African Theology for the African Church: The Need for an Evangelical Approach

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Abstract

As the African Church increasingly disconnects from Western theological influences to take responsibility for developing her own theology, clear questions arise for evangelical theologians in Africa: How might evangelical Africans do theology in a theological setting that is increasingly plagued by theological liberalism and religious syncretism? What is the most Bible-centered and God-honoring way of doing theology in Africa? This article responds to such questions by arguing for an evangelical approach to doing theology in Africa. To this end, four main issues are addressed. First, I state the meaning of African theology as explained by some African theologians. Second, I summarize the history of Christian theology in Africa, leading to the arguments put forward by some notable African theologians in defense of an African theology. Third, I show how dangerous it is to approach African theology from a liberal or syncretic perspective. Finally, I make a case for an evangelical approach to doing theology in Africa by exploring the origin of African evangelical theology, and propose a good starting point for African scholars to consider towards developing a robust African evangelical theology for the African Church.

1. Introduction

It is good that the African Church is increasingly disconnecting from Western theological influences to take responsibility for developing her own contextual theology. However, this signals an imperative need for theological research and writing in the evangelical tradition that would help steer the course of theological development in Africa in the right direction. By right direction I mean emerging African scholars should pursue the path towards becoming evangelical theologians rather than liberal theologians. I frown at the pace at which liberal theology is gaining grounds in Africa because pioneer liberal theologians like

https://www.sats.ac.za/conspectus/
This article: https://www.sats.ac.za/conspectus/african-theology-evangelical-approach
https://doi.org/10.54725/conspectus.2022.2.3

Conspectus

Keywords
African Evangelical Theology, African Theology, soteriology, African Church

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SATS
Bible-based. Christ-centred. Spirit-led.

Schleiermacher[2] approached theology as a discipline that presupposes Christian experience as interpreted by the Christian community to be the primary source for determining the knowledge of God. They did not see theology from one defined perspective. To them, "Religion is for you at one time a way of thinking, a faith, a peculiar way of contemplating the world, and of combining what meets us in the world: at another, it is a way of acting, a peculiar desire and love, a special kind of conduct and character" (Schleiermacher 1893, 27). As Smith (2008, 184) also noted, liberal theologians do not begin their theology with the assumption that God has spoken. Rather they resort to speculation, which makes their approach simply a subjective and conceptual comparison of what scholars in the field have been or are saying on a given subject.

Given the need for a robust African theology that will be essential for African Christianity, I make a strong case for emerging African theologians to pursue a path towards becoming evangelical theologians for the evangelical Church. This is because, evangelical theology is a theological system that focuses primarily and decisively on the Bible. Evangelical theologians approach the study of theology with the conviction that the Bible is God's full and final revelation. Barth (1963, 5) defined the evangelical tradition as one that draws on the New Testament writings and the Reformation tradition of the sixteenth century. I could not agree more with Muli (1997, 32) that an evangelical approach to doing theology in Africa is most relevant for the African Church because it "raises important issues with which evangelicals have to wrestle to make Christian theology authentically biblical and authentically African."

1 Schleiermacher is often thought of as the father of Liberal Theology. See McDermott (2010, 134).

Four main issues are addressed in this paper. First, I state the meaning of African theology as explained by some notable African theologians. Second, I summarize the history of Christian theology in Africa leading to the case for an African theology by some notable African theologians. Third, I show how dangerous it is to approach African theology from a liberal or syncretic perspective. Finally, I make a case for an evangelical approach to doing theology in Africa by exploring the history of the concept of African evangelical theology, and propose a good starting point for African scholars to consider towards developing a robust African theology for the African Church.

2. The Meaning of African Theology

Even though the term "African Theology" is a foundational concept in many theological circles in Africa today, the question still remains: What should be its appropriate and acceptable definition? It is defined differently depending on who is defining it and the perspective from which they are expressing it. Ukpong (1984, 4) explained the divergent views on African theology as follows: "African theology is seen as liberation theology, for others, it is black theology and for others still, it is simply a theology for Africans." Turner (1971, 64–65) has also explained what "African" and "theology" mean in the context of the term African theology. He explained that "African" in this context refers to the attempt to find points of similarity between Christian notions and those drawn from the traditional religions of Africa. "Theology" according to Turner refers to the hope that the systematic theology expressed in the language and concepts of traditional religion and culture, may one day be written.

In view of this understanding, Mbiti (1979, 83) once asserted, "I will use the term 'African Theology' in this paper, without apology or embarrassment, to mean theological reflection and expression by African

Christians." Kurewa (1975, 36) explains African theology as "the study that seeks to reflect upon and express the Christian faith in African thought-forms and idiom as it is experienced in African Christian communities, and always in dialogue with the rest of Christendom."

Despite the different perspectives on how the concept of African theology has been explained by different scholars, one thing is clear: African theology is simply Christian theology expressed from the perspective of African culture and context. But how did the concept of "African theology" originate? And how did it come to be a foundational expression in theological circles all over Africa?

3. The Advent of African Theology in the Mid-twentieth Century

At the beginning of the nineteenth century there were only a few pockets of Christianity in Africa. The largest Christian community at the time was the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in Ethiopia which had survived the advent of Islam, unlike their other ancient Christian neighbors in Sudan (ancient Nubia) and parts of Eritrea and Somalia. There were Coptic Christians in Egypt, small groups of Christians in the Cape region of South Africa where Dutch settlers had settled in 1652, and some small Christian communities in Angola and Mozambique, which were Portuguese colonies. Over the next two centuries, Christianity rapidly expanded in most parts of Africa.

Many factors contributed to this astonishing growth, but the most important historical factor was the colonization of Africa by European powers. This to some extent eased missionary work on the continent as many Christian missions were established by different Roman Catholic and Protestant orders. Their primary goal was to convert Africans to Christianity and establish a ministry base in the continent based on their Western theological convictions. In all of this, Africa was simply at the receiving end, consuming all the theological convictions and ministry praxis from the West. The missionary system did very little to encourage Africans to think objectively towards developing their own theological convictions.

By the mid-twentieth century, the African Church began experiencing a great revival and awakening. Many Africans began receiving sound theological education which enabled them to think critically on important issues of faith and practice. Because of this enlightenment, African scholars began to protest a missionary interpretation of religion and culture in Africa. They began reading Scripture using an African cultural lens and advocated for an Afri-centric Christian thought.

Kinoti (1997, 75), for instance, observed that Christianity in Africa is a white man's religion (evidenced by the denominations we belong to, the hymns we sing, the liturgies we use, and so on), and challenged African Christians to begin to think and do things for themselves and not to allow Western theologies to govern their beliefs and conduct.

Idowu (1995, 31) criticized the missionary efforts to introduce the God of the Bible to Africans by arguing that God belongs to the whole earth, and he alone reveals himself to all the peoples in the world "whom they have apprehended according to the degree of their spiritual perception… as those who have had practical experience with him." Idowu (1965, 19) further argued that God,

> created man in his own image—a rational being, intelligent will, someone addressable and therefore responsible (response-able): someone to whom God could communicate his revelation…and with whose spirit the Divine Spirit could have immediate communication. We can deny this primary revelation only when we rob the created order of its revelatory quality and relieve man of his inherent capability to receive divine communication.

Mbiti (1991, 63) rejects the Western view that considers African religion as polytheistic and therefore not authentic because of its many divinities and demigods. He believes that African religion is as authentic as the Western religion because African traditional religion is equally monotheistic. To him, the divinities and demigods in African religion are simply personifications of how God manifests in the affairs of men. He argues,

> the life of this invisible world is in some way higher than that of man, but God is higher still. In order to reach God directly, it may be useful to approach him by first approaching those who are lower than he is but higher than the ordinary person. (Mbiti 1991, 63)

Recent trends in publications by African scholars clearly indicate that Africans are serious about doing theology in a way that is relevant to the African context.[2] Though a commendable effort, the push for an African theology spells danger especially for conservative evangelicals in Africa. It is important to be aware of the potential dangers the process entails so as to avoid them.

4. The Dangers Involved in Advocating for an African Theology

As mentioned before, the move towards advocating for a Christian theology within an African cultural context is good because it is a proactive effort towards contextualization for the African people. However, the danger lies in the steps involved in developing this African theology. It seems to me that in a bid to argue for an African theology in Africa, many theologians Africanize Christian theology rather than contextualize it in the African context. By attempting to Africanize Christian theology, these theologians see the African culture/experience and not the Bible as the starting point for African theology and this undermines the biblical basis of African theology.

For instance, in developing Christology for African theology, some African theologians portray Jesus as an ancestor. An ancestor in typical African thought is an exemplary but deceased personality who—through mandatory communication from the living by means of sacrifices, rituals, libations, and so on—acts as an intermediary or a mediator between the living family or clan and God. These theologians reject the doctrine about Jesus as taught by the missionaries and argue that even though better than all other ancestors, Jesus is basically the same as the ancestors and fulfils the same role.

Orobator (2009, 68) is an example of an African theologian who argues in this regard. His Christology does not start with Christ as articulated in the gospels, but with the ancestors. His argument for this is that the gospel accounts of Jesus are built on faith that cannot be justified by facts. Orobator agrees with Bujo and Nyamiti that Jesus "completes and perfects all there is in the African perception of ancestor" (16). Bujo (1992, 83) Africanized rather than contextualized biblical theology in paraphrasing Hebrews 1:1–2: "For after God had spoken to us at various times and in various places, including our ancestors, in these last days he speaks to us through his Son, whom he has established as unique Ancestor… from whom all life flows for His descendants." John Parrat (1995, 47) acknowledged that "the fundamental tools of the Bible and Christian doctrine should…provide the basis of African Theology." However, he goes on to weaken the evangelical strength of his position by arguing that the

2 For example, see: Kwame Bediako (1992); John Parratt (1995); Michael Battle (1997); Benezet Bujo (1992); Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator (2009). Recent evangelical voices include Samuel W. Kunhiyop (2012); Matthew Michael (2013); James Nkansah-Obrempong (2013).

Bible and Christian doctrines should not be "a straightjacket by which Africans are constrained, and should not stifle innovation."

This approach in developing a theology in the African cultural context does not do proper justice to Scripture. It fails to search Scripture to understand Christ but rather portrays him as a creation from the missionaries' culture who must be replaced by a Jesus of African culture before his message can be accepted. I agree with Kato that African theology as understood in this light is simply religious syncretism. He argues,

> Christianity has gone full circle. Christianity in Africa, or in the Third World for that matter, has come to the stage it was in the second century. Just as syncretism plagued the church in the days of apologists, so it challenges the historic faith in Africa today. (Kato 1975, 1218)

However, does this mean that the move towards interpreting the Scriptures from the perspective of an African cultural context is unbiblical? By no means! In his book on what makes a living church, John Stott underscores the need for churches to understand their own theology. According to Stott (2007, 53), the reason many churches are theologically sick is because "they have a false self-image. They have grasped neither who they are (their identity) nor what they are called to be (their vocation)." Abate (1989, 27–38) also explains that the Church only remains relevant in a suffering world not when it tries to elevate culture above the Bible but when it seeks to bring to light the "God who suffered for all so that humanity may not live in ignorance….[It should] proclaim the victory won by Jesus over suffering and pain…thus the church becomes in Christ the hope of the world, the instrument for the redemption of humanity."

Given that God is supra-cultural, it cannot be a theological fallacy if Africans interpret Scripture from the perspective of our cultural context. However, for true justice to be done in this regard, African scholars must not bring their indigenous cultures into the biblical text. Instead, the biblical text should shape the indigenous cultures of the African people. Mbewe (2020, 10) articulates this very well when stating the purpose for his book written for pastors and ministry leaders in Africa. He writes,

> [This book] tries to apply biblical principles to what is obtaining in Africa so that we are drawn back to belief and practice that follow God's design for the church. I am not trying to make the bible more African; I am trying to get the church in Africa more biblical. (Mbewe 2020, 10)

Also, to make a strong case for a biblical worldview in Africa, Mburu (2019, 23) writes,

> In order to have a truly biblical worldview, believers need to ground their entire orientation to life in a cohesive biblical base, based on biblical assumptions. Their worldview must be informed and shaped by biblical beliefs and values. In addition, it must be consistent with the entire story of the bible from Genesis to Revelation, that is, with the biblical metanarrative.

In this article, I join these notable evangelical African scholars to argue for an evangelical approach to doing theology in Africa.

5. An Evangelical Approach to Doing Theology in Africa

As Tiénou (1977, 3) correctly noted, Kato played a key role in promoting the idea of an evangelical African theology. In his presentation on "Theological Trends in Africa Today," Kato shared at the 1973 Christian Education Survey Conference in Kenya that the spiritual battle for the soul of Africa would largely be fought on theological grounds (Kato 1985, 11). Kato understood the need for a robust theology that will empower the African Church to stand victorious against the threat of theological liberalism and religious syncretism. He did a lot to set the stage for sound theological work among evangelicals in Africa before his death in 1975 at the age of 39. Building on the foundations set by Kato for a robust African evangelical theology, there is need for Africans to think critically about a good starting point for doing theology in Africa in the evangelical tradition.

While there may be other matters to consider, I argue that doing theology in Africa from an evangelical tradition should begin with soteriology. From there other relevant doctrines in African theology could be developed. This is because soteriology is the end and purpose for which all other doctrines are derived. It covers relevant topics on biblical issues such as regeneration, conversion, justification, adoption, sanctification, and glorification. Ryrie (1987, 277) underlines the fundamental role that soteriology plays in theology:

> Soteriology, the doctrine of salvation, must be the grandest theme in the Scriptures. It embraces all of time as well as eternity past and future. It relates in one way or another to all of mankind, without exception. It even has ramifications in the sphere of the angels. It is the theme of both the Old and New Testaments. It is personal, national, and cosmic. And it centers on the greatest Person, our Lord Jesus Christ.

It seems to me that a biblically accurate view on the meaning and method of salvation is closely correlated with understanding other theological views such as the nature and function of God as well as human nature. Hence, through a carefully developed soteriology, African theologians in the evangelical tradition should be able to correctly develop a Bible-centered Christology, eschatology, bibliology, anthropology, and theology proper.

6. Soteriology for African Evangelical Theology

Adeyemo (1983, 6) is right to allude that the concept of salvation in African Traditional Religious thought is "ritualistic[3] and I believe"[4] that this has a negative impact on the move towards developing a Bible-centered soteriology in African theology, because, as Maganda (2002, 148) noted, "Some African Christians not only have resorted to the practice and beliefs of the [African] Traditional Religion, but they have also tried to equate the mediatorial work of Jesus Christ with that of the ancestors in Africa Traditional Religion." Hence, for African theology to be Bible-centered, a Bible-centered soteriology could be a very good starting point, but this is possible only through proper hermeneutics. In his article "The salvation Debate and the Evangelical Response," Adeyemo (1983, 19) again advised that "to understand the Word and communicate it with relevance, evangelicals particularly of the Third World, must evolve meaningful and effective hermeneutics." This "effective hermeneutics," I argue, must focus primarily on the Pauline epistles as the starting point, as they are central to understanding soteriology. This explains why the works of many

3 What Adeyemo seeks to communicate with the use of the term "ritualistic" is the complex preparation often required in the quest for salvation in African Traditional Religions.
4 By this, Adeyemo means the complex process of salvation in African Traditional Religion is not necessarily designed to be attractive but simply practical or useful to its adherents.

soteriologists are heavily indebted to the Pauline corpus. Many scholars acknowledge that the book of Romans, in particular, is a primary "work of theological teachings that covers many themes and key doctrines of the Bible" (MacArthur 2003, 265). Soteriology is one of the major doctrines covered in the book of Romans, and many mainline Protestant theologians like Luther and Calvin built their soteriologies mainly from the epistle of Romans. While paying close attention to Romans in particular and the Pauline corpus in general, I have considered Scripture in general in developing and articulating some theological principles that I believe are central to understanding soteriology, which may be helpful for the development of African theology in the evangelical tradition.

6.1 A Biblical understanding of God's glory

A biblical understanding of God's glory (especially on matters pertaining to salvation) is an essential theological principle that is central to understanding and developing a soteriology for African theology that will identify with the Bible. Here is what Africans need to understand about this theological principle: God in his sovereignty shows mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens the heart of whomever he wills. His purpose for "showing mercy on whom he desires" and "hardening whom he desires" is "to make known the riches of his glory" (Rom 9:13). This implies that, as far as predestination is concerned, God's glory is the motivation. The very fact that the text rebukes a person for answering back to God on this matter implies that it is misleading to look at predestination from a human point of view.

From the creation in Genesis, God's glory has always been a key motive for his actions (see Gen 1:26–28). The fact that God created humans in his own image indicates that he created them for his glory because, if they reflect God's image, it also means they represent his greatness, his excellence, his beauty, and so on. After Adam and Eve were created, God wished to see more people in his image. That is why he commanded them to be fruitful and to multiply and fill the earth. Isaiah 43:7 clearly states why God created his people—"*whom I have created for my glory*, whom I have formed, even whom I have made" (emphasis added).

This means that humanity is created for God's glory and whatever he chooses to do with us, he chooses to do so that he will be glorified. This explains why God admonishes those who exalt themselves. Even God's act of loving humanity serves his glory as it reveals his divine attributes. God loves us for his sake and for his glory, not ours. This explains why humanity can have full confidence in God's love; it exceeds affection for us. Rather, it is a love that is committed to his glory.

God's covenantal love towards Israel illustrates this point. According to 2 Sam 7:23, God's redemption of his people would cause him to make a name for himself. This did not guarantee prosperity for the nation of Israel. Several times they were troubled or oppressed by foreign nations, and even lived as slaves in Egypt. However, God makes a name for himself by rescuing them out of slavery with his powerful hand (Isa 63:12–14). God's dealings with Israel were motivated by his glory.

The death of Christ is another good example. In Jesus's priestly prayer, he asserts, "I glorified Thee on earth, having accomplished the work which Thou hast given me to do" (John 17:4 KJV). Again, in John 12:27–28, as his death was drawing closer and his heart was filled with sorrow, Jesus prayed saying

> "Now my soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour. Father, glorify Thy name." Then a voice came from heaven saying: "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again."

As God's glory was the motivation for Jesus going to the cross, so is humanity's salvation and the forgiveness of sin motivated by the glory of God.[5] If God's glory is the fundamental motive for every divine action, then African churches should understand God's dealings with humankind on matters of salvation from this point of view. When we situate predestination in the realm of God's glory, we can share in Paul's exclamation: "Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!" (Rom 11:33).

6.2 A Biblical understanding of God's sovereignty

The second theological principle that is central to understanding and developing a soteriology for African theology that will identify with the Bible is a biblical understanding of God's sovereignty. Here is what Africans need to understand about this theological principle: God is not just sovereign over all things, he also has the right to rule over us according to his good pleasure. Paul's reference to the potter and the clay in Rom 9:21 justifies this claim: "Does not the potter have a right over a clay object, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use?" During the Reformation, people embraced the fact that God was sovereign, and in his sovereignty, he has offered salvation by grace through faith not based on any merits in humanity but solely for his good pleasure. In contrast, our generation often requires God to justify why he acts the way he does.

According to Rom 9:21, God's sovereignty implies the right to do with creation and humanity as he pleases since they were created for him. Thus, Paul rebukes his readers in Rom 9:20: "But who are you, o man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, 'Why have you made me like this?'" While robust interaction with God is not sinful, God has the right to rule over humanity without being interrogated over it.

It should be a sobering thought for Africans to come to terms with the fact that the Lord has the right to wound or heal us, and to give to us or take away from us. Sadly, many African churches speak only of his love and care for us. While these must be affirmed, our understanding must expand to the realization that we should both befriend a loving savior and revere a supreme king. This line of thinking will influence the development of a good African evangelical theology for the African Church.

6.3 A Biblical understanding of election and reprobation

The third and last theological principle I wish to share in this article that is central to understanding and developing a soteriology for African evangelical theology is a biblical understanding of election and reprobation, otherwise known as predestination. Here is what Africans need to understand about this theological principle: Given that "all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23) and since "the wages of sin is death" (Rom 6:23), God, being just and committed to fulfilling his word has ensured that all sinners must pay the price for their sins by facing his wrath which he has revealed against all ungodliness (reprobation). However, as explained in Rom 5:8, God has graciously demonstrated his saving love (through the atoning work of Christ) to some guilty sinners, thereby saving them from his wrath. This is known in biblical and theological terms as election.

In Africa, some people struggle to grasp the theological concept of election. As Michael (2013, 174) explains, the term "election" basically has one meaning for most Africans and that is the act of voting a person to political office, and this meaning usually carries the dirty package of African

5 See 1 John 2:12; Jer 14:7; Ps 25:11; 79:9.

political connotations. Since African elections are not always fair and transparent, Michael explains that it is natural that this similarly transfers to the concept of election in theological discussion. The result is that most Africans consider the term "election" to be inappropriate to describe the divine choice of believers before the foundation of the earth. However, to understand the biblical concept of election, Africans must not view it from our African experience but from God's perspective as explained in Scripture. As the first man, Adam represented humanity: made in God's image and sinless before the fall. Likewise, Adam's sin has implications for humanity as a whole. The fate that awaited the entire human race was death. In response to this, God's redemptive plan, known as the eternal covenant or covenant of redemption,[6] emerged.

This covenant includes three parties: God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit[7] and its objective is to reconcile humanity with God. In this covenant, the Father (a) promises to bring to the Son all whom he had given him; (b) is responsible for sending the Son into the world to be the representative of the people; (c) is responsible for preparing a body for the Son; and (d) gives the Son all authority in heaven and on earth. The Son, in turn, (a) became man; (b) was found under the law; (c) died for the sins of the world; and (d) was raised from the dead by the Father. Finally, the Holy Spirit (a) empowered Jesus to do the will of the Father on earth;[8] and (b) applied Christ's redemptive work onto those who believe.

From the point of view of this redemptive covenant, the Holy Spirit empowers Jesus to save all those whom his Father chose to give him (i.e., those to whom God chooses to show his mercy; Rom 9:18). By default, they deserve to die, but God chooses (out of his good pleasure) to show them mercy. Since all are deserving of his wrath, God's justice upon the sinner and the salvation of only some ought not to be seen as unfair or biased. Hence, reprobation reveals God's justice in ensuring that guilty sinners receive their due punishment. Again, this theological principle could be helpful as Africans work to develop an African evangelical theology for the African Church.

7. Conclusion

Of what good is African Theology to evangelical Christians in Africa if it does not find its foundation in the Scriptures? Torrance (1979, 199) correctly explained that a true living church cannot exist by deriving its essence from human experiences but in the being and life of God and rooted in the eternal purposes of the Father through his Son, Jesus Christ. This implies that a living church must be grounded in a Bible-centered theology. Hence, a proper grasp of biblical and theological principles as explained in this article could help African theologians to begin the process of developing a robust African evangelical theology by developing a soteriology that is rooted in Scripture. With a well-developed soteriology, other essential theological doctrines could be more easily developed for the African Church.

The culturally diverse nature of Africa should not be an obstacle to developing an evangelical theology that identifies with the African culture and context. Since Christian theology in general is composed of views articulated by individuals in a variety of cultures and existential situations, which is why it has a variety of points of view, Africans should not be afraid to be different. It is acceptable for evangelical African theology to have a variety of points of view based on a theologian's cultural situation. However, these need to be rooted in Scripture and a basic unity is still needed when

6 For reference, please see the following resources: Ralph Allan Smith (2003); Gerhard E. Spiegler (1967); Stanley W. Paher (1997).
7 Normally, covenants are made between those of different authority levels, like a king and his subjects. But in the Eternal Covenant, all the parties involved are equals.
8 Note that the Holy Spirit did not empower the Son but Jesus the man.

developing African evangelical theology, so as to differentiate it from other traditions. This could be achieved through a comparative study of the theology of each evangelical African theologian with the aim of identifying the particularities and uniqueness of each and creating a platform that allows for complementing and borrowing from each individual theology (Munga 2000, 250).

In this paper, I have agreed with African scholars like Kinoti (1997, 75), Idowu (1995, 31), Mbiti, (1991, 63) and others that it is time for Africans to start articulating their own Christian theological convictions from the perspective of the African cultural context. I have also challenged the views of liberal theologians like Schleiermacher (1893, 27) and the syncretic view of scholars like Orobator (2009, 68) and Bujo (1992, 83). I agree with scholars like Kato (1975, 1218), Mburu (2019, 23), and Mbewe (2020, 10) that there is a need for an evangelical approach to doing theology in Africa. To effectively achieve this for the African Church, I have argued that African scholars will need to develop a proper soteriology for the African Church as an informative and fundamental step towards developing other key doctrinal issues relevant for a robust African theology.

To this end therefore, I have attempted to develop and explain some key theological principles that could help African theologians to develop a Bible-centered soteriology that could shape as well as enable the process involved in developing other essential tenets needed for a robust African evangelical theology. As Munga (2000, 250) rightly noted, "The future of African theology and its fruitfulness depends on allowing for a continual critical engagement in viewing and reviewing its fundamental assumptions in the light of the challenges that arise from changes in context and situations." With this in mind, African scholars may consider the arguments put forward in this paper as one of the helpful tools that may prove useful to critically view and review our culture and context as we work towards developing the much-needed African evangelical theology for the African Church.

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