The Socio- Religious Perspectives of Cult and Sects Activities in Nigeria

By

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Abstract

The groups referred to as new religions or smaller associations is the focus of this paper not secular cults. Cults and sects activities is a global phenomenon. A cult is an association, in religious dimension. A cult could refer to people worshipping one deity or members of one sect or church. A sect is exclusive in mode of operation. Sociologists of religion divide religious organizations into four main types: the eccleia, the sect, the denomination, and the cult. Each varies from the other in organizational structure, scope of influence, membership, and in the social relations (Kalu 1978:652). The ecclesia as a religious organization is found in the associational society because it is "large all-embracing religious association which includes most members of a particular society". The sect is also a religious organization of the communal society but it can be described also as a religious protest group which seeks to isolate itself from larger society. Denominations may simply be described as sects in advanced stage of development (Kalu, 1978:652). A cult is a sect, fraternity, new religions (Saliba,1995:37). The functionalist theory is of the view that what attracts people to cults and sects is the need to satisfy practical human needs Such needs as company of friends, protection, to develop one's spiritual and intellectual talents, health needs, needs to share the Bible or bible study, biblical leadership, and need to listen to a charismatic leader (LeBar, 1989:60). The method adopted in the study is religion-sociology analysis.

Introduction

In the contemporary societies the number of distinct denominations of indigenous churches which registered with the Government in the West, Central and the South of Africa as recorded by David Barrett was over 760 in 1970 but the number increases with each succeeding years (Ayegboyin and Ishola 1997). Every month, around 20 new religious groups or sects starts up in Nigeria (Breuilly, E and Palmer, M Sainsbury's Religions of the World, p.2).

The word 'cult' is from Latin 'cultus' used to refer to many new religious groups. A cult is a sect, fraternity whose members make life interesting and fulfilling for their members (Saliba, 1995). In the twentieth century, cults have been viewed as a pseudo-religious organization. There are elements of deceitful practices and a hidden agenda in the association (LeBar, 1989). The problem with cults is that there are elements of "occult" and the worship of the devil, or Satanism in its practices. Religious sociologists associate cult with church-sect type relation. The cult is regarded as a small flexible group whose religion is characterized by its individualism, syncretism and frequent esoteric belief. It has been suggested that religious sects emphasized fellowship, cults enhance private, individual experience, in practice it is often theoretically difficult to distinguish religious groups in these terms (Nicholas, Stephen and Bryan, 2000). Cult members often patronize diviners and spiritualists on private basis like Saul visit to a medium in the Old Testament of the Bible.

The sect are exclusive, separate from the world, a community of believers of the reborn and a sort of trust foundation for supernatural ends. It is a community of exemplary Christians, having sovereignty of the local community of believers (Michael Hill, 1973).The community of believers insisted on regulating the members' relationship with the rest of society. There is strict moral discipline emphasized in maintaining the purity of the whole community (Michael, 1973).

This paper is not intended to look at secular cults, the focus is on 'new religions' in Africa. I have written an article on secular cults published in the University of Ibadan journal of African Society for the study of Sociology and Ethics 2020 Vol.7 and 8 June-December. The new religions began around 1900 The independent churches began as protest groups around 1918, the members wanted religious satisfaction. They felt insecure in many ways in the established churches and wanted the religion to solve their problems. The problem of insecurity, curbing witchcraft, charms, evil powers that was common in the colonial period or prevalent in their societies. This religious movement was primarily spiritual and religious, a striving toward cultural integrity and spiritual autonomy (Ndiokwere, 1981).

The lack of knowledge of the true church of Christ has made many to continue to drift into the different sects. Most people think of church as a building with some peculiar designs. The influence of charismatic leaders whose aim is to gather people or multitude so that they raise fund to build their ministry and rejoice at the multitude that fellowship, will give them opportunity to expound their ministry (Eni, 1994).

Type of sects and cults

Africa Independent churches: this are of two categories according to the period', the first category began around 1900 they were connected with mainline churches in liturgy, robes, and ecclesiastical hierarchy. They are self-supporting/financing, self-governing and self-propagating. They withdrew because of the negative attitude of the white missionaries to Africa, leadership and cultural heritage. Examples are the Native Baptist church (1888), United Native African church (1891), African church (Incorporated, 1901) and United African Methodist church (1917).

The second category of this churches are the Aladura/ Zionist churches. The word Aladura is a Yoruba word, it has been used to describe the churches even outside Nigeria. Aladura means 'one who prays' .Else where in West Africa, the word 'Zionist churches referred to spiritual churches'. This group emerged as a result of schism from the Anglican Church in 1918, following the dissatisfaction of its African members with the church's failure to help them (Ndiokwere, 1981). Among this group are, 'the church of the Lord' (Aladura), Celestial church of Christ, the Ethiopian movement type with many separate sects.

The neo-Pentecostal churches began around 1960-70s following a new wave of Christian awakening, the "Charismatic revival or movement". The movement first began among students in higher institutions. The emphases of the revival was on personal salvation, baptism of the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues, healing, miracles and evangelism. These doctrinal characteristics have continued to distinguished Pentecostal movement from other Christians (Ojo, 1993). .

The Godian Sect : this is a response from traditional religion to the encroachment of Christianity and Western civilization .With its head-quarters at Aba in the Eastern Nigeria and a number of well-built up churches in some towns of Anambra and Imo states, Godianism numbers among its ranks some thousands of adherents, comprising religion-cultural revivalists, some educated men and women, people who lost faith in the Christian groups to which they formerly belonged, and others who joined from traditional religion. Syncretism is common in the group with borrowing of ideas from traditional religion and indigenous churches practices. (Ejizu, 1975).

In Benin City, Aruosa Church is a Godian sect- type, in which people worship God without going through intermediary. The church contains elements of Christian and traditional religion beliefs and practices. Aruosa is an Edo word meaning 'eye of god', through the temple, the deity shrines his eyes on the king and his subjects. The doctrine of the Holy Aruosa is Godianism by which its adherents channel their prayers direct to the Almighty God instead of going through intermediary (Edebiri, 2003). The Aruosa's symbol is the open eye- the eye of God watching over His creation. It is a symbol of the Edo direct experience of God (Otasowie, 2018). The Oba of Benin performs official thanksgiving at the temple, the thanks giving could mark the end of the year or mid-year, Vanguard, July 8, 2024.

Igbe Religion: : This began around 1911 at Kokori in Delta State. The founder of this religion is Ubiesha Etakpor who dug up some kaolin while digging to plant yam in his farm. He left the few kaolin but in his sleep at night the residing spirit in the kaolin started appearing in his dream the spirit command him to take the kaolin home. The Spirit appeared to him many times Gradually the voice of this Spirit was interpreted as a call from a divine being. This kaolin as the religion developed became source of healing. Dance is a prominent feature of the religion, through dance the spirit possesses the worshippers. The religion gain acceptance because the leaders were able to perform healing, expel witchcraft and prophecy to people. Practically all those who join the cult or visit their temple do so to escape witches, by giving their head to Igbe for safe keeping. It is a Spirit possession cult found in Delta and Edo States. The Spirit possess the worshippers as they dance and use fan containing glass. Having read the works of Nabofa, M.Y. and Erivwo, S.U. on the origin of this religion and looking at it from archaeological angle one will say, the kaolin excavated belonged to ancient shrine and the spirit residing in the shrine was what came to possess the discoverers. Sectarian are non-conforming groups within religions

Causes of Drift to Proliferation of Cult/Sects.

The word proliferation means rapid multiplication, spread or increase.. The powerless have often found in religion a means to altering their situation and even reversing their status in both symbolic and social terms (Terence, 1986).One major theory aimed at unraveling the process of conversion to a new religion movement is based on the observations that those attracted to new religion (i) have been involved in counter cultural activity for a while (ii) have at times tried different faith commitments, long before they appeared to have settled down in one particular religious movement. The Pentecostal sects are homogenous, some members move from one to another. Rather than a sudden conversion, there individuals have experienced a gradual change, therefore their involvement in a new religion has not been a

sudden decision. It has been a gradual transformation. People do not jump into new religions, they drift almost imperceptibly into them over a period of time (Saliba, 1995:88).

Pentecostal churches in USA supported Africa by sending missionaries, as part of the new Pentecostal wave in the 1960s. These Missionaries, were predominantly from North America, later the strategy was to support the Local rather than sending North Americans. This was adopted because Locals were both 'less expensive and less culturally intrusive' In 1992 there were 24,213 locals fully supported and 17,737 partially supported by US agencies (Mission Hand book 15th edition, 59. In Paul Gifford,2009:45) As was reported in "Fire in his Bones" Benson Idahosa received support from American Pentecostals in his mission projects. This gave his mission work upward movement (Garlock,1981).

New religious movements are a common feature of the world today, a feature which is driving churches all round the world to reexamine their Christian experience and to carry out an in-depth evangelization exercise in different socio-cultural contexts. At the moment, it is difficult to give an accurate estimate of the number of sects, independent churches and new religious movements in sub-saharan Africa . Some scholars recorded more than 10,000 of them. Many Christians are leaving the traditional mission churches to go and look for salvation else where, were their aspirations seem to be better addressed.

These churches were an avenue for liberation and for the search for personal and collective salvation. They appeared like efforts made in various ways to recapture, the message of the Bible which was distorted and rendered lifeless by the missionaries who came from outside the continent. The charismatic leaders who are the founders of new churches make positive applications of this message, which is received either through revelations or through divine calls, to the real life situations of their followers who find that, in this message their expectations are more adequately met (Rene De, 1993).

These new groups proliferate in African societies undergoing enormous changes ,in modernity, technical and industrial development; rapid urbanization, democratization process. In the urban centers individuals who are into white-collar jobs, having abandon the old traditions, in the micro –social institutions are thrown into the urban society which does not offer them any structures within which they can seek solutions to the numerous problems of their new situation. Diseases and sterility, possession by evil spirits, fear of witchcraft, mental disturbances caused by insecurity and difficult socio- professional relations, badly affect people who in their new environment are constantly looking for a brother or leader who speaks the same language and can bring comfort and support in difficulties.

In this socio-cultural and religious dislocation, the African masses turn to the prophets of the new churches in order to find meaning and logic in their new social order where the old behavior patterns are no longer applicable and where new patterns prove to be necessary for life and for survival. New groups are thus formed in response to the needs that arise as a result of new living conditions often characterized by misery, unemployment and subhuman living conditions. The new groups are formed by people of like minds who sympathized with the priest/ pastor that wish to live the missionary church or an older fundamentalist church to

form a new one. The reasons advanced was rights and leadership, racist, resistance to transfer and poor remuneration (IYASHERE, 2000).

In the new sects solidarity and brotherhood arise ensuring acceptance and security, mutual assistance and support in modern African societies where individualism and bourgeois thinking of the dominant class are taking hold. The traditional African values of sharing and solidarity find here a concrete expression; there is assistance available in cases of need, visits to and prayers over the sick are assured (Rene De, 1993).

The Bible is at the centre of the life of these new communities and it is also the pivotal of moral dealing, the leaders make use of it, most often in a fundamentalist and Pentecostal interpretation. The followers recognize in the biblical passages living conditions that are similar to their own, and are able to identify with the oppressed people of the Bible. The God of the biblical exodus becomes the God who will take their side and bring about an African exodus. The reading and interpretation of the Bible in this groups is done in a very basic manner.

The prophet, charismatic leader or founder of one of these new communities appears to his followers as a man powerful in word and deed, stronger than witch doctors, those strong men of the traditional African religions. He appears capable of effectively protecting the faithful from all kinds of evil spirits. This last point is the reason some are involved in syncretism .

Leadership in the Sects ’ .

The leaders claim they are called to lead the people / followers, they claim to have the anointing from the lord. In much of the literature dealing with African independent churches, the importance of leadership is stressed- the churches are seen as allowing outlets for expression of leadership qualities, and there are high incidence of leadership disputes and tensions in sects. The obsession for leadership in the church is a symptom of the other underlying factors in society. It is the church which has provided the only legitimate outlet for the African’s strong urge for leadership. Some independent church leaders are like traditional leaders. The leaders whether “Bishop”, “Overseer” or “prophet” is like a king and the church is his tribe (Martin, 1975). This applies to face-to-face social encounters, the micro-society or small groups. In urban independent churches the traditional chief model may not apply, the people in the urban speaks various languages. There are elaborate hierarchies in the independent churches. There are leaders at the top of their particular hierarchy and those who hold other, lesser positions of leadership.

The next issue is the distinction between those exercising charismatic authority and those exercising legal authority. The distinction between a priest and a prophet, that is the distinction between the ordained minister and those who claim to have special gift (Martin 1975). The members of the sects make their free choice on which church to join, this choice often rests on the personality of the leader or the healing abilities of certain people in the church. The church is homogeneous in nature. The members change their affiliation so that church leaders are not able to rely on legal authority in maintaining the allegiance of their congregation (Martin, 1975).

Most church leaders exercise both legal and charismatic authority over their congregations. In some churches, the prophets stand outside the 'formal' hierarchy and are not leaders of churches. In that case the bishops, leads but also has influential prophets. In the church of the Lord (Aladura) the formal hierarchy has two streams, one stressing 'visions, revelations and prophecies' and leading to the position of Apostle, and the other stressing ''pastoral, preaching or administrative' gifts leading to the position of Bishop, with the overall leader being the Primate, who is expected to have both sorts of gifts (Turner, 1967, Vol.ii: 36-41, in Martin, p.50). Most of the prophets are women. The presence of woman' prophet is usually no threat to the established male hierarchy. Woman leads in women organization, usually the wife of the bishop, under her the wife of the church second –in-command, followed by wives of ministers, deacons, evangelists and preachers. This is one reason why a man is usually ordained with his wife, and after ordination both are formally led to their places in the congregation.

Female leadership is common among the Pentecostal churches The priesthood of Christ is a powerful gift to the people of God. Access to the ordained priesthood has widened, as women have struggled to have their call to the ordained priesthood heard. Female leadership is common among the Pentecostal churches in Edo state ,Nigeria. The members of these churches accept the ordained women. The women leaders represented Jesus disciples with a very strong faith (John,11:22). The women leaders represent Christ who radiates compassion and solidarity to the down trodden. These churches organized their hierarchy and church organization in the style of American Pentecostals. These churches easily accept female leadership like their counterparts in America. In Benin City there are many of these churches, but four will simply be mentioned here. First is 'Jesus Deliverance Ministry' whose founder is Sister Ngozi Peters, the church is situated at Ogbeson, Ikpoba hill. Second is 'the church of God mission' founded by late Benson Idahosa, lead currently by Archbishop Margret, the mission is situated at Airport road. Third is the 'Spirit and Life Bible Church' founded by Bishop (Mrs) Eunice Osagiede, situated in GRA. Forth is 'Family Prayer Intercessory Ministry' established by Evangelist Margaret Agbonifo situated at Ekehuan road.

A woman who joins an independent church will, either immediately or after a probationary period, depending on circumstances, become a full member of the church. In most of the small churches, full membership brings with it the right to attend the church women's organization. The women organization has regular meeting days and activities. In women's organization, members are bound through common ties of membership and friendship, through common experience (in which personal confessions and testimonies play an important part).

Authority in so many of the sects are not transparent, the economic situation in the society also affects the life of the churches as one of the opportunities available. Many people come to the ministry because they could not have achieved a better career. Rev. Timothy Njoya, a Kenya Presbyterian said, 'over 90% of the clergy in Kenya today have no call at all (Gifford, 1998:345). Many capable and talented people are now in church leadership, which shows the poor economic situation in Africa. Many are led to a life in the church as one of the few opportunities available. That many capable and talented people are led to enter church leadership has a further bearing on Africa's economic development (Gifford, 1998,345). How

is one called to the ministry, some said they heard voice in their dream, some said they escaped from accident through divine protection and some were recommended after close observation by an old priest., Having successfully attended the training required and ordained for the ministry the question of not being called does not mean anything again. However some opened their own ministry, start preaching without attending any former Bible College training. Such people learn in the job , while being guided by other ministers informally .Some preachers are not organized in their method , they take many directions in delivering their message without bringing the main points, they are scattered in their preaching, this makes it hard to follow and understand. If one judge the style of another preacher by saying he is not called, the person is judging God's anointing on him. God has a will and plan for everyone.(Meyer, 2003). ,

Function of Cults/Sects as religious Organizations

Cults /Sects are groups, community and an association, they are community in essence and association in appearance. The population in the community form the Christian church, among which are different association. The church as religious organization plays the role of educating, counseling, prophesying and healing. The church plays the role of binding, loosing and praying for souls to be loosed from sins. The church brings people together and helps some individuals cope with uncertainties of life. It allows for social cohesion in society, unite a society under a system of belief.

Religious groups provide model for how life should be lived through sacred codes, rules of conduct in which adherents should live by. Religion help people adjust as some who wondered away from the faith sometime remember their past and return to the traditional church., Religion brings people together in the love of God beyond kinship and blood relationship.

Sects foster ambition, sobriety, goals, application and education, provide a support group for personal strivings. They make their own constitutions, include many human opinions, some of which are not base on the Bible. The sects run their groups like enterprises, offerings and tithes are encouraged like protection taxes in secular cults.

The new churches are juridical entities, a surprising number have left the mainline churches to the new churches or Pentecostals. The Pentecostal churches are distinguished for their livelier worship than the liturgical mainline churches and are freer generally. The freedom of the smaller sects is evident in readiness to preach sermon series on topics like AIDS and domestic violence, services can also be competitive and they organize Bible quiz (Gifford, 2009:110).

Growth/ Prosperity Sermons

In the Pentecostal churches sowing seed or 'seed faith' is emphasized by entrepreneur pastors. The theology of entrepreneurship was developed base on stress on deliverance. This theology attempts to explain that faith does not always bring his reward, but with deliverance one can obtain everything that faith promises. The deliverance based on faith has its root in African religions. African religions are concerned with the good life here and now, with health and prosperity, with success in life , happy and productive marriage. African religions deal with

the causes of diseases, with failures and other obstacles in the path of self-development and fulfillment (Gifford, 1998:339).

In these churches with money collected from tithe and other donations they embarked on projects in which they can feel a sense of pride and achievement. Sometimes, the people do not have a say in what the money goes into, or what projects. Pentecostalism has brought about emphasis on personal decision, which serves to develop the notion of individualism. These churches tend to break down the notion of the extended family, provided scope for youth development and encourage women leadership roles. Faith Gospel serves to legitimize the accumulation of wealth, as something willed by God.

Some of the smaller churches are one-man (or one-woman) founded sects. Others are established by persons of like-mind, with properly constituted boards, under the supervision of the lawyers in their midst. These churches are mainly concerned with cultural problems, prayers are made to conquer witchcraft, sorcery, interest in divination, addiction to alcohol and drugs, syncretism, involvement in secular cults and lifting people above poverty. The sect leaders emphasize giving of money to the Christian ministries.

The sects do not meet only on Sunday, the city churches have services before work in the morning, lunch time services, and services after work. The services are directed at a practical team, like praying for business and breaking curses. There are always many worshippers at the services (Gifford, 2009:126). The churches having many worshippers are in urban centers, they are involved in outreach and church planting in rural areas. These are the churches that dominate the media, propagating the Christian faith. Some of the churches emphasize 'prosperity gospel' they encourage their members to pay their tithes and offerings in order to attract God's material blessings into their lives. Many of these sects agree that Christianity is about success, status, victory and achievement.

Transference of power by association: Members of white garment sect claim they have spirit of prophecy, prediction and vision transfer. The supposed Holy Spirit got from the sect may not be genuine spirit of God. Spirits may be transferred through parents, those possessing demonic or witchcraft spirits by association to children (Chigbundu,1993). Transference of spirit through laying on of hands. Negative spirits have been transferred to people through laying on of hands, by false prophets. Transference of spirits is a part and parcel of human life. It is when a stronger power or spirit gradually or forcefully influences a lesser spirit with a view to dominating, and controlling it that there is transfer of power into the weaker (1 Cor. 15:33).

'Apostolic' or 'Spiritual' Christian communities lead by self-appointed 'prophets' have drawn converts from established Christian churches and from the shrine cults, they multiply every day. They brought revolt against the joylessness of what missionaries call 'the atmosphere of Christian communities' (Acts,2). They are possessed in the same way and in the same large numbers (Field,1969).Ever since Christianity came to West Africa converts have embraced it from variety of motives, some faced with some problems. One Sunday in church service, 'something' would 'come to an individual and he would be possessed. Members will ask questions, was this the Holy Ghost? Or was it a native deity 'calling' the convert back from

his mistaken allegiance? Often he would visit a soothsayer who would only prescribe a sheep/goat to propitiate the deity. Perhaps the same scene in church would occur again and the same sacrifice required. It may be decided that the deity had called the convert back to be a special servant. He would then accept his calling, go and train as a medium. Any layman can be casually possessed by the Holy Spirit or another spirit, these are 'the moving, dynamic, burning forces in life (John Lake 2009:115).

Fundamentalist Christian Associations

Fundamentalism is a term that can be applied to all AICS and Pentecostal churches because they approach the Bible uncritically. They love to quote it, refer to it and support any position by alluding to it (Gifford, 1998).'Sect' is a label frequently used in Africa to describe the small new churches, some of which have not even registered with government. It applies to groups distinct from the historic mainline churches (Troeltsch,1931).A sect is described as manifesting qualities like exclusiveness. Fundamentalism had a more dogmatic interpretation of the Bible. The fundamentalist are enthusiastic in their effort to bring people to life in Christ. They believe in adult baptism and reject unholy music.

All the new churches appear to possess a set of family resemblances. They depend on deliverance, and these churches attack 'spiritual' churches. The new churches reject all the ritual-candles, blessed water, white clothes, drumming, sacrifices that has been associated with the AICS (Monica Wilson 1971). Their worship is exuberant, but it is less characterized by the trances and possessions characteristic of the AICS. Dreams have given way to a much more direct form of divine communication. The new churches maintain a preoccupation with spirits, but in a markedly different way from the AICS. The new churches use modern instruments, their language tends to be English or French depending on the country. The formal theology of the new born-again churches is essentially faith Gospel. It developed in America with television-evangelists, stress on seed-faith or giving. This prosperity theology was adopted by African new churches, it was ritually enacted with, collections and offerings. They were reinforced by countless testimonies. In the 1980s, prosperity gospel was associated with Pentecostal churches, but it later spread to earlier churches and the mainline churches. It was spread by various means: through the literatures, organizations, Bible schools and the rise of 'pastors conferences' and through the various ministries. The church leaders embraced this faith teaching because of its function, it brings in revenue that enabled them to survive and flourish in a very competitive field. It favors the pastors because one only needs faith, belief and God will do everything (Gifford, 1998:336).

Syncretistic Practices

Syncretism is the term which indicates the continued existence and impact of the traditional religious culture in contemporary society. This phenomenon assumes many forms from the prevalence of elements of traditional religion in some categories of independent churches to dual affiliation by a good number of members of the mainstream Christian groups.

The number of independent churches is always on the increase. These owe their origin to different experiences. A certain category of them, although Christian in outlook, draws a lot of inspiration from traditional religious cosmological ideas. The basic outlook to religion is heavily anthropocentric. Like traditional religion , a lot is made of the power of spirits and

other cosmic forces; witchcraft, sorcery and reincarnation are believed in..And ritual sacrifices are highly extolled as a control mechanism. These elements of the traditional religion are, overlaid with Christian coatings. Such syncretistic behavior are evident forms of the survival of aspects of the traditional religion in the midst of Christians (Ejizu,1985).

There are many healing homes in independent and Pentecostal churches, some are simply faith healing centers. The others incorporate traditional medicine in their healing techniques.

Conclusion

The African independent churches preoccupation was predominantly health, particularly in rural life, where sickness was the obvious and recurrent trial. The newer churches in the cities have slightly different needs, sickness has not lost its importance, but these deals with wage –earners whose concern s centre on employment, promotion, accommodation, transport and acquisition of money..While in rural communities people are involved in agriculture, tied to extended family or kinship groups.

The AIC use drums and African instruments in worship, they incorporate African elements like dreams, ancestor veneration (Gifford, 1998). The AIC in South Africa was both pre-revolutionary and actively revolutionary. They were pre-revolutionary in the sense that they did not operate according to a set plan in trying to move society towards a definite goal. But they were revolutionary in their impact on the fabric of the society, creating a change that provides the dispossessed people with a sense of hope and a vision for the future.

The Pentecostals came with idea of positive confession of faith, this idea assisted them in fund raising quoting relevant Bible passages. They brought prosperity gospel, they were often on the media emphasizing to believers that they prosper by planting a seed of faith. Those who were influenced by their doctrines left mainline churches throw away their objects of worship and joined them.(Adiche, 2014).

Some of the Pentecostal churches have developed institutional structures like the mainline churches with national headquarters, regional administration, and structures of authority. The Pentecostal evangelists are often on the air broadcasting family TV programs, Life skills programs, Christian comedians programs, programs that promoted creationism and prime time programs. The programs are aired in American prototypes.

A cult is 'a group, religious in nature which surrounds a leader, or a group whose teaching denies or misinterprets essential biblical doctrine'. Again, a cult can be viewed as any religious movement that is organizationally distinct and has doctrines that contradict those of the scriptures as interpreted by traditional Christianity as represented by the major Catholic and Protestant denominations (Saliba, 1995:2). From this definition, a cult possesses a new scripture designed by the members.

The leaders of both cult and sects are persons with charisma, anointing and persons who have the ability to coordinate, unit other people into a family or association. Some of the leaders left other groups they formally belonged with people of like-minds but to be able to bring people together into one family or club demands managerial skill and ability.

Pastors do attend conferences where pastors of similar churches will discuss common issues like how to raise fund to build church, in Nigeria there is Pentecostal Fellowship association and Christian Association of Nigeria. Hundreds of pastors will attend such conference and a pastor from a very large church/Ministry will give a talk. Joyce Meyer 2003 suggest, if a pastor want God's will for his mission growth, the simplest advice is pray and obey. God has given every pastor the zeal to pray and obey his audible voice, that is, acting on an impulse one think is from God, learn to operate in faith. Pastors must be careful when waiting to hear from God because sometimes they hear a similar voice, but intuitively one will know it is not God's. Meyer Joyce says, one know things about God by the Spirit, not necessarily by the head. One take information into his mind but revelation comes to his spirit through the Holy Spirit. Those who want to be led by the Spirit, but who are too lazy to spend time in the word or time in prayer, set themselves up for easy deception (Meyer 2003:40). Lastly, some people are gifted in visions and dreams more than others. This paper discusses cults and sects as religious institutions, for the groups accepting Christ as Lord, faith is the key. Let the word of God function or active through the ministry. It is the word of God doing business in the ministry.

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