

Winning Souls for the Church through Propaganda: The Changing Narrative

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Abstract

The paper attempts to ascertain how diverse Christian denominations in Nigeria use propaganda and persuasion for membership acquisition and retention. The paper also investigated the veracity or otherwise of the claim in certain quarters that propaganda and persuasion are potent machinery for acquiring, retaining and sustaining church membership in Pentecostal churches as opposed to what obtains in Catholic and Anglican religious denominations. In line with the rabid quest and consequent unhealthy rivalry prevalent among diverse Christian religious denominations in the country, it is imperative to devise alternative strategies that would make the rat race for membership acquisition and retention among Christian churches in Nigeria less competitive. The need for Christians to imbibe the virtues of practicing their faith with good deeds and loving their neighbours as they love themselves triggered this study. Questionnaire and personal interviews served as the measuring instrument. To ensure good outcome, 15 participants were selected from the leaders of catholic, Anglican and Pentecostal churches in Port Harcourt, Lagos and Abuja as well as members who have been affected by either propaganda or persuasion. Using survey research design and interviews, it was unveiled amongst others that albeit most Christian churches in Nigeria and elsewhere frown at the utility of crude forms of propaganda and persuasive devices, they extensively use subtle gimmicks ranging from evangelization, conversion, adoration, hour of grace, dead arising, lame walking, blind seeing, dumb talking as well as barren becoming pregnant to attract and retain membership. The paper therefore recommended amongst others that CAN and other relevant religious umbrella bodies should enhance monitoring and regulation of the activities of Christian churches in Nigeria.

Keywords: .Propaganda .Persuasion .Faith .Heresy

Introduction

Etymologically, Christianity is the religion that follows Jesus Christ's teachings. Indeed, this religion is based on the life, teachings, and examples of Jesus Christ. The name "Christian" was first applied to the disciples in Antioch, as recorded in the Holy Bible, in Acts of the Apostles 11:26. For the first 1500 years of Christian history, there were no "denominations" within the Christian Church as there are today (www.religionfacts.com). Indeed, various offshoots of religious groups existed but they were considered "heresies" and not part of the Christian Church. Most of them were small and until the 16th Century, were never influential. From the beginning of Christianity through the Middle Ages, there was only one; the Catholic ("Universal") Church (www.religionfacts.com).

The protestant reformation split the Catholic Church into many different denominations such as the Lutheran Church, the Anglican Communion and many others. This is referred to as "schism" (McBride, 1983).

Today, there are over two billion Christians, one third of humanity. Christianity divided into the Roman Catholic Church and Eastern Orthodox Church in the great schism of 1054 when disagreements arose over where the Catholic Church should have its headquarters; whether in Rome in honour of the leader of the Apostles St Peter who worked and died in Rome, or in Constantinople in honour of St Paul who was deemed to have done most of the preaching around that area. However, the choice of Rome was boosted by the fact that Emperor Constantine proclaimed that the Church should be given complete autonomy and sovereign status (McBride, 1983).

It is very unlikely that the earliest church (Catholic Church) used such words like propaganda and persuasion to acquire and sustain members because of its negative connotation. What this early church members used to convince people was just a demonstration of their faith. This was evident during the Plague in Europe.

Catholic and Anglican priests believe that propaganda and persuasion is used only in relation to other churches. For a better understanding of this study, it will be in our best interest to give an elaborate explication of the term propaganda and persuasion.

Propaganda has been defined as a form of communication that attempts to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist (Jowett and O' Donnel, 2012). Public opinion and behavioural change can be affected via propaganda. The purpose of propaganda is to change opinion but more importantly to influence one's decision(s).

Words frequently used as synonyms for propaganda are lies, distortion, deceit, manipulation, mind control, brain washing and psychological warfare. The major aim of a propagandist is to convince and dissuade the opponent to accept his point of view.

The propagandist attempts to alter the opinions of his subjects or viewers by convincing them of the validity of his own. In order to accomplish this, he or she uses a variety of methods and techniques. To this end, propaganda can be simply conceptualized as manipulation of public opinion.

Bettinghaus (1973) in Ndolo (undated) defines persuasion as "a conscious attempt by one individual to change the attitudes, beliefs or the behaviour of another individual or group of individuals through the transmission of some messages."

Persuasion is "free will". For persuasion to be persuasion, the person or audience being persuaded must be free to accept or reject the argument presented; must be free to comply with or refuse to comply with the action requested. Persuasion, in its purest sense, is gaining the compliance of one who is completely free to comply or not to comply with the persuasive message.

Statement of the Problem

The Catholic Church was the first and only church that was in existence until about 1500AD when the Protestant Reformation occurred that gave rise to so many other different denominations. In Nigeria for instance, some of these denominations happen to have more members than the others. This can be linked to the fact that the economy of the country has dwindled so much over time, that the situations we find ourselves in have misled many members of the Church in their quest for miracles and material things. It is also probable that many reasons such as the quest for freedom and independence may have influenced the minds of those that instigated the multiplicity of denominations within the Church as time went on.

Therefore, the question about whether these denominations developed different strategies of propaganda and persuasion to acquire and most importantly, retain members is what necessitated this study which examined the use of propaganda and persuasion by different Christian denominations for membership acquisition and retention.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

- i. How do leaders of Christian religious denominations use propaganda and persuasion to acquire and retain members in their churches?
- ii. What roles do propaganda and persuasion play in membership acquisition and retention in Nigeria?
- iii. Are propaganda and persuasion still widely used by Nigerian Churches in membership acquisition and retention?
- iv. To what extent do diverse Christian religious denominations use propaganda and persuasion for membership acquisition and retention?

Review of Related Literature

Propaganda in the Catholic, Anglican and Pentecostal Churches

Propaganda in the most neutral sense means to disseminate or promote certain ideas. In 1622, the Vatican established the "Sacra Congregation de Propaganda Fide", meaning the "Sacred Congregation for Propagating the Faith". In 1988, the Church changed the title of the quotation to "Congregation for the Evangelization of people". Because the propaganda of the Roman Catholic Church had as its intent, spreading the faith to the new world, as well as opposing Protestantism, the word propaganda lost its neutrality and subsequent usage rendered the word pejorative. Propaganda represents the work of large organization or groups to win over the public for special interest through a massive orchestration of attractive conclusions packaged to conceal their persuasive purpose and lack of sound supporting reasons.

As earlier stated, it is very unlikely that in the early church, such words as propaganda and persuasion were used to acquire and retain members. What the early church members used to convince people was just a demonstration of their faith. They were practicing the love of God and neighbour which is the greatest of all commandments Jesus stressed upon (Matt 22:36-40). Majority of them exhibited their love for God through Martyrdom, which helped create membership for the Christians. The whole history of the Catholic Church is filled with stories of heroic Christians who chose martyrdom to witness their belief in Christ. Christ himself led the way as the king of martyrs. Stephen followed his master to death and became the first Christian martyr. The roster of Christian martyrs is lengthy and impressive. Ignatius of Antioch, Cecilia, Lawrence, Agnes, Clement and Lucy are but a few of those who displayed magnificent courage in standing against those who would lure them away from their religious conviction about Jesus and his way (McBride, 1983).

Countless thousands of Christians were deprived of their civil rights, went to jail, endured torture and exile, the loss of property and the hostility of the non-Christian community because they were strong and loyal to their faith.

The pertinent question here is: what made them do it? The love of Christ urged them on. The faith, hope and love which Jesus asks of every Christian are sometimes illustrated in acts of heroism, as in the lives of the martyrs. So neither propaganda nor persuasion was needed to win membership, they only needed faith and love. A typical example of such acts is the *Plague in Europe*.

The Black Death is the name given to the great plague which raged during the reign of Pope Clement VI between 1347 and 1350, the same period in which the Hundred Years' War between England and France was beginning. It struck every country in Europe, killing one-third to one-half of the population. It affected several places such as Genoa, Venice, Italy, Siena, Sicily, Marseilles, Narbonne, Arles, Spain, Sweden, Montpellier, Avignon and Paris, killing thousands of people. In July of 1347, the plague reached England and spread over it for 18 months. No part of northern and western Europe escaped its devastation.

At Avignon, Pope Clement VI organized medical and sanitation aid. He also intervened to protect the Jews (especially those from cities in the Rhineland); when they were accused of causing the plague, Clement offered them sanctuary in his state (McBride, 1983).

It was the church members that helped these plague victims and taking care of them with no fear; whereas others were scared and ran away to avoid contracting the disease. Many of them faced and accepted death joyfully. So through the services they rendered to the victims, they actually won the heart of many. In other words they won converts.

In recent times, they realized they were losing their members to the Pentecostal Churches which is one of the reasons why things like Adoration, Hour of Grace, Charismatic Renewal... etc. were introduced, because some of the reasons given by defectors was that Catholics do not read the bible, hold fellowships, hour of praise and worship... etc. However, an interview with a notable Catholic says otherwise. According to him, the three readings of the mass have been arranged in a way that it covers the entire bible. Catholic Churches in places such as Lagos, Abuja and Port Harcourt are now being a bit lenient about the way people dress during Church service, for instance allowing the ladies put on trousers, short and sleeveless dresses... etc, all these were condoned to suit the current trend and as a way of retaining their members.

Catholics always try to show presence in any new settlement, so it is a kind of propaganda to let people know that this church exists. So, once there is any new settlement in any area; people tend to attend that church closer to them especially if your parish is far.

Most people wonder what the Catholics do with their money, forgetting that they are actually involved in a lot of charities both educational and humanitarian; disasters, hospitals, universities where some take up your fees. They risk their lives to save you for example during one of the bomb blasts in the north, those who survived were those helped by the Catholics.

They have strict doctrine in marriage; members must not marry outside the church, but however do allow what is called mixed marriage in which each partner especially the woman is allowed to practice her Catholic faith irrespective of her husband's denomination. Members are made to believe that without the Holy Communion, they won't go to heaven and it is only the Catholic Church that has the real communion therefore members stay in Catholic. This claim is based on the fact that the Catholics insist that there is no breaking in pastoral authority between Jesus Christ and the present day Catholic Priest. They also visit the sick and give them the Holy Communion.

Catholics are also into selling of items such as powder, soap, olive oil and other sacramentals telling you it is anointed and usually blessed by the Priest when bought.

A comfortable church with fans, air conditioners, television set, toiletries... etc; are required amenities that could attract members. Many years ago, an uncle of mine once said that his "reason for attending St Mulumba's Catholic Parish at New Haven in Enugu was because it had fans". This is to say that the comfort of church members matters a lot.

Propaganda and the Anglican Church

King Henry decided to leave the Catholic Church because he was faced with the prospect of ending his reign as British Monarch without a male successor. His request to the then Pope to marry another wife had been rejected and this led to the formation of the Church of England; perhaps the citizens liked the idea of having their own Church, therefore supported him. King Henry had summoned all priests of British origin then in Rome to come back to start the new Church in England. The following are some of the issues (and the dates of their adoption) which people claimed were responsible for the revolt of Martin Luther.

Venerable Prof W.O Wotogbe-Weneka (JP), in his book on "Anglicanism" had dubbed them "heresies and inventions".

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| a. Prayer for the dead | A.D 300 |
| b. Making of the sign of the cross | A.D 300 |
| c. Beginning of the exaltation of Mary (the term "Mother of God")
first applied to her by the Council of Ephesus | A.D 431 |
| d. The doctrine of Purgatory established by Pope Gregory I | A.D 431 |
| e. Latin language as a compulsory language in prayer and
worship imposed by Pope Gregory I | A.D 600 |
| f. Prayers directed to Mary, dead saints and angels | A.D 600 |
| g. Kissing the Pope's foot | A.D 709 |
| h. Worship of the Cross, Images and relics authorized | A.D 786 |
| i. Celibacy of the priesthood decreed by Pope Gregory VII | A.D 1079 |
| j. The Rosary, Mechanical praying with beads invented by
Peter the Hermit | A.D 1090 |
| k. Sale of indulgence | A.D 1190 |
| l. Auricular (through the ear of a priest) confession of sin to a
Priest instead of to God instituted by Pope Innocent III in
Lantern Council | A.D 1215 |
| m. Bible forbidden to laymen and placed on the index of
Forbidden Books by the council of Valencia | A.D 1229 |
| n. Cup forbidden to lay men at holy communion by Council of Florence | A.D 1414 |
| o. Tradition (of early elders) declared at equal authority with the
Bible by the council of Trent | A.D 1545 |

Propaganda and the Pentecostal Church

As the Catholic and Anglican Churches strived to expand their denominations through the use of Propaganda and persuasion, Pentecostal Churches were not excluded. The following are the different practices carried out by the Pentecostal Churches for membership acquisition and retention.

- 1) Pentecostals work on the psyche of the masses because they know the common problems facing the society. Some of the problems include lack of faith, poverty, desperation, the urge to belong, amongst many others. Some of them even go to the extent of telling all kinds of stories of which about 90% of them may be false. They tell stories about their life history and various miracles which actually never happened. All these they do in their quest for members.
- 2) They promise you to believe and you will receive miracles, preach the more you give, the more you receive, and to whom much is given, much is expected. They threaten people by telling them "if you do not give, what you have will be taken from you, or God will not protect you". They make people believe that when you give them, you have given God.
- 3) Omega Power Ministries, a Church in Port Harcourt has a restaurant that gives free food to both members and non-members, compensate the efforts of their members, transform their lives by mending broken homes, people regaining good health, barren became mothers, and in the process won souls.
- 4) Churches like the Salvation Ministries in GRA and Winners in D-Line, Port Harcourt, Redeem, sometimes Mountain of Fire and Christ Embassy arrange buses that convey their members to Church and back, for free though some pastors believe that it is not the way of salvation.
- 5) Christ Embassy Pentecostal church is more into healing, signs and wonders, for instance, a woman who has been barren for years suddenly became pregnant. People saw and believed and by words of mouth were persuaded but unfortunately most of these were hoax, fake. They can also pick one when he/she is being invited. They

- help you find a job and accommodation, advice members to accommodate their fellow members when they have accommodation problem. They organize lectures on inspirational and motivational topics that help one think and focus his/her mind on how to reach the acme of his/her accomplishment.
- 6) Some Pentecostal Churches take care of emotional problems of their members such as visit and pay their hospital bills when sick, provide raw materials, clothing for the widows in their church, sponsor their members during marriage, burials as well as pilgrimage. For example, Our Saviour's Chapel, Uniport has a welfare scheme where money is contributed for those that cannot meet up their needs like rent, hospital bills, etc.
 - 7) House on the Rock in GRA, Port Harcourt often send bulk messages informing their members about their services, they do not cast members away for what they are wearing, rather they welcome you in and with time, you will begin to change in areas that need change. For instance, if a lady wears something short or revealing, she will be given as many scarves as she needs to cover up properly. They have the media department that customizes jingles/posters/flyers, their services are also covered and messages recorded. One can easily go to the media stand and request for a message which will be put in a CD that will be sold out. They also send their media representatives to Lagos for training when they join the group.
 - 8) Most Pentecostal churches have private television channels that broadcast their church activities such as preaching, signs and wonders, testimonies which attract the attention of public. Members of these churches try to use this as a means of building their faith by listening to the word of God without necessarily going to Church. For example African Christian Broadcasting Network (ACBN) is a station that shows different denomination; others are Redemption TV (RTV) owned by Redeemed Christian Church of God, Dovevision TV also used by RCCG, Super Screen TV in Lagos owned by Christ Embassy; Infinity is also owned and used by Christ Embassy where members subscribe to the diverse channels such as Loveworld plus, Loveworld sat, Campus ministry, Enter the healing school with Pastor Chris... etc.

The researchers' perception about propaganda and persuasion in the context of this study

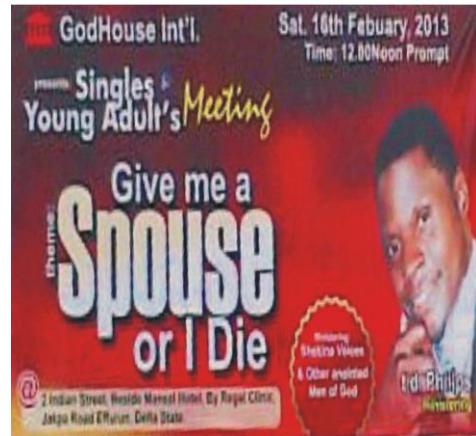
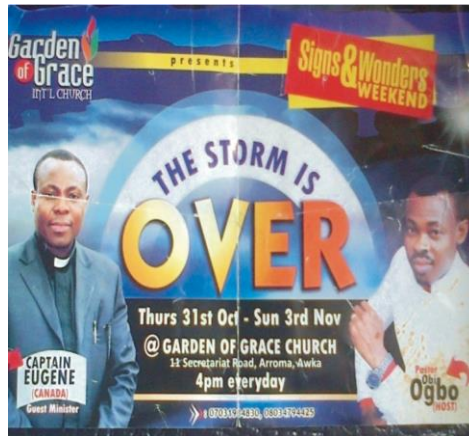
Propaganda and persuasion are inter-related. One is positive and the other is negative in meaning, but both are aimed at achieving one thing which is to work against somebody's freedom. The approach adopted to achieve this holds true for either propaganda or persuasion.

Persuasion is the ability to convince somebody to undertake an action with an extraordinary effort which is not something the individual accepts. The individual may or may not be convinced by such acts but usually ends up acting out of his own freewill.

Propaganda on the other hand is deceptive in nature. It is a form of communication that attempts to mislead an individual or the public which can change a person's behaviour and influence one's decision. Propaganda is a manipulative instrument used by churches to convince the general public to see and believe what they want them to. This is because people react positively to what they can see, hear or feel. The impact of this on our society is that people have been practically turned to slaves of the churches they worship in; not only that, they have ended up worshipping the church or pastor, instead of worshipping God. For instance, you see people putting stickers on their cars saying "I am a chosen", changing from one church to another all in the name of looking for the fruit of the womb, getting financial breakthrough, finding out who is holding back their progress. What is the impact of all these on our society today? Unemployment, fights and catastrophe in the family, illiteracy... etc. This can be accomplished through the use of variety of methods or techniques such as the television, where they display all kinds of miracles to acquire members for example, the lame walking, barren becomes pregnant,

because people love what they can see, hear or touch. Other ways are posters, handbills and bill boards.

Below are some examples:



Comparative Analysis of Reasons by Defectors

The following are reasons why members of other churches have joined the Catholic Church:

- a) I am in love with the Catholic Church, it is simply the best.
- b) I became a Catholic because I grew up in a family that attends the Catholic Church.
- c) I became a Catholic through marriage.
- d) I wanted to become a priest. According to him, the Anglican Church is biased.
- e) I was an Anglican. I left because Anglicans have the habit of seeking favour from the Parish Priest and wife (such as cooking, washing, and buying clothes for their kids), all these are done to be noticed and be recognized as a good parishioner, and used as examples to others.
- f) I joined the Catholic Church because I wanted to become a member of the Christian Women Organization (CWO), which she is now a member.
- g) I left Christ Embassy for the Catholic Church because I don't like their mode of worship and dressing (ladies are allowed to put on whatever they like, do not cover their hair and Pastors coil their hair... etc).
- h) Some others said their reason for joining the Catholic Church is because it gives members the opportunity of going to Church on Sundays with ease thereby creating no room for excuses. One can easily plan, meet up appointments, travel and still be able to attend the Sunday mass.

The idea of having several masses is for the convenience of its members, therefore one really has no reason to miss the Sunday mass because the Church has made it in a way it will be convenient and easy for its members; there is round-the-clock service till evening.

- i) Another reason is the fact that the Sunday mass is usually brief and precise
- j) Prof. Scot Hahn, a Presbyterian Theologian and author of "Rome Sweet Home", had set out with his friends to use the scripture to prove to 'Roman' Catholics how wrong they were in worshipping God the way they do, but ended up joining the Catholic Church with his wife and friends.

This was consequent upon a number of reasons:

- They all agreed that the scripture was an infallible document, written and compiled before the official adoption of the New Testament at the Council of Hippo in AD 393 and the Council of Carthage in 397
- Scott agreed that an ecumenical council had correctly declared Mary to be "Theokotos" i.e. Mother of God because Mary is mother of Jesus and Jesus is God the son.
- He understood clearly that being born again was not about "accepting Jesus as your personal Lord and Saviour", but the transformation conferred by water and the Holy Spirit during baptism (John 3:3 onwards).
- Scott systematically studied the doctrine of purgatory, the Holy Eucharist and confessions and agreed with the Catholic explanation of them.

All his Theology friends and later, his wife Kimberly also joined (Hahn, 1993)

Some Catholics have also left for other Churches for the following reasons:

First of all, the percentage of the girls and boys who leave the Catholic Church is like 70:30, the girls are more than the boys.

- a) The number one reason here has to do with family background. Many Catholic homes don't spend time on the children, teaching them the catholic virtues and doctrines. So there is a high rate of unawareness of what the Catholic Church really represents, thus they can easily be swayed.
- b) Peer pressure also contributes to Catholics defecting to other churches. This is seen mostly in the universities when all your friends are attending "Winners, Redeemed,

- or Christ Embassy." Somehow you start feeling left out, especially if one doesn't have a strong religious and family background, they are bound to start attending those other churches even without knowing it.
- c) Analogous to the first and second reasons is when a man attends the Catholic Church and his wife is attending a different church before their marriage or even while married. The upbringing of the children will not be firm. The woman doesn't really believe in the Catholic Church at the back of her mind, but maybe she agreed for peace to reign. When the children grow, they are bound to attend a different church.
 - d) Catholic Church is outdated. They don't dance, they don't wear trousers and spaghetti tops.
 - e) Many are not spiritually uplifted in the Catholic Church; they believe that they worship images, by having those images; it counters what God wrote in the Ten Commandments.
 - f) I was a Catholic, my parents were knights but we all left because we believe a member was trying to harm us.
 - g) Some people attend other Churches because it is closer to their place of residence; a reason mostly given by students. According to them "after all we are all serving the same God, so why would I spend such amount of money just to go to Church".
 - h) I left the Catholic Church for Winners because I wanted my children to be aware of what goes on inside the Church since they have a television situated outside the Church.
 - i) A friend and her Mum were persuaded to leave the Catholic Church for Assemblies of God because they helped solve their emotional problem. According to her; *"my Mum took ill, and being a member of the charismatic renewal, I expected my fellow members to ask and check up on her by paying us a visit but to my greatest surprise, none of them showed up rather members of Assemblies of God"*.
 - j) Catholics mode of worship is boring.
 - k) The pastors are powerful, have the powers to do miracles, to heal people, change your situations, power of prayer and their prayers lead to fruits.
 - l) Catholics worship Mary
 - m) Catholic Church is difficult, they go for confession, and they are too strict. They want to go to other churches where they can do whatever they like.
 - n) I left the Catholic Church for Redeemer because they bring out money to do one thing or the other for their members.

Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on Information theory propounded by Claude Shannon and Warren Weaver in 1949. It involves the use of propaganda to manipulate the view of the general public. This could be done through spoken language such as the television and radio, and written language for example graphic symbols and representational images such as posters, handbills, bill boards as seen in the literature review. The theory is significant in this study because the work examines the use of propaganda and persuasion by different Christian denominations for membership acquisition and retention

Research Design

Research design is the method or procedure employed by a researcher to develop a work. For the purpose of this study, qualitative method was employed. The methods applied and data collected provided a detailed description of meaning, situations, experiences and interactions between the interviewer and interviewees.

Qualitative Research Technique

Interviews were conducted as well as recorded. Prior to any of the interview, calls were made informing the interviewees about the reason for the interview. Before officially

beginning any interview, the interviewees were allowed to go through the questions in case they needed clarifications. The audio-recordings of these interviews were transcribed to enable the researcher decode properly all the answers provided by the interviewees for the purpose of a detailed analysis.

Interviewees and criteria for selection

Fifteen participants were selected for the study based on their experiences and intellectuality. To provide a sufficient outcome, the selection had to cut across the leaders of the Church (who were 4 in number) and members who have been affected by either propaganda or persuasion. These people were selected because they are not only church officials but had an insight about the topic and understood the subject of study. The researchers met some of the interviewees for the first time, others were friends, but all had an idea of what the study entails.

Data Generation

The interview is the qualitative method used in this study. The interview was aimed at understanding what the concepts of propaganda and persuasion is in the context of the study. It also aimed at capturing the effect propaganda and persuasion has on members and how it is used by different churches.

As earlier stated, the interviewees were all informed ahead of time about the purpose of the interview, and as such were allowed to choose the best time and venue since their comfort and convenience is of utmost importance. Most of the participants found the topic interesting thus were all cooperative and asked for ways they could help. The interview was found very effective because the researchers were able to capture in detail some of the different practices carried out by different denominations which are actually used to attract and most importantly sustain members, and also why certain changes occurred.

The term “propaganda and persuasion” was explained both in English Language and vernacular for those who seemed to have difficulty understanding the term. During this time, the interviews went smoothly without so much difficulty except that one of the interviewees was becoming uncomfortable with the questions. She re-adjusted after explaining to her the need to be specific in this work. The interviewer continued giving her room to reply as she wanted.

Data Analysis

According to Anikpo (2006), analysis involves a technique of inductive or deductive logic; to determine the logical coherence of available information. Having read through each transcript, the researchers found some similarities and differences relevant for the analysis.

- Themes existing in each interview that are related were identified and interpreted. This is achieved by exploring the transcripts, spotting out the similarities as well as the differences and the relationships between them which confirms that indeed propaganda and persuasion is a means of promoting the gospel of Christ to acquire and retain members which is the fundamental theory of the study.

In the analysis, codes are generated by reading the transcripts line by line, looking for reactions as well as evidence of feelings among the participants towards other churches. For instance, some statements made by the interviewees showed clearly the enormity of their disdain for other denominations within the Christendom. Below is an example of how the data were represented by showing responses made by participants when asked certain questions.

Four categories were used for the entire data:

1. Represents **Denial** in the use of propaganda and persuasion, which was found in answers of all interviewees for example–*The word propaganda is not used in the Catholic Church, Anglican Church does not believe in propaganda and persuasion, Propaganda is of the Pentecostal Churches, And today even in my church, in all branches all over the world, we don't believe in what we call propaganda as to gain and retain people in our churches.*
2. **Persuasion** – Respondents believe that persuasion is a positive concept which can be adopted in churches to acquire and retain members. The following statements were made; *In talking about persuasion, you will see there is a kind of extra-ordinary force, an effort that works against somebody's freedom of conscience and drawing the individual to undertake an action which is not something the individual accepts that is why the Church accepts a positive concept of evangelization, conversion, trying to work on the individual so that in his own freedom and dignity will appreciate the message, In terms of persuasion, we persuade but we are still conscious of the work of the Holy Spirit, I recently tried to persuade two members of the church whom I caught living ungodly lives, not to come to church but to repent, this is persuasion. Persuading someone is forcing someone to do what is against his or her will maybe through material things or whatever.*
3. **Packaged Messages/Propaganda** – As said by one of the respondents in appendix 2, the procedure of propaganda is the packaging. The way you package your message can either reflect propaganda or persuasion. Examples are found in the following statements; *Because propaganda is a negative concept, it is not used rather evangelization, conversion, bringing the message of gospel to the people, Principle number 1 is to feed them with the word of God, life, truth, show them the right way to follow, I'll like to say that the revelation that is going on in this part of our country about somebody that went to heaven and came back, she was able to reveal so many things that will lead people to hell which in our church we believe, such is true because we have been practicing it and we've been preaching,.*
4. **Faith** – This can be attributed to defectors especially Catholics who are yet to know their faith. The following statements were made; *If you know the faith, people cannot change you from your original status, So I will say if someone is leaving his denomination because the one I belong to don't take care of me, the point there is that the person is still coming up in faith, Yes it's still happening, that's one of the thing propaganda and persuasion cause some people, denying their faith, where they had been for another, you can still make people change their mind, faith or denomination to another but I want to tell you that to some extent, it will not save people.*

Pertaining to these classifications which suffice it to say that dynamically affiliated; conclusions have been drawn for the subject matter that will be discussed in the next segment of this study.

Reliability and Validity

In this study, attempts were made to provide a detailed explication of the research methods employed in a bid to exhibit commendable levels of credibility. The researchers have done their best to present exactly what was found in this study, nothing is fabricated. None of the interviewees were forced to give answers they regarded as confidential. This research work will still be relevant even after several months because the study conducted is concurrent and can still be used in future.

Ethical Considerations

This study was conducted on both leaders and members of the church based on their experiences and to the best of our knowledge; it was devoid of any form of manipulation and neither were any of the interviewees vulnerable. Interviewees were assured of the confidentiality of information they provided and that no contribution of theirs would be used against them.

Discussion of Findings

All participants were of the same view that propaganda is a negative concept which is used by some Christian denominations to acquire and retain members, therefore denied their involvement in its use. However, from the data collected, one will find that in one way or the other, propaganda or persuasion is used in almost, if not all Christian denominations. Participant A for instance said:

'Because propaganda is a negative concept, it is not used rather evangelization, conversion, bringing the message of gospel to the people'. He also said; 'There is no other way we acquire members in the Catholic Church unless within our own local context'.

This means that even though the use of propaganda is generally not accepted in the Catholic Church, different parishes (denominations) all over the world have what they do to sustain their members which can be a form of propaganda or persuasion.

Participant C in his own submission said:

'But when we are going towards negative aspect of it, that is what we cannot find in the bible, we are now making propaganda as a judge to what we cannot find in the bible, such should not be encouraged'.

Participant D in his own view said:

'and today even in my church, in all branches all over the world, we don't believe in what we call propaganda as to gain and retain people in our churches'
However he made the following points:

'Most of these orthodox churches that I mentioned earlier; the Catholic, Anglican, Methodist and Presbyterian there are so many means they use in winning souls, some of them in the preaching of salvation, they don't go straight hitting the hammer at the head of the nail. Instead of that, they will tell you is when somebody comes to God first before you begin to tell him many other secret things and people now are perishing because of what we can now call propaganda, they are deceiving people, one of the ways is presentation of the words of God. Unlike Catholic Church, the way some ministers so called winners, they come in a way of preaching miracle, and they can go extra mile even using material things like handkerchief, cloth or anything at all, olive oil in the case of Catholic or whatever, they present material they call chaplet or an image which they say is a representative or a signal of a symbol of the mother of Jesus and many people believe that you'll first see the mother before you go to the son or before the father, but among the Pentecostal churches, it's not so, we believe that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life'

From the above statements, does this reflect propaganda or persuasion?

Such comments by participants C and D show clearly how most Pentecostal churches castigate the Catholic Church; they go about spreading false stories about the Catholic Church by saying that what is in the Catholic Church is not good and so on in order to acquire members, quoting the bible to support their claim. This will surely make a positive impact for people. Many Pentecostals allow experience to trump Scriptural teaching and will twist Scripture to support what they "know by experience." In preaching the gospel, they now change it to suit them. Jesus Himself warned of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves and spoke of mighty spiritual experiences in Matthew 7:15. "Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, drive out demons in your name and perform many miracles?' Then I shall tell them to their faces, 'I have never known you; away from me, you evil doers (Matt 7:22-23).

Many of what different denominations do that attracts members and possibly retain them can be seen in the literature review and the major reason for this is to have large congregation. Other reasons are money and wealth; the larger the congregation, the more money that will be realized.

Reasons by Defectors

As seen in the literature review, the percentage of Catholics who have left the Church for other churches is like 70:30, they are more than those who have joined, because most Catholics are yet to know their faith. Some of these reasons can be classified under four major headings:

- **Desperation**– Many people are desperate, both men and women but especially the women, desperate for a lot of things; one miracle or the other, seeking marriage, job, the fruit of the womb, so many other things... etc. Sometimes they feel the Catholic Church isn't forthcoming with hope, they want to see the light elsewhere and so they move to another church. For instance one said; *"the pastors are powerful, have the powers to do miracles, to heal people, change your situations, power of prayer and their prayers lead to fruits"*. People are more interested in what they can see, hear or touch and as such are persuaded to leave their church for another where they can get what they seek for, what we popularly call "miracle" to solve their immediate needs instead of the one that can lead them to life eternal. To the best of our knowledge, most of these miracles are not from God (see appendix 3). Most of these miracles are mistaken for magic, they're not worthy to be called miracle. Let us be reminded that satan was also given the power to perform and do many things which he has given to those who believe and associate with him to counter the word of God. Unfortunately, none of these pastors or any of the members will come out and speak the truth knowing that if they do so, tell people that what they are doing is not of God, their chances of winning souls will not be achieved, and they know that lots of people look forward to benefitting from these miracles as they are made to believe. Today, it is difficult to differentiate the good pastors from the bad because there are so many pastors but the word of God says "by their fruit, you shall know them" (Matt 7:16). Some of these miracles are displayed on TV; dead arising, lame walking, blind seeing, dumb talking, barren becomes pregnant, all to attract people which of course they succeed in doing.

Freedom – According to one of the defectors:

"Catholic Church is difficult, they go for confession, and they are too strict, too conservative, they should follow the trend that things are changing therefore they should change"

It is true that the Catholic doctrinal teachings are difficult to maintain. That strict discipline chases people away to where they can have their freedom which they have taken to the extreme because they feel that what the priests are doing is controlling their lives, so along the line, they leave to easy going places where most of the pastors are crooks. Many people feel the Catholic Church is outdated as you would have in the literature review; they don't dance, they don't wear trousers, short or spaghetti dresses, covering of hair is mandatory. For instance, Participant D narrated:

'A lady who once attended our Church was asked to cover her hair and she refused saying it's no longer in vogue'.

So with this, they just go to another church where they can be freer to do whatever they like, where there are no restrictions. This is one of the reasons why as earlier said (in literature review) that the Catholic Churches in Lagos, Abuja and Port Harcourt for instance, are now being a bit lenient about the way people dress to Church probably to suit the current trend.

- **Poverty** – The Country Director of the World Bank in Nigeria, Marie-Francoise Marie-Nelly, had recently reiterated the already published figures that 100 million Nigerians live in destitution, another term for extreme poverty (www.vanguardngr.com). As pointed out in "statement of problem", the economy of the country has dwindled so much over time that the situations we find ourselves in have misled many members of the Church in their quest for miracles and material things, which leads to lack of faith especially for Catholics because they

believe the Catholic Church is not forth coming with hope. Since government change often cannot get to the root of the problem of poverty, the church on the other hand, can do exactly that as seen in literature review. The issue of pressure of poverty as Participant A said when talking about emotional problems at times causes lack of faith for example;

"My Mum took ill, and being a member of the charismatic renewal, I expected my fellow members to ask and check up on her by paying us a visit but to my greatest surprise, none of them showed up rather members of the Assemblies of God".

"I left the Catholic Church for Redeemer because they bring out money to do one thing or the other for their members".

- **Lack of Faith** – Many of our people are ignorant. They are always feeling that someone or something is behind their mishaps and somehow the Catholic Church is not like that. They decide to go to other churches to find solutions to their various problems, where they are told that they would need deliverance or told that their cousin or mother-in-law or some relation is behind their problem. For instance, one said:
 - *"I was a Catholic, my parents were knights but we left because we believe that someone was trying to harm us".*

According to participant A; *"Most of our Catholics are yet to know their faith"* Some people believe that because Catholic Church have too many members, they don't care about their members but other churches are very caring, they welcome you on your first visit and when you don't come, they visit you, there is person to person relationship. Participant B exclaimed:
'So I will say if someone is leaving his denomination because the one I belong to don't take care of me, the point there is that the person is still coming up in faith'.

Many have left their Churches because of what they can gain; their financial or material needs, they feel their emotional problems will be solved.

In this segment of the paper, the researchers were able to present their findings in a scholarly manner and discuss them in a way as to help arrive at a definite conclusion. The next and final segment will conclude the paper by summarizing the major findings and making recommendations considered relevant.

Conclusion and Recommendations

As the world changes its position within the context of the universe per unit time, so does everything else change, hence the saying that time changes everything. The weather changes and so requires constant monitoring and forecasting. Similarly, the activities of mankind have witnessed constant change since the beginning of history of humankind.

In the field of religion, it is change that gave birth to Christianity. For almost 1500 years after the death of Christ, Christians remained together under one holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. The life and death of Christ was still so fresh in Christians' minds that persuasion and propaganda were not necessary to win converts for Christ. Instead, the early Christians were prepared to die for their faith. They held strongly to the love of God and of their neighbours and they also practiced their faith with good works. Thus, early Christianity can be said to have survived on the blood of martyrs.

As the Catholics settled down as the first organized Christian religion, they relied more on good works to propagate the faith with the Vatican as headquarters.

The protestant reformation appears to have given birth to most other forms of persuasion/propaganda as Rev. Fr Martin Luther needed to convince others to appreciate his new point of view. Unfortunately for Luther, his strong defense of his theses encouraged other reformers in Europe to revolt thus resulting in the multiplicity of denominations that ensued, and the commencement of what can be referred to as a rat race for supremacy by numerous denominations. While Anglicanism used nationalism to their advantage, others such as many

of the Pentecostals exploited the changes in world economic order to spice their own propaganda and persuasion.

As at today as shown clearly in this study, all denominations, either by reasons of retaining their members or by reasons of gaining new members have adopted the use of propaganda and persuasion for their benefit.

Based on the findings and limitations of this study the following recommendations are made:

There is the need that the Catholic, Anglican and Pentecostal church leaders should imbibe virtues of practicing their faith with good deeds as well as loving their neighbours as they love themselves. Indeed, this age-long Christian doctrines would in no small way, help to draw more souls to the church, rather than using manipulative devices to brainwash new converts.

There is also the pressing need for Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and other relevant religious umbrella bodies to step up their monitoring and regulatory roles on the ethical conduct of various Christian religious denominations in the country. Doubtless, this will compel church leaders-cum-subordinates to retrace their steps in using pernicious propaganda and persuasive devices to blindfold unsuspecting Christian converts.

There is also the urgent need to checkmate the proliferation of Christian religious denominations in Nigeria. The unbridled quest to draw large congregation for pecuniary motive at the expense of practicing genuine religious doctrines as enshrined in the holy book leaves much to be desired.

Finally, further studies in this area should expand the scope to cover more Christian religious denominations in the six geopolitical zones in the country for wider coverage.

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