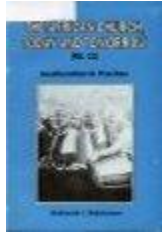


## THE AFRICAN CHURCH - INCULTURATION

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There are too many Churches and religious movements in Africa. The proliferation is enormous and competition aggressive. Some will not survive and may naturally close down. Many Church communities, parishes and missions have closed down and many more may not see the third millennium. No doubt, there are many factors contributing to the ugly and depressing situation.

Why is it that only few believers attend Christian worship in their various Churches and Christian communities? The percentage of 'Church-goers' or Christians who attend Sunday services in various parts of the world - Black and White World has never ceased to drop so low. It is alarming. Many factors are responsible for the deteriorating situation.

In the African Church Today and Tomorrow - Inculturation in Practice - one important area that deserves special attention has been highlighted by the author. Examining this area from his Igbo, Nigerian, African and Catholic background, the author sounds a note of warning on the consequences of any failure in inculturation in the Black Church. What he says may apply to all Churches everywhere.

Successful adaptation or inculturation of the rich black cultural heritage to the mode of worship, administration of the Sacraments, Church discipline, and to the overall evangelization strategies, will serve as litmus test for the survival of the Established or Mainline Christian Churches in Africa and elsewhere in the Diaspora.

In the book author examines the various ways through which the Christian Church and faith in the Black World could be enriched with the black African values, customs and tradition to make the Church relevant to the people. This process of adaptation or enrichment is referred to as inculturation. Special treatment has been given to mode of worship, an area which most Christian Churches have neglected for a long time to make changes. The consequences of this failure are great - Mass exodus of people from religious worship and the proliferation of Pentecostal Churches.

With regard to Africa and the black world, traditional institutions and festivities occupy unique role in inculturation. Their values must be incorporated to make Christian religion more meaningful to the people. The adaptation of black art forms to preaching and teaching in the modern times is crucial for any Church that will exact impact or survive among the black people. The book is truly for every Christian - believers and non-believers. It will serve the interest of students of theology, liturgy and religious studies. It is also for every Christian, particularly those who are worried about what the Church is doing to make religion more relevant to the modern man.

At least in this area of inculturation Africans and blacks everywhere have a lot to offer humankind and particularly the universal Church This reminds us of the works of Leopold Senghor, one time president of Senegal, writer poet and philosopher, the one who initiated the "Negritude Movement" - the idea that "Black is beautiful". Devoting much of his life to the glorification of the black man's culture through books, poetry and scholarly works, this African statesman once wrote: "Without black Africans, civilization would lack the rhythm section of its orchestra, the bass voice of its choir. I wear European clothing and the Americans dance to jazz, which derives from our African rhythms - civilization in the 20th century is universal. No people can get along without others".

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