ET 303 Cults and Sects in the African Context

Student Coursebook
Nazarene Theological Institute

--Note to teachers and students—

This teacher coursebook was prepared by
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Nazarene Theological Institute
Church of the Nazarene
African West Field

ET 303 Cults and Sects in the African Context
Syllabus
Certificate or Diploma

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Description

Course Description

This course is designed to describe the traditional beliefs of God in Africa, regarding God's omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence and as the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. This course will explore various teachings of sects and cults in Africa in light of biblical revelation and Christian theology. This course is designed to assist members of the African Church to understand the belief in one and only God revealed in Jesus Christ and to preach and teach same, and above all to live for Jesus Christ.

Course Rationale

Narration
      For many cultural and spiritual reasons, Africa has given birth to many traditional religious practices, and sects of which several are aberrations of true Christianity. Even if members of these groups convert to Christianity they sometimes need to be well educated in the Bible and theology without mixing their old beliefs with their newfound faith in Christ. It is the primary responsibility of the pastor to make these new believers into followers of Jesus Christ.
      Ministers in the Church of the Nazarene in Africa will find themselves at some point in an area where many people follow one of these religious groups and sects. It will be necessary to know how to explain with love the errors of these movements and also to proclaim the Gospel in a clear manner to gains the attention and the hearts of those lost inside these traditional religions, cults and sects. The commitment of the local Church must not be to only evangelism, but to life-transforming discipleship program to each new converts.
      For a pastor to be an effective witness among people in these traditional religions, cults and sects, it is necessary that they are up-to-date not only with these movements, but the cultural tendencies that give birth to these groups.

Program Outcomes
      The following program outcomes assigned to this module are identifiable competencies required of the student in this course.

CN 4	Appreciation of the theological foundations of the Christian faith from the Biblical point-of-view when read from a Wesleyan perspective
CN 5	Realization of the biblical, theological, and practical implications of holiness doctrine when taught from a Wesleyan perspective
CN 8	Appreciation of the position and teaching of the Church of the Nazarene concerning religious phenomenon
CN 9	Acknowledge the differences between evangelical doctrines and the teachings of cults and sects, in particular African cults and sects

CP 3	Ability to defend the doctrines and positions of the Church of the Nazarene
CP 3	Ability to worship God by using personal and public means of grace
CR 5	Ability to express humility and interdependence in all of one's personal relationships
CR 8	Ability to stay faithful to the Church of the Nazarene and maintain a spirit of collaboration
CX 1	Ability to understand African history in the context of world history
CX 2	Ability to understand the context within which he or she lives with objectivity
CX 3	Ability to understand the principles of cross-cultural ministry
CX 5	Ability to interpret on a scientific and biblical bases the Christian position on magic, spiritism, medicine and traditional healing

Course Outcomes

Upon the completion of this course of study, the learner will be able to:

1. Understand the way(s) Africans believe in God (CN 4, CN 9; CXT 3).
2. Identify the difference between god(s) and the God (CN 9; CX 5).
3. Compare and contrast the Western and African concepts of God. (CN 5, CR 3, CX 3, CX 5)
4. Understand the customary beliefs and practices and use them to evangelize effectively. (CN 8, CN 9, CX 2, CX 3)
5. Reach out to the traditionalists with the Christian message of salvation (CN 4, CX 2).
6. Describe the rites of passage in the local context and think about how it can explain Christian spiritual growth into maturity (CP 3; CR 3).
7. Give an oral presentation on customary practices and their religious advantages and disadvantages to the community. (CN 4, CN 9; CP 3)
8. Examine existing traditional/customary practices that could be used for Christian/evangelism advantage. (CN 9, CR 3, CR 5, CX 2, CX 3, CX 5)
9. Make a case study of families/communities that are deep rooted in traditionalism. (CX 2, CX 3) (OPTIONAL)
10. Identify a sect of Christianity that veers away from the essential aspects of Christian theology. (CN 4, CN 5, CN 9, CX 2, CX 3)
11. Apply Paul's method of preaching to the people of Athens. (CN 4, CN 9, CP 3, CR 3, CR 5, CX 1, CX 2, CX 5)
12. Defend the articles of faith using biblical truth as an antidote to the contrary beliefs of these traditionalists, sects and cults. (CN 4, CN 8, CN 9, CP 3, CR 5, CR 8, CX 2, CX 5))

The following sessions and exercises of this course offer the following percentages of the four Cs:

Content	30%
Competence	10%
Character	25%
Context	35%

Bibliographie

Harold J. Berry, *What They Believe*. Lincoln, NE: Back to the Bible, 1990.
Ruth A. Tucker, *Another Gospel*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1989.
Paul G. Hiebert, R. Daniel Shaw, and Tite Tienou. *Understanding Folk Religion: A Christian Response to Popular Beliefs and Practices*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999.

Wes Tracy and Stan Ingersol. *Here We Stand: Where Nazarenes Fit in the Religious Marketplace*. Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1999.

Course Requirements

1. The student must be present and on time for all course sessions with a Bible and any other required materials. If students are absent from one course session it will result in a 25% reduction of the final mark. Each following absence will result in a 25% redaction.

2. Students must attend each session and be able to participate in discussions related to the course content. (Course outcomes 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12)

3. Students must conduct research on at least one traditional practice, sect or cult that is influential in their environment (course outcome 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 10).
4. Students should come up an oral presentation that critiques the African traditional religious practices found in the ministry and practices of the Church. Be sure to compare these practices to what is found in traditional religions and historical Christianity. (course outcomes 2, 3, 5, 6, 7 12).

5. Students should prepare to take part in a debate on the following subject: "A Christian attitude needs to be loving in helping turn others away from these traditional practices, cults and sects." (course outcomes 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11)

6. Final examination

Course Evaluation

Class Participation	20%
Oral Presentation on African sect or practices	20%
Research on belief system and practice an African sect or cult	20%
Critique on key teaching of traditionalist or sect	10%
Oral Debate on attitude toward followers	10%
Final Examination (Oral exam s is an option)	20%

Final Marks

A	90-100%	(18-19 Excellente)
B	80-89%	(16-17.9 Très Bien)
C	70-79%	(14-15.9 Bien)
D	60-69%	(12-13.9 Passable)
	45-59%	(9.5-11.9 Passable pour gagner le niveau de certificat et pour passer les exigences d'être ordinée à l'Eglise du Nazaréen)

If students earn a mark lower than 45%, they will still need to pass the course will a higher mark if they want to obtain a diploma.

Course Schedule

This course can be given as an intensive. The course material is divided into several units of various length, and the number of activities in each section.

Section 1 INTRODUCTION.
1.1 What is a Cult?
1.2 Characteristics of Cults

Student's Ability to Complete Course Work
A reasonable effort to assist every student will be made. Any student who has handicaps, learning disabilities, or other conditions that make the achievement of the class requirements exceedingly difficult should make an appointment with the instructor as soon as possible to see what special arrangements can be made. Any student who is having trouble understanding the assignments, lectures, or other learning activities should talk to the instructor to see what can be done to help.

Instructor's Qualities and Availability
The instructor has committed to preparing the content and being familiar with the objectives of the course. The instructor's life and attitude inside and outside of the course should reflect the lifestyle of Jesus Christ—the main subject of the New Testament story. Good faith efforts to serve the students both in and beyond the classroom will be made.

Small Group Activity Guidelines

Educational research demonstrates that shared-learning activities, such as small group projects and discussion groups, raise the student's ability to gain and retain knowledge for practice outside the teaching environment. Students are able to develop critical thinking skills such as analysis, evaluation, and synthesis as they work in small group. Assigning small group projects help students to:

1. Learn how to work together in a team environment through positive interdependence.
2. Understand group processes, including process management, conflict management, synergism, collaboration, resource utilization, individual accountability, shared knowledge, cooperation, planning and problem solving.
3. Effectively and efficiently develop oral and written presentation skills.
4. Be better prepared for social interaction at work.
5. Explore and integrate a broader range of ideas and expertise.
6. Respond to different learning styles.
7. Supplement the knowledge of the facilitator/teacher.
8. Develop a sensitivity to and awareness of cultural and gender diversity.

When engaged in small group activities, the following guidelines should be followed:

1. When considering the formation of groups, take into account that it is desirable to balance the small groups by gender, age, geographical origin, local language, and experience. Try to bring as much diversity as possible to the group.
2. Select a spokesperson(s)/Leader(s) for the group to keep the team on task and for reporting back to the rest of the class about the small group's findings, conclusions, and recommendations. The spokesperson(s) should also serve as the recorder(s) for the group.
3. Select a timekeeper for the group. Most small group activities should not exceed twenty minutes. The timekeeper's task is to keep the group moving forward and on task to complete the assignment within the allotted time frame.
4. During the course, students are encouraged to try to participate in as many small group roles as possible—spokesperson, recorder, timekeeper.
5. Solicit the facilitator/teacher's assistance at any time the small group is unable to stay on task.

Section 1 INTRODUCTION

One of the biggest **P**_____ for the Church in Africa is the proliferation of religious cults. This growing phenomenon does not only worry the Church, but also the public and even some governments.

The price of this freedom is that we will see the creation and insertion of several of these groups into our countries with whom we can never be in **A**_____.

1.1 What is a cult?

The word "cult" derives from the Latin "**cultus**" (care or adoration, cf. French *culte*). A similar word is "**sect**" which comes from the

Latin verb **sequi** (_____),

and **secedere**(_____),

and **secare** (_____).

Sociologically a sect or cult is:

The reality of a cult exceeds the **B**_____ of religion and church.

The creation of cults is a **H**_____ phenomenon which is found in the ideological, social and political domains than the religious. Examples

In its usual sense, the terms cult or sect connote **S_____** and a willingness to **F_____** someone else's lead or an extraordinary or idealistic **D_____.**

It is necessary to **D_____** between groups – such as sects -- simply resulting from separations and schisms - for which there are often very good reasons - and those we may designate the true cults, in the full pejorative sense, in which their doctrines and practices deny the essence of the Christian message.S

The critical distinction between sects of Christian origin could perhaps look into the source of the **T_____** of these groups.

A sect differs from the Universal Church by placing an **E_____ upon a point**, in such as way that the other **core values are sometimes L_____**with regard to that particular point.

Examples:

- **In Christian Science** . . .

- **Among Jehovah's Witnesses** . . .

- **Among those with whom we disapprove . . .**

1.2 Characteristics of Cults

They are characterized by a "**sectarian spirit**" containing the following general traits:

The conviction that they are the **P**_____ or **E**_____ who often have the feeling of being persecuted;

The belief that they are **R**_____, that they are set against the whole world, and especially against authority;

The lack of **I**_____ in the masses or the authorities;

A monolithic character and unyielding judgments in which they carry out with passionate.

Cults are often **A**_____ in their structure;

They use brainwashing and mental **C**_____;

They maintain a **C**_____ constraint and inspire feelings of culpability and fear.

1.3 Sectarian Tendencies

The sectarian tendencies suppose that there is:

- **Alienation of people**; to alienate means to remove someone's personality in order to inculcate the other.

- **Direct communication with God**

- **Manipulation of the word of God**

- **Cocooning or closure of the group and its certainties instead of universal communication**

> The fact that Christianity began as a "sect" or "cult" in the eyes of contemporary Romans and Jews, and has gradually formed as a church, does not justify the existence of cults, but simply demonstrates that Christianity in its origins, and in its basic structure, was not only a sect, but an open religious movement, open to all, universal in its reach, to become what we call sociologically and theologically a "Church."

1.4 Psychological Factors

There are some points of reference, especially psychological factors, to help us describe cults:

1. S_____ Factor

2. A_____ Factor

3. Factor of Doctrinal R_____

4. Factor of F_____

Designated Targets for Proselytism

Youth

Some others:

Example: University Campuses

Cults usually succeed where society and the Church have failed to acknowledge those intentions or desires.

Section 2 WHY CULTS GROW

must take into account the recruiting practices and indoctrination techniques used by many cults.

2.1 Human Needs and Aspirations (What cults appear to offer.)

a. The search for **M**_____ (sense of community.)

Cults seem to offer:

b. The search for A_____
In complex and confusing situations, there is naturally a quest for answers and solutions.

Cults seem to offer:

c. The need to be R_____**, to be special**

Cults seem to offer:

d. The need for V_____

    Cults seem to offer:

f. The need for a spiritual D_____

    Cults seem to offer:

g. The search for C_____ identity

    Cults seem to offer:

h. The search for W_____

    Cults seem to offer:

2.2 Who might leave the Church to join a cult?

1. Those who need security; those who feel abandoned.

While acknowledging the common human desire for something greater than themselves or a universal hunger for religious devotion, there are many in society who emotional capability is not fully mature. They feel overwhelmed by the tension of adult life - unemployment, dependents, challenges of all sorts. That is why many are looking for the security of a small group. There are those who are caught up in the anxiety or the need to be rescued or who feel isolated in the world.

2. Those seeking intellectual satisfaction.

There are also those who have a religious temperament or intellectual preoccupation, and without having lived their faith in depth, jump to a glimmer of light unveiled in a cult.

3. Those who seek a purified religion.

Some are discouraged by the imperfections they see in the Christian life. Sin and failure are inevitable in large communities. It may then be tempting for them to seek a community of "***pure people***". But, Jesus condemned the Pharisees for pretending to observe the law through their obsessions. Jesus, then and now, accepts sinners and the poor in spirit in order to save them.

4. Those who want to reach directly to God.

Others have a deep thirst for the absolute or seek God through the easiest route. Such people become discouraged to see too passive attendance at the Sunday worship. Disappointed by the materialism of the world, they thirst for the absolute and spiritual experience. Cults are promise the key to this kind of experience. Example: "We pray in way that reaches directly to God." This is a misleading illusion that oblige God to meet our needs, and in doings so avoids the courage that is required to live in faith.

Cults seems to thrive because . . .

They believe in someone or something, with conviction, devotion and commitment that are powerful (and often magnetic).

They are going to meet people where they are, in a way that is warm, personal and discreet, leaving the individual in anonymity, yet promoting participation, spontaneity, taking the responsibility to gain commitments through an intensive follow-up of multiple contacts, visits to homes, support and continuous guidance.

They help them to re-interpret their own experience, to reaffirm their own values, and to confront the critical issues within a comprehensive system that meets spiritual, emotional, and physical needs.

Normally they use convincing stories: preaching, literature, mass media, and often also on the healing ministry.

Simply put, they present themselves as the only answer in a chaotic world.

All this is very important in the success of cults.

Section 3 Overview of Certain Cults

3.1 Moonies (The Unification Church)

Who is Rev. Moon?

The Teaching and Doctrine of Rev. Moon
- The "Divine Priniciples" by Moon

- Moon considers himself to be the Messiah

- Moon thinks he established the new kingdom of God visible through the ideal family

Methods and Strategies for Recruitment
- First contact: They never speak about Moon or his teachings.

- Spend an evening in their very welcoming community, and then spend a weekend filled with activities and leaving no time for reflection.

- Soon the new adherents are supported by a spiritual "father" or "mother."

The Errors of Rev. Moon
The biggest errors are those concerning Jesus Christ:
- Jesus Christ was not God, this is contrary to the Bible.
- The death on the cross was an example of the failure of Jesus , again contrary to the Bible.
- According to Moonies, Jesus was not resurrected in the body but only in the spirit (again, contrary to the Bible).
- Jesus Christ will not return to judge the world. This work is already in the hands of the new "messiah": Rev. Moon.

Moon's followers replace the Bible with the "Divine Principles."

3.2 The Way International

The Beginnings and History of "They Way"

- Founder: Victor Wierwille

- Teachings in the Beginning

The Organization of "The Way"

- The groups

- Use of Time

Teachings of "The Way"

- They reject the Bible as the Word of God

- They reject the Old Testament and the Gospels

- They believe that the Holy Spirit is not a person but only a power from on high.

3.3 Baha'i Faith

The Forerunner: The declaration of Bab

- A pious sect of Islam

- "How will you recognize the messenger?"

- The meaning of the May 23

The Founders and the Interpreter

- Bâb

- Bahâu'llah

- The interpreter: Abdul'l Baha from Haifa

LifeStyle

There are no clergy or religious rites. They focus on prayers, spiritual readings, a life dedicated to service, and a high sense of morality.

Key Beliefs

- Unification of God

- Uniqueness of religion

- Unity of truth

- Uniqueness of man

- Equality in humankind

- Equality between the sexes

- Education of Children

- Universal Language

- World parliament

Baha'i Faith and Christianity

The Baha'i faith teaches that there have been several revelations of God to humanity

Bahâu'llah was basically the same revelation as Jesus, but Bahâu'llah came later, and his message was more complete and revealing especially the common origin of all religions.

He was imprisoned so that people can be free. Christians believe that this is in contradiction with the teachings of the Bible that Jesus is the only Son of God.

They recognize evil but they do not provide the same answer as Christianity. The Bible states very clearly that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" and that salvation comes by no other name than Jesus.

In the eyes of the Christian faith, Baha'i is superfluous. By his death and resurrection Jesus Christ responds to the real need of humanity.

3.4 Les Rastafarians

Its Roots

- Marius Mosiah Garvey from Jamaica
  "'Turn toward Africa' and soon a black king will be crowned.'"

- Ras (Prince) Tafari was crowned Emperor of Ethiopia under the name:
  Hailé Sellasié

- For Jamaicans, the Book of Revelations was an allegory of their suffering and that Hailé Sellasié was Jah (god) in person.

- Garvey became a hero figure.

- Africa became an idealized "promised land."

- Political engagements: Michael Manley

Lifestyle

- Long hair in dreadlocks

- Ethiopian national colors: red, black, green, and gold.

- Smoke marijuana

- They speak a deliberate form of creole to embarrass non-members.

- They sometimes carry a photo of Hailé Sellasié

- Particular views on certain areas

    o Alcohol

    o Drugs

    o Food

    o Marriage

    o Morality

Key Beliefs

Many Rastafarians do not know exactly what they believe, but here is an overview of their main beliefs.

- God, Jesus, Israelites and the first Christians were all black.

- God became man, not in person of Jesus but that of Haile Séllassié not in Jesus Christ

- The Rastis are the true Jews

- The Bible was written by and for blacks

- White people are demons

- Black people will be liberated with they return to Africa

- Some believe in reincarnation and some insist they remember their voyage as slaves en route from Africa.

Discussion Questions
- **Are you comparing the Rastafarians with the followers of "The Way" or Baha'i faith? What there are similarities or differences?**
- **What is the motivation of Africans to join the Rastafarians? How cant eh Church respond to this movement with a theology of the land/earth/the environment?**

3.5 Jehovah's Witnesses

Its Origins

- Date and place of its beginning

- The name "Jehovah's Witnesses" (Isaiah 43:10-12)

Their Four Presidents

- "The Pastor" Charles Taze Russell

- "The Judge" Joseph Franklin Rutherford

- "The President" Nathan H. Khorr

Theocratic Organisation

- Operates like a business

- Simple worship

- Structures meant to deepen their "biblical" knowledge

The Six Steps for becoming a Jehovah's Witness

- First home visit

- Second home visit

- Home study

- Kingdom Hall

- Door-to-door visitation

- Baptism

Key Beliefs of the Jehovah's Witnesses

They are the only ones to proclaim God's truth, and that they are the only hope for the world, therefore everyone must join their movement;

God is a single person, Jehovah, who has existed since the beginning of time:

a. God created Jesus, who, in heaven was the archangel Michael. On land he was a man, not God. When God raised him from the dead, he returned to heaven as a spirit;

b. The death of Jesus on the cross, or rather "torture stake" as they prefer to call it does not assure anyone of eternal life. He can accept it as the price of his past sins, but the only guarantee of one receives is to continually strive to obey God according to the directives given by The Watchtower Society;

c. The Holy Spirit is the invisible force of God that compels servants to do his will;

d. The present world will end soon at the Battle of Armageddon. Survivors will reign with Christ for 1,000 years;

e. During this period there will be no sickness or death. There will be an abundance of flowers and fruits, and all the wild animals will be tame (The Peaceable Kingdom);

f. At the end of the 1,000 years, all the dead will be raised. The 144,000 elect will go on to live in heaven, but the overwhelming majority will stay on earth. Those who have rejected their doctrine will be annihilated;

g. The kingdom of God on earth was established in 1914 when Christ returned to the temple and began to purify it. The devil was expelled from heaven and God established his heavenly kingdom. The earthly land will continue during the lifetime of those who lived in 1914. Each earthquake, famine, war or disaster is a sign of the approaching end.

Conclusions sur les Témoins de Jéhovah

Can we really say that they are witnesses for Jehovah? Where are biblical proofs to support their beliefs?

- • They cite the Bible but their New World Translation is full of inaccuracies;

- They translate John 1:1
instead of translating "in the beginning the Word was God," they translate it as "the Word was a god." By adding the indefinite article "a", they make Jesus a secondary divinity. Also, other verses are torn from their context to prove their point of view.

- They prohibit blood transfusions, leaving the patient to die in their sickness. They support this practice by quoting Leviticus 3:17; 7:27; 17:10-11. But these passages have nothing to do with blood transfusions.

- They also believe that the second coming of Jesus has already taken place though it was invisible. This contradicts Revelations 1:7.

Discussion questions

- **Compare recruitment strategies of Moonies with those of the Jehovah's Witnesses.**

- **What is the importance of Christology (the study of Christ) in the ministry, preaching and teaching of the evangelical church in light of the distorted teachings propagated by these cults?**

3.6 Brahnamists

The Founder
William Marion Branham was born in Kentucky (USA) on April 6, 1909. Branham had a lumberjack for a father and a mother who was half Native American.

At the age of seven, he received a visitation from an angel who gave him instructions; he did not feel free to share with others. But at 20 years old, after he received an anointing in a Baptist church, he gave his testimony which led to the possibility of becoming an evangelist. He refused this offer following the advice of his parents and friends

Thus, the anointing was removed as he went through a difficult period. The angel appeared to him again and asked him to accept the anointing of the Lord that he may begin to heal the sick and have knowledge of the past and the future.

He received several visions (around 100,000 at least five to six times per day because he has lived for fifty years. He predicted that the year 1977 would be the end of the world. He referred to himself as John the Baptist, the forerunner of the Messiah. His word was final in terms of how he revealed truth in his teachings.

Croyances Clés

• They deny the Trinity (the existence of three persons in one; they misinterpret Isaiah 45:6: "I am the Lord there is no other").

• The Crucifixion for them is a myth, a legend;

• Original sin was that Eve had sexual relations with the snake and she had sexual relations with Adam. Therefore, the birth of Cain and Abel, the first being born of the snake; as a result, Cain killed his brother);

• They believe that God is three revelations: one God with three titles of father, son, holy spirit;

• The Holy Spirit is not God, but a force of God;

• Jesus is not God but a temple in which God is revealed;

• At the cross, God withdrew from Christ when he was crucified;

• Jesus is an image, Christ is the anointed.

3.7 Mormonism: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints

History

The church was founded in 1820 by the "prophet" Joseph Smith in New York, USA. According to Smith, he was praying for wisdom, according to James 1:5, when an angel appeared and gave him another version of the Gospel. Using precious stones, he read the inscriptions on ancient tablets written in a cryptic language that came from the angel. Smith translated these rocks into English. The translation is called "The Book of Mormon."

After some time, others have joined Smith in establishing what they thought of as the one true religion in which Jesus Christ long ago visited America. The faithful adherents of the new religion fled in the western United States to a place now known as the state of Utah. The Mormons believe it is their mission to evangelize all people with the gospel according to their beliefs.

Key Beliefs

The real source of authority comes from the "Book of Mormon" and also the current president of the church. They believe that God is an exalted man in the role of a God. All righteous men can become gods with their own planets. They reject Christ as God. Baptism is needed to be saved even more than faith in Jesus Christ. Baptism works for salvation even if someone is already dead. The Mormons are trying to replace the true message of the Gospel with their recent interpretations.

The organization and methods

The Mormon church has its headquarters in Salt Lake City, Utah in the United States. They call for young members to spend two years as missionaries. They wear a uniform of white shirts and neckties. They use biblical words but change their meanings to suit their perspectivces.

Discussion question
Name the "small truths" the cults tell in order to hide their bigger falsehoods. These "small truths" might be phrases, beliefs, or practices that are generally good things but only reveal one small part of the whole biblical truth.

3.8 African Independent Churches: Are They Cults?

When we speak of independent churches in Africa, one immediately thinks of the largest such as Celestial Christianity (Christianisme Celeste) in Benin, the Cherubim and Seraphim, Harrisists of Côte d'Ivoire, or the Kimbanguist Church in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Yet there is a proliferation of independent churches in most African countries.

Some have origins that are Protestant and evangelical, others follow a prophet or practice a particular mix of pagan rituals and Christian beliefs. The latter are usually a reinterpretation of the biblical truths and link orthodox beliefs as only something to be found in the religion of the white man or foreigner.

Being an independent church is not to say that this community of faith is automatically to be considered a cult. The practices may well differ from those of established churches or those started by missionaries. What is distinctive and bizarre—sometimes even threatening—often represents an affirmation of the "Africanness" of the independent church's response to European or American churches and their attempts to control the African church.

In churches established by missionaries, African Christians often behave like Europeans in their worship, in their homes, depending on the culture and rituals imported by the missionaries or international TV broadcasts. Pastors will often wear a jacket and tie, even during the hot season.

Churches soon take on a particular character and adopt distinctly African practices that we might not want to oppose without further consideration and reflection. We must look at all the issues before classifying an African Independent Church as a cult. If we look closely, we will see that our own churches have great practices and traditions that arise from particular contexts and historical situations that cannot be based solely from the word of God.

The distinctive character of the independent church can reveal its true colors by viewing its doctrine of Christ (Example: deviating from any statement about the person of Christ or trying to make Jesus into a black Christ). Or, how they desire to practice Christian worship in a way that saturates it with local traditional religious practices.

3.9 African Traditional Religions

We can evaluate the role and practice traditional religions in Africa. By using the following chart, each of the students will identify the most important aspects of traditional religions in their context and how to respond and minister to adherents in these religions.

Directions: Each student must conduct research on a cult or African traditional religion that is prominent in the community by filling out the "Chart of African Traditional Religions."

After that, form small groups in which each group will choose a cult or traditional religion to study together. The groups will prepare an oral presentation by following the method of developed by Paul Hiebert called "critical contextualization.'

In the oral presentation, the groups will offer responses in the following areas:
• The outline of beliefs and practices in comparison with Christianity.
• The liturgy and preaching in these churches.
• The attitude to adopt when dealing with the proliferation of cults.
• To know why they are adopting certain pastoral attitudes in their responses to these cults and traditional religions.

The missiologist Paul Hiebert offered a method for evaluating ministry in various context called "critical contextualization." There are four steps to this approach:

STEP 1: Observation: The minister observes the practices and religious phenomena in its context.

Requirements for the first step: Observe good, consider every detail, try understanding what is seen, but do not judge it.

The student will need to ask the following questions:

What are the beliefs or traditional practices in our context?

What happens in the community through these practices or beliefs?

STEP 2: Analysis: The minister must be able to identify the importance of practices or beliefs in the context.

Requirements of research in the second step: **examine** the observations through the lens of Scripture and against the perspective of objective reality.

Using the Scriptures, we approach the observations according to the vision of the world that is found in the Bible: the message that teaches us through the stories of creation, fall, redemption, and also the restoration of God's reign.

At the same time, we must bridge the gap between the Christian message and the local context. Avoid the tendency to reject others' perspectives without first trying to understand them.

The student will need to ask the following questions:

What is the meaning of practices and beliefs in the context?

How are the observed religious phenomena to be compared to the revelation of the Christian Scriptures?

How are the observed religious phenomena to be compared to other cultures of Africa or the world?

STEP 3: Evaluation of our analysis: The minister must evaluate traditional and localized beliefs with the Bible and Christian beliefs.

Now, the researcher needs to evaluate the old beliefs and practices in light of the new light given by the Bible. It is not just a process that includes spiritual leaders, but a process that involves the input of as many as possible.

The student will arise the following questions:

What are the implications if we start to change old practices in light of the new Christian beliefs?

Why is there no conflict between the old practices shared between other cultures around the world?

Or: How can we adapt old practices that they are also acceptable for Christianity?

STEP 4: Create a ministry of transformation: The minister must organize practices to transform their context with the message of the Gospel. The final step requires us to continue the process of restoring the reign of

God on earth. Our actions are to be full of grace, according to James 2:13b, "Mercy triumphs over judgment."

The student will arise the following questions:

How does the Church guard Biblical truth and orthodox belief against beliefs or practices that arise primarily from their culture?

Are there local beliefs or cultural practices that correspond to the message of the Gospel?

How can cultural forms be incorporated into the ministry of the Gospel in this context?

Use the following chart to help identify the beliefs and practices of traditional religions or cults according to Step 1.

Evaluation Chart for African Traditional Religions

	Conception	How this conception is identified in context
1	**God**: The conception of God in Africa; names, attributes, ideas	
2	**How God acts**: by the means of intermediaries, little gods, dreasm, visions, natural phenomena	
3	**God and humanity:** How God punishes and rewards humanity (judgment); morality and social ethics and standards for behavior	
4	**Rites of passage**: birth, puberty, marriage, death, influence of these rites in society and worldview	
5	**Festivals**: origin and meaning of these rituals (general and/or specific)	
6	**Superstition and mysticism in Africa**: explaining fortune and evil in the African context (individual and groups)	
7	**Veneration of divinities**: divinites and their powers. Personal or community divinities.	
8	**Cheiftains**: order of successions; cult and institution of chieftaincy, chiefs and society	
9	**Communal cohension**: clan, tribe, village, city, wars, and catastrophes	
10	**Means of spiritual education and formation:** secret societies, sorcery, spiritual beings, jinas, monsters, water beings, (Maame, sirens), etc.	

11	**Practices and Customs**: significance of groups. Localized practices, such as genital mutilation, rights of widows, and inheritance of property rights	
12	**Informal education**: apprenticeship, relationship between servant and master; obedience, submission, role of educators: parents, masters,co-horts, mentors	
13	**Healing practices:** what cuases sickness; and how are they healed or treated r	
14	**Knowledge of the Future:** how are decisions made and commitments for the future	
15	**Afterlife:** What happens after life on earth?	

Section 4 African Challenges and Pastoral Responses

4.1 African Challenges

The destruction of social structures

This destruction is leaving many Africans confused, uprooted, insecure, and, therefore, vulnerable.

The search for a solution

44.2 Global Concerns

By reviewing African societies, it is possible to list some of the symptoms of the pathologies infecting today's global society and that cause suffering for so many. There are worries and concerns arising from unemployment, threat of war, terrorism, poverty, etc.).

Seekers ask themselves about the nature of truth and how it is found

Seekers seek real answers to real questions.

Researchers feel frustrated and uprooted. They are without . . .

Seekers are disappointed by . . .

Seekers are among the faithful.

4.3 Pastoral Approaches

A sense of C_____

Education et C_____education

Prayer and W_____

Participation and direction ("L_____")

P_____ approach

Cultural I_____

Tolerance and Discernment

Cults have been an embarrassing problem for both churches and governments.

It is up to the Church in Africa to find the means to educate others on the religious needs of African today. It is for the Church to bear the heavy responsibility of promoting the conversion of those ""Cries of the Africans" toward a liberating act of faith in Jesus Christ. Because the most effective defense of the Church is the testimony of one person who radiates Christ's light to the darkened world.

Section 5 Conclusion

We need religious freedom.

We need biblical teaching.

We need salvation by grace through faith in God and mutual cooperation between believers.

We need do avoid a sectarian spirit, including authous avons besoin d'éviter nous-mêmes tout esprit sectaire, including authoritarianism and legalism

We need to be good observers and not reactionary

What should be our attitude and our approach in ministry?

- **Analyze the actions of cults and sects**

- **Inform the membership and especially the youth**

To be faithful to what we believe and in our principles

- **Comprendre « les points ou ils sont »**

- **Understand their point-of-view**

Critical Contextualization

By Paul Hiebert, Daniel Shaw, Tite Titenou, *Understanding Folk Religions* .(1999), pp. 20-29

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STEP 2: **Analysis:** The minister must be able to identify the importance of practices or beliefs in the context.

What is the meaning of practices and beliefs in the context?

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STEP 3: **Evaluation of our analysis:** The minister must evaluate traditional and localized beliefs with the Bible and Christian beliefs.

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STEP 4: **Create a ministry of transformation:** The minister must organize practices to transform their context with the message of the Gospel.

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Group	Members	Total time		Points	Total points	Notes
			Content		100	
			Participation		100	
			Presentation		100	
			Total		/300	