

Book Presentation:
African Christianity Rises
Volumes One & Two
By
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African Christianity Rises - Volumes One and Two, are the first two in a series of forthcoming volumes intended to examine the performance of the Christian religion in the continent of Africa. Issues ranging from the activities of Christianity in specific areas in Africa such as Igbo land (my home land), to indigenization [inculturation] of the Christian message in the African continent, as well as the rise and challenge of evangelical and Pentecostal movements in mainland Africa, the tug-of-war between Christianity and Islam in Africa, and the future of African Christianity in general, will be the focus of this study series. The nature of this study is critical and scientific. Hopefully, evidence will be examined according to latest traditions in religious scholarship.

My effort in this study series is in keeping with my primary area of responsibility as a religion/New Testament scholar. While engaged in journalism and socio-political commentaries through my column on Nigeriaworld.com, I hope to fulfill my obligation to religious studies by embarking on such researches from time to time. So in the next few years I intend to pen the two or three more volumes that will complete the series.

African Christianity Rises, Volume One:



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As the saying goes, charity begins at home. I chose to begin this study series with a critical review of the performance of Catholicism among the Igbo people of Nigeria. As an Igbo myself and a member of the Catholic Christianity [and for full disclosure's sake, a Catholic priest], I feel obligated to thoroughly examine the performance of my own religious affiliation first before embarking on any other efforts along this line. My decision on Igbo Catholicism sprang from my personal admiration of its achievements in the last one hundred years. I took to heart the acclaim

of the success of Catholicism among the Igbo people that has been resounding from across the world since the mid-20th century.

The streak of achievements of Igbo Catholicism in just one century, nay, her flourishing and imposing presence, her charismatic and enthusiastic laity, her highly educated and enlightened clergy and religious, her ever-crowded and carnival-like Eucharistic celebrations as well as her overall contributions to the universal Church, are great signs of hope in a world that is being terribly demoralized and confused by excessive reliance on materialism. Igbo Catholicism is indeed a breath of fresh air in a world in which religious ideals and trust are daily being made to appear like values of the bygone years.

But this is not a sing-song eulogy book for the Catholic Church in Igbo land. Rather, this research work engages in a dispassionate and hard-nosed evaluation of the current situation of the Catholic Church among the Igbo people of Nigeria. The passion and frankness that we have been exhibiting over the last few years in our column on Nigeriaworld.com: **Ihenacho's Home Truths** are all on display in this volume. If you appreciate the take-no-prisoners and no-holds-barred approach of the Home Truths column you will definitely appreciate books in this series.

The first volume sub-titled: A Critical Study of the Catholicism of the Igbo People of Nigeria, takes a critical look into the overall performance of the Catholic Church among the Igbo people of Nigeria. The goal is to emphasize the fact that though Catholicism has made a tremendous progress in this part of Africa, there is still a lot to be done. This book intends to suggest some important ways forward for the African exemplar Christianity that is indeed today's Catholicism among the Igbo people of Nigeria.

African Christianity Rises, Volume Two:



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This second volume in the series is an effort to examine how creatively indigenous Catholicism is among the Igbo people. This springs from our belief that to discard the toga of "foreign" and "a guest," a missionary religion has no other option than to make itself a part and parcel of its new

people and their cultures. A missionary religion neglects indigenization [inculturation] to its peril. To the extent that Catholicism has not made any significant progress along this line in Igbo land, it must consider its future as not assured.

This volume considers it a terrible irony that notwithstanding its miraculous achievements in this part of Africa especially in numbers and structures, Igbo Catholicism as a project has remained largely stalled both in theological reflection and other critical activities associated with it. Igbo Catholicism perhaps ranks dead last among its peers in indigenous theological activities. With regard to theological reflection, the Church in Igbo land looks like a dormant volcano. The potential for eruption is there for everybody to see. Yet she does not seem to be able to release the first surge of the molten lava. This work is an effort to introduce some theological creativity along the line of indigenization and inculturation in Igbo Catholicism.

This volume makes some effort to discuss the issue of inculturation – a technical term for indigenization in Catholicism. It is our belief that a truly African Christianity is one that has made itself indigenous to the people. To the extent that Catholicism among the Igbo has not made much effort to become a part of the lived experiences of the Igbo people, it must consider itself as “a guest.” And as the Igbo say, *O biara ije nwa ula* - that is to say, unless Catholicism indigenizes among the Igbo people its lasting stay cannot be assured.

The books of this series will be helpful to scholars and students of African Christianity, African Traditional Religion and African Theologies. For those who want to deepen their knowledge of the goings-on in the religious world of Africans, this study series will be quite an indispensable companion. It is an effort to introduce critical reasoning into the study of religious issues in Africa.

These works seem quite timely in view of how religion is being viewed and used in the present world. As a result of its bastardization by fanatics and terrorists religion is getting such a terribly bad rap in our time. And because of the peculiar nature of Africa, it is easy to predict that religion will remain one of its hottest topics for the next few decades. In view of all this, we believe that a scientific study of religion in Africa, its nature and value, is a *sine qua non*. Moreover, it is our belief that every missionary religion in Africa [both Christianity and Islam came to Africa via missionary activities] must indigenize to avoid being manipulated and hijacked by international fanatics and terrorists.