ in Africa today, it is the need for theology expressed in the context of Africa by Africans and for Africans” (Kato: 1974j:n. p). Further, Kato said:

There are certain issues peculiar to Africa where only African theologians may be able to speak effectively. Such issues include polygamy, family systems, courtship and marriage, liturgy, the spirit world and cultural revolution. In dealing with these issues, the ever-abiding Word of God remains the authoritative source.

Over four decades after the death of Kato, some of the key issues he highlighted continue to be prevalent in the church in Africa. Concerns are still being raised on both sides of the divide, namely, the liberal ecumenists and evangelicals, according to Kato’s categorisation of the protestant church, about the state of theological education on the continent. In the last four months of 2019 both AEA and AACC mounted significant theological consultations in Nairobi; in response to the alarming rate of theological heresies on the continent. The AEA Theology and Christian Education Commission theological consultation was held on 8-13 September 2019. In the invitation letter to participants, the organisers stated:

One of the greatest challenges facing the Church today is the lack of sound biblical and theological education for ministers of the gospel of the good news of Jesus Christ. In spite of the phenomenal growth of the Church in Africa, the society has not been proportionately impacted. Research studies reveal that 85-90% of pastors and church leaders in Africa have little to no biblical and theological training; required to effectively disciple their congregations (AEATCEC 2019).

The AACC has also identified what they termed: “Misleading theologies on the continent”. In a concept note for a symposium to address the issue, the AACC (2019) stated:

The AACC through its Theology, interfaith relations and ecclesial leadership development department is preparing this symposium to accompany the churches in Africa in the area of promoting relevant contextual theology in the continent and to engage with churches in *theology that promotes life with dignity* (emphasis mine). Engage churches in identifying, analyzing and deconstructing misleading theologies on the continent.

Theological education institutional leaders are equally concerned about the state of theological education on the continent. According to van Rensburg (20019): “the biggest crisis facing the global evangelical church today is the fact that most pastors, missionaries, and Christian leaders have no formal theological training”. The WEA also

identifies biblical illiteracy as the leading challenge in the world today. Studies show that over 90% of all pastors do not have a formal theological education (<https://www.re-forma.global/>). The church in Africa is growing at a phenomenal rate and even though every year thousands of new churches are planted, they are pastored by people without any formal theological or college and seminary training. Assessing the state of theological education fourteen years following Kato's vision for theological initiatives on the continent, Tite Tienou made the following assertions:

Indeed, while all of these initiatives have made laudatory contributions, some perhaps more so than others, not one has yet become effectively settled, not one is yet securely in orbit. And there is still so much else needing to be done. Assuredly as we survey the scene today, we are forced to acknowledge that evangelicals have a long way yet to go in achieving Kato's vision for evangelical theological responsibility and maturity in Africa (Tienou n.d.:4).

Tienou went on to enumerate the root causes of the theological malaise; according to Tienou, part of the reason is: "When we think of theologians, most of us do not automatically think of people of non-European stock. Theology as we experience it in Africa is basically of European origin" (Tienou n. d:4). He also highlighted the following factors as causes of the theological malaise:

Proclamation without reflection and theological responsibility; fragmentation of the church along doctrinal and denominational lines, which prevents evangelicals from working together on a common theological agenda, resulting to many groups working alone and even when cooperation is agreed, each group wants to participate on its own terms. Other factors include shortage of trained evangelical theologians, unconstructive instinct for power and control (p. 4-5).

The consequences of these lapses, he said were dire and include: 1. Silence by default - African theology was being constructed without contribution by evangelicals; there was little contribution of evangelicals in scholarly publications, 2. Numerical growth outpaced spiritual depth and maturity of African Christianity and 3. The concerns of African Theology, with three distinct branches of inculturation (cultural identity), Black theology and Liberation theology dealing with dominant problems of African (cf. Otonko 2018).

However, Tienou posits that these problems are not perceived as theological issues by the ordinary African Christian at the grassroots; they are generated as theological task by academics. Theologians were typically elite scholars in ivory towers constantly addressing issues of abstract philosophical nature, which while important bore little

relevance to the day to day Christian witness of ordinary believers. Nonetheless, theology he said, should fundamentally be concerned with how Africans can be real Christians in the African context, which he refers to as *popular theology* (my emphasis). Thus, he sees the challenge for bridging the gap between these two forms of theologising academic theology and popular theology. Academic theology was written for international readership. Tienou admits that even his own works and Kato's must be included in this category of academic theology. Many people in the local church may not be aware or read these works, as these are not for popular consumption.

Popular theology on the other hand is what takes root in the heart of most African Christians. This is the theology expressed in singing and praising God, in preaching and in everyday admonition or counsel by the people's spiritual leaders or pastors daily. Theologically, a lot goes on at the popular level and little at the academic level. This situation is alarming because popular theology is not grounded and governed by Scripture. The way many pastors preach and give counsel may be completely at variance with sound scriptural interpretation. Tienou said the solution to this challenge lies within reach of African evangelicals; strategically placed to come up with a third option to theological education—one which does not necessarily disdain academic discussion nor neglect real life daily issues. Quoting David Bosch, Tienou writes: "Good theology always arises out of encountering situation, that is, in the crucible of actual ministry...So it was for Biblical writers—NT theology was not produced in ivory towers" (Tienou n. d.:7).

Pastors need to know how to interpret the Bible correctly and apply to their context. If a proper interpretation of Scripture takes place at the grassroots by the pastor, informed by a proper understanding of the context, then such a pastor's preaching and counselling will be demonstrating sound African Christian Theology. The Lausanne Occasional Paper states: "The purely academic pursuit of theology is a mis-direction and a distortion of the purpose of equipping of the saints for ministry. We do well to heed Robert Ferris' call to move away from "theology-as-science," a legacy of the Enlightenment, to "theology-as-engagement." (LOP No. 57 2005:18; cf. Asumang 2018:121). Asumang (2018:115) proposes "that seminaries in the south be consumed by the global dimensions of the mantle that the Spirit has placed on them to form

leaders capable of steering the pentecostalised Church unto the kingdom's harvest fields, both north and south, and certainly away from theological graveyards" and goes on to examine the practical outworking of this reforming agenda in six areas, namely, (a) theology of theological education, (b) access to that education, (c) curriculum design, (d) resource development, (e) research and (f) seminary-church relationship.

An assessment of the WEA Mission Commission (WEAMC) highlights how secularism or so-called post-Christianity as new form of syncretism in the Church, is growing in many places, even in the global South. The WEAMC's description of the church in the global South could be emblematic of contemporary African Church; the typical face of the contemporary church in the world (Walls 2002:85). The WEAMC 2017 Report highlights the need for a new reformation. According to the report, the fifteenth century reformation was more of a European reformation and only secondarily did the global South benefit from the impact. The Roman Catholic Church had much of an influence in the rest of the world and later with protestant missionary presence, along with local or indigenous religions in receiving countries in the global South. "We realise that a new reformation is needed. A call to recover the integrity of the Church is heard more in the global South" (WEAMC 2017 Report). Further, the report states how the once missionary sending regions with evangelical zeal, were now in need of missionaries from the global South.

With the phenomenal growth of the Church in the majority world, especially in Africa, training leaders to handle God's word with integrity and manage their congregations well is needed (Glismann 2019; Kelsey 2011). According to Chrispal (2019:n. p.): "Most of the emerging churches are made up of first-generation believers. Therefore, they come with totally different sets of worldviews. They lack deep discipleship under the lordship of Jesus Christ in their lives, which would transform their worldviews". It would require informal training, flexible and adaptable learning methods and materials, with sound biblical basis (Asumang 2018:131; Chrispal 2019; Bangura 2015). However, given the challenges associated with national accreditation; it may well be necessary for seminaries in Africa, to seek ways of supporting two-tier systems. Students of lower academic abilities may pursue good quality yet to be accredited theological education as interim measures in preparation for entry to accredited ones. Additionally, extension programmes such as Church Seminars and 'taster courses'

which increase the access of rank and file members of the churches to theological educators. This will also serve to demystify theological education and reduce the often-justified suspicions some believers hold against the educational enterprise.

As mentioned early, it was Kwame Bediako who invested more time in his research on Byang Kato. More importantly, Bediako, like Kato, went beyond polemics and established an outstanding institution to continue to advance his vision of theology and theological education. The Akrofi-Christaller Institute of Theology, Mission and Culture (ACI), a postgraduate research university was established in Ghana in 1987, with Kwame Bediako as the founding Rector. The antecedent of ACI was a missionary training seminary, established by the Presbyterians in the 1840s, the name is in honour of two pioneer figures in the “cultural witness of the Church in Ghana, Clement Anderson Akrofi and Johannes Gottlieb Christaller” (web. Retrieved 15 June 2020). The university’s stated objective, is to promote African innovation and dedicated to the study and documentation of Christian history, thought and life in Africa. The Institute affirms the Scripture as the word of God, the uniqueness of Jesus Christ as sole Redeemer and Lord, the regeneration and sanctifying role of the Holy Spirit in the individual and the Church and his enabling in the Christian witness to society and the world. The Institute is committed to a spiritual view of life, to the spiritual renewal of the Church and to socio-political and cultural transformation through the Gospel (<https://www.aci.edu.gh/>).

Some of the core programmes include: African and World Christianity, Biblical Studies in the African Context, Bible Translation and Interpretation, “for students from all over the world for studies in *forms and traditions of African Christian life and thought* (emphasis mine), *emerging as a distinctive strand of non-Western-Christianity with potential to contributing to world Christianity*”—emphasis mine (web.). The research centres and interest include: Interfaith studies and engagement in Africa, Gospel and Culture engagement and Primal and Christian Spirituality. Describing the later research focus, it is noted:

Contrary to the prevailing view among evangelicals, vital Christianity has always been built on a primal substructure. By contrast, Christianity that has lost its primal vision has declined. Where indigenous knowledge is now acknowledged generally to have much to contribute to human enhancement, contrary to earlier negative estimations, the same is true in the area of Christian mission and spiritual renewal, with respect to the primal substructure of religion and culture (web. Retrieved 15 June 2020).

Therefore, it is evident that Bediako's legacy seems entrenched and influential, certainly in some of the research objectives and aims of this institution. But also, with the prevailing secularism and humanism, a newer definition of African evangelicalism may appear to be emerging as the representative brand of African evangelicalism. A recent publication of a handbook by the WEA—; *Evangelicals Around the World*— featured eight personalities from the mid-1800s to current century, in an article: "Evangelicals You Would Want to Know". Notably, Kato was not among the eight personalities, however, Bediako featured among the eight leading evangelicals from Africa (Hickman 2015:227). Thus, the importance of exploring Kato, to distil and apply his legacy has contemporary relevance. Notwithstanding the growing challenge, the contribution of Kato's endeavours to address the theological challenges should not be underrated.

3.8 Conclusion

Following Kato's conversion to Christianity from ATR, he pursued and excelled in a rigorous programme of biblical and theological training. He demonstrated a biblical worldview and held a high view of the Bible, its inerrancy, infallibility and authority as God's word. The Bible for Kato was the final authority for faith and conduct and sole source for Christian theology. Based on his biblical hermeneutics, he confronted many of the theological scholars of his time and several issues he perceived were heresies in the church in Africa. Notably, he endeavoured to draw a distinction between African traditional religions and the Christian faith to avoid syncretism and advocated for authentic biblical Christianity from an evangelical perspective. He rejected universalism and affirmed the unique and only way of salvation in Jesus Christ.

Salvation in Christ meant a transformed life and conferred an identity and self-understanding, a solution to the elusive search for African Christian identity. Notwithstanding the diversity and pluralities of identities, humans belong to two categories; those saved in Christ and those dead and lost in sin. Thus, Kato believed that being in Christ was by far more fulfilling and liberating than ethnic identity and asserts Christian African identity. In Kato's opposition to the theological teachings from

many scholars of his time, he contributed to defining and shaping evangelicalism, especially in the African context.

Kato was perhaps one of the best placed theologians of his time to engage ATR. He probably had more experience in ATR practices than his peers, both his detractors and those who supported him. However, and despite Kato's effort, ATR beliefs are still influencing the church in Africa today. Perhaps Kato could have done more about how the biblical worldview could have engaged or confronted the pervasive ATR worldview. He laid the foundation for sound theological education to promote a biblical worldview (Chalk 2013; Mburu 2019, Turaki 2020). I will now turn to analyse Kato's views against other scholars and material considered to be mainstream evangelicalism, in a dialogical approach, in the next chapter.

Chapter 4.0

Theological and Biblical Foundations for African Christian Identity, Hermeneutics and Evangelical Theological education

4.1 Overview

This chapter seeks to provide theological and biblical data against which Kato's contribution may be assessed. It traces, though briefly, how classical or orthodox beliefs of the Church, consistent with mainstream evangelical understanding were established. Specifically, the views of Kato on the issues of biblical hermeneutics, African Christian identity and theological education will be examined considering the orthodox teachings and beliefs of the Church, rooted in the Apostolic teachings in the NT Church, handed down to the contemporary church which Kato defended.

No one theologian or person has the final word or flawless theology. "All theology involves fallible human beings interpreting God's word and will. Although we rely on the Holy Spirit to guide us into all truth, our limited knowledge and sinful nature makes it possible that our interpretation is incorrect or imperfect" (Smith 2013:39). It is possible that some perspectives or stance Kato took, even with the best of intention to be faithful to the Bible, could be unbiblical. Aware of this reality, Kato in an address to the NAE leadership in the USA, (1975c:17) stated: "Then there are all these different relationships. So, when some fear we are too far to the right, some too far to the left, where do we fit in? Well, we need a lot of prudence and perception. And we would appreciate very much your prayers for the evangelical Christians in Africa as we seek to be as wise as serpents and harmless as doves in our day". Therefore, Kato's defence of African evangelicalism must be weighed against a broader context of biblical and theological foundations of classical Christianity. Thus, the materials surveyed include works by scholars both from the West and other parts of the world and scholars from Africa.

The rest of this chapter is divided into four main sections; the first section deals with some essential tenets of mainstream evangelicalism followed by the way the classical doctrines were established and sustained from the NT to modern times through the medieval and Reformation era. The theological and biblical foundations of Kato's legacy of 1) Hermeneutics, 2) African Christian identity and 3) theological education will be examined.

4.2 Tenets of Evangelicalism as Background to Kato's Theology

Given the ambiguity about evangelicalism, some clarity about mainstream evangelicalism would be required. Theological texts in the global church have long been the work of Western writers. Current endeavours by scholars in the majority world, especially in Africa, are critical and laudable. Kato's vision to have evangelical theological scholarship in Africa saw the establishment several initiatives. However, Kato's effort at initiating the evangelical theological enterprise in Africa has drawn praise and scorn in equal measure (Shiriki 2019; MacDonald 2017; Bediako 1992). Despite the expansion of the evangelical stream of the church in Africa and elsewhere around the world, evangelicalism faces misunderstanding and misrepresentation and bad press, especially in the current information age. Thus, evangelicalism grapples with the enigma of popularity and disfavour (Stott 2003:16; cf. Sider 2015).

John Stott expounds on the defining essence of evangelicalism. Stott first makes three disclaimers about what evangelism is not (2003:16-20): Firstly, it is *not a recent innovation* (emphasis Stott's); rather "evangelical Christianity is the original, apostolic, New testament Christianity" (p. 16). The reformers contended for the same in the sixteenth century as they sought to go back in time, seeking to recover the authentic original gospel. They were charged with heresy by the Roman Catholic church for an invention. In a rebuttal to the charge, Stott quotes from John Jewels Apology (1562) and writes: "It is not our doctrine that we bring you this day; we wrote it not, we found it not out, we are not inventors of it, we bring you nothing but what the old fathers of the church, what the apostles, what Christ our Saviour himself hath brought before us" (p. 17; cf. Oden 2015; 2016). Stott asserts that the same criticisms and charges brought against evangelical Christians as being innovators has been heard in every generation and the charges have always met similar rebuttals. In Africa, Kato took a robust posture for biblical Christianity and writes:

We are engaged in a battle for survival of sound biblical Christianity in the African continent. Should the revealed Christian faith be sacrificed at the altar of syncretistic universalism, in the guise of contextualisation? Should the church in Africa exchange eternal values of the Kerygma for 'one morsel'? Or is the evangelical concern for eternal values nothing more than a 'pie-in-the-sky by-and-by' theology? These are the issues that require attention in Africa today (Kato 1985:15).

The well-known Evangelist, Billy Graham faced similar charges at the beginning of his ministry. He was said to be "hopelessly out of date, setting back the cause of religion a hundred years" (2003:17). According to Stott, Billy Graham's rejoinder was: "I did indeed want to set religion back—not just 100 years but 1900 years, to the Book of Acts, where first century followers of Christ were accused of turning the Roman Empire upside down" (p. 17). Kato had his share of criticism; "Byang Kato was most notable as the dissenting voice in the chorus of positive evaluations of the African pre-Christian religious heritage...his own acultural conception of theology in fact defeated the very purpose of theology as the struggle with culturally-rooted questions" (Bediako 1992: xviii).

The second disclaimer Stott states is that the evangelical faith is *not a deviation from Christian orthodoxy*. Evangelicalism is mainstream Christianity; Christians "who attribute ultimate authority to Scripture and Salvation to Christ crucified alone" (p. 18). Both Kato's supporters and critics credit Kato for his high view of the Bible and charge him for his overzealousness, respectively. Thirdly, Stott states that the evangelical faith is *not synonym for fundamentalism*. The word fundamentalism originally referred to publications of Christian truths or affirmations of the Christian faith called The Fundamentals. However, the word has become a slur which evangelicals reject; they would not accept the fundamentalist label (p.19-20). However, the word evangelical and evangelicalism became current in modern Church history, culminating in the beginnings of the World Evangelical Alliance in 1846, albeit a British entity then. More realistically, the WEA became a global entity in 1951, with the name World Evangelical Fellowship but assumed the WEA again in 2001 (WEA web. retrieved 28 April 2020).

Stott gives a more positive description of evangelical essentials; in reality, these relate to the three persons of the Trinity— "the authority of God in and through Scripture, the majesty of Jesus Christ in and through the Cross, and the lordship of the Holy Spirit in and through his manifold ministries" (2003:28). This was built on David Bebbington's

magisterial survey findings of four main characteristics of evangelicalism (1989)—*conversionism, activism, biblicism and crucicentrism*—a stress on the Bible and the Cross, evangelism and conversion (p. 27). Stott further extrapolates:

In seeking to define what it means to be evangelical; it is inevitable that we begin with the gospel. For both our theology (evangelicalism) and our activity (evangelism) derive their meaning and importance from the good news (the evangel). And when we are thinking about the gospel, three fundamental questions and answers are bound to formulate in our minds regarding the origin, the substance and the efficacy of the gospel. They occur in 1 Corinthians 2:1-5, where Paul states his position over against the false teachers who were disturbing the Corinthian church (Stott 2003:28-29).

Concluding his treatise on the tenets of evangelical Christianity, Stott (2003:145-46) writes:

I have been at pains to argue that evangelical Christianity is trinitarian Christianity. We hold the three 'Rs'—revelation, redemption and regeneration, associating revelation with the Father, redemption with the Son and regeneration with the Holy Spirit. We desire above all else to bear witness to the supreme authority of the Word of God, the atoning efficacy of the cross of Christ and the indispensable ministries of the Holy Spirit.

Kato (1974:n. p.) similarly emphasised the centrality of the Bible and Christ and states the following five doctrines as the irreducible minimum of evangelicalism: 1). The infallibility of God's revelation in the Bible, 2). The virgin birth of Christ, 3). His vicarious death, 4). His bodily resurrection and 5). His personal return.

Underscoring the humility with which the evangelical faith is engendered, in spite of the reputation and charge by others that evangelicalism is characterised by pride, arrogance, vain and conceit, Stott (2003:146) states:

Yet the more the three persons of the Trinity are glorified, the more completely human pride is excluded. To magnify the self-revelation of God is to confess our complete ignorance without it. To magnify the cross of Christ is to confess our utter lostness without it. To magnify the regenerating, indwelling and sanctifying role of the Holy Spirit is to confess our abiding self-centredness without it.

The Word, the Cross and Spirit has a very special place in the thinking and mindset of evangelicals and at the core of the worldview assumptions with which they view reality, thus at the heart of their hermeneutics.

4.3 Historical sketch of the Development of Christian orthodoxy

The church in current era can look back to several millennia of human culture and the grounding of scriptural integrity by objective approaches or methods. This subsection seeks to engage historically the establishment of orthodoxy from the New Testament Church to contemporary times. This is an attempt to outline how the classic Christian doctrines were established and handed down to the Church from NT times. Thus, this sub-section seeks to address the question of the source(s) for constructing orthodoxy, a key pre-occupation of Kato in his arguments with his detractors, and an important aspect of Historical theology, which was the heart of debates of Kato and his opponents.

4.3.1. Classical Ecumenical Approach to Christianity

In the first millennium of the Christian era, i.e., from the time of Apostle Paul to Anslem, the Archbishop of Canterbury in the eleventh century (1093-1109 C. E.), the worshipping community defined the shape of classic Christianity (Madigan and Osiek 2005; Oden 2015). In discerning the meaning of scripture and faith, they established orthodoxy, using reliable interpretive methods. Orthodoxy, according to Oden (2015:33) is the “integrated biblical teaching as interpreted in its most consensual classic period—Classic Christian teaching” and “by which truth-claims are assessed”. This approach is also referred to as Classic Ecumenical Method (Oden 2015:183-207).

It is necessary to explain or define briefly the two words or concepts: ‘orthodox or orthodoxy’ and ‘ecumenical’. Simply, orthodoxy is a concept antimonic or opposite to heresy or heterodoxy or non-orthodoxy (Porumb 2014:9). Bebis (1998:841) proffers a concise description of the words orthodox and orthodoxy and the way related derivatives are used:

The terms ‘Orthodox’ and ‘Orthodoxy’ (from the Greek *orthos*, ‘right,’ and *doxa*, ‘opinion’ or ‘doctrine’) appeared in the fourth century A.D., and became common to refer to ‘true doctrine’ and ‘true practice.’ The term Orthodox Church now refers to those churches also known as the Eastern Orthodox Church, the Orthodox Catholic Church, or the Greek Orthodox Church. Orthodox in this modern sense contrasts with Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Nestorian and Coptic Churches of the east. The Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed (381) defined the Church as ‘one, holy, catholic, and apostolic’ without the use of the term ‘Orthodox’ because it and other creeds were themselves a definition of what right doctrine was. The terminology of the Orthodox Church arose (e.g. Justinian, Cod. 1.5.214) in contrast to positions defined by the ancient church as heretical.

Biblical orthodoxy refers to the inheritance and connection to the apostolic era and early centuries of Christianity. The evolution of Christian orthodoxy was based on already established principles, familiar to the worshipping community (Harnack (2008:81-82).

However, from the perspective of the Orthodox Eastern Church or Orthodox theologians, the concept of orthodoxy precedes the appearance of heresies. It is not only an inheritance and connected with the past, but a continuous dynamic reality inspired by the Holy Spirit inside the church. Further, the Orthodox Eastern Church sees other groups as not part of the Church and do not see the division in the Church as a reality. They see the Orthodox Church itself as the one Church of the apostolic era—“exclusivist” unity of the “*una sancta*”. Orthodoxy is seen not simply as a doctrinal entity, but as a community or communion mystically together in the image and likeness of Christ (Porumb 2014:8-9; cf. Zizioulas 1985:15-16). For the most part in this study, the former definition and understanding of the term is used, that is, the inheritance and connection to the apostolic age and early centuries of Christianity but with ontological implication for being.

“Ecumenical”, like the word “Evangelical”, has also become contentious a word (Sider 2020; von Sinner 2007:2). However, according to Oden (2015:69): “Ecumenism is Christian unity, based expressly upon Christian truth, rather than a union for absolute toleration, allowing anyone to bring to the table any faith-feeling”. Kato could not agree with Oden more and writes: “Unlike the true type of early ecumenical councils, present day ecumenism plays down doctrinal issues. Their thesis is that doctrine divides, but service unites. The drive for ecumenism, therefore, comes mainly through service (Kato 1975a:130). Therefore, Ecumenism, as defined, should not be confused with the ecumenical movement as promoted by the WCC (2015:67). Modern conciliar and bureaucratic ecumenism may not be succeeding in uniting the Church.

Kato developed three chapters of the thirteen-chapter *Theological Pitfalls in Africa*, underscoring his concerns about modern liberal ecumenism and writes: “The basic problem of ecumenism is the lack of an authoritative source for the meaning of

salvation. The word liberal³⁰ means a person who, among other things, does not accept the absolute nature of the Bible. While evangelicals hold that the Bible is the word of God, liberals advocate that the Bible contains the Word of God” (1975a:141). However, tried and tested ancient ecumenism and its methods of consensual affirmation, was a viable means of learning about the Christian faith in the Church (Kato 1975a:129-130; Oden 2015:184). Most of the fundamental doctrines of the Church in confessional statements or creeds common in the different traditions of the Church came to being through the ancient ecumenical method. Kato (1975a:129-30) states:

Early “ecumenical” church councils were very concerned about doctrine. In fact, for the first millennium of the Christian era, every Council condemned a major heresy. For example, the orthodox council meeting in Nicaea 1 (325) condemned Arianism which reduced the deity of Jesus Christ, that exalted the humanity of Christ at the expense of his deity. Although ecclesiastical politics played a major part in some of the struggles, the primary concern of the orthodox church was purity of doctrine. Subsequently, discussion will reveal that contemporary liberal ecumenism cannot rightly claim identity with the early ecumenical councils (cf. Porumb 2014:4).

The conciliar practice began in Jerusalem (Acts 15) and “took on formal characteristics in African debates in Carthage, Alexandria, Hippo and Milevis that would gradually come to define the methods for achieving ecumenical consensus elsewhere” (Oden 2012:48). The Church looks to the past, for the gospel that was handed down from the prophets, apostles and the Church fathers, to proclaim anew, the ancient gospel, in succeeding generations (Oden 2015:204). Classic Christianity does not necessarily pitch tradition and the Scripture against each other. The understanding is a way of “right remembering—consensually received throughout all Christian ages and culture—the earliest testimony of Scripture to God’s self-disclosure in history” (Oden 2015:36). Asserting any tradition that has no basis in Scripture is less orthodox. Quoting Vincent of Lérins, Oden (2015:143) states:

Christian teaching, consists in “what you have received, not what you have thought up; a matter not of ingenuity, but of doctrine; not of private acquisition, but of Public Tradition; a matter brought to you, not put forth by you, in which you must be not the author but the guardian, not the founder but the sharer, not the leader, but the follower.

³⁰ Kato used the term liberal or liberal ecumenical or modern ecumenism interchangeably.

The way the early interpreters of the Bible shaped the understanding of the Church was articulated by Vincent of Lérins, a French Monk, in the first half of the first millennium (Porumb 2014). Following the third ecumenical council in Ephesus in 431 C.E., Vincent of Lérins withdrew to shape the course of Christianity, by studying the process the church adopted in deriving at decisions. This is how he described the Classic Christian method for understanding and interpreting scripture (Oden 2015:183-84). The Classic Christian Method for orthodox scriptural discernment, guided by objective historical inquiry and with the help of the Holy Spirit was summed up by the Latin phrase—*Ubique, semper, omnibus* (*everywhere*—cross-cultural space, *always*—intergenerational time, *by all*—fair deliberative process). That is, that which has been believed and lived out by the faith community in all cultures and believed from the beginning of the apostolic witness. Also, that which has been accepted by general consent by both clergy and laity, in the whole church, over the whole world in all generations. The brief summary statement is succinctly stated as—*universality, apostolic antiquity and conciliar consent* (Oden 2015:190-92).

This standard is not the preserve of any establishment or tradition, it is as diffuse as is the uniting work of the Holy Spirit. Thus, according to Oden, the test of orthodoxy or reliability of scriptural interpretation or opinion must respond in the affirmative to all three following questions:

- (1) *Universality*. Does this opinion echo out of a particular locale, or is it shared generally by the whole community of believers around the world?
- (2) *Apostolic antiquity*. Is this claim something new, or is it grounded in ancient intergenerationally received faith?
- (3) *Conciliar consent*. Has this teaching been confirmed by an ecumenical council or by the broad consensus of the ancient Christian writers? Do we have documentary tradition of consenting laity generally affirming it? Has it been duly expressed through the liturgy and prayers of the Church (Oden 2015:191)?

Nevertheless, “Fourth-century Christianity and the Council of Nicaea have continually been read as a Constantinian narrative. The dominancy of imperial Christianity has been a consequent feature of the established narrative regarding the events within

early Christianity. There is a case for a revisionist enquiry regarding the influence of the emperor in the formation of orthodoxy” (Rukuni and Oliver 2019:1). Therefore, the only reliable and authoritative source of faith and conduct is indisputably the Bible. Kato’s constant hammering of this fact was not far-fetched as his detractors would make of it. “The Bible must remain the basic source of Christian theology. Evangelical Christians know of only one theology — Biblical theology — though it may be expressed in the context of each cultural milieu” (Kato1974l:n. p.).

Incidences of division, starting with the East-West schism of the Church in the eleventh century, continued to arise when the church experienced crisis of confidence and some dissenting voices broke away from the communion of previously perceived faith. In the New Testament Church, the Apostles resorted to a Council to discern the mind of God regarding the place of uncircumcised believers in the Church (Acts 15). Ancient ecumenical Councils resolved heretical readings of Scripture and affirmed what is now embraced by the Church as orthodoxy. The Church’s response to safeguarding the truth of God’s word has been, the universal body holding against the variability and fragility of the few. “Christian teaching prefers the universal to the particular, the classic to the eccentric, the whole, to the part” (Oden 2015:215). Nevertheless, Tradition and Councils or any human method, are all subordinate to Scripture. Classic Christian teaching holds fast to what has been believed and consented to around the world by Christians of all times and places (Oden 2015:190; p.194; Mueller 2011).

Sometimes, the opposite scenario can cause problems in the church when even the majority may threaten to abandon the historically held faith; the next level of appeal is apostolic antiquity which precedes and regulates the newer proposal. If apostolic antiquity itself is questioned, a sound conciliar process with the aid of the Holy Spirit, should diligently discern what is consistent with apostolic teaching as generally received cross-culturally and intergenerationally (Oden 2015:195-97). In the case of Kato, he appeared to be a lone “voice in the chorus of positive evaluations of the African pre-Christian religious heritage” (Bediako 1992:xviii), informing hermeneutical discourse, in Africa. Kato was an embodiment of the antithesis of the theological positions propounded by African theologians, like John Mbiti and Bolaji Idowu, whose publications included a number of subjects, such as ATR and relationship to

Christianity, salvation and African Christian theology (Bediako 1992:386; Breman 1995:367; Kato 1975a.:200).

The Classic Ecumenical approach underscores the oneness of the Church and dependency on the guidance and enabling of the Holy Spirit, who leads the consenting community of faith to unity as the one body of Christ; one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and father of all (Eph. 4:4-6). However, politics and imperial influence on episcopal polities tended to raise doubts about the reliability of the decisions of the councils (Rukuni and Oliver 2019:1). In any case, the apostles remembered events accurately and transmitted these reliably in the written Word, aided by the Holy Spirit; the received apostolic teaching is trustworthy entirely reliable for faith and conduct. The Christian community is not a mere human institution, constantly in need of protection by human guarantees; it stands under the protection of God the Spirit, who helps the faithful to receive and remember rightly (Oden 2015:206; Zizioulas 1985:205). Thus, Vincent of Lérins, defined ecumenical teaching as an aid to interpretation of Scripture under the threefold test of classic Christianity: “that which has been believed everywhere, always and by all” (Oden 2015:103). The Church as a whole, acts as the hermeneutical community. Paul Hiebert reiterates the importance of the church community acting as hermeneutical safeguard against interpreters going astray from the text and writes:

The priesthood of believers is not a license for theological “Lone-Rangerism”. We need each other to see our personal biases, for we see the ways others misinterpret Scriptures before we see our own misinterpretations. Along the same line, we need Christians from other cultures, for they often see how our cultural biases have distorted our interpretations of Scripture. This corporate nature of the Church as a community of interpretation extends not only to the church in every culture, but also to the church in all ages (Hiebert 1994:91).

However, Kato had strong reservations about modern ecumenism. According to him, the use of the term ‘ecumenism’ had taken on a new connotation; the general idea of brotherhood. Brotherhood, “based on the feeling that our differences really do not matter so long as we can eat together and talk together” (Kato 1975a:130). Also, this had become an “institutionalised movement incarnated in the World Council of Churches” (Kato 1975a:130). Thus, the concerns Kato raised about what he called liberal ecumenism was not about ecumenism *per se*, but the basis upon which ecumenism is forged. Kato (1975a:169) writes:

Unity with all “Christians” at any cost is advocated by some. The African solution to a problem of disagreement, as it is said, is to seek compromise. The two parties sink all their differences, gloss over the truth and pretend that all is well... The word of God has some strong things to say regarding disagreement over doctrine and Christian living. “If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him Godspeed. For he that biddeth him Godspeed is partaker of his evil deed” (2 John 10, 11). Regarding Christian living, the Word of God commands, “... certain men who, having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof, from such turn away” (2 Tim. 3:5).

Kato feared that the drive for Christian unity was to bring all the church denominations together, including the Roman Catholic Church under one tent. The preservation of the established doctrines of the church was no longer the focus.

Notwithstanding the need for a *sensus communis*, some evangelical churches believed they should remain outside the WCC structures, represented by AACC. However, realising the need for unity and that “Jesus Christ did pray for both spiritual and visible unity (John 17:21), Evangelicals should want to pull together as long as it is for unity of people committed to Christ and his Word... For African evangelicals, the most desirable alternative is membership in the Evangelical Fellowship of each country and also membership in the African Evangelical Association” (1975a:170). Such disagreement among protestant churches have their roots in the Reformation era. I will now turn to a brief historical sketch of the evangelical biblical heritage through the divisions during that period.

4.3.2 Biblical Orthodoxy in the Medieval and Reformation Era

In the second millennium C. E., the time of Anselm to John Paul II, pivot of history included the medieval era, the Reformation and modern period (Oden 2015:2). In medieval period, the church was indulged in activities contrary to the teachings found in Scripture. Papacy lacked spiritual and moral integrity and unworthy act of sale of indulgences and ecclesiastical positions to the highest bidder, all had negative spiritual impact on the ordinary people. The reading and teaching of Scripture were left mostly to the priests (Holder 2017). The integrity, moral standing and tradition of the church made the interpretation of Scripture controversial or questionable. At best, scriptural interpretation paid attention to higher-critical approaches—“reconstructing sources that presumably lie behind the final form of the text, which focused on more or less speculative elements behind the biblical text rather than on the text itself—rendered the study of the Bible lifeless and devoid of clear meaning for Christian faith and

ministry” (Bauer and Traina 2011:2). The method of interpretation was deductive and according to Bauer and Traina (2011:18):

The deductive spirit is dogmatic and authoritarian, absolute and categorical, characterised by a closed mind. It amounts to hermeneutical absolutism. It does not entertain the possibility of being in error and therefore is unwilling to change. It is not open to challenge or dissent. It is resistant to the discussion of differing views. It is often concerned with supportive proof texts for position already held.

Access to Scripture by the ordinary people was through the liturgy. The priests taught an ever-widening list of doctrines that were not necessarily consistent with Scripture which stood between the congregation and the text. Asumang (2014:59) observes: “During the medieval period, the discipline of Church Dogmatics, which expounded the confessional theological stances of the churches, displaced the primacy of the text and therefore biblical studies”. In other words, the traditions developed were given supremacy over what the Bible says.

The social and political situation of the period also had an impact on Christian hermeneutics. Illiteracy and political instability were rife. This inevitably placed Bible interpretation solely in the hands of “elite” priests, who then corrupted it. The growing discontent among the people was a pastoral concern for the German Monk, Martin Luther and his attempt for reforms was initiated by nailing his 95 theses on the church ‘bulletin board’ on the door in Wittenberg in 1517, for discussion. His theses were informed by his reading and understanding of Scripture and led a movement for spiritual liberation and return to primitive Christianity. This resonates with Kato’s call for Biblical Christianity in Africa. There could be some analogical parallels of this account of the situation with Kato’s time. Medieval times resonate well with Africa in the first half of the twentieth century. Kato was not a Luther, but we can see how one can learn from the hermeneutical struggles of Luther’s time and compare with Kato’s.

The reformation era was another important turning point in the history of the Church for biblical hermeneutics that has shaped the understanding of the Church. There was discontent and need for the church to go back to the Apostolic doctrines. Martin Luther’s action led to galvanising the Protestant movement for the reformation of Christianity. Reformation, as the movement would be known, was essentially “a theological and spiritual movement and it was, above all else, about the nature of divine communication” (Patterson 2017:6). Luther and the reformers found the Bible

not only as the Word of God but was believed to be all-sufficient guide for faith and practice, “overriding the authority of pope and council” (2017:7). Patterson states:

The first Principle of the Reformation is the conviction that God spoke by means of the Holy Spirit to holy ones who wrote the words of God and the Bible as such is the inerrant and sufficient Word of God. As such, the Bible—not the church or the government in any of its forms—was to provide the trajectory for knowing God and serving Him. This conviction of the authority of the Bible led to the second great principle of Reformation—justification through faith alone” (2017:7).

Altogether, the Reformation teachings are summed up in the reformation slogan (what is now commonly referred to as Five Solas (Baba 2016:111; Smith 2013:14; Holder 2017:1) —1). Sola Scriptura (that the scripture alone is the standard and source for the Christian faith, doctrine and practice), 2). Sola Fide (faith alone), 3). Solus Christus (Christ alone), 4). Sola Gratia (grace alone) and 5). Soli Deo Gloria (for the glory of God alone). The leaders of the reformation affirmed the authority of the Bible as supreme and encouraged the inductive study of the Bible. With the emergence of the printing press, the Reformation movement succeeded in promoting the reading of the Bible and the inductive Bible Study by all; clergy and laity.

However, Holder argues that the magisterial reformers did not necessarily abandon the traditions of the Medieval church, except perhaps the Anabaptists writes (Holder 2014:7). The social and political situation in the medieval period also had an impact on Christian hermeneutics (Porumb 2014:128). Tradition had a way of shaping the church’s hermeneutics but always required the judgement of Scripture. The place for tradition was helpful when proven and time-tested approaches are employed in discerning the meaning of Scripture. The reformation occurred not just because of the efforts of Luther and his followers, but the socio-political issues contributed to it. There were three issues among others, that drove the reformation, these were, (a) the Renaissance which started decades before Luther’s time started questioning the extent of elitist Roman Catholic authority of priests – that also impacted on who and how biblical interpretation was to be done, (b) the discovery of printing democratized the ability to read and write by wider population than the elite and (c) the political situation of Germany, especially Saxony region, that was keen to assert its independence as against the rest of Europe, made it more likely for Luther to receive local support (Pak 2017:1-13; Rukuni and Oliver 2019:1-10). Rukuni and Oliver

(2017:8) observe: "Perceivably, there is a traceable trend in early Christianity where political autonomy was a reason for non-conformity to a universalised orthodoxy".

The resonance with Kato was the emergence of independence African nations from colonial rule, cultural revolution and nationalism, a call for moratorium and assertion of African selfhood and self-rule. But this is how far the resemblance goes, he had not political or social influence for his point of view. The witness of the apostles, handed down to the patristic and matristic believers, have had a way of transmission from one generation to another, aided by divine providence. The trusted scriptural and theological inherited traditions are important continuum for engagement for modern day reforming movements, rather than discarding these, in the quest for the preservation of the purity of scripture. Even though Kato was notably known for contending for the Scripture as sole source for theology, he embraced scriptural traditions of the NT and the church in early centuries. In his defence of the received scriptural traditions of the missionary church in Africa, he states: "One common error which also may be cited is the lumping together of some fundamental Biblical principles with the western culture and repudiating both. The error begins with some early Western missionaries who identified the kingdom of God with Western civilisation" (1975a:175). Kato based his work on the patristic fathers, notably Tertullian. Bediako labels Kato as Tertullian of modern African church and states: "The Tertullian viewpoint of Byang Kato must be given due weight, but so also must the evidence of a firmly established Christian religious commitment in the African church" (1992:xviii). Kato affirms the place of the Early patristic fathers, scriptural traditions and writes:

It is often forgotten that the Apostolic Creed, on which most Western church creeds are based, was composed by Europeans, Asians, and Africans. Athanasius, the great architect of the earliest Christian creed and defender of Orthodoxy, arose out of Africa. Other theologians of Africa, Arius and Origen, of course, were not condoned in their false views. Inevitably, many cultural tendencies were passed on to the converts by the Western missionary (1975a:176).

The reformation itself was not without its own pitfalls and causing more divisions among the reformers and the Protestant Church itself. Some of the traditions of the of the Church (Catholic) protestants were severing from were retained. The authority of the Bible and place of tradition continued to be in a state of flux and a particular stream of protestants, known as evangelicals, emerged.

4.3.3. Evangelical Hermeneutics

Evangelicalism, as known today, can be traced back to 1521, in the reformation era. Like the Reformation itself, evangelicalism was continuation of the contention for the NT and apostolic, against the corruption of the world. According to Hickman (2015:10): “Erfurt University rector Johannes Crotus Rubianus, friend of Martin Luther, is the first to call Luther and his followers “Evangelicals” (Evangelische); the term rapidly gains widespread usage, and a variant is used to mean “Protestant” in most non-English European languages today”. Reformation posture encourages individual assertiveness, justified by the doctrine of priesthood of all believers (1 Peter 2:5). The liberty to read the Bible for self, without dependence on the designated priests paved the way for various individual emphasis, separate from other leaders’ particular emphasis.

In the early 1700s Puritanism and Pietism in Europe and America were more dynamic and challenged what they saw as mere nominal Christianity in the institutional Protestant churches. They called for repentance for past sins, personal conversion to Christ and authentic Christian living and commitment to proclamation of the gospel. This brand of Protestant Christianity gave the word evangelical greater currency. Although evangelicalism itself is theologically diverse, they “continue to see themselves as inheritors of a tradition of authentic Christianity that can be traced back to the early church, although operating outside of ecclesiastical structures and sometimes in open revolt against them” (Wolffe 2015:25-26).

Another difference between evangelicals and the historic and institutionalised protestant churches is the approach to Bible interpretation. Both the institutional protestant and the distinct evangelical wing use Inductive Bible Study method for Bible Interpretation. However, the former do so in a narrow sense; the approach is allegorical, approaching the text with presuppositions and making deductions from reading the texts in support of the presumptions, very much like the Catholics. Evangelicals use the Inductive Bible study in the broader sense; it involves a commitment to move from evidence from the text and realities that surround the text to possible conclusions or inference, regarding the meaning of the text (Bauer & Traina 2011:1). The evidential approach seeks for the literal meaning of the text (plain-simple-literal or natural sense), rather than the allegorical or deductive.

The literalist tradition is traced back to Jewish sect who broke away from the normative Judaism and the Sadducees faction of the Jewish religious leaders, came out of these sect (Baba 2016:94). These rejected tradition and allegory, relying solely on Scripture as the valid source for faith and practice. They interpreted Scripture literally. However, Bauer and Traina contrast the deductive and allegorical method with the literal and inductive approach and write:

In contrast, the inductive spirit and the process by which it is implemented seek to be undogmatic. The inductively minded person welcomes discussion and even challenges; this eagerness is based on the desire to hear whatever the text has to say, whether one agrees or disagrees. Such an inductively minded person recognizes that at a later point one will have opportunity to make value judgements concerning the message communicated by the text. Furthermore, one who has this inductive spirit is willing to acknowledge one's own fallibility and to begin any interpretation with the statement, "I may be wrong, but this is my understanding and the evidential reasons for it". Such a person is open to changing one's view if the evidence warrants it (Bauer and Traina 2016:19).

Underlying this is the principle that the Bible cannot be interpreted like any other book and one has to depend on the Holy Spirit for guidance. The interpreter must recognize that the ultimate purpose for God's word is a changed life by the Holy Spirit. God continues to reveal himself through the written word and human interpreters, but whose interpretations must be consistent with what the Bible says (Kunhiyop 2012:36, 41). Thus, Kato states: "Only by following the normal, grammatico-historical interpretation would one be free from extreme subjectivism. To follow the allegorical method or to spiritualise normal concepts necessarily leads to subjectivism and preconceived notions" (1975a:78). However, hermeneutics is dynamic and takes different approaches and practices, supported my theoretical foundation and practical application (Mburu 2019:5).

The early evangelicals included Calvinists—who believed in the absolute sovereignty and predestination for salvation— and Arminians, who held that salvation was for all who by own free-will, accept the message of the gospel (Wolffe 2015:26). However, both the Arminians and Calvinists affirm the 'five solas' but hold some differences in definition (Smith 2013:14). Evangelicals have also been hampered by Protestant pietism and the Enlightenment, which did not subscribe to classic forms of scripture interpretation. In pietism, it was personal story-telling, while the influence of the Enlightenment led some to resort to the historical-critical work as the key for scripture

interpretation (Oden 2015:75). A sweep of the evangelical history reveals, according to Heckman, four main categories of events that shaped evangelicalism, these include:

- i. Revivals, evangelical awakenings, and evangelistic crusades
- ii. Founding of Bible societies, mission societies, denominations and other organisations that were evangelical at the time, even if they are not so now
- iii. Sending of missionaries and
- iv. Conferences mostly related to missions and/or evangelism (Author 2015:10).

These factors contributed in shaping the approach to biblical interpretation. Over the years, various methods have evolved, like the few selected approaches in this study (section 4.3.4).

Evangelical roots are firmly established in the religious fervor of the First and Second Great Awakenings of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Europe and America, respectively. “The “events” of the Great Awakenings—especially the second—were weighted toward winning people to Christ rather than the time-consuming task of discipleship” (Moffitt 2019:9). Typical of this era were large gatherings, including camp meetings where large crowds would gather to listen to a series of evangelists. These meetings were well planned and advertised ahead of time and attracted people from far and wide.

The First World War also helped shape focus on evangelism. Citing Mike Metzger, Moffitt (2019:9) writes: “WWI had profound consequences for the church. It launched apocalyptic interpretations of history among evangelicals, giving rise to the End Times movement.” This movement passionately appealed to listeners to save themselves from the impending judgement and destruction of the world. Moffitt (2019:9-10) states:

This history enforced the idea that the priority task of the church was evangelism. A well-known and contemporary document of evangelicals, the Lausanne Covenant of 1974 says, “...in the church’s mission of sacrificial service evangelism is primary.” This was written to counter the claims of the liberal wing of the Protestant church, which sometimes claims that salvation comes as God’s people do good works, and a personal, saving encounter with the living Christ is optional. The evangelical wing of the church rightly protested that salvation does not come without a personal experience of being born again.

The church had been influenced by the Enlightenment philosophy and uncritically accommodated the dualistic worldview; the spirit and material divide of reality. The Church's role was the spirit aspect, subordinating the material and physical side of life.

The International Congress on World Evangelisation (ICOWE), held in Lausanne, Switzerland, with 2,473 delegates from 150 countries (50% from the Global South), in 1974, was another important turning point in the history of the global church and especially for evangelicalism (Hickman 2015:22). Lausanne Movement, born under the leadership of Billy Graham and John Stott, have contributed to the current shape of evangelicalism around the globe. The Lausanne Covenant was an important attempt to change the dualistic view of evangelicals and rightly affirmed the mission of the church to be integral or holistic; that the mission of the church or evangelism is inclusive of social action (Moffitt 2019:10; Hickman 2015:22-23).

It is noteworthy that Byang Kato was one of the plenary speakers at the first Lausanne event and a member of the continuation committee of Lausanne. One of Kato's notable contribution to theology was to bring to the limelight the subject of contextualisation in theological discourse. Also, at Lausanne, the WEA appointed Kato as Chair of the WEA Theology Commission and he planted the idea of ACTEA for the global body which led to the birth of ICETE (Bowers 2008; cf. Lausanne 1 Compendium:p. 1228).

Following the brief historical account of the development of evangelical hermeneutics, I will now turn to selected works on evangelical hermeneutics in the contemporary church, taking into consideration the African context and the African traditional religious worldview and the missionary priority of the Church.

4.3.4. Contemporary Evangelical Hermeneutics

Context, plurality of religions, worldviews and the mission of the Church, are important considerations impacting on hermeneutics. In the African context, Kato's missional endeavour had to contend with ATR. This section seeks to engage some theoretical foundations for biblical exegesis. The three main models selected for review embrace the grammatico-historical or literal interpretations, a method adopted by mainstream evangelicalism (Kato 1975a; Bauer and Traina (2011, Mburu 2019). Elizabeth Mburu (2019:5) asserts: "Scripture is meant to be relevant to the context in which it is being

taught and applied. And yet millions of believers in Africa are constantly bombarded with foreign ways of approaching the text of the Bible that ignore important aspects of the social, economic, political and theological culture of Africa". Nonetheless, the history of exegesis reveals that "classic African Christian teaching in the patristic³¹ period (100-750 AD) preceded modern colonialism by over a thousand years" (Oden 2016:3; cf. Mburu 2019:4). According to Oden: "Many young African women and men are now re-examining these roots. They are hungry for accurate information on their brilliant Christian ancestors" (Oden 2016:3). Mburu 2019:4-5) states: "However, in the nineteenth century when Western missionaries brought Christianity to Africa, they also brought their own Western readings of the Bible. Consequently, although some of the approaches to Bible interpretation originated in Africa, Western approaches are prominent in the African church today" (Mburu 2019:4-5).

Four decades earlier, Byang Kato made a similar call for contextualisation of the gospel in the African context and writes:

'Contextualization' is a new term imported into theology to express a deeper concept than 'indigenization' ever does. I understand the term to mean making concepts or ideas relevant in a given situation. In reference to Christian practices, it is an effort to express the never changing Word of God in ever changing modes for relevance. Since the Gospel message is inspired but the mode of its expression is not, contextualization of the modes of expression is not only right but necessary (Kato 1985:23).

Kato further outlines aspects of Christianity for contextualisation and states:

Contextualization can take place in liturgy, dress, language, church service, and any other form of expression of the Gospel truth. Musical instruments such as organ and piano can be replaced or supplemented with such indigenous and easily acquired instruments as drums, cymbals, and cornstalk instruments. It must be borne in mind, of course, that the sound of music must not drown the message. Clergy do not have to wear a 'Geneva' gown or even a 'dog collar'. Not only should the message be preached in the language best understood by the congregation, but the terminology of theology should be expressed the way common people can understand (1985:23).

Mburu proposes a hermeneutical model that could be particularly helpful in the African context, she calls this—Four-Legged Stool (2019). Using known African categories of interpretation, this model uses a familiar object in the African context; a four-legged

³¹ According to Oden: Where the word 'patristic' occurs, read as patristic/matristic, since numerous women were participants in the interpretation of early Christian scriptures—Macrina, Amma Theodora, Paula, Marcela, Melania the Elder, Fabiola, Eustochium and others. 2016:5

stool as a symbol, in a five steps process, as a theoretical framework. According to Mburu (2019:65):

Just as a good stool is stable and supports our weight, so the hermeneutical stool will be one we can put our weight on, confident that it provides a stable or accurate interpretation of the biblical text. To do so, it requires four legs, which in this case are (a) parallels to the African context, (b) the theological context, (c) the literary context and (d) the historical context. These legs support the seat, which represents the final stage of interpretation—the application.

The fifth stage is the application (the seat), supported by the four legs; each leg representing a critical step in the process of interpretation. The first step (leg 1) has to do with our presuppositions (the African context) or the known before moving to the unknown. The familiar worldview could either stand in the way of understanding the text but also essential in understanding reality and a framework in understanding the biblical text. Mburu (2019:67) states: “Hermeneutics involve moving from the known to the unknown”. If the reader does not know her own assumptions, she would not know when these are incorrect or wrong. Mburu (2019:68) writes: “While the Bible stands in a historical context and tradition, so does the reader”. Earlier exegetes did not realise this. In oral culture as in Africa, a narrator’s story must connect with the audience, thus there must be contact with the biblical text.

The diagram below, demonstrates the four legs of the stool and the seat itself, resting on the four legs. According to Mburu (2019:70): “The first leg of the hermeneutical stool is to consciously identify our own context and discover the points of contact between it and the biblical context. In this way, we can identify cues that will allow for a more accurate interpretation of the text through a process of comparing the two contacts and analysing the findings”. The second leg (leg 2) of the hermeneutical stool seeks to understand the theological importance of the text in terms of its genre and the rest of the Bible as a whole. “Africans tend to be very religious, even in modern Africa.

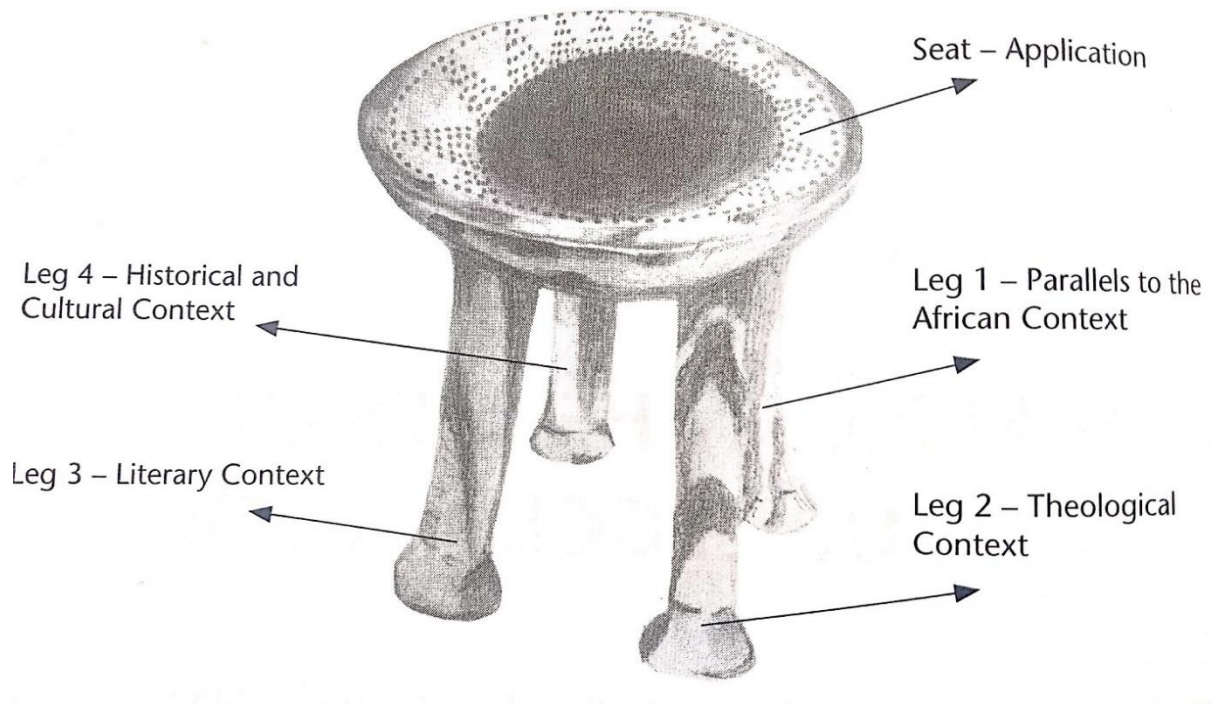


Figure 3: An African Hermeneutic: A Four-Legged Stool

Source: *African Hermeneutics* by Elizabeth Mburu, P. 66

The spiritual dimension of life is always a factor in our interaction with the world around us. Because of this orientation, most African readers initially focus on the theological emphases of the text and allow these to determine their interpretation of it" (Mburu 2019:70; Mbiti 1986; Mokhoathi 2017). The third step (leg 3 of the stool) is the literary features or genre of the text, which is identified. This helps in clarifying the interpretations so far, in the previous two steps. Finally, step four (leg 4) is the historical and cultural context of the text. This step seeks to understand the context of the original readers and how they would have understood the message. These approaches are necessary to uncover the intended meaning to the original audience for appropriate application to the African context, the seat of the stool.

Undergirding the African cultural hermeneutics are the following considerations:

- 1). Africans tend to have an inherently religious or spiritual worldview that is not lost when they become Christians, 2). The philosophy and method used in an African hermeneutic must address issues that are relevant to African Christians, 3). An African hermeneutic must ground abstract thinking in concrete realities and 4). An African hermeneutic must be

comprehensible to all Christians and not just to a select group of intellectuals. The goal is millions of believers who live in Africa to truly understand the biblical text and apply it in their lives (Mburu 2019:7; cf. Kunhiyop 2012: xv-xvi).

Kato sensitised the church in Africa about syncretism and warned of its negative impact and states: “Contextualisation is a new term imported into theology to express a deeper concept than ‘indigenisation’ ever does. I understand the term to mean making concepts or ideas relevant in a given situation. In reference to Christian practices, it is an effort to the never changing Word of God in ever modes for relevance” (Kato 1985:23; Mburu 2019:6).

The need for sound biblical exegesis in the African context is highlighted by Chalk (2013:ix) who writes: “Statistically, sixty-five percent of the population in sub-Saharan Africa is professing to be Christian...large enough that by this time there should be some Christian shaping of African culture”. The lack of transformation has been ascribed to the fact that “Christians are holding on to their African worldview while trying assimilate new Christian doctrines into it” (Chalk 2013:ix; cf. Turaki 2020). Thus, the quest for African Christians to deal with the prevailing and dominant traditional cultural and religious worldview.

Turaki proposes a radical approach in African hermeneutics so that the Christians can embrace the biblical world view for transformation. The use of Western hermeneutics on one hand and the use of African Traditional Religion on the other, as basis for Bible interpretation have proved problematic and inadequate in the African context. Western methods of doing theology were “too rationalistic, too scientific and too humanistic with too many secularists ideas. This approach betrays African authenticity. On the other hand, African scholarship has been accused of being too ideological, using the African culture, religion or worldview to portray Africa in a better light” (Turaki 2020:xxvii; cf. Mokhoathi 2017). Thus, Turaki proposes a method that takes ATR seriously without undermining the fidelity to biblical Christianity; a method “that engages ATR from a biblical, Christocentric and ecclesiastical perspective...to formulate an African Theology that is relevant and biblical” (2020:231).

The goal of this method—Engaging Religions and Worldviews in Africa—is to demonstrate how biblical Christianity can transform the traditional cultural and

religious mindset. According to Turaki (2020:231): “Any teachings and any presentation of the gospel of Christ to people in traditional Africa must bear in mind the great influence of these religious and social beliefs and practices. Christianity cannot provide less than traditional religion offered to Africa”. Turaki outlines elements of the worldview or belief system of the African; which need to be understood from a biblical perspective and suggests enquiry into the following:

- (1) What do traditional Africans feel about particular religious beliefs, for example, the belief in spirit beings (the spiritual phenomenon) or the belief in mystical, mysterious, unseen and hidden powers and forces (power phenomenon)?
- (2) What attitudes, behaviours, and practices accompany, support, and reinforce this belief?
- (3) What religious and social feelings, attitudes, behaviour, understandings are affected when such a fundamental belief encounters Christianity, or Islam, or modernity?
- (4) What is the impact of such a belief as it shapes and moulds the traditional African mind, or the Christian mind in Africa, or modernity in Africa?
- (5) What religious and social practices, rituals, rites, and ceremonies of traditional Africa are rooted in beliefs that shape and mould the African response to Christianity and modernity? (Turaki 2020:231-32; cf. Kato 1975b).

These beliefs should not be treated lightly and dismissed as superstitious; they are real to the African. Kato affirms this and observed:

God has revealed Himself in two ways - general non-redemptive revelation on the one hand, and special redemptive revelation on the other. In the context of African traditional religions, the worship is merely an indication of an honest craving for God, which can be fulfilled only in biblical revelation through the incarnate Christ who died and rose again. This should be the preoccupation of the church in Africa (1985:9).

Thus, what would seem to be a response to these considerations of the African traditional worldviews and practices, Kato states:

The written Word of God should be the final test of any action. Always compare every teaching or practice with Jesus Christ. Some questions you can ask are: Does such practice or teaching recognize that Jesus Christ is truly God and truly man? Does it uphold the fact that He was born of a Virgin, died and rose again as the only Saviour of the one who accepts Him? Does it teach that Jesus Christ went up to heaven and that He is now praying for the believers? Does it acknowledge that He is able to take care of all our problems now, whether they have to do with examinations or health? Does it allow for the

possibility that Christ may even permit us to fail examinations or be ill and yet He still loves us? Does it recognize that the wicked may even prosper in this life through their dealings with evil spirits but the day is coming when Jesus Christ will put down all principalities and powers, and become Lord of Lords and King of Kings? Only the teaching that answers these questions positively is in line with God's Word (1975b:n. p.).

Christianity and the Bible with the theology of salvation and redemption, God's special revelation to humanity through Jesus Christ, adequately respond to the ATR enquiries (Turaki 2020:232). Turaki further writes:

If we get our methods wrong, we will be liable to misunderstand, misinterpret and misapply theological data. This is what happened in the past when those using comparative and descriptive approaches spent their time looking for similarities or differences between Christianity and ATR and when phenomenologists looked for religious meanings. Any theological discourse apart from God's special revelation in the Bible and in Jesus Christ would merely be an analysis of human theology (2020:232).

Therefore, the task of Christian theological reflection is not to seek to understand Christianity from the perspective of African traditional culture and religion, but to understand African traditional culture and religion from the perspectives of Christian Biblical Worldview, a method of engagement and interaction of religions and worldviews (Turaki 2020:232).

There is a growing number of African scholars magnifying the voice of Kato and taking a stance for the authority and the primary place of the Bible in Christian theological reflection (Turaki 2020; Mburu 2019; Kunhiyop 2012; Mokhoathi 2017; Otonko 2018). Palmer (2015:6) for example, states: "Source of Christian theology is the Bible or Holy Scripture and the Holy Spirit, the means of special revelation by which God has made himself known to us". Quoting Martin Luther, Palmer writes: "reason and natural theology can lead us astray" (2015:6-7). Natural theology does not tell us about the Trinity, a suffering God and Jesus dying on the cross for our salvation nor the condescension of God in a manger (Palmer 2015:6). Natural revelation does not help us to get a full understanding of God and salvation. Authentic Christian theology is derived from the Bible.

The phenomenal growth of the African Church is driven by evangelical activism or evangelism, with a sense of divine vocation and commission in the mission of God. Thus, African hermeneutics could be mission centred. Kato in an address to the Evangelical Alliance in Natal, spoke on John 17, among other things and said:

In this chapter the Father, Son and Holy Spirit discuss Missions. vv. 15-21. Whom did Jesus send as missionaries? a) the disciples at that time, and b) those who would believe through their word. (Unbelievers have no room in this prayer for unity.) Christ wants all Christians to be ONE, and He wants to send them out in MISSION. All Christians are sent, even believers from the Third World. "As the Father has sent Me, so send I you (Kato 1981:6).

Christopher Wright observes that the whole grand narrative of the Bible; from Genesis to Revelation is about the Mission of God and the participation of God's people in the Mission of God (Wright 2006; cf. Tennent 2010). Wright (2006:17) writes: "Mission is, in my view, a major key that unlocks the whole grand narrative of the canon of Scripture". Thus, he proposes a framework for reading the Bible and identifies underlying themes as foundational pillars of the biblical worldview and biblical theology. These themes include: "monotheism, creation, humanity, election, redemption, covenant, ethics, future hope" (2006:17). He explores each of these themes from their Old Testament roots through to the New Testament to illustrate how they developed and fulfilled (2006:17-18).

Given the diversity in methodologies, the goal of hermeneutics is always to get to the one true meaning of the original message and as understood by the original hearers in their own context. Wright writes (2006:40):

It is important to point out here that "plurality in interpretation" is not pluralism as a hermeneutical ideology, nor is it a relativist charter. The starting point for understanding the meaning of biblical texts...remains a careful application of grammatico-historical tools in seeking to as far as is possible their author's and editor's intended meaning in the contexts they were spoken or written...But as we apply those tools and then move to appropriate the significance and implications of these texts in our own context, cultural diversity plays its part in the hearing and receiving of them.

However, the different methodologies and approaches may all have their limitations and open to critique. Ultimately, it is the text that should govern the methodological framework and not the other way round (Wright 2006:40, 68; Bauer and Traina 2011:19). Wright counsels to base hermeneutic assessment for its "heuristic fruitfulness", i.e. clarity and coherence with the Bible's overarching message (2006:68). Missiological studies itself may be difficult to define as a theological discipline (Oborji 2006; Danielson 2013). Missional endeavour by nature, involves a wide spectrum of social engagement if the church takes seriously the second most important commandment—loving neighbour as self and indeed, a demonstration of

the former—"loving God with with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind and all your strength" (Mark 12:30; cf. Leffel 2013). According to Leffel (2013:xiii):

The gospel's social dimensions have been integral to Christian mission from the beginning. Caring for the poor, naked, homeless, starving, oppressed, and abandoned; "seeking the welfare of the city"—these concerns always have accompanied faithful witness. They also have animated generations of missionaries who established schools and universities, hospitals, orphanages, agricultural programs, and relief programs for the poor with great impact throughout the world.

Kato's interpretation and application of scripture could be deduced by his polemics in part but much more so by his missionary activities and as explored in the previous chapters. However, I will now turn to his handling of particular biblical texts; how this impacted him directly or how he exegeted a particular passage in preaching.

4.4 Theological and Biblical Foundations of Kato's Theological Legacy

This section explores the basis for theological and biblical understanding of Kato's hermeneutics, African Christian self-identity and theological education. At the core of theology is the appreciation of the Holy Scriptures (Bible), how this is interpreted and applied to one's reality and context, especially from an orthodox or evangelical perspective. Some selected works demonstrating classical approaches to hermeneutics from the early church to contemporary times will be engaged. Among other works, Thomas Oden's work on Christian orthodoxy from antiquity and early African Christianity (2015; 2016) and Christopher Wright's *The Mission of God* (2006); using the theme of mission as the meta narrative for understanding the Bible are reviewed. Also, Elizabeth Mburu (2019) and Yusufu Turaki's (2020) works, on hermeneutical approaches in contemporary African context, are helpful materials, among others, in this task of highlighting theological and biblical foundations.

The survey highlights historical sketch about how the early Christians received the Bible, understood, interpreted and applied it. This is how the Canon of Scripture was defined and the essentials of classic Christian doctrines were established. This is an attempt to lay the foundation for assessing Kato's hermeneutics, African Christian identity and contribution to evangelical theological education, as espoused in the previous chapters. Each of these areas of Kato's theological legacy will now be examined.

4.4.1 Foundations of Kato's Biblical Hermeneutics

Kato's biblical worldview was shaped by the western missionary enterprise, from the Sunday School, through elementary school and Bible college. He also pursued undergraduate and postgraduate studies in UK and USA, respectively. Kato was well trained in Systematic Theology. Kato's perspectives were also shaped by his cultural upbringing and context. In practice, his approach was more pragmatic and essentially, a Practical Theologian, though in his polemics, he tended to be Dogmatist. Practical theology model typically follows a practice—theory—practice model. According to Smith (2013:70): “studies in Christian praxis practices, with objective of formulating theories of action to improve the mediation of the Christian faith”. Kato's own actions and concerns were that practices in the church should be consistent with what the Bible says. He referred to himself as a conservative evangelical (Breman 1995:366). His doctrinal stance on the Bible and of the uniqueness of Christ was unwavering.

It may be difficult to pin point a particularly established methodology (theory) to describe Kato's way of doing theology. This could well be a distinguishing characteristic of renowned theologians (2013:13). Smith states that the goal of evangelical theologians is not to construct a theology of their own; their concern is faithfulness to the teachings of Scripture that honours God. Thus, the approach is scriptural, doxological and trinitarian (Smith 2013:15). This section of engaging the foundations of Kato's biblical hermeneutics is divided into three subsections: a). Biblicism or the doctrine of the Bible, b) approaches or methods for the study of the Bible and c) application of Scripture. Some classical works are explored in dialogue with Kato's hermeneutics.

4.4.1.1 Engaging Kato's biblicism

At the heart of Kato's theological contribution and indeed any Christian theological discourse, is the place and authority of the Bible. Mainstream evangelicals believe the Bible or the Holy Scriptures is God's word to humans and revealed through the agency of the Holy Spirit; enabling people to write God's message in human language for their understanding. God reveals himself through his word. God has also revealed himself through nature and creation (Palmer 2015:6). Ultimately, God revealed himself to the world in the person of Jesus Christ; God's Word made flesh (John 1:14). The Bible,

the written word of God, is the supreme source of information about God and guide for faith and conduct. Scriptures are the primary sources for doing theology. In his ten-point proposal for safeguarding biblical Christianity in Africa, Kato (1975a: 182) writes: The Bible alone is the final infallible rule of faith and practice. Its verdict cannot be challenged in any court of law since He (sic) is the final court of appeal. This propositional revelation is fully inspired, inerrant in the original manuscripts, and faithfully transmitted (2 Tim. 3:16; John 10:35)". According to Tennent (2010:124): "The *Missio Dei* is the central message of the Bible. The Bible, like the *Missio Dei*, is the story of God's *redemptive, historical initiative on behalf of His creation*. Missions ultimately must drive its life from that *source*".

The Bible by itself, is sufficient for faith and conduct (Palmer 2004:21). Canon of Scripture—the sixty-six books of the Bible—comprising thirty-nine books in the Old Testament and twenty-seven books in the New Testament, was established by ancient ecumenical tradition. "The canon of scripture itself was explicitly defined for eastern and western Christianity in Africa" (Oden 2016:7). Byang Kato asserts the absolute centrality of the Bible for theology and life: "In the African evangelical effort to express Christianity in the context of Africa, the Bible must remain the central absolute source. The Bible is God's written Word addressed to Africans—and to all peoples—within their culture and background" (Kato 1985:43). In an interview with Don Smith, he draws a difference between African Theology and Biblical Theology. Comparing Western theology and African theology, Smith (2019) said: "The two theologies were asking and responding to different questions and these discussions may not necessarily provide data from scripture or the Bible. On the other hand, Biblical theology is concerned with what the Bible says, what it meant for its first hearers and the implications for the current era". He concluded that the difference between Kato and some of his contemporaries was Kato's unique focus on biblical theology and not so much on African Theology.

Kato and other scholars contended for a local theology; the division continues to be the place of the Bible itself for theologising. Bauckham (2005:11) argues for hermeneutics "that takes seriously the missionary direction of the Bible itself; embodying a kind of movement from the particular to the universal", which the reader needs to find self, inside. Bauckham further states:

The Bible is a kind of project aimed at the kingdom of God, that is, towards the achievement of God's purposes for good in the whole of God's creation. This is a universal that takes the particular with the utmost seriousness. Christian communities or individuals are always setting off from the particular as both the Bible and our own situation defines it and following the biblical direction towards the universal that is to be found not apart from but within others particulars. This is mission (2005:11; cf. Wright 2006; Tennent 2010).

How the Bible is understood, interpreted and practiced—hermeneutics—is important for the integrity of the Christian faith. The authority of the Bible in the Church determines the way people interpret the Bible. “Hermeneutics is foundational to any theological education” (Baba 2016:19). Kato affirmed the high view of the Bible and states (Kato...African Cultural. n.d.3:37):

The content of the Bible is inspired. It cannot be changed. "Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35). As the Bible moves from culture to culture, it remains the same. It is the culture that must change. If the Bible did not remain the same, Christianity would have changed so much from country to country and generation to generation that it would hardly be recognizable today. Jesus Christ remains the same as He was in the past and will ever be (Hebrews 13:8). His Word remains unchanged in the same way (Psalm 119:89).

Byang Kato contended against what he perceived as an attempt to shift focus of the church in Africa from the authority and truth of the Bible. According to Kato (1975a:142): “If the Bible is not recognised as the authoritative source, it stands to reason that the biblical meaning may not be adhered to”.

Other theologians did not differentiate between biblical values and nationalistic values of Western missionaries and the tendency was to extol African values or traditional religion at the expense of biblical teaching. Elevating tradition above Scripture was one of the un-doings of the spiritual leaders in medieval times, who also wielded political power and all the trappings of worldly power that necessitated the need for protestation and reformation. The Church's past historical traditions were elevated to be the supreme guide and not the Scripture. At best, the Roman Catholic and in modern times, both sacred Scripture and tradition are accepted and venerated with the same sense of devotion and reverence (*Dei Verbum* 9), thus putting Scripture and Tradition at par (Barron 2018:115). Bediako expresses his disappointment with Kato for the latter's elevation of Scripture above own tradition or culture and writes:

Whereas most other African theologians felt an inner compulsion to...vindicate Africa before a critical European audience, one that is largely without understanding of the continent, Byang Kato, on the other hand, tended to see as his opponents fellow African Theologians, who, perhaps more aware than he was that the Western Value-setting for the Christian faith was no longer tenable, were concerned to seek new foundations for an

African Christian self-identity which took account of the African religious past” (Bediako 1992:391).

Bediako further states: “There is no issue so crucial as the understanding of this heightened interest in the African pre-Christian religious tradition, if Africa’s theologians are to be interpreted correctly and their achievement duly recognised” (Bediako 1992:1). He affirms Mbiti’s assertion that the African religious heritage is *praeparatio evangelica* (p. xvii). However, this view can be countered by the historical reality that Christianity sprang from Judaism but the majority of the Jews have not embraced the gospel of Jesus Christ to date. Overstressing the cultural heritage of people who encounter Christianity would therefore appear to be an anomaly. According to Kato (1975a:122-23):

African traditional religious worshippers may claim that their gods are agents of the triune God, Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. But their view must be subjected under the searchlight of the Word of God. Under that scrutiny the traditional religions are found wanting. They highlight the cry of the human heart but the solution lies elsewhere. The natural revelation was never given for the purpose of salvation...Man may a glimpse of the Supreme Being through natural revelation. But a clear picture is impossible...For a clear and final revelation to any people, only the Christ-event will do.

However, Mburu argues for an understanding of both the African traditional worldview and the biblical worldview for even an evangelical reading of the Bible. “If we lack understanding of African worldview as well as the biblical one, how can we understand what the Bible has to say about daily life in Africa?” (Mburu 2019:5). With African traditional religion and Christianity many Christians live dichotomised lives; their Christian faith does not seem to affect their everyday lives (p. 3). According to Mburu, this has weakened the church causing it to lose its moral voice in the world and argues that part of the problem is in the failure to interpret the Bible accurately and allow it to guide everyday life of the Christian (211). Similarly, in an interview with Yusufu Turaki (27 May 2019), he opines that most African scholars equated Christianity with ATR and all other religions. This approach tends to root religion in culture, philosophy and worldview of the people. Thus, Christianity is also rooted in the same social factors of culture, philosophy and worldview of humans. Turaki further stated that Kato differed in his understanding of religion and believed that values that shaped formation of religion is not rooted in human culture, philosophy or human worldview and in particular, Christianity was not produced by these sociological considerations.

4.4.1.2 Kato's Hermeneutical approaches

While the one true meaning of God's word to humans is intended, people may miss this. They hear and interpret the same word differently and in their different context or preconceptions. The task of hermeneutics is to discern the intended meaning of God's word in its original context and how to apply it in contemporary context (Baba 2016:4-5; Mburu 2019:5). The Holy Spirit is indispensable in the process of discerning the meaning of God's word. The Scripture came to humans by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and he aids illumination in the interpretation and application of Scripture. However, while inspiration is inerrant, illumination can be errant, given the role of humans and disposition in the process.

There are wide ranging scope of methodologies and tools for Bible studies and interpretation. "A distinctive feature of biblical studies as an academic discipline, is the fact that it employs explicit and transparent methods for researching the Bible" (Asumang 2014:73). Perhaps the veracity of a particular method could be measured by its acceptability and by the Church community in different parts of the world and for all times. There may be more that unites the Church in terms of orthodoxy than divides it. From the time of the New Testament Church to current era, three pivotal turning points in the methods or approaches for biblical interpretation will be examined; i.e. Classic Christianity, Medieval and Reformation and Modern times/evangelicalism (Oden 2015:2; Baba 2016). Although the period and prevailing context were different, what emerges are timeless principles that may be common and helpful for assessment of sound biblical principles for understanding and interpreting Scripture, everywhere and at all times.

While the Church has always had disagreement around biblical interpretation, the major split in the church occurred in the reformation era, about five hundred years ago, when Martin Luther (1517) led a protest against the corruption of the Church and advocated for its reformation. The Scripture was no longer the supreme and absolute authority. Tradition, allegorical approaches and deductive interpretation of the Bible, leading to practices that were inconsistent with the Bible, were also embraced. This led to the split of the Church, with the breakaway or expelled faction, known as the Protestant Church and the '*remainers*', the Roman Catholic Church, the majority Church then.

This major split was preceded by division of the Church by geography; the East-West schism in eleventh Century C. E. This was break in communion between what is now Roman Catholic (West) and the Eastern Orthodox Church (Porumb 2014). These splits were marks of the growing discontent in the One Church, emerging out of the New Testament Church, birthed at Pentecost (Acts 2). Various factions of the divided Church point to Scripture to support their position. Therefore, biblical interpretations and applications by people in different contexts may continue to be the root cause of division in the church. MacDonald (2017:7) writes:

Any particular passage can elicit a slew of meanings from two similar people, and the divide can be even greater when age, culture, and training backgrounds differ. Thus, who dictates meaning? Since the Scriptures self-attest to be from God through the superintended authorship of men and, presumably, the divine perspective is more valuable than ours, we should not choose to dictate the meaning.

The Evangelical movement itself grew out of the Protestant and Reformation movement in defence and promotion of Biblical orthodoxy. Thus, it is important to look back at the approaches for understanding and interpreting the Bible and explore how biblical orthodoxy has been sustained in the light of the divisions, from the NT Church to contemporary times, especially in the evangelical tradition.

Church history reveals that North Africans were among some of the most important early interpreters of the Bible. The list includes Church fathers like Athanasius, Cyprian, Tertullian, Augustine, and Origen (Oden 2007; 2016, Mburu 2019:4; Kato 1975a:176). However, Oden (2007:62-63) observes: “A demeaning prejudice has crept into historical lore that these great figures were not Africans at all—merely Europeans in disguise”. Oden goes on further to state:

This is a fairly recent Western intellectual prejudice. It suggests that the African intellectual tradition cannot even claim its own sons and daughters, especially if they happened to have been articulate, or if they were sufficiently astute as to speak in the common international, academic, commercial and political languages of the day. According to that bias, the greater those competencies, the less African they would be (2007:63).

Notwithstanding the cynicism, African Christians could turn to their North African ancestors, if indeed, they need to look to ancestors for developing their Christian beliefs and not necessarily the non-Christian ancestors. It is also insightful to note that Christianity has been on the continent for nearly two thousand years and earlier than other parts of the world and Islam. Perhaps arrival of Christianity in Africa is long enough period for Africa to lay claim to Christianity as an indigenous religion rather

than foreign (Kato 1975a:176; Oden 2007, Mbiti 1989:229). Also, it is ironic that Kato's theological African identity is apparently in question for his defence of Christian orthodoxy, as if the Christianity he expounded was an invention of Western missionaries in last two centuries of Christian history in Africa.

Developing theology from anthropological standpoint tends to undermine exegesis in African theological discourse. "While evangelicals would concur with the idea that God speaks individually to each reader, through the power of the Holy Spirit, they would reject the postmodern notion of the relativity of all truth-claims" (Domeris 2014:187). The Bible must speak for itself as we seek to address the needs and aspirations of people in the local context. Kunhiyop (2012:80) states: "Insights gained from anthropological study do not have the same revelatory status and authority as the truth of the inherent word of God. Consequently, all insights obtained from such studies must be subjected to the scrutiny of scriptures". A key pre-occupation of Kato in his arguments with his detractors was biblical orthodoxy and therefore, a brief historical survey of methods that sought to address the question of the source(s) for constructing orthodoxy will be explored.

4.4.1.3 Examples of Kato's exegesis and application

This section explores how Kato, an eminent evangelical Christian leader, navigated the hermeneutical problem of consistency of practice with beliefs and biblical orthodoxy, in the African context. The discussion in this chapter is limited in scope in terms of assessing Kato's hermeneutics. He is assessed by the conclusions he made regarding certain issues, highlighted in previous chapter. Kato engaged the church on several matters concerning the application of scripture in the African context, such as the place of African traditional religions in Christianity in Africa, continuity or discontinuity in the two faith systems, salvation, the authority of the Bible and culture or tradition, ancestors, ecumenism, and on social issues. In many ways, Kato held a contrary view from many of his contemporaries in the way they interpreted and applied scripture in these issues. Kato's perspectives on these matters were highlighted in the previous chapter.

According to Domeris (2014:177) "There are emic readings of the Bible (people who have a faith investment in the text) and etic readings (people who operate outside of

any faith commitment)". Further, Domeris states that when a preacher and a Bible study leader expounds scripture, a hermeneutical task, one focuses on a message for today and the other would probably emphasise the meaning of the text. An academic theologian, in a lecture on the Bible, may make same emphasis but may further provide scholarly information and try to respond to academic questions (Domeris 2014:178). Kato contended against the church looking to other sources for enriching understanding of God; especially to African traditional religions. Kato regarded these secondary sources, informed by African traditional belief system in general are limited in their ability to guide Christian theological reflection. I will now turn to examining the way Kato interacted and applied biblical texts.

This final section on Kato's hermeneutics explores how Kato applied biblical texts in real life and how some texts impacted his life. This is an attempt to examine how he used the texts for preaching and what how he applied these to his own life. Thus, one of the texts is that in Genesis 6:9-7:24—Noah and the Ark.

4.4.1.3.1 Kato's Application of Genesis 6:9-7:24

This is the passage, according to Kato's biographer Sophie de la Haye (1986:19) which Kato heard and brought about his conversion to Christianity. Haye (1986:19) narrates:

One day his Nigerian teacher explained the way of salvation, using the story of Noah and the ark. 'God prepared a way of escape from the flood for Noah and his family', the teacher explained. 'When the ark was built, God commanded Noah and his family to go in. Then He closed the door. Because they obeyed God, in spite of the laughter and ridicule of all their neighbours, they lived. So for you and me, God has prepared a plan...'. Byang realised that he had to choose. That day, standing before the class, he asked Jesus to come to into his heart, and received God's free gift of salvation in Jesus Christ.

Kato was still a child, at the impressionistic age of twelve when he became Christian, an experience he would remember and recall in his adult years and at the pick of his ministry. Kato (1975), in an interview with 'Christianity Today' and in response to the question about how he was converted to Christianity, Kato (1975) said:

It was through the ministry of a missionary of the Sudan Interior Mission and a Nigerian school teacher. The missionary worked in my town and got me interested in Sunday school. Later, when I was twelve, I started going to school, and it was in the classroom through the ministry of a Nigerian school teacher that I came to know Jesus Christ as my personal Saviour. My pagan parents later gave their hearts to Christ as well".

In another account about his conversion, Kato mentions further details: “One day the teacher told us the exciting story of Noah and his ark. At the end he solemnly applied the story to us in a personal way, inviting us to accept the Lord as Saviour. I did so with a child's faith and sincerity, little realizing all that was involved” (1962a:n. p.).

There may not have been a specific account about of Kato's exegesis of this passage, when he heard the Noah and the ark narrative from the Scripture. However, it is clear that the text made a substantial impact on him and how he appropriated the text is the task here. I could not find any sermon or exposition by Kato himself on the passage, except the reference to it and the summary of his Nigerian teacher's exposition of the passage, as briefly accounted in the previous paragraph. The Bible story was not just a fable for entertainment but that the story had a personal application for him.

The story of Noah and the ark is one of the familiar lessons thought in Sunday school. Perhaps it is also the case that the children fascination of the animals trooping into the boat and the rainbow, at the end of that narrative would be the lasting impressions. Not many leave Sunday School and go home with a story of conversion. Kato's experience compels a fresh look at the passage as an evangelism material. The passage was about the salvation of Noah, a righteous man, and his family from a wicked world. The rest of the people perished in the flood waters. It took faith for Noah to build an ark on dry land that would turn out to be the means of surviving the flood waters. . Kato was able to relate Noah's story to himself, as a sinner, to be saved in Jesus Christ by faith. “Inviting us to accept the Lord as Saviour. I did so with a child's faith and sincerity, little realizing all that was involved” (Kato 1962a:n. p.).

It is evident that Kato read the Old Testament through a Christocentric NT lens. In this lens the flood is seen as divine judgement, and the ark is a type of Christ. Secondly, this interpretation of the Noahic flood accords with the NT interpretation of this passage in 1 Pet 3:20-22. And thirdly, Kato clearly believed that Scripture spoke directly into his situation and circumstances. Thus, his exegetical enterprise was not merely at level of cognitive and abstract apprehension of the text, but even so application to himself, as if God was directly speaking to him. This accords with the principles of evangelical hermeneutics expounded earlier in the chapter.

Studying Kato's attitude and approach to the Bible, that is, the high view and literal approach, one can observe some consistency with this early encounter with Scripture and how he appropriated texts. His sense of urgency to proclaim the gospel and avoid the looming judgement of eternal damnation also has parallel to the Noah and ark lesson. The flood narrative also has echoes of eschatology. "When the Son of Man returns, it will be like it was in Noah's day. In those days before the flood, the people were enjoying banquets and parties and weddings right up to the time Noah entered his boat. People didn't realise what was going to happen until the flood came and swept them all away. That is the way it will be when the Son of Man comes" (Matt. 24:37-39).

The amount of space given to the Noah and the ark and the flood narrative in the Bible is indicative of the flood's epoch-making importance (cf. 2 Peter 3:5ff). "The Flood stands out in Scripture as the most general judgement between creation—Fall and the final consummation" (Guthrie and Motyer 1988:88).

Kato's evangelistic favour and dispensational orientation to save the lost reflect the implication of the flood washing sinners away. "The flood severed the central trunk of human history, the ark-remnant exempted, so terminating the old world and justifying the NT's representation of it as universal in its significance and making the end of one epoch and the beginning of another in God's programme of redemption" (Guthrie and Motyer 1988:88). There are also some startling similarities with Kato's experience with that of Noah. His *lone* voice and faith in the doctrines he took a *lone* stance on is likened to Noah (Gen. 6:9; 7:1). Even if no one took Noah seriously, building a big boat on dry land, he did not give up. He diligently pursued his objectives and waited for the flood to use the ark (Hebrews 11:7). Kato was relentless, even if the other theologians viewed him negatively.

Sometimes obeying God may mean doing the most absurd things in the eyes of other people. It may mean a sacrifice of your prestige, fame, and resources. But when through faith, we obey God—even when it seems foolish to others—we will find favour with God. Obedience through faith takes us above human wisdom into special relationship with God and in his favour" (Jusu 2016:14).

However, the sail in the ark was not a lone sail, Noah brought his extended family into the ark. Similarly, Kato did not only see the need for salvation for himself and his family

alone, but also, he saw the need for salvation for all he met. Notwithstanding, Noah's reputation as a righteous man, he was subject to the brokenness of the world. The account of his nakedness and drunkenness (Gen.9:21) and Kato's frustration even after giving his life to Christ revealed their common mortality and sinfulness and indeed all humans, with feet of clay (Dan. 2:31-33; cf Rom 3:23; Isa. 53:6). Kato could attest to his own experience of slipping back into the old life of sin after giving his life to Christ and writes:

One day the teacher told us the exciting story of Noah and his ark. At the end he solemnly applied the story to us in a personal way, inviting us to accept the Lord as Saviour. I did so with a child's faith and sincerity, little realizing all that was involved. The next few years passed in semi-darkness. I was a Christian, but knew constant failure. Youthful lusts held me in their grip, and my testimony was a mockery to the Name of Christ (Kato... From Juju to Jesus... 1962b:2).

Kato could make probable connections and corroborate his experience with that of Noah that could have shaped his understanding of salvation and while still on this side of eternity. Salvation outside of the ark made no vulnerable. Salvation inside Christ was key for Kato and would make a commitment to stay in Christ for life, at the next opportunity. Recounting his rededication experience at a revival service in the church in his town,

I will never forget the amazing scenes that took place in Kwoi in March 1953, and changed the whole course of my life... Men and women began to weep for their sins. One after another rose to strip off his outer garments and empty his pockets to show that he would keep nothing back from the Lord. Many promised to give their pigs, gramophones, clothes, and other possessions. Thanksgiving continued for a whole week. My own heart was breaking within me. With tears I went to the front of the church to confess my sins before the Lord and His people. It was then that I promised to serve my Lord all the days of my life. He took me at my word. It became clear that He wanted me to go to Igbaja (Kato 1962b:2).

4.4.1.3.2 Kato's application of Philippians 4:13-19

Kato is believed to have used this text, in particular (4:13), as one of his favourite and one that he applied to his own life circumstance. Reporting what Kato said to her, Haye (1986:24) writes: "One day, while working in a missionary's home I read a wall plaque: 'I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me'. This became my life's motto".

This would be a familiar text and may be recited by many Christians. Often and like any biblical texts, people may interpret and apply it wrongly. For instance, this may be taken to mean that the Christian is empowered to accomplish 'anything' in the name

of Christ. However, the text is part of a section of the last chapter of the Paul's letter to the Philippian church, expressing his appreciation for their concerns and financial support for his apostolic ministry. This indeed was the theme of the entire book of Philippians, Paul's appreciation for their support and for their faithfulness. Ironically, he was joyful and lifted the spirits of the Philippians in times of incarceration and challenge. Despite all the challenges, the Lord sustained him through all the difficulties, in good times and in bad times. Thus, Paul could say: "I have learned how to be content with whatever I have. I know how to live on almost nothing or with everything. I have learned the secret of living in every situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little" (Phil. 4:11b-12). Thus, Paul say: "For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength" (v.13). Paul was confident that "God will enable him to do God's will in every situation" (Eaton 2020:771; cf. Adeyemo 2006:1448).

How did Kato understand and apply this to his life? Unlike, the life changing text in the previous analysis, Kato actually spoke on this text. The title of his presentation was "*The Joy of Christian Service*". However, the key text of the sermon was (Philippians 4:19). Firstly, Kato recalls his experience and relationship with Jesus Christ:

In the year 1953 a great revival broke out during a church conference at Kwoi in North Central State. Many people with tears streaming down their cheeks dedicated their lives to the Lord. As a mark of their dedication some gave clothes, money, goats and grain. As a young man struggling to earn his school fees and buy clothing, I did not have much to give. But I dedicated my life to the Lord for whatever thing He would have me do. As a sign of my life dedication, I gave my best of two shirts I had to the church for God's work. God's perfect joy filled my heart when I surrendered my life, my talents and my best shirt to Jesus Christ (Kato...*The Joy of Christian Service* n. d. 5:n. p).

It is evident that one of Kato's approaches to interpreting texts like these was to analogize with the writer, in this case Paul, and seek to appropriate the text to his own circumstances. Like Paul, Kato would say, this was the secret of his life. He recalls the challenges he encountered in his life, even after the encounter with Christ. He was persecuted by his parents and also encountered discouragement and ridicule when he chose to be "a missionary" and go to Bible School instead of a secular career that promised better life and affluence, according to his friend.

But I have found the Lord not only faithful in meeting my needs. But He has filled my life with joy even at the times my family and I have not had much in the way of material possessions. Although I knew that God wanted me at Igbaja Bible College, I did not know

even where I would get money for the train ticket to Igbaja. Neither did I have any money for my school fees. But one week before I left for Igbaja, I got a letter that had gone through the Post Office without the return address. When I opened it, I found exactly enough amount to pay for my train ticket from Kafanchan to Ilorin. Within the same week the pastor of our church also told me that the church would pay my school fees during the first year. These things really encouraged me to trust the Lord and to be prepared to face every situation with confidence in God. I have found Philippians 4:19 true many, many times. It says, "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus (Kato n.d.5:n. p.).

Kato, like Paul, credited God for meeting his needs; for encouraging him and giving him joy when it seemed the situation was hopeless or dire. Doing all things through Christ who strengthened him, did not mean, there would not be challenges. How Kato saw strength from God in all situations is highlighted when he stated:

God has not always given me all the money, clothes and food I have needed. God does not promise that His children will always live in plenty. As a matter of fact, He has warned His children against the idea that material possession is what makes life, happy and meaningful. Jesus Christ warned His followers. "Beware! Don't always be wishing for what you don't have. Lk. 12:15 Living Bible). The Apostle Paul did not always have all the money, clothing and food that he needed. Paul was hungry, thirsty and without clothes many times. He says, "Often I have been hungry and thirsty and have gone without food; often I have shivered with cold, without enough clothing to keep me warm" (II Cor. 11:27 LB). While Paul went through poverty, he still believed that God could supply all the needs of His children. He does this not only by giving them material things but by giving them sufficient grace to carry on serving Him happily even at times of material needs (Kato n.d.5:n. p).

The grace of God—'sufficient grace'—, apart from material things, is how God kept his people happy through the challenges of life, with little or nothing and in abundance. He went on to narrate:

When I started serving the Lord full time in 1957 my salary was N10 per month, while my counterparts working elsewhere were getting about N30. There were times when we had to eat only sweet potatoes. But the Lord gave us peace and satisfaction in serving Him. Some preachers mistakenly say that when we become Christians all our physical needs and our troubles on earth will end. But that is not so. God does supply our physical needs as He sees fit. But sometimes He just gives us sufficient grace to go through times of poverty and sickness (II Cor. 12:9) (Kato n.d.5:n. p.).

He admonished his audience, mostly pastors, not to abandon their call for greener pastures or live a misery life, attracting sympathy from others, because of poor pay structure in the church.

Some pastors run away from their calling because of low income. Others stick to the ministry but go about seeking sympathy from other people as if the ministry of the gospel is the saddest vocation one could get. Although the Apostle Paul was despised by some

men and suffered poverty and sickness, he still felt that serving the Lord as a full time Christian minister is an honourable job. Paul writes to Timothy, "It is a true saying that if a man wants to be a pastor he has a good ambition" (I Tim. 3:1 LB).

For a true joy in Christian service, certain principles needed to be realized. Kato outlined some principles that keep the Christian or Christian worker joyful. These included: correct view of God and the world, contentment, assurance of God's call for vocation, concern for the fate of unbelievers and joy as the fruit of the spirit. Elaborating further on these he pointed out that the attitude of frugality was not ascetism, the wrong notion that in order to serve God, one needs to live in abject poverty, physical punishment and denial of self of all good things in life. He said, the right attitude towards wealth and contentment with what God avails to people was necessary and stated:

For every creation of God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving" (I Tim. 4:4 RSV). The correct attitude is to realize that "The earth is the Lord's and the full-ness thereof the world and those who dwell therein" (Psa. 24:1). He distributes the wealth of His creation as He wills. He may withhold some material possessions from the pastor, but He will give sufficient grace. "No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly" (Psa. 84:11). But it is not for God's people to deliberately inflict God's minister with poverty.

Contentment does not necessarily come with the amount of goods one has. God's Word says, "There is great gain in godliness with contentment for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world but if we have food and clothing, with these we shall be content" (I Tim. 6:6-8). Discontent only brings sorrow, backsliding and disobedience to God's call, or even self-destruction (I Tim. 6:9). True joy comes from contentment, and the source of true contentment is faith in Jesus Christ for salvation and obedience to his will and ministry to which he calls people. The Christian ministry may be difficult and the pay small, but the joy of the Lord will prove to be our strength and one must be able to say with Paul "Woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel" (I Cor. 9:1b). The love of Christ which led Him to the cruel tree should so fill our heart that we can truly say:

Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were a gift far too small. Coupled with this should be the compassion for souls going to hell where they will be tormented eternally. This burning passion should challenge us to serve the Lord. The joy of future reward should also fill us with joy in serving the Lord. It is said of suffering Christ, "He shall see the fruit of the travail of his soul and be satisfied" (Isa. 53:11). Paul calls his converts "my joy and crown" (Phil. 4:1). The Christian minister should look beyond the immediate circumstances to the time of reaping the result of his faithful ministry (Kato n.d.5:n. p.).

Finally, a child of God should be full of the joy of the Lord under any circumstances (Gal. 5:22,23) and people around you should see the joy. Kato wrote: “Remember in the list of the fruit of the Spirit joy comes next only to love. Joy does not necessarily mean a smiling faith, but a smiling faith speaks a lot about a person’s joy. The best way to have J - O - Y is Jesus first and His call to us. Others second in the service we offer, and You last in seeking material benefits” (Kato n.d.5:n. p.).

The exegesis of the passage illustrates Kato’s hermeneutical views outlined in chapter three and makes several helpful applications to real life situations; drawing parallels from the original context of the Bible to contemporary times. He did that in ways that are understandable and consistent with the foundational message of the Bible as highlighted in the foundational and theoretical discussion.

4.4.1.3.3 Kato’s application of Jeremiah 8:11-22

A final sampling of Kato’s handling of biblical texts in his sermons is Jeremiah 8:11-22. The title of the sermon was: *The Brave New World*. According to Kato, the subject was about hope after all else has failed, there is still hope for the new world. The book of Jeremiah is clearly a prophetic book and passage itself, a narrative about God and the people of Judah. God’s messenger, Prophet Jeremiah, foretold what God would do with the people then and in the future, because of their idolatrous sinfulness and stubbornness to repent. Jeremiah was announcing the impending calamity that was going to befall the people of Judah because of their sins. They had turned away from God and it appeared the call for repentance fell on deaf ears and thus, the eminent judgement. Instead of them repenting and turning to God, they followed false prophets or teachers who gave them false sense of security. These false teachers assured them of peace and healing but there was no peace and they were faced with terror and calamity as prophesied by Jeremiah. They also perceived of ways to run away from approaching enemy attack and flee to safety in more fortified cities and towns but they could not escape the wrath of God (Adeyemo 2006:860; Ndjerareo 2006:861)

For an exposition or sermon outline, the text Jeremiah 8:11-22 could be outlined into five sections:

1. God’s charge (v. 11-

- Deceptive solutions to the people's plight; false teachers and prophets were promising what they could not deliver.
 - They lived in open sin and not ashamed of their immoral behaviour.
 - They provoked God by worshipping idols and useless foreign gods.
2. God's judgement
- The false prophets and their followers will be slaughtered by the invading enemy.
 - They would be brought low.
 - They would have poor harvest, leading to lack of food and starvation.
 - Would be dispossessed of all they had.
 - No peace, no healing but instead terror will come upon them.
3. People's plea of defiance- This was not a plea of guilt or innocence, rather defiance and an affront to God. They would not yield to the Prophets call for repentance.
- Plan to escape God's wrath
 - Flee more fortified cities and towns to take refuge.
4. Prophecy fulfilled
5. Jeremiah grieves

Kato starts his exegesis with a brief background of the book. Jeremiah was called to be God's mouthpiece when he was in his early twenties. He compares Jeremiah with Timothy in New Testament; they were both timid yet they had a message for the people of their times. Jeremiah realistically confronted the prevailing situation. He condemned the false teachers of his days who were shouting "Peace, Peace, when there was no peace." The false security in Israel was gone.

Since the days of Amos and Hosea, the children of Israel had a false theology. Because of their material prosperity, they felt God was on their side. The rich were getting richer, and poor were getting poorer. The rich deprived the poor man of his land and felt that since they were rich, God was pleased with it. Religious leaders held that God would never desert his temple. Yahweh must defend His temple under any circumstances. Having a form of religion, they denied the power thereof (Kato n.d.6:n. p.).

The false security the Jews were given by false prophets and the material prosperity they enjoyed were in conflict with what the prophet Jeremiah proclaimed, and warned them about the peril of their action and need to repent. However, the Israelites were oblivious of the pending danger of the advancing enemy, the King of Babylon,

Nebuchadnezzar's troops, outside the city wall. The false prophets proclaimed "peace, peace", but peace eluded the Israelites. They continued to revel in sin and would not listen to God's word, the prophet Jeremiah gave them. Nebuchadnezzar with his mighty army stood outside the city wall, yet nobody paid any attention. False prophets kept on saying, "Never mind, all will be well. God is a God of love; no judgment will come." So they cheered the hearts of people lightly. "The weeping prophet Jeremiah reflected the sad situation of his people. He cried "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." (Jer. 8:20). The time is running out. Hope is fast disappearing. Yet Israel remains stubborn. Jeremiah asks a rhetorical question: "Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there?" (8:22)".

Kato draws parallels with the twentieth century world he lived in. There was so much advancement in science and technology, marked by the invention of things like the steam engine in 1763, train engine (1829), the aeroplane (1903), radio (1907), and TV in 1940. These gave the world some sense of security and that era also had their false prophets (theologians) who announced "peace, peace". But apparently these was false security.

This false philosophy of humanism has gripped Man (sic). Man was spelt with a capital M. Liberal theology taught that man by his own effort could bring about a Utopia. A man called Rauschenbush taught the false view that by working to improve society, Christians would be bringing about the kingdom of God. European theologian Ritschl and Schleiermacher identified Western Civilization with the kingdom of God. Some liberal missionaries went to foreign lands to bring what they believed to be the message of the kingdom of God. These were the type of erroneous teachers shouting peace, peace, when there was no peace.

A careful analysis of Kato's exegesis reveals an understanding of both the biblical context of Jeremiah's world and the twentieth century context of Kato's world. The worldview of Kato or theological assumptions and the context, which constitutes the first leg of the stool, according to the African Stool model, is evidenced. The title of the sermon and Kato's 'third race' view would be assumed in his introduction. He clearly draws parallels from Jeremiah's world and the contemporary world of the twentieth century. The Bible's historical context and the reader's (Kato's), find some points of contact and interaction. The theological implications of the passage are also drawn out by Kato, the second leg of the hermeneutical stool. He alluded to God's message by the prophet and false prophets in the Bible on one hand and the liberal theologies of humanism and the kingdom of God on the other hand; false hope in humanism and

real hope in the true God and the implied salvation message, as underlying theological theme. The text is clearly a prophetic book. The content itself is more of a historical narrative or story, constituting the third leg of the stool. Kato's exegesis does give a literal interpretation. The historical and cultural character of the text, fourth leg of the stool, is also seen. Kato lets his hearers know about the author of the message and the context of his prophecies.

Finally, Kato rests his message, application (the seat) or fifth step in the process, on an appeal for salvation, which Kato deemed important for his audience. Kato proclaimed: "The weeping prophet Jeremiah reflected the sad situation of his people. He cried "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." (Jer. 8:20). The time is running out. Hope is fast disappearing. Yet Israel remains stubborn". He makes a final appeal and said:

Jesus Christ is going to make all things new. For the individual sinner there is hope for a brave new world right now. Jesus Christ says, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). The Apostle Paul says, "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away; behold the new has come" (2 Cor. 5:17). Accepting Jesus Christ now will bring you the following results: 1) You will be at peace with your maker instead of being in conflict with Him. 2) You will receive eternal life and know that you have it here and now in spite of your sinful condition, past or present. 3) You will have the right perspective of this world, helping to make it a better place in which to live and yet realizing that we have no abiding home here. 4) You will live at peace with your neighbours, your family and other people by the enabling power of the Holy Spirit. 5) You will someday enjoy eternity with Christ. This is the new brave world which we invite you to explore.

In this one sermon, Kato's theological disposition, articulated in much of this work, rings through. More importantly, the treatment or interpretation of the text may be agreeable to normative evangelical approaches. A final observation about Kato's sermon is the prophetic tune; especially at a time, when the world is under the scourge of a plague or pandemic—COVID19. Kato foretold.

Today man's (sic) capacity for wiping out the earth has multiplied. It is estimated that the U.S.A., Russia and China have the capacity to wipe out the earth 50,000 times. Where is earth's peace? The U.K., in the same impotent position as the League of Nations, looks on while wars and rumours of wars rage on in all corners of the earth. *If a Third World War should break out today, man (sic) might resort to the use of biological warfare. It could come by way of something like the plagues of Egypt, the form of vicious flies or lice. The world is no safe place. Truly this old world is on its way out_*(emphasis mine).

This statement, proclaimed nearly half a century ago, is fascinating and given the current era of a pandemic—COVID19. Apparently, this gives some credence to the ascription to Kato as prophetic; saw beyond his time. Kato was not alone in reflecting on the apocalyptic sentiments of the period when the cold-war was at its zenith. It was quite common to hear and read about impending divine judgment. It was also around then that the “Left Behind Series” of books and films were released in the US, dealing with the dispensationalist end time interpretation of the Bible (Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins series 1995-2007). Kato’s hermeneutics and application could also be seen in the other two pillars of his theological legacy in this study. I will now turn to Kato’s perspectives on African Christian identity in the next section.

4.4.2 Foundations of Kato Contribution to African Christian Identity

The quest for self-identity for the African is an important consideration, with implications for the African race, both on the continent and in the diaspora. In modern times, books and movies like Alex Haley novel, ‘Roots’ (1976) and more recently, the ‘Black Panther’ (2018), have attracted the interest of the world and Africans or black people in general and everywhere on this subject. Africans on the continent and those in dispersion in other continents, because of slavery, have struggled to gain some form of independence and unique identity and freedoms. The impact of enslavement and colonisation of Africans seems to have dented their human dignity and self-worth. Unfortunately, the missionary enterprise in Africa may have also contributed to the sorry state.

One cannot talk about African identity without the question of slavery and colonialism and racism and the indignity the black race has suffered in the hands of others, even in the church (Viriri and Mungwini 2010:28; Bediako 1992). The question that arises is: “What does it mean to be an African or a black person?” This is not just a question about nativity or provincial identity, it has far more implications for the African or the black person. The question has to do with slavery and colonialism and Africa and African spirituality.

Africans are made to be the inheritors of Ham’s cursed son (Gen. 9:20f), even if erroneously (Adeyemo 2009). “The black colour of the African skin was criterion used

to place Africans at the bottom of the human social scale” (Viriri and Mungwini 2010:38). The common human ancestry in Adam and Eve and indeed, the humanity of Africans was questioned by some Europeans (p. 36-39). Centuries of demonising and ridiculing ‘Africanness’ have in effect forced some African people to abandon or lose what was once sacred and brought meaning and self-worth. When they try to reconnect with what they perceive as lost African heritage, it is not clear what that is and if they could ever connect with what is left of this heritage, if any. Thus, African scholars seek “to deconstruct a myriad of negative images that denigrate the African continent as dark and seeks to place into proper context distortions of the original African creative intellect twisted by Western hegemony (Oden 2007; 2016). It further attempts to invalidate the stereotypes that were pervasively consecrated as historical truths in literature, philosophy, religion, and politics” (Viriri and Mungwini 2010:27; Bediako 1992; Kato 1975a.:50; Mbiti 1989).

Some African intellectuals look to traditional African social philosophy as “a viable framework to shape life in contemporary Africa and as a counter to the widespread individualism threatening humanity in the world of today...to show how African indigenous systems that were condemned as irrational and backward can inform life today in a much more beneficial way by shaping a unique African modernity” (Viriri and Mungwini 2010:39). According to Viriri and Mungwini (2010:39-40):

The philosophy of ubuntu is basically an indigenous philosophy of social existence that defines the relationship that ought to obtain between members of the society. The distinguishing features of this philosophy are its welfarism, altruism, universalism and basically its utilitarian outlook. Central to it is the near universal lessons that ‘to be human is to affirm one’s humanity by affirming the humanity of others...While Western scholars have gone to length to demonstrate that there is nothing worth noting from the African continent besides its vast forests and wild animals the philosophy of ubuntu stands out clearly as one aspect of the African cosmology that has to be salvaged to promote a humane social existence.

Africa’s problem with self-identity may not just be multiple calamities of slavery and colonialism, not just western economic imperialism, impactful as each of these have been but rather a principal problem may also be a dominant intellectual ideology that has lost its efficacy (Bowers 2008:7). The African identity question has occupied the mind of African scholars in all intellectual endeavours, whether it is literature, art, history, sociology, political science, economics, philosophy, jurisprudence, educational theory and theology (Bowers 2008:6; Ngong 2007:114; Viriri and

Mungwini 2010:27; Mengara, 2001:1-2;). Africans themselves have contributed to negative profiling and identity crisis. According to Hendriks (2020:49):

An American president's reference to African countries as "shithole countries" is only one in a long history of racially tainted, derogatory remarks and characterisation aimed at our continent and its people, remarks that hurt and humiliate. What makes these remarks even more mortifying is that, in some cases at least, if we are honest with ourselves, we have to admit that we are responsible for making such terms quite accurate characterisations.

The involvement of some Africans in the slavery industry for financial gains and ongoing corruption and nepotistic and despotic rule by the political class, in collusion with foreign powers characterises many countries in Africa. Even the humane social construct of ubuntu— "a person is a person through other persons" (Tutu 2011:21)— touted as a fine defining characteristics of African value system and way of life is put to the sword by limiting it to own tribe and not the wider society (Maigadi 1997). In the Church, "blood of ethnicity, tribe, racialism, sexism, caste, social class, or nationalism seems to flow stronger than the waters of baptism and the confession of Christ (Rice 2005:5).

Similarly, there is quest for African Church people to do theology in a distinctly authentic African way and unique to its context. The emerging proponents were nationalists across the linguistic divide of Anglophone and Francophone Africa. The early African scholars were concerned with disputing Western stereotypes and extolling African culture and religious beliefs, devoid of any Western ascription. According to Bowers (2002:115): "African political nationalism refused to differentiate between the coming of colonialism and the coming of Christianity to the continent, it becomes axiomatic to treat the two as one". Among the Western educated clergy were Vincent Mulago of Zaire, Alexis Kagame of Rwanda, Harry Sawyerr and Edward Fashole-Luke of Sierra Leone, E.B. Idowu of Nigeria, John S. Mbiti of Kenya, Cardinal Francis A. Arinze, Archbishop Stephen N. Ezeanya and E.C. Ilogu of Nigeria (Conteh 2014:4). For about three decades these scholars, among others, continued to attempt to reconcile Christian thought with African belief systems. Many would assume that African theology was simply about given an African face to theology; providing Christian truth with contextually-sensitive illustration and applications.

However, the aspirations of African theology were more complex and diverse than contextualising. It was an attempt by some to correlate between Christianity and

African traditional religions; Christianity and African culture; Christian and implicit worldview (from philosophical perspective). “Ecumenists have pursued not a correlation of Christianity with Africa's past so much as an activation of the Christian community in shaping Africa's future, towards greater liberation and humanisation” (Bowers 2002:110). Commenting on the lack of Christian impact on society, notwithstanding the growth of the Christian population in Africa, Otonko (2018:1) writes: “The revival of cultures and the attendant theological enterprise in inculturation have often legitimised the importance of African cultural expressions on Christian beliefs, but also with tendencies of distorting the purity and integrity of Christian faith as a result of misunderstanding”.

The principal proponent of theology of Identity; framing African Christian theology on the doctrine of self-identity and as a biblical hermeneutical question was Kwame Bediako. In his seminal work, *Theology and Identity*. This work was essentially, Bediako's PhD thesis at the University of Aberdeen in 1983, eight years after the death of Byang Kato. The underlying theme of the work was the gospel and culture and how this is rooted in one's own Christian self-understanding. Bediako (1992:xi) states: “I have felt the need to seek a clarification for myself of how the abiding Gospel of Jesus Christ relates to the inescapable issues and questions which arise from the Christian's *cultural* existence in the world, and how this relationship is achieved without injury to the integrity of the Gospel”.

Thus, it would appear that both Kato and Bediako were concerned and interested in the authenticity of African biblical Christianity. However, the two approached this question from different perspectives. Kato's approach was the centrality of Scripture and the need to “baptise culture” (Kato 1975a:174), where this was not consistent with biblical values. Kato (1975a.:16) states:

The purpose of this book is to sound an alarm and warn Christians on both sides of the argument concerning the dangers of universalism. These dangers are theological pitfalls indeed...The noble desire to indigenise Christianity in Africa must not be forsaken. An indigenous theology is a necessity. But must not betray Scriptural principles of God and His dealing with man (sic) at the altar of any regional theology? Should human sympathy and rationalism override what is clearly taught in Scripture? Many voices in Africa and outside the continent are answering these questions in the affirmative. Their number is increasing rapidly. This is why I wish here to alert Christians to these pertinent dangers.

Bediako on the other hand grounded his reflections on self-identity and writes:

The basic argument which underlies the various chapters is that the development of theological concern and formulation of theological questions are closely linked as inevitable by-product of a process of Christian self-identity. In this sense, how certain problems assume a priority of a group of writers is illuminated by the view of Christian self-identity that a particular writer takes, or which is shared by that group of writers (Bediako 1992:xv).

Thus, proponents of African theology tended to look more towards African traditional religion as source for doing theology and defending ATR not to be a religion of animism, devil or idol worship. Therefore, the objective was less of an emphasis on the authority of Scripture, associated with Western missionary endeavor. The intention here was to look into the Bible for ideas that would support this premise by allegorical deductions. This was the critical tension between Kato and the other theologians—African traditional religions existing alongside Biblical Christianity, without syncretism. Kato's view was not unsympathetic with the concerns of other theologians, the association of the inhuman acts of the Western slavery and colonialism on one hand and Christianity by Western missionaries on the other. Kato (1975a:13) states: "Admittedly Biblical Christianity does not favour this type of inhuman practice...however, the Western world is steeped in Christianity, so the two appear identical".

However, Kato believed the African quest for freedom and selfhood still lied in Christianity. "In fact, it was Christians such as William Wilberforce who helped to abolish slave trade" (13). Authentic Christian faith would require a critical appraisal of African theology. Thus, Kato saw many of the teachings of his contemporaries as an affront to the unique claims of the Bible and salvation by Christ alone and argues:

The relativity philosophy is seeking to make the Scriptures only one of many revelations rather than a special revelation. Christianity is not repudiated but given the largest room in the camp of religions. It is claimed that the difference lies not in kind but in qualitative teachings. "Thus, said the Lord" as a propositional revelation or a fulfilment of other revelations. By this process it cannot dislodge other revelations but only improve upon them. That being the case, salvation is no monopoly of Christianity. It is just as possible to be saved through other religions as it is possible through Christianity though the later may bring salvation faster. Such is the kind of thought prevailing today. These are *theological pitfalls* (my emphasis) that only a discerning Spirit-filled Bible-believer can see and refute (1975a.:173-74).

Therefore, Kato was very concerned about what he perceived as universalism and syncretism creeping in the Church in Africa. This formed the basis of his main work—

The Theological Pitfalls in Africa—and in which, he was critical about the direction of African Theology.

Commenting on the work of an early church father, Tertullian, Bediako said: “Tertullian’s major concern was not so much how the Christian Gospel might be made relevant to the world, as how Christian truth was to be defended, and protected from the world conceived as “demonic”. Tertullian, therefore, represents “negative” response of the Christian to the cultural tradition in which he stands” (xvi). In this respect, Bediako labels Kato as Tertullian of modern African church. Bediako concluded: “The Tertullian viewpoint of Byang Kato must be given due weight, but so also must the evidence of a firmly established Christian religious commitment in the African church” (xviii). Bediako further asserts: “African theology in the post-missionary era, therefore, is as much a response to missionary underestimation of the value of African pre-Christian religious tradition, as it is an African theological response to the specific and more enduring issues of how the Christian Gospel relates to African culture” (xvii).

Accordingly, African theology tended to exalt African traditional religion as an authentic religion with same claim as perhaps, Christianity or rationale to synthesize the two and defending ATR not to be a religion of animism, devil or idol worship. Thus, the objective was less of an emphasis on the authority of Scripture, associated with Western missionary endeavor. The intention here was to look into the Bible for ideas that would support this premise by allegorical deductions. Accordingly, Kato (1975a:176) writes: “Africa stands to gain by becoming more creative than by expending energy on cultural demythologisation. It is childish to water down or compromise the gospel in order to impress the world with African contribution. The Spirit-filled believer bathed in the study of God’s word has great contribution to make to the universal Church of Christ”.

Acknowledging the religious confrontation and cultural challenge that Christianity faces in any culture, Kato (1975a:174) states: “The test for Christianity, however, was going to be whether it would survive as a unique faith, as the only answer to the human dilemma. Would it baptize cultures or would it be polarised and enmeshed by the multitudes of cultures it would invade?” Oden (2016:25; cf. Turaki 2020) asserts:

Afro-centrism must be rejected as an ideological bias contrary to the catholicity of the faith. Africa was the continent in which the concept of catholicity was first tested. Global vision is essential to catholicity. The aim of catholicity in Christian teaching is to reflect the wholeness of apostolic truth to the whole world, not simply the uniqueness of African Christianity to Africa...The gospel is not for or from Africans only. Classic African Christianity was attuned to a global citizenry.

Nonetheless, some missionaries may have had dominant cultural worldview and assumptions in their interpretation of scripture which were unbiblical and also offensive in the African context. What other people or the community think about the African could give her a diminished sense of self-worth or worthlessness, based on fear/honour-shame culture. This is an important consideration for one's identity. The guilt, shame and honour and fear, play an important role in shaping identity in human cultures. There are dominant traits of these factors in different cultures. Anthropologists generally agree that the Western culture is mostly guilt based and Africans and Asians are shame/honour based, with fear (Tennent 2007:77-82; Mburu 2019:68).

Tennent posits that “ a more biblical understanding of human identity outside of Christ is framed by guilt, fear and shame that should be able to stimulate a more profound appreciation for the work of Christ on the cross and perhaps which has not been well articulated by Western missionaries (2007:92). A repulsive reaction to attitude of those who demean the African culture was inevitable. However, should the repulsive reaction to the misapplication of Scripture be tantamount to rejection of the Good news itself, the Bible? Kato's response to this was in the negative. Human philosophy or rationalism should not “override what is clearly taught in Scripture” (Kato 1975a:16).

However, the subject of identity is not just about the demeaning of Africans; it borders on the whole question of ‘personhood and being’ that occupied the minds of patristic fathers as they envisioned the being of God (Zizioulas 1985:18). According to the Orthodox theologian, John Zizioulas:

Respect for man's (sic) ‘personal identity’ is perhaps the most important ideal of our time. The attempt of contemporary humanism to supplant Christianity in whatever concerns the dignity of man (sic) has succeeded in detaching the concept of the person from theology and uniting it with the idea of an autonomous morality or with an existential philosophy which is purely humanistic. Thus, although the person and “personal identity” are widely discussed nowadays as a supreme ideal, nobody seems to recognize that *historically* as well *existentially* the concept of the person is indissolubly bound up with theology (1985:27 his emphasis).

People's reality is never apart from God, our creator. Zizioulas further notes “Humanism or sociology could struggle as much as they wished to affirm the importance of man (sic).

The existentialist philosophers...have shown the person as an absolute ontological freedom remains a quest without fulfilment" (18). The Bible says: 'For in him we live and move and have our being' (Acts 17:28). Indeed, the quest for true identity is being in Christ.

In the new birth, people can have a new identity in Christ. "[F]or the Christian, the work of Christ on the cross is the most fundamental place where our new identity is formed. In Adam we became identified with guilt, fear, and shame. In Christ we are now identified with forgiveness, confidence, and honour" (Tennent 2007:92). Further, Tennent writes:

The apostle Paul uses the expression "in Christ" or close equivalents (e.g. "in him") 165 times in his letters. He declares, "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2:20). For Paul the cross is the place where our new identity is formed (92).

Thus, Kato suggests a 'third race' identity; an identity that is neither African or Western, nor a split identity between the two. In any case, followers of Christianity, like Judaism, in earlier centuries, were considered strange and abnormal kind of people... who did not bow to worship the Emperor and other deities.

They stood alone by themselves amid all the other races who were included in, or allied to, the Roman empire... this very uniqueness of character was taken to be a defect in public spirit and patriotism, as well as an insult and a disgrace... In the case of Christians, some of the sources of offence peculiar to the Jews were absent; but the greatest offence of all appeared only in heightened colours, viz, reprobates, belonging to an unlawful group (Harnack 2005:204-05).

The Christians were not considered as belonging to any of the recognised social classes, having fallen from being Greek or Roman then Jew and Christian (classless), something worse than Jew. "So monstrous, so repugnant are those Christians (of whose faith and life Cæcilius proceeds to tell the most evil tales), that they drop out of ordinary humanity, as it were. Thus Cæcilius indeed calls them a "*natio*," but he knows that they are recruited from the very dregs of the nations, and consequently are no "people" in the sense of a "nation"" Harnack (2005:204). Thus, the Christians were considered a 'third race'. According to Harnack (2005:207), Tertullian, "in his two books: *Nationes* and *Apology*, that states that Christians were called "*genus tertium*" (the Third race) by their opponents". Drawing from Scripture, Harnack (2005:187) further writes:

In classifying mankind Paul does speak in one passage of "Greeks and barbarians" alongside of Jews (Rom. i. 14), and in another of "barbarians and Scythians" alongside of

Greeks (Col. iii. 11); but, like a born Jew and a Pharisee, he usually bisects humanity into circumcised and uncircumcised—the latter being described, for the sake of brevity, as “Greeks.” Beside or over against these two “peoples” he places the church of God as a new creation (cp., e.g., 1 Cor. x. 32, “Give no occasion of stumbling to Jews or Greeks or to the church of God”). Nor does this mere juxtaposition satisfy him.

This new conception of identity into leads to higher unity, Jews and Greeks coming together as one in Christ. As a matter of fact, the people of Christ are not a third people to him beside their neighbours. “The people of Christ are not a third people to him beside their neighbours. They represent the new grade on which human history reaches its consummation, a grade which is to supersede the previous grade of bisection, cancelling or annulling not only national but also social and even sexual distinctions” (Harnack 2005: 187; cf. 1Peter 2:9; Col.3:11; 1Cor. 10:32; Gal. 3:28 and Rom. 9-11). The concept of “third race” identity was quite rife in the early twentieth century among European politicians especially when the Jewish and Gentile roots of Christianity became a very hot and contested issue in Germany, with the anti-Semitic sentiments of Nazism (Harnack 2005:279).

Kato’s application of this terminology therefore has very potent resonance to that of the NT church. Just as theologians from the time of Paul sought to overcome the totalizing effects of their cultures on their Christian theology by asserting that the Christian is in essence a member of a new race, Kato was attempting to do the same in applying this concept. The third race identity is the ‘new life in Christ’ (2 Cor. 5:17); apart from African and Western identities or split between the two.

Turaki (2001:137) states: “Our Lord Jesus himself made some categorical statement about his message of salvation within context of Jewish monotheism and the plural religions and cultures of the Roman Empire. Apostles message about the uniqueness of Christ”. The third race is profoundly biblical, supported by orthodox evangelical understanding of the being and otherness of the Christian. Conversion is not passivity and assimilation of a new belief into the old. Becoming a Christian is being born anew, of the spirit (Rom. 8:5-17; Eph. 4:21-24). Christian identity is what the Christian is, in Christ.

Romans 2-11 describes who the believer is in Christ: our identity consists of what God has done and made us to be—our very nature and essence in Christ. The passage suggests that God has chosen, elected, justified and saved us from the penalty and power of sin. So we are new creations, no more living under condemnation but living as children of God

and joint heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:14-17). No longer are we fallen and hopeless before God. Instead, we are victorious in Christ...This identity does not depend on our gender, tribe, education or nationality. It is purely how God has created us and what he has given us (Jesu: 2016:1601).

There are many references in the Bible that talk about the identity of the believer. Human identity is in God and without God, all humans are lost and all yearn for a true identity.

When humankind chose to be in charge of their own little gardens (Gen. 3), when they chose to construct cities with high walls and impressive towers to make a name for themselves (Gen. 11), paradise was lost. God then called Abraham and took him on a journey (Gen. 12). In the same way that God had created the world and blessed it, he now called this man and blessed him so that he could be a blessing to the nations of the world... Abraham's journey was the first "long" walk to freedom (Hendriks 2020:51).

Hendriks (p.53) further states: "If God calls and the Holy Spirit empowers, there is no ethnic, class, gender, age or any other human or natural barrier that prevents a person from becoming a vehicle for the coming kingdom of God. That, rather than their human circumstances, is what their identity".

At the heart of the question of Kato's African Christian Identity was his theology—*Theologia Africana*. *Theologia Africana* is a concept which defines the quest for African theology as distinct from that of missionary Christianity. This is a quest for African theology of post-missionary Christianity. According to Kato, the challenge of church in Africa was biblical ignorance, and lack of emphasis on theological education on the part of missionaries.

Many pastors in the churches in Africa have swallowed the pill of incipient universalism without knowing the premise nor the end result. While the work of interdenominational missions in Africa, which still makes up the core of evangelical Christianity, is highly commendable, nevertheless it is a fact that most of the missionaries lacked sound theological education. So a mammoth church has been established without the depth of theology that the church needs. Christian leaders are now vulnerable to the tactics of ecumenism with its basic universalistic premise (Kato 1976b:n. p.).

Bediako insists that the question of African theological identity is "the key to understanding the concerns of Christian theology in modern Africa and in the Second Century AD" (Bediako, 1992:1). He asserted that the primary agenda of the "modern African Theology" is "the meaning of the pre-Christian heritage as a prime concern." He further states: "There is no issue so crucial as the understanding of this heightened interest in the African pre-Christian religious tradition, if Africa's theologians are to be

correctly interpreted and their achievement duly recognized" (Bediako, 1992:1). To the credit of Kato, Bediako states: "Kato's achievement was in his persistent affirmation of the centrality of the Bible in the theological task ...Kato thus contributed a viewpoint of cardinal importance... even though his own cultural conception of theology in fact defeated the very purpose of theology as the struggle with culturally-rooted questions" (1992:xviii).

However, Kato in turn insists, that African Christians can only fulfil this quest in Christ. The answer was not to turn to culture and traditional African religion for identity. Against the background of the African Christian identity debate, it is intuitive to note Andrew Walls' perspective, a mentor of Bediako. Walls (1996:8) writes:

Throughout Christian history there has been another force in tension with this indigenising principle, and this also is equally of the Gospel. Not only does God in Christ take people as they are: He takes them in order to transform them into what He wants them to be. Along with the indigenising principle which makes his faith a place to feel at home, the Christian inherits the pilgrim principle, which whispers to him that he has no abiding city and warns him that to be faithful to Christ will put him out of step with his society; for that society never existed, in East or West, ancient time or modern, which could absorb the word of Christ painlessly into its system. Jesus within Jewish culture, Paul within Hellenistic culture, take it for granted that there will be rubs and frictions—not from the adoption of a new culture, but from the transformation of the mind towards that of Christ.

The quest for a balance between an authentic African worldview and biblical worldview, without mixing the two—continue to be an illusion. On the place of Christ in theology, Mugambi and Magesa (1998:x) write: "Theology is not Christian at all when it does not offer Jesus Christ of Nazareth as the answer to the human quest". However, some scholars argue that because the Western missionaries who introduced Christ in sub-Saharan Africa were also compatriots and in some instances allies, with those who suppressed the African, Christological discourse has been nuanced. The ambiguity about African Christology has also been complicated with quest for African identity (Parratt 1997; Mbiti 1986; Bediako 1997; Rieger 2007).

In any case, the notion of an African identity, even from a non-theological view was a conundrum. Many of the writers may only paint a skewed version of what that 'Africanness' is. There is hardly any one particular religion called African traditional religion, rather there are as many religions as there are different African traditional societies, each with own particular religious practices, even though these could have similar elements or characteristics. Underscoring the ambiguity about the African

context, Palmer (2015:1) asks: “But what is the African context? Is it the traditional world of Chinua Achebe? Or is it the modern urban context of half of the population of Africa?” In response to this query, Turaki states:

Modern Africa is a mixture of the old African traditional values, institutions, religion, culture, and worldview; of Western colonialism, Christianity, modern Western values and philosophies, and the secular forces; and of new values, social structures, and institutions generated as a result of the interaction between civilizations such as the West, Christianity, and Islam. A modern African therefore has a new identity forged out of modernity. This African could be a Christian, or a non-Christian, or a traditionalist. Others might be neither traditionalist nor Christian nor Muslim” (Turaki 2020:xxiii)

Nevertheless, the quest for identity has some validity, certainly under the current sociological strains of globalization. The fact is people always have some form of identity, for identity is the basis upon which we define self to others. Those who refuse to self-define their identity will have other people defining it for them. In any case, for the Christian, we only bear witness based on our identity. Evangelism cannot be successful except evangelicals inhabit the identity for which they preach. So, really it is not whether identity is important or not, but what sort of identity Christians in Africa ought to assume and project.

The challenge is that there are no literary forms of ATR to returning to and examining for established orthodox concepts, even of the ATR religion for critical assessment for parallels in the Christian religion. What the beliefs were may merely be conjectures by scholars who themselves have not had a full immersion experience of ATR. If anything, experience is varied and superficial. A typical African person is so different from the imaginary traditional African, before the arrival of the gospel. The Kenyan Masai in a three-piece suit and tie, on zoom in his air-conditioned office in Gigiri and arguing passionately about traditional Masai values is so different from Leboo, who has had his rite of passage by surviving a contest with a lion in the Masai Mara.

According to Turaki (xxvi): “The “Africanness” ideology in scholarship must be put to one side as it will only divert our attention from engaging and interacting with the traditional mind”. Turaki rejects both African and Western ideologies and their styles of theological discourse, especially the dominant approaches of African scholarship. The ‘Africanness’ of the African person comes out in the way they live, sing African songs, serve the interest of others, dance in church, pray as they do and other expressions which happen effortlessly. Kato (African Cultural...n. d.3:6) wrote:

The disturbed traditional life must be re-examined. Culture is what binds a people together and gives them a sense of identity as a community. The call for cultural revival is therefore right and necessary. But no culture is static. Every culture is changing. So the Romans influenced English culture, Arabs influenced Spanish culture. Africans influenced early Americans culture, and recently Americans have been influencing European culture. Borrowing from other cultures and revisions of traditional life style is what makes a culture alive and dynamic.

Kato argues that religion is the heart of culture for Africans and if there is a change in religion it would require a re-adjustment in culture. Short of this is to deny the person freedom of religion, a fundamental human right.

If Christians, for example, refuse to be involved in dancing, they cannot be charged with throwing away African culture. Their deep respect for the older people, parents, and authorities is certainly more important than body twisting, which may have immoral intentions. Because they have assumed a new religion, Christianity, they have to abide by the principles laid down in the Book of their -10- religion, the Bible. The Bible becomes the final judge of their culture (Kato...African Cultural n. d.3:7).

An authentic African Christian is one who will authentically live as an African in authentic Christian ways, as Christ did. About Christ, the people in community asked: "Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't his mother's name Mary, and aren't his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? (Matt. 13:55 NIV). One's identity in the society is unmistakable but also, there is a sense in which one's identity is infused with the community. Jesus could not be distinguished from his disciples; he had to be identified by a kiss, to tell him apart from the rest of the disciples (Mark 14:44). Distinct Christian identity then does not necessarily distance the believer from the community or people around them.

A model of the church as the one family of God, is the answer for quest for self-understanding for the African Christian, based on agape love. The choice of this model is also based on its relational element, a core value in African cultures. However, more than the African practice of ubuntu, the 'Christian African' should have no place for divisive ethnicity; "God is glorified when Christians view themselves as members of one family, an attitude of voluntary surrender is generated and God's children are compelled to learn each other's cultures" (Maigadi 1997:ii).

Defining a distinct Christian identity from culture in which the Christian finds self is critical to the Christian faith. In the past, NT Scholars explained identity construction without taking into consideration changes in group dynamics with time (cf. Esler 2003;

Tucker & Baker 2014). However, current Social Identity theory by sociologists teaches that identity is a complex social construct. After all, Christian identity may not be monolithic and unchanging as previously held (Kok 2014; Kok and Roth 2014). Perhaps Christian identity was much more complicated than we tend to think.

People can belong to several different groups at the same time; people could hold multiple social identities. Different people represent their multiple social identities in different ways. Within the same group for instance, there might be people who simultaneously belong to particular groups each of a different nature (intimacy groups, loose associations, religious groups, and so forth), but in their own mind, and in a particular context, they might view a certain group (and loyalty to that group) as being more important than another group. Kok 2014:2; cf. Roccas and Brewer 2002:88).

With the help of Social Identity Complexity Theory, social scientific models have been proposed to support Christian identity construction and ethos, which transcended and transformed social and cultural boundaries, rather than maintaining the social hegemony of the day (Kok 2014:8; Roccas and Brewer 2002). From social scientific perspectives, social identity can be construed and structured in many ways. People's social identity can be high or low in social identity complexity. People with a high level of social identity complexity tend to be more inclusive of outgroups, according to Roccas and Brewer (2002). Accordingly, Kok (2018:8) writes:

From a cursory analysis of the Pauline texts as case study, it seems that Paul had a high level of social identity complexity that enabled him to transcend social boundaries and facilitate a higher level of inclusiveness. Paul was rather critical of Peter at one stage in history, as a result of Peter's compartmentalisation that functioned in a dominating way and brought about re-segregation rather than reconciliation. Paul's baptismal unity formula in Galatians 3:28, which states that all believers are one in Christ, irrespective of whether a person is a Jew or a Greek, free person or slave and created new language and metaphors, like, 'new creation', 'brothers and sisters', 'all of you are one'; and he rejects language and practices that break down this unity (cf. Gl 3:38; 1 Cor 12:13; Col 3:11; cf. 1 Cor 9:19–23).

In other words "identity" is always being negotiated and debated and asserted and always changing, whether personal identity or ethnic, racial or national identity, it is always being revised. Human identity require redemption; one dies to the old and are raised with Christ in baptism (Otonko 2018).

There is a difference between assimilation or inculturation and sanctification. The newborn again Christian's aspiration is for Christian living. This should not be negritude, colonialism or inferiority of African cultural values, it is indeed a judgement on all human cultures. Kato (1985:41-42) writes:

The search for authenticity through culture remains a desirable element in many African societies. The attitude of Christians toward cultural renaissance need not be negative. Culture as a way of life must be maintained. Christ became a man in order to save men (sic). In becoming incarnate, he was involved in the Jewish culture—wearing their clothes, eating their food, thinking in their thought patterns. But while he went through all that, he was without sin, addressing both Jewish and Gentile people authoritatively as the Son of God.

Furthermore, Kato (p. 42) writes:

Jesus would not have come to make Africans become American Christians nor to cause Europeans to become Indian Christians. It is God's will that Africans, on accepting Christ as their Saviour, become Christian Africans. Africans who become Christians should therefore, remain Africans where ever their culture does not conflict with the Bible. It is the Bible that judges the culture. Where a conflict results, the cultural element must give way.

The story of the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11 was an attempt by fallen humanity to seek an identity without God and his purpose. But this was reversed at Pentecost in the NT, God reverses the curse of Babel. The Pentecost narrative affirms ethnic and linguistic diversity as part of the renewed people of God. At Babel, people sought homogeneity outside God's intended purpose; Pentecost restored unity-in-diversity as God intended (Tarus 2019:6).

It is worthwhile to state that Christ is not against any culture. What he does is to eliminate elements of culture that are opposed to the will of God, thereby raising the culture to God's standard. As a transformer of culture, Christ or the Christian faith permeates cultures to heal people of practices that hinder them in fulfilling the will of God. The neglect of this important dimension (Christ as the Transformer of Culture) of Christ's relationship with all human cultures has made Africans carry the Christian faith and African Traditional Religion on the same voyage. This is, indeed, the crisis of the Christian faith (Otonko 2018:5-6). Yes, there are basic unchangeable aspects of identity – physical and geographic characteristics. But these are always adjusted elements which undergo repeated changes depending on several factors.

Therefore, Kato's argument with his detractors was extremely important at the time. And in that regard also, Kato offers some lesson for the contemporary church, in fact, much more today than his generation. If Africa is to take seriously the mantle God is handing over to the African church, to be his mouthpiece of the Gospel to the world, the introspective identity some scholars are re-suggesting is actually the opposite of what the church must assume. The typical Church in global Christianity, especially the

evangelical church in Africa, cannot hope to evangelise Europe by insisting on projecting our Africanness, as if we believe that the European missionaries were after all correct in their colonization of Africa (Asumang 2018). We must on the contrary assume “third race” Christian identity to be able to evangelise the world.

Another important area that Kato made an important contribution was his focus on theological education. He recognised the impact of the place of the top giftings the Holy Spirit has bestowed on the church for solid grounding and expansion and maturation. These were prophetic, apostolic and teaching-pastoral ministries (Kato, *The Power of the Holy Spirit*; cf. Eph. 4: 1-16). While he was concerned about teaching of the Scripture at all levels in the church, he was particularly concerned about the training and development of leaders, for the prophetic, apostolic and pastoral roles. The study will now turn to his contribution in theological education in Africa.

4.4.3 Foundations of Kato’s Contribution to Evangelical Theological Education

The Christian faith is sustained and passed from one generation to another through Christian education. Education with the aid of the Holy Spirit, grounds believers in the faith and direction for every area of life. Theology is the soul of the Church, therefore “theological education is an intrinsic and intentional part of our participation in God’s mission” (Wright 2017:2). Theological education, formal or informal, “belong to the biblical category of ‘teaching’”. It is for the Church, to serve the life, growth and mission of God’s people, both in training its pastors and leaders and in helping all believers to be ‘transformed through renewal of their minds—to have the mindset of the Spirit’” (Wright 2017:2). The goal of theological training is to strengthen the Church, so the church can transform the world. This underscores the importance of theological education and therefore, must be characterised by missional intent, shaping of character and behaviour of people; the worship of the one true God, in a world of pluralism of religions/gods and maturing the church (Col. 1:6, 9-11; Eph. 4:11-16).

Giving an overview of the state of education in newly independent African countries, (forty-three countries then, in 1973), Kato highlighted how Africans were enticed by offers of scholarships by Islamic, socialist and communist nations and stated:

African Independent churches number 6,000 movements, claiming 7,000,000 adherents, and are growing by 100,000 each year. Their theology varies from strong belief in fresh visions by priestesses and priests, to a syncretism that places their founder e.g. Simeon

Kimbangu in Zaire, in equal position with Jesus Christ. A strong emphasis on things African will bring about a repudiation of traditional Christianity as presented by the missionaries. The philosophy of doing things African per se will help the growth of Independent Movement. Theology, that is where the action really is (Kato...Africa: Facts... 1973b:1-2).

Kato goes on further to assess the kind of training offered on the continent then and to underscore the need for theological training and wrote:

By sheer number of trained theologians, liberalism presents a real threat. Although only about 1% of all students in Africa go to University as compared to 4.6% the world average, these university level people are the elite of the continent. They will be the administrators, financiers, military rulers, decision makers in every department of life including the church. Theological education available so far for any of these varsity grads, has a strong view of African religions and culture. Almost all the 68 universities of the continent have a department of religions, where one can obtain up to a Ph.D. A search for peaceful co-existence among religions seems to be the basic concern of these religions. Thus, the graduates have come out with a call for softer and friendlier approach to Islam, African Religions and other faiths (Kato 1973b:2).

Thus, evangelicals in Africa saw this as a challenge; the need for battle for the mind and training the leadership, the decision makers, to match the intellect of these others for the survival of biblical Christianity in the church in Africa. This is how the theology commission of the then AEAM was established. Kato (1973b:2) wrote:

In their triennial conference, the 165 delegates of the Association of Evangelicals of Africa and Madagascar from 27 countries, expressed a deep concern on the theological trends in Africa. A theological Commission under the AEAM was set up to encourage the few existing theological schools in the continent. It was noted with regret that nowhere in the continent could a college graduate get a theological education at a graduate level. It was therefore resolved that an M.Div. level of training be started in the continent.

It was at this meeting that Kato was elected to lead the theology commission and before the meeting ended, Kato was also elected as the General Secretary or the Chief Executive Officer of the whole organisation of the AEAM.

According to Domeris and Smith (2014:8): "The task of studying theology at tertiary level is a complex one, because this is not just an academic exercise—it involves our faith, indeed our whole reason for living". Ultimately, the theology training programmes must produce graduates who are fit and committed to participate in God's mission, faithful to worshipping the one true God of the Bible and growing in maturity in their understanding, obedience and endurance in faith. Kato wrote: "It is absolutely essential that church leadership in Africa delve into the discipline of theology before the queen of sciences is relegated to the second-rate status and the Christians left undernourished and confused" (Kato 1974f:n. p.). He advocated for the church to reach out to young people, especially in secondary school and university. Kato

underscored the importance of theological education not only for evangelisation, but for discipling the young. He encouraged Christian education programmes for the youths in the Church and writes:

Christian Education encourages the growth of various youth organizations in the church as well as those of the older people. A strong Sunday School, Youth Fellowship, Boys' Brigade, Girls' Brigade, Young Sword League, and other similar clubs that promote Christian teaching are given impetus by Christian Education... Youth centres in cities to be established by NEFs as not every single church should do so, bible colleges to train in youth work. Encouraged parents to do the same... A good Christian home should be the foundation of youth work... Involve youths in activities of the church. Sunday school, library for them to read, games and sports. Discover their talents (Kato 1969:3).

The task of making disciples emphasizes the educational aspect of the great commission given to the faith community. "It is discipleship unto life transformation — a process of growth and development of the total person, spiritual, intellectual, volitional and emotional, to the end that the disciple is made fit for life here and in the hereafter" (LOP No.57: 2005:12). The church has a missional purpose, which is enhanced through education, both of her leadership and of the generality of her membership" (LOP No.57 2005:17). Jesus Christ himself spent three years teaching, coaching and mentoring the Apostles. Similarly, the Apostle Paul invested time in teaching and mentoring leaders for the Churches he planted in his ministry (Acts 20:27).

The church is divided on the place for theological education in the mission of the church. The evangelical movement has placed priority on evangelism and church planting tasks with speed as core value to the neglect in investing time and resources for theological education as core component of the great commission. The Church is starved, for not being fed with the whole counsel of God's word. (Massey 2014:5-16). The goal of evangelical theological education is to turn out graduates who are thinking practitioners; "one who thinks deeply about theology, but who is also actively engaged in Christian ministry of some sort. They reflect deeply on the great questions and challenges facing the church in their context, develop theological responses that seek to show God's viewpoint so as to help the people of God to respond in ways that are faithful to the Lord" (Smith 2013:13).

In a review of a book by Tite Tienou, Carson (1982:119-20) highlighted what Tienou perceived as the theological challenge and task of the Church in Africa. According to

Carson, Tienou pinned the challenge to “the relationships between biblical Christianity and African culture, and between biblical Christianity and African religion; and the nature of and need for proper contextualization of theology in Africa today” (Carson 1982:119). However, what Tienou saw as threats to the evangelical church were, informing the theological task, were internal. Unlike Kato’s external threats from liberal ecumenists creeping into the evangelical church, Tienou draws attention to “dangers within the evangelical church”. These included: 1) mistrust of theology, 2) the persistent tendency of African evangelicalism to follow their leaders blindly without thinking biblically and theologically and contributing to their errors (Tienou called this ‘sacerdotalism’), 3) the danger of an ahistorical faith, the need for some awareness of two thousand years of Christian tradition and reflection, and 4) denominational individualism. Tienou’s call or prescription was the need to develop “positive theology”—a theology that does not merely criticise other developments, or merely follow leaders African or Western, but to think ‘God’s definitive revelation’ for themselves, in the African context, without sacrificing the authority of Scripture or the counsel of tradition, but equally without adopting undigested theological formulations that bear no consequences of Africa and her needs, cultures and categories.

Tienou also urged that theological reflections should be in the context of prayer and thirdly, called for African evangelicals to aim for a balance between theological unity and denominational and personal identity and freedom. Furthermore, Tienou admonished that African evangelicals should advance their numbers in the developing departments of religion in the new universities instead of withdrawing, to establish two or three (emphasis mine) more graduate schools of theology; to proceed cautiously with T. E. E. programmes, to befriend wherever possible the leaders of the many independent churches in Africa in the hope of influencing their direction to strengthen ACTEA and ETSA (Evangelical Theological Society in Africa) and more (Carson 1982:120).

As the immediate successor to Kato, as the Executive Secretary of the AEA Theological Commission (Bowers 2016:9), the *avante garde* of Kato’s theological work and for which he would be famous, Tienou’s musing here is important. Tienou’s observations may be a fair assessment of the situation in the church but perhaps his

concerns were more of leadership issues than theological per se. Also, these challenges are not so much in tandem with Kato's perspective on theological advancement, even if both agreed on the need for theological education. One wonders whether Tienou's concern was more of quelling the feud and diffusing the line Kato had clearly drawn between the liberalists and what was the beginning of evangelical wing in the emerging African theological discourse. Bowers (2002:121) noted: "The average educated African evangelical would probably resonate with many of the themes and preoccupations of African Theology, even if he would expect to modify the answers given on these issues". Thus, Tienou's proposal could well be the genesis of the 'middle-ground' posture many of the budding evangelical theologians took. Carson (p. 119) observes: "Tienou reflects a healthy catholicity: he draws from western and African writers, conservatives and otherwise, without in the slightest veering from his biblical moorings". By contrast, Kato maintained his hard-line stance: "I have heard some key leaders warn against "the hardening of lines between liberals and evangelicals," and this we can appreciate. But can we realistically wipe out the line without compromising the evangelical faith if the liberals stick to their theological stance and practice?" (Kato 1974f:n. p.).

The nature and goal of theology is not simply to apply the gospel in the diverse contexts of human life, it aims to create understanding of the unchanging nature of the gospel—the absolutes that transcend time and cultural pluralism (Hiebert 1994:102). Kato's remedy included establishing a theological institution for providing standards, accreditation, curriculum and faculty development, in addition to establishing two graduate evangelical theological schools in sub-Saharan Africa. Kato insisted on training Christian leaders on African soil, to avoid liberalisation in Western institutions, among other reasons. However, the faculty in the African seminaries were mostly Western missionaries, the approaches and curriculum were not only Western standards, but also subjects like African Traditional Religions were shaped and taught by Western missionaries. Harries (2018:171) asserts: "The categories of 'African Traditional Religions' (ATRs) and 'world religions' (WRs) turn out to be Western inventions with an incomplete grasp of reality". Drawing from his personal experience of mentoring an African colleague who took over his teaching responsibilities in ATR, Harries opined that what is written and communicated about ATRs is on Western terms and forms and in fact, originally written by Westerners and Africans who followed them,

follow the same patterns of communication, for acceptance in the Academy. “Without a doubt, my African colleagues knew African religion, in the sense of what Africans do and believe, better than I did. What they did not know was how to communicate this information in a form that is acceptable to Western scholarship” (p. 172-73).

Kato himself taught ATR at Igbaja Seminary. Rev. Norman Lohrenz, a missionary colleague, observed that the students got a better understanding of the subject under Kato’s tutelage than under any other faculty member (Haye 1986:50). He was forthright in spelling out the difference between ATR beliefs and Christianity. According to Haye (1986:50) Kato said: “In the context of African traditional religions, the worship is merely an indication of an honest craving for God, which can be fulfilled only in biblical revelation through the incarnate Christ who died and rose again”. He also argued that Africans should be made to feel that Christianity was an African religion and not any more foreign than it is in Europe or other parts of the world.

Kato experienced some change of identity by embracing the Christian faith, brought to them by Western missionaries, in own language and cultural lenses. Kato’s unique and contrary theological views became a cause for the hot debate in theological circles in Africa and the aspersion against Kato’s non-Africanness and authenticity of Christian beliefs (Ngong 2007:109). Kato’s theological perspectives were not innovations. Similar to the way classical doctrines and canon of Scripture were established; Kato contended for what had been known and practiced in antiquity, what has been accepted by all everywhere—mainstream evangelicalism (Otonko (2018:6). Kato’s theological perspectives were grounded in classical Christian beliefs. The contentions were more with an esoteric and localised theological motif.

4.5 Summary and Conclusion

While Kato’s theological perspectives stood in contrast with the views of many of his fellow Africans he debated, there seems to be resonance with other evangelical theologians or scholars from the past and from other parts of the world as well as some African scholars. Some people could argue that Kato’s views did not resonate with the African context because Christianity tended to be cloaked in Western civilisation and not authentically African. However, Kato contended the approach to getting rid of Western cloak was not to then cloak the gospel in African culture or ATR. Instead,

Kato advocated biblical Christianity that has a home in Africa.

Byang Kato's theological interpretative narrative leaning and approach to the Bible was dispensationalism and the inductive method. In the inductive Bible study approach, it is acknowledged that all have blind spots and therefore, the help of others is needed (Bauer and Traina 2011:26). In endorsing Kato's work—*The Theological Pitfalls in Africa*, Billy Graham (1975) stated: "Paul, Peter and Jude would have approved of the theme of this book, for they too were on guard against the destructive effect of heretical ideas (Gal. 2:4; 2 Peter 2:1; and Jude 4). Dr Kato provides us here an update in the perennial concern the Christian Church ought to have against what he calls "unhealthy trends" in theology". Graham went on further to state:

Much of the world, including Africa, today still reveals entrenched idolatry. In addition, the awakening consciousness of nationalism provides the temptation of fabricating a faith to be embraced mainly because of what it can do for people materially. Dr Kato properly suggests however that there should be no conflict between nationalistic loyalty and Biblical faith. The Scripture teaches clearly that believer is by definition—a citizen of two worlds.

Charles C. Ryrie was equally affirming of Kato's theological direction, in his introduction to "*The Theological Pitfalls in Africa*" Ryrie (1975) stated:

Byang Kato is uniquely qualified to say what is said in this important work. His background is in Africa; his training has been thorough; and he has no cause to champion except that of the truth of the Scripture...The author's case against syncretistic universalism is fully documented and well-reasoned. He has issued a scholarly challenge to those who follow these false teachings.

Kato's theology had an appeal to other scholars in other parts of the world (Shirik 2017). He may have been a solo voice in vigorously defending the gospel against several opponents but what he stood for mostly had resounding resonance with mainstream Christianity. Kato's contribution, to make Christianity understandable in all cultures, is particularly important in contemporary Christianity where the African Church is now the majority in the global Church.

Chapter 5.0

A Model for Biblical Fidelity in African Evangelical Christianity

5.1 Introduction

As pioneer evangelical theologian, Kato has a unique place in the church and theological circles in global christianity. Kato's life and ministry in the academy, in the pulpit, the community and leadership roles in his local church, in Africa as a whole and indeed, in global Christianity, established him as a theological leader. He is acclaimed to be the father of evangelical theology in modern sub-Saharan Africa. His theological legacy is very much alive in the Church in Africa. His name is revered and remembered in many parts in the church today. Kato's life story is itself a theological means for reflection (1 Thess. 5:12-13; Heb. 11, 13:7). His conversion from African traditional religion to Christianity and how he lived as a Christian with a dominant biblical worldview is of theological interest.

Nevertheless, Kato has been criticized by some people and he is said not to have any theology of his own (Bediako 1992 Chapter 10; Ngong 2007:109; Palmer 2004; Oduyoye 1986:62; Helleman 2003:13-15). Kato's critics may be referring to academic theology and therefore limit his theological contribution to the one scholarly work for his doctoral dissertation and from which a popular book version—*The Theological Pitfalls in Africa*—was published, which in any case, sparked off heated theological debates that continue to date. Kato's work was a critique of the theology of other scholars, who were mostly concerned with the integration of African traditional religions with Christianity which, from Kato's perspective, led to syncretistic universalism in the Church in Africa. Kato's aggressive critique of African theology, which was embracing syncretistic and liberal tendencies of universalism were apparently, his major scholarly undertaking before his demise. He warned the church and named the drivers of these theological pitfalls. His theological contribution would be cut short by his sudden and tragic death (Haye 1986:91; Ngong 2007: 127).

In the broader context, what is considered theology in the academy could well be limited to traditional disciplines of “Biblical exegesis, church history, systematic theology, pastoral theology” (Oborji 2006:393). Thus, Kato’s critics credit him for little or no theology of his own but branded him as a complainer. Kato is charged to be a pawn in the hands of Western theological masters, intent on undermining attempts at promoting the dignity of Africans (Bediako 1992; Ngong 2007:132). They make him infamous for complaining about what was not right about the theology of others and there was little or no theology of his own. Kwame Bediako, one of Kato’s fiercest critics, writes: “Virtually everything he wrote was intended as a reaction to, and a rebuttal of, much that went to constitute the “African theology” of the last two decades. For this, if for no other reason, Byang Kato’s work compels attention” (Bediako: 1992:386). Further, Bediako states: “Kato presents the remarkable instance of one who, though trained in theology on a Western model like his fellow African theologians of modern time, yet unlike them, retained that model for his theological reflection in his African context” (1992:386; 1994). So, while Kato is charged as rejectionist regarding embracing African theology (cf. Kato 1974j), it is claimed that the other theologians rejected whatever they had been taught, because it was in the West. One wonders whatever else was rejected or retained from the West. Bediako also acknowledges the fact that Kato’s views represented his deep roots in conservative evangelical tradition (1992:386).

While Kato’s engagement with other people’s theologies were indeed critique of what was wrong, that was itself some form of theologising. However, a careful assessment also reveals that Kato’s life history and his zealous polemics, highlighted and defined what he perceived as biblical Christianity and revealed some theological constructs that characterised his theology and for which he was known and remembered. Theology itself is born out of mission—mother of theology— “The missionary commission, which has its source in the *Missio Dei*, cannot appear only in the specifically theological sphere but also embraces liturgy, prayer, proclamation, communication of the faith in all its forms. All of this, of course, needs thorough theological reflection, especially in the cultural context, but must not be confined to it” (Oborji 2006:390). However, theological reflections did not necessarily have a prominent place in development of a discipline of systematic reflections on mission; according to Oborji (2006:385). Quoting Bosch, Oborji (2006:384) states:

Christianity is missionary by its very nature and it is the intrinsic nature and mission of the church to proclaim the message of salvation in Christ to the ends of the earth. To neglect this mission is for the church to deny its very *raison d'être*. But this does not mean that missiology as a theological discipline is a neutral or disinterested enterprise; rather, it seeks to look at the world from the perspective of commitment to the Christian faith. Such an approach implies as well a critical examination of every manifestation of the church's missionary activity to rigorous analysis and appraisal, precisely for the sake of the Christian mission itself (Bosch 1993:9).

For many centuries, theology was a single discipline, the knowledge of God, without subdivisions. With the emergence of Enlightenment, theology came to be subdivided into two areas; according to Oborji (2006:387; cf. Smith 2013:35-38):

Theology as practical know-how necessary for clerical work, and theology as one technical and scholarly enterprise among others (theology as practice and as theory). From here, theology evolved gradually into what Farley calls the "fourfold pattern:" the disciplines of the Bible (text), church history (history), systematic theology (truth), and practical theology (application). Each of these had its parallels in the secular sciences. "Practical" theology became a mechanism to keep the church going, whilst the other disciplines were examples of "pure" science.

However, Missiology as a theological discipline, which takes into consideration the diverse aspects of mission, the work of the Church (Oborji 2006; Bosch 1991). Smith posits: "We do theology by thinking and speaking about God's word and our faith. Scholars use four important words to describe the way theologians reason and discourse: hermeneutical, critical, correlational and dialogical" (2013:38-39).

Thus, there is firm theoretical foundation for exploring missionary activities in the church and the life history of the missionary, for theological reflection, apart from and in addition to the academy or seminary. Therefore, this study sought to explore the missionary activities of Byang Kato, a prominent African Church leader and indeed, his contribution in the academy. The discourse in this research has been hermeneutical, critical, correlational and dialogical. It has been 'a word about God' (Smith 2013). It is not so much about studying God, as God cannot be a direct object of study. "Divine revelation and people's faith are two direct objects of theology" and indirectly, we get to know God's nature and will through the systematic study of divine revelation and human faith (Smith 2013:18).

The abiding impact and lively debates Kato ignited continue to date, more than four decades after his sudden death. One could argue that the ongoing debate in African theological discourse, especially about the relationship between African traditional

religions and Christianity, is itself an important theological contribution. Following Kato's death, a number of his literary works, albeit most of these were unpublished, were discovered and collated and made available as an important resource of information about Kato. Therefore, as important as "Theological Pitfalls in Africa" is, there are other written sources that provide biographical information about Kato's life and theological reflections. A comprehensive information of Byang H. Kato bibliography, compiled by Christina Breman (1996), is made available by ACTEA (ACTEA Tools, No.16). Oral sources of information from family, colleagues and friends who have survived Kato, for over four decades may be a depleted group of people, from whom vital information about Kato's life and ministry could be gleaned. During this study for example, the widow of Kato passed, only two months after the researcher met her and forty-four years after the death of Kato. The contribution of Kato is also immortalized in at least three theological institutions, Kato helped to build, in different regions of Africa.

The various sources highlighted above were used in this research to collate information to respond to the research questions. Bowers (2008:7) observes:

Discussion about Kato needs to be reformulated, by setting him within the larger framework of his agenda and accomplishments. Much of the conventional treatment of Kato has repeatedly taken his measure almost exclusively in terms of his distinctive input to the African Theology debate. Kato is then interpreted either by critiquing or by defending that input. To the extent that this has become a common framing of the entire Kato discussion, it can prove reductionist and hence misleading.

Therefore, this study was designed to explore data from the life history and biography of Kato and his theological legacy in three areas, hermeneutics, African Christian identity and evangelical theological education, as described in preceding chapters. In this penultimate chapter, I set out to construct a theological system that uniquely characterised Kato's contribution, which I have called *Katoan Theology*—a distillation of Kato's legacy as an account of theological vision which would have relevance for contemporary evangelical scholarship in Africa. Kato himself did not claim any theology of his own, rather than what the Bible says. The beliefs and practices that Kato's life and message conveyed, could be a helpful model for African Christianity.

That message may seem to have been drowned with his body in the Indian Ocean in Mombasa on the East coast and interred with his bones in Kwoi, on the West coast of

Africa. This study is an attempt to resuscitate or resurrect, for reflection in the contemporary church in the African context. The life and ministry of Kato; his birth and context of his birth, conversion and spiritual journey, his message, his rise as a global evangelical Christian leader and tragic death, provide some important theological lessons, of spiritual and practical value to Christians. The task was to assess Kato's effort to sustain biblical Christianity in Africa through teaching, training and developing discipleship programmes in the church.

Data from the study, drawn from preceding four chapters, was the material for reflection and analysis; to identify theological themes that characterised Kato's theology. The themes identified were based on frequency of occurrence and emphasis Kato made on these themes. The themes were coded and categorised in simple and understandable language Kato would use and perhaps not easily recognised by others as theological constructs. Kato believed "Theology should be expressed in the context of every people for their understanding and practice, but Christian Theology does not need polarization, which has a tendency of adding to or subtracting from the gospel of Christ" (Kato 1976b:30). I have also attempted to set these out in standard or classical theological categories, which would make it easily comparable and contrastable with others. Thus, the following is the outline of the theological constructs or themes I identified from the study as distinctive of Kato's theology. Each theme highlighted has subthemes, as outlined and described below.

5.2 Outline of Kato's Theological Model

The following outline sets out what I deduce from the study as Kato's theological emphasis, even if he himself did not set these out in a systematic account in his writing. Kato was concerned about the historic or classical doctrines of the Christian faith and wrote: "Unless the church in Africa wants to isolate itself from historic Christianity, it should take a position on these vital doctrines" (1975a:149). This comment was in reaction to those who wanted unity of the church at all cost and avoided talking about doctrines to avoid division. However, from his messages, writings and polemics, the following could be distilled as Kato's theological and doctrinal positions he contended for—historic Christianity that could be understood and applied in different context.

1. Soteriology (Personal conversion)

- Own personal salvation from world of sin or Adamic nature (Gen. 6-8; Rom 3:23; 6:23; Eph. 2:1; Col 1:21)³².
- Lostness of all humans and need for salvation (Rom. 3:23, 6:23; 5:12, 15; Eph. 2:1; Col. 1:21; John 5:24).
- Vicarious death of Jesus as the only way for salvation (Rom. 5:17; Acts 19:23-41; Phil. 3:8; John 5:24; Rom. 5:12)
- Uniqueness and otherness of Christ in salvation (Rom. 5:17)
- Salvation is more than physical liberation; both the oppressed and oppressor (all people) need salvation (John 3:16)
- Conviction, repentance and acceptance of Jesus Christ by faith (Phil. 2:5-11; John 1:12; Eph. 2:8-9)

2. Christian formation (Disciple-making)

- Discipleship through consciousness/consistency in learning to follow Christ as taught in scripture (Matt. 28:19; Acts 1:8).
- Children and Youth programmes (Prov. 22:6; Eccl. 12:1; 2 Tim. 1:5; 2 Cor. 2:16).
- Family altar
- Contending for the faith (Jude 3)
- Holism in discipleship
- Christian education

3. Bibliology (Bible-centred)

- Doctrine and high view of the Bible as God's special revelation; inspired, inerrant and infallible (Heb. 1:1, 2:3-4; Acts 10:35).
- Biblical Worldview (Ex. 25:40; Heb.8:5)
- Conservative, consensual and contextual
- Authoritative and sufficient guide for faith and conduct; content unchanging (OT and NT—66 books) but mode of expression contextual.
- Only source for Christian theological reflection

4. Christology (Christ-centred)

³² Scriptural references were the relevant Bible passages Kato used, in connection to related themes in outline.

- Incarnation and Virgin birth
- Personhood and Divinity
- Vicarious death and resurrection (and only means for salvation)
- Uniqueness of Christ and only way for salvation
- Return of Christ to earth as the glorious hope of followers of Christ.

5. Ecclesiology (Christian African identity)

- Identity in Christ
- Third race citizenship (Rom. 13:1-14;
- New citizenship/ One Body of Christ (Acts 17:26
- Discontinuity (Eph.2:15; Matt. 11:724)
- Christian African- true freedom and self-understanding of the African Christian.
- True unity in diversity and in Christ and his Word (John 17:21)

6. Missiology (Safeguarding biblical Christianity in Africa)

- Strategic leadership development and establishing evangelicalism (Acts 13:1-2
- Theological education
- Growth and maturation of the church (evangelism and disciple-making and leadership development).
- Children and youths and family (roles in the ministry of the church).

7. Eschatology (The Second coming or return of Jesus Christ)

- Pietism—tendencies on the fringes of mainstream evangelicalism.
- Dispensationalism/ premillennialism (Rev. 20).
- Second Advent of Christ (Titus 2:13; John 1:14, 17; Matt. 16:27).
- Glorious hope of the church

8. Pneumatology and Demonology (Power of the Holy Spirit in the Christian and demons).

- “The second experience” (Acts 2; 10:46; Eph. 19:1-6; Acts 4:8-31)
- Receiving the Holy Spirit and the evidence (Acts 1:8; 2:1-13; Lk. 24:49).
- Baptised and sealed and being filled with in the Holy Spirit (Acts 6:3-5; 7:55; 9:17).

- Spiritual gifts (Rom. 12:3-8; 1Cor. 12:4-14:40; Eph. 4:1-16).
- Demons and angels and their impact on Christian life and missions (cf. MacDonald 2017).

Each one of these constructs will be further described in the following sub-section(s) below:

5.3 Description of Kato's Theology

This section will now give a fuller description of each of the eight theological categories outlined in the last section. The description reflects the discussion in the previous chapters and has much as possible, using Kato's thoughts and re-echoing his perspectives; reflecting his voice, words he used and how these were understood, as much as possible.

5.3.1 Soteriology (Personal Conversion)

Kato's conversion from African traditional religion, as a Jaba fetish priest and the 'Devil's baby'—Kato's reference to his dedication as fetish priest to the tribal god as a baby—to Christianity is key to his doctrine or understanding of salvation. Kato got saved at an impressionistic age of twelve years and would continue to recount the experience for the rest of his life. Asked in an interview how this happened, Kato said:

My reply will be, well, when I was without Christ. I was of course religious - religious in the sense of worshipping idols. But when Jesus Christ was presented to me, I realized that He was the Way of Life - not just a way, but the only Way, and so I asked Him to come into my heart, in order that when I die, I may be sure of going to be with Him in heaven (IDEA Magazine... African Perspective 1974).

His personal experience of salvation was futuristic and foundational to his understanding of salvation and his theology and indeed his soteriology. Understanding the need for salvation would require understanding of what was at stake, that is, the right conception of sin and eternal consequences. Kato (1976b:30) observed:

There has never been such great confusion concerning the meaning of salvation. The number one problem for not attaining the truth is the rejection of the authoritative Word of God. Since the Bible is not the authoritative source of teaching, the ecumenists are left to devise their own concept. The basic concept held by liberal ecumenists is social and economic liberation. To stress the idea of personal salvation and declare hell judgement is considered eccentric and dehumanizing. The concerted effort is for universal deliverance of all people everywhere from any kind of oppression by fellow human beings.

Humans were dead and lost in sin and estranged from God (Eph. 2:1; Col. 1:21) and hell bound. Kato believed in the original depravity of human beings needing salvation.

Since the fall, the total race of Adam has been condemned to death (Rom. 3:23; 6:23). Salvation in the biblical sense is the passing out of this death dungeon (John 5:24) into the dimension of life. The members of Adamic race are all stillborn (Rom. 5:12). Not one of them deserves to live. But the undeserving favour of God has made salvation possible through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The death and resurrection of the second Adam is described as to only "abound to many" (Rom. 5:15). Christ is universally available to all men everywhere at any time. This is how far universalism goes. But its effectiveness applies *only to those who receive the offer*-Rom (Kato 1975a:180-81).

Thus, Christ, the God-Man died for all but only those who accept His offer through faith and repent of the Adamic nature and sinful life can be saved (Rom. 5:17). Salvation does not come through following a religion, philosophy or any liberation movement or liberation from oppression of other people systems. Expressing concern about Liberation and Black theology proponents on the question of salvation or soteriology, Kato (1976d:70) wrote:

To use New Testament terms like 'salvation', 'freedom', 'deliverance', in a context of political liberation is semantically incorrect and leads to a misrepresentation of Christian truth. Questions of social justice are ethical, not soteriological. This in no way lessens the importance of these questions for the Christian but seeks to place them on a theologically adequate foundation. Two areas of contemporary theology are particularly responsible for this confusion between soteriological and ethical issues.

Kato understood demands of true Christianity, regarding other religions that informed his choice for embracing Christianity. "A Christian is a person who believes in Christ and who by faith in Him has received remission of sins and everlasting life" (Kato 1974c:n. p.).

Kato relates the salvation of humanity in the flood, in the Genesis story (Chapter 6-8) to salvation of people in the world. Just as people had to get into Noah's ark to be saved from perishing in the flood, people need to be in Jesus Christ to be saved from eternal damnation without Christ, in this world (Haye 1986:19). Kato's main theological concern was salvation for people through faith in Jesus Christ. However, salvation for Kato was more of future reality. He believed the essential mission of the Church was to warn people about the future condemnation and eternal suffering in hell, through proclamation of the word or evangelism. Nevertheless, Kato states (1975a:153): "It is a gospel that salvation of the individual soul begins here and now, and that eternal life qualitatively influences the whole dimension of life".

Like the Apostles in the Bible, Kato's message was what he had personally experienced. For example, the Apostle John writes: "We proclaim to you the one who existed from the beginning, who we have heard and seen. We saw him with our own eyes and touched him with our own hands, He is the Word of life" (I John 1:1). Kato claims no Apostolic authority, but the prayer of Jesus Christ confers similar standing on those who would believe in him through the Apostolic message. Jesus prayed for the disciples, before going to the Cross and ascension to heaven: "I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message" (John 17:20). Therefore, Kato appropriated this and states his own experience:

While the NT Christianity respects human dignity and calls for justice, liberation in terms of what Christ came to do must be understood as meaning liberation primarily from man's fundamental dilemma, which is sin. When Christ talked of freedom, the Jewish leaders thought of political freedom. But He made it plain that He meant freedom from sin (John 8:31-38). Both the oppressed and the oppressor need this message. The liberated person must, therefore, see his fellow men (sic) as equal before God. The heart of Paul's social ethics is summed up in Galatians 3:28: 'There is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ' (Kato 1985:51).

Many people in the church in Africa today would base their membership of the church for other reasons rather than conversion in the biblical sense—the born-again experience or new birth in the Spirit. The burgeoning church membership could be motivated by African spirituality or religiosity and resulting in syncretic practices and not real conversion as understood by evangelical orthodoxy. Some Christians could be described as nominal or cultural Christians; relying on culture and tradition for their faith and take salvation to be political or social action. Kato (n. d.3:32) wrote:

While justice and social improvement are the results of salvation, they are not salvation. Both a slave and his master in the New Testament needed and enjoyed the salvation of the Lord (e.g. Philemon). It was possible for both the rich and the poor to be happy in the salvation of the Lord in the New Testament (Luke 16:19-31; Acts 16,14,15). Both the oppressed and the oppressor today need the gospel (Romans 3:23; John 1:12).

Until people can confess being in Christ as the Bible teaches and as demonstrated by Kato, in word and deed, their profession of the Christian faith is not authentic. Kato (1978:1) stated:

Exploitation, disease, abject poverty and deprivation of the basic necessities of life have been the lot of the majority of African people. But what is the root cause of these human tragedies? Would man's problems be solved after alleviation of physical suffering and material deprivations? Is putting clothes on man's back

and food in his stomach the way to solve man's basic need? Is political liberation the final answer? History negates any answers to these questions. Philosophical reflections show that man's root problem is beyond these issues here noted.

Conversions start with conviction, confession and then forgiveness and repentance, based on the substitutionary and sacrificial death on the cross by Christ. "The Holy Spirit is absolutely necessary for rebirth (John 3:1-6). Anyone born of the Holy Spirit has the Spirit taking His abode in him from the time of that conversion experience onward. (Rom. 8:9). Even such carnal Christians as those in the Corinthian church possessed the Holy Spirit—I Cor. 16:19.20" (Kato 1978:2). Forgiveness is appropriated by faith in Christ. Life in Christ means a complete turnaround and a new identity in Christ. It is not just a change of religion but change in religious beliefs, values and practices from previous religions, which was always sinful and inconsistent with what the Bible teaches.

It is the person of Jesus Christ, and not the religion or culture that is being presented, if Christianity is to be faithful to the mission and message of its Lord. Nominal or cultural Christianity may also be one of the reasons for misleading theologies—based on human philosophies and not the Bible, God's special revelation for theological reflection. True conversion demands the lordship of Jesus Christ in every aspect of the Christian's life, above anything else, person or religion, culture or nationality. Arguing the case for evangelism as distinct from social action, Kato (1975a:153; cf. Leffel 2013:xiv) wrote:

The Messiah came as both the Messenger and the content the "*eungelion*". The incarnation as a whole was good news to the cursed Creation (Rom.8:23) but the "saving of souls" was the primary purpose of God condescending to the lowest depth of humanity (Phil. 2:5-11). The Son of Man truly came to serve, but that service was the atonement made possible on the cross (Mark 10:45; 8:36). When it is announced intelligently to the hell-bound sinful soul that God gave His Son to die in his (sic) place and that the choice is now left with him, a choice that will determine destiny, evangelism has taken place (John 1:12; 3:16, 36; Acts 4:12; 16:31; 1Peter 1: 23-25; Eph. 2:8, 9).

Kato goes on further to argue:

While it is true that the Old Testament concept of salvation was physical deliverance from whatever problem the people of God had (Exodus 15:1, 2; Psalm 34:6; Isaiah 43:11), the New Testament assumed the meaning primarily as deliverance from sin (Luke 19:10). Sin is the fundamental dilemma of man (sic). Christ died to save man from that dilemma (Ephesians 2:13-18). The outcome of salvation, of course, calls for social concerns here and now. But that in itself is no salvation (1975a:163-64).

Kato's definition of evangelism is important for the church, even as the debate about definition of evangelism and social action continue in the church. Kato believed that salvation was not political liberation or social development but eternal redemption.

5.3.2. Christian Formation (Radical Discipleship)

Following Kato's conversion to Christianity, he saw the need to learn and grow in his faith. Being a Christian meant learning about and following Jesus Christ as a disciple. Kato believed the only reliable source of information about Christ and his newly found faith was the Bible. He took seriously, what the Bible said and made time "for the inductive study of God's word" (1975a:183)—the Bible and was diligent in availing himself to biblical teachings in the church. Kato (1985:37) asserts: "Know the truth and defend it, with all at your disposal, including your life's blood. Our Lord appeals to us to "contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints" (Jude 3)".

Like his conversion experience, he began his discipleship journey with fundamental biblical vision, learning to be a disciple. Kato was an adolescent when he converted to Christianity, a period of life when he would still be open and willing to learn anything that will stay with him for life. He went through biblical instructions in the church before he was baptised. He developed a keen interest in the Sunday School where he followed the lady missionary preacher to hear and learn more of the gospel message. He also went to the regular missionary school in the village. Kato was accorded the opportunity to learn about what it means to follow Jesus. He consciously and consistently availed himself to the opportunity for learning and Christian growth. He took advantage of the opportunity to teach others what he was taught in Sunday School and the normal school. Applying what he learnt by teaching others would be a way of integrating the message in his own life.

Kato was an enthusiastic member of the Boys Brigade. At eighteen, he became the first Nigerian to win the 'Proficiency Star' as Sergeant and leader of the Kwoi company (Haye 1986:22-23). In the Boys Brigade, he learnt life skills, leadership skills, physical disciplines, based on Christian values. He was also involved with the Youth for Christ, a non-denominational international Christian organisation. As an elementary school pupil, he was disciplined to continue working on the family farm and doing chores for missionaries to earn his livelihood (Haye 1986:22).

Kato understood that following Christ meant a change of worldview and identity, with far-reaching implications for direction and way of life. Thus, he wrote: "Following the steps of the New Testament church, Christians in Africa should be prepared to say, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil.1:21). Africa needs her Polycarps, Athanasiuses, and Martin Luthers, ready to contend for the faith at all cost." He went on further to state: "The Lord of the Church, who has commanded Bible-believing Christians to "contend earnestly for the faith" (Jude 3), has also said, "Yes, I am coming quickly" (Rev. 22:20). May we give the reverberating response, "Amen, Come Lord Jesus" (Kato 1975a:184). Kato was indeed, a radical follower of Jesus Christ and led others to follow Jesus.

Kato was a strong voice for discipling children and youths in the church. Underscoring the importance of children and youths, in an address to church leaders in Africa at the first General Assembly of the AEA, Kato (1969a: n. p.) stated: "A reliable survey has indicated that 75% of African 260,000,000 population is under 20. If children and young people form the majority of our population then they deserve our whole attention. But it is not the size alone that makes this age group very significant. This is a very significant age for conversion". The scriptural injunction in Proverbs 22:6: "Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (KJV) is apt. The Scripture further urges: "Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and years approach" (Eccl. 12:1). Young Timothy was commended for his sincere faith inherited from the grandmother and mother (2 Tim. 1:5). Kato wrote: "There is nothing for the youths to remember that has not been made known to them. Here we want to see if the Church of Christ in Africa is fulfilling its task in filling the minds of the youth with something to remember. (Kato 1969a:n. p.). Further admonishing the Church leaders, Kato (1969a:n. p.) stated:

A sound Christian Education programme in every local church should be pursued, A great deal of evangelism has been done but little teaching has followed. The great commission is "Go ye therefore, and TEACH all nations. TEACHING them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." A sound Christian Education would mobilize our young people into active participation of the church life.

He admonished the church leaders to prioritise involving the young people in the ministry of the church and their needs for growth in their faith:

Many young people today feel neglected. It is a fact that some old pastors look

at the youth as sinners who cannot have hands in the holy things of God. But "who is sufficient for these things?" (2 Cor. 2:16). "If thou Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" (Psa. 130:3). We should sympathize with our young people in their stormy period, bearing in mind that we were once in that stage. We should give our young people something to do after they have committed their lives to Christ. Sin, of course, must be dealt with. But let us avoid pharisaic attitude (Kato 1969a:n. p.; cf. Leffel 2013:xiv).

Kato outlined some programmes for consideration in the churches, like youth centres in the urban cities, libraries, family altars that seek the salvation and discipleship of children, social activities for young people, pastors writing letters to their youths when they are away in school and involving them in church programmes like special Sundays for youths, when they are solely in charge of the service. Kato himself had a 'family altar' and led all his three children to Christ before they all turned ten. They prayed daily as a family and also had individual quiet times, reading and studying the word of God and doing personal prayers daily. Kato also reached out to neighbourhood children by organising children's clubs. He commended the work of para-church organisations, like Scripture Union and Intervarsity Christian Fellowship, Boys' and Girls' Brigades, but opined that the young people needed to be grounded in the local church in order to sustain them in the faith.

Kato's consistency and conscientiousness in pursuit of his life goal; to serve God as a preacher and Bible teacher, was demonstrated in the way he strove and excelled to gain sound theological education and in his diligent service to the church, at all levels; national, regional and at global. His outlook on life was engaging all of life and standing out for biblical principles, as a church leader, was an exemplar. His goal was to make everyone a disciple of Christ, in obedience to the commandment and commission of Christ (Matt. 28:19-20). His aim in relating and interaction with people was to lead them to follow Christ, as he did himself. Kato did not create any theology of his own, he consensually learned from the wider evangelical Christian community. Thus, he was consensual; he recognised God's revelation and human faith, (history of the church), although the Bible remained the more authoritative and primary. Kato's discipleship experience was also wholesome, embracing every area of his life in community and through the local church and other youth ministries. His ministry was also engaging, always with a goal of sharing the gospel with the hope of making disciples of Christ.

Kato was known for his integrity and faithfulness to his call as disciple of Christ and minister of the gospel. He built a reputation for keeping his word; “He did what he said he would do” (Kohl 2019). He demonstrated dualistic beliefs at the conceptual level, that is, he believed in the dichotomy of the spiritual and physical or material aspects of the person, and that the spiritual aspect was more important and was priority for salvation. However, his actions showed some level of holism. In other words, he did show concern about the whole person, integrating the spiritual and physical in his ministry. He probably caught the holistic view of the person from his Africanness; and a values system that was consistent with biblical values. Kato’s pietism was also a hallmark of his discipleship. In the early part of his Christian journey, Kato felt the conviction of the Holy Spirit to rededicate his life and all he had to Christ, at a revival meeting. Haye (1986:20) records Kato’s confession: “With my heart breaking within me, and tears streaming down my face, I went forward to confess my sins before the Lord and His people. As a symbol of my sincerity, I took off my shirt and laid it alongside the other gifts. Oblivious to everyone, I knelt in prayer”. The shirt was what Kato had to contribute to the gift basket where others were putting the monies for support for sending out missionaries. Kato narrates his encounter with Jesus in his prayer. According to Haye (1986:22) Kato revealed:

It is not only your shirt I want, Jesus said to me. What do You mean? “I want your life, son”. Lord, I give you my life. I don’t know what you want me to be, but I dedicate myself to You. Do whatever You want with me. “Now I can use you”, Jesus said, as He accepted my small gift like He’d accepted the few loaves and fishes from the young boy.

Kato loved God with fervour, a characteristic of evangelicalism.

5.3.3 Bibliology (Bible-centred Christianity)

Kato was known primarily for his high view of the Bible and the eminent place he gave it in the life of the Christian and the church. He insisted that the sole source for theology is the Bible, all sufficient for faith and conduct. He affirmed the Bible as God’s special revelation, the very word of God, inspired, inerrant and infallible. Clarifying what he meant by inerrancy, Kato (1974c:n. p.) wrote:

We should realize that inerrancy refers to the original manuscript originally given by God. But as we believe in God’s ability and promise to preserve His Word, and as we note the very careful way by which the manuscripts have been passed on from one generation to another, we definitely believe that the Scriptures as

we have them today are absolutely reliable. So we can affirm with Christ that "the Scripture cannot be broken" John 10:35.

Kato was not unmindful about how the word of God was written by humans, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and by inspiration, he did not mean a verbal dictation from God nor was this in the same way people are inspired to write other books. The Bible was God's special revelation and the supreme authority for judging every aspect of human life, truth and wisdom. It is superior to any other source of information or inspirational writing. Where there is conflict between the Bible and other sources, especially culture, the Bible takes precedence. Kato's embrace of the Bible as the truth from God, radically changed his perspective about reality and certain practices informed by African traditional worldviews, especially those that were not in line with the biblical views.

Kato's discipleship experience and theological training could all have contributed to integrating his faith, understanding of the Bible and applying biblical thinking to life's realities and experiences holistically. In defending the charge against Kato that he was against contextualisation of the gospel in the African context, Kato stated his rebuttal:

We believe that the content of Christianity is inspired, but the mode of expression is not inspired. By this I mean the instrument played rather than the music. Or, in the method in preaching, I don't see anything inspired in insisting on a three point sermon in order to communicate. We can tell stories; we can hold dramas. We can find effective methods which can communicate adequately to people, but when we are doing this, we dare not tamper with the content of God's message to man (sic). Because it is inspired and is unchanging to whatever culture it goes, the Word of God remains forever. "O Lord your Word is settled in heaven (1975b:19).

He went further to state: "We evangelicals appreciate the sentiment, the desire and the need to contextualise. By contextualise, we mean to make Christianity truly relevant in our situation and to make the African view himself (sic) welcome in the church. By that we are not dealing with the content, we are only dealing with a mode of expression" (1975b:20; cf. 1974b:53).

While some of Kato's opponents affirmed the uniqueness of Christ, they were not so affirming of the authority of Scripture. Kato (1973a:n.p.) writes: "the uniqueness of Christianity must cover more than the uniqueness of Jesus Christ. How can I know for sure about Jesus Christ in an errant Bible? The Scriptures that speak about Jesus

Christ must be accepted in God's final and special revelation. Inerrant authoritative Scriptures alone can give us reliable facts about Jesus Christ and man's relationship to Him". The Bible and Christianity itself are sometimes portrayed as belonging to the 'whiteman' and the whiteman's religion, respectively. Some believe the Bible and Western Christianity, were part of the system of the exploitation and demeaning of Africans. Thus, Kato (1975c:20) observed:

Many intellectuals are beginning to see that it makes sense to them. "Because white man and his theology have exploited us," they say, "it is now time for us to pay him back." They forget that God is true even if all men are unfaithful. Christianity is more than what people profess it to be. It is an objective fact, a revelation from God and regardless of what white men have done, or have not done, the Bible stands true. So, we must tell them to stay with the Bible and find true evangelical teaching (cf. Otonko 2018:2).

Kato's perspective and doctrine of the Bible informed his approach to the interpretation of the Bible. His views and approach to the Bible were mainstream and conservative evangelical position. Kato emphasised the inductive study of the Bible and the literal interpretive approach or grammatico-historical method for interpretation and application of the Bible. Kato (1975a:78) asserts: "Only by following the normal, grammatico-historical interpretation would one be free from extreme subjectivism".

In assessing his views outlined in this study and comparing these with biblical and classical theological materials highlighted in the previous chapter, there is appreciable level of consistency. Kato's "Radical Biblicism" or "Bibliology" as Bediako (1992) calls it, is a major characteristic of his theology. "If the Bible is not recognised as the authoritative source, it stands to reason that Biblical meaning may not be adhered to...The rejection of the authoritative Word of God is the number one problem blocking the attainment of the truth about salvation" (Kato 1975a:142-43). Nevertheless, Kato affirmed contextualisation of the Bible and stated: "But this biblical theology should be expressed in terms that are meaningful to every people in their own situation to meet their peculiar needs" (1974j:n. p.). Kato's Biblicism is extremely relevant today, not just in Africa, but also in wider global evangelicalism where postmodern tendencies have raised questions whether the Biblicist approach is theoretically, let alone practically tenable.

While Kato himself may not have provided systematic arguments to contribute to the current debate, examining his Biblicist theology in both practice and theory resonates with other evangelicals around the world. For example, Shirk (2019:132) writes:

That Byang Henry Kato was a man of the Bible and the Church, even his critics accept. That he was also a man of vision, many affirm. That he was a man of a particular context, who faced specific challenges in a particular manner, even some of his sympathizers admit. However, that he was an evangelical Christian whose theological understanding arose from deeply held convictions about the Bible, the world, and humanity that are very much consonant with the fundamental evangelical ethos, his critics deny, and some of his sympathizers misunderstand.

Shirki further states:

Kato's strength also lies in that he was able to speak beyond the confines of Africa. I, as an Asian, more than four decades separated from Kato, and with very different challenges and struggles, can affirm many of the things he affirms. He and I can read the scripture together to come to a common understanding. In this aspect too, he has bequeathed to his readers a compelling argument that all theologies must not be contextual to the degree that they have no universal resemblance and application (2019:150).

Kato advocated strongly for the preaching and practice of the unadulterated word of God in the church in Africa and insisted that for the Christian faith, the source of information for theologising is the Bible (Kato: 1974j:1).

5.3.4 Christology (Christ-centred Christianity)

Kato's theology and message were primarily Bible and Christ-centred. This was based on the uniqueness of God's revelation in the written Word and the Word made flesh and lived on earth as human:

It must be maintained that Jesus Christ became incarnate as a particular person in time and history. John's use of Logos (John 1:1-7) was in that particular sense. The Word became flesh by assuming not only the form of man in general (Philippians 2:5-8), but by being born as a particular person in Bethlehem. This was necessary in view of the work He was going to do. He could be crucified in time and history only as a particular man. He died and rose as an individual to save each individual sinner (Kato 1985:21).

Christ did not only reveal God to humans in incarnation but also died on the cross as a ransom for the sins of the world and accomplished his work of salvation by his resurrection and ascension into heaven. Thus, Kato affirmed the divinity and personhood of Christ, his incarnation and substitutionary death on the Cross to atone for the sins of every sinner "everywhere at any time" (p. 21).

Kato emphasised the centrality of the Bible and Christ and affirms as non-negotiable the doctrines of Christ, that is, the virgin birth, His vicarious death, His bodily resurrection and His pending personal return. Elaborating on the Christological doctrines further, Kato (1974c:n. p.) wrote:

The Virgin Birth—that Jesus was born of a virgin who never knew a man becomes a problem only if one questions God's ability to create life out of nothing and the truth of the inspired Word of God (Matt. 1:22-25), His Vicarious Death presupposes the fact that man's fundamental problem is that he is a sinner by nature and practice (Gen 3; Romans 3:23; 5:12). Jesus Christ, who knew no sin died in place of sinners (Mk. 10:45; Romans 5:17-21; II Cor. 5:18,19), Bodily Resurrection—the reality of Christ's physical resurrection is the basis of believer's resurrection (I Cor. 15:3-8, 20-22) and The Personal, Visible Future Return of Jesus Christ is taught in the Scriptures and is believed by all those who take Scripture as truly God's eternal Word for all generations (Matt. 24:30; John 4:3; Acts 1:11).

Appraising the AACC statement of faith, Kato said it was not enough to affirm Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour and Second Person of the Trinity, as statement of faith; thus, he wrote:

The statement is commendable in what it says. But the greatest problem and dangers lie in what it does not. Who is this "Lord Jesus Christ as God and *only* Saviour"? Should a statement about His supernatural birth, life, death and resurrection not be mentioned? Is His second coming so insignificant that nothing need to be said about it? (1974j:n. p.)

The uniqueness of Christianity is in the person of Jesus Christ. Religious leaders and government authorities were puzzled about this Son of God and Son of Man (p. 20).

Commenting on the Christological controversies, about the divine and human nature of Christ, dating back to the time Christ lived on earth, it took the special grace of God the Father, to get to know who Jesus was.

It was only through the Holy Spirit that men like Peter could declare, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God' (Matthew 16:16). Even after the Father had authenticated the ultimate claims of the Incarnate Christ by raising Him from the dead and exalting Him at His right hand, the Person of Christ was still a real problem to his followers and to pagans of the early centuries of Christianity (Kato 1985:20).

Kato asserted: "If biblical Christianity is to survive and flourish in Africa, we must hold fast the truth that man's (sic) fundamental problem is sin against God, and that salvation is only through Jesus Christ. We must hold to the uniqueness of Christian revelation through the written Word and through the Living Word. To seek salvation elsewhere than through the shed blood of Christ is heretical" (1985:22).

The meaning people attached to religious practices was a threat to the Christian faith. The new basic faith in Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit, is based on the Bible. “The Christian will have to examine his whole life-style or culture by the Bible. The Bible is the final judge of every culture” (Kato n. d3.:23). Furthermore, Kato asserts (1975a:104): “The judgement of individuals will be entirely Christological. It is a Biblical absolute truth that “he who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him” (John 3:36). The proposition of accepting or rejecting Jesus Christ here and now settles the question of eternity”. Christ is the only way for salvation. Kato (1978:6) argued:

If the best that religious pluralism can do is to locate the thirst in the human soul, it stands to reason that Special Revelation in Jesus Christ alone can save. Besides making fantastic claims about Himself -- The Way, The Truth, The Life, The Door, The Good Shepherd, One with the Father – and justifying all of them, the Son of God also invites all men to come to Him for salvation. (Matt. 11:28,29) His closest friend, Peter, through the Holy Spirit declared, “And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12). The Apostle Paul affirms, “Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven and who are on earth and under the earth.” (Phil. 2:9,10).

Jesus was not only a religious leader, he is God, and he is the only way for salvation for the whole world, if any would repent of their sinful state and accept Jesus Christ as saviour and Lord.

On the centrality of Jesus Christ as the historical fulcrum, Kato (1975g:n. p.) stated: “Without Him, history has no meaning. For all history is His story. Generally, calculation of history today is divided into B.C. and A.D. in the Christian era. Jesus Christ is historically central in terms of time. His coming is central historically in terms of events and circumstances. He is central in man's quest for reality in life”. The incarnation and birth of the Son of God in human world was an important event anticipated in B. C. and his second coming is much anticipated to mark the consummation of time.

5.3.5 Ecclesiology (Christian-African Identity)

Kato may have had a lone voice in theologising in his time, however, the ecclesia (the body of Christ or the Church as a whole) was not lost on him. As an African, his personhood was tied to his community, especially the Jaba ethnic people of Kwoi. However, as Christian, his selfhood went beyond his tribe, and indeed Nigerian African

heritage. Kato's sense of community went beyond *ubuntu*, the highly appreciated African way of relational life, the collectivist culture of interdependence of most African peoples. The subject of a distinct African Christian identity occupies the mind of many scholars in Africa. The search for a true African identity is however often skewed to vindicate the African or the Black person. The call has been to turn to Black Theology of liberation or an integrated theology; a theological synthesis of ATR beliefs with Christianity—African Theology—as espoused by some theologians in Kato's time. However, the more that has been written about the subject of self-understanding or identity, the more elusive the identity question has become. Kato's identity in Christ was his answer to the daunting identity question.

According to Kato (1975a:21): "From Biblical point of view all people of the world are divided into two groups: the people of God, and the people outside the covenant relationship with God". The distinction does not depend on one's race, tribe, culture or geography (Luke 12:30). Addressing the social concerns of African indignity, Kato (n. d.4: n. p.) stated:

The question of social concern also raises the burning issue of justice, especially in southern Africa. As an evangelical, I believe the Christian has the basic task of bringing about the ministry of reconciliation to all men. Racial and tribal discrimination of any kind is sinful. The Christian should speak out the truth "in love." Prayer for both the oppressed and the oppressor is necessary. Action by peaceful means, stressing the equality of all men, seems to be the pattern the New Testament Church followed. This is the method the Apostle Paul took to bring about a reconciliation between a Christian slave and his Christian master (Eph. 6:5-9; Philem. 17). As an African Christian, I am a citizen of two countries. My Christian commitment requires me to seek to bring through peaceful means a reconciliation between all parties in Africa. But I also owe my national legitimate government a loyalty.

Kato's solution to the enigma is his 'third race' or 'Christian African' identity, in Christ. This describes an identity that transcends the confused split personality between the authentic traditional African and the de-Africanised person by foreign or Western cultures or indeed, the defaced image of all humanity without Christ, regardless of race, status or origin. The Christian African identity tends to satisfy the yearning and quest for human dignity and self-worth, not only for the African or Black person but for the whole of humanity, lost and dead in sin. Kato believed he had now attained a new citizenship in this life and the life to come—a Christian African. Kato (1975a:179) states:

Dehumanisation is the socialist slogan commonly employed to ridicule the soul-

salvation concerned believer. But is it not in the Bible that true humanisation can be seen? A person without Christ has not attained the ideal status God meant him (sic) to have. Man (sic) was made in the image of God. The image has been defaced and the unbelievers are considered dead and estranged from the living God (Eph. 2:1; Col.1:21). Humanisation comes only when one becomes a Christian (cf. Porumb 2014:104).

Christianity, Kato said, was “unique, it creates the new race, a race called "the body of Christ," made up of people from any cultural background” (1976b:30). Based on scriptural injunction, faith in Christ confers new citizenship (2 Cor.5:17; Rom. 13:1-14). The quest is no longer an identity but a pilgrim’s yearning for a glorious homeland (Rev. 21 & 22). The search for identity is not just an African problem, it is a problem for all of fallen humanity, groping in the dark for meaning. That emptiness can only be filled when humans find rest in Christ through faith. “The Word of God does teach that our true citizenship is in heaven (Phil. 3:20). But does that mean we have no responsibilities to fulfil in the earthly land we live?” (Kato n. d.2:n. p.).

By Christian African, Kato was primarily highlighting the priority of his new self-identity over the natural or cultural identity, an identity that was fallen, broken and lost and needed redemption. This does not deny the reality of the old life; a citizen of Kwoi, Nigeria and truly African. Kato travelled the world but always returned to Kwoi and connected with his people. He sought to be a part of the community without compromise to his Christian beliefs and way of life. He connected with mates from his traditional society. At least, one of these childhood friends confirmed that Kato taught him the Bible and how to be better person, in their own language and context. Kato’s social relations and interaction in the village and in postgraduate school, earned him the Four- Way Test award; for personal relationships, in and outside the school, consistent Christian life, and with promise for leadership (Breman 1995:41). This is another evidence of his practices being holistic, although at conceptual level, Kato taught the priority of evangelism over social concerns.

Kato emphasised the importance of living in this world by Christian values as taught by the Bible. He purposed to discontinue any aspect of life that was not consistent with biblical values. While there are some cultural values that are unique to African and ethnic context which are consistent with God’s truth and continue to be part of the Christian life, generally, the ways of the world are opposed to God’s ways, as revealed in the Bible. So, Kato’s bent was generally, discontinuity. This did not mean

discontinuity with aspects of culture consistent with biblical values. There was also an understanding of the common image of God in all people, although God's image is marred by sin and all needing redemption only through faith in Jesus Christ (Rom 3:23; Eph. 4:17-19, 2:15).

The Christian African identity also meant membership of the Christian community—the body of Christ—all believers in Christ, everywhere and regardless of other identities; race, gender, nationality or tribe, and social status (Gal. 3:28).

As evangelical Christians we realize that Christ has called us to be nothing other than African Christians. William Barclay has rightly stated, "But it is not Jesus' purpose that we should turn all men into one nation, but that there should be Christian Indians and Christian Africans, whose unity lies in their Christianity. The oneness in Christ is in Christ and not in any external change." (Commentary on Ephesians, p. 136). Evangelical Christians are not opposed to the call for a return to African culture... It is in the area of syncretism, that is, importing pagan elements into Christianity, that cultural revolution poses as a threat to evangelical Christianity. The Christians answer in such a situation should be that Christianity must judge every culture (Kato 1974c:n. p.).

The self-understanding of the church is in multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-racial; "one body, one Spirit, one glorious hope for the future, one Lord, one faith, one baptism and one God and Father of all" (Eph. 4:4-6; 2 Cor. 5:17; cf. Turaki 2020:398-99).

The implications of the new community meant, Kato had brothers and sisters from everywhere, around the world, including missionaries from countries that colonised Africa and destroyed their culture. Kato recognised that these Western missionaries came from cultures that were also fallen, like all human cultures. The Western missionary church may have been the means and cradle for his new birth and encounter with Christianity. But like any authentic follower of Christ, Kato demonstrated a call out of the traditional African religion and Western cultural trappings—human culture. He demonstrated this by his opposition to ATR and promotion of developing Christian leaders on African soul and criticism of the ignorance of Western missionaries. According to Bowers, "Kato called vigorously for contextual theology attuned to the cultural realities of Africa, but he also affirmed the normative role of Scripture for authentic Christian theology in every context" (Bowers 2002:120). His understanding of the two religions of ATR and Christianity was evident and was clearly convinced of the claims of the gospel as unique and only means for salvation. He was a true disciple and disciple maker. His own parents embraced

Christianity before their death. His children all accepted Jesus as their saviour under his watch. In terms of the unity of the church, Kato repudiated unity at all cost:

Unity with all "Christians" at any cost is advocated by some. The African solution to a problem of disagreement, as it is said, is to seek compromise. The two parties sink all their differences, gloss over the truth and pretend that all is well. But how long can such a brittle unity last?... Unity is desirable but not at the expense of truth. Political compromise may be in order for Africa, but glossing over spiritual absolutes is suicidal (Kato 1975a:169).

Kato admonished evangelical Christians to follow the true light even when it means separation from a family member.

Realising that Jesus Christ did pray for both spiritual and visible unity (John 17:21), Evangelicals should want to pull together as long as it is unity of people committed to Christ and his word. Unity is strength even in the Lord's work. But, also realising that people have different tastes, including those relative to the type of church worship and the form of church government, Evangelicals do not see the need of abolishing church denominations. Unity in diversity is also strength (Kato 1975a:170).

Kato's emphasis and basis for unity was partnership in the gospel (Phil. 1:5). His opposition to the ecumenical movement was not about ecumenism per se. His criticism was about the humanistic basis for unity, with a low view of the Bible and basic doctrines, ambiguity about the meaning of salvation, among others (1975a:129-170).

At a time when many of the Church leaders were calling for a moratorium on sending of missionaries and money to Africa as a way of enhancing selfhood, Kato advocated for collaboration and partnership (1974i). In a series of radio broadcast on 'Voice of Kenya (VOK) at the beginning of the year in 1974, Kato spoke on the theme: "Lift Up your Hearts: On the Future of the Church". He spoke on different themes, such as unity, moratorium, youths, church and government, awakening and renewal in the church and imminent return of Jesus Christ. While Kato lauded the effort at selfhood, however, too little effort had been expended on achieving self-sustainable and especially in training leaders. Kato argued that because of the potential for growth and development of the church in Africa, it was necessary to have every Christian on board to help nurture the church by accelerating leadership training and build capacity to tap on local resources. Stressing the scope of work of the church and need, Kato said:

Perhaps half of the people of the world have no gospel witness. That's about two billion people. And literally thousands of people right here are unreached. God

has sent his people throughout the world to these thousands and millions and billions of unreached people. All the available resources of all/of God's people everywhere must be put to the task—now (1974i).

Kato saw evangelism as the task of the church across denominations and across the world. He was particularly optimistic about the future growth of the church, following the inaugural and historic Lausanne conference in Switzerland in 1974.

More than 3,000 leaders from 150 countries and every kind of church were together for ten days dealing with this. They talked about what the good news is and what it means is and what it means in one's life. They discussed the need to getting this good news out to every person in the world in the next 25 years...I was impressed with the widespread commitment to this task (1974i).

It is noteworthy for Kato to make the following observation, underscoring what defined his relationship with other traditions, especially the Catholics and his perspective on the unity of the church. Continuing to share his experience at Lausanne, Kato stated in the radio broadcast:

This was a conference of evangelicals, but while there I joined others in a press conference interviewing five catholic priests who were there as observers. Even these men were talking about spiritual renewal...they said they could agree with much of what was being said about evangelism at this Congress...that the best road to Christian unity is around the cross of Jesus Christ. These priests talked about the power of the Holy Spirit in one's life, and stressed the need for Bible study and prayer and fellowship. They spoke about the "dynamic proclamation of the person of Jesus Christ" as the core of evangelism. One said that "for the Catholics the final goal is the breaking in on God into one's life and fellowship with God established" and that this is an ongoing process that continues 'till Christ returns' (1974i).

He then went on to state about the "disgrace of divisions" and the need for Church unity, people were confused with so many different groups; Christians ought to speak with one voice. He observed that there were ongoing conversations about the churches coming together as one. However, Kato said "this has to be scriptural unity—one body in Christ—a united approach to the world is scriptural. But there is considerable confusion about what that means among Christians. There is disagreement about just how that is to be achieved.

Unity—one voice—does not necessary mean everyone saying the same thing and doing the same thing in the same way at the same time. That's military regimentation, which is not spiritual and quite deadly to the life and vitality of the church. Unity—in any human society—does not mean that everyone is to lose his identity, casting aside his (sic) individualism, veneering over the differences. Unity in Christ is not assuming the same name, same forms of worship, the same attitude and feelings and reactions (1974i).

He likens unity of the church to a family with every member of the family with own uniqueness; different personalities and talents and different in a multitude of ways but members of the one family and there is unity and oneness that holds them together in warm fellowship and purpose. Similarly, a nation of diverse people groups and tribes and cultural backgrounds hold together as one nation, working for one common good and purpose. In the family or nation there must be freedom to develop individual personalities and abilities and meeting of individual needs. "This kind of freedom brings tension, but even that can have a healthy effect on growth and maturity...The diversities within a family or a church or a nation do not nullify unity for there still can be oneness and togetherness" (Kato 1974i).

5.3.6 Missiology (Safeguarding or apologia for biblical Christianity in Africa)

At the heart of Kato's theological concerns and reflections was his personal faithfulness to the word of God and ministry focus on establishing and defending biblical Christianity in Africa and maturing of the church (Eph. 4:12).

Two things are necessary for the survival of the ship of our faith. On the one hand, there must be an uncompromising confidence in God's revealed Word. On the other hand, there must be the intelligent communication of this faith to the contemporary African mind. Along with this two-fold commitment, there must be another pair of oars: the head and the heart" (Kato 1975h:3).

Kato's missionary endeavour was marked by the authority of the Bible, thus effort for biblical or theological education and a pastor's heart for people. He believed, the church had a mission, and that every Christian was a missionary: Kato (1974j:n. p.) wrote:

John 17. In this chapter the Father, Son and Holy Spirit discuss Missions. vv. 15-21. Whom did Jesus send as missionaries? a) the disciples at that time, and b) those who would believe through their word. (Unbelievers have no room in this prayer for unity.) Christ wants all Christians to be ONE, and He wants to send them out in MISSION. All Christians are sent, even believers from the Third World. "As the Father has sent Me, so send I you." How was this Mission of Jesus?

He outlines the nature of the mission of Jesus as:

1), A Mission with a Vision of the world in sin. Without vision, the people suffer, together with the "watchman" who keeps silence (Ezekiel 3). 2). A Mission with Compassion. Matt. 9:35-38. People are sheep without a Shepherd.. We must see them with the Compassion of Jesus. 3). A Mission of Sacrifice. Mark 10:15 "to minister and to give His life a ransom". Yes, be prepared to be a martyr, "who takes up his cross and follows Jesus". In the past, persecution has often come to the church...And I know that as I expose error. I too will suffer danger. We

must be prepared to suffer in Christ's Mission. 4). A Mission of harvest. Is. 53:11,12. "Let us not be weary in well-doing, for we shall reap if we faint not. 5). A Mission that does not end until we leave this earth (1974j:n. p.).

Thus, missiology as a theological discipline is all embracing and was a subject of debate among scholars. Oborji (2006:395; cf. Leffel 2013) states: "As a theological discipline, missiology is to distinguish itself as that whose primary objective is to explore the origins, concepts and goal of the Christian mission in relation to the missionary activities of the evangelising church." Although Missiology has struggled to be accepted as theology, it is now established and given the necessary recognition as a theological discipline. According to Oborji (2006:393):

As a theological discipline, missiology must realise its dependence on the other theological disciplines and avail itself of their help. For example, missiology must allow itself to be enriched by modern scholarship on Biblical exegesis, church history, systematic theology, pastoral theology, liturgy, and so forth. The missiologist should by no means claim to be an expert in exegesis, church history or systematic theology as well.

Therefore, it is against this foundation that Kato's several missionary endeavours could be described as part of Kato's theological contribution and making a case for third world (Global South) missions.

Kato felt at home among his people and the evangelical church in Africa and beyond, he wanted Christianity to have a home in sub-Saharan Africa; a far cry from Christianity being a foreign religion. His approach and strategy for the task was to delineate and clarify what evangelicalism was; against the backdrop of a church that had been established and influenced by Western missionaries but practices of members were being informed by traditional religious views. The liberal ecumenicals in pointing out the errors some theologians were advancing, Kato stated the mission of his organisation, the AEAM and wrote:

The Association of Evangelical in Africa and Madagascar feels that we have a responsibility to exist. Our prudence, our wisdom, our understanding of this is that we now realize the need for safeguarding Biblical Christianity and Biblical methods. Therefore, in speaking of relationships between evangelical Christians, we see that Christians in Africa ought to find their own method of coming together and their own method of fellowship and association (1975b:19).

The conception of salvation also tended to universalistic beliefs. The syncretistic and universalistic ideas or practices were also being promoted by thought leaders in the church. Kato opines: "In the search of the African church for theological identity, evangelicals have a great potential for keeping the church biblical. Practically all the churches started out evangelical, and many of them are still evangelical. If adequate

leadership is produced now within the evangelical sphere, the church in Africa will have a proper biblical perspective to hand on to forthcoming generations of African Christians” (1985:52). However, Kato (1985:11) stated: “Biblical Christianity in Africa is being threatened by syncretism, universalism and Christo-paganism. The spiritual battle for Africa during this decade will be fought, therefore, largely on theological grounds. But the church is generally unprepared for the challenge because of its theological and biblical ignorance”. He emphasised theological education including basic doctrinal teaching programmes of the church at all levels. Kato (1973c:n. p.) observes:

The word doctrine, which simply means teaching, has been part of gospel ministry in Africa. Bible doctrine (teaching) may be considered theological instruction perhaps with less philosophical reflection. The word theology is of course more appropriate as it is a pregnant word (theo-logos) while doctrine could mean the collection of any system of teaching e.g., government, social club. Nevertheless, Bible doctrine, which is identical with theology, has not been altogether lacking.

Thus, Kato endeavoured to define what evangelical and biblical Christianity was. He was strategic in his approach and mapped out a clear vision of what he wanted to see in the church. The key for his prescription was for developing leaders and promotion of sound evangelical theological education in Africa. He demonstrated this by his own personal development and creating institutions and structures in Africa for the training of leaders and theological work on the continent. Bowers affirms Kato’s strategic leadership and writes:

Kato was nothing if not a visionary, and his lasting contributions were firmly rooted in that characteristic of the man. But Kato was more than a visionary; he was to an extraordinary degree an innovative implementer of fresh vision. That is what he was most about, that is what was so tragically cut off by his death. It is this larger perspective on Kato that I believe we need to re-energise (2008:7).

Kato articulates a comprehensive missional agenda, which he asserted was required to preserve biblical Christianity in Africa. This was a decalogue—a ten-point proposal— for the survival of biblical Christianity in Africa (Kato 1974a:278-81):

- (1) Adherence to presuppositions of historic Christianity. The shape of this adherence included: God’s revelation through *imago Dei*, conscience and creation. Recognising that non-Christian religions may have a concept of the Triune God but also demonstrate people’s rebellion against God. Christ came to save all but only those who accept his offer will be saved. Principle of

continuity is in the sense that God's image in humans is not obliterated and God continues to reveal himself generally but running parallel to this is discontinuity, in the sense that God is now producing a new person, in the formation of the body of Christ and that the Bible alone is the final infallible rule faith and practice.

- (2) Christianity should find a home in African cultural setting by transforming the culture and not the other way around. This can be done by expressing theological concepts in African context and not by creating 'African Theology', as proposed by some of the proponents treated in Kato's work. Theology in Africa should scratch where it is itching and provide answers for issues like polygamy, family structures, spirit world, liturgy etc.
- (3) Concerted effort for biblical training, including training leaders in biblical languages to enhance their exegesis.
- (4) Study of religions but as a secondary to the inductive study of the Bible.
- (5) Aggressive programme of evangelism and missions, so, fate of the third century church in North Africa will not befall the church. Kato believed the third century church in North Africa's undoing was doctrinal strifes.
- (6) Consolidation of organisational structures, based on doctrinal agreements; as in the formation of national evangelical fellowships/alliances.
- (7) Attention to careful definition and concise expression of theological terms. This is necessary to safe guard against syncretism and universalism.
- (8) Apologetics to compromising systems finding their way into the church.
- (9) Church should not stay aloof from social ills but primary concern must remain the salvation of individuals who in turn will revolutionise the society and
- (10) Following the steps of the New Testament Church to contend for the faith at all cost, even to death.

In enumerating these concerns, Kato did not only demonstrate his biblicism, but also reveals some of his concerns and approach to the Bible and Christian faith. He concluded: "Theology in Africa is increasingly turning to African traditional religions rather than the Bible as its absolute source...A continuing effort should be to relate Christian theology to the changing situations in Africa, but only as the Bible is taken as the absolute Word of God can it have an authoritative and relevant message for

Africa" (Kato 1985:42-43). What is clear here is that Kato was a reflective theologian, applying his theological beliefs to actionable plans for the maturing of the church. He had the courage to institute a different direction for doing theology—Biblical Theology—in Africa to stem the tide most of the other theologians in his time were heading—"liberal tendencies" of African theology" (Turaki 2020:65). Kato's single mindedness, clarity of focus and determination to accomplish his life goals were remarkable. He was very strategic and foresighted. This is demonstrated by the way, his vision was implemented by those who followed, especially as General Secretary of AEA. After his sudden and tragic death, between him and his immediate successor, there was a three-year gap. However, it was exceptional that Kato's successor implemented a plan conceived by Kato and forty-five years later, Kato's blueprint for AEA continue to be relevant. Bowers (2008:5) observes:

It is one thing to have vision, and entirely something else to achieve parts of that vision. In Kato's case we live amidst major examples of vision achieved, ongoing powerful blessings to evangelicalism across the continent still in our own day, deriving directly from Kato's personal vision. I speak of NEGST, FATEB/BEST, and ACTEA. One must not fail to note as well in this respect his foundational contribution which underlies the vitality that AEA has continued to represent, not to mention his parallel contribution to WEA, and to the WEA Theological Commission, all still significant movements for good among us; and as well the global movement for which I presently work, ICETE, a direct derivative of Kato's energetic vision. By no means can the significance of Kato in our own day be reliably assessed without taking these exceptional, enduring contributions into account. The thriving publications of scholarly work by African evangelicals were also part of Kato's aspirations.

There are some lessons here for succession planning and how to lead institutions. Vision needs to be so clear and compelling that another person should be able to follow it to implement without the leader, even for consultation when the need arises.

The basis for investing in theological education was based on mission, Kato (1974j:n. p.) wrote:

The Bible Training we give should be a view to Missions. Teach not only Mission history, but relevant Missiology and Anthropology. (Some of the courses taught in Bible Schools do not prepare the students for the REALITIES they will meet.) Technology is a help. Develop strategy for Urban evangelism, and Bush evangelism. Church - Mission relationships must choose between fusion or partnership. Missionaries must work through the Church already there, new missionaries should come through the existing Church. We must help the Churches already established to have a missionary vision, sending (as some churches are doing) one Sunday's offering per month to support missionaries. Do "soil research" of areas to ascertain how many live churches there are, where the pagan pockets still persist. Focus attention on responsive areas. WE ARE PARTNERS TOGETHER. Find out how God can use you. Support His work. Let us do God's MISSION TOGETHER!

These were important considerations and particularly relevant as currently, the church in Africa sees itself as a mission force and preparing and sending missionaries to other regions of the world.

Focus on children was also an innovation for Kato's theological work in Africa. The foundation Kato laid for the AEA Theology and Christian Education Commission was strategic and continues to contribute to the growth and maturation of the church in Africa at all levels. The Christian Learning Materials for Children (CLMC) provides Sunday School materials and other resources for children and promote publication of Christian literature. Kato told his testimony to remind his listeners about the need to minister to children to be saved, just as he experienced. He said: "Church begins in the home" (Haye 1986:46-48). Kato's main contention in these debates was to establish biblical Christianity, distinct from ATR beliefs that are not consistent with biblical beliefs. He saw sound theological training as an important missional engagement for the evangelical church in Africa.

Kato (1985:37-39) outlined the following recommendation for Christianity as an authentic African religion: 1). Know the truth and defend it (Jude 3), 2). Discern the voices; get your marching orders from the Word of God and not from peoples' voices, 3). Reject moratorium but promote self-reliance. Both the missionaries and nationals should work together as workers with Christ (2 Cor. 6:1) and prioritize training and leaders in the national church. 4). Evangelise or perish (1 Cor. 9:16). 5) Contextualise without compromise. Let Christianity truly find a home in Africa (1Cor.10:31). 6). Pray for and be prepared for revival; plead with God for more Joshuas and Timothys for the future of the church and 7). Become more missionary-minded; look beyond the borders of your country and further afield.

5.3.7 Eschatology (Second Coming of Christ)

Kato's theological leaning was dispensational premillennialist evangelicalism. Kato was aware of the diversity of opinion on the doctrine of eschatology among Christians. According to Kato (1975a:81):

There are those placed in the camp of postmillennialism, that view of the last things which holds that kingdom of God is now being extended in the world through the preaching of the Gospel and the saving work of the Holy Spirit, that the world eventually is to be

Christianised and that the return of Christ will occur at the close of a long period of righteousness and peace, commonly called the millennium. Then there are those holding amillennialism. They believe that the Scripture teaches that good and evil will continue side by side, but eventually there will be a sudden personal eruption of Christ into the midst of the world's scene of conflict, with a swift sifting and separation of souls at the final judgement.

Kato highlighted yet another view—premillennialism. Citing Carl Henry, Kato (1975a:81) stated: “This is a view that of last things which insists that the millennial passage in Revelation 20 must be interpreted literally and the Second Coming of Christ will inaugurate His reign as King in person on the earth”. This is the position Kato affirmed as an illustrious alumnus and adjunct faculty of Dallas Theological Seminary, a leading premillennial dispensationalist school.

Nonetheless, what Kato affirmed as the absolute was the consensual position, he stated: “One common denominator among orthodox Christians is the belief in the future, visible personal second coming of Jesus Christ. It is agreed by all who take the Bible as the inspired, infallible Word of God seriously, that the second coming is the hope of the Church” (Kato 1975a:82; cf Henry 1962; MaClean 200). Drawing from Arnett, Kato went on to outline the Scriptural basis for the Second Coming of Christ.

The explicit teaching of Holy Scripture is that Jesus Christ will come a second time from heaven to earth personally, bodily, and visibly. This marvellous and climatic event is called the “blessed hope” of the Christian Church by the Apostle Paul (Titus 2:13). Christ appeared once on earth in grace (John 1:14, 17; Titus 2:11). He will appear a second time in glory (Matt. 16:27; 24:30; 25:31; Luke 21:17).

Further elucidating on the return of Christ, Kato (1975a:82) stated:

The second coming means that Jesus Christ will come again to this world in His personal and bodily form, glorified and deathless. The word *Parousia* is used frequently in the New Testament as a technical term to denote the return of Christ at the end of the age (Matt. 24:3, 27, 39; 2 Peter 3:4, 12; 1 John 2:28). His second appearing will be personal (Acts 1:11; John 14:3; 21:20-23), unexpected (Matt. 24:32-51; 25:1-13), sudden (Matt. 24:27; Luke 17:24), visible (Matt. 24:30, Rev. 1:7) and glorious (Mark 8:38; Luke 9:26).

In a radio broadcast series in Nairobi Kenya in 1974, Kato spoke about the imminent return of Jesus Christ, he said:

Christians talk about living in the last days and the imminent return of Jesus Christ to the world again. Jesus said he would be coming back again and I for one expect this. It may be immediately or it may be a thousand years yet. Many see signs that we are in what is called “the last days”. Well, I just don't think anyone knows, except God himself. But I would like to suggest that we may not be in the “last days of time” in this world, but rather that we

may be in the beginning days of real church history. We may be about to see an awakening and renewal among God's people such as the world has never seen before" (1974i).

Elaborating further on his biblical understanding of the Second Coming, Kato said:

The irreducible minimum of an evangelical belief concerning the life to come includes: (a) Personal, physical return of Jesus Christ at a time not known by any created being, not even the Son during His earthly life (Mk. 13:32). (b) Personal, physical resurrection of all people as individuals. (c) The judgement of the living and the dead and retribution on the basis of the acceptance or rejection of Jesus Christ. (d) Reality of Heaven and Hell. The righteous will enjoy heaven eternally, while the unrighteous will be tormented in hell forever (Kato 1976d:1).

In assessing Mbiti's eschatology, which refutes the second coming and asserts that the events described in the Bible were only symbols and words, Kato gives his own perspectives. The eschatological symbols and words Mbiti enumerated, according to Kato (1975a:83-85) included; Gehenna, fire, treasure, city, country, eating and drinking, tears and pain (hell) and heaven. According to Kato (1975a:84-): "Christ's use of Gehenna was definitely a reference to future judgement, albeit the terrible condition of unbelievers now (Matt. 5:22, 29, 30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15, 33; Mark 9:43, 45, 47; Luke 12:5). The only place Gehenna is used figuratively, and it is quite clear, is James 3:6". These so-called symbols and words were major doctrines of the Bible and contrary to the systematic repudiation of these, Kato affirmed these as future realities and states: "Space does not allow a fuller treatment (of the eight doctrines). But it is a fact that the reality of heaven and hell is fundamental teaching of biblical Christianity. The twofold teaching of future reward and future punishment was what the early church understood their Lord to teach in the New Testament" (1974a:133). Regarding future resurrection, Kato states: "That believers are mystically risen and seated with Christ in the heavenlies (Col. 3:1-4), no Bible-believing Christian would deny. But this does not remove the real future, personal resurrection" (1974a:135). Kirschner (2008:35) observes: "The strong focus on hell and condemnation in Kato's eschatology is prevalent in Kato's writings for two reasons. It derives from a so-called literal interpretation of biblical images used to describe the eschaton or eschatological events. Secondly it goes along with a theology that centres on atonement".

Kato's belief about eschatology may have been influenced by his own empirical studies or assessment. Kato (1975a:77) states: "I conducted a survey in 1967 in Igbaja, Nigeria, among some 500 college students and discovered that 90 per cent found

Christ through a message concerning the second coming of Christ". He believed, Africans were futuristic and able to grasp eschatological teachings and as the glorious hope of the church. Rebuffing Mbiti and defending his dominant futuristic view and that of the Africa Inland Mission (A. I. C.) of eschatology, Kato (1975a:81) states: "It is a fact that the A. I. C. does not teach all three aspects of the end—past, present and future—under the same doctrine. But do they need to? It is an accepted and workable practice to approach eschatology in a future sense, which is valid understanding of *eschaton* (the last events)".

5.3.8 Pneumatology (Power of the Holy Sprit and spirit world of the cosmos)

In Kato's writings and speeches there is not much emphasis with regard to pneumatology as much as he did with the place of the Bible and life in Christ. Three factors could have been responsible for this. 1. His personal experience of spirits and the place this had in ATR, 2) this relative silence was generally the case among evangelicals in his era and 3) the teaching of others about African spiritism, which was the basis of his *apologia*. Also, with emergence of Pentecostal and charismatic teachings, perhaps with some excesses, at the time, Kato had a cautious and conservative approach. However, Kato's theological reflections on this subject was teased out in a sermon or teaching note about the Holy Spirit. Precisely, this was a fourteen-page typed written and undated paper, entitled: "The Power of the Holy Spirit in the Christian".

The apparent lack of emphasis on the Holy Spirit had been observed by people around him and Kato narrates a particular encounter with an American pastor friend, as he lays out his perspective on this subject. This is particularly important to highlight and reflect upon, within the current context of pentecostalisation of Christianity in Africa. Kato wrote:

One day I met an American negro preacher in the USA who asked me "Have you had the experience?" I asked him what experience. He replied, "You mean you are a preacher and don't know the experience I mean?" "Have you spoken in tongues?" I told him that I truly know the Lord, and that I realised my need of walking with the Lord daily but that I had never spoken in tongues. But he insisted that speaking in tongues was the mark of spirituality (Kato n. d.7:1).

This experience would be familiar encounter to many people in the contemporary church, thus the study endeavours to give a comprehensive summary of Kato's response and indeed, his pneumatological understanding. Accordingly, Kato noted:

“Many young Christians today are being urged to seek “a second blessing”, “second baptism” and “new experience”. Let us examine the issue which at different times may be called Pentecostalism or Charismatic movement. “Is speaking in tongues a spiritual thermometer to measure the spiritual life of a Christian?” (p.1). Kato then went on to respond to his own question and outline the following:

Jesus Christ was conceived, born and did his work through the Holy Spirit. He taught his followers that they could not work in their own strength and commanded them to wait in Jerusalem till the Holy Spirit came upon them (Acts 1:8). It is necessary that a Christian receives the Holy Spirit, be controlled by the Holy Spirit before the Christian can bear effective witness for Jesus Christ. No amount of head knowledge or clever speech can take the place of the power of the Holy Spirit in a person’s life.

A dry, well-articulated sermon may cause listeners to applaud. But only a sermon borne on the oven of prayer, produced through the burning power of the Holy Spirit can produce lasting results in the church. Cold, dead orthodoxy only hardens the hearts of sinners, making them immune to the gospel of Christ. We need reviving power of the Holy Spirit in our dead churches (p.1-2).

However, Kato reiterated that the power Jesus promised his followers was the initial outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. In Acts 1:5 he had called it baptism with the Holy Spirit, which was to take place “not many days from now”. In fact, the event took place only ten days after Jesus had promised the occurrence of the event and ascended into heaven. “The event of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-13) was going to be of a historic significance that the Lord commanded his followers to wait in Jerusalem for it. This is the only case in the NT where Christians were ever commanded “to “tarry”, in the city of Jerusalem (Lk. 24:49). Any suggestion by anybody today for “tarrying” for any spectacular event such as the Pentecost has no basis in the Bible” (Kato n. d.7:2). The historic outpouring of the Holy Spirit was marked with some physical signs, including violent sound, tongues of fire and the ability to speak in foreign languages but none of these was the power. The Holy Spirit himself was the power and the giver of the power. As he filled the 120 disciples, he then gave them the ability to work in an unusual way. This marked a new era in which Jews and Gentiles could be brought together into one church of Jesus Christ (p. 2).

Since the physical signs were not the power itself, but only a manifestation to the power, they were not a necessary part of the power Jesus promised would come upon his followers. It is true that physical manifestations were given at certain occasions of the

outpouring of the Spirit. On the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2), in Cornelius' house (Acts 10:46) and at Ephesus (Acts 19:1-6) speaking in tongues accompanied the filling of the Holy Spirit. Probably because each case was a significant landmark for the expansion of Christianity into a new territory. However, we must note that the filling with the Holy Spirit was NOT ALWAYS accompanied by the physical sign of wind, fire or tongues (p. 3).

All the apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 4: 8-31) but tongues did not accompany the events. The seven deacons (Acts 6:3-5), Stephen (7:55), Saul (9:17), and Barnabas (11:24) were filled with the Spirit but physical signs were not given as the evidence of filling. We cannot, therefore, take tongue speaking or any other physical sign as evidence of being filled with the Holy Spirit, or the sign of power in believer's life. Kato asserted (p. 3-4):

It is clear in the Bible that everyone who has accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour has received the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit dwells in every believer. "If a man does not possess the Spirit of Christ, he is no Christian" (Rom. 8:9b NEB). The receiving of the Holy Spirit is an act of faith that brings about a spiritual new birth or establishing new relationship with God through Jesus Christ. If therefore, you have put your trust in Christ, take God at His Word that you already possess the Holy Spirit. "But as many as receive Him to them gave he the power to become the sons of God" (John 1:12). At the moment of conversion, all believers are baptised and sealed (1Cor.12:13).

However, while the phrases "indwelling by the Holy Spirit", "Sealing with the Holy Spirit" and "baptising with the Holy Spirit" apply to all believers, there is one phrase that cannot be so applied. "Being filled with the Spirit" is commanded to be a continuous act.

Being filled with the Spirit, according to Kato, means to continue to be controlled and guided by the Holy Spirit. This is contrasted with drunkard who is under the influence of alcohol (Eph. 5:18). This calls for a life of dedication to the cause of Christ (Rom. 12:1). A life that is separated from sin. Sin grieves the Holy Spirit (Eph.4:10). A person, therefore, living in sin is not filled with the Holy Spirit. When sin is confessed, a believer's life becomes a channel for filling of the Holy Spirit. When sin is confessed, interrupted fellowship is mended. The Spirit fills and flows through one's life. This also calls for a continuous walk in the Spirit, dependence on the Holy Spirit always. This rules out arriving at any point of perfection in life (Phil. 3:13-14). While it is true that we have the precedents in Acts where being filled with the Holy Spirit was accompanied by speaking in tongues, it was not always the case (Acts 4:31). The passage that commands the believer to be filled with the Holy Spirit, makes no reference to tongues as evidence of the filling. The whole context of Ephesians 5 where the call for infilling

is recorded is the matter of walking with Christ and manifesting the life of Christ in our daily relationship within the church. The evidence of a Spirit filled life may be summed up as follows: It is a Christ-like character which brings out the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal.5:22-23; cf. Eph. 5:18-21). A different aspect of the outworking of the Holy Spirit is called the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Kato also addressed the nature and place of gifts. The word for gifts is “charismata” which means grace gifts or gifts given to believers by the Holy Spirit purely out of grace (Rom. 12:3-8; 1Cor. 12:4-14:40; Eph. 4:1-16). Kato outline some principles about spiritual gifts:

1. Difference between natural gifts and spiritual gifts. The Christian’s natural gift(s) could become spiritual gifts as well. However, only those who have the Holy Spirit and are born again can talk of spiritual gifts.
2. Spiritual gifts are by God’s grace and it is only by God’s own freewill that he bestows the favour
3. Every Christian has a spiritual gift, some have more than one but no one has all the gifts (1 Cor. 12:11). No gift is obligatory for every believer, or as a mark of spirituality. All are commanded to use their gift(s) in love (1Cor. 12:31).
4. The purpose of the gift is not merely for the private edification of the person except as this contributes to the maturation of the church; contributes to the unity and growth of the church (Eph. 4:12-13). The gifts are listed in order of importance (Eph. 4:11). This is not because of the person exercising them but simply because God lists them that way. Apparently, the gifts at the top are those with greater potential for greatest contribution to the church. First major ones are Apostles, Prophets and Teachers (1Cor. 12:28). The original Apostles were necessary for the foundation of the church and made up a unique class not to be succeeded (Eph. 2:20). The Prophets predicted future events as well as declared the message of God to the people of their generation. There are no apostles or prophets today in the same sense.

However, by application missionaries may be called the sent-out ones or apostles but cannot claim succession to original Apostles. In a sense gifted preacher may be said to have a gift of prophecy. But there are no prophets today who predict future events. God’s revelation is found in the Bible. Teachers may refer to some people in the church

with a specific gift for expounding the word of God. In Eph. 4:11 the gifts of teaching and pastoring go together as pastor-teacher, the kind you would look for to pastor a church. The gift of evangelism is among the leading gifts to the church. If the Apostles and prophets laid the foundation of the church, then the teachers, pastors and evangelists are necessary for the continuation and expansion of the church. Other gifts include miracles, healings, helps, government, tongues and interpretation of tongues (1Cor. 12:27-28). Christians are called upon to “earnestly desire the higher gifts” (1Cor. 12:31).

However, although tongues are not to be sought, they should be tolerated (1Cor. 14:39-40) and need to take into consideration the guidance given in 1Cor. 14. Speaking in tongues is one of the temporary gifts.

In 1Cor. 13:8 prophecies and knowledge “will pass away”... Tongues will cease, that is they will come to a stop at one time. The time when tongues will cease to function is not, however, indicated. But it is not unreasonable to suggest that they have already ceased since the truth God wants to communicate to man (sic) is in the Bible. However, this is one area I cannot be dogmatic as many eminent Bible scholars do not all agree on this (p.13).

Finally, Kato points out that the prophecy of Joel quoted in Acts 2:17-21 can be used to support the possibility of tongues still in use. The last days in Scripture may refer to the whole period of grace from the time of Christ’s first coming till the end of this age at his second coming. The widespread charismatic movement today may have both the genuine and counterfeit experiences. But the word of God, and not the experience itself, should be the standard for judgement (Matt. 13:24-30).

It is noteworthy to mention Kato’s teaching on the other spirits, the demonic spirits. According to Macdonald (2017:204-05):

[Kato] frames the discussion of the demonic in the attributes of the Creator. The spirits are created spirits, far diminished in quality, ability, and power to the Author of spirits. Kato rips away the fear which surrounds the subject by establishing the supremacy of the uncreated Spirit. Kato also resists any and every action that would exalt, worship, or empower the demonic. All forms of false worship and seeking the assistance of spirits is opposed and repudiated. In keeping with the Scriptures, only God is elevated as the proper source of supernatural assistance for life and death.

Given the growth of “New Generation Christianity” (Cole 2019), with widespread belief in the efficacy of spiritual forces, Kato’s teaching on these spiritual forces and as distinct from the Holy Spirit is important, especially in the African context. Kato does

not only give his personal insight of the occult but also, his biblical understanding of the spirits.

As a child I used to be very afraid of a graveyard. I am still not sure that I would be happy to spend a night in a cemetery. I think this fear comes from my pagan background, because I grew up believing that the spirits of the dead come back to haunt the living. This is a universal belief among heathen societies. But is it true? Do dead people come back as spirits? In this book we shall be looking at what spirits are and how they originated. But first we must see what the Bible teaches us about God (Kato 1975b:n. p.)

Kato also reflected on the world of spirits in the cosmos generally. God is Spirit but very different from the other spirits (John 4:24). The other spirits, the spirit world in the cosmos, are created like everything else and are finite, unlike God. God's purpose for creation is for his glory (Psalm 148:2,3; Col. 1:16; cf. Gen. 1:31). In the first place, Kato (1975b:3-4) pointed out:

God as Spirit is not a vague substance such as energy. He is a Person. In fact, there are three Persons within the Godhead, although there is only One God. There is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. We call this 'Trinity'. God as Spirit does not have a body. So in order to be seen by man (sic). God revealed Himself in Jesus Christ. That is why Jesus Christ said, 'He who has seen me has seen the Father' (John 14: 9). In Jesus Christ, God who is Spirit has been revealed to man (sic). Because Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man, He was able to die, to be buried and to rise again for our sins. As God He is Spirit, therefore He dwells in the believer today. The Apostle Paul is very fond of the expression 'Christ in you', or Christ who 'lives in me' (Galatians 2: 20). The third Person of the Trinity is called the Holy Spirit. God's nature is holiness and all the three Persons are absolutely holy.

In speaking about demons and cosmological spirits, Kato was not in any way comparing the Holy Spirit to the spirits of the cosmos. "God as Spirit is absolutely different from all other classes of spirits. He is the Creator. Every aspect of His character is infinite; that is, without limit or comparison. He alone knows everything. He also can do everything that is not against His nature. God alone can be everywhere at the same time. He, therefore, belongs to a distinct category of the spiritual world, though He is Spirit" (Kato 1975b:4).

However, because of the apparent confusion in the church in the name of charismaticism, aspects of God's gifts to the Church, there is need to understand the difference between the Holy Spirit and his work in the life of believers. Also, the operations of the cosmological spirits have their limitations. "God is the Creator of all that is. He has no beginning and no end. 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth' (Genesis 1:1). God who always IS, created the heavens and the earth

and everything in them. So in our dealing with the origin of spirits, we must exclude God” (Kato 1975b:4).

Although God created the cosmos and everything that exists (Ps. 148:2, 5; Col.1:16), he is not the author of evil. Evil is inconsistent with God’s nature and who God is. Part of creation is the invisible spirit world, made up of both good and evil angels or spirits. Rebellion against God is the cause of evil. Rebellious angels are demons and Satan or Lucifer being the chief devil (Isa. 14:12). This begs the question about why God allowed evil. Kato’s (1975b:7) response was:

You may ask why, if God was good and all-powerful, did He allow evil to come into His beautiful universe? This question bothers me too. It has bothered philosophers and religious leaders. The ultimate answer lies with God. 'The secret things belong to the Lord our God; but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children, for ever, that we may do all the words of this law' (Deuteronomy 29:29). So we do not know fully why God allowed sin to spoil His beautiful creation. But we must remember that the spirits are intelligent, personal beings with the ability and privilege to choose. The same thing applies to man (sic).

Some angels left their place of perfection and proper place of living (Jude 6). Thus, the angels, led by Lucifer, rebelled against God, and sinned. Apparently sin first occurred in heaven with some of the angels. Satan's pride and ambition were the root cause of sin. Satan was the first sinner. Although he was a 'commander-in-chief' of God's armed forces, the angels, he aspired to make himself like God. The result was that he was driven from the presence of God. Other angels who followed Satan in sinning were also expelled from the presence of God. They lost their original holiness. The fallen angels became unclean spirits or demons (Kato 1975b:7-8). Jesus sent His disciples to cast out unclean spirits (Matthew 10:1). Some of them are still bound today in a place called Tartarus until the day of judgment (2 Peter 2:4). Others are free to roam about. But all the evil spirits will be judged and finally cast into the lake of fire (1 Corinthians 6:3; Matthew 25:41).

There are good cosmological spirits in our world as well. “Angel is the term used in the Bible to describe the created spirits, and the words 'angel' and 'spirit' can be used interchangeably. The word 'angel' means a messenger or agent of some higher being” (p. 8). Kato briefly surveys the reality of good angels or spirits in the Bible:

Daniel describes the multitudes of angels serving God in heaven. 'A stream of fire issued and come forth before him; a thousand thousands served him' (Daniel 7:10). Jesus said God could send more than twelve legions of angels at one call for help (Matthew 26:53). One legion of Roman soldiers was between 3,000 and 6,000. So Jesus could call upon

between 36,000 and 72,000 at one time and that would not be all the angels there were at God's service. In Hebrews we read of 'innumerable hosts of angels' (Hebrews 12:22). The Word of God mentions several kinds of good angels (p. 8-9).

The good angels are messengers of God and do serve in various functions, including (Kato 1975b:11-13):

The worship of God (Isaiah 6), working out God's will (Job 33:23; Dan. 7:16; Acts 12:23), Looking after God's chosen people (Dan 3:28; 10:13, 21), Serving Jesus: Predicted and celebrated the birth of Jesus Christ (Matthew 1:20; Luke 1- 11). They served Christ in His temptations and sufferings (Matthew 4:11; Luke 22:43). Announced His resurrection and going to heaven (Matthew 28; John 20:12; Acts 1:10, 11), and they will announce the coming of Jesus Christ (1 Thessalonians 4:16). Jesus Christ will send the angels to gather together God's children in the final day of judgment (Matthew 24:31). They will also help sort out the believers from the unbelievers (Matthew 13:49,50) and helping Christians (Acts 5:19; 12:11; Heb. 1:14).

Kato gives a personal experience of receiving help from angels and narrated:

The fact that God's good angels guard and deliver believers from danger should be a great consolation to us. One day I was driving from Kagoro to Kaduna with other pastors in the car. I was driving in a thick fog on the road I had never driven before. At a sharp bend I missed the turning and headed into the bush. There was a huge tree right in front of us. A fellow pastor sitting with me in front offered the shortest prayer he has ever offered. He simply said in Jaba language, ' Oh Nom ' repeatedly, which means 'Oh God'. The car stopped just before it hit the tree. We pushed the car back to the road and drove on after a prayer of thanks. I am convinced that the Lord sent his angel to stand between my car and the tree for protection (Kato 1975a:13).

Not many people would have attributed their protection in this way to angels or spirits. However, Kato stated: "Let me give a note of warning here. Nowhere in the Bible are we told to pray to the angels or even ask God to send us His angels to deliver us. As a matter of fact, angels themselves rightly feel unqualified to be worshipped since they are creatures" (p. 14).

The demons or fallen angels roam around to cause harm to people in various ways, ultimately, under the permissive will of the All-Sovereign God. However, the Devil and the demons are creatures, and therefore, they are limited. The Devil cannot be everywhere at the same time but does have his agents, the demons, all over the world. However, since Satan and demons are real, their activities must be taken seriously. Some of the happenings people hear about may be true. For example, it is possible for evil spirits to put on the appearance of a dead person and come back to communicate with living people. Satan can perform miracles (Exod. 7:10-12). God

may allow Satan to do mighty things but there is a boundary beyond which God will not allow him to go (Kato 1975b:22).

The Christian should believe in the reality of the world of demons but should seek no contact with them whatsoever. The Bible condemns any dealings with evil spirits. Evil spirits are behind the activities of witches and diviners. As children of light we should have no dealings with the works of darkness (1 John 1:6; Deut. 18:10-12). It is sin to consult a witchdoctor who in turn consults the spirits to tell the future or to help you in any way. The Christian should not take part in idol worship in any way. Demons are behind the objects that pagans worship (Deut. 18:10-12; Isa. 8:19). Kato (p.26) noted:

I know that in 1 Samuel 28:7-25 we have the account of Saul consulting a witch doctor of Endor. It is a difficult passage, but let us realize that Saul was a backslider, a miserable and confused person. And when Saul inquired of the Lord, the Lord did not answer him (1 Samuel 28:6). Since the Lord did not answer Saul, he turned to Satanic sources. The end result was God's judgment by death for Saul and his sons, and defeat for Israel. Let this serve as a warning to those seeking help from demonic forces.

The Christian should be alert all the time, realizing that Satan never takes time off from trying to persuade the Christian to do wrong. 'Be sober, be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking some one to devour' (1 Peter 5:8). The Christian must actively resist Satan. 'Resist the devil and he will flee from you' (James 4:7). The Christian should be well armed by depending on the Lord for victory over Satan and his forces. 'Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil' (Ephesians 6:11).

There is a difference between demonic influence and demon possession. The unbeliever does not have the Holy Spirit of God, and therefore can be possessed by demons. The Christian is a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19). The Holy Spirit and an evil spirit cannot both dwell in the same body at the same time. The believer may be influenced by an evil spirit, as happened to Paul himself when 'a messenger of Satan' harassed him (2 Corinthians 12: 7). But demons cannot possess the body of the Christian. Even at death they still have no claims on a Christian's body (Jude 9). Every spirit should be tested to confirm if it is of God. (Kato (1975b:31; cf. John 4:2-3; 2Tim 1:12).

5.4 Summary

This chapter has endeavoured to consolidate some theological constructs that were pertinent to Byang Kato's theology at conceptual level and praxis. The forgone sections established eight key theological categories or doctrines that defined Kato's contention for biblical Christianity in the church in Africa. These cover the believer's new birth in the church (soteriology) through life of the Christian (missiology) and last things (eschatology). These were deduced from the life history of Kato himself, his conversion, ministry and particular perspectives or beliefs about these aspects of theology. The themes highlighted were deduced from Kato's defence of the gospel, among several other African theologians whose work tended to blend African traditional religious beliefs with what the Bible teaches.

The theological doctrines outlined above cover essential classical doctrines of the church. The findings have been fitted into eight main theological categories that are mostly consensual, biblical, Christocentric, practical and mainstream evangelical beliefs. Therefore, these corpus of the theological material underscores the important contribution Kato made in defining biblical Christianity in the church in Africa. However, Kato's focus was essentially, God's special revelation in Christ and through his written word, the Bible. Thus, the source for theology was the Bible and there was one theology—Biblical theology, integrating all the different branches into one. This analysis could serve as useful material for the contemporary church, especially in disciple-making and maturation of the church in Africa. Kato's teachings and life is an important example to emulate for the missionary tasks of the church in Africa. As recipients of the promise of God in faith, the church learns from who have proceeded in trust and obedience as examples in trust and obedience and avoid the pitfalls exposed by their failures.

Chapter 6.0 Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 Introduction

This study is an analytical biography of Byang Henry Kato (1936-1975). Kato was renowned as father of evangelicalism in the modern history of the church in Sub-Saharan Africa. Kato was the first African General Secretary of the Association of Evangelicals in Africa (AEA) and doubled as the Executive Secretary of the AEA Theology Commission. He is remembered for his unique voice in theological debates of his time and his vision for the theological initiatives and institutions he helped to create before his tragic death by drowning.

Kato's faith journey from a dedicated follower of ethnic Jaba traditional religion, to an outstanding evangelical Christian witness and leader was exceptional. Kato's assimilation of a biblical worldview was critical in the strides he made and for his achievements in ministry. A critical mass of Christians with practices that are consistent with a biblical worldview is essential for gospel transformation in Africa. The practice of many professed Christians in Africa is still often informed by traditional worldviews. Thus, Kato's transformative experience is exemplary.

The purpose of the study was to analyze Kato's life, ministry and theological contribution. Specifically, Kato's theological legacy of biblical hermeneutics, African Christian identity and contribution to evangelical theological education were explored. The hypothesis was that Kato's theological legacy and lived experiences would be commendable lessons for leadership development and growth of the church in Africa. Kato's purpose was to contend for biblical Christianity in the church in Africa and safeguard it from syncretistic universalism. He helped to shape evangelical Christianity and put together a plan to establish theological institutions, for promoting theological educations at all levels.

I used qualitative analytical methods to respond to the research questions. This final chapter summarises the proceedings and findings of the preceding five chapters and concludes with main findings, how the research answers the research questions, particular contribution of the research and recommendations for further research.

6.2 Summary

A concise overview of how the research was carried out is described. The account is a summary of content of each chapter in turn, starting with chapter one.

6.2.1 Summary of Chapter One

The first chapter is an introduction to the study, highlighting the importance and nature of the study and theoretical framework; justifying biographical study of a theologian, as a discipline in Historical Theology. Byang Kato was the first African General Secretary of the Association of Evangelicals in Africa. He is believed to be the father of evangelicalism in Sub-Saharan Africa in the modern history of the church in Africa. He helped to shape evangelicalism and set up important institutions for promoting sound theological education. The study explores his life and his theological legacy in three critical areas in African theological discourse; that is, (1) biblical hermeneutics, (2) African Christian identity and (3) theological education.

The life of one person may not be adequate to serve as normative. However, many people would be able to appreciate and relate to Kato's experiences in the African context. The socio-economic, cultural and political context in which Kato was raised would be fairly typical for many Africans. His adult life and ministry were extensive in scope and sphere of influence. Kato would epitomise the kind of life and challenges an average African goes through. That he was able to demonstrate transformation and radically change from ATR worldview to biblical worldview is worth emulating. Thus, the importance of exploring Kato's life; his radical conversion and transformation, ministry in the Church and theological legacy. Lessons from his life and theological contribution, may prove to be an important resource for the church in Africa, in disciple-making, theological education and leadership development.

To explore Kato's life and theological legacy, the research was framed to respond to the main question: What theological contribution does an analytical study of Byang Kato's life history, legacy and message on understanding biblical hermeneutics, African Christian identity and evangelical theological education make to contemporary biblical Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa? To respond to this main question, the research sought to respond to four sub questions, as follows: (1) Who was Byang Kato

and what social, cultural, political and theological contexts and influences shaped his theological formation and views?, (2) How did Kato's message on biblical hermeneutics, African Christian identity and Christian education impact evangelical Christianity in Africa of his time?, (3) What is the Biblical and theological foundation for Kato's message on hermeneutics, African Christian identity and evangelical theological education? and (4) What can the contemporary sub-Saharan Church learn from Kato's life and theological contribution to Sub-Sahara African biblical hermeneutics, Christian identity and evangelical theological education, in shaping evangelical theology in Africa?

To achieve these objectives, a design and methodology to carry out the research were crafted. The design described the type of research and outlined the different steps sequentially followed to accomplish the goal. The methodology described the instruments used to collect the relevant information and data required to respond to the research questions. In addition, I use this section to provide the philosophical justifications and framework which shapes the design and methodology. The main approach was a qualitative single case study; an in-depth biographical study of Kato's life and theological contribution. Theoretically, it was argued that how a single case could be a learning tool, presenting narratives of lived and real experiences of an African church leader, rising from a traditional background to contributing to shaping of evangelical Christianity, which others could vicariously appropriate in the contemporary African context. The study was also exploratory, descriptive, qualitative and to a limited extent, ethnographic. The researcher is one of Byang Kato's successors at AEA, even though several decades exist between them. Nevertheless, access to information and the fact that the researcher is going through similar experiences, enhanced in depth exploration of the subject.

The tools used included literary review of Kato's published and unpublished works and other biographical materials such as the collections in the Kato memorial lectures and a comprehensive biographical tool put together by ACTEA. Also, field interviews of people, who knew Kato and could provide relevant information about his life and ministry were conducted. A total of ten persons, from various backgrounds, including his family members, were interviewed. It was providential that Kato's spouse, who had

survived him as a widow for forty-four years, died at eighty, under two months after the researcher met her for the interview in Kaduna, at the home of her daughter.

6.2.2 Summary of Chapter Two

The second chapter is a biographical sketch of Kato's life history, covering his birth, childhood and adult life, conversion from a fetish priest to Christianity, his education, family, career and death. The context of Kato's birth, in a rural town, Kwoi, in Northern Nigeria and the influences that shaped Kato are highlighted. The roadmap for Kato's meteoric rise to being a globally recognised evangelical Christian leader is described. The chapter crafted a portrait of Kato, from the cradle to the grave, underscoring his theological and spiritual milestones and pitfalls.

Kato was destined to follow his father's footsteps as a fetish priest. He was dedicated to the tribal god a few days after his birth and nurtured in that culture as a child until he attained rite of passage to manhood at age ten. Still at the tender age of twelve years, Kato converted to the Christian faith. He first got attracted to the church through the ministry of a missionary lady who occasionally came to the village square to preach the gospel in the local Hausa language. Kato followed her on Sunday to the SIM local church in the village and expressed interest in enrolling in the local elementary school to the strong objection of his father. After much persuasion and plea by the missionaries and the intervention of the grandfather, Byang eventually enrolled in school one year later than his first attempt and under very strict conditions; ensuring he worked on his fathers farm while in school.

It was in school, Kato heard the story of Noah and the ark by his teacher that he felt the need to 'jump in the ark of Jesus' to be saved from the 'flooding judgement of eternal death', under the cause of sin. This act would make more sense to Kato when he attended revival services in the church some time later. He was under conviction and recommitted his life and covenanted to follow and serve Jesus for the rest of his life. This was a significant turning point in Kato's Christian formation.

Kato went from elementary school to the Igbaja Bible College to train for a ministerial career. However, Kato did private studies to qualify for university matriculation to enter London Bible College for more advanced theological studies, an undergraduate degree in divinity. He pursued graduate degrees in Systematic Theology at the

masters and doctoral levels at Dallas Theological Seminary in the USA. In between studies, Kato was also building a family and a career, under difficult circumstances. In his third and final year at Igbaja Bible College, Kato got married to a local princess, Jummai, daughter of the King of the Jaba people in southern Kaduna. The couple started having children within the first year of their marriage. He worked as a Bible teacher in Hausa, did farming to supplement income and did private studies to sit the 'O' and 'A' level exams to enter university. He was moved to Lagos to start a career in media but left for further theological studies in London.

Kato returned from studies to continue teaching Bible at Igbaja Bible College for a short stint before he was appointed as Secretary General of the ECWA Church. His tenure coincided with the breakout of the civil war in Nigeria. After three years in this position, Kato proceeded to the USA in quest for more advanced theological studies. He did both his MST and DTh in record time, between 1970 and 1973. By the time Kato was graduating from Dallas, he was appointed both as the Executive Secretary of the Theology Commission and the General Secretary of AEAM.

Kato is remembered for the way he rose from what he called "devil's baby" (Kato 1962) to being a great servant of God. He contended for biblical Christianity on the continent. Most of the theologians during Kato's time wanted to decolonise Christianity and turned to ATR beliefs with the goal of elevating African culture and thought. The demeaning of African values and culture by European colonisers were associated with Christianity brought to Africa by European missionaries. Kato uniquely differentiated the biblical message from the messenger and debated the other theologians, charging them for views perceived to be syncretistic universalism. His counter arguments helped to shape African evangelicalism.

Kato endeavoured to promote sound biblical teaching in Africa by planning the establishment of theological training institutions up to graduate level and an accreditation institution. He also proposed the establishment of a peer reviewed journal to encourage and promote the publication of scholarly work by African scholars. Kato was also engaged with the global Christian family. He was a plenary speaker at the inaugural Lausanne Congress for World Evangelisation in 1974 and was selected to serve on the continuation committee of the Lausanne Movement. The

same year, Kato was elected to the WEA International Council and as Chair of the WEA Theology Commission.

His tenure at AEAM was short-lived, cut short by his tragic death by drowning in the Indian Ocean on the coast of Mombasa, Kenya in December 1975. However, his achievements were substantial. The institutions he helped to establish continue to play an important role in theological education and the church in Africa as a whole. Kato, like every human being, was not without shortcomings. The final section of this chapter outlined both Kato's accomplishments and his failures.

6.2.3 Summary of Chapter Three

The third chapter focused on Kato's theological contributions, especially in the areas of hermeneutics, African Christian self-identity and his contribution to evangelical theological education in Africa. The the different theological constructs Kato had to contend with; bringing into the conversation a unique voice which was contrary to many of the scholars of his time was explored. He sparked a lively theological debate on the continent by establishing a clear theological divide between liberal Protestant or mainline church theologians and evangelicals. Several theologians in Africa advocated linking ATR with Christianity, in ways that Kato thought were syncretistic. Kato contended for what he considered to be biblical position on some essential doctrines, such as, salvation, the Bible, the uniqueness of Christ as the only way for salvation, ecumenism, ancestral veneration.

Kato's critics charged that he was known for "what he was opposed to, but not what he stood for" (Breman 1995:384-5). Kato was known for his seminal work; "The Theological Pitfalls in Africa", warning the Church about the kind of theology that was prevalent and which he perceived to be harmful to the church in Africa. In advancing his views in the disputations, Kato's hermeneutics, including the doctrine of the Bible, approaches to biblical interpretation and application of scripture, were highlighted. Kato had a high view about the Bible, that is, the Bible is God's word and therefore, it is inspired, inerrant and infallible. Kato revered the Bible as the word of God and supreme authority and guide, through the Holy Spirit, for Christian faith and conduct. He argued for the Bible as the only source of Christian theology and rejected African traditional religion as source for Christian theology, especially as espoused by

proponents of African theology, during Kato's time. He sought to give an emic and literalist reading and interpretation of Scripture, from a conservative evangelical dispensationalist point of view.

Kato helped to define African evangelicalism and establish this within mainstream evangelicalism. His views about authentic African biblical theology were clear and unambiguous in relation to African theology, which was based mainly on anthropocentrism. Therefore, he argued for discontinuity of the African belief system; to be completely transformed and replaced by the biblical worldview; essential for faith and conduct. What Kato saw as the task of African theology was to scan the message of the Bible in its original context and learn to apply in the African context, without the distractions of deductive presuppositions or allegorical interpretations.

On the question of authentic African Christian identity, Kato prided himself as Christian African. Of prime importance, was his commitment to his faith as a Christian and less so that he was African; not to talk about his nationality or tribe. He was a proud Nigerian African Christian. African intellectuals had given high priority to the subject of African identity in every area of endeavour. The key assumption is that the influence and maltreatment of their slave masters and colonisers has led to a split personality or loss of identity. In the quest for Africans to deliver themselves from the self-identity challenge, Kato argues for a third race, salvation in Christ. It is only in Christ that he finds true liberation and identity—authentically Christian and truly African—Christian African. This is essential for the resolution of the so-called identity crisis and an important consideration for Africa's aspirations.

Kato did not only complain about the heresies in the church but envisioned guidelines for addressing the challenge. He prioritized theological education, training of pastors and church leaders, children and lay members of the church, in sound evangelical theological education, at every level. Kato's contribution to theological education was not only limited to his own personal development, ministry and the institutions he envisioned for establishment but also contributed in enhancing theological discourse in several ways. His plan resulted in the establishment of the first two graduate level theological schools or seminaries in Sub-Saharan Africa. ACTEA was also established to help set standards and support for development of curriculum and faculty for the

seminaries. He promoted evangelical theological scholarship, writing and publication. The novel theological institutions he helped to establish continue to do an important work. Kato promoted evangelical scholarship; scholarly research and writing and balance between culture and the gospel, Western and African worldviews and the Bible.

The chapter also highlights the contemporary state of the Church in Africa. Kato's concerns for theological distortions continue unabated. The ATR beliefs are still prevalent and with globalisation and secularism of the world, there is need to contend for biblical Christianity in the church. The growing new generation and sections of pentecostalised and charismatic churches have sacralised ATR belief systems in more tangible and visible ways than what Kato contended with. The growth of the church is not matched by trained and qualified pastors to lead the churches. The overwhelming need that continues to exist in the church may not necessarily diminish the important contribution the legacy institutions of Kato but rather a measure of their importance.

Kato's theological work was pioneering, however, in current time, the theological educational institutions must contend against challenges for their survival. The AEA schools and others associated with these through ACTEA have been converted to universities, under the jurisdiction of national educational authorities. The universities operate and mount courses approved by these authorities and ensure they comply with all their guidelines, informed by values other than biblical or Christian values. Theology or Christian studies is only one of several subject options and intake of students and faculty may not be limited to Christians. There could be important lessons to learn from Kato when he faced the challenge of the non-existent of tertiary institutions for theological education in Sub-Saharan Africa. The church needs to explore innovative and perhaps informal ways of advancing sound theological education.

6.2.4 Summary of Chapter Four

Whilst the last chapter was polemics, with opposing views on various bible and theological doctrines, this chapter was dialogical and comparative, reconciling Kato's views with established evangelical orthodoxy. It critically engaged with the biblical and theological basis for Kato's theological themes in this study. Brief summaries of

selected texts and evangelical biblical materials as backdrop are outlined, against which Kato's theology for evangelical orthodoxy could be assessed. The study firstly, explored evangelical tenets for which Kato contended and then explored how these orthodox beliefs were established. These texts were extensively reviewed for ancient approaches for biblical hermeneutics and orthodoxy; from the first century of Christianity to the reformation era. The Scripture has been affirmed (the Canon of Scripture), its integrity sustained and handed down to the Church from the New Testament through ancient classic method, guided by objective historical inquiry and with the help of the Holy Spirit. The approach is succinctly summed up by the Latin phrase—*Ubique, semper, omnibus*. Translated in English: that which has been believed and lived out by the faith community in all cultures and believed from the beginning of the apostolic witness, accepted by general consent by both clergy and laity, in the whole church, over the whole world in all generations. The summary statement is: universality, apostolic antiquity, and conciliar consent (Oden 2015:190-92).

Given the missional intent of evangelical reading of the Bible, Wright's 'Mission of God' (2006) was also gleaned. The thesis of this work is that the basis for understanding the Bible could be done from the perspective of God's mission on earth. Wright proposes an approach for reading and interpreting the Bible; he identifies core themes which are foundational pillars of the biblical worldview and biblical theology. These themes include monotheism, creation, humanity, election, redemption, covenant, ethics, future hope (2006:17). He explores each of these themes from their Old Testament roots through to the New Testament to illustrate how they developed and fulfilled (2006:17-18). Underscoring the missional hermeneutics, Bauckham (2005) submits that reading of the Bible should be in a way that takes seriously the missionary direction; moving from the particular to the universal, aimed at the kingdom of God.

For contextual relevance, the overview also included two African scholars, with methodologies that focus on the African context. Elizabeth Mburu's *African Hermeneutics* (2019) is a five-step approach visualised by a familiar object in the African context—a stool. She calls the approach a Four-legged approach; each of the four legs representing a distinct step in the hermeneutical process, with the seat itself being the fifth and final step or application in the hermeneutic cycle. As a good stool

is stable and supports the weight, so the hermeneutical stool could confidently provide a stable or accurate interpretation of the biblical text. The four legs are (a) parallels to the African context, (b) the theological context, (c) the literary context and (d) the historical context. These legs support the seat, which represents the final stage of interpretation—the application.

The fourth hermeneutical approach is that proposed by the second African evangelical scholar, Yusufu Turaki (2020). Turaki proposes a method—*Engaging Religions and Worldviews in Africa*. This takes seriously the underlying questions ATR believers are seeking answers for. Turaki asserts that these ATR questions can be engaged from a biblical standpoint, without undermining the fidelity to biblical Christianity. He shows how this can be done from a biblical, Christocentric and ecclesiastical perspective. The goal is to demonstrate how biblical Christianity can transform the traditional cultural and religious mindset. Presentation of the gospel of Christ to people in traditional Africa must bear in mind the great influence of their religious and social beliefs and practices. Christianity cannot afford to offer less than what traditional religion offers African Christians. To a less extent than the four works mentioned, other works, commentaries and the Bible itself were all sources of information for evangelical orthodoxy.

Kato's hermeneutics in reading, interpretation and application of Scripture was demonstrated by exploring the biblical text that led to his conversion and a couple of passages he exegeted in his preaching. Before this, the account also explores Kato's self-Christian understanding or against the theoretical or biblical foundations for Christian identity and finally, evangelical theological education. Apparently, Kato's perspectives were in resonance with many of the scholars mentioned in the study and indeed, mainstream evangelicalism. Kato's theological propositions were mostly consensual and Christians in other parts of the world could understand and relate to his teachings. Thus, an important consideration, if the church in Africa could take seriously the call to reach out to other regions of the world with the normative Christian gospel.

6.2.5 Summary of Chapter Five

In the final step, the research formulates a theological model, in response to the main research question of relevance of Kato's theological legacy to contemporary challenges to Christianity in the Sub-Sahara Africa, as practical biblical guidelines to harmonise biblical beliefs. The chapter distils the information in preceding chapters to outline and describe the perceived themes that characterise Kato's theology.

Kato's life history, childhood in traditional setting and ATR, conversion to Christianity, education, family life and vocation have been explored in this study. Kato was well trained in the evangelical tradition and held eminent positions in the church in Nigeria, Africa's most populous country and eminently, the position of General Secretary of the Association of Evangelicals in Africa. He was also elected to important positions in the global evangelical institutions like Lausanne Movement and the World Evangelicals. Thus, reflections on Kato's life and his theological work were important lessons for evangelicals in Africa.

Kato's apologia and writings or messages have been explored. reflecting on his life and ministry and identifying themes for constructing his theological contribution in this study. There are "very few contemporary African theologians who emphasise the discontinuity between the Christian faith and the traditional African religions and cultures. The greater majority are in line with some form of synthesis; pleading for various degrees of continuity between the gospel and traditional African beliefs" (van der Walt 2011:928). Thus, the unique but mainstream evangelical articulations would constitute an important lesson for the evangelical church in Africa.

The themes that were identified as characterising Kato's perceived theology include eight main theological constructs, including: 1. Personal conversion (Soteriology), 2. Radical Discipleship (Christian formation), 3. Bible Centredness (Bibliology), 4. Christ-centred (Christology), 5. Christian-African Identity (Ecclesiology), 6. Safeguarding biblical Christianity in Africa (Missiology), 7. The Second Coming or Personal return of Christ to earth (Eschatology) and 8. Power of the Holy Spirit (Pneumatology).

These themes were coded, comprising sub-themes. The core themes and sub-themes are defined and described, drawing out relevant theological implications for the church, especially in the African context. I dub these theological constructs—*Katoan Theology*.

Thus, in response to the research question, Kato provides a corpus of theological constructs are important learning material for the contemporary church, particularly in Sub-Sahara Africa for discipleship, leadership development and maturation of the church.

6.3 Conclusion

Byang Kato's life was a short span, yet it was fulfilling and impactful. Kato rose from very humble beginnings, typical of many Africans, to a position of global influence in the Church; and to the very epitome of his career, as a churchman. Though Kato became an international figure, he did not neglect his local community and maintained his relationship with his peers, not so privileged. He was able to engage his traditional culture without compromising his biblical beliefs; he let the Bible judge his cultural beliefs. He embraced values that were not against biblical injunction and rejected those that he perceived to be contrary to what the Bible. He was hardworking, consistent and conducted himself with integrity and godliness. He raised a family on Christian values and shared the gospel in his encounters with people.

The historical context in which Kato was born and raised reflected the African culture and shows how the Christian African could live out the Christian faith, without compromise. Vital participation in the community lets the individual live as creed of their religion. According to Tarus and Lowery (2017:312): "These beliefs and practices are not written but handed down from one generation to the next and exist in the heart of the individual...each [individual] is himself a living creed of his own religion. Where the individual is, there is his religion, for he is a religious being. It is this that makes Africans so religious: religion is in their whole system of being". Kato's witness was demonstrated by proclamation of the word and the way he lived.

The avant-garde of Kato's career was his dual role in AEA (AEAM then), as General Secretary of AEA and as Executive Secretary of the Theology Commission. The tasks matched his strengths and skills set and passion for theological education. He seamlessly understood the theological challenge of the evangelical Church and was able to outline an adaptive strategy and goals, which continue to be foundational for AEA's work. Nearly all the objectives, he outlined have been implemented and

continue to be major interventions of AEA. Africa needs visionary leaders in the church and in the nation in general, to bring about transformation and for Africa's renaissance.

The church in Africa continues to grow exponentially and Christian population is at least four times more than Kato's time, but the theological training cannot keep up with the rate of new-church plants and number of trained pastors required to lead these churches. Also, the theological institutions engineered by Kato have focus on academic training; these and the approach to theological training may not be adequate to curb the theological malaise in the church in Africa. The theological seminaries have also become fully fledged universities. The implication is the diminishing number of students opting for theological or biblical courses. Kato was an inspiration for many people, who testify of his influence for developing themselves for service in the church and theological education.

The abiding interest in keeping theological discourse about 'African identity' is itself a capture of the mind and ironically, enslaving the mind as the colonial suppressors wanted it to be. This is a settler mentality that the church needs to break away from, if it should play a meaningful role in global Christianity and as it must, in 21st century Christianity. Pan-Africanist sentiments and Western cultural imposition cannot be the basis for theologising. If indeed the packaging of the good news of the Gospel in Western clothing is condemned, repackaging it in African clothing does not make it any better. Surely, God's revelation to any people group is by his own means; calling out of the old into a new life, using circumstances and people in spite of their imperfection. The call of Abraham in Genesis 12 is paradigmatic to the call of every Christian; faith response requires a coming out of the old religion into the new faith of Christianity. The call is from the particular to the universal. "The church is rooted in localities and at the same time a global movement. In a world in which, more than ever before, global developments override both nation states and local communities, the Christian church is both both an international movement and essentially rooted in localities" (Bauckham 2005:111).

Knowledge of the past and how the evangelical church in Africa was shaped is important. Therefore, the research endeavoured to understand and glean what a notable figure like Byang Kato, believed and taught. Experiential pedagogy is an

important learning process for missional engagement. Therefore, the biography of those who have had similar immersion and creditably acquitted themselves are important lessons for reflection for those who follow them. Examples to follow is what the faithful do. God's people in the Old Testament came to understand God by seeing how he revealed himself to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and other Old Testament people. Similarly, we follow their examples of trust and obedience and avoid the pitfalls exposed by their failures (Cockerill 2002). Cockerill states three principles for understanding the Old Testament in particular, these included: the example principle (what the faithful do), the picture principle (what God has done)—God's redemption of his people in the OT is a sketch or picture of the deeper redemption provided for his NT people through Christ and the third principle, the pattern principle (what the law says)—God gave his law at Sinai to show the kind of life he wanted his people to live in fellowship with him in community with one another (2002). In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul encourages following our leaders who follow Christ and uses himself as an example to follow (1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1; Phil. 3:17; 2:12; cf. Heb. 13:17; 3 John 1:11).

God has always used human agency, with the help of the Holy Spirit to reveal himself to humans. He has done so through the Patriarchs, the Prophets and Apostles and the written word of God (the Bible). The incarnation of Christ was the ultimate revelation. Christ established his Church and calls and equips people to serve in the church for its growth and maturation (Eph. 4:1-16). How that has been unfolding and how it continues to do so, is the basis for theologising and prophetic declarations; less about the efficacy of religions created by humans, in their rebellion against the God of the Bible; whether this is an African religion, European or Asian. "The meaning and the effects of the cross are mediated to the new community of believers through the Holy Spirit and the Word (Scriptures).

Kato's portrait of Christian African identity is indeed, the biblical solution to the African identity crisis. While Africa's identity problem could be more acute and daunting, the identity challenge is a human problem. All humans without Christ are lost and groping in the dark, yearning for some form of self-identity that is illusive. However, Kato's de-emphasis on traditional religion and cultural identity did not highlight the positive theology of politics and economics and leadership in the African context. Turaki's vision of

engaging African realities from a biblical mindset builds on Kato's theology to develop a political theology for freedom and emancipation to realise the 'Africa we want'—aspirations of the African Union for the continent. The 'Christian African' doctrine of Kato does not only resolve the African Christian identity question but lays a foundation for a theological articulation for development and socio-political and economic transformation of Africa.

Kato's perspectives or hermeneutics on many of the issues he contended with others in African theological discourse would be assessed on the right side of orthodoxy. History correctly judges him as the father of evangelicalism in the modern church in sub-Saharan Africa. Evangelicalism recognises the imperfection of humans; the best of humanity has feet of clay. Kato did have his own theological pitfalls; the tendency for extreme pietism or fundamentalism may be noticed in some of his views and attitudes. Getting a right balance between ministry responsibilities and family responsibilities could have been uneven.

The research particularly focused on a brief biography of Kato, his biblical hermeneutics—the way Kato read, interpreted and applied Scripture—his view of African Christian identity and the contribution he made to evangelical theological education in Africa—constituting Kato's theological legacy the study seeks to highlight. These theological views and actions were weighed against biblical and classical or orthodox evangelical views, to discern a corpus of theological content attributed to Kato as useful model to learn from—*Katoan Theological Model*—for biblical Christianity in the African context. Kato's theology focused on an apologetic defense of the historic Christian faith. He defended the integrity and authority of the Bible, the unique person of Jesus Christ; incarnate, crucified, resurrected, ascended and soon returning Son of God and as the only way for salvation. He defended the distinctiveness of the Christian faith from African traditional religions and the clarity of the gospel message in contextualisation.

6.4. Contribution of Study

This study is essentially a biography of an exceptional pioneering church leader whose context, life experiences and challenges typify many people in Africa. Therefore, in exploring Kato's life and theological legacy, the research findings make an important

contribution to African theological discourse and missionary activities in global Christianity. This is particularly important, given the status of the African church, evangelical and Pentecostal in persuasion, as the majority church in global Christianity.

The study makes a contribution to scholarship and the mission of the church in the following main ways: 1). It paints a portrait of Byang Kato, an important theological leader, to be visible and accessible, as a mirror for reflective practice, especially in the African context. Kato's journey in overcoming prevalent traditional religious worldviews is a useful example for appropriating the transformative power of the gospel of Jesus Christ. 2). A corpus of theological material, constituting the core of Kato's theological constructs as a legacy, has been identified. The nature of this theological corpus is consensual and mainstream evangelical beliefs and therefore, relevant to the Church as whole, not only in Africa but the global Church. 3). Given Byang Kato's stature, this may not be the last word on exploring Kato, and therefore, the study provides a substantial bibliography for future studies on Kato. 4). Kato's theological corpus highlighted in this study helped to define and describe evangelicalism in Africa.

As alluded to in the third contribution above, the study did not cover all there was to Kato's life and ministry. His life and as a student in UK and USA; a total of seven years in his thirty-nine-year life span, was an important period of his life, that needs to be explored. Kato's polemics were mostly about the relationship between the Christian faith and African traditional religions. However, Christianity contended mostly with Islam, especially in Nigeria and particularly in the North, where Kato comes from. Not much is known about what Kato thought about this important relationship and cause of conflict in Nigeria, even today.

6.5. Recommendations

Kato's life offers the church important lessons to explore in disciple-making and contending for the faith in a pluralistic and multi-religious twenty-first century society, especially in the African context. The pragmatic and innovative approach for doing theology (popular theology) and training grassroots pastors and laity, to read, understand, interpret Scripture and apply in their own context, in response to real problems on a day-to-day basis is commendable. This kind of approach to doing

theology may not necessarily be provided by theological schools or seminaries, which traditionally are residential programmes. Therefore, various other means to increase access to theological training, through open and distance learning, using internet technology or online learning, informal and innovative approaches need to be identified to scale the training of the large percentage of untrained and unqualified pastors. More importantly, the biblical message is lived for others to learn from the way leaders live their lives. The goal of disciple-making is to embrace the biblical worldview, demonstrable in both what Christians say and do.

Kato's theological corpus constructed in this study could be a useful material for training church leaders and disciple-making in the church. These provide some understanding and growth in the Christian faith, if African Christians should avoid syncretistic universalism and make the gospel transform society for the better. Kato's book, *Theological Pitfalls in Africa*, which is talked about a lot by the theological community, is out of print. The AEA needs to undertake reprinting of this work to make it accessible to theological bookshops, universities and evangelical scholars (Bowers1989:14).

The seeming controversy Kato sparked in theological circles in Africa have not gone away. Even those theologians of the evangelical persuasion, who hail Kato for the defense of a biblical worldview, tend to hold a middle position. Many do not seem to have a clear stance on the uniqueness of biblical claims and are straddling the opposing positions, between leaning to ideas espoused in ATR and the uniqueness of the biblical message, as the supreme and all sufficient premise for authentic biblical Christianity Kato contended for. The proposal here is for an orderly consenting process, like the ancient Church Councils whose deliberations have bequeathed to the Church classical doctrines and creeds that the Church has held to, down history and across the various church traditions. A good example of this in modern times is the Lausanne Covenant and Cape Town Commitments, which have become creedal among evangelicals globally. "The covenant proclaims the substance of the Christian faith as historically declared in the creeds and adds a clear missional dimension to our faith" (LOP No.57, 2005:2). The tendency to leave contemporary issues that border on doctrine, to subjectivity, for example, sexuality and same sex marriage, is a deviation from historicity of the faith. Perhaps the evangelical church could have a way

of building consensus on essential doctrinal divisive subjects. The AEA as the premier representative body for evangelicals in Africa could provide a forum for consensus building.

It is intuitive to realise how early African Councils provided a practical model for discussion and conflict resolution and theological discernment (Oden 2007:48-55). This practice could be like contemporary practice in some African cultures, like the *Indaba* in South Africa, *Barray* in Sierra Leone, West Africa, *Baraza* in East Africa etc. This practice requires stakeholders in the community coming together, to debate or discuss matters in the open and come to definitive conclusions that are binding on all. One wonders how the church lost this practice. This is perhaps a wake-up call for African Theologians in their quest for African authenticity. If we should look to ancestors and traditional cultures for authenticity, why not turn to the early Church in North Africa, instead of the non-Christian traditional religions? The North African Church fathers made important contribution in shaping classical doctrines that informed Western and global Christianity. According to Oden (2007:13): "African Christianity has arisen out of distinctly African experience on African soil. Those who have most suffered for its genuine depth and continuity have been born as Africans and have struggled in African cultures nurtured within untold generations of indigenous African experience. They are not from outside". This is contrary to the myth of Christianity being a 'Whiteman's' religion. African theology, though contextual needs to be consistent with the Bible and mainstream Christian theologies. This can only happen if the Bible and the Mission of God, in which believers in Christ are privileged participant, is at the heart of our reflection.

For future research, the outstanding issues not covered in this study, as mentioned above, could be possible researchable issues. Assessment of the impact of the theological institutions Kato helped to establish could be useful information for the church in Africa. Kato himself made a ten-point proposal to advance biblical Christianity in Africa, before is untimely demise. These are captured in this study and worthy of scholarly assessment. Generally, Kato's success in advancing evangelical theological education and impact on the church in Africa tend to be anecdotal and needs more empirical assessment.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Background: Three of the targeted participants had been intimated verbally about the research when we met in different forums, as early as 2015 and 2016 respectively. These had informally given me their enthusiastic consent to participate in the research. This was about the time I had just enrolled at SATS. Ahead of planned travels to the various countries, that is Nigeria and USA, I contacted the respondents by email (see APPENDIX B), of my travel dates and requested for an appointment for hosting me to agree on a suitable time to meet and conduct the interview. Before the meeting each of them, I had shared with them a summary of the objective of the research and description; outlining the research objectives and research questions. Similarly, the other participants were met in face to face meetings and/or communicated by email. They were all interested and committed to provide as much information as they could.

Interview Prompts

The interview was informal and semi-structured approach. It was conversational and exploratory. Before I met the respondents, I had prepared some question prompts to help guide our discussion, and ensure the participants responded adequately or appropriately to the research questions. The interview prompts are set out below:

1. Kato's life history

- i. How long did you know Kato and what can you say about him?
- ii. What can you say about his religious or Christian life? How does he compare with a typical African church leader?
- iii. What kind of influences and impact did he make on people and communities he was associated with?

2. Kato's Theological Legacy

2.1 *Hermeneutics*

- i. What did you like or not like about Kato's preaching?
- ii. What and how can the current church learn from Kato?

2.2 *Christian Identity*

- i. How did Kato relate to tradition and culture?
- ii. How did the people in his community perceive him?

2.3 Theological Education

- i. What was Kato's contribution to theological education in sub-Saharan Africa?
- ii. Why and how is this important to the church?

3 Follow- Up Questions

The questions prompts were lead question and depending on the response of the interviewee, further questions were asked to explore the previous answer or redirect and focus on the prepared questions. This was to ensure that the participants actually respond to the research questions, in addition to any other relevant information. The length of time spent for the interview sessions depended on the particular interview and how well they knew Kato. I spent a couple of nights in the Kato family homes in Kwoi and Kaduna, half day sessions with each of the two scholars Bowers and Turaki in Charlotte and Jos, respectively.

4 Capturing and Recording Information

I recorded notes of the interview sessions by hand writing, I also received written materials by email, CD, WhatsApp messages from respondents in addition to the face to face interviews. The information collated complemented the literary works by Kato himself and others which constituted data for the research and respond to the research questions.

Appendix B: Communication for Participants' Consent

Aiah,

It was a pleasure renewing personal contact between us at the ACTEA meetings last week.

At the same time, I was distressed to learn that our communication link had failed, just at the point when you had found that you were available to visit Charlotte. So I made a note to myself to double-check with you whether between us we are using the appropriate email addresses for making contact. And I am now attempting to address that item by means of this email.

This email address from which I am writing to you here is my regular personal email address, wpaulbowers@bellsouth.net. This is the one that I commonly use both for personal and for business interaction. Please let me know if this is the one in your system, or if some other email address has crept in by mistake. At the same time, by means of your response you can confirm if the one I am using for you is the sure one to use, namely: aiah@aeafrica.org

Also let me add that if ever you are in the States again, and available to visit Charlotte, please do let me know. I am now 'retired' within the SIM system, and therefore have no formal role assignment from them. But I can easily coordinate to find out whether Joshua Bogunjoko is scheduled to be in Charlotte at the time you are available, and if a meeting would therefore be feasible. I am sure that he would be delighted to meet you here if that should become possible.

One more thing that I did not remember to ask you in Addis. Thank you for letting me know about your hope to do some research and writing on Byang Kato. May the Lord prosper your hand in that. I had meant to ask if you by chance do have the CD of all Kato's published writings, the one that was put together by George Foxall in Canada, and that was circulated to many persons in Africa a few years ago? I am supposing that you do have that CD. But if not, then to mention that Foxall sent the remaining few copies of the CD to me for storage, since he has now moved into a care centre. So, if you should happen to need a copy, I can readily supply it to you.

Again, may I say that it was great to be together at the Addis meetings. I am so pleased to see the significant progress in the reactivation of AEA being accomplished under your leadership, and not least now in the exciting plans for the new headquarters building in Nairobi. Please keep in place a small memory that I was the first one to hand you a \$1 donation in Addis for that project (or at least I think I was 🙏).

Yours in common service,

Paul

Greetings, Aiah.

I shall look forward to some good conversations again in Antalya, as we had in Addis.

My major article on Kato is based on special lectures I gave in Jos, Nigeria, in 2008. It is available on the web at:

<http://www.theoledafrica.org/OtherMaterials/Files/KatoLecturesPart1.pdf> (This was also published in the *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology*.)

Many years before, in 1980, I also wrote a major review of the book for which Kato is best known, *Pitfalls*. You will find that review at:

<http://www.theoledafrica.org/OtherMaterials/Files/KatoLegacyThemelios1980.pdf>

Among other articles about Kato worth consulting would be the one in the *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*, which one can also find on the web at:

http://www.dacb.org/stories/nigeria/kato_legacy.html

About Dr Bulus Galadima's project, maybe let's talk further while at the ICETE event.

See you soon.

Paul

From: [Aiah Foday-Khabenje](#)

Sent: Thursday, February 1, 2018 07:54

To: [Paul Bowers](#)

Dear Paul,

Greetings from Nairobi. Pray this email finds you well. A quick note to let you know that I will be in the US for WEA meetings primarily, March 2-17. WEA meetings are in Fort Lauderdale in FL till March 8. I will then be visiting with Ted and Martha Barnett in Atlanta March 9-12. My next stop is in Raleigh, NC.

Ted has graciously offered to drive me to Charlotte en route to Raleigh and would like to seize this opportunity to visit with you, Paul and also the SIM International Director. I intimated you about my quest to do some Kato study, in particular, doing: "An Analytical Biography of Byang Kato (1936-1975): His Theological Legacy and Contribution to Biblical Hermeneutics, Evangelical Theological Education and African Christian Identity"

I would be interviewing a few people who knew Kato well, including your good self. Accordingly, I would be grateful if you would be kind enough to participate in this research. If this is agreeable, I wish to do this during my visit with you.

I will proceed to Raleigh from Charlotte.

In anticipation of your kind approval, I wish to express my profound appreciation.

Every blessing,

Aiah

On Sun, May 20, 2018 at 19:36, Aiah Foday-Khabenje

<aiah@aeafrica.org> wrote:

Dear Deborah,

Greetings from Nairobi. I trust this email finds you well. You would recall, when we met in November 2016, I intimated you about the research I am doing, working on an analytical biography of the life of the late man and his contribution to theological education in Africa. This involves reviewing his literary work and other writings about him and his work. Also, I am interviewing people who knew him well to strengthen the research about his life.

No doubt, his immediate family members like your Mum and yourself are included in the purposive group of people I am interviewing. I really wish to make time to come over to Nigeria sometime this year. I am also exploring the possibility of talking to you on Skype or zoom. Please let me know about the possibility of connecting on Skype and the earliest convenient time to do so.

Warm regards,

Aiah

On Mon, Feb 4, 2019 at 13:23, Aiah

<aiah@aeafrica.org> wrote:

Dear Deborah,

Greetings. Trust you and Mum keep well. I just wanted you to know that I have a meeting in Abuja 25-27 March. Kaduna may be far from Abuja in Nigerian terms but certainly going to be closer to Kaduna in Abuja than when in Nairobi. I wonder if there is a window of opportunity for me to meet with Mum and yourself this time. Depending on our schedules, I am exploring the possibility of me coming a few days earlier, before the meeting.

After the meeting, I would need to return to Nairobi as soon as possible to continue final preparation for the official opening of the AEA building on 12 April 2019. What do you think? Is it easy to travel from Abuja and fly to Kaduna? Will Mum be there? Can I fly in and return same day?

I would like to hear from you before I do my ticket as soon as possible.

Kind regards,

Aiah

Perfect. I will save the dates and make necessary arrangements. Go ahead and book your flight. Waiting for the itinerary.

From:deborahbature
Reply-To: "debykato@yahoo.com"
Date:Tuesday,5February 2019 at 22:19
To: Aiah Foday-Khabenje
Subject: Re: Kato Study

Sir,

I am so glad to hear that you are finally coming. Mama and myself will be in Kwoi around that period, by His grace. I would therefore suggest you come into Abuja earlier and one of my sons can pick you up and bring you to Kwoi which is only 1to2 hours drive. You can spend a day or two to see his birth place, schools he attended, church, grave and other relevant sites. We can arrange for you to meet people that may have some thing to say about him.

I have also gone through the question you sent earlier and working on them.

Sir, as soon as you book your flight, kindly send me your itinerary to guide me on my preparation for your coming. God bless.

Ron:

Thank you for your note and for helping Aiah with this dissertation. As I understand part of the uniqueness of African theology is that it doesn't bifurcate the relational from the intellectual as much as what most of us grew up with in our western theological tones. Aiah is hoping that his dissertation not only reflects Byang Kato's intellectual contribution, but also reflects his character and personality. That is why he was hoping to talk with people who studied with him. Including Elliott Johnson is a great idea. Thank you for contacting him. He is a "hero of the faith" to many of the people involved in our school since he was a founder of the ATS in Manila who we partner with.

I gain much credibility in Latin America and The Philippines when I tell people I studied under Ron Blue and Elliott Johnson (as long as I don't tell them my grades in your classes).

Thank you for your contribution to me and for helping Aiah in his research.

BRAD SMITH - President, Bakke Graduate University

From: Ron Blue <jronblue@yahoo.com>
Sent: Friday, May 8, 2020 12:04 PM
To: brad.smith@bgu.edu
Cc: Aiah <aiah@aeafrika.org>; Aiah Foday-Khabenje <fodaykhabenje@gmail.com>; Darrell Bock <DBock@dts.edu>; Elliott and Inge Johnson <ejohnson@dts.edu>
Subject: Re: Please help with a strategic dissertation

Brad,

I would love to hear more about this dissertation project. I regret that I cannot provide more information on Byang Kato's years of study at DTS. I will check with Dr. Elliott Johnson who may have had him in class. Elliott and I are both retired but remain active in Central Bible Church here in Arlington, TX. Darrell may know of other professors who were teaching in the early 1970's. These years seem recent to me. Yesterday, I received a list of my shipmates and fellow officers from my years in the United States Navy, 1957-60. It hardly seems possible that 60 years have zipped by since then!

I thank God for you and all those working with you at BGU,

Ron

On May 6, 2020, at 9:42 AM, brad.smith@bgu.edu wrote:

Can you take about 5 minutes to read this email and perhaps forward it to a Dallas Seminary professor or alumni who was active at DTS in the early 1970s? Or can you help identify an administrative resource in the registrar's office who can help this important research project as detailed below?

Aiah Foday-Khabenje who is the Regional General Secretary of the African Evangelical Alliance, is doing his doctoral dissertation with SATS (South African Theological Seminary) on the topic of Dallas Theological Seminary graduate **Byang Kato**. Aiah has already interviewed key leaders in Africa who knew Kato personally, including his wife before she died. His dissertation is exploring not only Kato's theological work, but also his personal life, relationships and calling.

Byang Kato's DTS dissertation was widely published in Africa under the title Theological Pitfalls in Africa. His work was influential in starting two major schools in Africa. His influence on African theologies are very strong and Aiah's dissertation will reflect well on DTS demonstrating the influence of DTS in the early 1970's on emerging African theologies which are now bearing the fruit of Kato's earlier work.

Aiah needs someone he can talk with to over Zoom or in written correspondence who can help him research Kato's time at DTS. Specifically he would like to talk to someone who knew Kato when he studied at DTS in the early 1970s. He would like to hear how Kato interacted with his fellow students, faculty or others. Kato was known for being involved in child evangelism while in the US. Aiah is looking for something unknown to date about his leadership, relationships, and scholarship.

In addition to a relational connection, Aiah also needs some administrative help with Kato's academic records and confirmation of his systematic theology award from DTS in 1974? Aiah believes Kato is the first African to attend DTS and receive a doctorate degree from DTS. Confirming that would be helpful to his research.

Here are some links to learn more about Byang Kato and Aiah Foday-Khabenje.

Aiah is the author of the 2016 book: [Competencies for Leading in Diversity: A Case Study of National Evangelical Associations in Africa](#).

<https://voice.dts.edu/review/clouds-of-witnesses-noll-nystrom/>

<https://www.christianitytoday.com/history/2009/june/let-african-christians-be-christian-africans.html>

<https://www.amazon.com/Competencies-Leading-Diversity-Evangelical-Associations/dp/1783682108>

My dear Brother,

Attached are three documents.

1. The documentation pages and table of contents of “Let the Earth Hear His Voice”, from the massive Lausanne 1974 book—printed in India paper because it was so long.
 2. Dr. Kato’s report on Africa, Evangelism Opportunities and Obstacles
 3. Dr. Kato’s paper on The Gospel, Cultural Context and Religious Syncretism
- Blessings upon your research and writing.

Bill

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