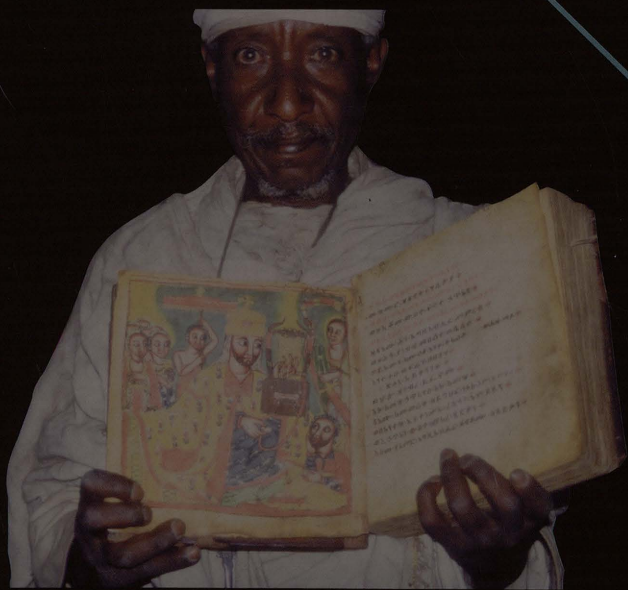


# African Christianity: An African Story



**Ogbu U Kalu**  
**(Editor)**

**Series 5: Vol 3**

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A photograph from Klaus Koschorke's Collection, Maximilian University Munich. An Ethiopian Orthodox monk holding some crosses and an ancient text a reminder of Africa's early contribution to the Jesus Movement.

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# African Christianity

## *An African Story*

Perspectives on Christianity Series

### **Series Editors**

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Series 5, Volume 3

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*For Andrew F. Walls and Brian Stanley:*

*many have bemoaned the collapse of Christian scholarship in  
Africa, you both have done something about it*



## Preface

In the last five years of the twentieth century, five books on Christianity in Africa have appeared, written by Adrian Hastings, 1994, John Baur, 1994, Elizabeth Isichei, 1995, Mark Shaw, 1996, and Bengt Sundkler in co-operation with Christopher Steed, 2000. Admittedly, some were long-standing projects that took either a decade or more, but towards the end of the millennium, it became rather glaring that a general text on African Christianity was required. Each text has met with various degrees of success with students. The edition by Hastings starts from 1950 because he had covered the period from 1950-1975 in a different volume. But his work is very readable and his Africanist periodization is intriguing. Isichei's book throws too many facts on unsuspecting students, but is a mine field for the informed graduate specie. Sundkler's is laced with so many "small stories" that its size and cost intimidate. There is no doubt about its usefulness as a resource and reservoir of information. Shaw's is rather marred by the extreme application of the kingdom motif, but the maps are very helpful.

The effort in this book is ideologically-driven: to build up a group of African church historians who will tell the story as an African story by intentionally privileging the patterns of African agency without neglecting the roles of various missionary bodies. The effort is to identify the major themes or story lines in African Christianity and comment on them in such a manner as to elicit new research approaches before a general text could emerge. To that extent, this work is a signal of a process. When a solid band of African church historians may have been built, they will do the main work. They will prayerfully have more success than my generation in co-operating to tell our story.

This work owes its inspiration to the distant past when Enrique Dussel tried to persuade Africans to join in writing the history of the Church in the Third World. In 1977, he spoke so eloquently in Accra. As if to demonstrate leadership by example, CEHILA has served richly as an association that mobilized Latin American church historiography. African efforts have failed in spite of the 1986 Nairobi seminar made possible by Dr. Masamba ma Mpolo (then at WCC, Geneva) and Dr N. Abeng, who was serving Missio at Aachen, Germany. But the endeavor continues. Younger church historians are emerging and the task will be passed on to them with greater hope of success. The doyen, Andrew F. Walls, has

encouraged this endeavor through his writings, teaching, mentoring, deep insights and friendship. He has reared more African scholars than any one single person; and interpreted Africa to the West with a strong influential voice. Every year, he teaches at Akroffi-Christaller Center in the belief that if Africans built academic ashrams, they would lick the desolation caused by the collapse of educational infrastructure and resources. Similarly, Lamin Sanneh's muscular scholarship has shaped the contours of interpretation and influenced the study of Christianity and Islam in Africa. His turns of phrase and inimitable prose allure and are repeated regularly. Kwame Bediako has been more "hands-on", intentional, and dedicated to nurturing African Christians through the ATF program, conferences and his own seminal scholarship. He has been an inspiring churchman and scholar in this generation. But it is Brian Stanley who used the opportunity generated by the Currents in World Christianity, 1998-2001, to promote African Christian scholarship. His own scholarship covers Africa from a wider vista, but the task of deliberately building a band of scholars to work together and redeem a scorched environment is a different kind of academic engagement. Many young African scholars openly and unabashedly acknowledge their indebtedness. He is always sympathetic and helpful. I am only a mouthpiece of what I have seen and heard!

Two individuals have made this project possible by working behind the scene: Linda Hofmeyr hosted the many meetings of the core group with grace and generosity and deserves our gratitude. Petrus Maritz brought the zeal he employed in organizing the Pretoria Conference of Currents in World Christianity to the job of proof-texting and production of this book within the Perspective series in the University of Pretoria. More amazing is that he combined it with writing his own doctoral dissertation on an intriguing ecumenist and critic of a church that deployed theology to underpin apartheid. Professor Marais was a maligned scholar, a churchman and a very humble, genial person whom God granted the grace to live beyond the apartheid system and to receive the apology from his detractors. There is a rich story still waiting to be told in the future volumes. This book opens the possibility that African scholars will co-operate to tell the story of where the rain of the gospel met our ancestors, its thick showers on us and the tornado that will meet our future generations as the gospel deluges Africa.

Ogbu U. Kalu



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## Part One

### The Insertion of the Gospel

