

PERSUASIVE APPEAL IN NEW GENERATION CHURCHES IN NIGERIA:

A Perceptive Study Of Pentecostalism In Rivers State

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Abstract

The power of persuasion cannot be overemphasized even for religious purposes. To this end, this study sought to examine persuasive appeal in new generation churches in Nigeria particularly, in Port Harcourt. This study was anchored on Cognitive dissonance theory. A mixed method research design approach using in-depth interview and focus group discussion (FGD) was adopted. The population of the study comprised of 1,148,665 residents in Port Harcourt metropolis. The study has 20 respondents as the sample size and it was selected using the purposive sampling technique. The in-depth interview and FGD guides were used as the instrument for data collection. Findings revealed that people who reside within the Port Harcourt metropolis see miracle in their various churches as a money venture affair and have ugly experience of miracle in their church. It was also revealed that Pastors of the new generation churches use persuasion, cajoling and threatening words during sermons or in personal encounter with member than allowing people to decide for themselves. It was recommended that government must as a matter of urgency set up taskforces to investigate the veracities of these miracles we see and or hear daily; this will help ease off the religious tension and also create an atmosphere of cordiality and respect. And any pastor found wanting of fake miracles should be sanctioned. Pastors should be mindful of their language when communicating with members; they should avoid threatening their members or cajoling them unnecessary against their will.

Keywords: Persuasive appeal, Pentecostalism, Perceptive study, Christians, church

Introduction

On the 24th of October 2019, Nigerians woke up to watch five (5) different videos on social media, of one Dr. Chris. Okafor, performing healing miracle, on a woman that had a stunted right arm. The evidence from the videos showed that the same “spiritual miracle” was repeatedly performed at different stages because, the pastor; woman with the stunted right arm and congregation, wore five different outfits. The incident created hoopla and comments on social media and the conventional media, as to how Dr. Chris Okafor will embarrass the body of Christ with an obvious deception?

Suffice it to say, that Nigerians are always inundated with daily stories of pastors using people to fake miracles; pastors having sex with their female members and impregnating them; pastors using church members for rituals; pastors extorting monies from their flocks, all in the name of sowing financial seeds unto the Lord; pastors using church funds without

proper accountability and so many ills in the church (Jando, 2014).

According to *Daily Trust Newspaper* (2019), on the 20th of November, 2019, the Enugu State Police command arrested one pastor Sunday Egbo, General overseer of Christ Mercy Ministry, after multiple female braziers, pants and a small coffin was recovered from his residence. The popular pastor landed into trouble after allegedly raping a female member of his church, who went to his house for deliverance. According to the pastor “I paid the native doctor #20,000, to get the coffin and a flute. He told me to do certain things, after which I will get a Ghana-Must-Go bag full of money in my room. But after two weeks, the money did not come as the native doctor told me”. It is so unfortunate that the evolution of Pentecostalism resonated the style of worship and tomfooleries, we are witnessing presently in Rivers State.

According to Ogbu (2008), Pentecostalism started in the early 70s, as a result of the post-civil war. Nigerians at that time, saw the church as a place of solace hence, some scholars decided to come together to encourage one another through prayers. The oil boom in southern Nigeria, at that time, also brought a rebirth in the economic fortunes of the country, as many Nigerians began to make huge money from the oil business. Some Pentecostal pastors at that time, capitalized on this huge success of these Nigerians, and started using persuasive rhetoric to advance their course of extortion. The sermons of the pastors gradually changed from winning souls to Christ to praying for the rich (Mckenna, 2005).

The African aphorism that says “when a man is rich, he is always afraid” cannot be over stressed here. Back then, prayers, tithe, offering, faith in God and believe in the bible was the sermonic techniques employed by the Pentecostal pastors. For those rich men that needed special prayers for God's protection, of course, special offerings and donations were made to the pastors for their efforts. But as the year progressed, some voracious and garrulous persons joined the Pentecostal space to up their games, by introducing magical miracles (Edem, 2012).

Today, the Nigerian evangelical space is awash with persuasive and cajoling preaching, fake miracles, extortion, rituals and sex. According to Pew research, Nigeria is the second most religious country in the world. Unfortunately, there is no correct statistical data of registered churches with the corporate affairs commission, as over seventy percent (70%) of the new churches are yet to be documented.

Though, it is believed that we have over ten million churches and still counting in Nigeria. The bible in second Corinthians 5:10 says, “for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us, for the things done, while in the body, whether good or bad”.

According to Webster Encarta dictionary (2005), persuasion means, the act of persuading somebody, to do something; either by word of mouth or gesticulations. This simple definition goes a long way to tell us that without persuasion, there will be no relationship between the speaker and the listener and or the encoder and decoder. Persuasion is an act to influence the mind of the listeners; it is a tool used by politicians, teachers, pastors, traders, individuals, parents and even government (Ogbu, 2008).

This is to say that every homo sapient uses persuasion in order to convince the listener or audience to accept the views of the speaker. Persuasion in communication is important because, it is the sole condiment used to get the attention of the listener to support and transform their thinking in favour of the presenter's perspective. Therefore, persuasion is about creating an attitudinal change to influence social behaviour hence; it is sine-qua-non in dialogical communication (Wariboko, 2017; Camaroff, 2012).

Statement of Problem

The emergence of Pentecostalism in Nigeria in the early 70s followed a period of immense post-independence instability, characterized by the violence of the civil war, political corruption, and rise of the military government. Nigerians at that time saw the church as a place for solace, where people pray together, encourage one another and help each other. In the early 70s, the Pentecostal style of sermon was mild “Repent and accept Christ as your Lord and personal saviour, so that you can make heaven”. The church therefore, allows you to decide on which part to follow. But as the year progresses, the methodology of the Pentecostal activities changed with crusades, healing with heavy donations, using all the media available at their disposal (Ogbu, 2008).

Presently, persuasive appeal, threats, heavy tithes, offerings, illicit sex, deceptions and heavy donations has become a trajectory in the Pentecostal churches. So many local and foreign Christian books have been written about the activities of the Pentecostal church, but there has been no book and or publication on persuasive appeal in new generation churches in Nigeria, that will get hidden details from a perceptive and objective point of view (Fehlauer, 2018).

Research Questions

1. What is the miracle experience of people in their churches?
2. Do churches give yearly or quarterly account of her income and expenditure?
3. Do pastor use persuasion, cajoling and threatening words during sermons or allows people to decide for themselves?

Pentecostalism in Nigeria

Ogbu (2008), says Nigerian Pentecostalism emerged in the 1970s as university-educated, charismatic youths began creating their own spaces for worship. Its roots are in the African Initiated Churches (such as the [Aladura](#)) and especially in American and British Evangelical and Pentecostal of the 1960s, which Nigerians encountered through international studies, Pentecostal outreach, and American televangelism and other Christian media.

As such Nigerian Pentecostalism combines elements of African worship while emphasizing its place among transnational Pentecostal networks, which have grown through conversion as well as robust immigration (Jando, 2014). The success of the Pentecostal movement in Nigeria inspired widespread 'charismatization' of Nigerian churches, which, by the late 1970s, widely attracted members of the Christian upper middle class. The emergence of Nigerian Pentecostalism followed a period of immense post-independence instability, characterized by violence (the civil war, especially), political corruption, and rise of the military government (Edem, 2012). The oil boom of the 1970s transformed the Nigerian landscape, particularly in the south, where well connected elite profited and conspicuous consumption blossomed.

On the one hand, this made life more difficult for the vast majority of people who increasingly turned to religious organizations to provide for their basic needs. In years that followed, some Pentecostal leaders became wealthy themselves, because, they directed their services to the wealthy; emphasizing a [prosperity gospel](#), which holds that faith is the key to prosperity in this world (Kिताuse & Achunike, 2015).

In so doing, these pastors contextualized the privilege of Nigeria's Christian elite, and attracted hundreds of thousands of poor and middle class Nigerians aspiring to greater wealth (Jando, 2014). Nigerian Pentecostal Christians are partly responsible for the rising inter-religious violence between Muslims and Christians in northern Nigeria. Both Pentecostal and Islamist movements of the 1970s were largely youth-based and offered an exclusivist message that frequently demonized the other. In particular, Pentecostal theology condemned Islamic healing practices (the use of amulets, etc.), Sufi rituals, symbols such as the star and crescent, and characterized Islam as a threat to Christians and Christianity (Hasu, 2012).

Empirical Review

But a related publication, titled "Figures of rhetoric in the languages of Nigerian Christians sermons" by two scholars; Dr. Adedu E.A. and Dr. Mekiliuwa O.O, will be used to draw positive inference to this research. According to Adedu (2010), rhetorical figurations, in discourse rhetoric, is that field of language often associated with the uses of languages, for the intent of persuading. Adedu and Mekiliuwa, citing Burke (1969, p. 43), defined rhetoric as "the use of language, as a symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings; which by nature respond to symbols." They concluded by saying that rhetoric in public speaking, implies the skill of elegant and persuasive speaking; which is the ultimate goal of rhetoric. Ogbe (2019) carried out a study on pentecostal churches and human development. The study investigates the role these Pentecostal churches play in either enhancing or further exacerbating the Human development of the people. The results revealed that these Pentecostal churches engaged in activities such as building entrepreneur skills, running of clinics and schools, and the beneficiaries are both members and the non-members. Obiefuna, Nwadiolor and Umeanolue (2014) did a study on the proliferation of Churches in Nigeria. The study also tried to explore Church proliferation in Nigeria pointing out its costs and benefits. It was revealed that Nigerian society today is undergoing significant constant proliferation of Churches which has brought not only changing values, but also source of solutions to people's problems. Meyer (2004) carried out a study to show how research on African Independent Churches has been reconfigured by new approaches to the anthropology of Christianity in Africa, in general, and the role of religion in the public sphere in postcolonial African societies. It was revealed that the recent salient popularity of Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches in particular. If the adjectives "African" and "Independent" were once employed as markers of authentic, indigenous interpretations of Christianity, these terms proved to be increasingly problematic to capture the rise, spread, and phenomenal appeal of in Africa. And that religion has a tremendous role in virtually all human endeavour in Africa.

According to Pew Research Center [PRC] (2015), on its study of religion and public life in sub Saharan Africa, the study project that Christianity and Islam "are expected to have more than twice as many adherents in 2050 and Christians are expected to increase in number to remain the "region's largest religious group, growing from 517 million in 2010 to more than 1.1 billion in 2050"). Obayi and Onyebuchi (2013) carried out a study on public relations techniques in promoting pastoral communication and it was revealed that priests sampled have engaged in one form of evangelization or the other using public relations principles. And that public relations techniques can serve as effective approach in grassroots evangelism. Jando (2014) did a research work on growth and expansion of Pentecostal

churches in Tivland 1975- 2005. The study revealed that Pentecostal activities started in Tivland in 1972 as a fellowship meeting that was later converted to a church. After that many other Pentecostal churches began to come through. These churches expanded very fast because of their enthusing style of worship and theology. Also, Pentecostal churches appear very fascinating and the people patronize them in great numbers because unlike mainline churches, they allow a greater degree of lay participation. The study further showed that Pentecostal churches face challenges such as lack of finance, manpower and converts that will stand the test of time.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical orientation of this research is based on Cognitive Dissonance, which refers to a situation involving two conflicting attitudes, beliefs or behaviours. Saul McLeod (2018), quoted Leon Festinger (1957), who propounded the theory, that cognitive dissonance is a conflict of mental discomfort, leading to an alteration in one of the attitudes and elevating the other to create balance. For example, when people smoke (behaviour) and they know that smoking will cause cancer (cognition); they are in a state of cognitive dissonance.

In the new generation churches, the pastors are very much aware that their sermonic styles (behaviour) are at variance with the practice of Christ, but preferred to go ahead with it because, of the gains (cognition). To them, they believe they are covered by Luke 6:37 “Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned...” These new generation pastors, haven taking into cognizance, how Nigerians adore the word of God, have continually applied persuasion in their preaching.

Methodology

This study adopted the mixed method research design using in-depth interview and focus group discussion. Due to the nature of this study the researcher used the population in Port Harcourt metropolis and according to Worldmeters (2019), the population of Port Harcourt metropolis is 1,148,665. From the population 20 persons were purposively selected to form the sample size of the study, for the focus group discussion they were 12 participants, while for the in-depth interview they were 8 persons. The whole respondents were selected using the purposive sampling technique because they were literate and they attend Pentecostal churches. The researcher made use of interview guide and focus group discussion guide as the instruments for data collection. The researcher adopted the explanation building technique as the method for data analysis. The sample size was used in order to examine the persuasive appeal in new generation churches in Nigeria. It is important to note that, this study is limited because the number of persons that formed the sample size is not a true representation of the population.

Data Presentation and Analysis

This section deals with presentation and analysis of data from both interview and focus group discussion.

A summary of in-depth interview and focus group discussion conducted with the 20 respondents.

The first question that was posed was what is the miracle experience of people in their

churches? The first interviewee responded by saying “he wondered why the new generation churches will sell anointing oil, salt, handkerchief, cap, perfume, stickers, etc inside the church at an exorbitant price; making you believe that your miracle is dependent on the item(s)”, another participating FGD1 in responding to the question observed that “Church is a body of Christ Jesus. Whosoever that decimate the body of Jesus, for his or her selfish gains has God to contend with.” The second interviewee has this to say “you go to church with a problem; the pastor will tell you to buy olive oil that cost two hundred naira (#200) in the open market for two thousand naira (#2000) all in the name of miracle.” FGD3 maintained that “Some churches will tell you to buy their stickers for protection against armed robbery, accident and other evils vices; meanwhile, the pastor of that church uses police as protection. FGD6 “Some churches will tell their members to have faith on the words that comes out of the mouth of the pastor for their healings, while the same pastor and his family visit the hospital, if they fall sick”. Similarly, interviewee 4 said “This is the height of deceit that I have seen and witnessed in some of these new generation churches”. Another interviewee talking on miracle experience he said:

“I and my family were attending a church, here in Oyigbo. “We believed the man of God, because of his spiritual prowess and the type of fast miracles he performs. “My wife had serious malaria and typhoid; that was in July 2000, and we were seriously praying that the God of our papa, will heal her. “Now, when I saw that she was not improving, rather than take her to the hospital, I took her to our church, so that my papa will lay hands on her and give her anointing water and oil. “Kai! Kai! Kai! May God forgive me; Three weeks later, my wife's situation was extreme, so I had to take her to the hospital. “I took her to the University of Port Harcourt Teaching Hospital; after the test, it showed that my wife had BP, malaria++ and typhoid, and that it has eaten deep into her system. “Three weeks later, my dear wife passed on, due to our negligence, leaving me with three children to cater for. Oga, (crying), I no trust any pastor again. “I have gone back to my Catholic faith and I think I am comfortable there. People need to learn; all that glitters on television are not the same in real life”

According to one of the interviewee who happened to be a pastor said Jesus Christ, in Mathew 7: 21 said, “*Not everyone that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father, which is in heaven*”. From the data presented above it implies that most of the respondents have ugly miracle experience in their church.

Another question that centred on churches gives yearly or quarterly account of her income and expenditure was posed. Responding to this question FGD8 a member of one of the Pentecostal churches maintained that “Pastor most times will tell church members that “the financial decisions of the church is not a public matter because, the congregation doesn't have the spiritual insight or maturity to understand the dynamics of church finances”. Interviewee 7 also said “Secrecy may also cloak the area of finances; Pastors make brazen appeals for donations, ranging from papa's day, mama's day, church anniversary, launchings etc; yet some churches offer no assistance to members that needs financial assistance or give periodic accounts of the church funds”. Similarly, another participant FGD12 is of the view that “we are made to contribute on buildings, vehicles of the G.O, schools and other projects, yet, no proper accountability.” A respondent interviewed who is a Pastor said that “on

financial accountability of the church, actually, it doesn't matter what the church does with the church funds. The responsibility of members is simply to give." However, the Bible commands us to be good stewards". On the contrary, FGD6 said

"As a good Christian and a good steward, when one becomes aware of financial mismanagement in an organization, such as the church, one should be responsible enough, to take proactive actions, rather than keeping mute".

Interviewee 5 has this to say "it is very simple, money represents power; therefore, it should be no surprise that controlling leaders will use unbiblical means to manipulate people into giving; sowing financial seed of faith to get miracles. Other respondents were of the same view that financial matters should not be a thing of secret in the house of God. By implication of this analysis it is obvious that churches especially Pentecostals hardly give quarterly or yearly account of its expenditure.

Lastly, a question on do pastor use persuasion, cajoling and threatening words during sermons or allows people to decide for themselves was asked. The responses from the respondents were as follows: Interviewee 2 a top member of a Pentecostal church said "their General overseer, most times would tell them how God spoke to him about some members of the church and how members must adhere strictly to his instructions or loss going to heaven". In the words of FGD4:

"At some times our head pastor times, he would make comments that would result in one staff member becoming suspicious of another. The atmosphere in my former church, most often than not, put us in fear and also fueled selfish ambition and competition amongst the staff and members. It became the pastor's way of maintaining control and ensuring that his staff could never challenge his authority and or leave the church. Unfortunately, when some of the assistant pastors discovered what was happening, five of them eventually resigned and left the church. That was how I left the church"

Regarding the question asked Interviewee 8 maintained that "Pastors must learn to deal with such questioning in a compassionate, positive manner. However, in these new generation churches in Port Harcourt, most questions are considered threats to the pastor's authority. Members who dare to question their pastors or who do not follow their directives often are confronted with severe consequences". In the view of FGD9 he maintained that "We were told by our general overseer, that it is more important to obey leaders than to question what they are doing. It was unthinkable to question the motives of the pastor, as we were made to take all sermons hook line and sinker." In the words of Interviewee 3 she said:

"Pastors operating under this persuasive and manipulative precept are often convinced that they are the only ones who can accurately hear from God. Under the constant exposure to this idea that "The spirit of God speaks through me", church members often become convinced that they indeed need their pastor to think for them. In essence, their personal fellowship with the Lord has been abdicated for a relationship with a man. As a result, they lose their confidence in being able to discern the will of God for their lives."

Explaining further FGD11 said “But in the new generation churches in Port Harcourt, pathos is the most adopted psychology by church owners, to create believability and acceptability. This is because; their style of miracle and manipulation makes their members bow to their whims and caprices without questions. For instance, a pastor will call a woman out of the congregation and tell her the problem(s) that brought her to the church. He then prays for her; she falls to the ground “under the anointing” and she is healed. No member of the congregation will want to ask questions because; they have been persuaded and cajoled by the performance of the pastor, whom they see as the man ordained by God. This is the extent Pathos can play on the emotions of people.

Bothering on the same question, Interviewee 1 said “These new generation pastors will not preach about tithe without mentioning Malachi 3:8 “Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, wherein have we robbed thee, in tithes and offering?” because, it is in their favour. Nobody in the congregation would want to ask what gave rise to Malachi 3:8. How can man rob his creator? Does God need our money? God is a giver not a taker”.

Also speaking on the same subject FGD2 maintained that “The new generation churches, in Port Harcourt, use the miracle tactics (Pathos- emotions) to control their members and make them believe that the church is the only place they can get their victory, through the man of God whom they believe, acquired the power from God.

On why the new generation churches in Port Harcourt use persuasion, prosperity and threats of hell fire on their flocks, a pastor who heads a church in Port Harcourt who was an interviewee has this to say:

“Fear is a great manipulative instrument of persuasion force; with it, you can make people do a lot of things that ordinarily they won't do, because, they are scared. Almost all religions of this world are built on the foundation of fear in order to excesses of man's based nature. It is this aspect of persuasive threats that most religious leaders and church owners use to their advantage. However, there are many people who prefer to believe in the very things that keep them enslaved in the name of belonging to a religious sect. These persons are too scared to ask questions on what they hear from the pulpit, for fear of going to hell. This, indeed, is another invention to scare people into religious captivity. For me, everybody has a personal relationship with God, so nobody or pastor should tell you that without his church, you cannot get victory, or sow financial seed for your healing; that is also a sin unto God he concluded.”

By implication of this data presented it implies that Pastors of the new generation churches use persuasion, cajoling and threatening words during sermons or in personal encounter with member than allowing people to decide for themselves.

Discussion of Findings

Analysis of findings revealed that people who reside within the Port Harcourt metropolis see miracle in their various churches as a money venture affair. They express bitterness over the issue. This could be seen in the expression of the respondent *Interview1* interviewed “I wondered why the new generation churches will sell anointing oil, salt, handkerchief, cap, perfume, stickers, etc inside the church at an exorbitant price; making you believe that your miracle is dependent on the item(s)” Similarly to this claim, *Interviewee2* puts it succinctly that “you go to church with a problem; the pastor will tell you to buy olive oil that cost two

hundred naira (#200) in the open market for two thousand naira (#2000) all in the name of miracle.” Though, another participating *FGD1* in responding to observed that “Church is a body of Christ Jesus. Whosoever that decimate the body of Jesus, for his or her selfish gains has God to contend with.” From the data gathered it is obvious that some of the men god seem not to fancy this biblical instruction. From this finding it implies that most of the respondents have ugly miracle experience of in their church. The finding of this study disagrees with the finding of Obiefuna, Nwadiakor and Umeanolue (2014) where they asserted that the proliferation of Churches in Nigeria has brought not only changing values, but also source of solutions to people's problems. In line with this study's finding Kitause and Achunike (2015) in their study noted that this has made life more difficult for the vast majority of people who increasingly turned to religious organizations to provide for their basic and spiritual needs. This finding is in consonance with the cognitive dissonance theory the research work was anchored. The theoretical orientation of this research is based on cognitive dissonance, which refers to a situation involving two conflicting attitudes, beliefs or behaviours.

Findings from data analysed revealed that it was difficult for churches and pastors to give yearly or quarterly account of its income and expenditure. In responding to the research question 2 *FGD8* a member of one of the Pentecostal churches maintained that “Pastor most times will tell church members that “the financial decisions of the church is not a public matter because, the congregation doesn't have the spiritual insight or maturity to understand the dynamics of church finances”. The respondents do not see it this way, they feel it is expected that such information is made public. However, a respondent interviewed who is a Pastor said that “on financial accountability of the church, actually, it doesn't matter what the church does with the church funds. The responsibility of members is simply to give.” In the view of *FGD6* “As a good Christian and a good steward, when one becomes aware of financial mismanagement in an organization, such as the church, one should be responsible enough, to take proactive actions, rather than keeping mute”. By implication of this finding, it is obvious that churches especially Pentecostals hardly give quarterly or yearly account of its expenditure. In line with this study, Ogbe (2019) in his study, noted that in as much as churches sometimes do not reveal their financial status Pentecostal churches engaged in activities such as building entrepreneur skills, running of clinics and schools, and the beneficiaries are both members and the non-members. It is quite clear that pastors do not like maintaining good financial relations as the study revealed. Disagreeing with this Obayi and Onyebuchi (2013) in their study noted that public relations techniques can serve as effective approach in maintaining good pastoral communication between a clergy and its members.

Analysis of findings revealed that Pastors of the new generation churches use persuasion, cajoling and threatening words during sermons or in personal encounter with member than allowing people to decide for themselves. In line with this study, Adedu and Mekiliuwa, (2010), noted that rhetorical figurations, in discourse rhetoric, is that field of language often associated with the uses of languages, for the intent of persuading. They also revealed that rhetoric as the use of language, as a symbolic means of inducing cooperation in humans; which by nature respond to symbols.” They concluded by saying that rhetoric in public speaking, implies the skill of elegant and persuasive speaking. This is supported by the view of *FGD11* who said “But in the new generation churches in Port Harcourt, pathos is the most adopted psychology by church owners, to create believability and acceptability. This is because; their style of miracle and manipulation makes their members bow to their whims and caprices without questions. For instance, a pastor will call a woman out of the

congregation and tell her the problem(s) that brought her to the church. He then prays for her; she falls to the ground “under the anointing” and she is healed. No member of the congregation will want to ask questions because; they have been persuaded and cajoled by the performance of the pastor, whom they see as the man ordained by God. In line with this view *Interviewee3* said “Pastors operating under this persuasive and manipulative precept are often convinced that they are the only ones who can accurately hear from God. Under the constant exposure to this idea that “The spirit of God speaks through me”, church members often become convinced that they indeed need their pastor to think for them. In essence, their personal fellowship with the Lord has been abdicated for a relationship with a man. As a result, they lose their confidence in being able to discern the will of God for their lives.” In similar vein *FGD2* maintained that “The new generation churches, in Port Harcourt, use the miracle tactics (Pathos- emotions) to control their members and make them believe that the church is the only place they can get their victory, through the man of God whom they believe, acquired the power from God. The new generation churches in Port Harcourt use persuasion, prosperity and threats of hell fire on their flocks, as the study revealed. Perhaps this trend could be why Meyer (2004) in her study noted that African Independent Churches has been reconfigured by new approaches to the anthropology of Christianity in Africa, in general. From the theoretical standpoint, in the new generation churches, the pastors are very much aware that their sermonic styles (behaviour) are at variance with the practice of Christ, but preferred to go ahead with it because, of the gains (cognition) as the theory this study was pegged postulates.

Conclusion

It is disturbing that churches especially Pentecostals that are supposed to be a place of worship is turning into a business venture where miracle is sold. Church is now a serious business, as long as you can perform the “magic” of miracles; wealth shall flourish your way and nobody dare question you. From the findings we can conclude that people set up churches to dupe the unsuspecting public because; of the respect and fear most Nigerians have for God. Selfishness and garrulousness are the bane of these new generation churches; and as long as they are not checked, our religious clime will continually have this sweet savour of deceit.

Recommendations

Base on the findings the researcher made the following recommendations

1. Government must as a matter of urgency set up taskforces to investigate the veracities of these miracles we see and or hear daily; this will help ease off the religious tension and also create an atmosphere of cordiality and respect. And any pastor found wanting of fake miracles should be sanctioned.
2. Pastors and church owners should be advice that good financial relations can go a long way in positioning the image of the church in good light before the members of the church and the public in general.
3. Pastors should be mindful of their language when communicating with members; they should avoid threatening their members or cajoling them unnecessary against their will.

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