

New Frontier Of Evangelism Among Business Elites In South Eastern Nigeria

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Abstract

Change a pivotal driving force in nature, is also at work in human activities such as methods employed in religious practices of Prayer and Evangelism. The change that is visible here is in religious activity which involves acts of delivering the gospel message of Jesus Christ to an audience especially in a market setting. Market evangelism and prayer session are considered in this article as a new frontier in Christian Evangelism. The new frontier of Evangelism underscores a development in Christian mission and preaching of the word of God. It can also be understood as transition of Evangelism from ordained ministers to enthusiastic lay people. This paper discovered that market Evangelists have brought a turnaround in Christian mission and ministry especially in non church environment. It is also of note that market evangelist need some kind of training to give preaching the word of God respect and focus. It recommends that time which is the soul of any business should be taken into cognizance while market evangelism lasts. The paper adopted two theories of religion: sensitive and phenomenological theories to explain the phenomena. The theories employed will bring clarity and deeper understanding of this topic.

Key words – New Frontier, Evangelism, Business elites, Change, Market and Word of God

Introduction

Everything in this physical earth undergoes one form of change or the other. This was the position of Heraclitus ancient Greek philosopher. Every human activity be it politics, religious practice, scientific innovations, culture and other forms of human activity are in the state of motion.

Evangelism which is a Christian religious activity, undergoes change in its method, application, and context. This change is brought about by the influence from other co-existent social factors in human environment such as education, science and technology, cultural pluralism, materialism etc. Evangelism or the preaching of the good news of Jesus Christ, has witnessed a new frontier among south Eastern business elites. Originally, preaching was the exclusive preserve of men and women of God right from the time of ancient prophets of Israel, to the time of Jesus. The disciples of Jesus were never considered as prophets but evangelists following the new order created by

Jesus Christ. In the modern time, the process of Evangelism rests squarely on the shoulders of Catholic Priests and Deacons, Pastors and other clergies from many Christian denominations. Their work is to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the Christian faithful, nourish and maintain their spiritual growth and spiritual life. The lay faithful never bordered about the methods applied in the homilies delivered. They were only interested in feeling the impact of the preaching on their lives and that of their families.

Evangelism that was the responsibility of the lay faithful was those ones done during prayers at Christian groups or societies, preaching in buses and Bible classes for those who are not ordained ministers of the word.

A new frontier of evangelism however sprang up among Igbo business men and women in Igbo markets and business areas like a wide fire. The aim and purpose was to among other things establish the protection of life and property of business people and attraction of God's blessings on their businesses. It was also organised to cushion off the affronts of diabolical business people who are also doing business in the markets. The most surprising phenomenon in this new frontier of evangelism among the Igbo business elites is that preachers are business men and women themselves. The method and manner of delivering the Gospel of deliverance of Jesus is very intriguing. The organisers have set a new boundary in Gospel delivering as it concerns business elites for that matter. It appears from observation that business people in Igbo markets and elsewhere in Nigerian have decided to create a new way of evangelizing God's people in the markets and other business areas. The radicalization of Christian evangelism in this part of the world is sure to create evangelization of business people.

The work adopts sensitive **theory** of religion and phenomenological theory of religion as means of interpreting the observed religious problem.

Definition of Terms

Frontier: Frontier is a noun that has several meanings and can be applied variously. By geographical expression; frontier means a line or border separating two countries, states or communities. The synonyms of frontier include the following words and expressions: border, boundary, partition, borderline and dividing line. Others include, perimeter, limit, edge, rim and bonds. When considered from academics and scholarship, frontier is an undeveloped field of study; a topic inviting research and development. Princetons world net sees frontier as a wilderness at the age of a settled area of a country.

Oxford online dictionary defines frontier as the limit of understanding or achievement in a particular area. Vocabulary.com posits that frontier is a field of study that has not yet been explored. This author sees New Frontier as an open and compelling space for research promotion, investment, competition and redirection for advancement of knowledge and public gain.

Evangelism: Evangelism from the lay man's points of view is the spread of. The gospel of Jesus Christ from his native country Israel to the rest of the world. The word Gospel is referred to as the

“Good News” which brings salvation to all human problems and conditions. In the understanding of Metuh (1996:36) Evangelization is a human endeavour to spread the gospel message. As a human endeavour, evangelization could and should vary according to the context and circumstance of place, time and sometimes the skill of the evangelizer. In the same line of thought, Hick (1987, 23) said, to evangelize is to bear witness to God revealed by Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit.

New Frontier: Oxford learners dictionaries.com reveals that the phrase “New Frontier” was a phrase used by John F. Kennedy to describe his aims and policies at his inaugural in 1960 as American president. He said that the U.S.A. was on edge of a new frontier and asked Americans to join together for new achievement in space, science and social institutions.

Business Elites: This term is used in this paper to qualify educated, reasonable, resourceful and visionary business men and women in the aforementioned market environments. Market leaders or administrator are usually extract from the crop of business men and women.

Cultural Pluralism: This means complex culture existed in a society which is shared by members of the same community. This religio-culture climate results into culture interface and subsequent assimilation.

Market Evangelism: Market evangelism is Evangelistic outreach that happens in the market or market environment. The addresses are market people and those the visitors to the markets. Market Evangelism to a greater extend is propagated by business men and women themselves.

Business Evangelists: These are business men and women with deep religious orientations who deem it necessary to evangelise Igbo market environment. The are desirous to win souls for Christ even in an economic and nosy zone like market environment.

Theoretical foundation of the paper

Sensitive Theory of Religion

This is one of the trending theories of religion. It is published by Global journal of Arts and social sciences. Steven Reiss (2014) explains that sensitive theory of religion is a comprehensive psychological theory of religion which postulates that there are sixteen basic propensities in man that influence the psychological appeal of religious worship. In the conception of Reiss (2014) these desires include power, independence, curiosity, acceptance, order and saving. Others include honour, idealism, social contact, family, status, vengeance, romance, physical exercise and tranquility. This theory has expanded and deepened the psychological explanation to religious inclinations. Some of the psychological powers as enunciated by Resis are related to some extent. For instance, power and independence, status and family, social contacts, romance, honour, belong together. Saving, physical exercise and tranquility point to mental health. Acceptance, curiosity

and order tends towards maintenance of human psychological balance. This theory is a proper rational tool to explain the evangelizers trending in some Igbo markets. It captures human inclination towards maintaining some kind of security and comfort around his environment. Preaching and prayers at the markets discussed in this work point to Igbo man's inner desire to dominate his environment or at least become curious of events around him or her. Sensitive theory of religion answers the question that borders on order in an environment as a necessary channel to the achievement of progress and protection of lives and property. Related to this is the phenomenological theory of religion.

Phenomenological Theory of Religion

This is another theory that is used to explain the issue being discussed. Phenomenology theory explains human experience in relation to what is being perceived, in an environment. The phenomenological approach to the study of religion owes its conceptualization and development, in a large part, to Chantepie de La Saussaye, Kriestensen and Van der Leeuw. In its explanation, global journal of Arts and social science explains that this theory concerns the experiential aspect of religion. It views religion in relation to and consistent with religious orientation of the worshippers. Current prayer sessions and preaching in some Igbo markets under study is only but a proof that Christians at the markets show off their religious sentiments as it concerns them. This theory employed in this piece tries to explain that evangelistic practices by non ordained ministers, is an emerging religious phenomena. It is a new frontier in Christian evangelism given its peculiar place.

Evangelism in Scripture

Evangelism that is practiced today in Christian circles has its antecedents both in Old Testament tradition and the apostolic period. Present day practice of preaching the word of God cannot be divorced from the influence of earlier preaching traditions. It is germane at this point to appraise briefly the approaches employed in the aforementioned traditions of evangelism.

Evangelism in Old Testament

The word Evangelism is synonymous with New Testament tradition powered by the disciples of Jesus Christ and the immediate successors of the Apostles and disciples of Christ. Evangelism as a religious activity can be found in the Old Testament of the Bible. According to Jesus film project (online journal) there are about 40 verses in Christian scripture that portrays and captures the essence, objective purpose and addresses of evangelistic programmes in scripture. Few quotations from Old Testament account are however necessary for this sub-section.

Psalms 105:1. Give thanks to the Lord. Proclaim his greatness; Tell the nations what He has done.

The psalmist calls on people of Israel to proclaim God's greatness to other nations. This is a call to evangelize the known world then, about God's blessings and deliverances.

Isaiah 6:8. The call of prophet Isaiah was specifically to evangelize the people of Israel on the life of righteousness, justice, obedience and trust in their God. There is urgent need to repent and turn to their God as failure to abide by divine instruction will certainly lead to doom. Isaiah accepted to be God's spokesman to Israel when the Lord asked the question "whom shall I send? Who will be our messenger? Isaiah replied "I will go! Send me"

From this divine encounter, Isaiah become the Lord's messenger, evangelist and mouthpiece.

Isaiah 12:4. Evangelism is about proclaiming, broadcasting God's actions, deliverances, assurances and justice to the whole world. The prophecy of Isaiah 12:4 mandates the people of Israel to proclaim to the nations what Yahweh has done among his people Israel. The whole world should hear from the testimony of the nation Israel the marvelous works of the Lord. Israel's testimony is a form of evangelization to neighbouring nations. It will boost the acceptance of Israel's God over others. The knowledge of God's goodness to Israel should not be restricted to Israel's boundary but beyond.

In Ezekiel 3:17-19. Evangelism is considered as a divine responsibility. The Lord's instruction to prophet Ezekiel affirms this – mortal man, I have made you watchman for the people of Israel. Evangelism or proclamation of God's message to those it is meant for, implies being sent by God for a specific purpose. Prophet Ezekiel's evangelism to God's people in the Good News Bible commentary was principally based on four main issues. These include;

- (a) God's call on Ezekiel to be a prophet, (b) God's coming judgement and the destruction of Jerusalem (c) Messages from the Lord regarding his judgement on Israel's neighbours
- (d) Comfort for Israel after the fall of Jerusalem.

Ezekiel had an uphill task to evangelize a stubborn people. But he had to do the Lord's bidding.

He should warn the people about God's judgement that is imminent. The social and political considerations of Israelites who are in exile in Babylonia and those in Jerusalem may impact negatively on the acceptance of his message to the people of Israel.

According to Ezekiel 38:23, It is the duty of the evangelist to announce to the nations God's plan of action and might. God instructed Ezekiel to condemn the atrocities of Gog the chief ruler of Meshach and Tubal in the Land of Magog. Gog the king of Meshach and tubal has an evil plan to attack defenceless, peace loving people of Israel who had been gathered back from many nation of the world by the Lord. To execute this evil plan, Gog had to enter into agreement with Lybya, Persia, Sudan, Gonier, Togarmah and other neighbouring nations to fight Israel who are now living in peace with one another. Prophet Ezekiel, God's evangelist, had been sent by God to announce God's judgement regarding the King's evil thought.

The above exposition of few Old Testament passages pinpoints the function of the prophet to their immediate community. It includes also the proclamation of God's words, degrees of judgements and God's intentionality in a particular situation or context. Actions bordering on proclamation

make them to be referred to as Evangelist in the contemporary religious sense. In the present religious understanding of the term, evangelist implies one who preaches the word of God, God's mouth piece, God's servant, one who utters prophecy in God's name. Some evangelists claim they are sent by God to say things in his name which means that they are sent like the prophets of Old. This argument can be sustained from the meaning of prophecy as explained by Ugwueye (2002:3)

By prophecy we understand not specifically or even principally the forecasting of the future but rather the mediation and interpretation of the divine mind and will. It was in this sense that the term prophet, one who speaks for another, spokesman or interpreter was used from about 5th century BC to designate those who interpreted God's words (p.3).

Present day evangelist or preacher of the word, explain God's words in relation to current issues affecting both individual and community. They claim to be interpreters of divine mind and will. This can be seen in their evangelistic Frenzy at the market places. In Weber's explanation as translated by Fishchoff (1993:46) "a prophet is an individual bearer of charisma, who by virtue of this mission proclaims a religion, who preaches an older revelation or a founder of religion who claims to bring completely new deliverance" The characteristic trait of the present day evangelists especially those at Igbo markets are charismatic in their preaching exercises in consonance with prophetic tradition of the Old Testament. Evangelists at the markets belief they are acting on divine mandate to preach the word of God. The objective of the preaching is to renew Christian religion in its practices by market men and women in the present dispensation.

Evangelism in New Testament

Call for discipleship formation and eventual sending by the Lord Jesus, laid the foundation and eventual practice of evangelism in the New Testament. Basically, the disciples that were called joined in the ministry of Jesus by preaching the kingdom as enunciated by Jesus. Jesus calls two brothers Simon and Andrew as he walked on the sea of Galilee. He asked them to follow him. He promised to make them fishers of men instead of fish. Jesus also called two sons of Zebedee to his ministry (Mark 1: 19-20). Fischer and Hasitslika (2002:111) explain that Jesus wanted collaboration with those he chose as disciples and apostles. To them, the manner and urgency of Jesus selection of his followers reveal its urgency and time bond. ... there is an immediate need of helpers to join his mission on earth. Apart from partaking in Jesus brotherhood of being in his company, Fisher and Hasitshka explained that Jesus disciples are to continue the mission Jesus and like him, to proclaim the reign of God and heal human beings of their illness (p. 115). Evangelism in the New Testament is based on the tradition of "Sending" begun by Jesus. Sending by Jesus is made more explicit in Mathew 5: 14 – You are the light of the world. Matthew 10:16 – I am sending you like sheep among wolves. Luke 10:1 – The appointment of seventy-two others in pairs.

The proclamation of the Good News about the deeds of Jesus Christ has in its kitty the person of Jesus, his mission to the world and miracles as evidence of in-breaking kingdom. In his interpretation Rhymer (1791:7) said,

The miracles of Jesus are only one part of a much wider picture, the whole pattern of early Christian beliefs about Jesus. The miracles were just part of evidence presented by those who had known Jesus, to help their followers to realize who Jesus really was, what he had achieved for them, and how he continued to affect their lives.

To Igbo market evangelizers then, theirs is a continuation of the command of Jesus to his disciples to preach the Gospel to all corners of the earth. In their spiritual impulse the divine command of preaching the word of God must be fulfilled in their own time and space. Present day evangelist presupposed the working of miracles as was in the days of the Apostles of Jesus and the disciples of the apostles. Testimonies impacting traders businesses and life styles will become the proof that traders will hold on to and sustain market prayers and evangelization. New frontier of evangelism suggests new approaches to evangelise the human society about God's word and the mission of Jesus to the world. Ogunewu (1985) explains that evangelization is a key factor in Christianity which is a reproductive mechanism for the church. New frontier of evangelization in Nigeria implies that Christian worshipping communities adopts new methods of expanding God's kingdom in the light of present conflicting issues in religion.

Accordingly, Ogunewu explains evangelization as a direct consequence of the obedience to the Great commission and this has been a principal preoccupation of the church from apostolic era to present day prophets and evangelists. Meeks (1985:31) states that – "It is the responsibility of the entire church and every individual is mandated to be personally involved in it." Meek's position may have given the needed push and justification for market evangelization across markets in Igbo society.

Causes of Market Evangelism

One thing led to another in the evolution of Igbo market gospel preaching or evangelisation. In the interpretation of Australia bureau of statistics, cause and effect is a relationship between events or things where one thing is the result of the other or others. This is a combination of action and reaction. From this insight, we can proceed to investigate the immediate and remote causes of market evangelism in some market in Igbo land.

Success in Business

Every business person, investor, inventor, or entrepreneur wants to see the growth of his business or expansion and acceptance of ones ideology by the members of human society. Success in the presentation of google online dictionary is, the accomplishment of an aim or purpose. Medium.com.online dictionary sees success as

The good or bad outcome of an undertaking. Medium.com establishes five keys to success to include, determination, skill, discipline, passion and luck. According to www.dictionary.com,

Success is the favourable or prosperous termination of attempts or endavours, the accomplishment of one's goals, the attainment of wealth, position, honours or the

like; a performance of achievement that is marked by success as by the attainment of honours.

This definition captures the understanding of success by the average Igbo business man or woman. The aim of venturing into business, trade or any other means of livelihood by the Igbo is to achieve maximum progress to be able to elevate oneself to a reasonable social status among the Igbo elite. Iheanacho (2016:28) articulates financial break through as a positive sign of success in business. He says:

Financial breakthroughs come under miracles of economic nature. They can also be classified as prayers answered from material point of need. Financial successes are gateways or channels to further successes and developments. It can be the foundation of a vibrant business, where hundreds of people can be employed in companies or firms producing one particular product or rendering an important service to human society.

Prayer gatherings or activities in some markets is therefore primed on business expansion. Preaching the word of God at such gathering encourages trust in God who is the source of blessings. Business men and women are encouraged to partake in the evangelism and the prayer rituals for few hours to attract divine blessings. Anetoh (2017:1) sees prayer as a fundamental human religious activity. He avers that, prayer is an essential aspect of religious worship. Human beings worship the supreme Being through prayer. Thus, prayer becomes a deep recognition of divine ultimacy. God is the ultimate reality and the supreme Being. Generally, human beings pray especially in moments of confusion.

Akam (2008) understands prayer as one of the great mysteries of the Christian faith. He went on to say that prayer to a god or gods is a feature of many religions of the world.

Influence of Igbo Philosophy of life Preservation

Igbo philosophy of life establishes life as a gift from almighty God which must be protected at all cost and preserved from harm. Iheanacho (2016:7) expatiates on this:

For the Igbo, Life should be guarded with enabling conditions, laws and material benefit. This can explain Igbo rationale for economic well-being of her citizens. Strong economic base galvanizes other socio-economic activities of the Igbo. For the Igbo then, life is a precious gift from God. It must be nourished, protected and enhanced through human efforts. While doing this, caution must be applied so that no one may willingly offend his neighbor who is in the same enterprise of life with him.

Ejizu (1986:143) had earlier on explained Igbo worldview as that which possessed respect and reverence for life. This religious and psychological pedestal as a matter of fact, influences Igbo mental resolve to protect life and property using every possible means.

He says:

Human life is supreme and everything is done to keep on. Thus sickness diminishes life and so its cause must be diagnosed through divination and appropriate measures to restore life. Thus this world is exhorted and valued more than any other world. Man wants to live long and thus he keeps in touch positively with the spiritual powers who, as it were guarantee his security and continued existence.

Madu (1996:7) gives more clarity to Ejizu's position. The Igbo can find answers to their day to day existential problems. Both the gods and medicine (ogwu) can give them confidence and security to life crises periods. No wonder they patronize the homes of the diviners and other mystics and medicine man. The preservation of life and means to achieve it is at the centre of every Igbo person. This desire and determination pervades in religions practiced by the Igbo be it African religion, Christianity, Islam etc. It is from this grunding religious principle that Christian business men and women in Igbo markets seek to preserve their lives and property via market evangelism and prayer sessions. This philosophy of life of the Igbo argues strongly for the establishment of prayers and evangelistic outreaches in market places in Igbo society. There is the tendency that some traders in Igbo markets might decide to operate in Hobessian state of nature where the strong strangulates the weak and were the feable recklines under the might of the strong. If this becomes the attitude and behaviour of some business elites in the markets, there is then the need to call on God to intervene in the affairs of men and women in the markets across Igbo land.

Threat to life and Property

Threat to life and property is a psychological condition that creates fear, anxiety, worry, protective tendencies and pro-active defensive mechanism in human life. In the understanding of Nelson-Jones (1989: 47), the fear of death and non living is the underlying fear from which all other anxieties are derived. Anxiety can be both helpful and harmful. It has a survival value in that it alerts you to realistic dangers to your existence. The protection of life and property is a high value in Igbo scheme of things. Threat to life is a battle for survival in terms of healthy-living, longevity and family propagation. Threat to property and business points to attack on means of sustaining life in totality. If care is not taken and attack uncheck mated, it can lead to suffering, poverty or retrogression of one's family or success already achieved. As the militant church, Christians are called to resist evil practices or evil conditions anywhere they can be found especially if it confronts Christian standards. Principally, they are called to be witnesses to Christ's Gospel and ministry. Few Bible passages from the new Testament exemplify this divine call to witnessing. Luke 11:23 states, he who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters. Luke 12:9.

But the man who disowns me in the presence of men, will be disowned in the presence of God. Matt 26:41. You should be awake and praying not to be put to the test. The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. One of the cardinal reasons for market evangelism across Igbo land is to be witnesses to Christ Jesus even in business environment. To witness to Christ in the markets entails confronting head on perceived occultic or democratic practice of few businessmen and bring it to

justice. In this condition, praying on weekly or monthly basis against forces of darkness becomes necessary and timely.

Evidence of Witchcraft and Occultic Practice in the Markets

This is the crux of the matter. The principle of causality establishes two main issues in cause and effect correlation. One action leads to another, one is determinant variable and the indeterminant variable. The noticed exercise of occultic practices and witchcraft among traders led credence to the demand by Christian market men and women to conjecture market prayer sessions and evangelism. Achebe (1986: 1) observed thus, any problem that causes distress to the human condition and impedes the maximum development of the individuals, especially the young, needs attention. The observation of various forms of sacrifices at some corners of the markets, frequent fire outbreaks, business collapses and sudden rise to fame of poor businessmen and women among others, constitute grave suspicion of the existence of witchcraft among traders. The prevalence of spiritual attack cannot be ruled out in a society that boasts of medicine, magic or spiritual attack. Spiritual attack is occultic as well as witchcraft. Oxford advanced learners dictionary defines attack “as an act of using violence to try to hurt or kill somebody, a sudden period of feeling of emotion such as fear. Madu (2004: 73) sees spiritual attack “as the attempt to disrupt the status quo ante of a personality or a group. It is an attempt to create a cosmic imbalance, a cosmic disequilibrium. It is a calculated attempt to cause pain, to deprive one of self fulfillment, self realization and self actualization. A spirit attack is an invisible power channeled upon an individual or family to destroy, reduce or dominate one’s life or wellbeing, some scholars have tried to explain witchcraft in relation to its nefarious activities in human society.

Harris and Swayerr (1968: 4) in Ekwunife (2011) explains the hidden agenda of an African witchcraft.

Somewhere within human category there lies the possibility of ill-disposed living human beings attempting to destroy or endanger the well-being of their fellow men through witchcraft... Much of their belief in witchcraft is linked with the idea that living persons can assume a spirit form which is able to leave the physical body and hurt the spiritual counterpart of the object of their evil intentions.

Quarcoopome (1987: 150) understands witchcraft as the belief in the possession of some supernatural powers by which evil or harm can be affected and good deed done. Some of the witch spirits are said to be strong and others weak. Ekwunife (2011: 15) defines witchcraft as that African occult science through which persons (male/female) genders with highly domineering propensities coupled with greed, psychically and mysteriously afflict victims with the help of hidden or familiar contact instruments, with a view to subjecting them to the witches/wizards selfish wills. From available evidence at the markets, there is the presence of occultic people in and around the markets. To leave it unattended to would create perennial fear and discontentment in the market environment. To confront it will create an atmosphere of spiritual redemption especially to those under the fear of the unexpected. Even though few people might be unwilling to cooperate with organizers of market prayer sessions and preaching, they are however helpless because of the

tyranny of the majority. Market prayer sessions and preaching has come to be a source of divine security and protection of lives and properties in the markets and other business areas as the case may be. The idea of praying and preaching at the same time in an economic zone like market, must certainly create some kind of social and psychological conflicts among business men and women in some markets. This scenario is captured by Amaladoss (1995: 105) this way,

When good and evil exist together in persons and in society how can conflict be avoided? Some conflicts are promoted by those who want to dominate, oppress, exploit. Resisting these is a duty. Such resistance is inevitably conflictual.

Market – Evangelism or similar religious activities can be understood in some social quarters as creative conflict which has the capability of creating peace and harmony among many people in the markets. In our word today, peaceful co-existence might remain elusive goal if not fought for. Amaladoss justifies creative conflict as necessary channel to create a peaceful society. He asserts that,

A conflict in order to be creative must aim at promoting a human value. It must be non violent. It must not be destructive. It must be animated by love for others, for justice for peace. It must challenge everyone including oneself to a change of heart. It must provoke constructive action.

The prayer sessions and evangelistic outreaches in some markets in Igbo society are in itself a process of spiritual renewal which challenges every businessman or woman in the aforementioned markets in Igbo society to a change of attitude in relation to doing business.

The business Evangelists

This comprises young men and women who are desirous to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all corners of the earth. This brand of business evangelists have many things in common. One clear common identity is the radical posture of the evangelists. The second trait is dedication to gospel outreach. The third and most surprising is the manner employed in the preaching of the word of God in the markets. An educated person with practical analytic mindset will notice that most evangelists have never being trained with the modern tools for evangelism like attending a Bible college, or any equivalent higher school that trains modern evangelists. This negligence on the importance of training on the part of market evangelists hampers the effective handling of evangelism in the market. Proper formation of market evangelist would make for the adoption of proper and most efficient method of evangelism; it will also lead to proper and judicious use of time especially in the morning and afternoon hours where customers from far and near come to purchase goods, make inquiries and initiate business links.

The use of language creates a discordant note in regard to the theme of the preaching and objective in focus. Some evangelists or preachers in the markets under investigation are never mindful of the words used in preaching God's word to people in the markets. Some words are damning and judgmental. It lacks diplomacy or advocacy. Sometimes what one hears makes the hearer have disdain for the preachers and the word being preached about. One thing is clear here, businessmen cannot do the work of preaching God's Kingdom better than men and women of God

trained specially for this. This is clear from method and approach to current issues in the world today. Preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ is not to be done in a fashion that suggests that emotions play a dominant influence in the life of the preachers. One can accuse the market preachers of being escapists or employing bias against other social issues affecting them and other market people.

Time of Prayer

There is time for everything under Heaven so says the Holy Scripture (Ecclesiastes 3:1-8). This implies that every human activity is time bond. Once an activity is set in motion, the next question to be asked about is the time for its end or conclusion. Thus, time allotted to any human activity becomes that principle that regulates its activity from beginning to end. To Maduegbuna (2005: 41), therefore,

Time is related to targets. You cannot talk of target without reference to the time frame. If a government purposes to build a stadium equivalent to the one under construction in Abuja capital of Nigeria, there must be time frame within which period the government would want the contractor to specify the expected period of completion.

When compared to our maker evangelizers, there seems to be no strict time set for evangelism and prayer. What is obtainable is time as dictated by the market evangelists.

The end of the prayer and evangelism is determined by the preacher of the day. The arrangement of the prayer session is determined by the section of the market themselves. While business is going on in line A for instance, a prayer session can occur in line B, C or D. While some use drums to animate the songs, others use high microphones and any other form of public address system. At the end of the day, someone who visits any of the markets is confronted by cacophony of noises emanating from various sections of a market. There is the tendency to extend the normal time given by market authority for such purpose. This extension is principally done because the brother or sister evangelist preys on the naivety of market people during prayers. At times this zealous activities of the modern day market preachers extend even to afternoon. At this point, it becomes a nuisance to the general public. Time not properly spent or utilized is a loss business or economic wise. This assumption is premised on the Nigerian saying that “time is money or creative resource”. Maduegbuna further asserts that time is perishable. He argues that,

Time is perishable like an egg or orange. If time is lost unnecessarily at any point in time, it is not retrieved. Time is in elastic and no matter how high the demand, the supply cannot be increased. Mismanagement of time leads to frustration and disappointment (P.7).

Random Sampling of Markets in Igbo Society as Empirical Evidence

Umuahia Market (Ogumabiri Umuahia)

This market before the ascendance of political authority of former Governor Theodore Orji of Abia State, (2007 – 2015) was the economic centre for Umuahia metropolis and adjoining communities. It was what a modern market could look like. It expanded on the four corners of the market to accommodate ever increasing market men and women and numerous customers. At a time, Governor Orji had to relocate it to place outside Umuahia metropolis. This action of government of the day led some traders to do their businesses in the open place popularly called “Gate”. Gate therefore became an improvised market for dislodged traders from Umuahia market. Despite this condition besetting economic activity at Ogumabiri market, traders and other business people gather around “gate” to pray and sing praise to God. The layout is similar to lose in other places like, Enugu, Aba, Onitsha, Nnewi and Nsukka markets respectively. On the day of prayer, traders gather in the open place with their drums and public address systems. The lead preacher delivers his homily to address present reality in the market place as well as general issues affecting members of his audience. The impact is felt as this revolutionizes the traders belief in God’s care and providence. There is denouncement of witches and wizards operative in the business environment.

Nkwo Nnewi Market

Prayer and preaching session formally began at Nkwo Nnewi in the year 2012. There is a general prayer organized on the first Monday of every month. The writer discovers that Nkwo Nnewi is divided into three sections namely machine parts, motor parts and a section for food stuff, kitchen wares and clothes. Reasons for the beginning of the prayers include among others things general insecurity of lives and property. Other reasons include case of practice of witches and wizards, occurrence of sudden deaths, various forms of ill health-stroke, madness, bad luck and other forms of wicked practices among the traders in the market. The existence of multi faiths and practice in the market gave credence to the practice of many unorthodox things in the market. While Christian traders might wish to do oral prayers with songs of praise and deliverance, those in African traditional religion may wish to do some sacrifices in the market either in the night, morning or at any other time. The effect of practicing one religion at the expense of the other may, create some conflict like religious conflict, economic conflict and psychological conflict. The tyranny of the majority nonetheless gave Christians at the upper hand to organize prayer and preaching sessions for market men and women operative at Nnewi market. Such radical decision is expected to address perennial fears of damnation, retrogress and attack of the unknown enemy of progress.

Enugu Market (Ogbete Market)

Enugu metropolis can boast of many large markets to include Ogbete market, Aria market (New market) Abakpa market, New heaven market etc. our concern regarding our topic however is Ogbete market. Before, former Governor Chimaroke Nnamani of Enugu state (199 – 2007) Catholics in the market took it upon themselves to say the “Angelus” at 12.noon in the market. Gradually, the importance of public prayer entered the minds of businessmen and women at

Ogbete market. During the reign of O.C. Peters as market chairman, people suggested that prayers be said during market meetings to address general state of fear in the market.

The fear of the unknown can be said to be the main reasons for the push for prayers at Ogbete market, Enugu. Traders noticed stranger happenings at the market which suggests some kind of occultic practice. Materials used for sacrifices were seen at various corners of the market. This suspicion created fear of uncertainty as a matter of fact. Consequent upon this, the Ogbete market authority approved that prayers be held in the market. This was during the time of Governor Chimaroke Nnamani. As of today, this attitude to prayer can only function on line or zone basis in the market. There is however a fundamental change in the attitude to prayer and evangelism in the market.

Main Market Onitsha and Ochanja Market Upper Iweka

These are the dominant markets in Onitsha town in Anambra state, Nigeria. The markets house many commercial and economic activities for the citizens of the state and by extension Nigerians who patronize many traders and craft men and women. Christmas season every year showcases volumes of commercial and economic activities going on simultaneously. This can be understood to be the case because Onitsha is the commercial nerve centre of the Eastern part of Nigeria. A visit to any of the aforementioned markets on a good day would strike surprise to a buyer. The market is in a praying mood. Shops located in a particular section of the market are locked down, traders and buyers stand around their shops to listen to market evangelists and the conduct of prayers at the end of the prayer exercise. At Ochanja market for instance, a day is set aside once a month for whole market prayer and preaching. At Onitsha main market, this standard is unattainable because of the size of the market. What holds here is section by section evangelization and prayer activities. As early as 8.am people have gathered in front of their shops for the spiritual exercise of the day. No one may object to this because it is based on general consensus. Minority opinion or objection cannot carry any weight of reversal because of majority rule.

It is a common belief here that the causative factors responsible for prayers and evangelistic session in other markets across Igbo land is obtainable at Onitsha markets also. The pomp and pageantry accompanying the preachings and prayer session justifies the *raison de' etre* of the whole process. The emergence of enthusiastic business evangelizers in these markets suggests that Christian businessmen and women want to pursue the salvation in the name of Jesus Christ to a logical conclusion. This, they do by proclaiming the worship of Jesus over perceived satanic forces in the markets patronized by Christians.

Nsukka Market (Ogige Market)

The culture and social affinity arouses social inclusiveness among citizens of Igbo ethnic nationally. This tradition is responsible for the commencement of market prayer and evangelization among traders at Ogige market, Nsukka. Historically, prayer sessions and market evangelism at Ogige market, Nsukka began in 2002 around the months of June and July of that year. One Ezeugwu was the market chairman and brain behind the commencement of the prayers

sessions and evangelistic activity at Nsukka market. The Idea came about as a result of contacts by Nsukka traders who went to Aba and Onitsha markets to buy goods and materials for their shops. What confronted Nsukka traders at Onitsha and Aba market was able to Ignite the demand in the trader to begin their own brand of market prayer and evangelism.

Time of prayer: This is fixed on the first week of every month at 7.30 to 12pm. At the onset, the conduct of the prayer sessions was shared among ministers from the Catholic, Anglican and other Christian denominations. As time progressed Reverend Father Obayi from Catholic Diocese of Nsukka was nominated to continue the market prayer activities and evangelization.

Objectives of the market prayer and evangelism include among others: the progress of traders at the market, protection from wicked people, protection from occultic people, either traders or buyers. The last but not the least is unity among the trader at Ogige market.

Findings

This academic discourse was able to find the following things in relation to the topic under discourse.

1. That there is the emergence of new brand of evangelists in Igbo markets especially in the urban cities.
2. Issues bordering on life preservation, protection of material wealth and fear of the unknown promote market prayer and evangelism.
3. Christian business elites embark of prayer and evangelism as a religious weapon against any form of occultic practice in the markets.
4. Market evangelizers are desirous to change the spiritual landscape of the markets where there is fear of the unknown.
5. It is common belief among leaders that business failure or no progress in business is not ordinary but an evil machination from an enemy of progress.
6. Majority of the business people in the markets have strong belief that evangelism and prayer sessions in the market open closed doors of progress and poor God's blessing on their businesses.

Conclusion

New frontier of Evangelization in Igbo markets shows the emergence of new crop of Christian Evangelists. It is a transition from the ordained to the lay faithful which signals a new dawn in doing God's business. The emergence of market evangelists is phenomenal as its impact is being interpreted by both business men and women themselves. These influences of market evangelism cum prayer session appears to have answered many questions that prompted its beginning. One of such was the fear about any infraction on one's life and protection of acquired property and goods in the markets. The tradition of market gospel among business elites has come to stay giving its spread among south eastern Nigeria business people.

The researcher was able to go fact finding mission in the markets as a means of supporting facts extracted from text books, journals and other sources at his disposal. In the end, some findings were made which is expected to spur further research on this novel topic. The Newness of this topic can account for the collection of scarce data. Nonetheless, oral interviews, observation became veritable instruments used to gather ideas and objectives for market prayers and Evangelical outreaches in some Igbo markets. Market evangelism and prayer sessions in Igbo market to some extent showcase the people commitment to control their environment and put in end or contact any life threatening situation. It justifies Igbo man's submission to God's authority in every situation in life. Even though an economic zone, the Igbo business elite still finds religion and its practices of prayer and communication to God, the ultimate source of strength and protection.

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