Tourism and Evangelism: The Nexus

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Abstract

One essential religious factor is the attempt at spreading a professed faith with the purpose of trying to win someone else to something. This is a consequential act in Christianity which is embarked upon through any means possible with the purpose of disseminating the good news about God's initiative and His Kingdom. Evangelism is a word that is commonly used in Christian parlance today to refer to the conduct instituted by the Master himself for all humanity either as messengers or beneficiaries wherever or whenever, using whatever means available and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Thus, the mission of every Christian is the evangelisation of every person who is not a Christian. On the other hand, tourism is the practice of travelling to, staying and visiting places for pleasure, knowledge and relaxation. Visitors are provided with relevant information concerning services provided, accommodation and entertainment, places of interest and other activities including advertising campaigns. Thus, it is today a means of income for many countries on account of the quantum tourists who throng these sites. This study therefore examines the connection between evangelism and tourism all in a bid to promoting the human person. It was discovered that various strategies are adopted in achieving their respective purposes. Citing some scriptural examples, it posits that because large number of people from various religious persuasions are found at tourist sites, this affords Christians the opportunity to embark on evangelism either as individuals or as groups through personal contact, lifestyle, giving out tracts and leaflets and use of the mass media especially videos and drama.

Key words: Tourism, Evangelism, Great Commission, Disciples

Introduction

From time immemorial, man had engaged in journeys or travels from place to place for various reasons such as economic (business), spiritual, social, etc. This he has done either on his own volition (voluntary) or by compulsion (being sent by a superior entity). Thus, there are many accounts of such in the Scripture. In addition, there are scriptural passages which approbate journeys and travelling abroad. Prominent among these are Matt. 28: 18-20; Mk. 16:15; Luke 24:44-47 Acts 1: 8, especially the *Go* in the Great Commission. The act of travelling or journeying from home to some other place, which may be near or far, is described as tourism. Many reasons account for this as already mentioned. Many stakeholders especially business enterprises and governments of nations engage in some other activities in order to attract such tourists because of what they stand to benefit. Because tourism has today become a big time financial earner with the influx of tourists and assemblage of people from all walks of life and various religious persuasions, it is posited that the Church could also key in to this process as a stakeholder in order to preach the gospel to such individuals and audiences.

Conceptual Clarifications: Tourism and Evangelism

Tourism

It would be necessary to examine the concepts tourism and *tourist* side by side, which derive from the noun *tour*. According to the Merriam Webster Dictionary, the word *tour* , first used in 1708, means *a journey through the different parts of a country, region etc; to make a journey or trip through an area or place; to travel from place to place*. One who does this is known as a tourist, a word first used in 1780. Similarly, *the practice of travelling for recreation* or *the activity of travelling to a place for pleasure* is called tourism, first used in 1811.

The word tour is said to have been derived from the Latin *tornare* and the Greek *tornos,* which refer to a tool which is used to describe a circle or a turner's wheel (Onu 2015), used in referring to the practice of movement, journey or visiting from one point to another. A person involved in this is called a tourist and the act of doing this is described as tourism. Onu equally cited the United Nations as describing a tourist as a person who stays in a country other than his own for less than twenty four hours and not more than six months of a non-immigrant purpose. He equally quoted Roday, Bival and Joshi to have defined tourism as "*the temporary short-term movement of people to destinations outside the place where they normally live and work and includes the activities they indulge in at the destination as well as facilities and services specially created to meet their needs* (p.9). He added that this is done with the intent of advancing personal, religious or business endeavours and appreciating the aesthetics which the world offers. For him, the acronym for tourism is:

T - Temporary movement of people from one place to another, within or outside a country;
O - Other areas visited by the tourist;
U - Usual place of abode of the tourist;
R - Residence of the tourist before embarking on a journey;
I -Intension or purpose of the tourist;
S -Schemes and services provided to meet the tourist's needs
M - Many beauties of the world (p. 9)

In a related development, Iheanacho (2012) indicated that the World Trade Organisation pointed out that tourism includes *purposes and actions that are oriented towards leisure, recreation and holidays, religion and pilgrimage, visiting relations and for business* (p.22).

Within the context of this paper, tourism is seen as the impermanent routine of people moving from place to place, other than one's place of

abode, for the purposes of pleasure, entertainment, relaxation, adventure, excitement, knowledge or curiosity in appreciating or catching on to what is ordinarily not available in one's immediate environment in the quality and quantity demanded at a given time. Tourism has therefore become a global activity which is said to have constituted the largest single item in world trade. Because of its contribution to the Gross Domestic Product of some countries, it has been described as an invisible export.

Topology of Tourism

Tourism has overtime become many-sided. Reasons for this would be adduced later and these necessitate the specialised areas which include cultural tourism, religious tourism , sports tourism, health tourism, recreational tourism, business tourism, ecotourism, medical tourism, educational tourism, creative tourism, space tourism, etc. (Onu, 2015; Iheanacho, 2012).

Motivating and growth factors in tourism

Factors that motivate tourism are varied depending on a number of other variables such as one's physical and aesthetic values, status or prestige, cultural values, personal choices, psychological influences, experience, exposure/behaviour, purpose and interpersonal relationships. In the American parlance, these are classified as the 4s-sun, sea, sand and sex. Other motivating factors are pleasure, relaxation, rest and recreation, health, participation in sports, curiosity and culture, ethnic and family interests, spiritual and religious inclinations and professional or business consideration (Onu 2015). In a related development, certain factors have been identified as responsible for the rapid growth of the industry. They include available and disposable income, increasing awareness, stress, product diversification, regional cooperation, annual leave, its economic benefits, realisable leisure time, early retirement age, technological advancement and accessible hotels and other securable services (Encyclopaedia Americana 2002).

Evangelism

Etymologically, the word evangelism is said to have derived from the Greek *eu* (good) and *aggelia* (message), which put together means good message. Its Anglo Saxon equivalent is *god* (good) and *spell* (*spiel* or speech), which combine to form *gospel*, meaning *good message* and *good speech*. Similarly, it is said to have been deduced from *evangelion* which is simply translated as *the gospel* from which *evangel* (good news) or (momentous tidings) is extrapolated. As practiced today, *evangel* has come to form the heart of Christianity as it entails the spread of the good news about God's nature, purpose, power and love (Taylor 1983).

The matter of evangelism started right in the Garden of Eden where man failed by disobeying God's injunction not to eat the forbidden fruit. Thereafter, the once fraternal relationship between man and God was smeared but Genesis 3: 9 said "*but the Lord God called to the man and said to him, where are you*?". This is believed to be the Biblical origin of evangelism and hence the first evangelistic call made by God in search of the soul of the one He had created. In Genesis chapter 3 verses 17-19, God said to Adam *"… because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, you shall not eat of it, cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. [18] Thorns and thistles it shall bring forth to you and you shall eat plants of the field. [19] In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return".* We see here that the earth was cursed because of man's failure to obey God's express permission which was tantamount to sin; yet in the same Genesis blood was shed for man's sake, for the purposes of covering his physical nakedness and by implication the spiritual:… *the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skin and clothes them* (Genesis 3:21). Whenever there is sin, the sinner becomes naked before God but by the shedding of the blood of Jesus, atonement was made for sin. It was equally in the Garden of Eden that the plan for man's redemption was made (Genesis 3:15). In the New Testament therefore, that

plan of salvation was fulfilled through the death of Jesus who is described as the lamb that was slain. Contrastingly, while the ground was cursed for man's sake and the earth began to produce thorns and thistles for man in the Old Testament, a thorn that sprang from the cursed ground was used to make a crown of thorns that pierced Jesus' head, with the blood of redemption which gushed out and touched the ground in the New Testament. It was this that brought liberation to man. In other words, what was used to buy man back to his maker in the New Testament was gotten from the cursed ground in the Old Testament.

This strictly speaking, is the basis or the whole essence of evangelism: the spreading of this message of liberation to all mankind by the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ. Evangelism thus becomes a germane task given to man by no other than Jesus Christ himself, an assignment that he was fully a part of right from the Garden of Eden. When his work on earth was done, he handed the work over to his followers (Acts 1:8). It is in the light of this that believers see evangelism as the heart beat of the Master. Thus, one of the basic duties of the Christian is the proclamation of the word of God (Gospel). This may assume the form of local evangelism (domestic) and mission (world outreach). Christians attribute this to the command Jesus gave in the popular Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-21; Mk. 16:15; Luke 24:47; Jn. 20:21; Acts. 1:8) as alluded to in I Cor. 9: 16; Rom. 1:15; 2 Cor. 2:5; Gal. 1:16; Eph. 3:8; Col. 1:28; 2 Tim. 4:2; Rev.14:6. This could be broadly done through living an exemplary lifestyle or telling others about Jesus Christ (Kerygma). Seen as an activity of the Church in announcing, sharing and proclaiming Jesus Christ, Amgbara (2014) described evangelism as *the act of presenting the gospel to unbelievers in the power of the Holy Spirit, Christ as Lord and Saviour and to nurture them to maturity until Christ is truly formed in them so that they bear fruits for Christ* (p.7). He explained that going by the Great Commission, its fundamental principle is multiplication, making disciples who make disciples. In this fashion, evangelism for the Christian

is not optional but compulsory; not a charitable service or doing God a favour but a debt of love for the Father in heaven (Rom.1:14).

Research revealed that overtime, evangelism has become a vast subject and a household name in both Christian and academic circles. As a result, people have expressed diverse views and varied understanding of it. While some see it as Bible exposition, others see it as the manifestation of signs and wonders which is a physical demonstration of God's power over the wiles of Satan and its agents. It is equally seen as simply knocking on doors, giving out tracts, leaflets, preaching in the open air in the forms of crusades, revivals or a life style. From the gospel narratives, it may be stated that evangelism traditionally was said to be addressed to individuals for the sole purpose of the forgiveness of sin but the gospels make us understand that it pointed to the inauguration of the Kingdom of God (Mk.1:14-15; Luke 4: 18-19; cf Isa. 61:1 ff). It then means that evangelism is one of the cardinal missions of the Church directed at individuals, within the framework of Christ's vision for the world. The business of evangelism then is basically the proclamation of the gospel to unreached people because of distance or lack of opportunity in order for choice to be made which may result to a conversion or change of life and becoming a part of the covenant which Jesus offers to those who believe in him. This activity , which may be private and personal or public, according to Fish and Conant (1976), is taking the gospel to the lost, not bringing the lost to the gospel. It is a spiritual act which is outwardly executed by the physical man and may be compared to tree planting. While man does the planting and tendering, its actual growth depends largely on the viability, suitability and sustainability of the soil. The soil here refers to the Holy Spirit, which gives and adds value to this human endeavour. The gospel does not have limit and class in motif, message, spread and coverage though the approach may be flexible, considering the time, circumstances, place and people.

Forms of Evangelism

Many forms of evangelism have been enumerated by scholars. Among these are mass, personal, pulpit, literature, household, children and youth and situation evangelism (Amakiri 2005). In all of these, the personal and mass forms appear the most outstanding. The former, as seen in Acts 8:26-29 and John 4:5 -29, is compared to the use of hook at a time in fishing. The latter, derived from Acts. 2:4-17, is likened to the use of a net to enclose a shoal of fish at a time (cf Acts 20:20-21).

Motives for Evangelism

The universal concept of evangelism to all people is a product of multi-dimensional conversation between experience, values and beliefs as done by the first Christians which the present Christians have emulated. In other words, what is it that motivates the many Christian activities that bear the name evangelism and what do they seek to accomplish? Green (1979) identified seven of these which moved the early disciples to do what they did. They are:

i) They bothered because of God's love (Rom. 5:5)
ii) Because of Christ's command (Matt. 28:18-20)
iii) Because of the Holy Spirit's thrust (Acts. 1:8)
iv) Because of their responsibility as Christ's ambassadors (2 Cor. 5:20)
v) Because of their great privilege
vi) Because of other people's needs (Eph.2:1)
vii) Because it brought joy (cf I Thess. 1:5-6) to the converted and the converter (I Thess. 2:19; I Jn.1:1ff; 3Jn. 4).

Furthermore, Amgbara outlined the motives for evangelism to include lawlessness of the world (Rom. 3:10-11; Luke 13:3); the waywardness of mankind (Rom. 3:23; 5:12; Lk.19:10); and the compelling love of Christ (2 Cor. 5:14). Taking rather a broader perspective, Greenway (1979),

established what he called the wrong and right motives. Some of the wrong motives include a desire to be admired and praised by others; ambition to expand the glory and influence of particular Church or denomination; the pursuit of adventure and excitement; and escape from unpleasant situations at home. The right motives include the desire for God to be worshipped and known among all the peoples of the earth; the desire to obey God and gratitude by carrying Christ's command to *make disciples of all nations;* and concern that Churches grow and the Kingdom of God be extended by deeds and words that proclaim Christ's righteousness to a world bedevilled by suffering and injustice. In sum, the two fundamental motives for evangelism are love for God (his glory) and love for man (concern for his wellbeing).

It is contended that evangelism is an extension and expression of the relationship which exists between man and God (vertical) and man and man (horizontal), which motives take cognisance of the needs of the lost, the power of the gospel and the conviction of the Holy Spirit.

The Nexus

Man as Homo sapiens has certain qualities which make him outstanding. Among these are the desire for pleasure and exploration. Perhaps, these were the basic elements in the biblical account of the fall of man in the Garden of Eden as encapsulated in Genesis chapter three. It is stated in verse five that the serpent assured the woman that she was being deceived by God because the tree they were barred from eating had the potential to making their eyes open (wisdom/knowledge) and to assume the resemblance of God in knowing what is good and evil. Responding to this, it is recorded that when the woman saw that the tree was good for food (nutritive), was a delight to the eyes (aesthetics) and could make one wise (pleasurable), she ate of its fruit and proceeded to give same to her husband to eat. In these tripartite elements, we see the factors of aesthetics, pleasure and exploration (inquisitiveness). Although the author of the passage

described it as sin against God, God's laws, God's creation, God's covenant and God's purposes, being unbelief in making God a liar and disobedience to a positive command, it reflects the true nature of man, who in a bid to discover and relax, could travel elsewhere. Regarded as a moment to enjoy, it is also perceived as a period of freedom from boredom or control. It is noteworthy to observe that Adam and Eve were not only created to be wise and intelligent, they also had the capacity to increase in knowledge, thus, all the means of information were within their reach; they had a strong urge to know (inquire) and had the greatest pleasure in knowing. Though this account is described as the *basic corrupting agent in the entire universe* it may on the other hand be said to be a reflection of man's state of perfection or a blissful consummation (HarperCollins Bible, 2009).

It may be deciphered from the foregoing that the fall of man or disassociation from God is captured amidst his desire for freedom, inquisitiveness and pleasure which tourism offers and hence the need to bridge the gap by reconciling man with God by means of exposure to the gospel (evangelism). Man's craving for aesthetics, pleasure and inquisitiveness lay at the base of tourism while making peace with God is the crux of evangelism. It is clear then that reconciliation between man and God is a major factor in many world religions especially Christianity. In so doing, various means are adopted with the belief that Jesus Christ came as the mediator and reconciler between man and God. This process is simply described as God's initiative to bring man to terms and to admit him once again into His kingdom made possible only through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Seen as an offshoot of the Great Commission which lays emphasis on all creatures, Christians use whatever means available to make this possible. It is for this reason that evangelism is said to be the task of every believer as did the early members of the Church in Jerusalem. In the words of Havlik (1976), *everyone is bombarding everyone else with both the hard and soft sell. Even music, the fine arts, the dramatic arts, and literature are used as mediums to soften up the populace for the abandonment of*

moral and ethical values which humanity has taken centuries to develop" (p.12). Tourism offers a veritable opportunity for this to take place, hence the nexus- man being reminded of his depraved state in the midst of relaxation, entertainment, pleasure and discovery and the need for reconciliation with man with man and God with man.

There are salient points that make this discussion imperative. First, the Manila declaration of 1980 on world tourism (item xxi), indicated that in practicing tourism, spiritual elements must take precedence over technical and material elements. The identified spiritual elements according to Onu include the total fulfilment of the human body, the liberation of man in a spirit of respect for his identify and dignity, and the affirmation of the originality of cultures and respect for the moral heritage of people. Secondly, among the services rendered at tourist destinations are hospitality centres and entertainment providers like band stand. Thirdly, the greatest tourist resource is the human person. Fourthly, in view of the derivable benefits, managers and governments put certain things in place in order to attract travellers including the use of advertising campaigns in magazines, newspapers and television. Fifthly, tourism has brought about some level of cooperation and inter human relationships which tourists enjoy and which reduce prejudices, conflict in ideologies and grudges. Sixthly, it has brought about cross-cultural effects to the point that the mental horizon of tourists about other cultures in the areas of food, dress, music, entertainment, etc have been broadened. Many tourists return to their places of origin better informed and enlightened about other people.

The underlying fact in all of these is that various forms of evangelism could take place alongside other programmes for tourists with the use of music concerts, giving out of Christian tracts, magazines, newsletters, posters, books, audio tapes, drama film shows, medical outreaches, one-on-one encounter and public proclamation. By having an advance team

and planning, the organizers and managers could be reached before hand in order to be placed on the order of activities or given slots during which they could minister to the audience in forms considered appropriate as identified above. From the scriptures, we see that John the Baptist, Jesus and Apostle Paul ministered to a crowd of people in various places (Matt. 3:1-12; Matt. 8:12). Jesus called his first four disciples by the sea of Galilee (Matt. 4:18-22); he fed the five thousand by the sea shore (Matt.14:13-21) and appeared to his disciples after his resurrection by the sea of Tiberias (Jn. 21:1-5 ff). Considering the throng of people in these places, it is possible that there were travellers who journeyed to *catch fun*. Apostle Paul engaged many people and travelled from place to place preaching the gospel. He may thus be said to be engaged in tourism evangelism especially in Acts. 16:11-15, where he converted people gathered by the riverside in Philippi. Among those converted was a woman named Lydia, *a seller of purple goods*. She may have gone there for religious purposes as she is described as *a worshipper of God* or for economic reasons, being a business woman. In whichever way, it is very probable that there were tourists at this centre and Paul and his team made good use of it for evangelism.

Conclusion

Tourism as an activity embarked upon by man has become a fast growing industry which attracts large numbers of people, with multiplier effects on society. Like evangelism, the primary beneficiaries are human beings, desirous of a better life in terms of pleasure, knowledge, adventure, excitement and interpersonal relationships, etc. These account for the nexus between them as seen in their basis and structure. Generally conceptualised, tourism engages persons from different walks of life, believers and non-believers, the high and low irrespective of age, class, gender and cultural background. It is then an opportunity for the ministration of the gospel in music, preaching, distribution of Christian literature, drama, videos and film shows, even to those who may not have

been reached but for such an opportunity. The gospel brings radical changes when people hear and respond to it; it changes the social structures of society; and changes the natural, sinful tendencies of man. At tourist destinations, people can be drawn to Jesus Christ with such gospel well arranged and garnished with especially orchestra (cf Gen. 31:27; Exod.15:20, 21; Isa. 5:12).

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