

DISSERTATION

Titel der Dissertation

SICKNESS AND THE SEARCH FOR HEALING IN IGBOLAND: A PASTORAL THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

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Having grown up in a Society plagued by sickness and disease worsened by lack of adequate health and medical care in the midst of poverty and hunger, a society now booming with a deep-seated hunger for miracles and healing, my journey in Pastoral Theology has often been interrupted by questions that began with ‘why’. The demand to understand ‘why’ has been motivated by my experience of a young, dynamic and fast growing church that in recent days tend to take the biblical injunction of Christ to -“go and proclaim the gospel and heal the sick”- serious. In the face of this, the need to recall to our minds the basis of the Christian ministry to the sick became crucial. The strong influence of the fast growing prosperity evangelical churches with emphasis on healing and deliverance seemed to have added to my zeal and interest to research into this topic. In the Igbo society, search for healing has become the order of the day but with many aberrations reported here and there. The traditional view of sickness and the Christian understanding of suffering seemed interesting to compare in the face of some carry-overs or a syncretistic mixtures of the two- traditional and Christian practices.

Equally, my experiences and study in the Western society and my contact with the much improved and sophisticated but praiseworthy medical system in place and the somewhat absence or elimination of God from the medical laboratory and the almost complete entrusting of the function of healing to medicine, raises the question in me: Who heals actually?

In 2000-2002, the Institute of Pastoral Theology of the University of Vienna through Markus Beranek under Prof. DDr. Paul M. Zulehner carried out a study in Europe to determine how far the faithful in four selected parish communities in Austria and Germany see their parish communities as a place of healing and salvation – “Gemeinde als Heil/Land”. The result was interesting as it was discovered that none of the interviewed expected bodily healing from the parish community. Medicine has taken over that function. It was interesting then to make a similar study in Africa particularly, in Igbo Land where the practice of “healing Mass” has become rampant.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge my indebtedness to all those who demonstrated their understanding to my quest and have differently played a supportive role.

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MMag. Sabinus Iweadighi (Vienna, April 2011)

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I. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

This research is an attempt to present a socio-cultural study of the intricacies between sickness and healing among the Igbo people of Nigeria with a view to healthy living. The main question that confronts us in this research is: how do the Igbo see sickness and healing, and how far does the Christian faithful from the point of view of their personal and subjective perception, experience their parish community as a saving and life healing place, and what role can the community play in healing? With the recent rampant erection of healing centres and the bizarre rush and search for healing in the Igbo Christian community today, this work will try to find out what the Igbo Christian community expects from their pastors of soul today.

It is the aim and objective of this Research to look into the meaning of health, sickness and healing and its pastoral - theological implications among the Igbo and the possible role of the Christian community. Through fieldwork and data analysis, we will be enriched with what the faithful Igbo expects from the parish in his suffering; for instance, to what extent he experiences the Christian community as a place of salvation and healing.

In the present-day Christian worship, large gatherings for healing prayers are gaining enormous ground in our Christian communities. "Healing Masses" are taking precedence over 'thanksgiving' and 'sacramental' masses in many parishes. The faithful migrate regularly from one parish to the other in search of healing and healers. This is the aim of this research, namely, to find out what the faithful are missing in their parish communities that they go looking for in the other parishes or churches.

Interviews and data collections:

This study made use of both deductive and inductive methods of study. Using the deductive method we moved from the general conceptions of health, sickness and healing concentrating more on the biblical and Christian conceptions to the particular Igbo understanding or conception of sickness and healing. The aim of this method was to place the traditional Igbo conception of sickness and healing alongside the biblical Christian conception so as to see how far the contact with Christianity changed the Igbo conception and the other way round to see what elements of the traditional conception was carried over into Christianity as the Igbo became Christians. This may go a long way to

help us find the reason for the rampant quest for healing among Igbo Christians and the crippling up of healing homes in Igbo land today. This formed the bulk of the first part of the work and we made use of written texts and literatures in this part of the work.

We then used the inductive method in the second and empirical part of the research. This empirical part of the study adopted a position in which the views of the subjects under inquiry will be the priority as a means of laying open the hidden facts in the field.

This part of the study was a qualitative and quantitative inquiry.

In the qualitative inquiry, open-ended, unstructured oral interviews were conducted with persons whose knowledge and experience in the field were thought to be of immense help and they include:

a native doctor (medicine man): Nwokorie Uwalaka; a priest involved in the healing ministry: Fr. Peter; a priest involved in the training of future priests: Fr. Dioka; a lay person Engr. Livinus Ebe; an Educationist Mr Odu; a Postulant: Gloria and an Igbo in diaspora living in USA: Simon Udemgba. The datasets were analyzed using recursive abstraction – analyzing without coding whereby the datasets were summarized.

In the quantitative inquiry, a research questionnaire was formulated and distributed and the data analyzed and the statistical graphs used in the work. A large part of the questionnaires was distributed in Igbo land. Two parishes in Igbo land will be selected for the Interviews. A good number of the questionnaires shall be distributed in these parishes. One parish will be where this practice of “healing mass” has been in practice and the other parish will be one where it is not in practice.

In order to get a wider and objective view on the issue, I will send out some Questionnaire to those I may not be able to reach through the open interviews. I shall try through the questionnaires to reach out to a good number of priests, Religious and Seminarians, who are the people in the pastoral field or will be in the pastoral field tomorrow to be able to assess their positions and influences. We reached out to people who were sick person and in need of healing, one health worker - a medical Doctor, One person who has being healed through prayers in the healing ministry.

I shall try to reach out to possible equal number of Men and women as well as representatives from the following age groups:

- youths: 12-25 years of age

- young couples or families: 25-40 years of age
- Parents with grown up children: 45-65 years of age
- Old People: 65 – 100 years

II. SOURCE MATERIALS

The source of the materials to be used in this work shall be the information gathered from written sources like books and literatures and the information gathered through the personal interviews and data collections. Whereby the first part of the work, will dwell mostly on information gathered from books and literatures, while the second and empirical part of the work will dwell mostly on the information from the field work.

III. INTRODUCTION

The Igbo is a tribal folk in the eastern part of Nigeria. Before the advent of Christianity, the Igbo were adherents of the African Traditional Religion (ATR). They had their belief systems. Their cultural and religious belief systems were in some aspects imbedded in superstitious beliefs.

Health is for the Igbo person very important and he/she does everything possible in his/her power to preserve this life. Sickness, which is seen as a danger to this health, is pursued to make sure it is eradicated as much as it is possible for the Igbo man. There were traditional therapeutic methods of healing before the coming of western medicine. There were the herbalists (Dibia), who through the application of herbs and leaves try to effect the cure of sicknesses; and the priests of the traditional African Religion who tried to find out the curse and also offered sacrifices to appease the gods, who often could be regarded as the cause of sickness. The community is the forum in which the individual lives play a very vital role in the issue of sickness and its alleviation.

Today with the advent of Christianity in Igbo land, some of the superstitious beliefs were abolished and the Christian faith is flourishing unhindered with the increasing number of parish communities. Gradually the African Traditional Religion is giving room to the Christian Religion; most superstitious beliefs are losing their holds on the people since explanations for most of these phenomena are discovered. Western Medicine has almost overtaken the traditional therapeutic healing methods. But sickness remains in the lives of the people and the search for its healing continues.

The health system is poor and there is no health Insurance so that the sick can be sure of getting adequate treatment. In most cases, poverty prevents people from getting better treatment for your sickness. Many die of simple ailments because of this problem. There are many private hospitals and the hospital bills are often so exorbitant that the poor could not afford it. Faith and hope in God the Creator and Healer seem to be the only possible way out and at times cheaper, while some tend to fall back to the old traditional therapeutic methods. On the other hand, one notices among the Igbo Christians the tendency of transferring the traditional ideas into the Christian faith. Many who cannot afford the cost of hospital treatment run from one healing centre to the other in search of healing. What does the pastor of soul and the Christian community do in the face of

this? The earlier catholic sacerdotal concept of a priest been “all things to all men” seem to have beclouded the sound interpretation of the Pauline theology of Charisma.

Jesus commissioned his Apostles to go and proclaim the Good News and to heal the sick. Today in the Nigerian church and in Igbo land in particular, the method of prayer healing is becoming the order of the day. Many healing homes are springing up here and there. Within the Catholic Church, the demand for healing among the faithful is spreading like a wild fire. Priests in many parish communities try to adapt to this demand by organising the so called “healing mass” outside the normal Eucharistic celebration in order to satisfy the pastoral need of their flock and in most cases to forestall a type of “pastoral migration” that might occur. In such healing Masses the sick would be prayed for in a special way and in most places hands will be laid on the sick often following the prayer method characteristic of the charismatic movement. The result is a type of competition among priests who presume to have this healing charisma. The faithful whose parish priest does not hold this healing mass migrate to other parishes where these healing masses are being held. Among the healers one observes often a sort of competition und more often some abuses of this gift and charisma.

In the face of these, the question is raised on the role of the Christian community in the mission of Salvation and healing. What does the sick Christian Igbo man expect from his or her parish community? How does he see sickness today? What does he expect from his parish priest? Does he experience the healing effect of the Christian faith in its mission of salvation? Must every sickness be healed? Is the Christian Igbo person forgetting the essence and meaning of suffering in the Christian life? All these questions are what this research is going to occupy itself with.

As a matter of approach, first we intend in this work to explore with help of written texts and Literatures the “status quo” – what was before, during and after the contact of the Igbo culture with the Christian faith. Then the research will try to investigate through Interviews and Questionnaires what Igbo understand by sickness today, the attitude towards sickness and healing and the accompanying theological and pastoral problems. We shall then present the results of fieldwork interviews whose statistical analysis and pastoral theological interpretations will form the bulk of the second and empirical part of the work.

The work is divided into two parts: the first part deals with the fundamentals and is divided into five chapters. Chapter one will try to expose the Igbo socio- and religious

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worldview so as to know why Igbo believe what they believe. Chapter two will explore the Igbo Anthropology analysing the Igbo concept of life, and man. Chapter three will deal with both the general concept of health, sickness and disease and the biblical Christian conception and end with the Igbo understanding of sickness. Chapter four will try to explore the Phenomenology of healing, the biblical Christian conception of healing and the Igbo traditional healing method. Chapter five will then access the advent of Christianity into the Igbo culture and the effects pointing to the situation of things today in the Igbo church with regard to the problem of sickness and healing.

The second part of the work will dwell on the empirical research. This part is divided into three chapters: Chapter one will explain the processes of the field work and data collection, while chapter two will be on the interpretation and evaluation of the results of the empirical research and chapter three will posit some pastoral-theological recommendations in regard to the problem under study followed by some concluding remarks.

PART I: FUNDAMENTALS – THE THEORETICAL CONTEXT AND THE STUDY BACKGROUND

I. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

It has been a practice in the art of healing; it has been a proven method in the art of solving problems that one goes back to the roots, to the bases in order to find the eventual cause of a problem in order to find a lasting solution. We want to apply this wisdom in this research. In this first part of the work therefore, we hope to take a thorough look at the theoretical context and background of our study, what I called the fundamental bases. We hope to do this with the help of books or literature research on the topic. Based on what book authors have written on the topic in question, we wish then try to elaborate on the study background.

Making use of this qualitative – inductive method, the first part shall be divided in five chapters. Chapter one will dwell on the Igbo Cosmology and worldview enlightening the Igbo world before contact with Christianity. Chapter two shall look at the Igbo concept of Life, Man, health and prayer. Chapter three will treat the concepts of health, illness, sickness and disease while chapter four will dwell on healing. Finally chapter five shall dwell on Christianity in Igbo land and subsequent developments that has led to the subject of our empirical research.

CHAPTER ONE: COSMOLOGY: THE UNDERSTANDING OF IGBO WORLD-VIEW

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Existence is a reality in space and time and for existentialists, to be is to be with. The Igbo folk exists in space and time and has in the cause of time formed their own world-view influenced by the course of history and the contacts in time. In this chapter, we wish to explore who the Igbo folk are, their origins and worldview elaborating alongside the material and religious organisation of the Igbo society.

1.1 MEANING OF THE TERM "WORLD-VIEW".

In order to comprehend a people's belief and why they see certain aspects of life the way they see them, it is pertinent to understand their worldview. So for us to look into the Igbo understanding of "health, sickness and healing", it will be necessary to inquire into the Igbo cultural and religious worldview. Such understanding will undoubtedly enlighten us on their concept of sickness and healing as highlighted by Berinyuu in his work: "Pastoral care of the sick in Africa" in reference to the Akan of Ghana. In this he notes:

„that modern (Western-trained) doctors and their sophisticated modern medical centres have not been able to meet the Akan's health needs, is that the most of these facilities have being operating for years without reference to the Akan concept of health and diseases and their general World View.“¹

Literally, the concept worldview is composed of two words – world and view – and literally refers to how the world is perceived by a group of people. World-view could be referred to as a model of the world. The world-view of a people influences the way they experience their world and their undertakings. It is "the complex of the people's beliefs and attitudes concerning the origin, nature, structure of the universe and the interaction of its being with particular reference to man"². Ikenga Metuh is of the opinion that

¹ Kofi Appiah Kubi, "God heals, man cures", in: Berinyuu Abraham Adu, *Pastoral Care to the sick in Africa, Studies in the Intercultural History of Christianity*, Peter Lang Band 15, Frankfurt am Main, 1988, 31.

² Ikenga Metuh, *God and Man in African Religion* Geoffery Chapman, London, 1981, 48.

knowing and understanding a people's world-view is essential to the understanding and rightful interpretation of their social, religious, political and even psychological problems.³ Hence the Igbo understanding of sickness and healing and the apparent quest for healing among the Igbo Christians today can only be understood when we know and understand the worldview and cosmology of the Igbo. According to Uchendu, to know how a people view the world around them is "to understand how they evaluate life; and a people's evaluation of life, temporal and non-temporal, provides them with a 'charter' of action, a guide to behaviour"⁴.

Cosmology can also be a "system of prescriptive ethics" or "an action system". Cosmology as a "system of prescriptive ethics" defines what a people ought to do and what they ought to avoid – and as "an action system", it reveals what they actually do and how they behave and react to certain life situations.⁵ Hence, cosmological understanding helps us clarify the basic notions underlying the socio-cultural cum socio-religious activities of the Igbo. But before we go to treat the socio-cultural and socio-religious world of the Igbo, let us look at the geographical location and historical background of this cultural group. The hypothesis surrounding the origin of the Igbo may go a long way to help us appreciate or understand more their attitude to life.

1.2 SITUATING THE IGBO SOCIETY: GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION AND ORIGIN

Administratively, Nigeria was formerly divided into three: the Northern Region, the Eastern Region and the Western Region. Religiously however, the country can be divided into the Muslim North and the Christian South.

³ Ikenga Metuh, *Comparative Studies of African Traditional Religion*. Imico: Onitsha, 1987, 61

⁴ Uchendu V.C., *The Igbo of Southeast Nigeria*, (Florida, 1965), 11; in Ugwu Moses Chinonyelu, *Healing in the Nigerian Church: A Pastoral-psychological Exploration*. *Studies in the Intercultural History of Christianity*. Peter Lang Volume 109, Frankfurt /Main, 1998, 33.

⁵ Ugwu Moses Chinonyelu, *Healing in the Nigerian Church*, 34.



FIG. 1: Nigerian Map along religious lines (Streisselberger)⁶

1.2.1 The geographical location

The term “Igbo”⁷ represents an ethnic group of people located in south-eastern Nigeria in West Africa. They occupy the largest part of south-eastern Nigeria and a small strip of land on the western bank of the river Niger. The people are called the Igbo⁸ and their language is also called Igbo language. The Igbo speaking people of Nigeria constitute one of the largest ethnic groups of Sub-Sahara Africa. The territory falls within the equatorial rain-forest region, between latitude 5° and 7° north, and longitude 6° and 8° east,⁹ and occupy an area of about 15,800 square miles.¹⁰ The River Niger, before flowing into the Atlantic Ocean demarcated the Igbo Land into two unequal parts. The greater part of Igbo Land lies in what was formerly called the Eastern Region of Nigeria, while the smaller portion lies west of the Niger in what was formerly called the Midwestern Region of Nigeria but now called Delta state.

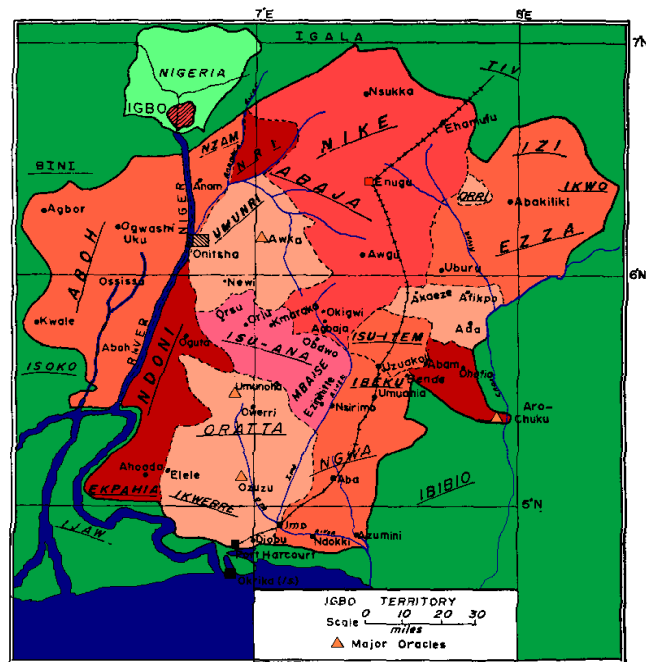
⁶ This picture was taken from a Film “Zu Gast bei Freunden” by Johann Streißelberger, 2001.

⁷ The alternative term “Ibo” is often found in books mostly of foreign authors. The equivalent “Ibo” is often used by foreigners who find it difficult to pronounce the Igbo double consonant “gb” in the term Igbo.

⁸ The use of the term “Igbos” to express the plural form is according to Igbo scholars not correct. .

⁹ Ikenga- Metuh, “The Nature of African Theism,” in *Religion and African Culture: 1. Inculturation – A Nigerian Perspective*, ed. Uzukwu Elochukwu E. C.s.sp. Enugu, Spiritan Publications, 1988, 62.

¹⁰ Cf. Uchendu V.C., *The Igbo of Southern Nigeria*, 1-2.

FIG. 2: Igboland along territorial lines¹¹FIG. 3: Igboland today¹²

In the current political structure in Nigeria, the Igbo are politically and economically administered in what is precisely known today as the Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, Imo and most of the Niger Delta/River States of Nigeria. The Igbo people caught world attention for a period – (1966-1970), as the chief protagonists of the Biafran Tragedy.

¹¹ Map taken from http://www.biafraland.com/biafra_maps.htm, June 2005.

¹² www.sitesatlas.com/custom/Igboland.htm Feb. 2010

Igbo is both the people (about 25million today) and their language (as we shall later discuss). The Boundaries of Igbo Land extends to other ethnic groups: in the north it shares boundary with the Igala, the Idomas and the Tivs; in the east with the Ekoi; in the southwest with the Binis (Urhobo) and the Isokos, in the south with the Ijaws and Ogonis, while in the southeast with the Ibibios and the Anangs. The Igbo people today are not confined to the boundaries of the Igbo land. Today, you will find them in every corner of the world in pursuit of wealth and education.

1.2.2 Climate and vegetation

Igbo land and the whole south-eastern Nigeria have “four main vegetational belts; the mangrove forest and fresh water swamps of the Niger Delta, the rain forest of the central parts and the guinea savanna of the Northern fringe. The annual rainfall amounts to about 100 inches in the Deltaic zone. Solid walls of green mangrove mask the Niger riverbanks and the delta is criss-crossed by a network of creeks and waterways. The climate is tropical and humid. There are two seasons: a wet season beginning in April and lasts till November and a dry season which sets in December and lasts till March. The temperatures range from 10°C to 40°C in these periods. The cool temperatures are experienced in the harmattan period and the rainy season. Pests and tropical diseases (mosquito, malaria, tsetse fly,) constitute some serious health hazards. Consequently, population is scanty in the mangrove and swamp belts of the region.”¹³

1.2.3 The Igbo population

The 1963 Nigerian census estimated the Igbo population then at about ten million. According to Ugwu, the Igbo make up about 18.4% of the Nigerian population.¹⁴ That means with the present population of Nigeria currently estimated at about one hundred and twenty million, it is then expected that the Igbo may have an estimated population of about twenty two million people.¹⁵ However, the exact and current Igbo population

¹³ Ozigboh Ikenga R. A., *Roman Catholicism in South Eastern Nigeria 1885-1931: A Study in Colonial Evangelism*. Etukokwu Publications, Onitsha, 1988, 20.

¹⁴ Ugwu Moses Chinonyelu, *Healing in the Nigerian Church*, 24. .

¹⁵ Compare: “Special Report on Nigeria,” Time Magazine, March 2, 1987, 33. The Report estimates the Igbo Population at approximately thirteen million people. Cf. also Udo R.K., “*Nigeria: Area and*

is not known, since there is not yet a current and exact population count in Nigeria in the recent past. Hence we are left for now with figures from the old census or estimates: According to the ETHNOLOGUE Language database, over 15 million people speak the Igbo language. According to Nigeria estimates, they are over 25 million people. That represents about 20 percent of the total Nigeria population.

The Igbo are mainly agriculturists and live in acephalous and segmented organised societies¹⁶, that is to say traditionally, according to Azorji, the Igbo live in a vast number of villages fragmented into small family groups but do not have an organised system of government in the sense of a hierarchical structure of chiefdoms and kingdoms. Traditionally, the Igbo believe strongly in a diffused democracy and community life with power and authority in the hands of the male lineage elders.¹⁷

1.2.4 Brief history of the origin of the Igbo people

Just as the origin of the term Igbo is unknown, so also is the origin or descent of the Igbo people not yet known with certainty. There has been debates and hypothesis on the origin of the Igbo people and as such there are thus diverse views about the origin of the Igbo. The origin of the Igbo people has been the subject of speculations and this is yet to be concluded. According to Afigbo:

“The Igbo, like any other group of people, are anxious to discover their origin and re-construct how they came to be where they are. ...their experiences under colonialism and since Nigeria’s Independence have emphasized for them the reality of their group identity which they want to anchor into authenticated history.”¹⁸

This is because a traditional history of origin of a given people forms part of their thought system and social life.¹⁹ In the last fifty years a real work has been carried out

Population,” University of Chicago Staff, (ed.) “Encyclodaedia Britannica”, Vol. 13, Chicago, 1984, 90.

¹⁶ Ikenga-Metuh, “The Nature of African Theism,” in Elochukwu E. Uzukwu C.s.sp. ed., *Religion and African Culture: 1. Inculturation – A Nigerian Perspective*, Spiritan Publication, (1988), 62.

¹⁷ Azorji Eugene, *Some Recurrent Problems of Christian Inculturation in Nigeria with special reference to the Igbo people*. Universitas Urbaniana, Romae, 1988, 154-155.

¹⁸ Afigbo A.E., *Prolegomena to the study of the culture history of the Igbo-Speaking Peoples of Nigeria: Igbo Language and Culture*. Oxford University Press, 1975, 28.

¹⁹ Onwuejiogwu, M., *An Igbo Civilisation: Nri Kingdom and Hegemony*, (London, Ethiope Pub. Corp., 1981), in Okonkwo Jerome I., “Nri Myth of Origin: An Aro Problem Review,” *AAP* 48, (Universität Köln, Dec. 1996), 81.

on the issue of the origin of the Igbo against false documentation of foreign researchers that Igbo scholars has “a basic lack of interest in grand history”²⁰. However archaeology, linguistics (glotto-chronology) and ethno-history all these time have yielded useful but non-conclusive evidence.²¹ Hence the issue on origin has not been fully established. And according to Ilogu, “where the Igbo came from and when, will remain for a long time a matter of conjecture because of the absence of helpful records or archaeological findings by which we can determine the date of settlement or place of origin”.²²

There are however hypotheses or conjectures on the origin of the Igbo and analysis of the sources that are available (fragmentary oral and local traditions of origin, correlation of cultural traits, and archaeological discoveries) and tend to posit three schools of thought on the origin of the Igbo.

A school of thought proposes the autochtony hypothesis as a basis of origin.²³

The word autochtony comes from the Greek word autochton which suggests aboriginal. This hypothesis says that the Igbo people have been here – where they are located now - since the beginning of time. It argues they have remained in their present area without being immigrants since they occupied a kind of established position territorial wise. This tends to support the views of Hartle who said “Archaeology indicates that the Igbo were in occupation of parts of south-eastern Nigeria by 2000 – 3000 BC.”²⁴ Afigbo affirms, “The antiquity of the Igbo ...on logistic evidence probably goes back to five or six thousand years.”²⁵ This buttresses also the claims of an elderly man, whom Isichei quoted as saying in an interview: “We do not come from anywhere and anyone who says we come from anywhere is a liar, write it down.”²⁶ Supporters of this hypothesis claim that the Igbo according to historical records and oramedial traditions never lived anywhere outside the present Igbo homeland.

²⁰ Ottenberg, (1971), 40 in *ibid*.

²¹ Thurstan Shaw ed., *Discovering Nigeria's Past* (Ibadan, OUP, 1975); Thurstan Shaw, *Africa and the Origin of Man*, (Ibadan, Univ. Press, 1973) in Ozigboh Ikenga R. A., *Roman Catholicism in South Eastern Nigeria 1885-1931*, 20.

²² Ilogu E., *Christianity and Igbo Culture*. London, 1974, 1.

²³ Okonkwo Jerome, “Nri Myth of Origin: An Aro Problem Review,” *AAP*. 48 (1996), 83.

²⁴ Hartle D.D., “Archaeology in Eastern Nigeria,” *Nigeria Magazine* 93, (June 1967).

²⁵ Afigbo A.E., *Ropes of sand: Studies in Igbo History and culture*, (OUP, Ibadan, 1981), 4, in Ozigboh Roman, *Catholicism in South Eastern Nigeria 1885-1931*, 20.

²⁶ Isichei E. *A History of the Igbo people*, Macmillian, London, 3.

A second school of thought proposes an internal migration hypothesis. Here some say the Igbo migrated from the Benue or from the Enugu area. Scholars of this school of thought regard the Niger-Benue confluence as the original homeland of the Igbo people and that it was probably from there that the original Igbo hunters and gatherers migrated southwards to the Nsukka-Okigwe cuesta. The Nri myth²⁷ (of origin) and legends confirms the later development of agriculture and iron technology in the Nri-Awka-Anambra axis.²⁸ Some archaeological findings in Igbo land tend to give certain scientific evidence to this school of thought.

This work does not however intend to trace the many valuable historical facts on the Igbo recorded by scholars like Afigbo (1972,1980, 1981 and 1987); Achebe (1960, 1983); Uchendu (1965), Isichei (1976); Ohadike (1994) and Onwuejiogwu (1981, 1987). Let us rather explore few archaeological findings as a background to assist us establish facts based on scientific evidence, that Igbo people are traditionally, as migrants, located in an area east of the Niger River or south-eastern Nigeria as argued by this school of thought.

In tracing the origin of the Igbo people, there have been four archaeological findings – the Ugwuele, Afikpo, Nsukka and Igbo-Ukwu, which have become more relevant. These sites have produced abundant and scientific evidence of the fact that at least between 100,000 BC and 5,000 BC, man has started his cultural drama in what is referred to as “the theatre of Igbo land²⁹. Thus, archaeological evidence shows that the Igbo man of today has undergone cultural evolutionary transformations from the African late Stone Age through the Neolithic and metal Age to contemporary time³⁰

In his presentation, Anozie argued that, Ugwuele site suggests that the makers of the Ugwuele stone artefacts might have settled near the site, engaged in hunting and gather-

²⁷ Nri myth of origin holds that the earth originated from Aro and from there dispersed. According to this Nri myth of origin: “the father of all Nri is Eri. No one knows where he came from. All traditions (*odinani*) acknowledge that Eri came from God (*Chukwu*). It was Chukwu who sent Eri to the Earth. As he arrived the earth was not firm. This made him contact the Awka smiths who used their bellows to dry the soft land. When Eri came, there was no food for the people. He prayed God (*Chukwu*) to send food. God (*Chukwu*) demanded that Eri should sacrifice his first son and daughter to Him (*Chukwu*), etc. At the end, Eri controlled yam and other food and the earth.” Cf. Okonkwo Jerome I., “Nri Myth of Origin: an Aro Problem Review,” *AAP* 48 (1996), 84. .

²⁸ Afigbo A.E., *Ropes of Sand*, 7. in: Ozigbo Ikenga R. A., *Roman Catholicism in South Eastern Nigeria 1885-1931*, 20.

²⁹ Onwuejiogwu, A., “Evolutionary Trends in the History of the Development of the Igbo Civilization in the Culture Theatre of Igboland in Southern Nigeria,” *Ahiajoku Lecture* (Owerri, 1987), 8.

³⁰ *ibid.* 10-11.

ing food and trapping animals³¹. He distinguished three occupation layers with quartz flakes, small stone tools and points at the lowest layer, followed by hoe-like implements, polished stone axe, red ochre, bored stone and pottery of red ware type. The upper layer shows some quantity of grey wares. The interesting thing is the date, which ranged between 2935 BC and AD 15 at the top level. At its closing end of Ugwuele site, two other stone cultures emerged at Nsukka and Afikpo.

Demonstrating further, Onwuejiogwu explains that the upper dates of Ugwuele overlapped with lower dates of Afikpo and Nsukka, which had similar pottery types. The shreds recovered were fired and associated with stone tools and in addition, the pottery is similar to contemporary Igbo pottery found in both Afikpo and Nsukka today indicating a conservative community. The picture that emerges is a Stone Age culture area extending from Nsukka to Aba and from Okigwe to Abakaliki and Afikpo area, with its factory site situated at Ugwuele³²

Notably, the unstable climate changes that commenced in the whole of Africa between 3,000 and 2,000 BC had far-reaching effect in the whole area. However, the Igbo-speaking people seem to be concentrated in the Nsukka-Okigwe-Afikpo triangle. It is the view of the linguists that from the distribution and alignment of the languages in the Kwa sub-group of the Niger-Congo family, it is most likely that this sub-group separated in the region of the Niger-Benue confluence³³. Anthropological evidence based on glottochronology³⁴ puts the date of the emergence of this spoken Igbo language from the proto-Niger languages at about 6,000 BC and Lexicostatistics, which suggests the relative degree of differences of varieties of Igbo languages spoken today.

From the above account, it is not known exactly where the Igbo language started separating from its Kwa sister-languages but it is assumed to be around where the Igbo now live, which would help to explain the absence of Igbo linguistic enclaves or islands in any of the neighbouring areas. Given the emergence of Igbo language by 6,000 BC, it is argued that the Igbo occupation of these areas would be around fourth millennium BC, a

³¹ Anozie, F.N., "Early Iron Technology in Igboland: Llejja and Umundu," *West African Journal of Archeology*, 9 (1979).

³² Onwuejiogwu, A., "Evolutionary Trends in the History of the Development of the Igbo Civilization" 12-13.

³³ Afigbo, A.E., *Ropes of Sand*, 7.

³⁴ "Glottochronology is the technique of collecting and calculating basic words of languages in order to work out centuries of separation. Lexicostatistics is the same technique used to establish relative degree of linguistic similarity and difference." Onwuejiogwu, "Evolutionary Trends in the History of the Development of the Igbo Civilization,"⁷⁴.

date that would make the occupants of the Nsukka area around the third millennium BC most likely Igbo.

However, bearing in mind the probable region of the origin of the Negro race, the Igbo must have come into Southern Nigeria from the northern direction. Thus we have to assume that they came over a broad front in little groups over a long period of time. At first, they would settle in Nsukka area before moving down to the area of Bende Division³⁵. What is certain about this origin is that it posits the Igbo as having migrated from the northern side, always coming from the North, from outside of Nigeria and this emigration might have taken place almost the same time as that of the Greeks and middle Eastern peoples. Hence a third school of thought suggests Far East descent.

The third school of thought postulates the External migration theory. This hypothesis asserts that the Igbo descended from the Jews and as such migrated from the Far East. Talbot writes about a migration set in motion in Egypt in 1870 BC. The Nubian wars of Amenemhat or the conquest of Egypt by Hysos are believed to have led some Egyptians to settle in the Yoruba country of Oyo and in certain Igbo sub tribal areas.³⁶ The idea of migration from the East is also backed by Niven, a colonial Officer – who wrote about the Igbo people: “There are living today along the two great rivers of Nigeria many tribes using languages ... (who) ... for the most part have no traditions except the almost universal one... of having come from the East, from Mecca, from Egypt and elsewhere but always from the east.”³⁷.

Also similarities in some Igbo cultural and characteristic traits with that of the Jewish culture buttresses the claims of a direct Jewish descent of the Igbo people just as Basden writes: “There are certain customs which rather point to Levitic influence at a more or less remote period. This is suggested in the underlying ideas concerning sacrifice and the practice of circumcision. The language also bears several interesting parallels with the Hebrew idiom”.³⁸

³⁵ Afigbo, A.E., *Ropes of Sand*, 77-78.

³⁶ Talbot p., *The Peoples of Southern Nigeria*, Vol. 1, London 1926, 19.

³⁷ Nwabara, S. *Iboland: A Century of Contact with Britain 1860 – 1960*, (London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1977), 17 in Jerome Okonkwo “Nri Myth of Origin,” AAP 48, 82.

³⁸ Basden G., *Among the Ibos of Nigeria*, (1966), 31.

This goes to support the theory and views of Innocent Okorie, who also holds that the Igbo migrated from the Middle East – Juda - whose story gives even more explicit dates, names and map of this migration of the Igbo from the Middle East³⁹.

In any case, it is not the aim of this work to go into deep research with the aim of ascertaining all archaeological and scientific proofs of this version of the Far East origin of the Igbo.

But however, Josephus Flavius, the famous Jewish Historian describes also in his famous work how Shalmaneser, the King of Assyria took Samaria by force, and how he transplanted the ten tribes into Media and brought the nation of the Cutheans into their country. Thus:

“When Shalmaneser, the king of Assyria, ...besieged Samaria, (he) took it by force in the ninth year of the reign of Hoshea, and in the seventh year of Hezekiah, king of Jerusalem, and quite demolished the government of the Israelites, and transplanted all the people into Media and Persia among whom he took King Hoshea alive; and when he had removed these people out of their land he transplanted other nations out of Cuthah, a place so called (for there is still a river of that name in Persia), into Samaria, and into the country of the Israelites. So the ten tribes of the Israelites were removed out of Judea nine hundred and forty-seven years after their forefathers come out of the land of Egypt, and possessed themselves of the country.”⁴⁰

It is true that the knowledge of the traditional history and origin of a given people form part of their thought system and social life. They also help to know the woher (cause or

³⁹ This Theory stipulates that the Igbo people originated from the Middle East. And that they wandered out of the present-day Palestine during the Assyrian Assault in which the ten northern tribes of Israel fell about 718 BC. Characteristic of this Assault according to biblical history and theology is that the Assyrians conquered northern Israel, and transported the people out and planted another people in their land. Many of the tribes in the northern Israel of this time wandered away in different direction and got intermingled among different tribes and cultures and disappeared so to say from history. There is no scientific explanation in biblical research and history of the where about of these tribes of northern Israel that were displaced. So this theory of the origin of the Igbo holds it that a tribe in northern Israel at this time of the Assyrian assault called “*Scheckenigbo*” was among the tribes that wandered out of northern Israel during this time. They supposedly wandered down to Egypt but remembered what happened to them in Egypt and left Egypt again and wandered further south. Along the way according to Okorie, because of fear that the Assyrians could still go after them, they removed the “*Schecken*” in their name and left only “Igbo”. They continued to wander southwest Africa. They intermarried with the people they met on their way, until they came to what is today Nigeria. On reaching the Niger, most of them crossed over and settled and some of them remained west of the Niger, which is the Delta Igbo of today. Cf. Innocent Okorie, *The History of the Igbos and the Chronology of Events*. New Haven Enugu, Cecta Pub., 1983, 8 -11.

⁴⁰ Whiston William, Transl., *The New Complete Works of Josephus*, Bk 9, Ch. 14, § 1, Mi. USA, Kegel Pub, 1999, 332.

reason) of their attitude towards life in general, particularly their views on health and sickness. They also help to diagnose similarities with other cultural trends. This trend accords with the views of J. Okonkwo, who held that: "...emigrations or migrations of all kinds punctuate cross-cultural transfers or religious and social entities. As a possible support to the above positions, we can remind ourselves of the Greco-Roman and Euro-African contacts."⁴¹

Summarising however, many are tempted to agree with T. Shaw, who maintains: "...how man (about 2.6 million years old) evolved into the Negro and how the Negro eventually got to South-eastern Nigeria will likely remain a mystery"⁴², since there are no documented evidence to prove the positions. One thing however remains distinctive of this folk: the Igbo language.

1.2.5 The Igbo language: A mark of distinction

The origin or the meaning of the term "Igbo" has remained unknown, since there is not yet a scientific proof of the origin but it stands for both the language and the people. Linguistically and according to Armstrong, the Igbo language is of "the Kwa sub-family of the Niger-Congo family of Languages"⁴³. Anthropological evidence as stated earlier while treating the origin of the Igbo, puts the date of the emergence of the spoken Igbo language at about 6,000 BC.

The Igbo Language has a number of double consonants and a complicated system of tones employed to differentiate meaning and grammatical relationships⁴⁴. This explains then the origin of the alternative word "Ibo" mostly used by foreigners who find it difficult to pronounce the Igbo double consonant "gb". The Igbo Language has also a wide range of mutually intelligible dialects,⁴⁵ the major and prominent ones being the Onitsha and Owerri dialects. The dialects notwithstanding, for all Igbo, the correct pronunciation of the Igbo language is very important, since the same Igbo word or lexical unit

⁴¹ Jerome I. Okonkwo, "Nri Myth of Origin: an Aro Problem Review," *AAP* 48, 84.

⁴² Thurstan Shaw ed., *Discovering Nigeria's past*, in Ozigbo Ikenga R. A., *Roman Catholicism in South Eastern Nigeria*, 20.

⁴³ Armstrong R.G., *The Study of West African Languages*. Ibadan, Univ. Press, 1964. In Ozigboh Ikenga R. A., *Roman Catholicism in South Eastern Nigeria*, 19.

⁴⁴ Ozigbo Ikenga R. A., *Roman Catholicism in South Eastern Nigeria*, *ibid*.

⁴⁵ *ibid*.

can have different meanings depending on the accent. For instance, “the same lexical unit *igwe* can mean ‘sky’, ‘multitude’, ‘metal’, or ‘to grind’.⁴⁶ The same with the word: *akwa*, which can mean “cloth”, “egg”, “bed”, “crying or weeping”, or even mean “to sow a cloth”, all depending on the accent. Another instance is the word *ike* for “power” or “buttocks” depending on the accent.

However, despite these nuances and dialectical differences, “the Igbo language is probably the most important trait marking out the Igbo as a distinct group. It is the one thing that lay claim to the epithet, “pan Igbo”.⁴⁷ It shows the Igbo as homogenous and indigenous to their land since the Igbo language “is not spoken as mother tongue anywhere else in Africa or in the world for that matter”⁴⁸. It is only spoken in Eastern Nigeria and that is a mark of the Igboness.

Outside the language criteria that distinguishes the Igbo as a distinct people; other marks of the Igboness would also include “their mode of dress, their social institutions, like *ozo* titles; *ofò* staff; *njoku* - yam culture; *nmanwu*, masquerade; marriage and funeral rites, festivals and modes of settlement, etc. All these would give the Igbo their distinctive features”.⁴⁹ And this goes also to explain their attitude towards life, health and sickness. The Igbo person is known for his strong will to life and hope for success even where others have failed. They are known for their trademarks such as relentless competition in pursuit of knowledge and wealth; they are willing to make it in any corner of the globe; Igbo people are skilled in turning nothing or very little into a lot; very family and community centric; (and) does not wait for central government to fund major infrastructures such as roads, schools, etc. Writing in the early years of the 20th century – in the 1930s, - S. Leith-Ross described the Igbo as “so adaptable, so ambitious, so little attached to his past, as long as he can look forward to the future.”⁵⁰ According to Uchendu V. C., the Igbo people have a conservative view of life and passionate striving for success and this characterises the Igbo spirit and guides the Igbo philosophy of life. Okigbo confirmed this when he writes: You can tell the spirit of a people by the quali-

⁴⁶ cf. Madubuike L., *Igbo World View*, 27 in Obiagwu Marius, *Healthcare of the sick among the Igbos of Nigeria*, (Roma, 2000), 16.

⁴⁷ Afigbo A.E., *Ahianjoku Lectures* (1981), 10.

⁴⁸ Ifemesia C., *Traditional Humane Living among the Igbos*, (Enugu, Fourth Dimension Publications, 1979), 15 in Obiagwu Marius, *Healthcare of the sick among the Igbos of Nigeria*, 15.

⁴⁹ Azorji E., *Some Recurrent Problems of Christian Inculturation in Nigeria*, 153.

⁵⁰ Leith-Ross S., *African Women, a Study of the Ibo of Nigeria*. London, Faber and Faber, 1934, 68, in *ibid* 157.

ties they admire, and this is true of the Igbo people. Let us now see the material organisation – the socio-cultural world - of the traditional Igbo society.

1.3 THE MATERIAL ORGANISATION OF THE IGBO TRADITIONAL SOCIETY.

Theology, pastoral care, or spirituality according to Nelson Thayer, does not occur in vacuum; but rather in a matrix of social processes. Therefore any attempt to handle these issues “must take seriously the cultural context within which pastoral care occurs”.⁵¹

However, as a prelude to understanding the metaphysical foundations of Igbo traditional society therefore, this work shall describe in some detail the material organization of Igbo culture live as this will give credence to it. A traditional Igbo unit has four main structures. The first, which incorporates the rest, is the ‘town’ (*obodo*, *ala* or *mba*). In the ‘town’, there is the ‘village’ (*ebe*); the ‘patri-/matrilineage’ (*umunna/umunne*); and the ‘extended family’ (*ama* or *onuama*), which are based on compounds. For the convenient of this work, we shall limit ourselves with those of family, extended family and the sense of community and the traditional moral code “*omenala*” that binds every member of these structures and regulates their day-to-day lives.

1.3.1 Categories of persons in Igbo cosmology

The structures of the Igbo traditional society – family, extended family, community etc - are built upon trust and kinship foundations and relationships. Each unit operates on the same set of principles, but according to the degree of influence depending on its complexity. The degree of complexity depends mostly on the number of persons in each structure belonging to the unit, such as, family or village community. Based on this analysis, three categories of persons – supernatural, natural and corporate – exist for the purpose of material organization and role-playing. The Igbo community of Vienna Austria for instance, which is a corporate person, is now among such three categories of persons for the Igbo people. Invariably, this stems from the acquisition, production, distribution and enjoyment of property rights and interests. For the Igbo, supernatural per-

⁵¹ Nelson, S.T., *Thayer* in: Berinyuu Abraham Adu, *Pastoral care to the sick in Africa*, 30.

sons comprise of all physical phenomena, like the sun, thunder, etc as well as all psychological forces. These are purely abstract conceptions defined by the Igbo mind through the concepts of *CHI-ukwu* and *chi*, as we shall see later. Natural persons include all human beings – living and yet to be born – together with other living beings like plants, animals, etc. Corporate persons refer to the village, the patri-/matrilineage, the extended families and compounds as well as associations. It is these three categories of persons that play role in the regulation of the system of production and distribution of benefits in the traditional Igbo society.

1.3.2 The Extended Family – “*Umunna*” system.

For the Igbo and many other African cultures, “the family has a much wider circle of members than the word suggests in Europe or North America”.⁵² The family includes “children, parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, brothers and sisters who may have their own children and other relatives.”⁵³ This is called in the Igbo culture the extended family system. Also the family does not imply only the living but also the dead and the unborn. It includes the children because they are the hope for the survival of their family. Children are also the hope or “insurance” for the sustenance of the older generation since by implication; there is no organised social insurance by the state that can take care of the ageing generation just like in western countries today.

The extended family relationship or co-operation then is one of the strongest institutions and the strength of the Igbo traditional society as well. This family relationship is based on either “bond of blood relationship or relationship through marriage between two families.”⁵⁴ The extended family relationship regulates or even dictates often the whims or grades of the individual to his fellow human beings. If one has a problem, he turns to the other side of the relationship - *umunna* - for help. Even in the case of sickness, *umunna* is involved. Nobody is left alone to carry the burdens of life. The society is ruled by the golden rule: “live and let live”. Nobody carries his problem alone, be it misfortune or sickness. Fortunes are also shared communally. Everybody has a place in the family just as Davidson expresses: “In the traditional African culture, the weak and

⁵² Mbiti, John S., *African Religions and Philosophy*, 2nd Edition. Portsmouth, New Hampshire, Heinemann, 1989, 104.

⁵³ *ibid.*

⁵⁴ *ibid.*

the aged, the incurable, the helpless, the sick are affectionately taken care of in the comforting family atmosphere.”⁵⁵

Even the training and bringing up of a child in the Igbo culture is not the affair of the parents alone. The extended family has a role to play as well. The training of the child takes place within the larger extended family. The child in Igbo culture is “our child” and not “my child” because certain decisions concerning the child cannot be taken alone by the parents in most cases. This view supports also the strength and sense of community among the Igbo people.

1.3.3 The sense of community among the Igbo

According to Nwaigbo, “the centrality of the Igbo culture rests in the community spirit (*otu obi, otu mmuo* – one heart, one spirit), thus, community spirit or the “we-culture” in Igbo society is a reality of practical living.”⁵⁶ The Igbo people believe very strongly in the power of togetherness. Many Igbo proverbs and idioms express this sense of communion among the Igbo. For instance *Igwe bu ike* – togetherness is strength, or together we are stronger. The strength of the extended family system in the culture of Igbo people stretches outside the family to the community. Just as the extended family system in a wider circle, does not allow the parents to claim sole authority in some decisions affecting their children. In the same manner, the family is obliged to involve the community in some matters affecting the family members, for instance in marriage issues.

In the Igbo culture, nobody exists for himself alone: “to be is to be with others”. So are joys and sorrows shared together as the Igbo people will say: “*ahapuru otu onye uwa, y’egbuo ya*” – if one is left alone with the burdens of life, he dies under the weight of it. The community partake in the joyful moments of the individual just as it does in the sad and sorrowful moments.

Again this sense of communal identity is also noticeable in the meaning and reality of prayer among the Igbo. The power and efficacy of communal prayers are intensified by the proverbial “*igwe bu ike*” – community is power or “*agbakota aka nyuo mamiri, ya*

⁵⁵ Davidson, B., *The African Genius*, (Boston, 1969), 31 in Onwubiko, Oliver, A., *Christian Mission & Culture in Africa*, Vol., I: *African Thought, Religion & Culture*. Enugu SNAAP Press, 1991, 20.

⁵⁶ Cf. Nwigbo, F., *Church as a Communion: An African Christian Perspective*. Frankfurt am Main, 1996, 186.

gba ufufu” – “We achieve more, when we join hands together”. The gods, it is believed, hear the community in prayer faster than the individual alone.

1.3.4 Cultural Tradition and Moral – “Odinala” / “Odibendi”, “Omenala”

Morality is a very essential part of the Igbo traditional society and religion. A good moral life consists in the observation of the ancestral norms, morals, customs and traditions, which they believe originated from *Chi-Ukwu* (the Great God), the guiding- and the ancestor spirit. The totality of these norms (morals and customs) is what the Igbo call *odinala* or *odibendi*.⁵⁷ The norms and customs are also called *omenala* - tradition. *Omenala* or Igbo tradition, like every tradition is the corpus of the legal, social, moral and ritual norms of the people. *Omenala* is the source of rituals and social behaviour.⁵⁸ The literary translation of the words: *odibendi* and *omenala* is also interesting and tends to point to the deep meaning of the words. “*Odibendi*” suggests “what is usual or what obtains among a people” and *omenala* points to “what happens or obtains in a land”. It is an instrument of identity of a people. Hence the insistence to maintain and protect the tradition. The Igbo people believe strongly that *omenala* or *odinala* – the traditional norms - came directly from *Chineke* (the Creator) and is sanctioned by *ala* (the earth goddess) and is bequeathed to the people through the ancestors. This is why tradition has a social and cultural function as well.

Ilogu differentiated between two forms of tradition: the moral tradition and the socio-cultural traditions.⁵⁹ From the socio-cultural standpoint, tradition - *odinala* - is the measure for the social ethos and the continuity of the societal values from one generation to the other. *Odinala* is the content of the enculturation of any Igbo child. The keeping and observation of the tradition assures of peace and tranquillity between the living and their ancestral Spirits. The guiding principles of tradition are called *nso ala* (an abhorrence). A violation of any principle of the tradition is a violation, a sin against

⁵⁷ Edeh, E., *Towards an Igbo Metaphysics*. Chicago, Loyola University Press, 1985, 59.

⁵⁸ Cf Nwala, U. T., *Igbo Philosophy*, 58f. in Nwagbala Edmund, “Christian Forgiveness (Mt.6:12) and Igbo Traditional Concept of Sin and Forgiveness” *Bigard Theological Studies* 23 No. 1, (Jan.-June 2003), 83.

⁵⁹ Ilogu, E., *Christianity and Igbo Culture*, 22.

the ancestral Spirits and against *ala* (the earth goddess) and is seen as a taboo – evil. It is called “*imeru nso ala*” – going against or doing what the earth goddess abhors.

Crimes like murder, robbery, abortion, incest etc are *aru*–abhorrence. They are crimes against the *ala* and against the ancestral spirits and the befalling tragedy is often expected as punishment for anybody who violates traditional norms. This punishment can most often be in the form of spiritual sickness or attack, which often manifests itself in physical sickness.

Again, individual offence carries often with it communal punishment. The community in general suffers at times from the offence of one person.⁶⁰ To restore the normalcy again, sacrifice for cleansing is made to appease the gods and ancestors. Again the fact that individual sins or violations affect not only the individual but the community in general points to the community-centeredness and solidarity of the Igbo society as well as the religious or theophanic nature of the Igbo cosmology.

1.4 THE RELIGIOUS ORGANISATION OF THE IGBO TRADITIONAL SOCIETY

1.4.1 The hierarchy of being in the Igbo cosmology

A.G. Leonard, a European writing at the end of the colonial period described the Igbo people thus:

“The Igbo people are in the strict sense of the word a truly and deeply religious people of whom it can be said, that they eat religiously, drink religiously, bath religiously, dress religiously , and sin religiously. In a few words, the religion of these natives is their existence, and their existence is their religion.”⁶¹

The Igbo people believe deeply in a created universe *uwa* and for them the creator of all things is God. God, in the Igbo ontology embodies *Chi-ne- (e) ke* – (*Chineke* - God the creator or the creating God) - and *Chi-ukwu* (Chukwu)- translated “the great God”). For them, everything that is, originated from or is created by *Chineke*. So seen from the standpoint of creation, God is called *Chineke* – the God that creates. He is the creator of

⁶⁰ Cf., Edeh, E., Towards an Igbo Metaphysics, 60.

⁶¹ Leonard, A.G., *The lower Niger and its Tribes*. London, 1966, 429.

everything that exists. He is the beginning and End of every human life. From the standpoint of All-powerful God, he is called *Chukwu* – the Great God. He has the final decision on every human life.

The universe or the Igbo religious world is divided into two parts: the visible world and the invisible world. The visible world is the material world of men and the invisible world is the spiritual world – the world of the spirits.⁶² There is however a constant communication and contact between these two worlds.

The content of these two ontological “worlds” *uwa* – material and spiritual – like in many African cultures is divided into five categories. In the Igbo world, the first category is the (Great) God, - *Chukwu*, because he creates as well as sustains the human race. The second is the category of the spirits – *muo*. This is the sphere of the gods, - *alusi*, *agbara*; the ancestor gods – *ndi nnanna* and the spirits of the dead – ancestral spirits, the living dead. The third category in the world of the Igbo is the human beings (living), including the unborn babies. The fourth category is the world of animals and plants. This category includes also all other forms of biological living organisms. The fifth are appearances and things without biological life.⁶³ Ikenga Metu summarises it thus:

„The Igbo World presents itself as one fluid coherent unit in which spirits, men, animals, plants and the elements are engaged in continuous interaction. The invisible World of spirits, ‚ani mmuo‘ and the visible world ‚uwa‘ shade into, and mutually influence each other. Spirits, *mmuo*, of various kinds inhabit the spirit world. There are: *Chukwu*‘, the creator, the deities ‚*Mmuo*‘ which manifest themselves through important natural phenomena such as the sun, the sky, thunder, the earth etc. There are the spirit – forces ‚*Arusi*‘, titular spirits of the clans. Then come the ancestors, *Ndichief*, and, *Ogbunike*‘, evil wandering spirits of the dead“.⁶⁴

⁶² Azorji, E., Some Recurrent Problems of Christian Inculturations in Nigeria, 162. .

⁶³ Mbiti, John. S., *Afrikanische Religion und Weltanschauung*. New York, Berlin, Gruyter, 1974, 20; Cf. Ezekwugo, C.U.M., *Chi, the true God in Igbo Religion* (Mar Matthews Press, South).

⁶⁴ Ikenga- Metuh, “The Nature of African Theism” in Elochukwu E. Uzukwu C.s.sp. ed., *Religion and African Culture: 1. Inculturation*, 62.

Igbo (African) Worldview

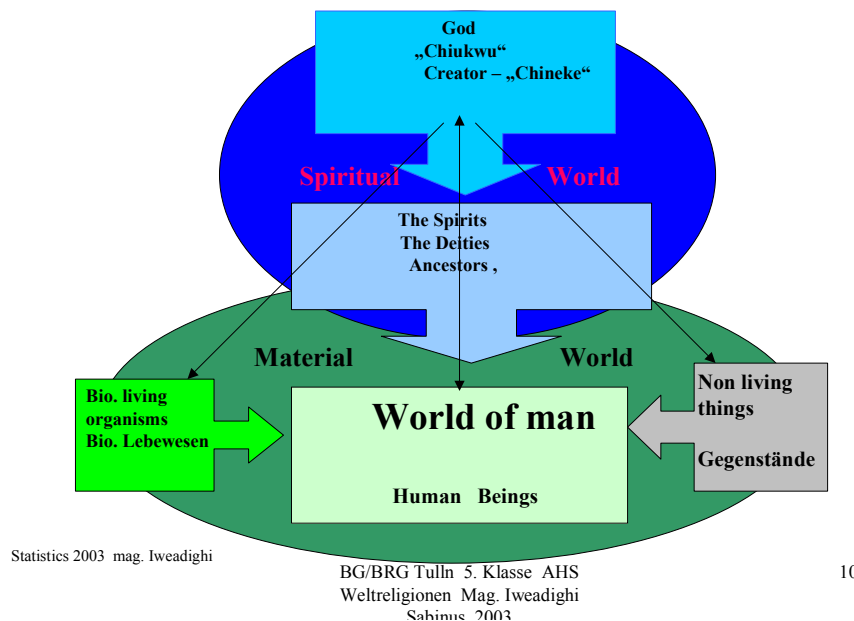


FIG. 4: The Igbo World and hierarchy of being

The above sketch shows the categories and objects (hierarchy of beings) in the traditional Igbo religious belief in its hierarchical order.

Let us now discuss some elements of the religious world of the Igbo.

1.4.2 Symbolism of the Chi concept and the worship of God

The traditional Igbo society is composed of a heterogeneous group of people under the dynamic and guiding principle of the CHI-concept – a basic category in Igbo cosmology and worldview. The Igbo cosmology and religious worldview can be seen through its chi-concept. Folk tales, proverbs, ritual festivals and myths, etc. are all embodied in the chi-concept and are among some of the ways of understanding its functional system. In his book, “Morning Yet on Creation Day” – a collection of essays – Prof. Chinua Achebe summarizes that:

“Since Igbo people did not construct a rigid and closely argued system of thought to explain the universe and the place of man in it, preferring the metaphor of myth and poetry, anyone seeking an insight into their world must seek it along their own way. Some of these ways are folk-tales, proverbs, and proper names, rituals and festivals

(...). There is of course the ‘scientific’ way as well as the tape-recorded interview with old people. Unfortunately, it is often more impressive than useful. The old people who have the information we seek will not often bare their hearts to any passer-by. They will give answers and true answers too. But there is truth and there is truth. To get to the inner truth will often require more time than the recording interview can give – it may require a whole lifetime. In any case, no one talks naturally into a strange box of tricks”⁶⁵.

The Igbo belief in the chi-concept postulates a multiplicity of worlds as well as personal identity, where existence occurs. In their thinking, “the limit is not the sky, it is somewhere much closer to earth”⁶⁶.

Based on this philosophy of life, the general meaning of chi is marked by animate and purposeful essence and existence. That is, for the Igbo people, chi has *ndu* (life), which guides their way for existence. Philosophically, chi means spirit being, which is not an absolute entity. One can understand this if we follow the traditional Igbo logic that “there is no creation without the consent of the created”. That is, for any creation to materialize and be meaningful there is always a relationship between the creator and the created.

Chi can mean two distinct but closely related selves. The first is the *chi* of the individual while the second is the chi of the collectivity, that is, in relationship with God. Strictly speaking, chi means that of the individual person, which is the symbol of the self and essence of personal identity; and the Chi with a suffix – *ukwu* (big, great) or –*neke* (create, divide), which is a personalised universal cause that determines all things and events. This *Chi-ukwu* or –*neke* relates to the individual chi as a collectively worshipped spirit and is the symbol of the collective people. God is called *Chi-ukwu* – Chukwu- (high, great God) stressing the fact that *Chi-ukwu* is higher than any other god and is also powerful than any other god and is capable of healing any kind of sickness and ailment. When *Chi-ukwu* is considered in connection with the creation of the world, he is called *Chi-neke* or *Onye-okike*, which means God the creator.⁶⁷ He created the heaven and earth, the Spirits, the human beings and all other created things.

⁶⁵ Achebe, C., *Morning Yet on Creation Day: Essays*. London, Heinemann, 1975, 94.

⁶⁶ *ibid.*, 96.

⁶⁷ Ikenga-Metuh, E., *God and Man in African Religion*, 24.

In the traditional Igbo society, it is the belief that at birth, each individual receives a personal god – *chi* – from the *Chi-ukwu* (Great God). This personal *chi* encloses within itself as in a nutshell the fortunes of the individual, which unfolds gradually, either for good or for bad⁶⁸.

Chi-ukwu however is to be distinguished from the ‘revelation’ idea of the Western God, which is very strange and foreign to the traditional Igbo conception. The early Christian missionaries and some of their ‘modern’ elitist and ‘educated’ followers of the day have often equated the *Chi-ukwu* of the Igbo to the Western God of revelation, in order to detest of what is typically of Igbo religion and symbolism. It is essential to point out that the *Chi* concept in all its ramifications was conceived within the Igbo categories of space and time.

The worship of *Chukwu* among the Igbo consists of sacrificial offerings, prayer, incantation, rituals, blessing and greeting-formulas. Also the worship of God is also expressed in the use of the name of God in Igbo names and proverbs. The Igbo people use these means to express their deeper relationship, and bond with God and also their religious feelings. This is evident in names like: Okechukwu – God’s gift; Chukwunyere – God gave; Chinweotito – to God be the praise; Onyebuchi – who is God, you are not my God; and Odinakachi – it is in God’s hands; etc.

The worship of God is also expressed in songs and hymns. The receiver of offerings and sacrifices⁶⁹ is God, the spirits or the ancestor-gods, whereas the ancestral-spirits are only mediators between God and the people. Imperatively, God is seen as the actual receiver or addressee of every sacrifice and prayer.⁷⁰

The occasions or times that call for sacrifices or offerings to Chukwu are during the time of child birth, at naming ceremonies, at circumcision, marriage, burial or at harvest, as well as when there is an offence committed against God or the ancestor-gods, be it an individual or communal offence – committed by the whole community. In whichever case, the sacrifice or offering can be a gift offering, a thanksgiving sacrifice, a

⁶⁸ Ekechukwu, A., “The Problem of Suffering in Igbo Traditional Religion” AFER, 24, No.2, (April, 1982), 89.

⁶⁹ John Mbiti distinguished between sacrifices and offerings: „Sacrifices refer to cases where anima life is destroyed in order to present the animal, in part or in whole, to God, supernatural beings, spirits or the living-dead. Offerings refer to the remaining cases where which do not involve the killing of an animal, being chiefly the presentation of foodstuffs and other items.” Mbiti, John, S., *African Religions and Philosophy*, 58.

⁷⁰ *ibid.*, 59.

community offering or an appeasing offering or sacrifice.⁷¹ The Igbo offer prayers and sacrifices for healing when they are sick or struck by misfortune. Prayer offering can be carried out at any time.

The traditional Igbo prayers express the Igbo belief and worship of the “High God” – Chukwu. The Igbo expresses the supremacy of Chukwu over other gods in prayers and incantations. The later – prayer – shall be considered in the discussion of Igbo traditional life.

1.4.3 The deities and spirits

In the material organization of Igbo traditional society, we observed the four main structures of understanding its traditional units, namely ‘town’ (obodo, ala or mba), ‘village’ (ebe); the ‘patri/matrlineage’ (umunna/umunne) and the ‘extended family’ (ama or obiama) which are based on compounds. The foundation of such traditional Igbo town or village or even extended family is usually based on a mystical kinship that often bears and/or refers to the name, or, if one prefers, the Chi of the founder while at the same time providing a collectively worshiped spirit in the form of a central deity. Any different case or situation can only be an exception, which validates our position. It is possible for every genuine Igbo person to trace his/her origin or genealogy by linking his/her known facts to a particular deity of the area. To do that, one does not need the knowledge of either the creation or the evolutionary logic of the conventional sciences.

For the Igbo, a deity is a created supernatural being. This is placed higher than, and independent of, every human individual. For the organization of the community life, the deity is given the highest respect and is accepted as sacred. One should be careful not to place the Igbo deity into any category, as was done by early ethnographers of most ‘primitive’ and African cultures. Naively, those earlier misguided ethnographers categorised the religions and symbols different from their own as animism or such other things.

The Igbo deity is recognised as the guardian of the socio-religious unity, and of law and morality of the villages, patri-/matrilineages, extended families and compounds, up to the individual levels with their own *chis*. The visible symbol of the deity, and hence the

⁷¹ Ibid.

symbol of a town unit, is the local priest who is regarded as the *eze-ala* or *eze ani*, literally translated as ‘king of land’ and not of people. Due to the depth of community consciousness and respect for the *eze-ala*, most religious and sometimes political functions end with the symbolic seal of his *Ofo*⁷². Thus, the *eze-ala* or the traditional priest is regarded as the symbolic head of the ‘town’ and representative of the deity. Following the same formula, every village, patri-/matrilineage and extended family compound has its own socio-religious head.

According to J.S. Mbiti, the world of the Africans is full of spiritual entities or beings namely the spirits and the souls of the dead. They make the world of man lively. The spirits belong to the sphere of existence or category which lies between God – *Chukwu* - and the world of man (human beings).

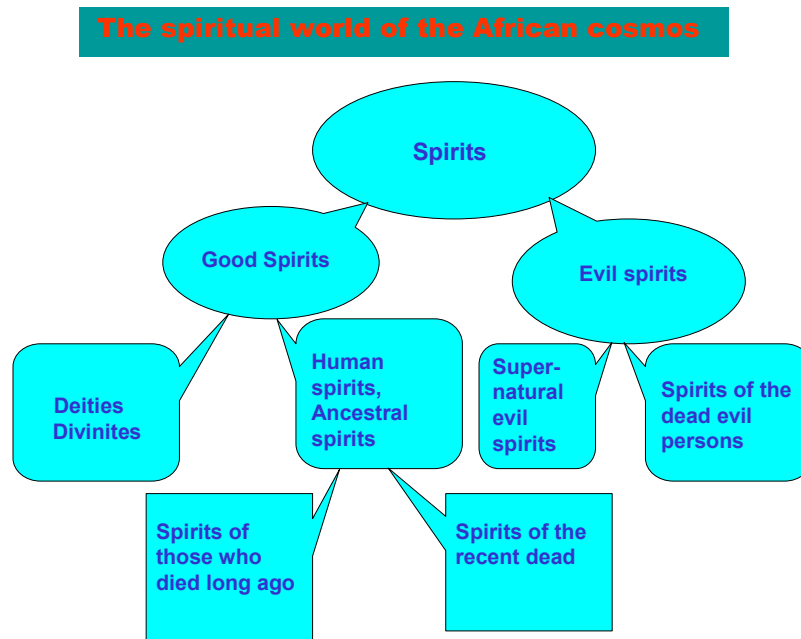


FIG. 5: Spiritual world of the African Cosmos

The Igbo world is full of spirits. These spirits could be the good spirits or the evil spirits. There are then two categories of good spirits: first there are the spirits that were created by God as spirits from the beginning. These are the deities – the gods. The second category of spirits are the spirits of the dead human beings who were created originally

⁷² *Ofo*, is literally regarded as ‘the staff of office’ or ‘a symbol of authority held by the titled men and those in positions of authority’. In a broader sense, it means ‘the lineage staff of truth and justice’.

as human beings but are now dead and so have entered the spirit world – the ancestor gods, the living dead (Ancestral spirits).

So the spirits and the deities, according to Igbo traditional religion, are created by Chukwu and are his messengers. They are in contact or are united with God in taking care of the affairs of man. They represent or show most often the power of God and his mode of appearances either as personification or as spiritual beings that manifest themselves or allow themselves to be represented in natural powers or natural occurrences.⁷³ Also natural entities, like mountains, seas, rivers, thunder, powers and others are often connected with the spirits and deities. Among the Igbo, there are such deities like: *Anyanwu*, (the Sun god); *Ala* (the Earth goddess, - the Fertility goddess); *Amadioha* (god of thunder - god of Justice); and *Igwe* (goddess of the clouds).⁷⁴

Besides these four gods and goddesses, there is a host of others. But it is important however to note that for the Igbo, these lesser gods are only messengers of the great God Chukwu. They are all accountable to Chukwu. They are only the mediators between men and the great God Chukwu. They carry God's messages and blessings, and also convey his wrath or punishment to the people and take also the people's pleas and sacrifices to God.

1.4.3.1 The good and evil spirits.

The spirits are believed to be extra-human, they are above the human. For the Igbo there are good as well as bad spirits. The good spirits include the deities and the spirits of the ancestors. Not all the dead however, are counted under the ancestors rather only those who lived well during their life time. Besides the good spirits, there are also the evil or bad spirits. The Igbo attribute their misfortune, sufferings or sicknesses to the caprices of the evil or bad spirits, who continue to torment the living in order to be appeased with sacrifices. The traditional Igbo man believes that God created the spirits and allowed them to influence, or involve themselves in the affairs and fate of men.⁷⁵ They pray then to God – Chukwu and the ancestors to protect them from the caprices of these evil spirits.

⁷³ Cf. Mbiti John.S., *African Religions and Philosophy* 2nd ed., 74-77.

⁷⁴ Ilogu, E., *Christianity and Igbo Culture*, 34.

⁷⁵ Arinze, Francis, A., *Sacrifice in Igbo Religion*. Ibadan, University Press, 1970, 12.

Clans, villages or kindred are often dedicated to a deity or to God by giving them theophanic names for protection against misfortune. While in the families, the ancestors are worshipped and prayed to, to protect their families from harm. Ancestors are also seen as the protectors of their families. When a clan, family or individual commits an abomination or atrocity against the laws of the land, the individual and most often the community or family is struck with sickness or misfortune. And to be well again, sacrifices and prayers are offered by the Juju-priest⁷⁶ to appease the gods and the ancestors and consequently restore the individual or community to normalcy again.

1.4.4 Ancestors and the ancestral cult

Death in the religious traditions of the Igbo is not the end of existence. It can be the end of that human terrestrial existence but it is not a total annihilation of this being. The existence, the Igbo believe, continues in another sphere - a belief in a life after death. Death for them is only a passage, a transition from the material world of men into the spiritual world of Chukwu and spirits.

However the spirits of the dead fall under different category of spirits in relation to the created spirits. Among the created spirits, the spirits of the dead differentiate themselves from the other created spirits in the sense that they were once human.

The dead in the Igbo cultural belief are still part of their family. They still belong to the family. Among the dead, the ancestral-spirits are of greater importance than other living dead⁷⁷.

The ancestors are the dead in the family who lived well during their life time. The criteria for belonging to the ancestral cult after death include: one must have lived a good life on earth, reached an old age before death, died a “good death”⁷⁸, and must have been accorded a befitting burial by the clan *umunna* – (the last rite of passage).

The Igbo people believe that when a person dies, his spirit wanders or hovers between the physical-material world and the spiritual world until he is accepted in the cult of the ancestors. That is why burial ceremonies among the Igbo are often elaborate one. The

⁷⁶ Juju Priest is the name given to the traditional religions priests, who offers the sacrifices to the gods.

⁷⁷ Mbiti, John. S., *African Religion and Philosophy*, 2nd ed., 81-83.

⁷⁸ A person who died a good death was seen as a person who did not die of any abominable disease according to the standards of the time. Dying at a very old age was seen as a ripe and good death. Child death or youth death was considered bad.

individual is celebrated only twice in life: at birth and at death, that is when he is entering and when he is leaving the world. All other feasts he/she celebrates in between, is carried out within and for the community of *umunna* where he/she belongs. So the spirit of this dead hovers around until the family accords him or her befitting burial, then the soul can rest in peace and can be accepted in the spirit world. If this is not done, the Igbo people believe the spirit of this dead person will continue to hunt the living.

Still not every the dead is accepted or revered as ancestor even when the family accords him/her a befitting burial. He must have lived a good life, attained an old age, adorned with a revered status. And the person must also have died with dignity. That was why in the past those who died a shameful death are not buried formally, but thrown into the “evil forest”.

In the traditional Igbo Society as well, there exists also the superstitious belief that the dead ancestors do reincarnate or come back again. That is to say “some aspects of their personality or their bodily marks do appear again in their second coming”. They call reincarnation *ilo uwa* – “coming back”, *wiederkehr*, - a superstitious belief that is still found today among the Igbo and which will perhaps take Christianity some decades to eradicate.⁷⁹

In this sense, life is for the Igbo “an unbreakable circle of births, dying and reincarnating, in which case the same spirit *Muo* reincarnates in same real person”⁸⁰.

The family heads pray to the ancestors for health of the family, and for births of children in the family. He also prays to the ancestors for protection against the evil spirits. Through the ancestral cult, they try to make use of the powers of the ancestors. The ancestors are then the protectors of the family, the traditions and the ethical norms. Any offence then committed against the tradition or family norms is also an offence against the ancestors and attracts punishment at times which may be in forms of sickness, misfortune or ill luck. Confronted with these spiritual problems, the traditional Igbo man looks for solution by consulting the traditional medicine man *dibia* or priest (diviner), in order to remedy what deemed an imminent calamity from the gods.

⁷⁹ Azorji, E., Some Recurrent Problems of Christian Inculturation in Nigeria, 177.

⁸⁰ Ikenga, Metuh, African Religions in Western Conceptual Schemes, 190.

1.4.5 Local priests and diviners

The Priesthood in the Igbo traditional religion is understood as stewardship to God - Chukwu. The priests are messengers of the great God Chukwu who also is the creator God *Chineke*. The people believe that their traditional priests are nearer to God hence they are often consulted in the face of problems or sickness. In this way priests exercise leadership role among the people. On the other hand, the deities and ancestors are intermediaries between Chukwu and the world of men. Each deity has its own college of priests to whom the people go to, to offer sacrifices when the need be in order to appease such deity whenever he is offended, or to supplicate for his favours. Hence we have for instance the *dibia Amadioha* – the thunder-priest or the Ahiajoku-priest. There is in the real sense no particular shrine of the great God Chukwu.

Generally, the Igbo people in the priesthood of all heads of households, lineages and clans. The *ozo* titled men in the Igbo traditional concept of priesthood are priests insofar as they offer sacrifices and perform ritual functions including praying to Chukwu and to the ancestors.⁸¹ Besides this general concept of priesthood in the Igbo religious tradition, there are two categories of special priests among the Igbo. One category comes from the Osu class⁸² – people taken captive and dedicated to special gods. The second class of priests is made up of men who become priests through ‘appointment’ by ancestral spirits. According to Ilogu, such men behave queerly and are noticed by those already priests who take them in and train them.⁸³ This class of priests does often combine the three functions of divination, offering and medication. That means they can carry out the function of the medicine-men – herbalists - with the knowledge of healing herbs. Secondly, they can carry out the function of divination and finally carry out sacrifices. These priests have at times the power to exorcise, prepare medicine for: wading off evil, protection from harm like car accidents and charms and guiding one good for-

⁸¹ Ilogu, E., *Christianity and Igbo Culture*, 53.

⁸² “*Osu Caste*” system is a system practiced among the Igbo in the earlier days whose scars are still found today. The Osu class are people who were taken captive and dedicated to special gods. One of them is always chosen to be the special priest of that god and must live near the gods’ shrine. The free class does not often marry from the Osu caste. With the advent of Christianity, this system is gradually losing its hold. The Government of Eastern Nigeria had passed a law that these outcasts should be declared “free men”. Cf.: Ilogu, E., *Christianity and Igbo Culture*, *ibid*.

⁸³ Ilogu, E., *Christianity and Igbo Culture*, *ibid*.

tune in trade or hunting.⁸⁴ In each village, a priest is known to be basically related to a deity or more.

Besides the above described special priest-diviners who may have knowledge of healing herbs, there are in some instances “a class of men greatly gifted in the knowledge of the use of herbs to cure various diseases. These men are commonly called herbalists - ‘*dibia*’. They are not priests, and cannot divinize but work hand in hand with diviner-priests.”⁸⁵ For instance in the case of sickness, no cure is effected entirely by the *dibia* – medicine man, without consulting the diviner who, according to Ilogu, through divination finds out “which spirit had been wronged and which human relationship had been strained”. The diviner then prescribes sacrifices and sometimes recommends the proper priest that should perform the sacrifice. These sacrifices are then added to whatever herbal medicine the *dibia*, gives the sick person to ensure proper cure.⁸⁶ These three aspects of the traditional Igbo priesthood play a vital role in the traditional healing system which we shall consider later.

The priest therefore plays a very vital role in the traditional life of the Igbo society and in the lives of the individuals. The traditional Igbo people not only go to the native priest, either in times of sickness to solicit for healing or to pray for good health, they go also to pray for fortune and good luck, and to seek protection against attacks and ill lucks. Priests then are medium of communication and supplication between the people, the deities and *Chukwu*. This differentiates them as such from the normal Igbo populace and imposes a high expectation of moral behaviour on them since they carry the messages of the deities to the people and the prayers of the people to the deities and to *Chukwu* the great God.

⁸⁴ *ibid.*

⁸⁵ *ibid.*

⁸⁶ *ibid.*

CHAPTER TWO: THE CONCEPT OF LIFE, MAN, HEALTH AND PRAYER

2.0 INTRODUCTION

Having seen the material and religious organisation of the Igbo society as well as their view of the world in the previous chapter, let us now treat the Igbo view of man – Igbo anthropology as a step to understanding the Igbo man's views about sickness and the ways of seeking its relief.

2.1 IGBO ANTHROPOLOGY

According to T. Sündermeier, African Religions have “a deep religious anthropology”⁸⁷. They are anthropocentric – centred on man. Though not yet scientifically articulated, the Igbo anthropology posits in many instances similarities with the graeco-western anthropology though to some degree. The discussion on the problem of sickness (deficiency in being) and healing (Restitutio) will presuppose our understanding of concepts of life and of man in the Igbo tradition. The Igbo concept of life and their understanding of man will surely go a long way in casting light on their attitude toward sickness, health and healing in the past and also in the present amid the external influences on her tradition posed so far by both the advent of Christianity and the western culture.

2.1.1 The Igbo concept of life - 'Ndu'

As we have seen in the Igbo world view above, the Igbo people believe strongly in a created universe made up of living and non-living beings. For them, man is the apex of this creation and life is the highest good – *summum bonum*. The Igbo word for life is *Ndu* – life. This *Ndu* - life is a gift from God who is the source and fullness of life. God created man and gave him life and this life belongs primarily to God. He alone can give life and he alone has the right to terminate or take this life. Man then is given this life as

⁸⁷ Sündermeier, T., Nur gemeinsam können wir leben. Das Menschenbild schwarz afrikanischer Religionen. Gütersloh, 1988, 124.

a gift and he must preserve it. *Ndu di nso* – life is sacred and it is held sacred because it belongs to the creator. That is why the Igbo would go any length to preserve this life.⁸⁸ This preservation of life among the Igbo according to Obiagwa “begins from the time of conception of the child by the mother and continues till death. This is seen from the type of attention and care given to an expectant mother. From the moment a woman is pregnant, the society knows that a new life is in the process.”⁸⁹ This new life is protected and celebrated before birth, at birth and till the natural end.⁹⁰ Pope John Paul II in the Encyclical “Ecclesia in Africa” attested to the African’s (naturally Igbo’s) respect for life and their eagerness to protect and preserve life:

“...the African loves children, who are joyfully welcomed as gifts of God. ‘The sons and daughters of Africa love life. It is precisely this love for life that leads them to give such great importance to the veneration of their ancestors.... The peoples of Africa respect the life which is conceived and born. They rejoice in this life. They reject the idea that it can be destroyed, even when the so-called ‘progressive civilization’ would like to lead them in this direction. And practices hostile to life are imposed on them by means of economic systems which serve the selfishness of the rich’. Africans show their respect for human life until its natural end, and keep elderly parents and relatives within the family.”⁹¹

The Igbo person protects and preserves not only his own life but that of other individuals. Hence to kill or to exterminate life at any stage whatsoever, no matter the circumstances is abhorred and is held as a great abomination. It is a sin against the earth goddess and punishable “by either ostracisation or by tit for tat.”⁹² As a result, Igbo culture forbids abortion, murder, euthanasia and crimes that tamper with human life and the dignity of the human person.⁹³

The value or the importance the Igbo tradition accords to life - *ndu* as well as the respect accorded to it is depicted in the various Igbo names. The philosophy of the many Igbo

⁸⁸ Obiagwa, Marius Chukwuemeka, Healthcare of the sick among the Igbos of Nigeria vis a vis the healing Ministry of the church and the pastoral challenges of today. (Romae, 2000), 54.

⁸⁹ *ibid.*

⁹⁰ Actually, for the Igboman, the person himself is celebrated only twice; at birth and when he leaves the world at death. Whatever feast one celebrates between birth and death, it is the community “*Gemeinschaft*” that is being celebrated and not the person himself in the real sense.

⁹¹ John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation: Ecclesia in Africa: On the Church in Africa and its Evangelising Mission towards the year 2000, (Libreria Editricem Vaticana), Art. 43.

⁹² Obiagwa, Marius, Healthcare of the sick among the Igbos of Nigeria, 41.

⁹³ *Cf. ibid.*

names shows this respect. Names like the following depict this: *Ndubuisi* (life is supreme); *Ndukaku* (life is greater than wealth), *Ndukwe* (if life permits). Igbo names like the following show the sacredness of life and that life belongs to God: *Chikwendu* (if God permits or agrees to life), *Chinwendu* (life belongs to God).

Also the importance placed on life, its perseverance and strengthening among the Igbo is also evident during the consultation of a diviner in the invocations he makes or even during the routine morning prayers of the family head. Ilogu described this thus: “When a man goes to a diviner with a wrenched tendril of the palm tree to inquire about anything, the *nwadibia* (diviner) lifts up his *ofo* stick and says to the client ‘*juru ndu*’ (touch the *ofo* for life),.... Again early in the morning when a titled man offers the *kolanut* pieces in prayers to the ancestors, he starts by saying ‘*Nna anyi ha tanu oji, ihe anyi nacho bu ndu*’ (ancestors eat kola, the good we ask for is life).”⁹⁴

Life - *ndu* for the Igbo is not just “to exist”. *Ndu* is what Placid Tempel in his African Bantu Philosophy called “vital force” – life or force to live strongly.⁹⁵ *Ndu* is the full dynamic existence in which all the good things of life will come: wealth, health, and children. A life blessed with these, for the Igbo, is a life in fullness.⁹⁶

Again this life, this “vital force” for the Igbo is “eternal”. The Igbo person shares in the life of the creator God – *Chineke*, through the “*chi*”⁹⁷ destiny in him and as such his life is meant to be immortal. So it is a strong belief among the Igbo that *ndu* – life - is “endless” even after it has been terminated by death. Life – *ndu* - does not cease at death but continues in another realm. This idea of eternity of life is also the background to the Igbo cult of the ancestors seen above, through which the dead share in the life of the living and the living can hope on the protection of the living dead.⁹⁸ This idea of the eternity of life juxtaposes also the belief in reincarnation⁹⁹ in the Igbo tradition.

Though *ndu* is eternal, its earthly existence can be terminated by death – passage from earthly life to the world of the spirits and it continues to exist there in the world of the

⁹⁴ Ilogu, E., Christianity and Igbo Culture , 130.

⁹⁵ Tempels Placid, Bantu Philosophies (Paris, 1959), 44 in Obiagwa Marius, Healthcare of the sick among the Igbos of Nigeria, 54.

⁹⁶ Ilogu E., Christianity and Igbo Culture, 130.

⁹⁷ „*Chi*” is the Igbo concept for the destiny spirit or guardian spirit. They believe that *Chukwu* assigned each individual a “*Chi*” particle which returns back to give account to *Chukwu* after death. We shall treat that under the Igbo concept of man in the next under title.

⁹⁸ Cf. IloguE., Christianity and Igbo Culture, 130.

⁹⁹ Reincarnation is the belief that the soul of the dead ancestors after death of the body comes back to earth in another body. .

spirits but still exacting influence on the lives of those in the world. During the earthly existence, between birth and death, life can be often exposed to dangers or can be threatened by sickness, ill-luck, by one's personal fate or destiny, or even by other people through sorcery or witchcraft.¹⁰⁰ The Igbo person strives then to uphold this life till its natural end through death. On the other hand, because *Chukwu* for the Igbo person is the author and last address of this life, that is the more reason why when this life is threatened by sickness or ill health, the Igbo person runs to *Chukwu* to seek restoration. Life - *ndu* - in this case is then strengthened by prayers, sacrifices, ritual gestures and proper conduct. So the Igbo person on his part works towards the improvement of this *ndu* given to him by "*Chukwu*". Today, according to Ilogu, the technical conveniences are tools or "gadgets" for serving *ndu* - life¹⁰¹ and they help to prolong this life as long as it is necessary or as long as *Chukwu* permits.

Today also an area where the desire for life and the priceless wish to preserve and maintain this life is manifested among the Igbo is when he is sick or when he is in suffering.¹⁰² During the field work of this research, we tried to find out from the Igbo people interviewed whether they still believe today that life - *ndu* (health) should be preserved or maintained (in reference to sickness) at all cost or not? It was interesting to note that across the different professional and age groups as well as the residential and culturally-influenced groups (the home-based Igbo and Igbo in Diaspora), almost the majority opted that life (health) has to be preserved at all cost.

¹⁰⁰ Sorcery or "Maleficium" – a Latin term meaning "wrongdoing" or "mischief", – "is used to describe malevolent, dangerous, or harmful magic, 'evildoing' or 'malevolent sorcery'. In general, the term applies to any magical act intended to cause harm or death to people or property". Magic, sometimes known as **sorcery**, "is the practice of consciousness manipulation and/or autosuggestion to achieve a desired result, usually by techniques described in various conceptual systems. The practice is often influenced by ideas of religion, mysticism, occultism, science and psychology". Witchcraft, "in various historical, anthropological, religious and mythological contexts, is the use of supernatural or magical powers. Witchcraft can refer to the use of such powers in order to inflict harm or damage upon members of a community or their property. Other uses of the term distinguish between bad witchcraft and good witchcraft, the latter involving the use of these powers to heal someone from bad witchcraft. The concept of witchcraft is normally treated as a cultural ideology, a means of explaining human misfortune by blaming it either on a supernatural entity or a known person in the community. A witch (from Old English *wicca* f./*wicca* m.) is a practitioner of witchcraft. Belief in witchcraft, and by consequence witch-hunts, is found in many cultures worldwide, today mostly in Sub-Saharan Africa (e.g. in the witch-smellers in Bantu culture), and historically notably in Early Modern Europe of the 14th to 18th century, where witchcraft came to be seen as a vast diabolical conspiracy against Christianity, and accusations of witchcraft led to large-scale witch-hunts, especially in Germanic Europe." Cf. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sorcery>; <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Witchcraft> (March, 2010).

¹⁰¹ Ilogu, E., Christianity and Igbo Culture, 168-169.

¹⁰² Cf. Obiagwu, Marius, Healthcare of the sick among the Igbos of Nigeria, 55.

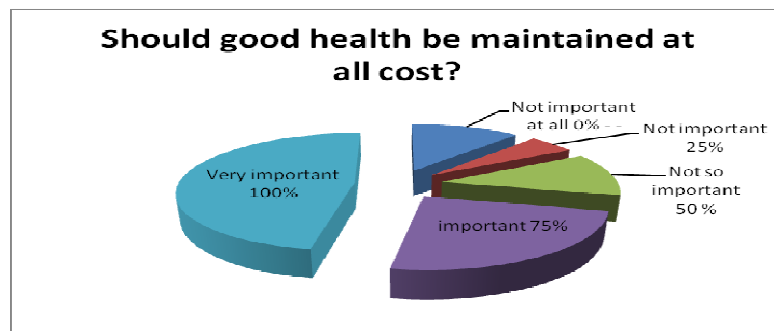


FIG. 6: Research Graphic: Maintaining health at all cost

Perhaps it is this strong believe in life and its preservation or restoration in case of sickness among the Igbo people that give rise to their general concept and understanding of man.

2.1.2 The Igbo concept of man "Mma-di "- (Beauty that exists)

The Igbo concept of man is in concords with the African concept of man. As we have seen in our discussion on the Igbo concept of life, man is for the Igbo the apex of creation and as Mbiti would say:

"Man is at the very centre of existence, and African peoples see everything else in its relation to the central position of man. God is the explanation of man's origin and sustenance. It is as if God exists for the sake of man."¹⁰³

Igbo religion like other African religions is centred on man and this man is indebted, for his life and existence, to the network of communications and ties that contribute to his existence. According to Sündermeier:

"He owes his existence to his parents who gave birth to him, he is indebted to the ancestors, who transmitted life to him, and he is grateful to the society, which accompanies him in his stages of life with different initiation rites and in his crises in life. Finally, he is thankful to God, who is the origin of every life."¹⁰⁴

So man is primarily a creation of God the creator – Chineke and the highest of all created things as is evident also in some Igbo names: Chukwukere (God created); Eke-

¹⁰³ Mbiti, J.S., *African Religions and Philosophy*, 90.

¹⁰⁴ Sündermeier, T., *Nur gemeinsam können wir leben*. 125-126 in Okorie, George, *The concept of Salvation in the context of Igbo African Culture*, Thesis, (University of Trier, 2001), 46.

chukwu (man is God's creature); Mmaduka (man is greater). The fact of the createdness of man and his indebtedness to Chineke, is buttressed by the fact of his being made the apex or centre of creation. This is evident in the etymology of the Igbo word for man – *mmadu*. The etymological root of this Igbo word for man – *mmadu* according to Arazu is “mma” (Igbo word for goodness or beauty) “du” (exist). That means “goodness exists” or “goodness that exists”. Arazu holds that according to a saga, this word “*mmadu*” was first pronounced by God when he looked at the world he created and said “*mmadu*” – “let goodness exist.”¹⁰⁵ The biblical literature says, “and God saw that it was good” (Gen. 1, 25-26).

Therefore the Igbo word “*mmadu*” etymologically is not just a word, but a sentence with “mma” and “du” as composite parts. “mma” is Igbo word for “good”, “beauty”, “order”, depending on the context in which they are used. “du” is the imperative of to be. “di” is then derived from “*idi*”, which is the Igbo verb “to-be”. Thus the combination of the meaning of the word is “mma” – goodness, beauty and “di” – “to be”, culminates in “*mma-du*” meaning the Good or Beauty that is.¹⁰⁶ This tends to presuppose the reason why the Igbo use the word “*mma-nwuo*” – (let beauty, goodness die) for masks or masquerades as a sign of ugliness in contrast to man – the beauty that is. However some people do not see that as probable.

But some scholars again interpret the etymological composition of the Igbo word “*mmadu*” in relation to life “*ndu*” as “*nma*” (beauty) – “*ndu*” (life) - beauty of life. That means man is seen here as the beauty or goodness of life or the beauty of creation buttressing man again as the highest of all creatures or as Nwoga will say “the master of other creatures”.¹⁰⁷ Obilo on his part linked the etymological interpretation of *mmadu* to good health in connection with “life and beauty”. According to him, “The word ‘*mmadu*’ in Igbo etymology means life and beauty. Life is beautiful if it is enjoyed with good health. Any life no matter the length of it, without good health is counted dead.”¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ Arazu, R., “A Cultural Model for a Christian Prayer”, *African Christian Spirituality*, Alyward Shorter ed., (Orbis Books, New York, 1978), p. 114. in Ikenga-Metuh, Emefie., *African Religions in Western Conceptual Schemes*, The Problem of Interpretation. Studies in Igbo Religion. Jos, Imico Press, 1991, 109. Cf. also Genesis 1, 25-26.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Edeh, E.M.P., *Towards an Igbo Metaphysics*, 100.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Nwoga, D., *Ahiajioku Lectures*, (Owerri, 1984), 46.

¹⁰⁸ Obilo, E.E., « The Philosophical Foundations of Igbo Concept of Death » *Ahiajioku Lectures*, (Owerri, 1991), 1.

Generally, *mmadu* refers to a human being irrespective of his age, sex or status. The term “*mmadu*” distinguishes the human species from other beings – plants, animals and spirits. Hence one speaks of “*ndi madu*” – human beings and “*ndi muo*” – spirit persons. So for the Igbo people, man has a spiritual and non-spiritual (or material) aspect, which however, suggests no distinction between body and soul¹⁰⁹ as is evident in the graeco-roman world. Man is a whole. He is integral. And there are three aspects that make up this integral and whole man. According to Ugwu, “they (the Igbo) speak of body (*ahu*), spirit/shadow (*mmuo/onyinyo*), heart (*obi/nkpuluobi*).¹¹⁰ So for the Igbo, there are three aspects of the same man. These aspects are “different instances of the person or levels of being which permits the whole person to be seen from different viewpoints”.¹¹¹ Though the Igbo doctrine of man does not admit of the dualistic characteristic of the Greco-Roman culture and doctrine on man, but these three aspects of the whole man could correspond to the body (*soma*), soul (*anima*, *psyche*) and spirit (*pneuma*) concept of present day natural science, along which line the three disciplines of medicine (*soma*, *psychosomatic*), Psychology or psychotherapy (*Psyche*) and theology (spirit) have focused their studies respectively.¹¹² However, since it is not the aim of this work to dwell deeply on these concepts, it suffices to state that these three aspects of man in Igbo tradition influence each other or rather are interwoven. The sickness of the body for instance affects the spiritual aspect of man.

Integrally man in Igbo understanding is composed of a material element “*ahu*” (body) and an immaterial element “*obi*” (soul or spirit) and the heart (*nkpuluobi*).

The body “*ahu*” is “the appearance or epiphany of the person during his earthly life”.¹¹³ It is the seat of personhood, the centre for the manifestation of a person in gestures. The body “*ahu*” as the appearance of the person is then the seat and avenue for the

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Ugwu, Moses, *Healing in the Nigerian Church*, 54. The Igbo have in the real sense no concept of soul that has to face judgement before God when the individual dies as is the case in the Christian tradition. (). The Igbo however do believe that there is an aspect of man that leaves the material being at death and enters into the spirit and the status of this spirit of the dead – whether he will join the ancestors or will be roaming about as an evil spirit – depends on how he lived and died on earth. Therefore one cannot rule out the issue of judgement after death in Igbo tradition, because the point of decision of whether a dead person become an ancestor or not is already a judgement. And the norms and principles of this judgement are already laid down by the Igbo tradition based on the laws of the deities.

¹¹⁰ *ibid.*, 54-55.

¹¹¹ Hebga, M., “Healing in Africa”, *Concilium*. 27 (1991), 32; in *ibid.*

¹¹² Cf. Beck, Matthias, *Seele und Krankheit: Psychosomatische Medizin und theologische Anthropologie*. Paderbon, Ferdinand Schöningh, 2000, 99-101.

¹¹³ Hebga, M., „Heilung in Afrika“. in: *Concilium* 27 (1991), 132.

physical manifestation of sickness. This can be observed in the different ways of expressing a state of ill health or good health in Igbo language. Sickness is described in Igbo language in reference to the body. Expressing ill-health one speaks of “ahu-onwunwu” (dying of the body); “ahu-adighi” or “ejighi ahu” (body lacking).¹¹⁴ Good health is expressed in the same way: “ahu-ike” (strong body), “ahu-izu-oke” (completeness of the body), “ahu-idinma” (body being good, beautiful); “Iji-ahu” (to have body or health). So man experiences the world through his body. But that does not mean it is only the body that suffers. It is the whole human being, the whole man who is sick and who suffers.

The second aspect of man is the Spirit “muo”. This represents the spiritual aspect of man. This spiritual aspect is immaterial and believed to pass away from the body at the event of death. “muo” is imperishable and according to Nwala, it “is the part of the person which reincarnates¹¹⁵ after death and also lives in the spirit world at death”.¹¹⁶ The Igbo people distinguish however between “mmuo” as a spirit (Geister) and “muo” this spiritual aspect of man.

The third aspect of man is the heart/breath “obi / nkpuobi”. “Obi” is man’s animating principle and ‘the seat of affection and volition’.¹¹⁷ For instance a kindly man is described as “onye obi oma” (soft hearted, good heart) and a wicked man is “onye obi tara mmiri” (one whose heart is dry and hard) or “onye obi öjö” (hardhearted person). Breath resides in the biological heart also called ‘obi’ – heart.¹¹⁸ Obi is the “life-force that links man with other cosmic forces. It may be attacked through witchcraft or sorcery and may be weakened or die.”¹¹⁹

This aspect of man is also spiritual in nature and is capable of leaving the body and returning to it again. This happens in dreams or under the influence of witchcraft. The “obi” – heart/breath leaves the body at death but does not continue to exist after

¹¹⁴ Cf. Ifeanyi, V., *The Catholic Church and the Challenges of the Traditional System of Health Care in Nigeria: A Moral Study in the light of a Holistic Understanding of Health Care*, (Rome, 1989), 52, in Ugwu, Moses, *Healing in the Nigerian Church*, 55.

¹¹⁵ What reincarnates after death is not the personhood (body) of the ancestor but an aspect of his self – destiny spirit (*chi*) and the ancestral guardian (*eke*).

¹¹⁶ Nwala, T.U., *Igbo Philosophy*, 42 in Ugwu, Moses, *Healing in the Nigerian Church*, 56.

¹¹⁷ Ikenga-Metuh, *African Religions in Western Conceptual Schemes*, 111.

¹¹⁸ *ibid.*

¹¹⁹ *ibid.*

death.¹²⁰ This differentiates it from “muo” (spirit) that continues to exist after death in the spirit world.

In recent times, mostly since the advent of Christianity among the Igbo, one hears of “nkpuluobi” (literally translated: seed of the heart). It has become normal to translate “nkpuluobi” as soul and identify it with the Christian soul, even though the concept of soul is completely alien to traditional Igbo belief.¹²¹ This is evident in the works of expatriates, like A.G. Leonard who in his work “The lower Niger and its tribes” using the term Soul for “nkpuluobi” tried to give a detailed Igbo man’s view of body and soul thus:

“We Igbo living in this part all believe that inside the body of every man is soul, which we call ‘nkpuluobi’ and that without this soul a man cannot see or touch.... It is without form, or substance such as man or animal has, and we believe that all souls are of one kind, and that each person has not more than one soul. This, our forefathers and the priests have told us, does not die, and it seems to us to resemble something like a shadow or the wind, or perhaps the breath. ... the soul, we think is the fruit of the body or of that organ which is said or thought to feed or supply the body, while the spirit is the living or vital energy of a person. The reason that the soul does not perish with the body is because it is the only thing which the Great Spirit wants from each person individually, so that as soon as the body dies the soul naturally goes back to Chukwu, except in certain cases, where it is claimed by evil spirits”¹²²

However, Leonard tried to establish a difference between soul and spirit, in which case the soul (nkpuluobi) becomes the spirit (Mmuo) when it is no longer confined to the body: To this effect, he writes further: “As to there being any difference between the soul and spirit, we do not know of any except that (which) speaks of the former as a soul when it is confined to the body of a man... and the later as spirit when it is not so confined.”¹²³

¹²⁰ Ugwu, Moses, *Healing in the Nigerian Church*, 56.

¹²¹ Ikenga-Metuh, *African Religions in Western Conceptual Schemes*, 112.

¹²² Leonard, A.G., *The Lower Niger and its Tribes*. London, 1966, 140-141.

¹²³ *ibid.*

2.1.2.1 Destiny/Guardian spirit “Chi” and Ancestral Guardian “Eke”

As has been earlier noted, man “mmadu” has integrally a non-spiritual (material) and a spiritual (spirit and soul) aspects. In his spiritual realm, man is endowed with what Metuh called different principles or selves which link and allow him to interact with other beings in the world. This principle constitutes his destiny, personality and character traits and distinguishes one man from another. Metuh posited these principles as “obi”, - heart or breath, “chi”, - destiny, and “eke” or “agu”, - ancestral guardian.¹²⁴ Obi as we have seen above is spiritual and is the life force, the animating principle of every man that links him to other forces in the universe.

Very important in understanding the Igbo concept of man however are the two concepts: “chi” and “eke”.

Chi is the destiny or guardian spirit believed to be an emanation of the creator which is in man. Every man has a “chi”, conceived as a ‘spirit-double’, assigned to him by God with one resident in heaven, while the other is resident in the individual.¹²⁵ The “chi”, according to Igbo belief is responsible for whatever fortune, misfortune or destiny the individual has in life. According to Metuh:

“At conception, the ‘destiny-spirit’ in heaven goes before God and chooses one from the many packages of fortunes put before it by God. Whatever it chooses becomes the destiny of the child. This destiny package which contains the sum total of the fortunes and misfortunes the child will have in life is therefore administered by the spirit double resident in the individual”¹²⁶

Hence the Igbo people describe someone who is lucky as “Onye chi oma” - someone who has a good chi (destiny) - and the unfortunate person is described as “Onye chi ojo” – someone who has a bad chi (destiny) or one who is unfortunate.¹²⁷ However, one can in his free will decide not to accept the choice of his chi (the destiny chosen for him by his chi) or even he can try to change it. This is evident in the Igbo expression “Onye kwe, chi ya ekwe” - if one says yes, his chi holds it for him. Consequently one cannot accuse the Igbo philosophy of life or Igbo anthropology as one characterized by

¹²⁴ Ikenga-Metuh, *African Religions in Western Conceptual Schemes*, 110.

¹²⁵ *ibid.*, 111.

¹²⁶ *ibid.*

¹²⁷ *ibid.*

pre-determinism (predetermined), since the individual has this free will to accept or reject the choice of destiny made for him by his *chi*.¹²⁸ What happens then is that when the person dies, his “*chi*” goes back to God to give account of his work on earth. So what goes back to God to give account is the “*chi*” – the destiny spirit and not the soul as is the case in Christian doctrine. Again, since the Igbo believe in reincarnation, what reincarnates then is not the *chi* of the dead person rather when he reincarnates, God gives him a different “*chi*”.¹²⁹ That is, what reincarnates is the “*eke*” – the ancestral guardian.

Eke is the ancestral or personality guardian which links man with his family and clan. Eke is connected with Igbo concept of reincarnation. Eke is the spirit of the ancestor, deity or *arusi* believed to have reincarnated in a child.¹³⁰ The child is believed to resemble the ‘eke’ (the reincarnated ancestor) either in appearance or character or both, but their destinies will never be the same. Where the personality trait in a child is not explicit, a diviner is consulted to find out who reincarnated.¹³¹ When recognised, each person prays or offers offerings to his eke for fortune and a place is assigned a child’s eke in the family shrine.

The importance attached to these two principles “*chi*” and “*eke*” is evident in expressions like: “*chi gi na eke gi mu anya*” (your “*chi*” – destiny spirit – and your “*eke*” – ancestral guardian - are awake) when somebody survives an illness or accident. In the same way, the expressions: “*Chineke gi azoola gi*” – your God (creator) has saved you and “*chi gi na eke gi azöola gi*” – your destiny spirit and your ancestral guardian have saved you -, are not the same.

Summarily, one can conclude with Metuh-Ikenga-Metuh that for the Igbo, “‘*chi*’ links man with God, ‘eke’ links him with the ancestors, while ‘obi’ – breath (life-force) links him with the entire universe of life-forces.”¹³²

And this life-force of man (*obi* – breath) is capable of growth, but also of diminution by sickening and by death since it may be the object of attack by witches, sorceries, unappeased deities or evil spirits and thus may be weakened and die. The body (*ahu*) itself becomes then the avenue through which this weakening and death could be visible and

¹²⁸ Cf. Ugwu, Moses, *Healing in the Nigerian Church*, 57-58.

¹²⁹ Ikenga-Metuh, *African Religions in Western Conceptual Schemes*, 111.

¹³⁰ Ugwu, Moses, *Healing in the Nigerian Church*, 58.

¹³¹ Ikenga-Metuh, *African Religions in Western Conceptual Schemes*, 112.

¹³² *ibid.*

experienced. But the Igbo try as much as possible to maintain and keep this life- force by maintaining a good relationship (with ones “chi” and “eke”) and with the social order. When the life force weakens, one can strengthen his it once more through rituals and sacrifices. Man can also in Igbo tradition religion further maintain or strengthen himself with charms and medicines¹³³ to effect good health. Let us now look at what this health consists of and what sickness means for the Igbo and how the sickened life force could be restored or healed.

2.2 MAN AND THE QUEST FOR HEALTH

2.2.1 The Igbo concept of health - “Ahu-ike”

The Igbo idea of health is influenced by their worldview. The two levels of being and existence – physical and spiritual- come to light in the understanding of health. Just as man has a physical and spiritual aspect, so do the Igbo also speak of physical and spiritual health. For them, health is the greatest gift. Even when wealth and children are not forthcoming, the Igbo believes that as long as there is life and good health, there is hope – they believe strongly that wealth and children will surely come as long as there is health. In a sense health is wealth.¹³⁴

Health can be seen as a virtue – a habitus¹³⁵ that one can possess. It is a possession of a person, and Schipperges confirms this view when he sees it as the “*höchste Besitz*” – highest possession. In this case, it is in no way a biological structure but part of a situation¹³⁶. This health however is a gift of God. Nobody possesses or earns it out of his own making. Stressing this aspect of health as possession, the Igbo language translates the assertion “I am healthy” as “*egim ahu*” or “*ahu dim*”, literally meaning “I have health” – “there is health in me”, or “my body is in order”. This idea implied in the condition of body is however all encompassing, because as discussed above, the body is the

¹³³ Cf. Ibid., 112-113.

¹³⁴ Cf. Obiagwu, Marius, Healthcare of the sick among the Igbos of Nigeria, 56.

¹³⁵ Ivan, Illich, Health as Virtue, in Obiagwu Marius, Healthcare of the sick among the Igbos of Nigeria, 185.

¹³⁶ Schipperges, Heinrich, “Gesundheit – Krankheit – Heilung,” in *Christlicher Glaube in Moderner Gesellschaft: Teilband 10*, Hrsg. Franz Böckle et al. Freiburg, Herder, 1980, 62. .

avenue of expression of the total condition of the person – spiritual and material. Health is multidimensional. It is not only the absence of physical infirmities but also of spiritual wholeness.

As a sound physical state, the Igbo people refer to health of the body, as “*ahu ike*” – strong body, or “*ahu idi nma*” - the body being in good state. Also in a more constitutive framework, health extends to a person’s general condition in his world of relations. Then a healthy person should pay attention not only to himself but also to others and to the world around him. Hitherto, the Igbo talk of “*ahu izu oke*” – the body being in order in all ramifications. The reference to “*ahu*” – body in all Igbo terms or expressions for health goes back to the Igbo view of the body as appearance or personification of life and the person.

The maintenance of the cosmic order is also decisive in understanding the Igbo idea of health. In which case, health is the ability to relate harmoniously with ones physical and metaphysical worlds. According to Schipperges: “Health is the ability, possibility to carry out the duties corresponding to our being, that means also carrying of burdens, resolving contradictions and, lastly that ability to suffer death”.¹³⁷

Summarily, health in general and for the Igbo as well, is wholistic. It “embraces social, moral, spiritual, physical and mental dimensions... (and) involves the person as an integral entity, able to use his energies for the fulfilment of his total human vocations.”¹³⁸ Hence a comprehensive conception of health must comprise or entail the physical or organic dimension (physical fitness, vitality and absence of pain), psychological dimension (psyche), social dimension, (relations must be in order –cosmic order), moral dimension (norms, regulation) spiritual dimensions (metaphysical) and mental dimension (mind). So health is “the condition of being sound in body, mind or spirit, especially freedom from physical disease or pain. It is the general – whole condition of an individual”¹³⁹ This holistic conception of health shall be our working concept of health in this research.

¹³⁷ „Gesundheit bedeutet ‚die Möglichkeit der Ausführung der unserem Wesen entsprechenden Aufgaben, d.h. auch das Tragen von Lasten, das Lösen von Widersprüchen, das Erleiden letztlich des Sterbens““. *ibid.*

¹³⁸ Obiagwu, Marius, *Healthcare of the sick among the Igbos of Nigeria*, 85-86.

¹³⁹ *Webster’s New Encyclopedic Dictionary*. Cologne Germany, Könnemann, 1993, 461.

However, absolute health does not exist also for the Igbo people as well. Because the Igbo people cherish their health, they pray ardently for its maintenance or restoration when they might have lost it through sickness.

2.2.2 Prayer -“Ekpere” and the quest for health in Igbo Religion

Praying is one of the attributes of being religious since it expresses the interior communion with the divine. As we have noted earlier, the African person is by nature religious and prayer-minded. Prayer is a universal religious phenomenon and stems from the natural human disposition to give verbal expression to thought and emotions.¹⁴⁰ According to Ndiokwere, Prayer is “one of the principal acts of worship by which individuals and groups of various religious convictions and affiliations establish communication and express homage to deities or beings which exercise influence in both their private and public lives.”¹⁴¹ It is an expression of a creature’s dependence on his creator. Whoever prays acknowledges his/her dependence on a higher reality as well as acknowledges his/her transcendental source of existence.¹⁴² Prayer is also a mark of the spirituality of a people.

In the African traditional Religion and in other Religions, there can be oral expression of prayers as well as what Bastide calls “materialized prayer” and “corporal prayer”. According to him, “Materialized Prayer occurs when the worshipper expresses his basic disposition through manipulation of a material object of some kind e.g. a cult object like the ‘*ofò*’, a cult staff of the Igbo. A corporal prayer occurs when bodily actions such as spitting, dancing or gesturing are used to express communications with God.”¹⁴³

For the Igbo, prayer is the recognition of the supremacy of the Creator - *Chineke* over the world. He is the creator and author of life and the sustenance of this life come from him. In prayers, the Igbo not only ask for material wealth and bodily health, but also for

¹⁴⁰ Bandon, S.G. (ed.), “Prayer”, *Dictionary of Comparative Religion*. London, Weidfeld & Nicolson, 1970, 507. Cited in Ikenga-Metuh E., *African Religions in Western Conceptual Scheme*, 141.

¹⁴¹ Ndiokwere, Nathaniel, *The African Church, Today and Tomorrow* (Vol. II): Inculturation in Practice, Enugu, SNAAP Press, 1994, 53.

¹⁴² Ifesieh, Emmanuel, “Prayer in the Igbo Traditional Religion: Some Traditional Models (A case Study)”, in Uzukwu Elochukwu c.s.sp. (ed.), *Religion and African Culture. 1. Inculturation – A Nigerian Perspective*. Enugu, SNAAP Press, 1988, 73.

¹⁴³ Bastide, R., ‘L’expression de la priere chez le peuple sans ecriture’ *La Maison Dieu*, 109, (1972), 106-107. Quoted in Ikenga-Metuh, E., *African Religions in Western Conceptual Schemes*, 141.

immortality quantified in the gift of many (especially male) children – that your name may not be obliterated.¹⁴⁴

Without intending to carry out an intense research into the concept, structure and forms of prayer in the Igbo traditional religion, we hope to outline the meaning of prayer among the Igbo, when they pray, to whom they pray, how they pray and for what they do pray. Our examination of the place of prayer in the pre-Christian Igbo traditional set-up may also help to throw light on the present approach to prayer in the present day Christian religion mostly in relation to times of sickness.

What prayer means for the Igbo is expressed in the different Igbo concepts or words for prayer. Prayer can mean *ekpere* – “to plead with”. This has the sense of asking persistently as well as with resignation, conscious of the fact that the addressee may or may not grant the request.¹⁴⁵ The petitioner pleads with the addressee or God, the deity and the ancestors using various means, including gesticulations to attract sympathy and hearing.¹⁴⁶ Another term for prayer in Igbo language is “*aririo*”, which means begging or asking for favour, for forgiveness or healing. In Prayer, the Igbo man asks and begs God for life. “*aririo*” acknowledges the Supremacy of Chukwu, the creator, hence the need to ask Him man’s need on earth –especially life (*ndu*).¹⁴⁷

According to Ndiokwere, in asking for favour, the Igbo man employs various ways and means to make sure he is not disappointed or turned away empty handed. In Igbo tradition, the petitioner “tries to quicken or accelerate action on the part of the donor and to attract his sympathy. He pays scheduled or unscheduled visit to the master, often with gifts and in company of relatives and friends who are expected to speak on his behalf or act as witnesses, in case he has to pay back the debt. He brings along wine, yams, cock or fruits.”¹⁴⁸

The third term used in Igbo Language to signify prayer is the term “*igo ofo*”¹⁴⁹ – blessing or to pray. “*ofo*” stick is an Igbo cult staff in custodian of the family head, which he

¹⁴⁴ Okorocho, C., The meaning of Religious Conversion in Africa, 71-72.

¹⁴⁵ Ikenga-Metuh E., African Religions in Western Conceptual Schemes, 141.

¹⁴⁶ Ndiokwere, Nathaniel, The African Church, Today and Tomorrow (Vol. II), 53.

¹⁴⁷ Ifesieh, Emmanuel, Prayer in the Igbo Traditional Religion, 73.

¹⁴⁸ Ndiokwere, Nathaniel, The African Church, Today and Tomorrow (Vol. II), 54.

¹⁴⁹ *Ofo*- Igbo ritual symbol is first and foremost a sacred stick or wood of prayer among the traditional Igbo. Intricately bound up with the Igbo cosmology, it serves as a vital medium of communication between man and the supernatural order. As a popular symbol of truth and justice, it serves the primary socio-religious function of ensuring correct moral living and harmony in the traditional Igbo society.

uses when praying for the family. “igo ofo” is understood in the sense of ‘to pray’. Ikenga-Metuh cited the example of telling a person about to undertake a hazardous Journey: “aga m agoro gi ofo” - meaning I will be praying for you, you will go and return safely. No harm will come your way.¹⁵⁰ It is also a common expression of prayer among the Igbo to say: “Igo ofo ogologondu” (to pray for long life), “ofo oga n’ihu” (pray for progress), “ofo ije oma” (safe Journey), “ofo mkpuru nke afo” (Fecundity, - Posterity), “ofo ahu ike” (health). Such prayers are said with the “ofo” symbol in the hand. The “Ofo” holder taps the symbol on the ground during the prayer and all present answer “isee” or “ihaa” meaning Amen - ‘let it be so’ .¹⁵¹

Praying is for an Igbo man “Itoghere –Chukwu obi” – untieing the depths of one’s heart. That is to say one lays ones worries and secrets of the heart open before God. Praying means also being in constant contact and union with Chukwu, – “Ikpoku Chukwu” – constantly calling on God. But the intensity of this calling on God according to Ifesieh increases mostly when one is threatened by problems or sickness. In which case Prayer becomes “Ibeku –Chukwu”: crying to God.¹⁵² We cry to God in prayer for help when things are not well with us – when problems threaten not only our person and our families but also our very existence or means of livelihood. For the Igbo people: “Chineke, the creator is the only and the highest saving power we cry to”¹⁵³ in this situation.

To seek favour from God, the Igbo go through his agents – his priests. Besides praying to God alone, the sick person, or the person besieged with problems must consult the priest diviner. The people believe the priests are nearer to Chukwu and Chukwu hears their pleas faster than theirs. This shows the leading role of priests among the Igbo.

Prayer among the traditional Igbo people can be private prayer or public prayer. Private prayer can be the routine private prayers said by the head of the family to the ancestors in the traditional setting, asking for protection, prosperity and well-being,¹⁵⁴ or asking for healing of a sick family member in the case of sickness. In these routine prayers, the family head begs the ancestors to wade off sickness or misfortune from the family. Dur-

¹⁵⁰ Ikenga-Metuh E., *African Religions in Western Conceptual Schemes*, 142.

¹⁵¹ Cf. Ndiokwere, Nathaniel, *The African Church, Today and Tomorrow* (Vol. II), 56.

¹⁵² Ifesieh, Emmanuel, *Prayer in the Igbo Traditional Religion*, 76-77.

¹⁵³ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ Ilogu, E., *Christianity and Igbo Culture*, 49.

ing this offering or prayers by the family head, he offers kola nuts¹⁵⁵ or uses white chalk, calling on the ancestors to come and accept the offering and hear his supplications. He holds during these prayers the *ofo* stick as a symbol of his authority.

When however, calamity or sickness has struck anybody in the family or on special occasions, besides the routine private prayers in the family, the victim of such attack or his guardian - somebody on his behalf - must go to consult the native priest or the diviner to find out the cause of such calamity. That means to find out which deity or spirit has been wronged and what must be done to appease the spirits or the offended ancestor in questioning order to effect healing. In this case, we talk of occasional public prayers or worship which is then normally “ordered by a diviner as a result of his being consulted by the individual”.¹⁵⁶ In any case, after the diviner might have prescribed what is to be done, “the individual concerned goes to the priest of the special deity and offers the prescribed sacrifices of either chickens, or eggs and kola nuts or goats, palm wine and chalk as the case may be”.¹⁵⁷ Public worship can be “the family and lineage worship or the clan/village worship involving annual or biannual celebrations, bringing people together to enact aspects of the history of the family, lineage or clan, but more so to celebrate aspects of natural and agricultural manifestations of the local and family gods.”¹⁵⁸

Generally, sacrifices and offerings constitute the most common expression of cults in African traditional religion. The sacrifices themselves may be to abate illness, for thanksgiving, or for expiations of sin. Sacrifice may be for devotion, offered to God – *Chineke* - or to the spirits, to the ancestors or even to evil spirits¹⁵⁹ to wade off sickness. Ilogu stated explicitly the special intention in the act of private worship/sacrifice performed for the individual by the priest, as one or more as such needs:

“To seek favour from the ancestral spirits, to seek protection from evil spirits like those of witches or evil minded persons. To seek healing from an illness or cleansing from

¹⁵⁵ Kola Nut is a fruit bitter in taste that grows in Igbo land and is offered to visitors as a sign of hearty reception.

¹⁵⁶ Ilogu, E., *Christianity and Igbo Culture*, 49.

¹⁵⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ *ibid.*, 49-50.

¹⁵⁹ Fernando, Domingues, MCCJ, *Christ our Healer: A Theological dialogue with Akyward Shorter*. Nairobi Kenya, Paulines Publications, 2000, 38.

defilement in eating forbidden animal or entry into ‘bad bush’ ..., to propitiate neglected spirits or angered gods. To seek the gift of children.”¹⁶⁰

In sacrificing, the sacrificial object is treated as a real ‘ambassador’ being offered or sent with petitions and gifts to the divinity in order to present favourably the case of the sick person or the community for whom the sacrifice is being offered¹⁶¹. The sacrificed animal substituted for the sick person, becomes a prime means of communication and interchange with spirit entities on whom the individual and community depend for life. According to Fernando, “even when it is a matter of pacifying an offended spirit who is afflicting the living members of its family, the life of the victim (or animal) is again offered to God. What is given to the aggressive spirit is some form of reparation”.¹⁶²

Ifesieh on his part tried to streamline the basic forms of Igbo traditional prayer as consisting of: adoration, praise, thanksgiving, petitions, and the readiness to make amends by way of penance that culminates in sacrifices and offerings. In prayer of thanksgiving according to Basden, God is given thanks - “inye –Ekene” – for all things (*ihe nile*) he has done for us (*omegoro anyi*); for all he is doing for us (*ihe nile ona emere anyi*); and for all he is going to do for us (*ihe nile oga emere anyi*))¹⁶³. According to Ifesieh: “...like the Christian Religion, the Igbo tradition has fundamental and basic forms of prayer which must have to contain among other things – adoration of God – Chineke - the Creator as the supreme essence; this gives rise and room to praising him and from praises, thanksgiving develops. When the worshipping individual or community gains confidence through words of thanksgiving, which x-rays the hearts, a situation favourable to petition is set in. It is during prayer encounter that the heart is ready to make amends by way of penance in order to retain God’s favour. The readiness to accept penance gives room for sacrifices and offerings”¹⁶⁴

Prayer, sacrifices and offerings and the person of the priest play an essential role in strengthening “*ndu*” – the life force in the traditional Igbo healing system. Before we treat the central topic of healing, let us look at the concepts of health and sickness.

¹⁶⁰ Ilogu, E., *Christianity and Igbo Culture*, 49.

¹⁶¹ Cf. Fernando, Domingues MCCJ, *Christ our Healer*, 38.

¹⁶² *ibid.*, 39.

¹⁶³ Basden, G.T., *Niger Ibos*. London, Frank Cass. 1966, 37, in Ifesieh, Emmanuel, *Prayer in Igbo Traditional Religion*, 74.

¹⁶⁴ *ibid.*, 78. Cf. also Arinze, F.A., *Sacrifice in Ibo Religion*, (Ibadan), 38ff.

CHAPTER THREE: HEALTH, ILLNESS, SICKNESS AND DISEASE

3.0 INTRODUCTION

One cannot talk of sickness without first thinking of health since the essence of fighting against sickness is to maintain health. In this chapter, we hope to treat the concept of health and sickness paying attention to the different nuances of ill health. We shall explore the scriptural conception of sickness and conclude the chapter with the Igbo (African) worldview on the concept of sickness.

3.1 THE GENERAL CONCEPT OF HEALTH

Life is a “*summum bonum*” (highest good) and this highest good is liveable and enjoyable only if adorned with good health. All through the ages, the aims of human research and technological endeavours have been to improve the quality of life and to maintain a state of good health for mankind. In the world of science, the modern day highly modernized medicine science has made enormous contributions in the improvement of life by trying to maintain good health or reinstating, restoring good health in the face of sickness. What does this good health mean?

The word ‘health’ in Latin “*sanitas*” signifies a general condition of complete bodily and spiritual well being, whereby, a latent, or even known but not life threatening danger or harm could be present. It owes to the fact that a state of absolute and complete health does not exist or is not conceivable.¹⁶⁵ In German language, the word for healthy is “*gesund*” and the word “*gesund*” leads back etymologically to the word “*geschwind*”, which means (well being) and well being expresses uninterrupted vital activities.¹⁶⁶ In Greek language, the concept of health corresponds with the Greek word “*holon*” which is interpreted as - ‘whole’ – wholeness. Its correspondence exists also in

¹⁶⁵ Lexikon 2002, 1999, 2000; Wissen digital Software Verlags GMBH, München. .

¹⁶⁶ “Im deutschen Sprachgebrauch läßt sich “gesund” etymologisch auf “geschwind” zurückführen, worin das Wohlbefinden einer ungebrochen vitalen Aktivität zum Ausdruck kommt. Im griechischen Sinnverständnis entspricht dem Begriff von Gesundsein am ehesten „das Ganze“ (holon), das auch im arabischen „salam“ als einem umfassenden Wohlsein umschrieben wird. In der lateinischen Scholastik steht dafür der Begriff „integritas“, den Paracelsus wiederum verdeutscht hat mit „Gesunde und Gänze“. Cf. Schipperges, Heinrich, “Gesundheit – Krankheit – Heilung,” in *Christlicher Glaube in Moderner Gesellschaft: Teilband 10*, Hrsg. Franz Böckle et al. Freiburg, Herder, 1980, 55.

Arabic as ‘salam’ – a comprehensive well-being. In Medieval Latin, the concept “intergritas” is used for health that Paracelsus again translated into German as “Gesunde und Gänze” – “healthy and whole”.¹⁶⁷ The word for “health” itself “Gesundheit” derives from an old Germanic root meaning “wholeness”.¹⁶⁸ In English language, however, the word “health” comes from the old English “haelth”, with the stem root “hal” meaning “whole”, “hale”.¹⁶⁹ From this root we can already see that the etymological root of the word health embodies the root idea of health as wholeness.

However, in terms of definition, it must be noted that there is no widely accepted definition of health. It is seen by many as one of the most difficult terms to be given a meaningful definition. Nevertheless, there are definitions of health such as the definitions which have either been seen as “incomplete, merely dealing with the absence of disease or a generalised well-being as all important while neglecting the spiritual and other dimensions of health”.¹⁷⁰

The World Health Organisation defined health as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”¹⁷¹ Even this definition of health by WHO suffers also the deficiency trailing many attempts at defining health, because it tends to have “overlooked the spiritual dimension of health”¹⁷² Some see the WHO definition as amounting to tautology since a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being is the same as the absence of disease and infirmity but relegating spiritual health. The American Medical Association (AMA) defined health as “a state of physical and mental well-being”¹⁷³. Even this definition is omitting the reference to complete well being and totally dropping the aspect of social well-being that is also part of health.¹⁷⁴

Health, just as Bernard Häring would also affirm cannot be defined from a mere study of the body; we must consider the whole person in his or her human vocation and final destiny. It is in this view that Karl Rahner saw sin (failing in one’s vocation or calling

¹⁶⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ Boyd Kenneth M., “Disease, Illness, Sickness, health, healing and wholeness: exploring some elusive concepts”, *Medical Humanities, Edition of the Journal of Medical Ethics*, 26, 1, June 2000, 9-17.

¹⁶⁹ Webster Dictionary, 1994, 461.

¹⁷⁰ Obiagwu Marius, *Healthcare of the sick among the Igbos of Nigeria*, 83.

¹⁷¹ Callaban D., *The WHO definition of health*, 165, in *ibid.*, 84.

¹⁷² Häring Bernard, *Medical Ethics*. Middlegreen UK, St. Pauls Pub., 1995, 153.

¹⁷³ Callaban D., *The WHO definition of health*, 165.

¹⁷⁴ Boyle J., “The concept of health and the right to healthcare”, in *On Moral Medicine*, 645, in Obiagwu, Marius, *Healthcare of the sick among the Igbos of Nigeria*, 84.

by God) as sickness and health therefore as comprising of moral and spiritual aspects,¹⁷⁵ hence introducing also the aspects of moral and spiritual health as parts of a holistic health. Our understanding of health in this work shall therefore be based on this holistic understanding of health.

Summarily, health can be understood as a balance in the physical world as well as in the metaphysical world. Hence any disruption of this balance results to sickness in whatever level be it physical or spiritual.

3.2 GENERAL CONCEPT OF SICKNESS

Having seen the different conceptions and definitions of health and having established our understanding of health in this work, let us now consider the general concept of sickness. Sickness has been a part of the general suffering of humanity and the question of ‘why suffering’ has remained a preoccupation of theodicy. We shall in this section discuss the issue of suffering and sickness and the different nuances of ill health as disease, illness and sickness.

3.2.1 Sickness as part of suffering

Suffering as an all-encompassing concept of all the misfortunes of man has become a dilemma of humanity. With his birth in time and death in history, man is exposed to suffering and the fight to overcome it. According to Michael Taylor, “from our conception we move towards death; hence we are all situated between birth in time and death in history”¹⁷⁶. So suffering forms part of the history of man.

Thus, suffering can be natural or physical inherent in the life-process itself – in birth, old age, sickness, natural catastrophe etc. It can also be psychological, as well as moral. In all these aspects be it natural, physical, psychological or moral, human suffering ac-

¹⁷⁵ Beck Matthias, *Seele und Krankheit: Psychosomatische Medizin und theologische Anthropologie*, Paderbon, Ferdinand Schöningh, 3. Auflage, 2003, 99-101.

¹⁷⁶ Taylor Michael, *Mystery of Suffering and Death*. 71.

cording to John Paul II “constitutes, as it were, a specific ‘world’ which exists together with man, which appears in him and passes, and sometimes does not pass, but which consolidates itself and becomes deeply rooted in him”¹⁷⁷. At first instance, it seems that the most striking form of suffering is physical or natural suffering. But a closer look at the human person amidst suffering reveals that almost all kinds of physical suffering evoke psychic, social and moral suffering. So that one can say that the different aspects of suffering are intermingled.

Physical suffering can affect the moral and social equilibrium just as moral and social instability can as well affect and manifest itself in the physical. In this sense, modern medicine speaks today of psychosomatic sickness. Physical suffering can manifest itself in ill health and this ill-health can be expressed in three modes of either been sick, ill or suffering from a disease.

3.2.2 The Concepts: Disease, Illness and Sickness

Sickness, illness and disease are “three modes of ill-health”¹⁷⁸ be it physical, psychological, social or moral. They are three modes of expressing what the German language expresses with the one word “*krank*” – sick, ill.

The word “sick” or “ill” is expressed in German language with the only one word “*krank*” which etymologically comes from the old German word “*kranc*” – (sonderbar, Debilis, or Infirmus in Latin) and it means “strange, odd, queer or extraordinary”. It is also related to the German word “*kränkeln*”, that is to crank/crack/crackle in English, which means to writhe (to wither away) or wringle with pain¹⁷⁹. The different expressions of the word sick or ill, in different languages points to its been depicted as a malady as in English – “ill” (evil, böse); in French “*malade*” (mal – schlecht – bad); in Russian “*bolnoi*” (bol – schmerz – pain); and in Latin “*aeger*” (beschwerlich –strain, stress, burdensome, fatiguing).

¹⁷⁷ Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Letter on the Christian Meaning of human Suffering: *Salvifici Doloris*. Boston, Pauline Books & Media, 1984, 11.

¹⁷⁸ *ibid.*, 19.

¹⁷⁹ Schipperges, H., “Gesundheit, Krankheit – Heilung”, in *Christlicher Glaube in Moderner Gesellschaft*, 10, Freiburg, Herder, 1981, 63.

There is according to Schipperges, a little historical development in the use of the concepts sickness and illness. In the middle ages, the word sick (“krank”), was more often used in literary works than the word ill - “*siech*” or “*aeger*” in Latin, which depicts a state of lingering illness, a state of languishing or invalidity. In this case, physical deformity or even psychic instability could be classified as “*aeger*” – illness. Later, the concept was extended to include “disease” and it qualifies all communicable diseases, mania, cravings or even addiction (sucht)¹⁸⁰. The etymological meaning of the concept later expanded to comprise almost all forms of existential deficit thereby bringing to light, the different modes of being sick or ill.¹⁸¹

Up until the 18th century, illness was used to mean either “wickedness, depravity, immorality, or unpleasantness, disagreeableness, hurtfulness”, reflecting the fact that the word “ill is a contracted form of evil”¹⁸². The modern understanding or meaning of illness according to Boyd dating from the 17th century connects illness then with health and sees “ill health as the state of being ill.”¹⁸³ And the dictionary defines illness in the sense of “a disease or a sickness” and defines “sickness” itself as the “the condition of being sick or ill; that means in terms of illness or ill health”.¹⁸⁴

So far our exposure of the concept has brought us to the intermittent use of the three concepts: sickness or illness or disease as “the absence of ease”, or “an impediment to free movement”. It is a state of “disorder of structure or malfunction in an animal or plant of such a degree as to produce or threaten or produce detectable illness or disorder.”¹⁸⁵ Sickness and illness are seen as synonyms for disease.

Professor Marshall Marinker, a general practitioner, made an attempt to distinguish between sickness, illness and disease and by that means to define explicitly the concepts of disease, illness and sickness over twenty years ago. For him,

¹⁸⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁸¹ *ibid.*

¹⁸² Boyd Kenneth M., “Disease, illness, sickness, health, healing and wholeness: exploring some elusive concepts”, in *Medical Humanities*, 26, 1, 19-17.

¹⁸³ *ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ Cf. *ibid.*

¹⁸⁵ *ibid.*

“Disease is a pathological process, most often physical as in throat infection, or cancer of the bronchus, sometimes undetermined in origin, as in schizophrenia. The quality which identifies disease is in some deviations from a biological norm.”¹⁸⁶

Medically, there is objectivity about disease which doctors are able to see, touch, measure, and smell. On the other hand, according to Marinker:

“Illness is a feeling, an experience of unhealth which is entirely personal, interior to the person of the patient. Often it implies disease, but the disease may be undeclared, as in the early stages of cancer or tuberculosis or diabetes. Sometimes illness exists where no disease can be found.”¹⁸⁷

It is then this fact of “illness-in-the-absence-of-disease” that distinguishes illness from disease. One can then be ill without necessarily having a disease. But both are however, all modes of unhealth or ill health.

Distinguishing sickness on the other hand from illness and disease, Marinker writes:

“Sickness is the external and public mode of unhealth. Sickness is a social role, a status, a negotiated position in the world, a bargain struck between the person henceforward called ‘sick’, and a society which is prepared to recognise and sustain him.”¹⁸⁸

Sickness is therefore a mode of ill health that affects and confronts the whole person. Sickness cannot be abstracted from the human person. And as Eric de Rosny maintains “there is no such thing as sickness in itself, only people who are sick.”¹⁸⁹ When one is said to be sick, what is sick is not only the visible, physical body lying on the sickbed but rather the whole human person is sick.¹⁹⁰ Michael Taylor summarised it rightly with the words: “sickness indicates simply and briefly the whole existential situation of the sick person, one for whom sickness has become a state.”¹⁹¹ In his or her state of ill health, in sickness, the human person feels hit or affected and overwhelmed by an alienating and foreign power or force that befalls us from outside and makes us vulnerable as infection or influenza, or as a threatening power.¹⁹² Sickness then as infection of one body organ or the other brings us to the medical view of sickness.

¹⁸⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁸⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁸⁹ Gusmer, 145.

¹⁹⁰ Cf. Eric de Rosny, „Krankheit, Heilung und Gesundheit“, in *Concilium* 34, 1998. .

¹⁹¹ Taylor Michael, 71.

¹⁹² Schipperges, “Gesundheit, Krankheit – Heilung”, 63.

3.3 HEALTH, SICKNESS, ILLNESS AND DISEASE IN SECULAR MEDICINE

There are three main existential and anthropological categories around which the existence of man revolves. It is that of being healthy “constitutio”, of becoming sick, “destitutio” and of getting well “restitutio”. Modern and classical medicine classified its studies along these three main categories namely: physiology as the study of health, pathology as the study of sickness and lastly therapy as the study of healing or restoration¹⁹³.

This triaxial line of thought is also evident in the concept of sickness. Along this line of understanding of man as body, soul, and spirit, sickness was also seen and defined. This was evident in the prevalent anthropological conflict of whether man is or made up of body, soul and spirit. However, there seemed to have been a historical development of the concept of sickness in medical history.

3.3.1 Medical history of the concept of sickness.

Heinrich Schipperges, a Professor of medical history in his Article “Gesundheit – Krankheit – Heilung” (Health – Sickness- Healing) tried to trace a certain historical development of the concept of sickness in the history of medicine.

In his view, the concept of sickness could be traced back to the oldest documents of the oriental medicine. According to the then prevailing worldview, sickness was seen as “a punishment from God or the revenge of the demons, or the lost of the world harmony or equilibrium rather than as a natural defect or breakdown of the body.”¹⁹⁴ During this period, the sick person adapted himself to the prevailing understanding and medicine - the doctor based his therapy on this understanding and saw his role as one of “mediating and expiating, purifying or reinstating the balance (equilibrium) and in this way re-socializes the sick.”¹⁹⁵

¹⁹³ Cf. Ibid., 54.

¹⁹⁴ „Krankheit ist dem Weltbild entsprechend eine Strafe Gottes oder die Rache von Dämonen, Verlust der Weltharmonie eher als ein natürlicher Defekt oder Ausfall“. Schipperges, *ibid.*, 64.

¹⁹⁵ *ibid.*: „Er vermittelt und entschönt, macht rein, oder gleicht aus, und er resozialisiert auf diese Weise den Kranken.“.

The role of medicine during this time in relation to sickness was social in the sense that it reinstates the ecological equilibrium biologically and socially. Medicine so to say served as a rehabilitation measure.¹⁹⁶ But the aim of this rehabilitation was the same for the ancient medicine namely reinstating health (*restitutio*). The health, which Hippocrates in this time saw as “the balance of juices and energies or powers” and Aristotle himself saw it as a “*habitus*”. And in this habitual stand, according to them, we are probably only potentially healthy and always relatively sick and therefore need rehabilitation¹⁹⁷. This conforms the point we made above in our treatment of the concept of health that there is no absolute health.

3.3.1.1 Sickness in the Greek medicine

The old Greek medicine according to Schipperges knew only two categories of sickness: “the outside wound or inquiry” and “the invisible pain or suffering”, which they believed the anger of the gods sent to the sick person. The invisible suffering needed the purifying and expiatory ritual to heal while the external wound needed the direct treatment of the medical doctor.¹⁹⁸ From this point, pharmaceutics “Wundarzneikunst” became its dominant role in the medical science beside the herbal medicine – “Pflanzenheilkunde”.

3.3.1.2 Sickness in the early Western Medicine.

It was in the early western medicine more than in any other period that the theory of sickness corresponded to the theory of healing. This was the period of Christian influence in medicine. For the first time in the history of medicine, the sick person and not the sickness itself became the centre of the healing method or medicine. To heal a sick

¹⁹⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁹⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, 64 : Gesundheit als „das Gleichgewicht der Säfte und Kräfte“.

¹⁹⁸ *ibid.*, 65: Zum Beispiel: „Eine innere Krankheit, wie sie Apollon mit seiner Pfeilen sendet, bedarf zu ihrer Heilung eines Reinigungs– oder Sühnerituaie, während die äußere Verletzung dem direkten ärztlichen Eingreif zugänglich ist.“: Transl.: For Instance, an internal sickness, like the one Apollon sends with his arrows, needs a purifying and expiatory ritual to heal, while the external wound needs the direct treatment of the medical doctor.

person or to relieve his pains became a work of charity: “*summae humanitatis et magnae operationis*”¹⁹⁹ (of the highest and greatest human work). So *agape* and *caritas* became integrated in the medical care. The “*ars medica*” now became also an “*ars caritativa*”. The sick person was seen as an *individuum* with freedom and dignity and according to Boethius as: “*substantia individua naturae rationalis*” (the individual substance of natural reason) and not as “*animal rationali*” (animal reason) or “*zoon politikon*”²⁰⁰. Sickness was seen as “a deficiency in being” and not a “to be” (*sein*) phenomena. It is not “a process of being” rather “a cessation of being”. It is a mode of deficiency – “*modus deficiens*”. Then sickness is not supposed to be in consonance with being. This corresponded to the concept of sickness of Isidore from Sevilla of this period who held that all things created including the human body were good and sickness and infirmity therefore are “*res contra naturam*” - against nature. Sickness was then traced back to original sin and was considered expiatory.²⁰¹

The adoption of these views on sickness however did not last long. With time, secular science dichotomised man along the triaxial line of body, soul and spirit, with different sciences or fields of study taking care of each aspect. In this allocation, medical science seemed to have taken care of the body – soma. Psychology took the psyche or the psychic sphere and sacred Theology was left to occupy itself with the spiritual (*pneuma*).

For a very long time, medical science reduced man to his body without paying much attention to the other aspects. The human body was diagnosed and dissected into organs and cells as parts of a machine called man. Any defect in this “human machine” could easily be dictated, pinpointed and restored or repaired. Thus the human body became “for man an object of manipulation and a raw material for his own experimentation as evident in the modern techniques of genetic carpentry”²⁰². The Hippocratic oath seemed in some instances to have been laid on ice. And man seemed also to have become the lord of his own ingenuity, which in actual fact was a gift and he himself, an instrument. The result was that God was expelled from the hospital theatres and laboratories. Andreas Heller in the third volume of Zulehner’s Book “Pastoral Theology” described the situation thus:

¹⁹⁹ Schipperges, *ibid.*, 65.

²⁰⁰ *ibid.*

²⁰¹ *ibid.*, 65-66.

²⁰² Iweadighi Sabinus, *The Metaphysical Implications of I-Thou Relationship in Gabriel Marcel*, Philosophy Thesis, St. Josephs Major Seminary Ikot Ekpene Nigeria, 1992, 1.

„The treatments of the godly medicine have become today a machinal-apparatus of a healing technique. The process of healing or making well again begins today with a “health – technical – overhauling – process” (“Gesundheits TÜV – Technisches - Überprüfungs-Verfahren”). The sick person is examined, he undergoes a medical check-up, the functionality of his organs will be examined and repaired if need be in the health-fabric. The human person goes into a spare-parts-warehouse, allows himself from time to time in a rolling band form dyhydrated, dissected, disinfected and defattened. Medicine defacto produces then health as a marketable product. The patient now assumes the role of a willfull consumer of this medical benevolence. Today the new hospital buildings appear ... as cathedrals of a convincing modern technological faith epoch, as cathedrals of an almost irrational faith, with the assurance of healing and recovery, if not also of an everlasting life. The situation of the pastoral care or pastoral worker in this case has become very difficult“²⁰³

However, in being a little bit critical of the one-sided development of the concept of man and sickness in the medicine in the course of medical history, we are in no way here trying to relegate the enormous significance of the technological achievements of medical sciences.

Notably, the crises in technical medicine and the constant discovery of the limitations of secular medicine have led to a rediscovery of holistic medicine and a concept of sickness and healing.

Today, modern medicine speaks of psychosomatic illness or holistic medicine (“Ganzheitsmedizin”). In the psychosomatic field, medicine tries to attest to the possible

²⁰³ Zulehner Paul M., *Pastoraltheologie: Band 3: Übergänge*, (Patmos, Verlag Düsseldorf, 1990), 60. Translation mine. Original German Text: „Aus den Behandlungen göttlicher Heilkunst ist heute eine Maschinellapparative Heiltechnik geworden. Der Prozeß des Gesundmachens beginnt in der Regel mit einem „Gesundheits TÜV“. Der Kranke wird durchgeprüft, auf die Funktionen seines Organismus hin untersucht und gegebenenfalls in den Gesundheitsfabriken repariert. Der Mensch geht ins Ersatzteillager, lässt sich von Zeit zu Zeit fließbandmäßig entwässern, entschlacken, entfetten, entseuchen. Die Medizin soll die Gesundheit als käufliche Ware produzieren. Die Kranken schlüpfen in die Rolle des empfangsbereiten Konsumenten dieser medizinischen Wohltat. Heute erscheinen die Krankenhausneubauten ... als Kathedralen eines technikgläubigen Zeitalters, eines fast ins Irrationale gesteigerten Glaubens an die Machbarkeit von Heilung und Genesung, von immerwährenden Leben. Die Stellung der Seelsorge in diesem Bezugfeld ist schwerer geworden.“ Zulehner Paul M., *Pastoraltheologie Band 3, Übergänge: Pastoral zu den Lebenswenden*, (Dusseldorf, Patmos, 1990), 60 .

psychological cause of a visible somatic sickness.²⁰⁴ The whole man in his physical, psychological, social, moral and spiritual aspects is considered.

3.3.2 Medical definition of Sickness

In the theory of sickness, modern day medicine differentiates between the cause of a sickness (its aetiology), the origin and development of a sickness (pathogenesis), as well as symptoms of a sickness (symptomatology).²⁰⁵ Going by definition, sickness is seen in the medicine along the lines of the distinction between the three categories: sickness, illness and disease as we have discussed above.

Generally speaking, sickness or disease is any abnormal condition of the body or mind that causes discomfort or dysfunction.²⁰⁶ The strict medical use of the term “disease” differentiates it further between “a disease which has a known specific cause or causes (called its aetiology), from a syndrome, which is a collection of symptoms that often occur together but for which there is no known cause”.²⁰⁷ A disease can be infectious – whereby the disease is caused by transmissible infectious agents such as bacteria, fungi, and virus. It can also be a parasitic – caused by parasites and worms. It can also be agenetic – caused by the presence or absence of genes in the affected person’s DNA.

Disease could also be a toxic disease caused by exposures to environmental toxins – poisoning, etc. Medically disease can be in the form of bodily injury, malfunction of an organ, or even in form of “Autoimmune disorders” like “Rheumatoid arthritis”, “Multiple sclerosis”, or diabetes.²⁰⁸

However, this biologically centred conception of sickness has in the last years given room to a broader conception that includes psychic and social disorders. Sickness in the medicine is now not only a bodily malfunction or a change in the body tissue but involves the general condition of the whole man.²⁰⁹ Today many diseases that killed

²⁰⁴ „Natürlich gibt es auch Krankheiten deren Ursachen ein seelischer Leiden ist.. Jahre lange seelische Belastung kann ein Menschen schwer krank machen“. Haberle Thomas OSB, *Helfen und Heilen*, Veritas Verlag, Wien. Auflag, 10, 15.

²⁰⁵ Schipperges H., “Gesundheit, Krankheit – Heilung”, 67.

²⁰⁶ www.wikipedia.com , Feb. 2008

²⁰⁷ *ibid.*

²⁰⁸ *ibid.*

²⁰⁹ Cf. Schipperges H., “Gesundheit, Krankheit – Heilung”, 67.

people in the past can be diagnosed and cured or managed for a very long time, thanks to medical research. As a result, many sicknesses or diseases which people in many cultures many years ago attributed to mystic powers or evil spirits or even considered abomination because they could not explain them, can be explained today and even be healed, even though medicine continues to be confronted with limitations and situations of sicknesses in which medical research has yet no answer. Oftentimes the sick turns to God for help as evident in the biblical times. Many a time is the story told of healings or bodily regeneration or restoration in which medicine has no explanation of how it happened. This belief in the involvement of God in sickness and healing abounded in the biblical Old Testament as well as in the Igbo world. Before we treat the Igbo concept of sickness, let us see the biblical-Christian concept of sickness.

3.4 SCRIPTURAL CONCEPT OF HEALTH AND SICKNESS

Having seen the general concept of health and sickness, we now move into a biblical assessment of health, sickness and healing. Here, we shall be confronted with the basic questions concerning the early Jewish and Christian opinion of health, sickness and healing. In the first place, we shall explore the Jewish understanding of health and sickness by examining the concept *hala* (sickness) in the Old Testament, the situation of the sick and sickness in the Old Testament texts. In the second place, we shall move to Christian understanding of health and sickness. Here we are going to treat sickness in the Gospels as well as in the Acts and the Epistles. We shall also explore the connection between sin and sickness in the New Testament. We shall also see how the early church understood, interpreted and applied these concepts of health, sickness and healing. Against the background of a scriptural reflection on these three concepts will help to demonstrate how the Igbo concept of sickness is closely tied up to the scriptural ideas about health, sickness and healing.

3.4.1 Health and sickness in the Old Testament

The man of the Old Testament was also confronted with the problem of maintaining health as well as restoring health when threatened by sickness. We shall try to explore separately now how these concepts were conceived in the Old Testament times.

3.4.1.1 Old Testament view of health: Health as “Wholeness”

The idea associated with physical health in Jewish tradition was that of wholeness. This holistic conception is evident in the Hebrew word “shalom” and its cognates which is translated as ‘peace’, “completeness, soundness, welfare, healthy peace and only secondarily as harmony between persons or nations, or freedom from strife and war”. But the understanding of health and sickness in the Old Testament was so much influenced by the prevailing conceptions among the ancient civilisations surrounding the Israelites. In these civilisations, emphasis was given to health not only as absence of diseases but also as absence of strain and sin in the horizontal and vertical dimensions of human existence and relationships. This conception was so evident among the Babylonians. For the Babylonians as well as Hebrews, health was well-being, wholeness, peace of body, mind and spirit, in harmony with the environment and with God.”²¹⁰

Reflecting on the use of Shalom in relation to understanding the Jewish concept of health, we discover that the very times Shalom and its cognates are used in the Hebrew Bible shed light on the possible meaning of health. Looking at the various uses of the word “shalom” it should be readily admitted that the expressions come close to the Old Testament concept of health. Take for instance the view that Shalom could denote “well-being” in practice, of course, this well being should be evident in “every sphere of life whether physical, mental and spiritual, or individual, social and national.”²¹¹

²¹⁰ Buttrick G.A.(ed), *The Interpreter Dictionary of the Bible, an illustrated Encyclopaedia*, vol. 2, (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1985), 546, in Obiagwu Marius, *Healthcare of the sick among the Igbos of Nigeria*, 98.

²¹¹ Wilkinson John, *Health and Healing; Studies in New Testament Principles and Practices*; Edinburgh, Handsel Press, 1980, 5.

Within the framework of Jewish understanding of their religion, the true shalom is stressed as coming from God. Health comes from God alone in whom every human person finds his or her true wholeness and complete fulfilment. From God, the wholeness of the human person is understood as wholeness of the human person in all his being and in all his relationships. In this case, health has not only to do with the physical state or nature but also with the social and moral dimensions of the human person. As such the horizontal and vertical dimensions of human relationships are defined according to his or her state of mind and body. This health in the moral or ethical sense consists in complete obedience to God's law. Thus within the religious perspective of Judaism, health and religion are somewhat connected. The degree of religiosity or the level of faith is often tested when confronted with sickness.

3.4.1.2 Sickness in the Old Testament

Sickness has always been an enigma in human existence even in the Old Testament times. The strong man of creation weakens or degenerates in the face of sickness. The Old Testament generally connected sickness with the sin of man. We shall now see the Old Testament terminologies for sickness, the general view about sickness as well as the situation of the sick person in the Old Testament.

3.4.1.2.1. "hala" ("weak" or "being sick"), "mrs" (bad, decaying): Terminologies for sickness in Old Testament Hebrew language

The Hebrew word *hala* – "weak" or "being sick" expresses a weak state accompanied with pain. Another Hebrew word that expresses a state of being sick is the word *mrs* which has a meaning of bad, decaying or degenerating. On the other hand, the Hebrew word, *rafa*, which means "making healthy again", "healing" or "repairing", was also used in the Old Testament in relation to the repairing of clay pots in Jer. 19.11. Other Old Testament expressions of sickness include an expression of being beaten by, or struck by something that point to external wounds. One of the predominant references

to sickness in the Old Testament is the expression that point to “leprosy”. There were however in the early Old Testament time, no special medical terminology in use for this sickness²¹². Terminologies found include like the ones found in the book of Leviticus 13-15, here, the author lists some skin diseases, emphasizing moreover, the cultic or sacrificial aspects. It is interesting to note that in this passage and other Old Testament passages, impurity, sexual diseases like impotence, sexual secretions and ageing were regarded as sickness.²¹³

3.4.1.2.2. The conception of sickness in the Old Testament

Outstanding in the Old Testament conception of sickness is the general belief that sickness is essentially connected with sin. As noted above with the issue of health, the understanding of sickness as well as the situation of the sick person in the Old Testament environment was also influenced by the prevailing conceptions among the ancient oriental civilisations surrounding the Israelites. Additionally, the Israelites’ understanding of their religion also plays a part in this conception of sickness as connected with sin. Sickness is understood as a “deficit” in being and an Israelite sees it as something harsh and complains of it to God from whom he also expects healing. (Psalm 31:11).

Within the understanding that sickness is connected with sin, what is interesting with this description is that sickness is viewed as evil, however, distinguishable from “physical trials from without – such as hunger, exhaustion, cold and from moral trials such as grief and affections of the heart”²¹⁴. Among the physical trials from without is the conception of sickness as “a scourge from attacks by external forces” i.e., evil forces whose powers and might are greater than that of man. Against these evil forces, exorcism was used to deliver the sick person from the powers of those external forces or evil forces. The case of Job possibly points in this direction of sickness resulting from external or

²¹² Cf. Bühringer Andres, *Pastorale Theologische Ansätze für die Krankenseelsorge: Krankenseelsorge aus biblischer und praktischer Sicht*, Diplomarbeit an der Universität Wien, Juli 1996, 16.

²¹³ Cf. Müller, Seybold, *Krankheit und Heilung*, 13, in *ibid*.

²¹⁴ *Sacramentum Mundi: An Encyclopaedia of Theology*, vol. 3, Burns & Oats, Western Germany, 1969, 98, in Obiagwu Marius, *Healthcare of the sick among the Igbos of Nigeria*, 99.

evil forces, though it can be disputed. The experience of the Israelites shows “that illness is mysteriously linked to sin and evil”²¹⁵.

In the Jewish thought and evidently with the creation story, it is believed that the world was created devoid of sickness and suffering.

"Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air.. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. .. God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good." (Gen. 1: 26a, 27, 31)

In view of this creation story, sickness and suffering were seen as not being part of the original plan of God for man. In fact, sickness and other human ills are viewed as having entered the world as a consequence of sin. (cf. Gen. 2, 3:16-19). Humanity was created to be happy and free from pain.

“And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die." (Gen. 2:16-17)

However, man disobeyed God and lost the state of grace, and the immortal state of painlessness. According to biblical narrative, toil, agony, sickness, pain and suffering gained entrance into human history as a result of this disobedience:

“To the woman he said, "I will greatly multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children, ... And to Adam he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth to you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return.'” (Gen 3, 16-19)

The fall became the beginning of the man’s physical and moral agony and suffering. Consequently, sickness came to be seen in the Old Testament texts, as a punishment from God for the sins of man. As punishment, the plagues sent to the Egyptians for their oppression of the people of Israel, presents a good example (Ex. 9:1-12). In Deut. 28: 27, the punishment for sin was described thus: “The Lord will smite you with the boils

²¹⁵ Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith: *Instructions on Prayers for Healing*. Nairobi, Pauline Press, 2001, 5.

of Egypt, and with the ulcers and the scurvy and the itch, of which you cannot be healed.” It could also be seen as a providential test of fidelity as seen in Tobit 12:13. As a test of fidelity, the story of the just man Job whom God allowed the devil to struck with illness and suffering provides an instance where God can permit sickness. Here it is good to note that in the Old Testament culture, it was a subject of scandal for the just man to be afflicted by sickness. They did not, according to Manus Obiagwu, realise early enough that sickness might as well be a test or trial sent by God to manifest a person’s virtues.²¹⁶ Hence the three friends of Job admonished him to curse God and die. They could not understand why their just friend could be punished with punishment meted out to sinners

When sickness befalls a person, the person turns to God, the author of life, for healing. The sick person who beseeches God for healing confesses to have been justly punished for his sins as evident in the psalms²¹⁷ (Psalm 37:40; 106:17-21).

Although it can be true that sickness or suffering has meaning as punishment or corrective measure in the Old Testament, when it is connected with fault, it is not all together true that that all sufferings are consequences of a fault and have the nature of punishment.²¹⁸ In this sense, sickness in the Old Testament may also have positive consequences. First it may be to demonstrate the faithfulness of the just man, or to repair the justice violated by sin, and sickness may also be used to effect conversion or reform of life. Furthermore, sickness or suffering may be for the atonement of the sins of others or the fault of sinners. In the texts of the prophets, it can have redemptive meaning for the sins of others²¹⁹. In the book of the prophet Isaiah, it is stated: “His soul’s anguish over, he shall see the light and be content. By his sufferings shall my servant justify many, taking their faults on himself” (Isa. 53, 11).

What needs to be recognized in the light of the discussion above is that there were no scientific medical care and Institutions in ancient Israel. Where sickness and suffering were seen as a result of divine displeasure for sin, healing and restoration were sought in God who was seen as the healer of his people: “For I am the Lord (Yahweh), your

²¹⁶ Obiagwu Marius, *Healthcare of the sick among the Igbos of Nigeria*, 100.

²¹⁷ Cf. *ibid.*

²¹⁸ Cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith: *Instructions on Prayers for Healing*, 5.

²¹⁹ The Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1502. Nairobi, Pauline Publications, 1994, 372.

healer” (Ex. 5.26). As a result some authors among the ancient Jews believed there was little or no need for physicians among the people as Sandford noted:

“The healing stories such as that of Naaman by Elisha in the book of Kings 5 was exceedingly rare exceptions, and that King Asa who suffered painful disease in his feet was reprimanded for consulting the doctors (2 Chron. 16,12).”²²⁰

So Yahweh was looked up for healing. The reality of healing has two dimensions: the physical healing realized in the individual and the future healing. The former is accompanied in the lifetime of the individual, the latter lies in the eschatological or final redemption of the people of God. The prophets prophesied about this that the messianic time would come when God will visit his people. It is a future time for Zion when there will be no more disease and infirmity and God will pardon every offence and heal every disease. (cf. Isa. 35:5-6; 33, 24). This messianic time was heralded in the New Testament. But before then the situation of the sick in the Old Testament, especially victims of certain forms of sicknesses like leprosy were precarious.

3.4.1.2.3. Situation of the sick in the Old Testament and the Ancient near East

Certain sicknesses such as leprosy dismember one from the community. Even after healing, the healed person must again be re-socialised through the “restitution process” before he or she could fully join the community.²²¹ In ancient Israel, there were no public medical institutions in which the sick could be treated and be healed. Medical doctors and health institutions did not exist. In 2 Kings 15:5, mention is made of a “Bedhouse”, but the use of this word does not imply the existence of a hospital at the time. This Bedhouse – a rest house when one is sick - was perhaps the privilege of King Assyria. At this time, they knew the external body parts but had no idea of the internal body organs and how they function. When people get sick, because they had no medical knowledge and there were no health institutions, they took recourse to magical practices

²²⁰ Sandford J.A., *Healing body and soul*, (Kenturthy, 1992), 13-14, in Obiagwu Marius, *Healthcare of the sick among the Igbos of Nigeria*, 99.

²²¹ Ibid., cf. Also Seybold, Müller, Seybold, *Krankheit und Heilung*, in Buhringer, 17.

in the pagan temples. This was predominant in the pre-covenantal Israel, though it may have also been practiced afterwards as well.

As noted above, the understanding of health, and sickness as well as the situation of the sick person in the Old Testament was so much influenced by the prevailing conceptions among the ancient oriental civilisations surrounding the Old Testament people of God. Among the Canaanites, for instance, though there is little evidence discovered regarding how sickness was conceived and how it was treated, the few findings show evidence of how amulets with magical incantations were used against the demon or the Canaan pagan gods as a method of healing.²²² There is also evidence of the existence of two medical traditions in Mesopotamia – the practical and the theoretical traditions. There were centres where scientific knowledge about sickness and healing were accumulated and documented in medical texts. Mention is made also of experts, exorcists, priests and medical practitioners. The medical practitioners treated the sick according to the prevailing stand or knowledge of medicine at the time, while the exorcists applied magical powers to effect the healing which in most cases, is done in the form of exorcism²²³, pointing to the conception of sickness as an attack of external forces interfering in the life of man.

With time, the medical expertise of the Mesopotamian doctors developed and became known. The Code of Hammurabi from the period of 1600 B.C. shows or gave evidence of eye operations, child delivery through surgical operations and other surgical attempts.²²⁴ With the Babylonian exile in 587 B.C., the oriental influence in the Old Testament became pronounced. Among the ancient oriental civilisations, Egypt was famous for its development in the area of medical science. Egypt was the centre of medical research in the ancient oriental culture. In the ancient Egypt, almost everybody was a doctor and their knowledge in the field exceeded that of other people. The oldest book in surgery is found in Egypt and points to “strict, systematic medical examinations or investigations, diagnosis, therapy, prescription and prognosis.”²²⁵ Though the level of medical and scientific development in Egypt was higher than the level in Mesopotamia, there still existed here doctors and exorcists-priests, who conjure evil spirits who were

²²² Bühringer, A., *ibid.*

²²³ Müller, Seybold, 21 in *ibid.*, 18.

²²⁴ *ibid.*

²²⁵ Müller, Seybold, 26.

believed to cause sickness. There existed in Egypt in this period as well magical incantations and rites.

The advent of medical science among the covenantal people of God Israel was at the time of the influence of Hellenism in the Jewish world. Just like in the Ancient Near East, in the Hellenistic there existed also a mixture of magical syncretism.²²⁶

Summarily, the situation of the sick person in the Old Testament Israel and its environs is:

- The sick had in ancient Israel no medical treatment.
- There were no doctors and no medical knowledge available.
- There were no medical treatment, no medical practitioners in Israel and as supplement there existed magical practices to effect healing.
- For a sick person, in Israel then, the only possibility was to understand his Sickness religiously and react to his sickness religiously and consequently turn to Yahweh in his helplessness for healing.

Later the role of physicians began to be appreciated with the advent of medical science though with the influence of its oriental neighbours.

3.4.1.2.4. Sickness in the Old Testament Texts

The Pentateuch speaks on one side from collective sickness or suffering like epidemic, famine or plagues. And on the other side speaks about individual sickness such as barrenness, see Gen. 15 and Judges 13.

The aspect of individual sickness is seen in Gen. 32: 23-31 where Jacob wrestled with the angel of the Lord and had his hip wrecked as a result of the fight. Numbers 12:10 speaks of the leprosy of Miriam. The leprosy of Miriam was seen as a punishment from God because she envied the leadership of her Moses brother. Leprosy was considered an abominable disease; it is tantamount as death itself. The severity of this sickness is evident in Aaron's comparison of the sickness with miscarriage in Numbers 12, 10.

The idea of sickness as connected with sin is dominant among the Israelite culture and religion. Numbers 21 tells the story of how the Israelites were beaten by the snake as a

²²⁶ *ibid.*

result of their grumbling against the Lord. Yahweh was not pleased with them and He punished them. Moses pleaded on behalf of the people and Yahweh healed them by asking Moses to place the snake on the stock and whoever is bitten and looks at the snake will be healed. In this narrative we see the many elements or conceptions about sickness come into place. We see also the instance of praying to Yahweh for healing and Moses who acted as a mediator. Here also, the use of antidote in healing is also present, i.e., using the symbol of snake to counteract or diffuse snakebite. Today, this symbol is used as a symbol for pharmacist.

Another instance of sickness connected with sin appears in 1 Sam 6. The passage reports about the sickness the Philistines had to undergo because they captured the Ark of the Covenant – the Holy of Holies. Consider also the case of the sin of David against Uriah, 2 Sam 12-16. The son born to David suffered sickness and dies as a result of the sin of the father. The influence of this communal conception perhaps must have prompted the apostles in the New Testament to pose the question concerning the man born blind. Whose fault was it, they asked. We shall come to this when we treat the New Testament perception of sin and sickness.

Evidence of sickness and healing are also found among the prophets. 2 Kings 4:15f, vs. 33-35 described the healing process where Prophet Elisha raised the son of the Semitic woman from the dead. The healing of Naaman from leprosy in 2 Kings 20 also shows the healing power of the prophets as well as depicting the prophets as instruments used by God in healing his people. The case of Naaman shows the role of ritual in healing; Naaman's three times stepping into the river to effect his healing.

In the chronicles, one already begins to notice the influx and influence of a certain degree of a higher medical knowledge.²²⁷ In 2 Chronicle 16:12 King Asa in his sickness of the feet neither turned to Yahweh nor to his prophets for healing, but rather turned to the medical practitioners. "A disease attacked Asa from head to foot in the thirty-ninth year of his reign; and, what is more, he turned in his sickness, not to Yahweh, but to doctors." (2 Chronicle. 16.12)

A striking instance or case of sickness in the Old Testament is the case of Job as noted earlier. Here, we see God allowing or permitting sickness or suffering as a proof of confidence or trust or as a test of faithfulness, though God was not the direct cause of sick-

²²⁷ Müller, Seybold, 32.

ness rather an external force – the devil in this case (Job. 2:7). We see here also a physical sickness or a physical suffering resulting from an inward spiritual test. Job accepted the sickness and suffering manifested in his physical pains, the death and loss of his children and property, and remained steadfast in his faith in God. In the healing of Job, we see the Old Testament understanding of health as wholeness that point back to the holistic connectivity of the concept we have already seen. Here Yahweh is again portrayed as healer. Job was restored whole and in toto and his physical health was restored and his physical suffering alleviated and the internal suffering healed.

Sickness in the narrative literatures of the Old Testament presents an impression that Yahweh is the God of sickness as well as of healing. He can send sickness and he can heal. Obeying his laws means being spared from sickness (Ex. 15:26).

It was only in the late prophets, the time of the Deutero-Isaiah that prophets refuted the traditional belief that epidemic, for instance, is a punishment from God and that penitence leads to healing.²²⁸

In the Psalms and Wisdom Literatures, we see the deep expressions of affliction with sickness and suffering and the cry for healing. At the same time, we see the thankful expressions to God for savings and healings busting out of the mouth of the healed in the psalms. On this basis then, we see in the psalms “sickness-psalms” where the sick complains of his sickness to God, and “healing-psalms” where he prays for healing. There are also “psalms of thanksgiving” expressing joy and thanks after healing. Consequently, “the man of the Old Testament lives his sickness in the presence of God. It is before God that he laments his illness, and it is from God, the master of life and death, that he implores healing”.²²⁹(cf. Ps 6:3, 38; Is.38). Again, because sickness is seen in the Old Testament as resulting from sin, it then became also a way to conversion, whereby God’s forgiveness initiates the healing (Ps.32; 5, 38; 5, 39:9, 102:20). Most of these Old Testament conceptions flowed into the New Testament.

²²⁸ Müller, Seybold, 51, in Bühringer, 25.

²²⁹ *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1502, Nairobi Kenya, Pauline Publications, 1994,372.

3.4.2 Health and sickness in the New Testament.

The new covenant brought about also a new perception of sickness and its causality. With Jesus the messianic era emerged and so also the holistic health for he came so that they might have life and have it to the fullness. Jesus in the New Testament resisted the retributive connectivity of sin and sickness. We shall have a look at health in the New Testament before treating the conception of sickness in the New Testament (Gospels, Acts and Epistles). We shall consider the issue of sickness and sin as well as sickness as vicarious suffering and finally summarise with the early Christian approach towards sickness.

3.4.2.1 Health in the New Testament

The holistic understanding of health as we have seen in our treatment of the concept of health in the Old Testament is also found in the New Testament. The Old Testament concept of health according to Wilkinson may be summarised as a state of wholeness with 3 basic aspects: ethically; health is a complete obedience to God's law; spiritually; health consists of right relationship with God and physically; health is manifested by strength and long life.²³⁰ This holistic dimension of health is also stressed by Socrates (4th century BC) "for the part can never be well unless the whole is well"; this was a warning against treating only one part of the body.

The understanding of health in the New Testament as well can be seen in the different words used in the New Testament to refer to health. The rare use of the classical Greek word for health (*hugieia*) in the pages of the New Testament resulted also in the rare use of the word in the English versions.²³¹

The many facets of the concept of health in the New Testament is shown in this table below as drawn by Wilkinson, showing the words used to refer to health in the following New Testament passages:

²³⁰ Wilkinson John, *Health and Healing*, 4.

²³¹ *ibid.*, 9.

Reference	Greek Bible	AV Translation	RSV	NEB
Mtt.15.28	iaomai	made whole	healed	restored to health
Lk. 7.10	hugiaino	whole	Well	in good health
Joh. 7.23	hugies	made whole	Made well	giving health
Acts 3.16	holokleria	Perfect soundness	perfect health	completely well
Acts 27.34	soteria	health	strength	life
1 Pet. 2.2	soteria	-	salvation	soul's health
3 Joh. 2	hugiaino	be in health	be in health	enjoy good health

TABLE 1: Words used to refer to health in the NT in different Bible translations²³²

The table above shows that health in the New Testament is thought of in terms of wholeness, well being, soundness, life, strength and salvation. An important element in the New Testament understanding of health is also the word “*eirene*” which the LXX used to translate the Old Testament word for health “shalom” meaning peace. Thus, health in the New Testament is also “shalom” – “*pax*” (peace); and the biblical concept of peace is primarily one of wholeness,²³³ especially in relation to God. Health in New Testament is also conceived as holiness (cf. 1 Thess. 5.23), hence the equation of sickness often with sin. Health is also life (*zōe*) in its highest and fullest sense. Jesus said: “I came that they may have life, and have it in abundance (fullness).” (John 10. 10).

3.4.2.2 Sickness in the New Testament

In the light of the brief introduction above, we now move to a more detailed study of the New Testament conception of sickness in relation to the connection between sickness and sin and the issue of health as wholeness. With the former, in our survey of the concept of sickness in the Old Testament, or the pre-Christian culture, we noticed the strong equation of sickness and sin. It is the experience of the people of Israel that illness is mysteriously linked to sin and evil, and sickness has a prominent place among the punishments threatened by God for the people's unfaithfulness.²³⁴

²³² cf. Wilkinson, J., 21

²³³ *ibid.*, 10.

²³⁴ Instructions on Healing, 5. Cf. also, Deut. 28.21-22.

In the apocalyptic expectations of the final stage of the Old Testament, the people expected the dawn of the messiah, who will come to destroy the powers of evil in a great and final battle (Apoc. 16.14). He will set up a new kingdom where there would be no sickness or death or even weeping and crying. But the great day of the Lord according to Manus does not promise extinction of diseases and sicknesses. Sickness persisted in the New World of the Jews.²³⁵

The understanding of sickness among the Israelites assumed a new dimension with the emergence of Jesus in the history of Israel.²³⁶ The holistic approach to the man afflicted with sickness as well as in effecting his healing, became operational with Jesus. Jesus denied “the crude view that illness is retributive”.²³⁷ But saw sin itself as a sickness that as well needed to be healed. And Jesus the Messiahs is the bringer of health of mind and body as well as salvation from sin. So “while he was concerned to heal the sick in body, he also pays close attention to the spirit and mind of the sufferer”.²³⁸ Jesus saw in sickness an evil from which man suffers, sometimes a consequence of sin, and a sign of the power of Satan over men, as evident in his response to the synagogue officials who objected to his healing on a Sabbath of the woman who was sick for 18 years: “...ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day.” (Luke 13.16)

Jesus saw sickness as an ailment that attacks both body and soul of man and approached each as an integral entity. He saw clearly the influence of the body and the mind upon each other. With Jesus therefore a new conception of sickness and its causality started. While the New Testament distinguishes between natural illness and diabolic possessions, Jesus without making this distinction cast out evil spirits and cured those who are ill (cf. Matthew. 8.1).²³⁹ But these acts of Jesus were signs that the Kingdom of God is already at Work.

The Jews of Jesus’ time also believed in the connection between sin and sickness. Sickness was regarded as punishment from God, if not personal sin, it is ancestral or family. Jesus tried to correct this impression of the retributive equation of sin and sickness in his response to the question about the man born blind: “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or

²³⁵ Obiagwu Marius, Healthcare of the sick among the Igbos of Nigeria, 103-104.

²³⁶ *ibid.*, 97.

²³⁷ Pastoral Care in African Community, 68.

²³⁸ *ibid.*, 8-69.

²³⁹ Ekeh L. Dr., “Healing and Exorcism: Scriptural Viewpoint”, in *Tourch Magazine*, Enugu, 2001, 32.

his parents, for him to be born blind” (John. 9.2). Jesus answered that neither the man nor his parents has sinned. He was born blind so that the work of God might be displayed.

So “Jesus broke through the mechanic dogma of retribution which was wide spread in the Old Testament and in later Judaism”.²⁴⁰ He did not give room to the Old Testament religious problem of sickness which was associated with that of retribution originally conceived in temporal terms (Deut. 28.21), nor did he support the concept of disease as punishment due to sin (Ps. 38, 107). Jesus, not only modified the ancient idea of sickness as coming from sin but he, preached that his own kingdom will do away with every illness and infirmity as part of his triumph over Satan and sin.²⁴¹

The causality of sickness was seen not in personal sin rather in the general situation of man which Christ came to redeem. Pope John Paul II affirms in the Gospel of Life: “It is not that a given illness in a given person is due to a specific sin rather, disease in general is due to the situation of sin in which mankind has existed since the sin of the first man.”²⁴²

There is therefore a tie between sin and physical maladies; not necessarily in a given individual, but in mankind as a whole. Stressing the point further the Javier Lozano, President of the Pontifical Council for Health Care workers writes: “maladies, illnesses, and pains affect man in his full depth – indeed, the source of all evils lies in the complete disorder of the person which is sin”.²⁴³

So while it is true that when suffering, connected with a fault has the consequence of punishment, it is however not true that all suffering is a consequence of a fault and has the nature of a punishment.²⁴⁴ In the case of the paralytic for instance, Evangelist Mark writes: “Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralytic, my child, your sins are forgiven” (Mk.2.5). Jesus in associating healing with forgiveness of sin does not suggest that in particular cases, there could well be a connection between sin and sickness. Rather he points to one of the causations of sickness. He teaches us that un-forgiven sin is one of the sources of unhappiness and many kinds of sickness. Juxtaposing this point to the present day understanding of health Taylor writes:

²⁴⁰ Obiagwu Marius, *Healthcare of the sick among the Igbos of Nigeria*, 106.

²⁴¹ *ibid.*

²⁴² Javier Lozano, Article: in: www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/hlthwork.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁴ *Instructions on Prayers for Healing*, 5.

“It is commonly appreciated today that many people become sick because they nourish grudges and bitterness in their hearts. Preoccupied by resentment of one kind or another, they are unable to establish good healthy relationships and thereby become vulnerable to sickness of a psychosomatic nature such as stress, heart attacks and even cancer”²⁴⁵

3.4.2.2.1 Sickness in the Gospels

The New Testament as we stated earlier distinguishes between natural illness and diabolic possessions. According to Wilkinson, where Jesus confronted people suffering from diseases or demonic possessions, the Gospel basically describes two forms of ailments suffered by the people: physical diseases or sicknesses and demon possessions.²⁴⁶

a. Physical diseases:

Physical diseases recorded in the Gospels could either be an acute disease or a chronic disease.

The acute diseases include:

Fever – Peter’s mother-in-law lay in bed with fever (Mtt 8:14; Mk 1:30; Luke 4:38) or the Nobleman’s son who was recorded as having fever (John 4:52)

Acute anterior poliomyelitis: - The centurion’s servant (Mtt 8:6; Luke: 7.2)

Incised wound: - Malchus’ ear in Luke 22:50.

Unknown fatal diseases: - The Widow’s son at Nain (Luke 7:12); Jarius daughter (Mtt 9:18; Mk 5:23; Luke 8:42); Lazarus was recorded as laying sick with unknown fatal disease (John 11:3, 13).

The chronic diseases include:

Nervous diseases like:

Paralysis of the lower limbs: - The paralytic in (Mtt 9:2; Mk 2:3; Lk 5:18); the impotent man in (Jn 5:5-7).

Paralysis of the hand: - The man with the withered hand (Mtt 12:10; Lk 6:6).

²⁴⁵ Taylor, 74.

²⁴⁶ Cf. Wilkinson J., *Health and Healing: Studies in New Testament Principles and Practice*, 23-27.

Blindness: – The two blind men (Mtt 9:27); the blind man of Bethsaida (Mk 8:22); the man born blind (John 9:1); the blind Bartimaeus (Mtt 20:30; Lk 18:35).

Deafness and defective speech (dumb): - The deaf mute (Mk 7:32).

Lameness/Cripple: - Mtt 2:14; 15:30)

Rheumatic disease of the spine: - The woman with a spirit of infirmity (Lk 13:11).

Chronic heart failure: - The man with dropsy (Lk 14:2).

Gynaecological disease: Fibroid tumours of the uterus: - The woman with the flow of blood (Mtt 9:20; Mk 5:25; Lk 8:43).

Skin disease – Leprosy: - The ten leprosy patients (Lk 17:12); the man full of leprosy (Mtt 8:2; Mk 1:40; Lk 5:12).

b. Demonic Possessions:

The Gospels' descriptions of demonic possessions as an ailment are either with no specific physical manifestations like the case of the Syrophenician girl (Mtt 15:22; Mk 7:25) or with specific physical manifestations such as:

Major epilepsy: - The synagogue demoniac (Mk 1:26; Lk 4:35); the epileptic boy (Mtt 17:15; Mk 9:17-26; Lk 9:39).

Acute mania: - The Gadarene demoniac (Mtt 8:28; Mk 5:2-7; Lk 8:29).

Mutism or an inability to speak: - The dumb demoniac (Mtt 9:32-33).

Mutism accompanied by blindness: - The blind and dumb demoniac (Mtt. 12.22; Lk. 11.14).

In Luke 4:40, we read an instance of Jesus healing people with various illnesses. It is possible that compared with other instances in the gospel where bodily, psychological, psychic and spiritual sicknesses are mentioned, those brought to be healed in Lk 4:40 had such similar illness (Lk 8:43; Mtt 8:6, 14, 9:18, 17:15; Jn 4:46) There are also references of healing caused as a result of sin. Jesus re-socialised those suffering from the sickness of sin. He cured them by forgiving them their sins. An example of such instances is the woman caught in adultery or even Mary Magdalena from whom he cast out seven demons.

3.4.2.2.2. Sickness in the Acts and the Epistles

The book of the Acts of the Apostles recorded three classifications of diseases confronted by the Apostles in the apostolic tradition though without a complete description of the attitude towards sickness and healing. First, there were narrations of physical diseases and demonic possessions²⁴⁷ as in the case of the later of the Philippian slave girl in Acts 16.16.

Second, there are instances of acute diseases such as: Acute blindness – Paul in Acts 9.8; acute fatal head injury – Eutychus in Acts 20.9; acute bacillary dysentery – Father of Publius in Acts 28.8, and the acute fatal disease of unknown nature – Tabitha in Acts 9.37.

Thirdly, there are also some recorded cases of chronic diseases like lameness or locomotors disability – the man at the gate of the Temple in Acts 3.2; and the cripple at Lystria in Acts 14.8. The Acts of the Apostles also recorded a case of paralysis due to neurological disorder – Aeneas in Acts 9.33.

Coming down to the Epistles, there are only a few references to sickness and healing.²⁴⁸ There are references to illness which are left to the natural process of recovery without reference to healing by supernatural means. In contrast to the Gospels and Acts of the Apostles, there are lessened interests in supernatural healing in the Epistles. There are no references in the Epistles “to demon possession and exorcism, and no mention of raising the dead”.²⁴⁹ We read in the Epistles of Church leaders who were sick and nothing was done to heal them.

In the Pauline Epistles, the reference to illness or sickness is understood in his view of the body and physical health. One could say the body (soma), forms the keystone of Paul’s theology.²⁵⁰ Stacey distinguishes not less than five different senses in which the word “soma” is used in Pauline Epistles: There is the body as flesh; the body as the whole man; the body as the principle of redeemable humanity; the body as the means of resurrection and the body of Christ meaning the Church.²⁵¹

²⁴⁷ *ibid.*, 85.

²⁴⁸ *ibid.*, 103.

²⁴⁹ *ibid.*, 104.

²⁵⁰ Robinson, J.A.T., *The Body: A Study in Pauline Theology*. London, SCM Press, 1952, 9, in *ibid.*, 105.

²⁵¹ Stacey W.D., *The Pauline View of Man*. London, Macmillan Press, 1956, 182, in *ibid.*

For Paul, the physical body of man has needs and functions (Rom. 12.20; 1 Corinth. 6.13; 11.21). So judging from “the experience of Paul with his thorn in the flesh and from his mention of the illness of three of his colleagues”, the body for Paul is subject to disease or sickness. In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul speaks of the “thorn in the flesh”: “...to stop me from getting too proud I was given a thorn in the flesh, an angel of Satan to beat me and stop me from getting too proud” (2 Corinth. 12.7). This Pauline thorn in the flesh could be described as a “disease (astheneia) of the flesh”.²⁵² But Paul went on to say he was content with his weaknesses, the insults, hardships, persecutions and agonies for Christ’s sake (2 Corinth. 12.10).

The word “weakness” (astheneia) points to a group word that could also mean powerlessness of various kinds – sickness inclusive. The Greek word astheneia – used 40 times in Paul alone, refer often to a comprehensive understanding of weakness as that which is derived directly from the earthly-bodily existence of mankind and has consequences in various realms.²⁵³

In 1 Tim. 5:23, Paul advises Timothy to take a little wine for the sake of his stomach and his frequent sickness (astheneiai).

In Phil. 2: 25-30, Paul describes Epaphroditus’ illness as nearly proving fatal.

Again he explains in 2 Tim. 4:20 why he left Miletus sick behind. His sickness was perhaps acute but no clue was given about its nature.²⁵⁴

It is therefore interesting that in all these four examples in the Pauline Epistles, no action was taken to counter them. Disease or sickness in the Epistles was allowed to take its natural course. Some present day independent and Pentecostal Churches who refuse to take medical attention against sickness, as we shall see later, often cite these references as the points of argument.

It is however the opposite case in the Epistle of James, where he rather recommends what is to be done (cf. James 5. 7-20). In this passage, James asks, “Is anyone among you suffering?”. Some translations say: Is anyone among you sick? The verb “*kakopatheo*” which means, “to be in trouble, to suffer misfortune” points not only to somatic

²⁵² Wilkinson, John, *Health and Healing*, 134.

²⁵³ Horst Balz, Gerhard Schneider (ed.), *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, Michigan, W. B. Eerdmans Pub., 1999.

²⁵⁴ Willkinson, John, 111.

disorder but also to sickness. Hence sickness in the Epistles could be somatic, psychic, psychological or spiritual.

3.4.2.2.3 Sin and sickness in the New Testament

As we saw in our treatment of sickness in the Old Testament, the idea that sickness and sin are closely connected is present also in the primitive Oriental and Greek thinking. It was believed that personal gods by means of sickness avenge offences. Many Babylonian words for sin also have the sense of “disease” or “infirmity” (*asakka*).²⁵⁵ The Greeks too attribute sickness to the wrath of the deity.

The same is the case in Greek Philosophy, though there is a somewhat different notion/equation of defect (sin) and sickness from the time of Plato. For Plato, sickness is an analogy or figure of the inner corruption which causes failings.²⁵⁶

In the Old Testament as we have seen earlier, there exists also the notion that sin and sickness are closely connected. This thought is worked out in Hosea 5.12ff and Isaiah 1.5. By the dogma of retribution, the sick man in Isaiah 53.4 is stamped as a sinner. Judaism worked out this doctrine of retribution in relation to sickness. In Rabbinic Judaism, a distinction is usually made between sickness and sin but in Hellenistic Judaism, Greek presuppositions probably helped to connect or relate sickness and sin.²⁵⁷ This was the suppositions when Jesus entered the scene and with him his religion.

Christianity assumed the position that sickness was contrary to God’s creative plan for man. It was seen as a result of demonic powers and is grounded in a cosmic catastrophe. The early Christians adopted the view that there is a general penal connection between sin and sickness and that this may also apply in particular cases (cf. Mtt. 12:22ff; Lk. 13:16; Jn 5:14).²⁵⁸

The connection of sickness and sin in the New Testament texts could be read or inferred from the expression “*kakws Exein*” in Mk 2:17: “It is not the healthy who need the doctor, but the sick. I did not come to call the virtuous but sinners”. Mark here equates the

²⁵⁵ Walter Elwell (ed.), *Theological Dictionary of the Bible*. Michigan, Baker Books, 1996

²⁵⁶ *ibid.*

²⁵⁷ *ibid.*

²⁵⁸ *ibid.*

healthy with the virtuous and the sick with sinners though one must say also the usage here is metaphorical.²⁵⁹ However, for believers, sickness is a salutary discipline used by God's fatherly love against sin. "When the Lord does punish us like that, it is to correct us and stop us from being condemned with the world" (1 Corinth. 11:32).

In the case of Paul in 2 Corinthians 2:7ff, the thorn in the flesh was preventive: "...to stop me from getting too proud, I was given a thorn in the flesh..." The same link between human suffering (sickness) and human sin is further developed by St. Paul in Romans 5:12-21: "Sin entered the world through one man and through sin death, and thus death has spread through the whole human race because everyone has sinned.... Again as one man's fall brought condemnation on everyone, so the good act of one man brings everyone life" (Rom. 5.12; 18).

According to Tom Coyle, "the whole sorry state of the human race, with its sickness and death, is to be ascribed to the sin of the first man, Adam; just as our salvation is equally to be ascribed to the 'good act of one man', Jesus Christ, who set us free from the 'law of sin and death' by his death and resurrection".²⁶⁰

The New Testament did not present us with a sick Christ. Though he suffered pain but nowhere in the New Testament was Christ ill. Perhaps since sickness originated from the fall and Christ, the new Adam came to heal and set us free from sin and sickness. Thus, this might be the reason why he was never presented as being sick. However, this is not to say that Christ and sickness are incompatible.

Jesus himself denied the mechanical dogma of retribution – the automatic equation of sickness and sin. To the question of his disciples about the man born blind in Jn 9:3, Jesus answered his disciples: "Neither he nor his parents sinned. He was born blind so that the works of God might be displayed in him". In the case of Lazarus in Jn 11:4, when Jesus was asked to come and heal Lazarus he answered: "This sickness will not end in death, but in God's glory, and through it the son of God will be glorified". (Jn 11:4).

While it is true that sickness or suffering may have meaning as a punishment when it is connected with a fault, it is not true that all sufferings or sicknesses is a consequence of a fault and has a nature of a punishment.²⁶¹ There are however examples of a just man

²⁵⁹ *ibid.*

²⁶⁰ Tom Coyle (ed), *Christian Ministry to the Sick*, (London, Geoffery Chapman), 1986, 53-54.

²⁶¹ Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, *Instructions on Prayers for Healing*, 5ff.

suffering or been inflicted with suffering. It is then in the New Testament that the question of why illness/suffering afflicts the just (vicarious suffering) finds a complete answer.

3.4.2.2.4 Sickness as vicarious suffering

The Greek mythology tells the story of the sick or suffering hero. Famous among them all is the story of Heracles, the divine man tested by suffering. This example of the just suffering was also known in the Old Testament. The story of the just man Job is a proof of this in the Old Testament. The book of Ezekiel and the Deutero-Isaiah gives account of the suffering servant of God: “Thou shall bear the iniquity of the house of Israel and of the house of Judah” (Ezek 3.22-27; 4.4-8). Though the sense in which it is used is symbolical, the idea of substitution is already present.²⁶² It was then in the Trito-Isaiah that the idea of substitutory expiation came to light. According to Albrecht Oepke, the doctrine of retribution posits that “the servant of God was marked off by God as a sinner beyond all others. But the sin was that of his people laid on him”²⁶³.

Later in the Post Christian era, Judaism related this Trito-Isaiah (Is 53) – the suffering Servant of God to the Messiahs, reinterpreting the sicknesses and making the substitution a vicarious intercession. However, this idea of the suffering servant of God vicariously bearing sickness was no constituent part or element of Judaism in the New Testament time. The early Christian teaching and Jesus himself referred the suffering servant of God in Is 53 to Christ (cf. Acts 8:32; 1 Pet. 2:22, 24). For the Church, it is rather a sign of the Hellenisation of Christianity.

The New Testament contains no record of Christ reported as been ill or sick, Christ was the Lamb of God who bore our iniquities, one with us in all things but sin. It would have been natural, if alongside the ugly Christ, there had also been a sick Christ.²⁶⁴ According to Oepke, “The fact that Jesus was never ill raises no difficulty, because the

²⁶² Oepke, Albrecht, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 96-97.

²⁶³ *ibid.*

²⁶⁴ *ibid.*, 71.

divinely smitten servant of God was found in the crucified, the more so in view of the reference to violent death in the original”²⁶⁵

In the case of the thorn in the flesh in Paul (2 Corinth. 12.7), suffering or sickness was literally understood as a vocational burden. This sickness is connected with his apostolic calling. And there is no hint of vicariousness here. According to Paul, by “these sufferings in his own flesh, he fills up what is still lacking of the sufferings of Christ” (2 Corinth. 1:5; Col 1:24).

3.5 AFRICAN – IGBO CONCEPT OF SICKNESS

So far, we have seen the general concept of sickness along with the concept of illness and disease as is perceived in the Old and New Testaments respectively. We have also ex-rayed the Christo-theological view of sickness. At this point, we need to see how the scriptural understanding of sickness is equally evident in the Igbo-African understanding and concept of sickness. It is very true, as in the view of Barbara Kuhn that sickness, disease, their origins and influence on human beings are seen differently in different cultures and epochs (and as our survey has shown).²⁶⁶ However, considering the different terms used to describe sickness and the religious, social cultural interpretation and assessment of sickness, we can already admit that while there are some ideological similarity between the scriptural understanding and the Igbo-African understanding and concept of sickness as this work will try to demonstrate, there are also ideological assessment of sickness unique to the African concept of sickness.

We have in the above deliberations seen the foundations of the Christian conception of sickness namely the scriptural understanding of sickness. With that in mind let us now explore the Igbo African conception of sickness and suffering.

²⁶⁵ *ibid.*, 97.

²⁶⁶ Barbara Kuhn, „Unterschiede im Krankheitsverständnis und Transkulturelle Pflege“, in *Zeitschrift für Medizinische Ethik* 46, 2000, 199.

3.5.1 Sickness and suffering in the Igbo Worldview

As we discussed in the Igbo anthropology in 2.2.1 above, the Igbo people cherish life and regard life and health as highest good. To live is to be healthy. To be healthy means to have life in abundance – “inwe ndu”, hence they say of somebody “onwere ndu n’ime ya” – he or she has life in him, meaning he or she is healthy. As already discussed above, many things are expressed in terms of this life. The concept of enjoyment is expressed in terms of life as “ira ndu” – to enjoy life. The body thus becomes the medium of expression of the state of this life.

So as a result of this pivotal role of life in human existence in the Igbo society, whatever militates against or tends to diminish this life is not taken lightly. And sickness as well as suffering, be it physical, psychological or economic suffering, are seen as things that militate or diminish this life. Sickness and disease is seen as “a diminution of that life, a threat posed to life”²⁶⁷.

3.5.1.1 The concept of suffering in the Igbo society

Suffering expresses the dilapidated state of man or of life be it physical, social, economic, psychological, moral or spiritual. This sense of dilapidation is expressed in the Igbo word for suffering – “ita ahuhu” meaning to suffer. Etymologically, the word “ahuhu” is the Igbo word for suffering but the same word “ahuhu” is also the Igbo word for ant. So that a literal translation of the Igbo word for suffering “ita ahuhu” will mean then “to eat ants”. This goes to express the sense of dilapidation and diminution of life, suffering and sickness has in the Igbo society. So that when man – “mma- ndu” – the beauty of life goes down literally as to “eat ants” – “ita ahuhu”, shows then this element of dilapidation and diminution.

More often, suffering is used in the Igbo society in terms of economic dilapidation in the sense of poverty – “Ogbenye”, and a life of poverty is termed “uwa ahuhu” –

²⁶⁷ Onyenemegam J. O., *Pastoral Care of the Sick in Igbo Community-Nigeria*, Rome, Lateran University, 1985, 28.

life/world of suffering. This life of suffering “uwa ahuhu” can then cause other forms of suffering both psychological and physical suffering.

Suffering can also be social in terms of discrimination, segregation, disregard or even rejection by the community or family. One suffers spiritually when tormented by the evil spirits – spiritual attacks. These sufferings can weigh down on the psyche resulting in psychological suffering or mental disorders or suffering. One tries at times to make the distinction when one says, “he is suffering from poverty” or “he is suffering from disease”. Sickness therefore with its accompanying pain, is part of suffering.

3.5.1.2 The concept of sickness in the Igbo Worldview

The Igbo worldview influences also their conception of sickness. As discussed in chapter two in the treatment of man in Igbo Anthropology, we did see that for the Igbo people, the body – “ahu” is the visible expression of the state of man.

The term sickness in Igbo language is expressed in relation to the state of the body. Sickness means “ahu onwunwu” – “dying of the body” in Igbo language. So sickness is almost equip rated with death and in the same sense is healing as we shall see later according to Onyemenagam “second to giving of life”.²⁶⁸

Wounds or cuts whether light or life threatening are expressed in relation to the body as “imeru ahu” – “injuring the body”. In actual sense, the literal translation of “imeru ahu” means, “defiling the body”. Sickness is then a “diminution of life”.²⁶⁹

Without intending to initiate any juxtaposition of concepts or ideas, one can say, from the standpoint of conception that the Igbo language also tries to differentiate between the concepts sickness, illness and disease.

Distinctively, the word “oyi” may be used to express cold, fever, and other “minor complaints like stomach upsets, headaches, cuts and skin ulcers”. In this sense, one says in Igbo language, “oyi na ama ya” or “oyi di ya” meaning he is sick or ill.

On the other hand, the Igbo expression or word “oria” – disease, is used specifically to express an unhealthy state. When the Igbo people say about somebody “o bu oria”, it

²⁶⁸ ibid.

²⁶⁹ ibid. .

means “he is carrying a disease.” Also the expression “ona aria oria” meaning also “he is sick” may imply on one hand, that the person is just sick with minor complaints or that he has a disease, whereby the later often implies.

Sickness whether as illness or as an unhealthy state, poses a lot of problems for the Igbo person. Sickness is “multidimensional and affects man in different ways”.²⁷⁰ It is not just the malfunctioning of an organ of the body but may be seen or conceived as a disruption or an evil opposed to life and health.²⁷¹

Like in the Old Testament, sickness is also connected with sin among the Igbo people and is consequently seen as a punishment for a transgression of the moral norms “nso ala” or traditions of the land “omenala”. Obiagwu notes:

“In Igbo society, when one is sick, the first thing he does is to examine his conscience to know whether he has done anything evil. He also tries to find out whether he has done all he is supposed to do such as offering sacrifice to his ‘chi’ (personal God) or to his ancestors”²⁷².

In the Igbo society, nothing happens by chance. Sicknesses have a cause. Let us examine some of the causes and agents of sickness in the Igbo society.

3.5.2 Causes of sickness in the Igbo traditional society

The Igbo people think a lot about diseases and suffering and regard them as hostile influences and agencies which beset man from cradle to the grave. Consequently, they develop a sort of pathology through which their attitudes towards suffering and their treatment of diseases can be discerned. They think that sufferings are a concatenation of several factors – natural, supernatural or spiritual or mystical. For the purpose of clarification, and in the broad sense, there are three causes of disease and suffering recognized by the Igbo²⁷³ - the natural causation, the supernatural – spiritual or mystical causation.

²⁷⁰ Ugwu Moses, *Healing in the Nigerian Church*, 60.

²⁷¹ *ibid.*

²⁷² Obiagwu Marius, *Igbo Traditional Healthcare and the Healing Ministry*, 57.

²⁷³ Dopumu A., “Health and Healing within the Traditional African Religious Context”, in *ORITA*, XVII/2, (Dec. 1985), 69.

3.5.2.1 Natural or physical causation

First we have natural or physical causation. The Igbo recognize the fleeting nature of minor illnesses and sufferings, and such illnesses are known to have fallen solely within the range of physical and natural plane of reality and understanding. They include cough, colds, slight fever, convulsion and sexually transmitted diseases. Illnesses with natural or physical causations are considered as “normal” illnesses and the natural causes could be “the disease states of the organism, hereditary factors, personal tragedies or disasters with which an individual is unable to cope (with) etc.”²⁷⁴ Asked to what they attribute their sickness when they are sick, the majority of the interviewed in the course of our research stated that they attribute their sickness to normal biological malfunction, which means to a disease state of an organism. It remains however a fact that many attributed theirs to preternatural forces.

A sickness is for the Igbo people “normal or “abnormal” depending on the degree of response to treatment. Normal sicknesses respond to treatment without problems.²⁷⁵ Also “normal sicknesses with natural causation whose cause or pathology is unknown to the people are termed “abnormal” or mystical. This was the case in the traditional Igbo society in the past of many of the sicknesses that were simply termed abnormal and the sufferers were abandoned, for instance, sicknesses like swollen stomach, sickle cell anaemia etc.

The Igbo people recognise also other sources or natural causations of sickness such as “poisoning, insatiable quest for wealth and power, bad eating habits and exposition to bad weather”²⁷⁶.

Metuh in one of his works mentioned other natural causations that can cause health hazards when he writes: “Causes of illness in African community may also include lack of respect for elders, adultery with a neighbour’s wife, incest, quarrels, jealousy, and culturally unacceptable marriages. These occasionally bring health hazards for the viola-

²⁷⁴ Nzewi E., *Transcultural Factors in the Diagnosis and Treatment of Psychopathology*, in Ugwu Moses, *Healing in the Nigerian Church*, 61.

²⁷⁵ *ibid.*

²⁷⁶ Obiagwu Marius, 63.

tors.”²⁷⁷ In which case, sickness becomes the result of an action or the punishment for a misdeed.

3.5.2.2 The supernatural causation

Apart from natural causations, sufferings and sickness can be attributed to supernatural or preternatural causation. Natural sicknesses like malaria or headache for instance which is believed to have a known medication that heals them, but when these sicknesses defy all medications, then something must be behind it. The Igbo attribute it to a supernatural power, which must be sort out and appeased.

In the traditional Igbo world, physical nature is not dead but is throbbing with life since it could be the temporary or even permanent abode of spirits. The forests become alive with sinister forces and powers of darkness²⁷⁸ that in turn influence the order of activities or lives of people by causing misfortune or sickness. Metuh notes:

“Among some African people misfortune may be interpreted as the work of the evil spirits, witches, or sorcerers but they may also be attributed to the evil eye, broken taboos, perjured oaths or even to the Supreme being, the deities or ancestors.”²⁷⁹

3.5.2.2.1 The Supreme Being as cause of sickness: Sickness as a corrective measure

Generally, the Igbo society does not attribute the manifestation of evil such as sickness, barrenness, death and failure in business to God but to malicious human and spiritual agents.²⁸⁰ They however, do believe at times just like in the Old Testament conception that Chukwu – the Great God may be the cause of a sickness or may allow a person to be inflicted with sickness. According to Obiagwu:

²⁷⁷ Metuh E. I. and Ojoade O., *Nigeran Cultural Heritage*, (Onitsha, Imico press, 1990), 236.

²⁷⁸ Ekechukwu, A., “The Problem of Suffering in Igbo Traditional Religion”, in *AFER*, 24, 2, (April, 1982), 88.

²⁷⁹ Metuh E.I., *Comparative Studies of African Traditional Religions*, (Imico Press, Jos, 1987), 150.

²⁸⁰ Mbiti J., 38. Cf. Ugwu Moses, 65.

“Chukwu, who is believed to be fundamentally good, may allow man to be inflicted by some physical evils such as illness. But when God allows man to be sick, it is believed to be for the good of the individual and the community at large or for the welfare of the individual as a sign of purge or punishment. When God punishes, the Igbo does not pretend to know the reason in all cases. But he believes that the attitude is just like that of a father to a son, meant not to destroy but to save.”²⁸¹

3.5.2.2.2 The Deities and Ancestral Spirits as causes of sickness

The ancestors, as discussed in the religious worldview of the Igbo society, are custodians of their families. Families pray to their ancestral spirits to protect them from misfortune, sickness and from enemy influences. Some people even place their properties under the protection of some deities. So generally the ancestral spirits and the deities as well are not seen as being evil or malicious. They are rather the law enforcement agents of the great God – Chukwu. They are the custodians of omenala - the moral code of conduct. The ancestral spirits and the deities especially the earth goddess – ala, therefore play an important role in the maintenance of moral and social order. They help in guarding and enforcing the social values and moral norms of the society embedded in the omenala.²⁸²

Nzewi described the sense in which ancestral spirits and deities are seen as causes of sickness thus: “There is a strong belief in many cultures (the Igbo society included) in retributive justice and there is a host of culturally instituted procedures of punishing the guilty or exonerating the innocent.”²⁸³

It is in this sense of retributive justice that the ancestral spirits and deities are seen as causes of sickness. Some sicknesses are therefore believed to be “punishments inflicted to either an individual or a community for some infringement on the omenala”.²⁸⁴ Whoever violates “nso ala” or commits what ala abhors (ihe ala so nso), must expect the

²⁸¹ Obiagwu M. C., 59.

²⁸² Ugwu Moses, 67.

²⁸³ Nzewi E., „Transcendental Factors in the Diagnosis and Treatment of Psychopathology”, in K. Peltzer und P.O. Ebigbo (eds.), *Clinical Psychology in Africa*, 228.

²⁸⁴ Ugwu Moses, 67.

punishment for his action either from the society or from the spirits. The punishment of the deities or ancestral spirits may be in the form of misfortunes or ill health. In this sense misfortune such as barrenness, miscarriages or ill-health like physical and mental illnesses are often believed to have being caused among others by an angered ancestral spirit or a deity. We must as well note that the malicious evil spirit could also be the cause of these misfortunes. The diviners must then have to find out which spirit is at work or have been offended. Such sicknesses at times do not respond to treatment until the angered spirit is appeased.

Furthermore, if a family member commits atrocities such as theft or incest, and gets sick, he is believed to have being visited by the wrath of the spirits. The sickness is seen as punishment for the sins committed. In the same vein most people suffering from mental illness are believed to have committed some offences probably unknown to the society.²⁸⁵

In the Igbo traditional society people at times use charms to place their properties under the protection of one deity or the other so that whoever steals or dispossesses them of the property will be struck by the anger of the deity. Even in the case of land dispute, the parties are called to swear an oath at shrine of a deity most often at the shrine of “amadioha” – the god of thunder, who is regarded among the Igbo as the god of Justice. It is believed that “amadioha” will strike the dispossessor (the guilty) or if one of the parties gets sick, it is believed that “amadioha” has struck him with sickness as punishment for claiming what does not belong to him. The ancestral spirits and the deities, in effecting this retributive justice are not seen as being evil but effecting law and order in the society. There are however spirits in the traditional Igbo society that are believed to be in themselves evil and set out only to accomplish evil in the lives of the people.

3.5.2.3 Malevolent-mystical causations

For the purpose of clarity and distinction, this work will distinguish the malevolent mystical causations of sickness in the Igbo society from the supernatural causations, though the mystical is also preternatural.

²⁸⁵ *ibid.*, 68.

Most often, people believe that sicknesses are caused by malicious evil spirits or human enemies who employ the machination of these evil spirits to harm them or hamper their progress. This belief is common in the African society. Among the Igbo people as well, it is a general belief that some people can manipulate or employ malicious spiritual forces or some people are believed to have psychic or mystical powers which enable them to attack others physically or spiritually,²⁸⁶ either through magic, witchcraft or sorcery (ogwu).

3.5.2.3.1 Malicious-evil spirits as mystical causations

The Igbo world is a swarm of spirits and is alive with sinister forces and power of darkness²⁸⁷ that inflicts harm and sickness on the living. As noted earlier, the Igbo religious worldview categorizes the spirits into created spirits and the spirits of the dead. Among these, there are the good and the bad spirits. There are among the created spirits, also bad or spiteful spirits and among the spirits of the dead, there are also bad spirits that wreck havoc among the living. The spirits of wicked human beings are among such spirits. In Igbo culture, as was remarked earlier, wicked human beings are not buried with honours. In the traditional burial rites, their dead bodies were normally thrown into the evil forest and as such, they do not received into the cult of the ancestral spirits. They are believed to roam around in the world causing harm or sickness, in order to draw attention to their plight. Also some wicked-malevolent spirits like the “wandering spirits of those who died without children or wealth and consequently received no funeral rites”²⁸⁸ may cause harm. These spirits – “*akalogeli*” – as they are called in some parts of Igbo land, wander restlessly because they are unable to reach the spirit-land. Alongside the “*akalogeli*”, it is also believed that the spirits of those who died young “*ogbonüke*” are among the mystical causations of sickness. These spirits are frustrated because they were not able to realise their aim or destiny in life²⁸⁹ and so turn out to wreck havoc in the lives of the living most often their age-grade members causing ill luck and misfortune in business or health. V. Ifeanyi summarised the influence of these frustrated spirits thus:

²⁸⁶ *ibid.*, 63.

²⁸⁷ Dopamu, Adelumo, in *ORITA*, XVII/2, (Dec. 1985), 69

²⁸⁸ Ugwu Moses, 65.

²⁸⁹ *ibid.*

“Nigerians (Igbo included) traditionally believe that when a person dies, befitting funeral ceremonies must be performed for him to enable him have easy and quick access to the land of the dead. Failure to do this would make life unpleasant for his relations on earth with various forms of afflictions which very often include sickness.”²⁹⁰

Another group of malevolent spirits that can cause ill-health or harm are some group-spirits like the spirit phenomenon the Igbo call “Ogbanje-spirits” and the water spirits – “muo miri”.

3.5.2.3.1.1 THE “OGBANJE-SPIRITS” AS MYSTICAL CAUSATION

“Ogbanje”, also called “repeaters” among the Igbo people are, according to Ugwu, “believed to be a group of spirits of children who organise themselves in groups (ndi otu) in the spirit world, and decide to be born into various homes only to die young, normally before reaching puberty.”²⁹¹ Besides the spirits of children, “ogbanje” could be a group of spirits of young people of not more than thirty years. Each group binds its members not to live longer than their age limits.²⁹²

There are however, many opinions as to what “ogbanje” actually is. Some describe “ogbanje” as “a confraternity of spirits, who visit the world in incarnate form for a short period, the length of each being predetermined. The spirits are born into babies who will die in infancy or boyhood.”²⁹³ Others describe “ogbanje” as “a case of repeated infantile deaths in a family.”²⁹⁴

Metuh described the aims of these repeater spirits of Ogbanje as “to torment parents with pangs of constant births and deaths of their children, and to leave them childless and frustrated at the end of their child-bearing age.”²⁹⁵

The victims of the Ogbanje spirit are often given to protracted illness. Most often, the sickness or suffering attributed to Ogbanje is such that influences the personality and behaviour of the victims. In the case of young girls who cannot get married, it is said to

²⁹⁰ Ifeanyi V., *The Catholic Church and the Challenges of the Traditional System of Health Care in Nigeria: A Moral Study on the Light of a Holistic Understanding of Health Care*, (Rome, 1989), 56.

²⁹¹ Ugwu Moses, 65.

²⁹² Metuh E.I., *Comparative Studies of African Traditional Religion*, 156, in Obiagwu Marius, 61.

²⁹³ Lucas J.O., *Religion in West Africa and Ancient Egypt*, (Lagos, 1970), 168, in Obiagwu Marius, 61.

²⁹⁴ Iwu M., *African Ethnomedicine*, (Enugu, Snaap Press, 1986), 29, in Obiagwu Marius, 62.

²⁹⁵ Metuh E.I., *Comparative Studies of African Traditional Religion*, 156.

be the result of the attacks of the Ogbanje spirits. They are believed to have bound themselves (married) in the spirit group and so cannot bind themselves again. In the Igbo society, it is regarded as one of the most devilish agents of people's misfortunes. Many attribute their sickness or misfortune to these spirits often young unmarried ladies. Ifeanyi described two ways in which sickness can arise on account of Ogbanje:

"In the first place, an Ogbanje person can be regularly sick following a way of life he/she adopted to lead while on earth.. The second manner in which sickness can arise out of Ogbanje is by a punishment inflicted on an individual member of Ogbanje for contravening the principles of his group."²⁹⁶

Though the reality of the ogbanje phenomenon has remained for many in the Igbo society even till today undeniable, yet the exact explanation of the phenomenon has remained blurred and confused. While some do not actually believe in the Ogbanje syndrome, many consider it a superstitious belief or as a "mystical explanation of the sickle cell anaemia, which have claimed lives of many infants repeatedly in many families in the past due to ignorance of the people on medical and health care matters."²⁹⁷ Achebe considers the equation of ogbanje phenomenon with the sickle cell anaemia as the strongest possible interpretation offered to date.

Achebe and Ebigbo on their parts, tried to develop models of explanation of the "ogbanje" phenomenon²⁹⁸. Achebe tried to describe the "ogbanje" phenomenon in relation to the "chi" symbolism. According to Achebe's explanation:

"..every normal individual born owes allegiance to his 'Chi', a creative force, who is God's representative on earth and co-operates with each individual to work out his life's possibilities and attributes. But 'Chi' fulfils this function partially since there are other forces that intrude in man's life, some of which are evil and must be placated. Some of these forces or beings are 'Nne mmili' and 'Onabuluwa' who constitute the major forms of Ogbanje. They lure the individual to break the covenant with chi by offering them some rewards such as excessive beauty, wealth, political powers and success in business to mention but a few. And those who break this loyalty are normally the Ogbanjes. And having upset the ordered balance and broken the faith with their Chi, they are exposed

²⁹⁶ Ifeanyi V., 58, in Ugwu M., 67.

²⁹⁷ Obiagwu Marius, 62.

²⁹⁸ Cf. Ugwu Moses, 160f.

to different sorts of afflictions and harassment since their relation with their Chi is weakened and they are left at the mercy of the deities.”²⁹⁹

Ebigbo and his co-researchers approached the problem from the psychological point of view and came to the conclusion that:

“Ogbanje phenomenon is an acquired behaviour brought about by the suggestive influence of the environment. The belief system and some personality characteristics of the concerned are the important factors that contribute to the acquisition of the Ogbanje behaviour. What the environment (mostly the parents and relatives) sees as abnormal behaviours of their child are both symptoms of some underlying problems”³⁰⁰.

They therefore dismissed the ogbanje phenomenon as “an anachronism that is too primitive to exist in the twentieth century”³⁰¹. It is however not our aim here to pursue a scientific or even psychological interpretation of the ogbanje phenomenon but to posit the phenomenon as a mystical causation of sickness in the Igbo traditional society.

3.5.2.3.1.2 WATER SPIRITS – MERMAIDS (“MUO MMIRI”) AS MYSTICAL CAUSES OF SICKNESS

The water spirits or mermaids belong to the malevolent mystic forces that the Igbo people believe causes sicknesses. No matter how fabulous or feeble it may sound, the people believe in it and it influences their thought system. According to Ifeanyi:

“Many Igbos, for instance strongly believe that there is a special group of spirits who have their abode in oceans, seas, rivers and streams. They are often called Mamiwata (Mammy Water or Mermaid) or Muo Mmiri (water spirit). These are believed to cause sickness in various ways.”³⁰²

The water spirit is believed to be a female deity, existing in groups and is often associated with wickedness. They are believed to be the guardian spirits of streams and rivers.

²⁹⁹ Obiagwu M., 61. Cf. Achebe Chinwe, *The Ogbanje Phenomenon*, in Manus Chris U. and co (eds.), “Healing and Exorcism”, 29-31.

³⁰⁰ Ugwu Moses, 178. .

³⁰¹ *ibid.*

³⁰² Ifeanyi V., 55.

She is said to inhabit the beds of the river and streams and hence called Mammy water or queen of the sea.

The Muo mmiri is often depicted as a beautiful woman and mostly young girls are believed to be prawn to the attacks of this evil spirit, who then uses them to wreck havoc on people.³⁰³ In this case, their agents, it is believed, are made to enter into agreement, friendship, marriage or partnership with the mermaids – queen of the sea and are therefore bound to abide by the terms of the agreement. Failure to abide by the terms of the agreement results often in the affliction of different forms of sickness. They can, through their agents, inflict on an individual “a strange unknown sickness”, and many at times out of mere sadism. They inflict sickness on people who refuse to agree to their request for friendship or marriage with them. Like the Ogbanje spirits, the water spirits are believed to cause sickness as punishment on people who entered into friendship, marriage or any form of partnership with them but failed to abide by the terms of the agreement. Generally many sicknesses or misfortune that people suffer in traditional Igbo society are considerably attributed to the attacks of the water spirits.

3.5.2.3.2 Mystical causations through human agency

In the traditional Igbo world, physical nature is not dead but is throbbing with life since it could be the temporary or even permanent abode of spirits. The Igbo people believe that human beings could manipulate these spiritual forces for different purposes – for good or for bad. In the bad intent, human beings could employ certain mystical forces inherent in nature to harm other people by causing suffering or sickness. This they can achieve through the use of magic, sorcery (ogwu) and witchcraft.

³⁰³ Obiagwu Moses, 60.

3.5.2.3.2.1 “OGWU” – SORCERY, MAGIC, CHARMS

The Igbo word “ogwu” is used for medicine, magic, sorcery, charms or talisman. Ogwu could be used in a positive or negative sense. It could be used positively for healing or protection and be used negatively for destructive purposes.³⁰⁴

In the positive sense, the drugs given to the sick to heal him of his ailment is called ogwu, so also the concoctions the diviners prepares to cure a sickness is called also ogwu. To protect themselves or their property, the Igbo man asks a medicine man (di-bia) to prepare charms “ogwu” for him. It is believed that this charm will wade off impending enemy attack. A mentality that was later transferred to the use of sacramental by some Igbo Christians.

It is the belief among the Igbo people that “sickness can be inflicted on an individual by another by means of charms and magic”.³⁰⁵ Ogwu – sorcery in this sense stands according to J. S. Mbiti for “..anti-social employment of mystical power”³⁰⁶.

Perpetrators of this evil are wicked people who act out of envy or hatred employing all sorts of ways to harm other people or their belongings. They are hated and feared in the community. Mbiti described the mode of operations of the sorcerers thus:

“..they send flies, snakes, lions or other animals to attack their enemies or carry disease to them; they spit and direct the spittle with secret incantations to go and harm someone; they dig up graves to remove human flesh or bones which they use in their practices; they invoke spirits to attack or posses someone”³⁰⁷.

Consequently, the Igbo people just like many other African cultures attribute the various ills, misfortunes, sickness, accidents, tragedies, sorrows, dangers and unhappy mysteries which they encounter or experience to the various mystical or occult powers employed by the sorcerers, witches or wizards.³⁰⁸ It is also believed that such evil people can worsen the conditions of hitherto natural diseases. Difficult labour and chronic mental illness are often believed to be caused by sorcerers and witches.

³⁰⁴ Ugwu Moses, 62. Cf. also Metuh E.I., *God and Man in African Religion*, 97.

³⁰⁵ Ifeanyi V., 61.

³⁰⁶ Mbiti J. S., *African Religion and Philosophy*, 195.

³⁰⁷ *ibid.*

³⁰⁸ *ibid.*

3.5.2.3.2.2 WITCHES AND WIZARDS - "AMOSU"

Witches are said to be human beings, usually operating outside their human bodies as Mbiti will describe:

"Anthropologists and sociologists use the term witchcraft to apply to people mainly women with an inherent power by means of which they can abandon their bodies at night and go to meet with similar people (other witches) or to 'suck' or 'eat away' the life of their victims."³⁰⁹

Witchcraft is widely believed to be one of the mystical causations of sickness in the Igbo Society. In the traditional Igbo society even till today, witches are widely feared. This is evident in our research for this work. Many Christians interviewed still listed witchcraft as one of the things to which they attribute their sickness today.

Graphic:

Witchcraft, unlike "ogwu" which could be positively or negatively used, can only be negatively used. In witchcraft, "amosu" as it is called in Igbo language, evil people manipulate the spiritual forces to harm others and destroy things and persons. Misfortunes, like bad harvest, ill luck in business, barrenness and accidents are often blamed on witches and wizards.³¹⁰

Witches are believed to transform themselves into insects, bird or even animals, in order to carry out malicious intents. Insects like locust, birds like bats "Usuu" or Owl "ik-wikwi" and animals like rats or cats can be mediums of transport for the witches. Witches are believed to operate in the night. As a result of that, an Igbo person seeing any of these mediums of witchcraft in his house in the night unexpected and uncalled for, becomes afraid suspecting that it could be witches.

Often people try to kill or maim these creatures when they are seen in the house in the night because it is believed among the Igbo people that "if any of the birds or animals, which they (witches) incarnate into, is killed while on course, the real body of the witch which may be sleeping in her hut will die at the same time."³¹¹

³⁰⁹ Mbiti J. S., 202. .

³¹⁰ Obiagwu Marius, 64-65.

³¹¹ *ibid.*

Victims of witchcraft are generally attacked while they are asleep, only to wake up and fall ill suddenly as a result of the witchcraft. Even today, when an Igbo person wakes up in the morning and sees scratches or wounds on his or her body, the cause of which he cannot explain, he becomes afraid suspecting that he might have been witch hunted by his enemies or witches and wizards.

It must however be noted that the Igbo people do not attribute cause arbitrarily. It is the circumstances surrounding an incident that influence how they interpret it. For them, just like many other African cultures, “nothing harmful happens by chance: everything (harmful) is caused by someone directly or through the use of mystical power.”³¹² In this case, it is for a traditional Igbo person, something else behind it, when malaria, which is generally known to be a curable sickness and has a known medication for it, in a particular instance, defies all treatment. This must not be scientific but they are realities for most Africans.³¹³

3.5.3 Agents of Sickness

As noted above, the Igbo traditional society like in many other African cultures, believe strongly that nothing happens on its own by chance; rather everything is caused by someone or something directly or through the use of mystical powers.

The Igbo people believe also that sickness is caused through the agency of some entities. And these agents of sickness could be physical or spiritual entity.

The physical entities which can serve as agents of sickness include the human agents. Human beings can harm others or cause physical injuries due to envy or wickedness. Human agents can also use mystical forces to cause sickness like in the cases of magic, sorcery and witchcraft. Also in the case of witchcraft, birds and animals that serve as its medium can also be considered as physical entities or agents of sickness. Also some disease communicating insects or parasites like mosquitoes are also physical agents of sickness.

³¹² Mbiti J. S., 195.

³¹³ *ibid.* Cf. also Ugwu Moses, 64.

The supernatural entities are the invisible agents of sickness. Here, the deities, ancestral spirits and the evil and malicious spirits like ogbanje and muo mmiri can be seen as supernatural agents of sickness. The mystical forces like the sorcery or witches and wizards can be considered preternatural agents using the agency of physical entities as medium.

We have treated both the physical and the supernatural entities in detail in our exposition of the causes of sickness in the traditional Igbo society. We have seen the concept and understanding of health and sickness. We have also seen that sickness is a deficit in being, a diminution of life, a state of unhealthy. Let us now see how this health is restored and sickness healed.

CHAPTER FOUR: HEALING

4.0 INTRODUCTION

The word ‘healing’ can be understood from the medical, intellectual, psychological, psychiatric and spiritual perspectives. The term is a difficult term to handle. M. Buckley writing about the advice of a friend affirmed this by quoting the friend as saying: “Write about prayer, theology, anything you like, but for God’s sake, don’t write about healing, that’s a real mine field. So the word itself, even before you can explain what you mean, it generates all sorts of highly emotional and irrational reactions among Christians”³¹⁴

But no matter how volatile the topic is, we have to discuss or talk about it because it is part of our existence and we all experience healing at one point or the other. Moreover, healing is one of the duties Christ commissioned his disciples to carry out. Throughout church History the idea that God heals both via natural (Medicine, human skills) and supernatural means (the power of the Holy Spirit in connection with prayer, laying on of hands, anointing with oil) has always been present.

Our conception of healing in this work is not going to be the mere physical healing – regeneration – of damaged tissues or organs in the body, neither is it going to be the mere faith healing. Our conception of healing shall be the holistic conception of healing. In this holistic conception, healing shall be understood from the medical, intellectual, psychological, psychic, biblical and spiritual perspectives.

In this chapter, we intend to explore the phenomenology of healing, examining the understanding of healing in the medicine. We shall explore the basis of the church’s teaching on healing by treating healing in the scriptures emphasizing the healing ministry of Jesus and the early church as basis for healing in the church and theology. Finally we shall explore the concept of healing among the Igbo.

³¹⁴ Burkley M., *His Healing Touch: Freedom through good relationship*, (London, Harper, Collins, 1987), VI, in Obiagwu Marius, *Healthcare of the sick among the Igbos of Nigeria*, 94.

4.1 THE PHENOMOLOGY OF HEALING

Etymologically the word healing is most frequently expressed by two Greek words “*ioamei*” and “*therapeu*”. The word healing stems from the Hebrew word “*ioamei*” which means “to cure”, “to make whole”. A later development saw the word healing translated with the Greek word “*therapeuo*” meaning “to cure medically”³¹⁵. In the profane Greek, “*therapeuo*” was originally used to mean ‘serve’ or to be in the service of a superior or of cultic service or to care for somebody (e.g. as a doctor).

The Latin language expresses the word healing with the concepts: “*sanatio*” (healing, curing), salvation (to be well, be in good health), restitution *ad integrum* (repair, restore, put back approximately to original state). This classical conception of healing like the Greek *therapeuo* (service, healing) and the Latin *curatio* (healing, curing, medical attention), *sanatio*, *salvatio*, *restitution ad integrum* still flow into the modern conception of healing³¹⁶. The modern conception of healing embraces both the bodily, spiritual, psychic-psychological and social aspects of man. It is a holistic conception that considers man in his bodily, spiritual, psychological and social contexts.

Healing according to dictionary definition is an act of making well; it means to cure, to become sound. According to the Oxford advanced learners dictionary, healing means “to become or make something healthy again, to restore somebody to health or cure somebody of a disease.”³¹⁷ It is a process of making whole again what has been wounded, what has become sick or made deficit. It is the process of restoring the bodily and spiritual integrity from suffering or sickness. It is also the recovering from a wound or a hurt. There is however an etymological difference between recovery and healing. While recovering from sickness (Greek *Neomai*) has originally to do with “escape from a danger of sickness, healing has to do with becoming whole again”³¹⁸. Hence the emphasis on healing must be on this wholeness – making whole again.

³¹⁵ Cf. Nnaemene, „Healing & Exorcism: Implications & Realities“, in *Tourch Magazine*, Dec. 2000, 5.

³¹⁶ <http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heilung>.

³¹⁷ Crowther J. (ed.), *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary*, (N.Y., Oxford Press, 1995), 561.

³¹⁸ <http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heilung>.

4.1.1 Healing as Wholeness - Restoration of the whole man

The holistic conception of man as the subject of research has been a red line in our treatment of health and sickness so far. Healing has to do with making well again one who has been sick mentally, psychologically, medically, spiritually or otherwise. This means healing goes beyond mere physical healing. It has a horizontal as well as a vertical aspect involving man in his relationship to his fellow men and to God.

According to Turner, "healing is completeness. It has everything to do with all of man's relationships – with those whom he loves and with those whom he loathes, it affects his attitude to those whom he fears, those whom he resents and to those whom he is indifferent. Healing has something to do with man's relationship with God who is all good and who is the healer himself. It deals with man's environment in which he lives, the condition under which he works and the community of which he is a part."³¹⁹

Holistic healing according to Maximillian Fürsinn, is multidimensional: it means the pure somatic rehabilitation or restitution of the sick; it is also concerned with a therapeutic service to the sick and his spiritual situation; healing tries to resocialize; it should help to bring about life fulfilment or accomplishment of a whole life program and finally, healing is concerned also with the position and situation of man in the plan of salvation³²⁰.

Healing must be holistic for it to be lasting. Healing one whose environment made sick and he goes to hospital and is treated and healed medically but sent back to the sickening environment. He will definitely get sick again. Physical healing and environmental healing has got to go hand in hand here.

Healing is hence not just physical or emotional cure of illness or forgiveness of sin but all these and more. Healing must take into account the physical, psychological, intellectual, medical, economic and spiritual aspects of man.

³¹⁹ Turner J., The healing Church, 8 in Obiagwu Marius, Healthcare of the sick among the Igbos of Nigeria, 96.

³²⁰ Fürsinn, M., „Heilen – Heilung – Heil“, in *Consilium*, 17: Original Text: „Heilen ist mehrdimensional – es umfaßt eine Reihe von Zeilen: es meint die rein somatische Wiederherstellung; es geht dabei um einen therapeutischen Dienst am Kranken Menschen und seiner seelischen Situation; heilen versucht zu resozialisieren; es geht um Lebensverwirklichung; es geht um den ganzen Lebensentwurf; und es geht um den Ort des Menschen im Heilsplan Gottes“.

Our understanding of healing in this work shall be based on this holistic sense involving a person's whole world – body, soul and environment – social and economical.

4.1.2 Restitutio - Healing in the medicine

The rudiments of a scientific curiosity in the art of healing or the origin of the art of healing both scientific and religious could be traced back to AEsculapius. The Greeks knew him earlier as Asklepios, the Greek god of medicine, said to be the son of Apollo and the nymph Coronis.³²¹ However, healing methods worthy of the description scientific began with Hippocrates.³²² It was Hippocrates who separated medicine from philosophy and formulated the Hippocratic Oath which is still taken by doctors today on qualification at some universities. The last part of this Oath reads: "Whatsoever things I see or hear concerning the life of men, in my attendance on the sick or even apart therefrom, which ought not to be noised abroad, I will keep silence thereon, counting such things to be as sacred secrets." Hippocrates is often described as father of medical science or medical healing.

³²¹ The Egyptians claim that Asklepios was apotheosised from the human magician Imhotep, which means "he who comes in peace" – a good title for the father of mental and spiritual healing – who was magician and architect to King Zoser of the third Egyptian dynasty in 2900 B.C. He seems to have become a demi-god and then entirely to have lost his human character. He was invoked as a god and was believed to visit suffering people during their sleep and heal their pain and disease. Imhotep's name, cult and fame passed from Egypt into Persia and Greece, where temples were erected to him under the name Asklepios the god of healing, regarded as the son of Apollo. Hygeia the daughter of Asklepios was the Greek goddess of health and was worshipped in the temples. The practice of sleeping (incubation) in these sanctuaries was very common, it being supposed that the god or goddess effected cures or prescribed remedies to the sick in dreams. We must admit that the temples of AEsculapius were the first hospitals, though this has been claimed for the Christian hospitals of later days. The symbol of the god was a snake, and this, rather than the story of Moses lifting up the serpent in the wilderness, accounts for the badge worn on the cap and tunic of doctors today. Harmless yellow snakes glided about the temple area and were trained to lick the sores of patients and thus – it was believed- to heal them. Since the snake incarnated the god, it was the god himself who healed. Most of the diseases treated were of the "incurable" variety and the literature about "incubation" shows that blindness was most successfully treated by the use of "divine ointment." Again, all who were healed offered sacrifice (especially a cock) and hung up votive tablets, recording their names, diseases and the manner in which they had been healed. Weatherhead Leslie D., *Psychology, Religion and Healing*, (Abindom, Nashville, 1951), 20-21.

³²² Hippocrates was born in the island of Cos, off the coast of Asia Minor about 460 or 470 B.C. He came to a world full of shrines to Asklepios, full of superstition and the ascription of disease to distant planets and to supernatural causes, and seems to have been the first to deny the supernatural origin of disease. Writing of epilepsy, then called "the sacred disease," he said: "It seems to me that the disease (epilepsy) is no more divine than any other. It has a natural cause just as other diseases have. Men think it is divine only because they do not understand it." *ibid.*, 22-23.

Today, medical healing also called physical or somatic healing is only one aspect of healing even though it seemed to have overshadowed other aspects of healing.

Human existence as noted earlier, circle around three existential and anthropological categories of been healthy (*constitutio*), of becoming sick (*destitutio*), and of getting well (*restitutio*). The study of modern medicine is also classified along these three main categories: “Physiology” as the study of health, “Pathology” as the study of sickness and lastly “Therapeutic” as the study of healing or restoration.³²³

The role of medicine then according to Schipperges is one of prevention. The function of a doctor is to make sure he maintains the healthy body through recommending reasonable life principles - *sana corpora in suo statu regendo conservare* and to see to it that he restores the sick body back to health again - *aegra corpora ad sanitatem revocare*. On the other hand the goal of medicine should be the maintenance of the healthy state through diet - *per regimen Sanitatis conservatio*.³²⁴

Healing or therapeutic in the medical profession means then a restoration of damaged body tissue (bone, wound, muscle) back to its normal state. Such a healing is a physical healing whereby somatic disorders are restored, body tissues healed with the aid of medication and the know-how of the doctor. Healing medically then is the regeneration of tissues with the aid of medication. It is the process by which the cells in the body regenerate and repair to reduce the size of a damaged or necrotic area.

Medically healing is the restoration of the health condition either by restoring the original state before the sickness (*restitutio ad integrum*) also known in medicine as healing by first intention (regeneration) or restoring the health condition but with some organic or functional defect also referred to as healing by second intention (repair).³²⁵

So in the healing of wounds for instance, medicine differentiates between healing by first intention or healing by regeneration and healing by second intention or healing by repair.

³²³ Cf. Schipperges Heinrich. „Gesundheit-Krankheit-Heilung“, in Heinrich Schipperges, Erwin Ringel, Erich Zenger, J.B. Brantschen, *Christlicher Glaube in Moderner Gesellschaft, Band 10*, (Freiburg, Herder, 1981), 54.

³²⁴ Amt des Arztes oder Aufgabe des Arztes ist: „...den gesunden Leib durch vernünftige Lebensführung zu erhalten.“ Und „...den krankgewordenen Leib wiederum der Genesung zuzuführen.“ Wiederum das Ziel der Medizin ist dementsprechend: „...die Erhaltung der Gesundheit durch Diätetik.“ „...die Heilung der Kranken über spezifische Heilmaßnahmen, welche die Krankheit vertreiben. Cf. *ibid.*, 57.

³²⁵ <http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heilung>.

In healing by regeneration, the necrotic cells are replaced by the same tissue as was originally there. Here the “union or restoration of continuity occurs directly without intervention of granulations”.³²⁶ For an injury to be healed by regeneration, the damaged cell type must be replicable. An example of a sickness in which the cells heal completely by regeneration is by an acute tubular necrosis in the Kidney.

In the case of healing by repair, injured tissue is replaced with scar tissue. It is the case of a closure of a wound by granulations. Only cells that are unable to regenerate like cardiac muscle or neurons are healed by repair. However, most organs will heal by using a mixture of both mechanisms – regeneration and repair.

In the recent past, there has been an enormous improvement and landslide development in technical medicine and medical research. Peter Wilkinson described this development thus: “In recent times, the possibilities of being made well again have been considerably improved because of the breath breaking advances in medical knowledge and practice. Numerous people are now brought safely through the most dangerous crises because of the expertise available within the intensive care units of our modern hospitals.”³²⁷

It is then in the wake of such technical technological development not seldom that the human person, the sick person becomes a secondary object while the sick organ is paid attention to. It becomes difficult to deal with people as human persons but as sick organs or materials that can be probed, poked and manipulated. Man becomes for man an object of experimentation. Biology and medicine has reached their heights in the modern day biological and medical revolution. The laboratory man has been created and medicine can now observe the human body like a transparent mirror and be able to pinpoint the exact cause of a sickness. The wake of an era of genetic carpentry is leading to a decoding of the human genetic code. The cloning of human beings is becoming possible and a culture of selection is establishing itself.

On the other hand, health and healing is becoming a marketable product and the hospitals are becoming health fabrics and the demand for this product - healing is becoming increasing high as well as expensive. Medicine thereby tends to give man the feeling that it can conquer all if not refashion man. It is therefore becoming difficult to see sickness as part of life and medical personals at times are tempted to see it as a failure

³²⁶ Saunders, Dorland’s Medical Dictionary for Health Consumers, (Elsevier, 2007).

³²⁷ Wilkinson Peter, *A Theology of Sickness*, in Tom Coyle (ed.), *Christian Ministry to the Sick*, (Geoffery Chapman), 71-72.

when a particular disease proves incurable thereby bringing them to the limits of their medical know-how. Again the danger of medical healing becoming impersonal is increasing. As a result the common man and the man of faith have either lost faith or can no longer afford the services and have started searching for alternatives again culminating in a random quest for healing today.

4.1.3 The quest for healing today: The “Healing Auction”

Humanity has since ages, made several attempts to eliminate sickness in the world but when man failed, he surrendered to divine healing of sicknesses thereby giving room to various forms of healing ministries all over the corners of the earth.³²⁸ The quest for healing is as old as humankind because as soon as man appeared and fell from grace according to the biblical injunctions, he began to deal with pain and illness, and the search for its relief started. Sickness for sure is a deficit and man is justified in seeking relieve to these sicknesses but the rate at which this relieve is sought today and most often at all cost is worrisome. 72% of those interviewed in the field research for this work carried out in Nigeria said their health is very important to them, only 1% said their health is not important to them. Asked whether good health should be maintained at all cost, 47% said yes while 12% said it should not be maintained at all cost. Again asked whether every sickness must be healed about 20% are quite of the opinion that every sickness must be healed and the result then is a random search for healing and a proliferation of healing homes and healing ministries. Healers emerge from here and there claiming powers to heal sickness even when they know that they do not have this charisma or gift from God. The result is a certain type of “healing auction” whereby healing powers are advertised and healing offered as a product and sadly at times as a marketable product. The result is the present craze for miracles and healing (powers) that has surreptitiously injected a lot of toxins into our Christianity.

In the face of these aberrations, it is pertinent to go back to the bases, to the foundation of Christian healing – the scriptures.

³²⁸ Obiagwu Marius, *Healthcare of the sick among the Igbos of Nigeria*, 111.

4.2 HEALING IN THE SCRIPTURES

The scriptural understanding of sickness and health as we saw in the previous chapter underlines also their conception and approach to the healing Art. The connection between sin and sickness influences also the choice of healing approach. Both Testaments bear witness to a healing God – “I am Yahweh your healer” (Ex. 15,26) and to a healing physician in the person of Jesus in the New Testament. Let us now explore the concept of healing in the two biblical Testaments.

4.2.1 Healing in the Old Testament

In our treatment of the concept of health in the Old Testament, we saw the word “shalom” as the central word denoting health in the Old Testament. This health was a divine gift and a highly prized possession. Health is acquired and maintained through obedience to Yahweh while disobedience produces ill-health. And so was sickness seen as punishment for sin and the afflicted turns to Yahweh for healing.

A survey of the Old Testament shows many words used to translate “healing” and most of them according to John Wilkinson “contain the idea of the restoration of something to its previously normal state, or the removal of something which is causing ill-health or an abnormal condition”.³²⁹ It shows one root word “rapha” as frequently used to depict the Old Testament language for healing. “Rapha” means to heal, to restore, to make whole or to stitch together. The word “rophe” comes from this root and is used for physician like in Exodus 15, 26: “I am Yahweh your physician -healer”.

This promise of Yahweh is the foundation of the Old Testament theology of healing and Karl Barth called it ‘the divine Magna Charta’ in all matters of health in the Old Testament. After crossing the Red Sea and finding no drinkable water, the Lord sweetened the bitter waters of Marah and declared himself the healer of his people: “I am the Lord your healer” (Ex. 15.26). Through this “redemptive and covenant name of Yahweh Roph’eka – (“the Lord that healeth thee” or “the Lord thy physician”), God pledged to

³²⁹ Wilkinson John, *The Bible and Healing: A Medical and Theological Commentary*, Edinburgh, Handsel Press, 1998, 53.

meet all of Israel's physical needs as they believed and obeyed him".³³⁰ The condition for health – shalom was obedience. In their affliction the Israelites in the Old Testament turned to God for healing.

This claim of the Lord to be the healer of his people is sometimes taken today to mean that they would have no need of human physicians for their treatment of disease and sickness. One hears of some Christian denominations today that refuse medical attention from human physicians basing their stand on this claim. According to Wilkinson, "It is more appropriate to understand the contrast to be, not between Israel's own divine healer and human physicians, but between Israel's God and the healing deities of other nations such as Egypt and Canaan. It is in opposition to the claims for these foreign deities that the Lord asserts that he is the real healer of his people. In contrast to these other deities, the Lord was never sick himself as they could be".³³¹

In the Old Testament the cure of sickness or healing was also sought in prayer and sacrifice. Besides turning directly to Yahweh for healing, "sick persons seek the blessing of priests or prophets and implore healing as a grace" as is evident in Elisha's miraculous healing of Naaman (2 Kings 5). Since sickness in the Old Testament was often attributed to the devil, "man practised exorcisms intended to get rid of evil spirits and implored Gods pardon by supplication and sacrifices"³³². Prayer for health or healing had a place in the practices of the Rabbi. These priests, prophets and physicians were then the agents of healing in the Old Testament.

Some references in the Old Testament point to the fact that Medicine was also a function particular to Priests. Prophets and priests played the role of physicians and ordinary people turned to them when the local practitioners failed as implied in 2 Sam. 12:14; 1Kgs 14:1-13; Isa 38:1, 21.

According to Weber, "Out of fear of Yahweh, who was regarded as the real healer (Ex. 15,26), medical practitioners, pharmacists and healing art was for a long time religiously suspected."³³³ But the existence of professional physicians or individuals or groups of individuals who dedicate themselves to the care of the sick was observed. The

³³⁰ Hill S., *God's Covenant of Healing*, Indiana, (no date), 14-15, in Obiagwu Marius, *Healthcare of the sick among the Igbos of Nigeria*, 101.

³³¹ Wilkinson John, *The Bible and Healing: A Medical and Theological Commentary*, 56.

³³² Dufour X. Leon (ed), *Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, (London, 1970), 543; in. Obiagwu Marius, *Healthcare of the sick among the Igbos of Nigeria*, 102.

³³³ Weber, Leonhard M., *Krankheit*, 591, in Bühringer Andreas, *Pastorale Theologische Ansätze für die Krankenseelsorge: Krankenseelsorge aus biblischer Sicht*, 21.

emphasis on preventive medicine and hygiene in Leviticus shows the existence of indigenous medical knowledge. As at 190 B.C., the importance of professional human physicians were already highly appreciated in the Old Testament as seen in the book of Sirach:

“Honour the doctor with the honour that is due for his services; for he too has been created by the Lord. Healing itself comes from the most high, like a gift from a king... The Lord has brought medicine into existence from the earth, and the sensible man will not despise them... He has also given men learning so that they might glory in his mighty works... My son when you are ill, do not be depressed, but pray to the Lord and he will heal you. Renounce your faults, keep your hands unsoiled... then let the doctor take over, the Lord created him too – and do not let him leave you... If a man sins in the eyes of his maker, may he fall under the care of a doctor” (Ecclus 38: 1-15).

Among the physicians and doctors of the Old Testament, there were some degrees of “specialisations though never exclusive of general practice... with doctors known for their work on the abdomen, anus, eyes, teeth or ‘inner liquids’ and the like”³³⁴.

Though rarely named due to cultural disposition prevalent at the time, there were also references to female physicians and nurses in the Old Testament. Nurses and bandagers supported the doctors in the medical functions in the area of embalming.³³⁵

We must also note that the Old Testament practice of healing was largely influenced by its oriental neighbours: Egypt, Mesopotamia, and the Greek world (cf. Chapter 3.4.1.2.3). However, the advent of medical science among the covenantal people of God Israel was at the time of the influence of Hellenism in the Jewish world. The influence of Greek medicine goes with the name of Hippocrates from whom the Hippocratic Oath which medical doctors take even in the New Testament and to date before they begin their profession originated. The New Testament heralded then the advent of Jesus the physician per excellence. Let us see the accounts of healings in the Gospels basing most of our analysis on John Wilkinson’s work.

³³⁴ Wiseman D. J., *Medicine in the Old Testament World*, 16, in Obiagwu Marius, 102.

³³⁵ *ibid.*

4.2.2 Healing in the New Testament – the Gospels

Jesus appeared among his people as a physician. The first three Gospels – Matthew, Mark, and Luke depicted him as the physician of soul and body. However according to Wilkinson, Jesus was never called a physician (*iatros*) in the New Testament, although the verb *iaomai* from which the Greek word for physician is derived is frequently used of his healing activity.³³⁶

The first Author to call Jesus a physician was Ignatius of Antioch in his letter to the church in Ephesus though he used the word metaphorically referring to his healing those afflicted with heresy and not disease of the body. It was rather Clement of Alexandria (AD 150-215) who referred to Jesus as a physician healing sufferings of the body and soul.³³⁷

There were other references to Jesus as a physician in the early Christian literature. Origen, frequently more than any other person spoke of Jesus as the physician. In his *Contra Celsum*, called him “the good physician” (BK II, Para 67 ed.).

Eusebius of Caesarea (AD 260-340) referred to Jesus as “the great physician” in his *Panegyrie* addressed to Paulinus, the Bishop of Tyre.

Though Jesus was not explicitly called physician in the New Testament but the records or accounts of his healing ministry in the New Testament according to Wilkinson show he carried out the work of a physician.

4.2.2.1 The records of Jesus healings in the Gospels

The amount of space dedicated to the healing activity of Jesus in the Gospels show the importance attached to it and this can be measured by the number of verses describing these activities. Compared generally, 9% of the Gospel of Matthew consist verses on healing making 99 verses out of the 1068 verses in Matthew; 20% of Mark – 139 verses

³³⁶ Wilkinson John, *The Bible and Healing: A Medical and Theological Commentary*, 63.

³³⁷ *ibid.*

out of 679 verses, 12% of Luke – 134 out of 1149 verses and 13% of John's Gospel making 112 verses out of the 879 verses in the Gospel of John.

The healing accounts in the Gospel belong to the narrative portion of the Gospel record. So from the narrative portions, 40% of the total narrative portions of Matthew are healing narratives, in Mark Gospel it is 4%, Luke 35%, John 33%.³³⁸ These statistics show that all the 4 Evangelists regard the healing activity of Jesus as an important part of his ministry.

John Wilkinson further categorised the healing narratives in the Gospel in two categories: the accounts of the healing of an individual sick person and the accounts of a collective healing or the healing of a group.

a. Records of the healing of Individuals

The Gospels accounts for three distinct groups of healing of individuals in which some account of the clinical details of the disease and its healing is given. They are:

- Accounts of a physical healing of an individual like in Mk. 8, 22-26 (the blind man of Bethsaida).
- Accounts of the exorcism of demons from an individual like in Mtt. 9, 32-34.
- Accounts of the raising of an individual from the dead like the story of Lazarus in Joh. 11, 1-46.

Wilkinson in his work listed 26 accounts of individual healings in the four Gospels:

		Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
1	Accounts of physical healing				
	A. In one gospel only				
	1. The two blind men	9.27-31			
	2. The deaf mute		7.31-37		
	3. The blind man of Bethsaida.		8.22-26		
	4. The woman with a spirit of infirmity			13.11-17	
	5. The man with dropsy			14.1-6	
	6. The ten leprosy patients			17.11-19	
	7. The ear of Malchus			22.50-51	
	8. The nobleman's son				4.46-54

³³⁸ *ibid.*, 19.

		Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
	9. The impotent man				5.1-16
	10. The man born blind				9.1-41
	B. In two gospels only				
	11. The centurion's servant			7.1-10	
	C. In three gospels				
	12. Peter's mother-in-law	8.14-15	1.30-31	4.38-39	
	13. The man full of leprosy	8.1-4	1.40-45	5.12-15	
	14. The paralytic	9.1-8	2.1-12	5.18-26	
	15. The man with the withered hand	12.10-13	3.1-6	6.6-11	
	16. The woman with the flow of blood	9. 20-22	5.25-34	8.43-48	
	17. Blind Bartimaeus	20.29-34	10.46-52	18.35-43	
2	Accounts of the exorcism of demons				
	A. In one gospel only				
	1. The dumb demoniac	9.32-34			
	B. In two gospels only				
	2. The blind and dumb demoniac	12.22-24		11.14-16	
	3. The synagogue demoniac		1.21-28	4.31-37	
	4. The Syrophenician girl	15.22-28	7.24-30		
	C. In three gospels				
	5. The Gadarene demoniac	8.28-34	5.1-20	8.26-39	
	6. The epileptic boy	17.14-21	9.14-29	9.37-43	
3	Accounts of the raising of the dead				
	A. In one gospel only				
	1. The widows son at Nain			7.11-18	
	2. Lazarus				11.1-46
	B. In three gospels				
	3. Jairus daughter	9.18-19	5.22-24	8.41-42	
		23-26	35-43	49-56	

TABLE 2: Accounts of individual healings in the Gospels (Wilkinson)

b. Records of the healing of group of people – collective healing

The four gospels recorded twelve references of occasions where Jesus healed sick people collectively. Two instances were recorded in only one gospel, five instances in two gospels only and five instances in three gospels.

References in the bible to the healing of groups

	Matthew	Mark	Luke
A. References in one gospel only			
1. In an unnamed city			5.15
2. In the Temple	21.14		
B. In two gospels only			
3. On a tour in Galilee	9.35	6.6	
4. In answer to John the Baptist	11.1-6		7.18-23
5. At Gennesaret	14.35-36	6.54-56	
6. In the hills	15.30-31	7.31-37	
7. In Judaea	19.2	10.1	
C. In three gospels			
8. At Capernaum	8.16-17	1.32-34	4.40-41
9. On another tour in Galilee	4.23-25	1.39	4.44
10. By the seaside	12.15-16	3.10-12	6.17-19
11. At Nazareth	13.58	6.5	4.24
12. After the return of the twelve	14.14	6.34	9.11

TABLE 3: Accounts of group healings in the Gospels as enlisted by Wilkinson

These instances could be instances of physical healing, exorcism or raising from the dead. This means Jesus healed groups or sick people together. In the instance in Mtt. 11, 1-6 or Lk. 7, 18-23, his response in answer to John the Baptist: “go and tell him, ... the dead are raised from the dead” may be a reference to the raising from the dead of the son of the widow from Nain which preceded the question of John in Luke gospel. There is however, no record in the gospel where Jesus raised people from the dead collectively. In the whole gospel, Jesus raised three people from the dead: Lazarus (John 11, 1-46), the son of the widow in Nain (Luke 7, 11-18), and Jarius daughter (Matthew 9, 18-19). However, it could be that Jesus raised more people from the dead as the gospels reported. In all we have recorded in the whole gospels thirty-eight accounts of healing by Jesus. Twenty six of them were healing of individual persons while twelve has to do with the healing of groups of people.

4.2.2.2 A survey of the nature of the diseases Jesus healed

According to Wilkinson survey of the nature of the diseases Jesus healed in these 38 recorded accounts in the gospels, show two classifications³³⁹: the healing of physical diseases and demon possession. The physical diseases could be acute diseases like fever (Peter's mother-in-law in Matthew 8.4); acute anterior poliomyelitis (the centurion's servant in Matthew 8.5); incised wound (Malchus's ear in Luke 22.50), or unknown fatal disease like the widow's only son at Nain (Luke 7.12) and Lazarus (John 11.3,13).

The physical diseases could also be chronic diseases like:

Nervous diseases which could be in form of paralysis of the lower limb (the paralysed man in Matthew 9.2); paralysis of the hand (the man with the withered hand in Matthew 12.10); blindness (blind Bartimaeus in Matthew 20.30); deafness and defective speech (the deaf mute in Mark 7.32).

Rheumatic disease of the spine like in the case of the bent woman with a spirit of weakness in Luke 13.11.

Chronic heart disease like in the case of the man with dropsy in Luke 14.2.

Gynaecological disease (uterine fibroid tumours) like the case of the woman with the flow of blood in Matthew 9.20.

Infectious skin disease like the case of the ten leprosy patients in Luke 17.12.

The Luke's account of these diseases portrays a significant level of details which is a sign of Luke's medical training. It is Luke for instance who reported that Peter's mother-in-law had a high fever (Lk.4.38) or that the withered hand was the man's right hand (Lk. 6.7)³⁴⁰.

The second form of healing Jesus carried out in the gospels is healing or deliverance from demon possession. An Analysis of the accounts of the demon possessions in the gospels shows also two classifications: Demon possessions with no specific physical manifestations described like the Syrophoenician girl (Matthew 15.22) and demon possessions with specific physical manifestations described which Wilkinson again classified into four: 1. Major epilepsy like the case of the synagogue demoniac (Luke 4.35) or

³³⁹ Wilkinson John, *The Bible and Healing: A Medical and Theological Commentary*, Edinburgh, Handsel Press, 1998, 70.

³⁴⁰ *ibid.*, 71.

the epileptic boy (Matthew 17.15). 2. Acute mania like in the case of the Gadarene demoniac (Matthew 8.28). 3. Mutism or an inability to speak like the dumb demoniac (Matthew 9.23-33) and 4. Mutism accompanied by blindness like the blind and dumb demoniac in Matthew 12.22.³⁴¹ In all these healings somebody took the initiative.

4.2.2.3 Who took the initiative in the healings wrought by Jesus?

In order to understand the healing activities of Jesus in the New Testament and be able to use it as a paradigm of the healing mission of the church, there are elements of the healing ministry of Jesus that are very important. Jesus healed the sick and raised the dead in the New Testament but of whose initiative did these healing take place? Who wanted these healing?

In most records of healings carried out by Jesus, the bible tells concretely or directly from whom the initiative came. On the whole, out of the 26 accounts of the healing of individuals by Jesus in the New Testament, only in four accounts was it not clear who took the initiative or who asked for the healing.³⁴²

Wilkinson in his work identified about seven categories of people who it was that took the initiative in the 26 accounts of the healing of individuals by Jesus.

According to him, in four accounts of the healing of individuals, Jesus himself took the initiative to effect the healing of the sick. Jesus himself took the initiative to effect the healing in the case of the healing of the woman with the spirit of weakness (Luke 13.12), in the healing of the Bethesda paralytic (John 5.6), in the restoring of the ears of Malchus (Luke 22.51), and in the raising from the dead of the widows son at Nain (Luke 7.14). Jesus himself saw the misery of the people and the need to heal the afflicted and he healed them. The primary aim of Jesus was preaching and teaching and not healing. This may be goes to explain why he only initiated healing himself only on four occasions as Wilkinson affirms:

“...the healing of the sick, the exorcism of demons and the raising of the dead were not the primary purpose or task of his earthly ministry. It is never recorded of him that he

³⁴¹ Cf. *ibid.*

³⁴² Wilkinson John, *The Bible and Healing: A Medical and Theological Commentary*, 90.

sought out the sick, only that he healed them when he saw them or when they were brought to him.”³⁴³

Furthermore, in two instances; the disciples themselves took the initiative in asking Jesus to heal the sick like in the case of the healing of the mother-in-law of Peter (Mark 1.30) and the healing of the man born blind (John 9.2).

In seven instances, the sick person himself asked Jesus for healing or took the initiative. An example is the case of the blind Bartimeus in Mark 10.46-52.³⁴⁴

There are also examples in which the relatives of the afflicted person asked Jesus to heal the sick person. Jairus for instance asked Jesus to heal his daughter (Mark 5.23), the father of the epileptic boy asked for his healing (Mark 9.17), and the sisters of Lazarus took the initiative in the case of Lazarus (John 11.3).

The friends or master of the afflicted took the initiative in some instance like in the case of the paralysed man in Mark 2.3 in which his friends took the initiative while the master took the initiative in the case of the healing of the centurion's servant (Matthew 8.5).

At times Jesus healed in order to show his opponents that the son of man has power to heal and to forgive sins. This was the case in the healing of the man with the withered hand in Luke 6.6-7. Here the opponents of Jesus initiated the healing just also like in the case of the man with dropsy in Luke 14.1-3.

Finally, there are four instances in which unknown persons initiated the healing of the sick like in the case of the dumb demoniac (Matthew 9.32), the blind and dumb demoniac (Matthew 12.22), the deaf mute (Matthew 7.32) and the blind man of Bethsaida (Matthew 9.27).

Again to stress the point that Jesus' primary mission was not to heal the sick but to preach the good news and that healing was a prove of the presence of the kingdom of God among men, Wilkinson cited the example of the healing of the paralysed man by the pool of Bethsaida (John 5.1-9). In this pool at Bethsaida renowned for the healing reputation of its waters, many sick, blind, invalids, lame and paralysed gather here hoping to be healed. Jesus came here, saw all the sick and healed only one sick person and

³⁴³ *ibid.*, 91.

³⁴⁴ Further examples of where the sick person himself asked Jesus for healing are the cases of the two blind men (Matthew 9.27), the ten leprosy patients (Luke 17.13), the man full of leprosy (5.12), the woman with the flow of blood (Mark 5.25-28), the synagogue demoniac (Mark 1.24), and the Gadarene demoniac (Mark 5.6).

left quietly and quickly. If healing were to be his primary aim, Jesus would not have missed this opportunity as Wilkinson will affirm:

“What an opportunity missed if healing had been his primary purpose. The fact that he did not take advantage of the opportunity presented by the crowd of sick people at Bethsaida show clearly that physical healing was not the primary reason why he had come into this world. He always taught the people, but he did not always heal the sick of their ailment.”³⁴⁵

However, the Lord's ministry combined preaching, teaching and healing but his emphasis or his ministry is more on preaching and teaching than on healing.³⁴⁶

4.2.2.4 The context of the healings in the ministry of Jesus.

Jesus healed within the context of the *basilea tou theou* – the kingdom of God he came to proclaim. His healing is practiced in illustration of his preaching and teaching rather than as their text and occasion will suggest. Jesus did not heal to show his might and power rather to show the power of the kingdom and its potentiality. According to Wilkinson:

„The healing activity of Jesus had a very intimate connection with its context in his teaching and preaching. When Jesus and his disciples healed, the kingdom, came near’ to the sick people they healed (Luke 10.9), and when he cast out demons the kingdom of God, came upon’ those whom he delivered from their power (Matthew 12.28) and Luke 11.20). These acts of healing and deliverance were signs of the breaking into the human situation of the kingdom of God and a foreshadowing of the time when God alone will reign. They were not indications of the glorious manifestation of the kingdom, for that was still future, but of its healing and saving power now visible in the present.”³⁴⁷

³⁴⁵ Wilkinson John, *The Bible and Healing: A Medical and Theological Commentary*, 91.

³⁴⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*

³⁴⁷ *ibid.*, 94.

4.2.2.5 Witnesses to the healing activities of Christ

The gospels present three witnesses to Jesus healings – his disciples, the religious leaders and the people.

The disciples are his followers and are those who should continue this work he is doing. It was a type of apprenticeship for them. So that every healing session they witnessed was another lesson for them on how to heal the sick, so that when they were sent out to heal they were able to do so by following Jesus example. He assured them that if only they could believe they could do even greater deeds than he is doing before them. He later sent them out to go and preach, heal the sick and cast out demons (Mark 6.13).

Again the context of the sending of the twelve was to go and proclaim – preach the kingdom and to heal the sick among them and cast out demons. Though they were not always successful like in the case of the epileptic boy (Mark 9.18) and Jesus said it was because they had not prayed (Mark 9.29).

The religious leaders of the Jews – the Scribes and Pharisees were also witnesses to his healing activity. At times they showed no surprise and were not responsive to the healings because they felt their colleagues could also do the same and also because of their hostile attitude toward Jesus.³⁴⁸

The third group of witnesses to the healings of Christ was the people themselves who came out in their thousands to hear him preach because he taught them like one with authority (Matthew 7.29). They witnessed his healings with amazement but also with fear like in the healing of the paralytic man (Matthew 9.8) and the exorcism of the Gadarene demoniac (Luke 8.37).

³⁴⁸ *ibid.*, 96.

4.2.2.6 The motives for the healings carried out by Jesus

The gospels according to Wilkinson were not interested in the motives of Jesus healing but it is possible to identify some implicit rather than explicit motives in the healing activities of Jesus.

In some occasions in which Jesus healed, his healing might have been as an expression of compassion for the sick. This compassion was aroused either by the presence of hunger, by the condition of leaderlessness, by the sight of mourning or by sickness.³⁴⁹ Jesus for instance had compassion with the mourning widow of Nain and raised her son from the dead (Luke 7.13).

In other instances Jesus healed the sick as a response to the cry for mercy. The blind Bartimeaus for instance cried aloud, Jesus son of David have mercy on me and Jesus asked him. What can I do for you and he said if you wish you can make me see again. (Matthew 20.30).

Jesus also effected healing of the afflicted in the Gospels as an answer to the strong faith of the sick person or those who brought him or came to request for the healing. The woman with the flow of blood in Mark 5.34 was healed by Jesus as answer to the faith of the woman. The centurion's servant was healed as an answer to the strong faith shown by the master.

The instance of the raising of Lazarus from the dead (John 11.4), show that Jesus healed at times to manifest the glory of God. When they came to call him as Lazarus was still lying sick, he told his disciples that this sickness was not sickness unto death and that it was meant to manifest the glory of God.

Finally, Jesus also healed in order to fulfil what was written in the scriptures. The demonstration to the Baptist's disciples in Matthew 11.2-6 and Luke 7.18-23 was in fulfilment of Scriptures just like the healings by the seaside in Matthew 12.15-21 and the evening healings at Capernaum in Matthew 8.16-17. Summarily, Wilkinson identified in the gospels four occasions in which Jesus healing was an expression of compassion, five occasions in response to a cry for mercy, eight occasions as an answer to faith, on three occasions as a manifestation of glory and on three occasions as a fulfilment of scriptures.³⁵⁰

³⁴⁹ *ibid*, 98.

³⁵⁰ *ibid.*, 97.

4.2.2.7 The methods of healing employed by Jesus in the Gospels

As a parallel to the healing methods of the modern day healing ministries in the church, let us explore the healing methods Jesus himself employed in his healing ministry as recorded in the gospels. The methods used by Jesus are very important in understanding the art and science of healing. His methods exceeded the prevailing medical skills of his time as he was able to handle and heal sicknesses medical skills of his days have been battling with for long.

Healing in the gospels occurred basically through two methods: Jesus healed mostly by word and by touch. Jesus did not make use of any medicinal agent in effecting his healings though he recognised the surgical use of olive oil and dilute alcohol in the treatment of wounds like in the case of the Good Samaritan.³⁵¹ The methods of healing used by Jesus in the healings recorded in the gospels may be classified into six namely: healing by word, healing by touch, healing by word and touch, healing involving the use of saliva, healing at a distance and healing by excision.

i. Healing by word

The gospels recorded that Jesus healed by word of command when he carried out physical healing, exorcism or raising of the dead.

In four cases of physical healing Jesus spoke a word of command directly to the sick. To the paralysed man in Luke 5.24, he said: “Rise, take up your bed and go home” and to the man withered hand in Matthew 12.13, he said: “Stretch out your hand”. In each of these cases Wilkinson rightly noted:

“The command of Jesus was to do something which the sick persons had been incapable of doing because of their sickness and its effects. They were commanded to move powerless limbs which were incapable of movement after long years of paralysis and dis-use.”³⁵²

In healing and freeing those held in bondage by the demon, Jesus used the method of ‘exorcism by word or command’. He addressed a word of command to the demon to leave the possessed and never laid his hands on the demon-possessed.³⁵³ To the syna-

³⁵¹ *ibid.*, 105.

³⁵² *ibid.*, 106-107.

³⁵³ *ibid.*, 105.

gogue demoniac he said: 'Be silent, and come out of him' (Luke 4.35) and to the Gadarene demoniac he said: 'Come out of the man, you unclean spirit' (Mark 5.8). Jesus command in the healing of the epileptic boy³⁵⁴ points to the danger that the demon could come back to its victim and Jesus forbid him that in this case: 'Come out of him, and never enter him again' (Matthew 19.18).

Jesus also used a word of command in raising the dead and in two cases he addressed it to the dead person. To the widow's son at Nain he said: 'Young man, I say to you, arise' (Luke 7.14) and in the raising of Lazarus from the dead he said: 'Lazarus, come out' (John 11.43).

ii. Healing by touch

Jesus also healed the sick by touching. Healing the sick by touch or laying on of hands was not usual in the Old Testament but according to gospel records, touch alone or touch combined with a word was the main method by which Jesus healed the sick. It also later became well recognised as an effective method of healing in the New Testament times³⁵⁵. The gospels recorded seven instances of Jesus healing by touch. Jesus himself took the initiative in four of these cases while the sick themselves took the initiative in three instances. In the case of the man with dropsy³⁵⁶ the gospel told us: 'He touched him and healed him' (Luke 14.4). In the case of Malchus it is stated: 'He touched his ears and healed him' (Luke 22.51). Reporting the healing at evening, Luke said: 'He laid his hands on every one of them and healed them' (Luke 4.40). On some occasions the relatives or friends of the sick could be the ones that have requested Jesus to come and lay his hands on their sick ones. Jairus for example asked for his daughter: 'Come and lay your hands upon her, so that she may be made well and live' (Mark 5.23). The friends of the blind man of Bethsaida pleaded on his behalf: 'They begged him to touch him' (Mark 8.22).

Sick people who touched Jesus also experienced healing like the woman with the flow of blood: 'She touched the fringe of his garment and immediately her flow of blood

³⁵⁴ The healing of the epileptic boy was recorded here as a deliverance from demon possession because it was considered demon possession, hence Epilepsy was considered Lunacy (Lunatic).

³⁵⁵ *ibid.*, 109.

³⁵⁶ Luke 14.2 used the expression *hudropikos*. This means he suffered from *hudrops*, a word which lost its first syllable when it came into Middle English as '*dropsy*'. This word is no longer in common medical use, but it was used to describe the swelling of some part of the body due to the accumulation of watery fluid in its cavities or tissue spaces, usually as a result of a chronic disease of the heart or kidney. The Rabbis believed that dropsy was a punishment for sexual immorality. Cf. *ibid.*, 107-108.

ceased' (Luke 8.44). Reporting the healings at Gennesaret, Matthew said: 'As many as touched the fringe of his garment were made well' (Matthew 14.36).

iii. Healing by word and touch

The gospels reported instances where Jesus also healed by a combination of word and touch. In these instances the power of touch or laying on of hands was accompanied by a word of command. In the account of the healing of the leprosy patient in Matthew 8: 3, for instance, Jesus touched him and commanded him to be clean: "He stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, 'I will; be clean'" (Mtt. 8.3; Mk 1.41).

In raising the daughter of Jarius from the dead Jesus applied the method of healing by touch and by word: "Taking her by the hand he called, saying, 'child, arise'" (Mark 5.41; Luke 8.54).

iv. Healing from a distance

The gospels recorded three instances in which Jesus healed the sick from a distance without touch or word and without seeing them. The Gospel of John recorded the healing of the nobleman's son with Jesus telling him: "Go, your son will live" (John 4.50). Matthew recorded the healing of the Centurion's servant from a distance: "Go, be it done for you as you have believed" (Matthew 8.13). While Mark gave the account of the healing of the Syrophenician girl: "For this saying you may go your way; the demon has left your daughter" (Mark 7.29).

v. Healing by excision

An exploration of the gospels reveal two occasions in which Jesus recommended healing by excision though not for somatic sicknesses but for spiritual sicknesses. Jesus himself however never practiced this healing method. In Matthew 5.29-30, Jesus recommended the excision of the right eye or the right hand as cure for lust if they were the cause of temptations which might end in sexual immorality. "If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell" (Matthew 5, 29-30). Again in Matthew 18.8 and

Mark 9.43-49 he recommended the excision of the eye, the hand or the foot if they were the cause of temptation and sin of any kind.³⁵⁷

Physical excision of disease has being a method of the medical science – surgery but some in the history of the church has erroneously taken this recommendation of Jesus literally and surgically. Origen, a third century Biblical scholar and theologian for instance castrated himself to avoid sexual temptations. To curb this erroneous interpretation, the Council of Nicea in 325 A.D. subsequently forbid such self-mutilation.

Jesus did not intend these recommendations to be taken literally and physically. The recommendations according to Wilkinson “are not advocating ‘a literal physical self maiming, but a ruthless moral self-denial’..they are reminder that for Jesus, the mind and the imagination need healing just as much as the body and that healing includes the prevention of physical and moral evil as well as their removal and forgiveness”.³⁵⁸

vi. Healing with saliva

There are accounts in which Jesus made use of saliva in healing the sick. Jesus used saliva in the healing of the deaf mute. He applied saliva to the tongue of the deaf mute using his fingers: “He put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue; and looking up to heaven, he sighed, and said to him, ‘Ephphatha’, that is, ‘Be opened’” (Mark 7.33-34). In the healing of the blind man of Bethsaida in Mark Gospel, Jesus spat directly on to his eyes: “He took him by the hand, and led him out of the village; and when he had spit on his eyes and laid his hand upon him, he asked him, ‘Do you see anything?’ And he looked up and said, ‘I see men; but they look like trees walking.’ Then again he laid his hands upon his eyes” (Mark 8.23-25). This healing account is unique in the sense it is the only case in which Jesus had to lay his hands on a sick person twice before they were healed. Here the healing was not immediate but took place in two stages.³⁵⁹ He first restored his near vision that made him recognise trees and then his distance vision.

The third account of healing with saliva is recorded in John’s gospel in the healing of the man born blind: “He spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle, and anointed the man’s eyes with the clay, saying to him, ‘Go wash in the pool of Siloam’” (John

³⁵⁷ *ibid.*

³⁵⁸ *ibid.*, 120.

³⁵⁹ *ibid.*, 116.

9.6-7). This is the account where Jesus saliva as an instrument of healing. Saliva may today have no recognised healing properties but in the ancient world, it was believed to possess healing powers though of magical nature which has no place in the gospel record.³⁶⁰ Whatever the importance in this healing record, Jesus did not use it alone and in no magical sense. The use of saliva in healing did not continue in the apostolic church showing it was not an essential part of the healing procedure in the church even though Jesus used it. However the use of saliva or spittle did form part of the Roman Catholic sacrament of baptism during which the priest applies his saliva to the ears and nostrils of the child being baptised.³⁶¹ Though today it is no longer obligatory or is replaced with the “Ephaphata ritus”- the priest making a sign of the cross on the lips and ears of the child-, all stemming from this healing account of Jesus with saliva in Mark 7.33.

4.2.3 Healing in the Apostolic Church

The apostles witnessed the healing ministry of Christ and he gave them the mandate to go and proclaim the good and heal the sick among them. With the ascension of Christ, the apostles were then left alone to themselves. The training was over. The time with Jesus was a time of apprenticeship, now they are confronted with putting to practice what they have learnt but they needed the power from above to empower them. The Pentecost therefore is the birthday of the church, for on this day the power from above came upon the apostles.

The synoptic gospels used the word power or “*dunamis*” to describe the healing works of Jesus. It is then the question whether the power with which the apostles were invested when they received the Holy Spirit included also the power or authority to heal the sick.

Going through the healing ministry of the apostles in the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles we see that the mandate or the power with which the apostolic church was vested included also the power to heal, though as we stated earlier, healing was not the primary injunction rather the proclamation of the Good News to the ends of the earth.

³⁶⁰ *ibid.*, 117.

³⁶¹ *ibid.*

Healing was a sign or a manifestation of the dawn of the kingdom of God – *basilea tou theou*.

According to Wilkinson, „the content of their first commission was a threefold imperative bidding them to go, to preach and to heal (Matthew 10.5-8), and to equip them for their task they were given authority to cast out demons and to heal every disease and every infirmity (Matthew 10,1).“³⁶²

However, there is no doubt that healing was a recognised activity of the early church and is recorded for us by the author of the Acts of the Apostles – Luke whose records are made all the more significant by the fact that he was himself professionally trained in the art of healing.³⁶³

A survey of the accounts of healing in the Acts of the Apostles show that the space dedicated to healing was much less than in any of the Gospels – about 4.5% of the total.

A survey of the accounts of the healing of individuals show 5 accounts of the physical healing (the Lame man at the gate by Peter in Acts 3.1-10; Paul’s recovery of sight in Acts 9.17-19; Aeneas healed of paralysis by Peter in Acts 9.32-35; the Cripple healed at Lystra by Paul in Acts 14.8-11; the cure of the father of Publius by Paul in Acts 28.8), one account of exorcism of demons (The Philippian slave girl by Paul in Acts 16.16-18), and two accounts of raising of the dead (Tabitha or Dorcas at Joppa by Peter in Acts 9.36-41; Eutychus at Troas by Paul in Acts 20.9-12).

There are also four records of the healing of groups in the Acts of the Apostles: the healing of the sick in the streets of Jerusalem by Peter in Acts 5.15-16; the healing of the sick in Samaria by Philip in Acts 8.6-7; the healing of the sick at Ephesus by Paul in Acts 19.11.12; and the healing of the sick in Malta by Paul in Acts 28.9.

Again like in the Gospels, a survey of the diseases healed in the Acts reveal diseases ranging from physical diseases like acute blindness (Acts 9.8), acute fatal head injury (Acts 20.9), acute bacillary dysentery (Acts 28.8) and acute fatal disease of unknown nature (Acts 9.37) to chronic diseases like lameness or locomotive disability (Acts 3.2; 14.8), and paralysis due to neurological disorder (Acts 9.33, 8.7). The survey also shows two accounts of demon possession (Acts 16.16; 8.7)³⁶⁴

³⁶² *ibid.*, 155.

³⁶³ *ibid.*, 156.

³⁶⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, 158.

4.2.3.1 The Practice of healing in the apostolic church

In the seven cases of healing described in the Acts, the initiative was almost taken by persons other than those who were sick. Only in one case,, that of the lame man at the gate of the Temple (Acts 3.3), was the initiative taken by the sick himself. In the other cases either the friends of the sick or the apostles took the initiative in effecting the healing. The apostles took the initiative in healing in Acts more than Jesus himself in the Gospels.

In the Gospels, healing occurred in the context of the preaching and teaching of Jesus. In the apostolic church, this connection was also present but not as obvious as in the Gospels. The combination of preaching and healing was also present in the practice of the apostolic church.

The motives of the healing in the Acts were not clear like in the Gospels. Only in three cases can we clearly define the motive for the healing. In the Acts, either the healing occurred as a response to a request like the lame man at the Temple (Acts 3.2) and Tabitha at Joppa (Acts 9.38) or in response to a need like the father of Publius in Acts 28.8. Also the healing in the Acts could be as a response to faith (Acts 14.9), as a witness to the Gospel (Acts 8.5-7) or in reaction to vexation (Acts 16.18). The healing in the apostolic church occurred also as an authentication of the preaching of the word (Acts 4.29-30) and a manifestation of the presence of the kingdom of God.³⁶⁵

The methods of healing used by the Apostles and others in the apostolic church were similar to the methods used by Jesus in the Gospels. Like in the Gospels, there were records in the Acts of healing by word (Acts 16.18, 14.10, 9.36-41), by touch (Acts 28.8), by word and touch combined (Acts 3.1-10, 9.17-19) and healing by other means. The cases of the healing by other means refer to three cases in the Acts that does fit to the methods used in the Gospel. These are in the case of the restoration of Eutychus to life in Acts 20.9-12 in which Paul fell on him as he lay on the ground and threw his arms round him. The second account is the record in Acts 5.15 that people laid their sick on the street so that Peter's shadow might fell on some of them as he passes. This does not mean that Peter's shadow healed them but may point to the level of supersti-

³⁶⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, 169-171.

tion among the people at the time.³⁶⁶ Peter's shadow fell on some of them but all were healed (Acts 5.16). The healing was performed by the hands of the apostles, but not by the shadow of any one of them.

Another account of the healing by other means is the healing by the cloths from the body of Paul in Acts 19.12. Finally, there were no accounts of healing by saliva like in the Gospels but only one of healing at a distance.³⁶⁷

Summarising, the analysis of the healing in the Acts of the apostles show the fact that the healing miracles of the Acts were not presented as a primary means of evangelism performed in order to impress their hearers and readers and to persuade them to embrace the new religion. So physical healing was not a major interest in the apostolic church but the spreading of the good News of Christ.³⁶⁸

4.2.3.2 The gift of healing- charisma in the apostolic Church

The New Testament epistles contain lists of what Paul calls 'spiritual gifts', the gifts of the Lord to the Church (1 Cor. 12.1). Paul uses the word 'charisma' to describe these gifts. Charisma means "a gift freely given, a gift or a present whose source is in the grace (charis), favour and goodwill of the giver". Scott defined a spiritual gift or charisma as "neither a capacity by itself, nor a ministry or office by itself, but rather a capacity which qualifies a person for a ministry. More simply it may be regarded either as a gift and the job (office) in which to exercise it, or a job and the gift with which to do it."³⁶⁹ Hence Wilkinson tried to classify these gifts as gifts given in terms of function like prophecy, teaching, healing etc and gifts given in terms of office like apostle, prophet and teacher etc.

The possession of these gifts is not a right of a few. Every Christian has at least one of these spiritual gifts or capacities for service and the possession of these gifts according

³⁶⁶ *ibid.*, 177.

³⁶⁷ *ibid.*, 172.

³⁶⁸ *ibid.*, 178.

³⁶⁹ Stott J.R.W., *Baptism and Fullness*, 2nd ed., Inter-Varsity Press, Leicester, 1975, 87; in *ibid.*, 187.

to Bittlinger “is in no sense a measure of Christian maturity”³⁷⁰ or Christian outstandingness.

These spiritual gifts or Charisma are recognised by three criteria or distinguishing marks. Paul listed them in 1 Cor. 12.3,7 as follows: First, it must not deny the incarnation for no one who is speaking by the Holy Spirit can say “Jesus is cursed”. Secondly, it must recognise and uphold the Lordship of Jesus for no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except by the Holy Spirit. And thirdly, the gift must be one which can be exercised for the ‘common good’, that means for the benefit of the whole church and its members. Spiritual gift or charisma “is not given to any member of the Church for their own glory or for their own private profit, although its use may deepen their own spiritual experience incidentally.”³⁷¹ This is important to note, particularly when it comes to the issue of the gift of healing.

Again, concerning the charisma of healing, the question has always been whether this gift was only necessary at the beginning of the early church, whether “it was given for use in particular situations or even only for a particular period in the history of the church”.³⁷² According to Wilkinson, spiritual gifts like natural gifts are permanent but they may be latent and lie dormant until called forth by some particular situation. So there is no time limit to the existence of the gifts of the spirit in the church, and “these gifts are still available and present in the church today as they were in Paul’s day”.³⁷³

In the apostolic church, this gift of healing was not given to everybody but to some as we learn from 1 Cor. 12.9,28 and 30. There were specialisations amongst the gifts with different gifts for different diseases and no one person could heal all diseases. But gifts could also be given for a particular occasion or situation. The healing of Paul’s blindness through Ananias is an example. Therefore this gift of healing is a function and not an office. It is a service (diakonion) and can also be described as ‘activities’ (energema-ton). This understanding of the gift of healing in Paul’s letter to the Corinthians as function stands in contrast to the letter of James where the elders of the church were involved in healing by virtue of their office and their prayer for the sick (James 5.14-15). The practice of healing in the apostolic church described by Paul in the first letter to the

³⁷⁰ Bittlinger Arnold, *Gifts and Ministries*, (Grand Rapids; William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., London, 1973), Hodder & Stoughton, 1974, 17-20; in Wilkinson, 187.

³⁷¹ Wilkinson, 188.

³⁷² *ibid.*, 189.

³⁷³ *ibid.*,.

Corinthians describes the method of healing by prayers while practice of healing in the book of James describes the practice of healing through anointing.

Paul also distinguished in 1 Cor. 12, the gift of healing from the gift of working miracles (dunameis).³⁷⁴

What is the nature of this gift of healing? What is its content and how was it exercised? Paul did not explain in detail the nature of the gift of healing. It was not sure whether he was referring to non-miraculous healing when he spoke of the gift of healing. However, according to Wilkinson, it seems the basis of the nature of the gift of healing lies “in the nature and characteristics of human beings who were created by God with certain aptitudes and capabilities”, since some people may be better at healing than others by virtue of their natural attributes of sympathy and compassion and their possession of natural skills and abilities. Hence some people may make better doctors and nurses than others. If then such people with these natural gifts “acknowledges that ‘Jesus is Lord’ and so becomes a Christian and is incorporated into the body of Christ, then the Holy Spirit intensifies and enhances their natural gifts and places them at the disposal of the church.”³⁷⁵

The content of this gift of healing is neither ‘a special acquisition of knowledge about diseases and their cures nor a special skill in surgical manipulations and procedures’, but consists of a ‘natural gift of sympathy or empathy combined with a capacity of knowing the right thing to do in any individual situation and with any individual sick person’. This intuitive knowledge and sensitivity in turn will be “sharpened and made even more sensitive by the operations of the Holy spirit on the mind” if the person places himself or herself under the direction of the Holy Spirit. Hence the gift of healing can be exercised and used in the context of prayer.

Summarily therefore, the gift of healing, “consists essentially of the application of earnest prayer together with the natural endowments of the members of the Christian community which have been enhanced by the Holy Spirit.”³⁷⁶

³⁷⁴ *ibid.*, 190.

³⁷⁵ *ibid.*

³⁷⁶ *ibid.*, 190-191.

4.2.3.3 Healing in the epistle of James

Besides the Acts and the Pauline letter to the Corinthians, the book of James also provides insights into the healing practices of the apostolic church. The information contained in these sources could however not give us a coherent picture of the healing activities of the apostolic church. The concern in treating the question of healing in the epistle of James is the periscope in James 5.13-18:

“Are any among you suffering? They should pray. Are any cheerful? They should sing songs of praise. Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up; and anyone who has committed sin will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective. Elijah was a human being like us, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. Then he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain and the earth yielded the harvest.” (James 5.13-18)

The main subject here according to Wilkinson is prayer. The topic of spiritual healing is dealt with in the context of prayer and the author of James underlines prayer as the basis of all the activities of the Church including its healing ministry. This underlines the role of prayer in healing. And James defined the kind of prayer which is most effective in healing. It is the earnest prayer of one who is righteous, one who is in a right relationship with God and able to stand in his presence before him as Elijah did. This prayer must be a prayer of faith and must be a specific prayer for the healing of the sick person made fervently and not vague intercession for the sick in general.³⁷⁷

Alfred Plummer saw two prominent subjects in this instruction namely: ‘the elders of the Church and the anointing of the sick’.³⁷⁸ These two however, became prominent in the later history of the Church.

It is interesting to note, the verb used for suffering in v. 13 is *kakopatheo* meaning ‘to be in trouble of any sort, to suffer misfortune’. Those suffering misfortune or are unhappy

³⁷⁷ *ibid.*, 241.

³⁷⁸ Plummer Alfred, *Expositor's Bible on St. James & St. Jude* (Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1891), 323, in Wilkinson, 238.

are advised to pray (themselves). Those who are happy and cheerful should sing hymns of praise constantly.

But the third group those who are sick should do something different - call in the elders of the Church and when they come, they should do two things namely: 'Pray over the sick person and anoint the sick with olive oil in the name of the Lord'. The idea of calling in the elders of the Church according to Harnack is "a clear proof that all aid in cases of sickness (in the apostolic church) was looked upon as a concern of the Church".³⁷⁹ And God was recognised as the source of healing as can be seen from the two actions the elders should perform when they come: pray and anoint in the name of the Lord. There has also being the discussion of which activity comes first: prayer before anointing or anointing before prayer. However, biblical scholars are of the opinion that the use of an aorist participle in expressing the instruction to anoint the sick with oil suggests a simultaneous action-the prayer and the anointing occurring simultaneously. There was no instruction about where on the body the sick person should be anointed.

As we noted in our treatment of the spiritual gifts above, the question remains: why were the elders of the Church called in? Is it as representatives of the Christian community, or did this healing function belong to their office as elders, or because they possess these gifts individually as persons? The Epistles according to Wilkinson, made no mention of healing as one of the functions of the elders of the Church. Hence healing the sick was not a specific function of this office. The Holy Spirit gives the gift of healing to whom he willed to give it (1 Cor. 12, 9, 28, 30). The elders were called in then as representatives of the congregation and not because of any healing function which belonged to their office as elders. This is because as we noted above healing and caring for the sick was part of the duties of the Church. Intercession for others was part of the pastoral care and duty of the elders though shared also by all members of the congregation.³⁸⁰ No individual elder should act as a healer in private but only carry out healing as a corporate function of the body of elders of the church just as the priest acts or administers the sacrament in the name of Christ and his church and not in his own name as an individual. Understanding these points is important for the healing ministry of the Church today and more especially for our case study – the Church in Igbo land today

³⁷⁹ Harnack Adolf, *The Mission and the Expansion of Christianity*. London, Williams & Norgate, 1908, vol. 1, 121 in Wilkinson, 240.

³⁸⁰ *ibid.*, 246.

with the rampant surge of healing homes and healers. The question continues to ring whether every priest is automatically a healer. Is the power to heal imbedded in the sacerdotal ordination? Must every priest have healing powers?

Summarising James teaching on healing we can say, according to the epistle of James the Church has a concern for the sick and healing is part of the normal work of the Christian Church. This healing is based within the Christian community and is to be practised by the elders and by the ordinary members of the Church and is to be carried out in the name of Jesus Christ. This healing implies not only physical healing or the saving of the soul but the redemption of the whole person in every aspect of his being.

4.3 HEALING IN THE EARLY CHURCH AND THE FATHERS OF THE CHURCH

The theme healing is not new to the Catholic Church; neither has it been irrelevant in the church. The Church has always recognised the fact that the special charism of healing could be given to people to manifest the power of the risen Lord as the Catechism of the Catholic Church (1508) states: “The Holy Spirit gives to some a special charisma of healing so as to make manifest the power of the grace of the risen Lord. But even the most intense prayers do not always obtain the healing of all illnesses.”³⁸¹

The Catholic Church recognises two kinds of healing namely: “healing by divine grace and healing that utilizes the powers of nature”.³⁸² Healing by divine grace point to the ministry of Jesus Christ, who performed many physical healings and who commissioned his disciples to carry on that work as a perfect example. This healing refers to the many healings wrought through prayers using the name of Jesus the physician in the long history of the church. The church recognises the healing that take place in the many pilgrimage shrines like Lourdes and even has made confirmation of miracles of healing as one of the conditions for canonisation of a saint. This healing miracle must

³⁸¹ Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1508.

³⁸² Lucey R.F., *Reiki, Healing and the Catholic Church*, April 2008, in <http://catechismocall.wordpress.com/2009/04/08/reiki-healing-and-the-catholic-church>.

however pass three conditions for it to be recognised as a miraculous healing through prayers: it must be spontaneous; it must be provable and must be lasting.

The Catholic Church recognises also healing using the powers of nature. According to Lucey; “the Church has never considered a plea for divine healing, which comes as a gift from God, to exclude recourse to natural means of healing through the practice of medicine.”³⁸³ These healings however must be sought for within the ramifications of human capabilities. The Christian should seek for healing when an ailment can be healed and resort to the will of God when it is incurable and he has tried to seek healing in the appropriate wa

4.4 HEALING IN THE MODERN CHURCH AND THE PHENOMENON OF HEALING MINISTRIES TODAY

Healing understood in the Christian context is wholistic and incorporates three propositions namely: the removal of physical disease, the restoration of bodily strength and the forgiveness of sins. Healing is more than physical healing and includes the whole being of the human person.³⁸⁴ Christ sent his disciples out and gave them the mandate to go and preach and to heal the sick. As we noted healing was not the primary mandate but preaching the Gospel. Healing was then a manifestation of the presence of the Kingdom of God.

4.4.1 The history of healing ministries in the Church

Throughout Church history, the idea that God heals both via natural (medicines, human skills) and supernatural means (the power of the Holy Spirit in connection with prayers, laying on of hands, anointing with oil) has always been present.³⁸⁵

The early Apostolic Church, which received the injunction to heal and care for the sick as Jesus did, was surely bound to view sickness in the prevailing New Testament under-

³⁸³ *ibid.*

³⁸⁴ *ibid.*, 245.

³⁸⁵ A Concise Dictionary of Christian Tradition, 178.

standing. Visiting, caring and praying for the sick was regarded as an important element of the ministry of the church.

The injunction of James: “is anyone among you sick, let him call the elders of the church”, points to the role of priests in accomplishing the healing mandate of Christ.

The early Church later ordained deacons and entrusted them with the role of caring for the sick while the apostles concentrated on the preaching of the word.

The Fathers of the Church in their writings laid credence to caring for the sick as an important aspect of the mission of the Church. Bishops and deacons are enjoined in the Canons of Hippo and the book of Clement “to visit the sick, pray over them and to do all that is necessary in care for them”.³⁸⁶

In the early Church during the time of the Pestilence “when Pagans often left their sick relatives to lie helpless, and threw their dead bodies on the streets to avoid infection, many Christians devoted themselves to ministering to the sick and dying even among pagans, and to the point of sacrifice”. The lives of the saints attest to many such men and women.

Healing therefore played an important role in the success of the early Church. In the missionary preaching of the first centuries, the title “Christ the Physician” was popular and the apostles were themselves characterised as healers. The early Christian Apologetics of the 2nd to the 4th century pointed to the miracles of healing performed by the church as proof of the divine origin of Christianity. The early Church and the early fathers of the church interpreted healing and the entire sphere of charismatic life in the sense that: “Christ is the Physician, the church the hospital, the sacraments the medication, and orthodox theology the medicine chest against heresy.”³⁸⁷ Ignatius of Antioch called the Eucharist the “medication that produces immortality.” So healing was an integral part of the early church.

Healing within the Catholic Church began to retreat or lose its importance only “in connection with the transformation of the church into a state church under Constantine and with the replacement of free Charismatics by ecclesiastical officials.” The basis for healing became generally a demonological interpretation of sickness and healing was often carried out as an exorcism – that is, a ceremonial liturgical adjuration of the de-

³⁸⁶ Oepke, Albrecht, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 71.

³⁸⁷ *Encyclopedia Britannica*; „*Christianity*“, 166 of 220.

mon that was supposed to cause the illness and its expulsion from the sick person.³⁸⁸ The office of the exorcist then became one of the lower levels of ordination to the priesthood. The Enlightenment – the French Revolution eventually suppressed the practice of exorcism within the Roman Catholic Church. The practice never completely vanished in the Churches of the Reformation. But with the emergence of the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements in the later part of the 19th century, the practice of exorcism or deliverance as it is called in Pentecostal and charismatic circles resurfaced with great emphasis. With the holistic conceptions of illness and healing gaining ground and the “basic connection between healing of the body and healing of the soul and the psychogenic origin of many illnesses acknowledged theologically and medically,”³⁸⁹ healing services or gathering in which prayers are offered for the sick and healing for sicknesses sort were gradually reinstituted in different older churches including the catholic church.

The result is that all over the world today, we are confronted with healing phenomena within and outside Christianity up to a syncretistic mixture of religious rituals. Christoffer Grundmann described the phenomena thus:

“Today we encounter a confusing multitude of healing movements of every kind, drawing adherents from all strata of society and any walks of life: intellectuals and illiterates, unemployed visionaries and highly paid experts, desperate Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists and those with ties to natural religions and dedicated atheists alongside confessed irreligious people as well. While in Western civilisation modern esoteric movements offer a bunch of so called, alternative, or wholistic therapies, people in other cultures rediscover their indigenous ways of healing. No doubt, there is a search for compensating the loss of roots and the alienation experienced by many all over”.³⁹⁰

The traditional African society was not left out in this movement trying to articulate and ascertain the content of its health and healing system.

³⁸⁸ *ibid.*

³⁸⁹ *ibid.*

³⁹⁰ Grundmann Christoffer H., “Healing – A Challenge to Church and Theology” in *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft*, 85 Jahrgang, Heft 2/3.

4.5 THE TRADITIONAL IGBO (AFRICAN) HEALTH AND HEALING SYSTEM.

In our consideration of prayer in Igbo traditional religious system³⁹¹, we have seen that the Igbo man prays and offers sacrifices for good health and when sickness strikes, healing is sought for through prayers. The herbal medicine which a dibia offers for the restoration of health, as well as prayers and sacrifices offered by family heads and those sacrifices carried out by the priest in recommendation of the diviner, belong to the aspects of the Igbo traditional healing system.

The traditional Igbo person believes that illness is not only as a result of normal bodily malfunction but also as a result of wrongdoing against a guiding traditional spirit or as a result of a strained human relationship, which manifests itself in bodily disorders. As a result they, not only go beyond simple diagnoses - diagnosing which part of the body is sickened -, but they go deeper to inquire into the religious or metaphysical causes. Something must be responsible they imagine. Hence sickness and sin in the traditional Igbo understanding are related.

So when a typical traditional Igbo man gets sick, the three classes of dibia, diviner and native priest as we saw in chapter 1.4.5. of this work, comes to play. The “culprit” or the sick goes to the dibia who has the knowledge of healing herbs, he then prescribes for him the appropriate medicinal herbs he has to take against the sickness. Besides that, he must go to the diviner who conjures up spirits through divination to find out which spirit has been wronged and the kind of human relationship strained. After such inquiry, he prescribes specific sacrifices that must be performed to appease whichever spirit is offended or in order to restore whatever human relationship already strained. Native priests appeasing the spirit or god that is offended then carry out the sacrifices. However, at times “when a diviner prescribes sacrifices he also names the proper priest that should perform the function”³⁹². These sacrifices and propitiations prescribed by the diviner are sometimes accompanied by whatever herbal medicine the dibia gives the

³⁹¹ Cf. Chapter 2.2.2.

³⁹² Ilogu, E., *Christianity and Igbo Culture*, 53.

sick person in order to ensure proper cure. In all cases of illness, no cure is carried out entirely by the *dibia* without consulting diviners.³⁹³

From the point of view of healing system “ogwugwo oria” in the Igbo traditional setting and their approach towards sickness, certain phenomena can be observed. As the research portrays, one tends to imply a certain degree of “carry-overs” from the traditional approach towards sickness and healing into our present day Igbo Christians. Fortunately or not, these Christians live in such environment and society with this approach to sickness and healing. However, a very good percentage of the present day Igbo Christians, their parents or grandparents were converts from the traditional religion. There is therefore bound to be an influence from this traditional healing system.

It is then the question: how do we approach the situation pastorally today? Can such “carry-overs” be tolerated in the Christian message without watering down the Gospel message? Are there elements that are good in the traditional system that could be upheld and developed? One of the questions I asked all those I interviewed in my research was: What do you think we should do with our traditional healing method? Majority of those interviewed opted that we uphold what is good in it and let go what is not useful. Again, asked what they think is good in our traditional healing system, majority laid the emphasis on the use of herbs to cure sickness. They suggested that scientific research should be carried out on those herbs and leaves that the *dibia* uses to cure peculiar sicknesses and hence be modernised in order to remove whatever is fetish in them.

Having treated the concept of healing, healing in the scriptures as well as Jesus healing ministry as the fundament of any healing ministry, and finally the Igbo-African healing system in a bid to see what was there before the advent of Christianity so as to see how far the influence extended, let us now explore the advent of Christianity into Igbo land and its subsequent effects on the Igbo traditional setup.

³⁹³ *ibid.*

CHAPTER FIVE: CHRISTIANITY IN IGBOLAND

5.0 INTRODUCTION

In chapters one and two of this work we treated the Igbo worldview, the material and religious organisations of the Igbo traditional society and the Igbo conceptions of man – Igbo Anthropology. In chapter three and four we treated the Igbo concept of sickness and healing. We tried in these preceding chapters to show the Igbo world before the advent of Christianity. In this chapter we want to trace the coming of Christianity into Igbo land and the subsequent influences in the Igbo culture and mentality.

5.1 THE ADVENT OF CHRISTIANITY IN AFRICA

The advent of Christianity and the subsequent Evangelisation of Igbo land took place in the wider context of the Evangelisation of the continent Africa. To contextualise the evangelisation of Igbo land, let us first look at the process or phases in the evangelisation of Africa.

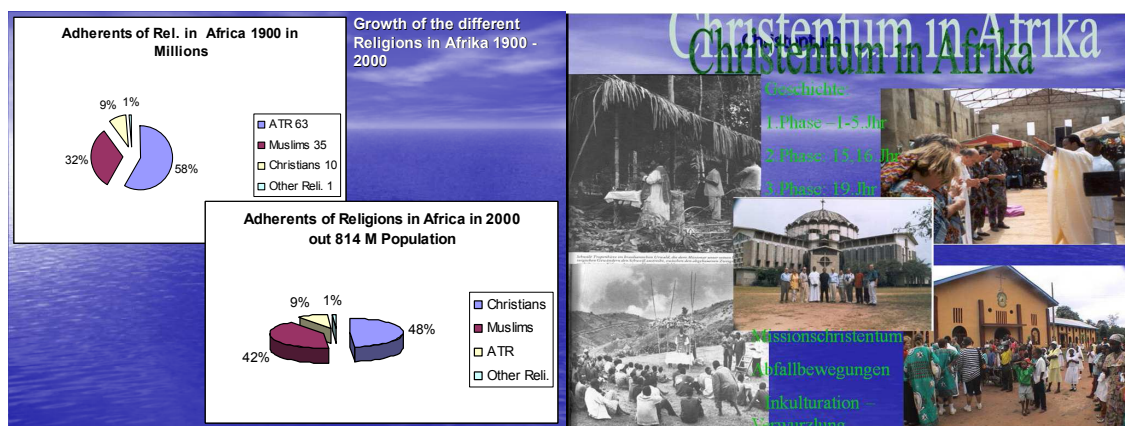


FIG. 7: History of Christianity in Africa. The Photo collage shows the development of Christianity in Africa: Advent of the Missionaries; Mass in make-shift Tents and open space; slowly churches were built – Mass in an unroofed church; today big churches are needed for the large Christian population³⁹⁴

The history of Christianity in Africa knows many epochs and phases. One differentiates three phases in the Evangelisation of Africa.

³⁹⁴ Photo sources: Sabinus Iweadighi, Johann Streißelberger, others unknown.

The first phase in the evangelisation of Africa took place in the first five centuries of the Christian history during which the Gospel spread from North Africa till Ethiopia. The church boomed in Africa in this phase and gave Africa such great church fathers like Augustine, Clement, Alexander and other church fathers of the North African church. But this first phase later disappeared with the fall of the Roman Empire and the threat of Islam in Africa, leaving only the Coptic Church in Egypt and Ethiopia as remnants of this first phase today. The collapse of the North African Church was seen as a result of lack of inculturation. According to Nwachukwu Fortunatus, “the North African Church..., was too Western and not interested in inculturation. The North African Church undermined inculturation.”³⁹⁵

The second attempt at evangelising Africa was in the 15th and 16th century in the southern part of the Sahara region Africas at the time of the geographical discoveries and with the opening of the sea route from Atlantic to the south. But this phase of the Evangelisation also disappeared after some time in the 18th Century.

It was only in the 19th century with the European colonial invasion of Africa from the central and southern part of Africa that the missionaries succeeded in establishing Christianity in black Africa south of the Sahara.³⁹⁶

African theologians today ask why the first two phases were able to be erased completely leaving only the Ethiopian and Coptic churches today. They try to find the answer in the fact that the faith was not inculturated in the heart of the African man. It was just like a cloth that the African man had had to put on and in the face of an affliction or test, he wore it off and told the missionaries to take their cloth again. The values already there were relegated to the ground. The later third phase seemed to have tried to have taken note of this fact and is trying now to incorporate the elements of the African- Igbo culture into the Christian faith.

It was in this third attempt at Evangelisation of Africa that the faith came into Igbo-land. It was also the time of the slave trade and the colonial regime, which also had a great influence on the attitude of the people towards this new religion. The evangelisation of the Igbo land began in the Year 1885 through the Irish missionaries (Holy Ghost

³⁹⁵ Nwachukwu Fortunatus, “A Nigerian Reflection of the special Mission of African Theology”, in *Encounter: A Journal of African Life and Religion*, Vol. 2, Rome, 1993, 55ff.

³⁹⁶ Cf. Gibellini R., *Handbuch der Theologie im 20. Jahrhundert*, 442.

Fathers) under the administration of the Society for African Mission (SMA) in Lyons.³⁹⁷

5.2 THE INFLUX OF CHRISTIANITY INTO IGBO LAND

5.2.1 Prior to the Influx: The Colonial era

With the abolition of slave trade in 1807 by the British Parliament and the subsequent liberation of slaves, there emerged a new social order – the rehabilitation of the freed slaves. The freed slaves from America and Europe were rehabilitated in Liberia and Sierra Leon. The slaves have lived in Europe and America and have imbibed the Western civilisation and Christianity. They came back with the new religion acquired during their contact with Europe and America. Some missionaries and teachers also accompanied them with the intent to safeguard them in their already acquired foreign ways of life. This included the already-made agenda to teach them the tenets of the scripture in their mother tongue³⁹⁸. In order to extend the new religion to other Africans, the missionaries embarked on massive evangelisation crusade in different African countries deploying the liberated slaves as forerunners. This culminated in the evangelisation of the Igbos, east of the Niger and western part of Nigeria by the Church Mission Society (CMS) in 1841.³⁹⁹ This mission was however based on the famous maxim of Thomas Fowell Buxton “the Bible and the Plough”. Because the Missionaries came at the same time as the colonial masters, it was not easy for them to gain creditability among the people since they were at times seen as agents of the colonial masters or as ‘forerunners’ of the colonial masters. And so the first mission of the Church Mission Society (CMS) was not successful not only because of these but also because of language barriers. The missionaries had no option but to learn the language of the people as a solution to these linguistic barriers in order to make communication with the local community more effective. Among these missionary linguists were the Yoruba-born ex-slave and teacher, Samuel Ajayi Crowther and J.F. Schön, a German missionary.⁴⁰⁰

³⁹⁷ Iluogu E., *Christianity and Igbo Culture*, 57.

³⁹⁸ Cf. Oraka L.N., *The Foundations of Igbo Studies*, 22.

³⁹⁹ Ugwu Moses, *Healing in the Nigerian Church*, 85.

⁴⁰⁰ Cf Oraka, *Foundations of Igbo Studies*, 23.

Though the Church Missionary Society (CMS) was the first to make the move in 1817 down the Niger, the Methodists were however the first to settle in Badagry area in West Africa in 1842, followed by the Presbyterians who settled in Calabar area in Eastern Niger in 1846. The Roman Catholic Missions started their mission in 1865 in Lagos area with the arrival of priests belonging to the Society of African Missions (SMA) based in Lyons and was directing the Holy Ghost Fathers from Ireland.⁴⁰¹

5.2.2 The beginning of missionary activities in Igboland

The first Missionaries to arrive the Igbo heartland (Onitsha) were Samuel Ajayi Crowther and his team of CMS missionaries in the year 1857. Among them were some Igbo-speaking Catechists like Simon Jonas and Rev. J.C. Taylor.⁴⁰²

The Roman Catholic Mission started also in Onitsha with the arrival of the Catholic Missionaries in 1885 under the leadership of the French-born Rev. Father Joseph Lutz. From Onitsha, they started reaching out to other parts of Igbo Land.

Other Christian denominations that also entered Eastern Nigeria were the Presbyterian Missionaries from the Calabar area in 1846. From here, they penetrated the Igbo heartland. The Baptist Missionaries entered the Western part of Nigeria in 1850 and later moved into the Igbo areas around Oloko and Obinze.⁴⁰³

The Primitive Methodist Society began their missionary work in 1892 in the area between the Qua Iboe River and Port Harcourt. Also an International Missionary body called Qua Iboe Mission founded in Belfast Ireland in 1887 also found its way into this area between Port Harcourt and Qua Iboe River and spread into Igbo land around Ngwa area near Aba. According to Ilogu, "It is through the activities of these six European based missionary agencies that Iboland was evangelised to the extent that by the time of the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, it could be said that Christianity had been planted in Iboland"⁴⁰⁴.

⁴⁰¹ Cf. Barrat D.B., *World Christian Encyclopedia A.D. 1900-2000*, Oxford, 1982, 528, in Ugwu Moses, *Healing in the Nigerian Church*, 86-87.

⁴⁰² Ugwu Moses, *Healing in the Nigerian Church*, 87.

⁴⁰³ Iluogu E, *Christianity and Igbo Culture*, 58.

⁴⁰⁴ *ibid.*

Ilogu identified three main periods with different characteristics in the history of Christianity in Igbo land.⁴⁰⁵

The first period in the evangelisation of Igbo land is in the time between 1857 and 1914. This is the time from the beginning of the colonial enterprise till the outbreak of the First World War. The missionaries came at the same time with the colonial intruders. The colonial enterprise cleared the way for the missionaries who profited from their influence in the areas where they later started their evangelisation. As a result of this concurrent advent of the missionaries and the colonial masters, the new religion got a negative undertone. The African adherents could not reconcile what they were taught by the missionaries and what European colonial masters themselves were doing. This irreconcilable example of the Europeans, made the Gospel message to the Africans unattractive⁴⁰⁶. In this period other Christian denominations started making their first attempts into Igbo land.

The second period started from 1914 till the outbreak of the Second World War in 1938. In this period the nationalistic spirit in the political sphere intruded also into the church and saw the gradual formation of indigenous national church. People started separating themselves from the main confessions and started forming their own churches. This period noticed also the influx of many American sects whose wealthy affluence and influence began to be felt in the country as a whole and in Igboland in particular.⁴⁰⁷ Some of these Christian sects from America like the Faith Tabernacle and the Garrick Braid Church started engaging in “Faith healing” and consequently with their influx “Faith healing” started taking root in Nigeria in this period. The phenomena spread like a wild fire and enjoyed widespread acceptance from the poor and analphabetic population, who hadn’t neither money to seek or get access to the new medical services the expatriates came with nor afford the goat, sheep or fowls often demanded by the native doctors as sacrificial object to appease the gods who were believed to have been offended and who as punishment sent the sickness. Ilogu describing this development in this period of the Church in Igboland writes:

“In 1916 the Garrick Braid secession had taken place in the Delta area and entered Iboland through the Christ Army Church organised from the secession. Braid had been an

⁴⁰⁵ Ilogu E, 62, in Ugwu Moses, *Healing in the Nigerian Church*, 88.

⁴⁰⁶ Ugwu Moses, 83.

⁴⁰⁷ Cf. *ibid.* 88.

influential member of the Anglican Church where at Saint Andrew's Bakana he was the Pastor's warden around 1914-1915. He later developed efficacy in divine prayer healing, and a prophetic attitude to religion which for some time he employed in the pastoral work of the St. Andrew's Church, but later he organised what he called Prophetic movement. This was declared heretical by the Anglican Bishop Johnson in charge of the Delta area. A large number of members of various Anglican Churches who sympathised with Garrick Braid joined him in forming the first "Prophet" Church as well as the first breakaway Church which eventually grew in Iboland. Today there is the Christ Army Church Garrick Braid Connection, with prayer and faith healing being the chief characteristics of the two."⁴⁰⁸

The third epoch in the evangelisation process in Igbo land ranges from 1939 till 1964. This was the period of the World War II and the post war era. This was also the period during which the training of indigenous sons and daughters of Igbo land were fostered so as to take over the work of evangelising their own people themselves as well as take up educational and administrative offices since the influx of the expatriate missionaries were restrained by the World War II.⁴⁰⁹ This period saw the ordination and placement of respected and educated Igbo sons and daughters in the helm of church affairs. The period also saw the rapid agitations of many African countries for independence and self rule. This awakening of the national consciousness that arose in the political life of the country did not leave the Church untouched⁴¹⁰ hence the effort to transform the missionary churches to national churches. This agitation for national churches was more evident in the Anglican Church while the other newly erupted churches occupied themselves with healing. This third period therefore experienced a very rapid growth of main "healing homes" and "prophetic Churches" in Igboland, a process that started in the second period. According to Ilogu:

"For many years the Christ Army Church remained the only Prophetic-Healing Church in Iboland. But within the 1939-1964 period the Cherubim and Seraphim Church as well as the Christ Apostolic Church, both "Prayer-Healing-Prophetic" type of Churches, arrived in Iboland from Western Nigeria through Yoruba settlers in Iboland and had spread all over the place. The first Ibo founded "Prayer-Healing" Church was by

⁴⁰⁸ Ilogu E, 59.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid., 60.

⁴¹⁰ Ugwu Moses, 89.

Madam Nwokolo of Ufuma who in the early 40's started healing through prayer, fasting and the use of holy oil. She refused her members' pressure to inaugurate and register a separate Church. Rather she advised those she had "cured" to go back to their own denominations. This fine example of Madam Nwokolo was not followed by the more "institution-minded" prophets and prophetesses, with or without connections to her, who have dotted Iboland with over two hundred of this type of Church."⁴¹¹

In this periods of the Christian Church in Iboland, the overemphasis on and the preoccupation with "healing" and "healing homes" has not yet so much invaded the Catholic Church since the she started building hospitals and clinics to care for the sick and needy.

A fourth period in the history of the Church in Igbo land could be identified as the time from the end of active missionary enterprise in Nigeria particularly in Igbo land. The end of the historical Vatican II Council that brought reforms and opened the windows of the Catholic Church allowing nations to express their faith in their native languages and with elements of their own culture, was overshadowed in Igbo land with the Nigerian-Biafran War from 1967-1970. The role of the Churches mostly the Catholic Church in care and Charities during the war won them admiration and growth.

After the Nigerian-Biafran War in 1970, the Nigerian Government sent the Expatriate Missionaries away and took over the mission schools which were hitherto used as means of Evangelisation. Barrat affirms:

"At the end of the Civil War in January 1970, the Church in Eastern Nigerian experienced important changes including the expulsion of most foreign missionaries (about 300 Priests and 200 Sisters) and the nationalization of all Primary and Secondary Schools which had previously played a significant role in Evangelisation."⁴¹²

With the expulsion of the missionaries, the onus of administration fell on the indigenous clergy and the local Churches were then forced to become self-reliant and seek ways of imbibing or accommodating elements of their culture in the daily lives and activities. The call for inculturation started becoming lauder and indigenous languages and tunes started gaining access into the liturgical celebrations of the Church. Those for whom the pace was too slow or too fast "tended to drift over to the Churches we have called

⁴¹¹ Ilogu E., 61, in *ibid.*, 90.

⁴¹² Cf. Barrat D.B., (ed.), *World Christian Encyclopaedia* AD. 1900. 2000, 528, in Ugwu Moses, 90.

prayer-healing-prophetic type of Churches, originated by Ibos, or breakaways from the missionary founded Churches”.⁴¹³

A fifth period in the Church evangelisation and development in Igbo land is the trend in the past decades. In this recent period the “faith-healing” phenomena in the form evident in the Pentecostal churches seemed to have intruded into the Catholic Church. Though healing has always been the mission of the Church, but in the form and agitation one experiences it today, one tends to see an influence from the Pentecostal and prophetic healing Churches.

With the advent of the Catholic Charismatic movement⁴¹⁴ in the Catholic Church, the emphasis on prayer healing or praying for healing has become rampant. With time, the concept “healing Mass” developed within the framework of the Catholic Church with priests in the recent past using such masses to pray for healing and deliverance for those who are sick or believed possessed – a phenomena that necessitated this research which it will attempt to analyse in the second part of this work.

5.3 THE MISSIONARY CHRISTIANITY AND THE IGBO CULTURAL VALUES

Before the advent of the Christian missionaries into Igbo land, the Igbo were traditional religionists. Their deep religiosity was manifested in their arts and culture, rites and rituals. Every action was given a religious connotation and significance; even natural phenomena like rainfall and flood, were given religious interpretations.

When the Missionaries came, the major problem the people had with them was the negative attitude of the missionaries towards their traditional culture. The missionaries saw their mission as that of dismantling the whole traditional structure. They lacked the idea of the relationship between the traditional religion of the people, the social structure and world view of the people.⁴¹⁵

The missionaries challenged social structures like divination and consultation of oracles, the ancestry worship as well as the traditional healing methods of the healers. Some of

⁴¹³ Cf. Ilogu E., 62; Cited in *ibid.*, 91.

⁴¹⁴ The Catholic Charismatic Movement was formed in 1966.

⁴¹⁵ Ugwu Moses, 94.

the traditional practices that attracted the wrath and condemnation of the missionaries include the human ritual sacrifices, the killing of twins in some parts of Igbo land, polygamy, the traditional Title taking and burial ceremonies- second burial. According to Talbot:

“...the origins of Christianity beheld the massive Igbo culture with its values and vices. The Christian missionaries summarily battled with cannibalism, nudity, infanticidal destruction of twins, local and tribal strife and blood-bath, mass illiteracy, absence of written total documentation, idolatry, superstitious beliefs, fear, human sacrifice, internal slavery, sorcery, together with witchcraft.”⁴¹⁶

The attitude of the missionaries to these practices was one of zero tolerance, though the explanation for this attitude could be found partially in the psychological circumstances of their work. The missionaries in their writings repeatedly described Igbo land as “the Kingdom of Satan” and many were called to come and help in pulling it down: “may many come willingly to labour in pulling down the stronghold of Satan’ kingdom, for the whole of Ibo district is his citadel.”⁴¹⁷ A second explanation for the attitude towards the Igbo culture could be seen in the goal of the early missionaries. Their first emphasis was on statistical success, to use the statistical strength of the vast numbers that could be won in Africa to sustain the church of the future and as such there was no time to sit and sort out which elements could be considered as this early instruction to seminarians show:

“In this early phase, with so many Christian denominations literally pouring into that pagan world, our first emphasis must be on statistical success. We must bring the word of God to as many as possible at the same time. We want on our side the vast numbers who in Africa of the future will sustain the Church with their numerical strength. Call it vote of the masses if you like. In pursuit of that objective, I am afraid we have got to be impatient with the culture of the people. There just isn’t the time to sort out first and label their customs as acceptable and unacceptable. To be ruthless in our method and

⁴¹⁶ C.f. Talbot P.A., *The Peoples of Southern Nigeria*, 1, 272. .

⁴¹⁷ Crowder S., and Taylor J.C., *The Gospel on the Bank of the Niger* (1857-1859), (London 1968), 325.

yet successful in our aim, we must ensure that all along we present to the people good tangible evidence of the advantages of Christianity.”⁴¹⁸

So the early missionaries did not build on the “*Logos Spermatikos*” - on what was there already – the already existing traditional values. Arinze notes: “We must, however, admit that not every missionary from Europe has been able to achieve the best results in the planting of Christianity amidst our people’s culture. Many of our customs were not understood and so were condemned.”⁴¹⁹ The missionaries’ strategy in the missions then was according to Marcello Azevedo neither one of inculturation nor acculturation but rather a transculturation, an importation.⁴²⁰ Stressing the impact of this strategy, Karl Rahner in his reflections on the missions strategy before the Vatican II council has this to say: “The actual activity of the church in its relation to the world outside of Europe was in fact the activity of an Export Firm which exported a European religion as a commodity it did not really want to change, but sent throughout the world together with the rest of the culture and civilisation.”⁴²¹

However, sympathizers of the missionary theology defend the method by saying that the missionaries could not have implanted the Gospel in the African or Igbo culture other than the way they themselves have imbibed it. “There is no surprise if a European missionary brings to Africa Christianity such as he knew it in Europe. The early missionaries did not have the advantage of advanced ethnological studies such as we have today. Often they had to depend on books written by itinerant adventurers who delighted in sensational reporting and who often wrote about what they little understood”.⁴²² The Bible commission further defended the missionary Strategy thus: “It was unavoidable that the missionaries should bring the Gospel message to the people in the form in which they themselves have imbibed it....”⁴²³

⁴¹⁸ Dinwiddy, H., *Missions and Missionaries in African Literature: Christianity in Independent Africa* edited by. Fashole-Luke et al. (London 1978), 428, in *Bigard Theological Studies*, 23, (Jan.-June 2003), 89-90.

⁴¹⁹ Arinze Francis, *Africans and Christianity, Looking for Light Series...*, Book 4, (Enugu, Optimal Computer Solutions, 1990), 50.

⁴²⁰ Azevedo Marcello, *Inculturation and the Challenges of Modernity*, 17-18.

⁴²¹ Rahner Karl, *Towards a Fundamental Theological Interpretation of Vat. II.*, in *Theological Studies*, 40, (Dec. 1979), in *AFER* 22 (1980), 6, 32.

⁴²² *ibid.*

⁴²³ The Pontifical Bible Commission: *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*, 125.

African Theologians therefore attribute the fact that the evangelisation of Africa took place in three phases to the fact that the Christian faith was not imbedded or enrooted in the heart of the African man and sees this as a reason for the collapse of the first two phases of the evangelisation of Africa.

The approach of the missionaries at the beginning was like one of despising elements of the Igbo culture and seeing everything as pagan and so must be done away with. On the other hand we must say also that many practices in the Igbo culture were ripe for change as they stemmed from lack of enlightenment. Christianity started entering into the Igbo culture to imbibe and purify, a practice that the process of inculturation is continuing today.

With the advent of Bishop Shanahan - the great apostle of the Igbos⁴²⁴ - into the missionary scene in Igbo land at the turn of the twentieth century, the attitude of missionary Christianity towards the traditional Igbo cultural values changed. According to V.A. Nwosu: "The method Catholic missionaries adopted then in teaching the Christian faith to the people, especially since the time of Bishop Shanahan at the turn of the century was one which strove to transform, not destroy, the people's religious consciousness. The missionaries realized that the people's traditional religious ideas were not so much incorrect as incomplete and required only completion und sublimation"⁴²⁵.

Hence the first attempt by the missionaries at trying to sort out together with the native Christian leaders which elements of the Igbo "native customs" could be Christianised and which could not be, was first made at a conference held at Onitsha from 12th till 14th May and from 3rd till 4th June 1914.⁴²⁶

⁴²⁴ Arinze Francis Cardinal, *Africans and Christianity, Looking for Light Series...*, Book 4, 50.

⁴²⁵ Nwosu V.A.: „So Rich And Abundant A Harvest“, in Obi Celestine (ed.), *A Hundred Years of the Catholic Church in Eastern Nigeria 1885-1985*, (Lagos, Africana-Fep Pub., 1985), 379.

⁴²⁶ But the Conference failed to achieve any tangible results. Almost all the various examples of „native customs“ that came before the conference were regarded as „heathen practices“ about which a Christian man should not concern himself. Extended Family and Lineage Duties were among the topics so discussed. The things involved in extended-family and Lineage duties which are still outstanding today include „ife-nru“ (customary giving of seniority tributes), widow inheritance, libation and ancestor reverence. In 1914 the list was formidable but a good number of the Items which the Church Authorities rejected then as unworthy of a Christian man's attention, have, without real noticeable authorization, become part of Christian practices. Examples include second Burial and memorial for dead Father (*Okwukwu*), uncle or brother, „ine omugwo“ (celebrations connected with child-birth), initiation into the lineage's masquerade society or the lineage's dance group. Ilogu E, 217. . „We too have neither theological nor historical reasons to suggest that a Christian should not do or take part in any of them. Even the masquerade which used to be the messenger of the earth goddess and the ancestors is more or less an entertainment these days.“ Ilogu E., 217

This showed a turn in approach having seen that the condemning approach yielded negative results. Shanahan, according to J. P. Jordan: “never spoke in condemnation of paganism, or anything pagan, whether as regards customs or law or ritual. He knew the people would not understand, and would only be suspicious and antagonistic. He preached therefore a new approach to God, on the assumption that if fundamentally correct ideas could be introduced into native minds, incorrect ones would be put to flight as darkness before light.”⁴²⁷

Protestant missionaries in general were less sympathetic to and compromising of African traditional religious values especially at the beginning of the evangelisation of Igbo Land.⁴²⁸ Though the catholic missionaries were more tolerant to the traditional Igbo values than their protestant counterparts, they condemned some of the more “obnoxious aspects of African beliefs, customs and traditions, such as trial by ordeal, sorcery and witchcraft, use of charms, the practice of polygamy and killing of twins and breach-babies”.⁴²⁹ The tolerant approach of the missionaries under Shanahan won them a good reputation among the people and subsequently easily won for them many converts. Many prominent Igbo chiefs got converted to catholic Christianity and these chiefs and even others preferred sending their sons and heirs to Catholic schools rather than to protestant schools with the belief or argument that “their sons would remain more faithful to their customs and traditions if they became Catholics than if they joined the protestant churches”.⁴³⁰ The compromise of the twentieth century missionary endeavours in Igbo land yielded the fruit of a booming Catholicism in Igbo land today but this should not leave one with the impression that becoming a catholic and preserving in the Catholic faith and doctrine was easy for the people. Though we laud this approach of the twentieth century missionary activity, but one stops to ask whether the carry-overs from the traditional religion into Christianity in the area of sickness and healing today could not be traced to this compromise. So despite their conversion to Christianity, there is still constant recourse to the traditional value systems and beliefs, and these affect their notion of health, suffering and healing.

⁴²⁷ Jordan J.P., Bishop Shanahan of Southern Nigeria, 54-55, in Obi Celestine (ed.), *A Hundred Years of the Catholic Church in Eastern Nigeria*, 379.

⁴²⁸ *ibid.*, 380.

⁴²⁹ *ibid.*, 381.

⁴³⁰ *ibid.*

5.4 THE METHODS OF EVANGELISATION

The first group of missionaries that came to Igbo land was not successful because of language barriers. They were not successful not only because of language but because of the method implored. They probably relied on the spoken words, conversion through preaching and catechetical instructions and were bent on making as many conversions as possible, as can be seen from the instructions to the Seminarians been prepared for mission quoted above.

The first and most important method was the “Catholic missionary catechesis” but top in the list of their methods of evangelisation was the formal or literary education through the schools. The missionaries built schools and through education were able to impact the faith on the children – the young generation.

A fruitful method implored since the time of Bishop Shanahan at the turn of the 20th century was a method which “strove to transform, not destroy, the people’s religious consciousness” and letting the people know that they did not come to destroy what they already have, rather to raise it and so the people joined them in large numbers because they were able to identify themselves with the faith. According to V.A. Nwosu, “the missionaries realized that the people’s traditional religious ideas were not so much incorrect as incomplete and required only completion and sublimation.”⁴³¹

This more compromising and sympathetic attitude of the catholic missionaries under Shanahan towards some elements of the African cultural values won them many converts in contrast to the Protestant missionaries who were less sympathetic to the traditional African religion.⁴³² Also the elaborate and colourful liturgical celebrations of the catholic missionaries appealed more to the people.

“During religious feasts especially the Mass and various devotions to the blessed Eucharist and the saints, altars were beautifully decorated with flowers, lighted candles, incense and colourful vestments were used. Statues of saints as well as the crucifix were displayed at strategic places. Organ music would accompany the choir which sang

⁴³¹ Nwosu V.A., *So Rich and Abundant a Harvest*, in Obi Celestine et al., *A Hundred Years of the Catholic Church in Eastern Nigeria 1885-1985*. 379.

⁴³² *ibid* 380.

hymns in Latin and the vernacular. All these caught the people's fancy and drew large numbers on such occasions".⁴³³

Besides these methods of evangelisation, the method of using hospital medical care was a very effective way of evangelisation. Though unlike in formal education, there was in Igbo land as we have treated earlier in this work, an already established century old network of traditional medical care before the advent of the Europeans⁴³⁴. There were the services of the medicine men, the diviners and herbalist. When the missionaries came, they built hospitals and medical centres to care for the sick. People were treated of their ailments and many were sickness for which they have not found explanations for or of which the traditional healing method have not been to heal. Also some of these medical services were offered by the missionaries free. The nursing care of the missionary sisters left also a very great impact on the people. People saw what they were doing, the services they were rendering and not only hearing what they were preaching and many joined the faith. Hence the medical mission was an effective means of evangelisation in Igbo land.

5.5 THE MEDICAL MISSIONARIES AND CHRISTIAN MEDICAL SERVICES IN IGBO LAND

According to John Baur, "the medical services occupied a second place in missionary activity. Education was considered a direct response to Christ's commission "Go and teach all nations". Healing diseases seemed to have been an activity used mostly to support Christ's own teaching mission.⁴³⁵ Just as the healing Christ was moved by compassion at seeing the sick, the hungry and the poor among his listeners, so also did the missionaries who used medical services as a means of transporting the message of a loving, healing and caring God to the people.

Western medicine however was introduced into Africa in general and Nigeria and Igbo land in particular through the colonial masters and the missionaries. Before the intro-

⁴³³ *ibid*, 381.

⁴³⁴ Baur John, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa: An African Church History*, Pauline Publications, 2nd Rev. Ed., 1998, 417. .

⁴³⁵ Baur John, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa: An African Church History*, 416.

duction of European medicine, Igbo medical culture had a well established century old network of medical care as John Baur affirms:

“Unlike in formal education, Africa had a well-established century-old network of medical care before the arrival of the white man. There were the proper medicine-man or herbalist, the witch-doctor and the diviner. The last named found out whether a sickness was caused by God, that is by natural causes and could be healed by using herbs, or was due to witchcraft or evil spirits and hence was to be treated by the witch-doctor or exorcist”.⁴³⁶

With the coming of the missionaries, modern western medical services were formally introduced into Africa. In Nigeria, western medicine was not formally introduced until the 1860s, when the Sacred Heart Hospital was established by Roman Catholic missionaries in Abeokuta. During the entire colonial period, the religious missions predominated by the Roman Catholic mission played a major role in the supply of modern health care facilities. By 1960, almost 40 percent of the total numbers of mission-based hospital beds were owned by the Roman Catholic mission. According to Library of Congress Country Studies, by the time of Nigeria’s independence in 1960, there were more mission hospitals than government hospitals- 118 mission hospitals, compared to 101 government hospitals. The missionaries also provided medical training and education for nurses and paramedical personnel and sponsored advanced medical training for many of the first generation of Western trained Nigerian doctors.

The British colonial Government in Nigeria started providing formal medical services with the construction of clinics and hospitals in Lagos, Calabar and other coastal trading centres first in 1870s. But unlike the missionary clinics, these were solely meant for the whites. Their services were only later expanded to African employees of European concerns. After the Second World War, medical facilities were expanded and medical training facilities for Nigerian medical assistants were established by the colonial government. However, Nigerian physicians, even if trained in Europe were generally prohibited from practicing in government hospitals unless they were serving African patients, a practice that led to protest by doctors and medical personnel involved then in the nationalistic movement.

⁴³⁶ *ibid.*, 417.

No doubt then, according to Baur, the medicine chest of the pioneer Missionary “was like a magical box working miracles of healing and winning the people’s confidence where his mere teaching would have failed.”⁴³⁷

The missionaries established medical centres that treated different ailments. At the beginning there were also sceptics – at first suspicion of getting poisoned but once it was overcome, the medical services were happily accepted since they relieved the people of their ailments.

Mission-based medical centres were concentrated in certain areas depending on the religious and other activities of the mission. Roman Catholic hospitals in particular were concentrated in the South-eastern and Midwestern areas of Nigeria. In Igbo land, the missionaries also established medical centres depending on which mission congregation resides in which zone.

The sick in Owerri zone of Igbo land got relief from the established medical centre at Emekuku in 1935 run by the Holy Rosary Sisters. Clinics were opened in out-stations though it was difficult to staff these clinics. In the bid to solve this problem of lack of staff, a Nurses’ Training School was opened in Emekuku in 1940 - The Holy Rosary Convent that produced Rev Sisters who managed the hospitals and clinics in this region from 1935 to 1970 when the Nigerian Government after the civil war expelled the expatriates.

Thereafter the Immaculate Heart Sisters assumed direct responsibility of the management of the clinics and medical centres.⁴³⁸ The reputation of Catholic hospitals today is formidable in the whole region.

In the Onitsha region, medical work of the church reached its climax through the establishment of St. Charles Borromeo hospital Onitsha in 1962 by Archbishop Heerey.⁴³⁹ Today some of the mission hospitals are jointly owned by the government and the Church.

Besides the Holy Rosary Sisters in Owerri and Onitsha region, in the Calabar, Ikot Ekpene and Abakaliki region were the Medical Missionaries of Mary⁴⁴⁰ who arrived at Ogoja in 1945 after having opened maternity Clinics in Abakaliki.⁴⁴¹

⁴³⁷ Baur John, 2000 Years of Christianity in Africa, 416.

⁴³⁸ Obi Celestine et al, A Hundred years of the Catholic Church in Eastern Nigeria, 209.

⁴³⁹ Ibid., 185.

⁴⁴⁰ The Medical Missionaries of Mary was founded in Nigeria by Mother Mary Martin in 1937.

5.6 THE PROLIFERATION OF CHURCHES IN IGBO LAND AND THE BEGINNING OF FAITH HEALING – PRAYER AND HEALING CENTRES.

We have treated above the advent and the stages in the development of Christianity in Igbo land. It is not the aim of this work to engage in detailed study of Pentecostalism, the Independent Churches and other religious Movements in Nigeria, rather to outline the characteristics of these movements in terms of their emphasis on healing and faith healing and through that to underline a possible influence in the current quest for healing in the church in Igbo land.

The mainstream churches – missionary Churches brought by the missionaries who came at the same time with the colonial powers, were seen as offshoots of colonialism and hence the move to break away from these churches and form Independent African Churches started. Prominent among the reasons for the breakaway were leadership problems like the replacement of the African-lead-mission in the case of the Christian Mission Society (C.M.S.) with European missionaries which was interpreted then as a racial act. According to Ugwu, “It is such dissatisfactions with the ‘white’ domination that led some of the African elites to form their own churches where they could determine their own policies.”⁴⁴² The result was that according to Barrett, by 1922, there were seventeen major bodies of the breakaway churches in southern Nigerian, with about 90,233 adherents⁴⁴³. Such breakaway churches include; the Native Baptist Church or Ebenezer Baptist Church (1888), the United Native African Church (1891), and the African Bethel Church (1901).

The urge for Independent African Churches was boosted with the Second World War when the African nationalistic consciousness started awakening. This awakening national consciousness led to the rise of nationalists who started agitating for independence from colonial powers. This led also to the agitations for “Churches with African face”.

⁴⁴¹ Obi Celestine et al, *A Hundred years of the Catholic Church in Eastern Nigeria*, 218.

⁴⁴² Ugwu Moses, *Healing in the Nigerian Church*, 119.

⁴⁴³ Cf. Barrett, D. B., *Schism & Renewal in Africa: Analysis of Six Thousand Contemporary Religious Movements*, (Lusaka, 1968), 19, in *ibid*, 118.

Besides the African Independent Churches born out of nationalistic cravings, a “desire for deeper religious experience” led to the development of other forms of Christianity, referred today as the “Spiritual Churches”. Ugwu described the emergence of these “Spiritual Churches” in Nigeria known as the “Aladura Churches” thus:

“These ‘Spiritual Churches’ emerged from a movement that gained prominence in Yorubaland during the influenza epidemic of 1918. The movement started when the Anglican Church could not help their African members during the epidemic. The Yoruba Christians believing that the mission churches could not help them in the face of the disaster, formed prayer and healing groups. This group later left the Anglican Church when they began having doubts concerning the infant baptism.”⁴⁴⁴

These Independent Churches employing faith healing seemed to offer protection against witchcraft, hence making people join them as Bauer describes: “While the mission churches were able through their medicine and health education to greatly reduce the fear of witchcraft, they remained incapable of convincing the people in cases of incurable sickness, barrenness and psycho-somatic diseases. People went on attributing such cases to witchcraft or spirit possession. Even calling for faith in God’s providence would hardly help. To explain the fact that priests were never harmed by witches, what the Tonga told Fr. Fernandes in 1560 could still be heard among Christians in the 1960s: the priest is protected by his breviary. It was only the independent African churches which seemed to provide a satisfactory answer to this problem through the practice of faith-healing. They often rejected indigenous and European medicines alike and trusted entirely in healing through prayer, the prayer of a charismatic prophet, usually enhanced by the prayer of the whole community.”⁴⁴⁵

Many American Pentecostal sects found their ways into Nigeria and established themselves. They also started influencing these independent churches giving rise to new movements and churches. Among them was the Faith Tabernacle. A group that separated themselves from the Faith Tabernacle later developed to be called the Christ Apostolic Church.⁴⁴⁶ The Christ Apostolic Church rejects western medicine and do not go to hospital when they are sick but rely on prayer. Hence these “Spiritual Churches” are known as “Aladura Churches”. Aladura is a Yoruba word meaning “one who prays”.

⁴⁴⁴ Ugwu, Moses, 119.

⁴⁴⁵ John Baur, 417.

⁴⁴⁶ Cf. Barrett D. B. (ed.), *World Christian Encyclopaedia AD. 1900-2000*, (Oxford, 1982), 532.

The Aladura Churches are the churches that lay much emphasis on prayer. Ugwu listed the different offshoots of the Aladura movement as: “The Christ Apostolic Church; The Cherubim and Seraphim; The Church of the Lord (Aladura), and other subsequent groups that broke away from them. The Cherubim and Seraphim, for example, have given birth to over 200 distinct denominations.”⁴⁴⁷

This trend in the Western part of Nigeria, the Yorubaland which is predominantly Protestants spread also to other parts and Igboland was no exemption. The mission churches at that time did not take them serious while the Protestant Churches from which they developed considered them as reactionary churches. Their mode of worship characterised by ecstatic manifestations and faith-healing made them attractive to the Igbo – African milieu as it seemed to satisfy their religious longings. The details of their religious practice according to Isichei: “contain much from the African past. Sometimes prayer ‘recipes’ are astonishingly concrete, to Western eyes. ‘...pray at 6.30 o’clock am. Before sunrise read Psalm 38 seven times’, and so on: a kind of technological approach to prayer which is linked with the way in which traditional religion offers specific protection to be attained by specific ends.”⁴⁴⁸

At the beginning they were given names and regarded by many simply as the “mush-room churches”, “hand-clapping churches”, “band-beating churches” or “vision-seeing churches”. But slowly they ate deep into Igbo land winning over many souls, so that - as Ndiokwere will put it - “there is, in fact, practically no little village in Southern Nigeria where one type of these churches or another does not exist. ... In Eastern Nigeria alone it is estimated that there were more than 1,200 prophets of all categories in 1974.”⁴⁴⁹

Today, in Igbo land, there is a proliferation of Churches competing to win souls with orthodox and unorthodox methods. Without trying to over generalise, almost every hulk and corner you will find a church. Many unfinished buildings and batchers have been taken over by one type of church or another. It is as if it has become a way of making money, so that whoever wants to make money as fast as possible in Nigeria today goes and starts his own church and gives it a name. According to Enang, Nigeria is in this situation “a bewildering tower of Babel as far as these new churches and movements are

⁴⁴⁷ Ugwu Moses, 122, Cf. Also Barrett, D. B., *World Christian Encyclopedia*, 528.

⁴⁴⁸ Isichei, E., *History of Nigeria*, (London, 1983), 463, in Ugwu Moses, 123.

⁴⁴⁹ Cf. Ndiokwere Nathaniel, *Prophecy and Revolution: The Role of Prophets in the Independent African Churches and in Biblical Tradition*, (London, 1981), 56-57, in Ugwu Moses, 125.

concerned”⁴⁵⁰. The rapid development of these new churches has left the established churches in shock as they see their members being robbed from them. The Independent churches are in fierce and stiff competition with other religious bodies, struggling for attention and winning-over of members. The recent international accreditation of Nigeria as the most religious country in the world could be traced back to this proliferation of churches and religious movements in Nigeria. As at now almost 11% of the about 40% Christians in Nigeria are strong adherents of these new Pentecostal churches and they are mostly concentrated in the eastern and western parts of Nigeria. Up to 1991, about 2000 different Christian denominations were registered with the Nigerian Government and out of this about 850 of the Independent church groups have already received their certificate of incorporation while almost about 2000 others are not bothered about any formal registration⁴⁵¹.

Rosalind Hackett in her study of the new religious movements in Nigeria classified them into five⁴⁵²:

a. The Neo Primal Movement: They respect the local belief systems and practices, trying to revive the African traditional religious concepts - Godianism. They propound that Africans should worship the God of their fathers as the Israelites did. An example of this movement is the National Church of Nigeria and the Cameroon founded in 1948 in Aba for the reformation of the original and natural Religion of Africa. The Bible does not make any strong appeal to them. Hence they are rarely regarded as Churches.

b. The Healing Homes: They are an offshoot of the traditional healing patterns and they exist solely for healing purposes drawing inspiration from Christianity, Islam, Occultism, Indian magic, Astrology and Metaphysics. The spiritual churches – Aladura churches developed from them. An example of such healing home is found in Calabar which according to Hackett describes itself as Homeopathic and Botanical Medical Clinic⁴⁵³.

c. Spiritual Science Movements: They are so called because of their search for spiritual knowledge which they believe will earn them better positions in society. Belonging to

⁴⁵⁰ Enang Kenneth, *Nigerian Catholics And the Independent Churches: A Call to Authentic Faith*, (Freiburg, 2000), 19.

⁴⁵¹ Cf. *ibid.*, 20.

⁴⁵² Cf. *ibid.*, 21-25.

⁴⁵³ Hackett R.I.J., *Enigma Variations*, 138, in *ibid.*

this group are the AMORC Society, the Church of New Jerusalem, the Iranian Bahaiism, the Hare Krishna etc.

d. Independent Churches: Studies on the independent Churches identifies three forms of the independent churches in Africa. These are the Ethiopian churches which are the independent churches that seceded from an old mission church like the African Presbyterian Church; the Zionist Churches like the Christian Apostolic Church in Zion and the Christ Apostolic Church; and the Messianic Churches which refer to church founders who refer themselves as the new messiahs. Example in Nigeria is the case of Olumba Olumba Obu.

Also with the coming of many non-denominational revivalists and Pentecostal crusaders from the United States of America, new groups of churches have emerged in Nigeria. Among them are: The Church of God Mission International in Benin City, founded by Rev. B. Idahosa, the UMA Evangelistic Association founded by Rev. Dr. Uma Ukpai in Uyo, Christ Kingdom Crusaders, the Deeper Christian Life, the Deeper Life Church, Revival Valley Ministries,, Jesus Christ Healing and Evangelical Movement etc.⁴⁵⁴

Beside the mainline Pentecostalism, there is today the neo-Pentecostalism which is considerably similar to the trend known as Faith Gospel or “Prosperity Gospel”. For faith gospel, affluence is a goal that is explicitly sought after, and faith gospel pastors openly flaunt their personal wealth.⁴⁵⁵ The Winners’ Chapel is a good example of the prosperity Gospel in operation. Financial Breakthrough Revivals and deliverance crusades with well known Evangelists like the famous German Evangelist Reinhard Bonnke with promises and reports of healing and deliverance from sicknesses but also from poverty are big also in prosperity Gospel Evangelism.⁴⁵⁶

5.6.1 Characteristics of the Independent Churches

Characteristics of these Independent Churches are that they “have strong Pentecostal tendencies.... They are exclusivist... and are characterised by rigorous born-again per-

⁴⁵⁴ Hackett, R.I.J., Religion in Calabar, 243; Enigma Variations, 134fff, in Enang Kenneth, Nigerian Catholics and the Independent Churches: A Call to Authentic Faith. 26.

⁴⁵⁵ Alyward Shorter & Njiru Joseph N., *New Religious Movements in Africa*, (Paulines Pub. 2001), 33.

⁴⁵⁶ *ibid*, 34.

suasions.”⁴⁵⁷ They lay emphasis on healing and Pentecostal revelations and are often called the “prophet-healing churches”. There is a pervading rigour of fasting and a definite emphasis on the presence of the Holy Spirit whose manifestations are mostly experienced in prophecy, glossolalia or the gift of tongues, in healing practices, dreams, visions and possessions by the spirit. They promise their members salvation and delivery from sickness and other misfortunes of life⁴⁵⁸. The Scriptures is placed high among these Pentecostal groups and born-again adherents, so that whatever is not biblically founded and established is not accepted. They show a passion for attacking and criticizing the Catholic Church. Miracles and healing are central elements of religious practice in the Nigerian Independent churches. Healing, long prayers, fasting and confession of sins are prescribed spiritual exercises. And modern medicines are often rejected and members are advised not to use modern pharmaceutical products.⁴⁵⁹

The emergence of these independent churches and later Pentecostal groups together with their emphasis on healing did not leave the established churches uninfluenced. The emergence of the Catholic charismatic Renewal Movement in the Catholic Faith and the subsequent emphasis on the Spirit-led, Charisma-led and healing-oriented worship culminating in the phenomena of “healing Masses” now rampant in the Catholic Church could be seen as a possible influence from Pentecostal Evangelism.

5.7 THE PHENOMENA OF “HEALING MASSES” TODAY.

Healing has always been part of the mission of the Church as we have seen in Chapter four on healing in the New Testament.

The Holy Eucharist which is the centre of this saving and healing mission of the church, has always been a sacrament of healing. It is the re-enactment of the saving act of Christ on the cross. According to the renowned Jesuit scholar Josef Jungmann, in his book: “The Mass”: “The holy Mass is before all else an anamnesis... The word implies that the mind turns to past action – Christ’s redeeming work – to bring it down to the present

⁴⁵⁷ Enang Kenneth, *Nigerian Catholics and the Independent Churches*, 26.

⁴⁵⁸ *ibid.*, 29-30.

⁴⁵⁹ *ibid.*, 30-31; Cf. Also Marshall, *Pentecostalism in South Nigeria*, 10.

moment and into the midst of the celebrating community.” Dom Gregory Dix reinstated this when he writes in his book: ‘The Shape of the Liturgy’: “Anamnesis has the sense of ‘re-calling’ or ‘re-presenting’ before God an event in the past, so that it becomes here and now operative by its effects.” Therefore when the Church comes together and gives thanks by remembering the death and resurrection of Jesus (anamnesis), the effects of what it recalls (salvation) becomes present. So the Holy mass from the onset is a healing and saving sacrament. The different elements or parts of the Holy Mass attest to this healing aspect of the mass. The whole actions that take place in the mass, point to this healing effect of the Holy Eucharist. But this saving and healing effect of the Eucharist can only be received through active participation as the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy Article 11 rightly points out:

“But in order that the liturgy may be able to produce its full effects, it is necessary that the faithful come to it with proper dispositions, that their minds be attuned to their voices, and that they cooperate with heavenly grace, lest they receive it in vain. Pastors of souls must, therefore, realize that when the liturgy is celebrated, something more is required than the laws governing valid and lawful celebrations. It is their duty also to ensure that the faithful take part fully aware of what they are doing, actively engaged in the rite and enriched by it.”⁴⁶⁰

Therefore, if we have not been fully enriched by the Sacrament, it could be because of the lack of participation.

Since the emergence of the Charismatic Renewal Movement in the Catholic Church in 1967, together with the influence of Pentecostal Evangelism and the Independent Churches with their inherent emphasis on healing, the terminology “Healing Mass” has entered into the vocabulary of the Catholic Church. Some find the concept however as an outright tautology since the Eucharist or Holy Mass in itself is a healing sacrifice. In an interview with Bishop Ochiagha, he opined that there is nothing like “healing mass” but he opted or admitted “Mass for the sick”. According to him, “there is nothing in the Church’s liturgy as healing Mass. We have mass for the sick. And I want to appeal to my brother priests and to seminarians; the church has everything you need to help you”.⁴⁶¹

⁴⁶⁰ “Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy”, 11, *Vatican Council II*, ed. Flannery Austin, O.P., Dublin, Dominican Pub., 1988.

⁴⁶¹ *The Torch Magazine*, 120, (Dec. 2000-June 2001), 17.

But in the Catholic Charismatic circle and for Charismatics, the healing mass is a Eucharistic celebration in which healing from sickness and afflictions are prayed for directly. At the healing Mass, they pray that the effect of the Mass, our redemption and salvation, be present and effective in each person. They argue in this sense according to Father Richard Bain in his Article: “What is a Mass for Healing?”: “When we pray the prayer of the Church, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, Christ is always present, and when Christ is present, his love is present, and when his love is present, healings take place. It is our Lord’s deep compassionate and unconditional love that heals us.”⁴⁶²

In many parishes in Igbo land today, the priests who are engaged in ‘Healing Masses’ do offer this Healing Mass once a month. These ‘Healing Masses’ are characterised by adoration hymns, charismatic hymns that moves the spirit and can lead to spiritual experience. In these charismatic Healing Masses, the efficacy or the authenticity of the Holy Mass is therefore interpreted in line with the healing effects of the Holy Spirit believed to be the healing agent.

The penitential rite is often done extensively since it is believed that it is our sin that block our petitions from reaching God. In the penitential rites, reconciliation with God is sought and the soul in so doing is purified in order to allow the Spirit of God in the faithful to affect the spiritual experience. We are therefore healed by the Lord of our sinfulness. We ask him to remove our sinful inclinations.

In these healing Masses, the liturgy of the word has a significant place in nourishing the spirit freed from sin in the penitential rite. We listen to the word of God and seek to integrate his word in our lives. Hence the sermon in many healing masses in Igboland generally lasts long. Charismatic preachers and healers are often advanced in the knowledge of Bible quotations. They can cite many bible citations off by heart and often win the sympathy of the people because of this capability.

The credo – profession of faith confirms the faith in this healing God who is then implored in the extensive and spontaneous prayers of the faithful in which prayers for healing are offered, often spontaneous. The sick are prayed for that they may be healed and their caretakers strengthened. Those who are sick and are seeking healing or those who come with other problems are often called out and the priest prays over them laying hands on them. In some cases, there are special prayer groups, often called the

⁴⁶² Richard Bain, „What is a Mass for Healing?“, in <http://www.parishmissions.com/mass.html>.

prayer warriors who assist the priest in this prayer session. They will extend their hands over the sick while praying for them. The use of holy water, olive oil and sacramental are also rampant. People do come with their water or olive oil for blessing for use at home.

In the offertory, bread and wine are presented for sacrifice, we present ourselves, our problems, our joys and sorrows to God and ask him to transform and heal us as he transforms the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ. In the moment of consecration we are awed by God's power as our gifts of bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ and proclaim his mighty deeds in the mystery of faith: "Lord, by your death and resurrection, you have set us free. You are the Saviour of the world." We then proclaim him as our father in this prayer Jesus taught us asking God that his Kingdom of joy come and that his Will be done. We pray like the blind man in the bible: Lord, if it is your Will, you can make me to see again."

In the Holy Communion, the sick is nourished and strengthened by the body of Christ. When we receive the Lord in the Holy Communion, our response is "Amen!" In that, we express our faith in his divine presence and power. In the silence and prayers after Communion, people are implored to praise and thank the Lord for the healing he is affecting in them in that moment of union with the Lord and to present their other needs to him.

After mass, the people are anointed with holy oil – olive oil, a sacramental. During this anointing, the prayer team, popularly called "Prayer Warriors" will be praying for the people. They are often trained individuals who participate in the prayers for healing after mass. In these prayers, one may see some people "ruptured or rest in the Spirit" as they may begin to pray in other languages or uttering words foreign to the people been prayed for. This is called "praying in the Spirit" or "speaking in tongues".

Adoration before the exposed Blessed Sacrament is a common practice in these places. The sick go to seek healing from Jesus the sole healer.

In these Masses, dancing, clapping of hands and waving of hands with closed eyes as sign of spiritual rapture are common phenomena accompanying prayers and services at healing sessions. Music ministry is also very important to the healing Mass with songs of praise, songs for the liturgy and for prayer ministry following the Mass.

As a further sign of the influence of Pentecostal Evangelism, the usual acclamation of Catholics “Praise be to Jesus” with the response: “Now and forever” has been overshadowed if not replaced with “Praise the Lord – halleluiaah” acclamation, usually accredited or associated with Pentecostal Evangelism. This acclamation is repeated at times to urge for calm or raise the spirit high, drive a point home or gain the attention of the worshippers.

Another significant part of these healing sessions is the giving of “testimony”. After the Eucharistic Celebration and the prayer sessions for healing, the worshippers who feel they have been healed or have received the favours they requested from God in the previous gatherings are called upon to come forward and testify what God has done for them. The testimonies or the fulfilment of one’s prayers are often followed by thanksgiving or the show of gratitude to God in different ways.

There may be some nuances in the conduct of the Healing Masses from place to place depending on the conducting priest. For some, the only difference from a regular Mass is that they substitute the blessing of the holy Water and an Asperges for the penitential rite. The venues of such Healing Masses are often filled with water Candles waiting to be blessed by the priest healer. Also the Asperges – the sprinkling of the holy water is done with banded palm branches to make sure the holy water touches the people directly since some attach the efficacy of the holy water to a direct touch and to the quantity that touches them. Some drink the holy water or take their drugs with the holy water to induce efficacy.

5.7.1 The pastoral effects and concerns.

Today the phenomenon of healing Masses is widespread in many parishes in Igbo land. The Faithful move from one parish to another where these healing masses are offered. They at times leave or abandon their parish priests and go to parishes where they feel the priest has the charismatic gift of healing. The result is that priests who do not want to lose their parishioners to this pastoral migration may start offering these healing masses or prayer sessions for healing purposes in their parishes even when they know that they do not have the gift of healing. Some try to frame it. The result is then the many reports of aberrations in the form of either trying to imitate or force out something

that is not in the person or even turn the whole phenomena to a financial investment since many people attend it and make their offerings and thanksgiving.

It is therefore this pastoral problems accruing from the incessant quest for healing among the Igbo Christians that give rise to the Healing Churches and homes and now to the phenomena of Healing Mass or Healing Sessions in the Catholic Church, that will be the object of the empirical research in the second part of this work.

PART II: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY, DATA COLLECTION AND EVALUATION

I. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Theology⁴⁶³ bears witness to a relationship between God and mankind. It is a relationship that bears the stamp of redemption, caring and sustenance of life in its fullness. God's relationship with humanity is revealed in Jesus Christ whose life and ministry represent the totality of this divine redemption and healing. Through Christ, humanity experienced and still experiences the saving power and grace of God who liberates from all powers inimical to life. The liberation through Christ as recorded in the New Testament is often shown in the manner of bodily healing of impediments and sicknesses and culminated in the passion and resurrection of Christ. In this sense Christ healed the whole man. He relived him of his bodily ailment and saved his soul from the eternal sickness. Christ healing was holistic. And He wanted his followers to continue this work.

He -Jesus therefore commissioned his apostles to go into the world: „proclaim the Gospel and heal the sick and free those in bondage“. This commissioning to bring salvation and healing to the afflicted, the poor and the pagans is also the duty of the church, the body of Christ today. And the immediate presence of this body of Christ is the community of worshipers as well as the common people in the parish community of the faithful shepherded by a priest, the representative and successor of the apostles.

The early church in the first centuries, witnessed a period where Charismas and gifts played a crucial role in the life of the church. Among these charismas and gifts was that of healing.

In the contemporary era, the phenomenon of healing through prayers has taken the centre stage especially in the African and Latin American churches. With the emergence of

⁴⁶³ Theology is a science about God's being and His relationship with the universe". It is "the science of the facts of divine revelation so far as these facts concern the nature of God and our relation to Him, as creatures, as sinners, and as subjects of redemption". (2 Timothy 3: 15-17).

the Charismatic Movement in the Catholic Church, the emphasis on charisma and gifts as well as praying for healing has become common. For the church in most of these developing and under-developed nations, the trend of incessant quest for healing on the part of the faithful and the danger of aberrations in the exercise of charismas and gifts on the part of the clerics and preachers of the word has started posing a pastoral problem that needed to be addressed. This is the case of the church in Nigeria and in Igbo land in particular. Healing homes and gatherings where prayers are offered asking for healing is becoming rampant. In the Catholic Church, the concept and practice of healing mass has gained ground. It is this practice of healing masses with the recent craze for healing that is the subject of this research.

This empirical part of the work shall consist of three chapters: Chapter one shall deal with the conduction of the interviews and the data collection. Chapter two shall dwell on the research findings and the data analysis while the chapter three shall attempt a pastoral theological interpretation based on the findings of the research and end with some recommendations.

CHAPTER ONE: DATA COLLECTION PHASE, ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter we hope highlight the method used in the collection of information that will be used in this part of the work. We shall try to stipulation the research title, the objective of the research and the method of data collection and processing.

1.1 RESEARCH METHOD

This empirical part of the study made use of the inductive method. Part of the method in carrying out this research consisted in the data collection approaches through administered questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. This part of the study was a qualitative and quantitative inquiry. Open-ended, unstructured interviews were conducted. The datasets were analyzed using recursive abstraction – analyzing without coding whereby datasets are analyzed, summarized and presented.

In the quantitative inquiry, a research questionnaire was formulated and distributed in Nigeria and to some Igbo people living Overseas.

This will be followed by the analysis process where the results of the empirical findings shall be subjected to interpretative practice of everyday practice of the people (as represented by the targeted participants). The data shall be analyzed and the statistical graphs used in the work. We shall then make some pastoral theological evaluations and suggestions.

1.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The aim of this part of the research lies in an attempt to address empirically the theoretical issues analysed in the previous part, namely, the present day understanding of sickness and healing that calls for the incessant quest for healing among Igbo Christians today. A pastoral problem is posed through this incessant quest for healing. The faithful

migrate often from one parish to the other in search of healing and healers. We wish to find out what the faithful are missing in their original parish communities that they go looking for in other parishes or churches and we shall try to make pastoral suggestions based on the findings of the Research.

1.3 RESEARCH TITLE

The title of the research shall be the problem of health, sickness and healing in the Igbo Church: A pastoral theological analysis. This Research dwells on the issue of health, sickness and healing amidst the Christian mission of salvation and healing among the Igbo people.

1.4 DATA COLLECTION PROCESS: QUESTIONNAIRES AND INTERVIEWS

The data collection for this work shall privilege the deductive and the inductive methods – Questionnaires and oral interviews.

1.5 UNSTRUCTURED QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS

This empirical part of the study will adopt a position in which the views of the subjects under inquiry will be the priority as a means of laying open the hidden facts in the field. In order to get an in-depth understanding of the respondents, especially, their professional perspectives on the issues being discussed, and some questionnaires were directed towards specified group of respondents. These were mainly some catholic parishes in Igbo land, a good number of the lay faithful as well as priests, Religious and Seminarians; also catholic teachers and tutors, from whom the questionnaires probed for their views and expert understanding of the parochial phenomena. The graphic assessments shall be the results that came in through the questionnaires.

I shall try to reach out with the questionnaires to representatives from the following age groups:

youths: 12-25 years of age

young couples or families: 25-40 years of age

Parents with grown up children: 45-65 years of age

Old People: 65 – 100 years

Most part of the questionnaires shall be distributed in two parishes in Igbo land. One parish will be where this practice of “healing mass” has been in practice and the other parish will be one where it is not in practice.

Besides the collection of data through the questionnaires, I shall try to organise an oral or open-ended interview with some people whose views may be of immense importance in the assessment of the problem.

The persons to be interviewed shall range from:

One priest involved in the healing ministry: Fr. Peter.

A traditional Herbalist: Nwokorie

One person who has being healed through prayers in the healing ministry and one who believes he was not healed.

Interview with a professor in one of the seminaries in Igbo land where the future priests and eventual priests-healers are trained: Fr. Dioka.

Interview with Nigerian priests – Fr. Simon living and working in the Western world (America) to ascertain the level of influence

Interview with an educationist: Mr Odu involved also in the training of the youths in the secular institutions.

A lay person who is also a worker or civil servant: Engr. Ebe.

1.6 THE INTERVIEWS

I have two forms in the Questionnaire:

2. How important is your health to you?



--	-	+/-	+	++
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

3. What is good health for you or who in your opinion is enjoying good health? (more than one answer is allowed)



Lack of pain	☐
Sate of bodily well being	☐
State of mental well being	☐
.....	☐

In the questionnaire-form like in Q 2 above, I will use the scale 1 – 5 (absolutely do not agree – fully agree 100%)

Where: - - - -+ + ++

1 2 3 4 5

1: absolutely do not agree 0%

2. do not agree 25%

3. agree 50 %

4. agree but not fully 75%

5. fully agree 100%

In the Form like in Q. 3 above: I will treat each option as a separate question using the scale: 0 or 1 that means if a box is ticked, it gets 1, whereas not marked ones or open Boxes get 0

CHAPTER TWO: RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DATA ANALYSIS

2.0 INTRODUCTION

Having highlighted the research methodology in the above chapter, we hope to present in this chapter the findings of our research, analysing the findings in the light of the present situation. This chapter shall dwell mostly on the findings from the field work.

2.1 SITUATION OF THE POOR: THE PLIGHT OF OUR FAITHFUL.

In our reflection on life – “ndu” in the first part of this work, we noted that life for the Igbo man has a supreme value that should be consciously nurtured and maintained. And man, “mma-du” or “nma-ndu” – the beauty of life -therefore goes out of himself in search of conditions that make this “ndu” – life enjoyable and tolerable. The importance attached to health and life is evident in the fact that about 73% of the interviewed consider their health as being very important to them, while 47% are of the opinion that health should be maintained at all cost.

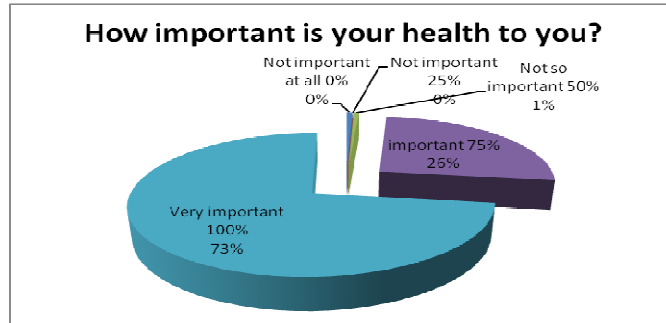


FIG. 8: Research graphic on importance of health

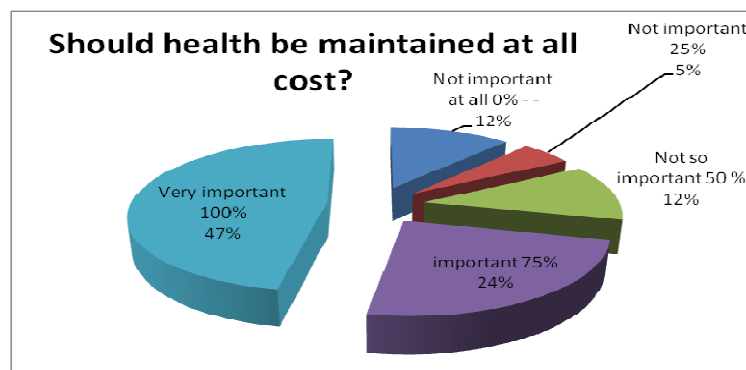


FIG. 9: Research Graphic on health maintenance

But no matter how important the Igbo person considers his health, it is the reality on the ground that concerns our case study here: the Igbo person's- "existential situation is indeed a deplorable one. He struggles always to survive in a world nagging with chaos, violence, injustice, oppression, hunger, sickness, disease, pain, suffering etc."⁴⁶⁴

Poverty and lack of the necessary amenities are the lot of many. The bridge between the poor and the rich is so wide. Social systems that can absolve the less privileged like what is obtainable in Europe is lacking. There is no health insurance and therefore whoever becomes sick, is at the mercy of the expensive, unaffordable and at times unreachable health industry. The available hospitals and clinics are ill-equipped. The health industry is an open market where everyone bids his own price. The result is that the poor can no longer afford it. The next option is the services of the chemists that have become a trade that one learns through apprenticeship just like one learns the profession of a supermarket salesman or woman just by learning the prices of the commodities accompanied by a little business acumen. The chemist option is cheaper for the poor masses. At times the mixture of medications from unqualified chemist's salesman or woman who professionally are not entitled to prescribe drugs can either heal or worsen the situation if they prescribe wrongly.

Slyvester Nwodo (2000), described correctly the situation or the plight of the sick thus: „presently, there is a shallow medical advancement with horrible charges that does not tally or equitably challenge our tropical deficiencies; man therefore resorts to supernatural assistance, which sometimes has their loose ends.“⁴⁶⁵

The resort to supernatural assistance explains today the flight to healers and healing homes with the rampant upspring of healing homes in Igbo land since recourse to God for many comes cheaper.

2.2 VIEWS ABOUT SICKNESS

We have treated in part one of the Igbo traditional concept and understanding of sickness. In this empirical part we tried to sample out the current views about sickness and how far sickness is abhorred as to seek its healing if necessary at all cost.

⁴⁶⁴ Nwodo Sylvester, "Crave for Miracles and healing; the pernicious problem of our time" *Tourch Magazine*, 2000, 5.

⁴⁶⁵ *ibid.*

We tried to sample out the notions people have today about sickness. 43% hold sickness to be a normal biological malfunction of the body while 18% held sickness to be a cross laid on someone. 17% saw it as a trial to test the faith and level of trust of the sick. Some saw sickness as means of blessing or means of attaining salvation. These current understanding or notions about sickness point to the Christian influence of the Igbo mind in the last decades. That some still see sickness as a curse points to the remnants of the traditional view that sickness is a curse or punishment from the gods or ancestors.

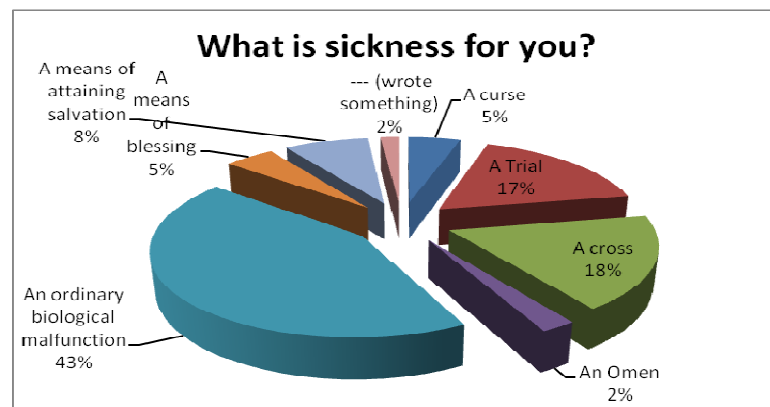


FIG. 10: Graphic on the meaning of sickness

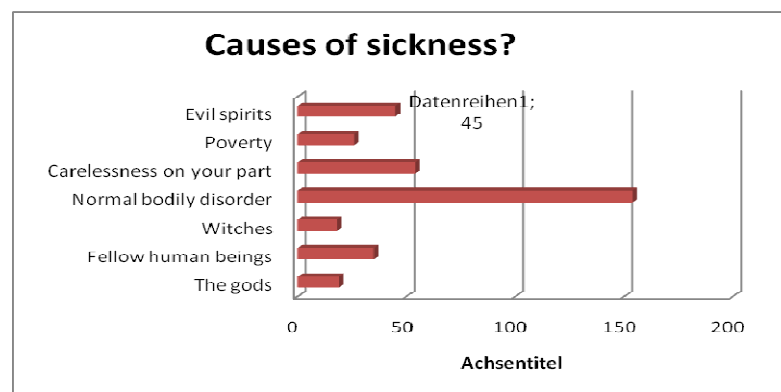


FIG. 11: Graphic on: "To what an Igbo man attributes his sickness"

One notices then that the traditional views are still deep-rooted to what the contemporary Igbo man still attributes his sickness. Some still attribute sickness to the gods or ancestors, evil spirits or even witches and fellow human beings in forms of "ogwu"-charms or sorcery. There is still a strong believe in human agents or human causations of sickness. The majority of the interviewed do not give God the blame for all sicknesses.

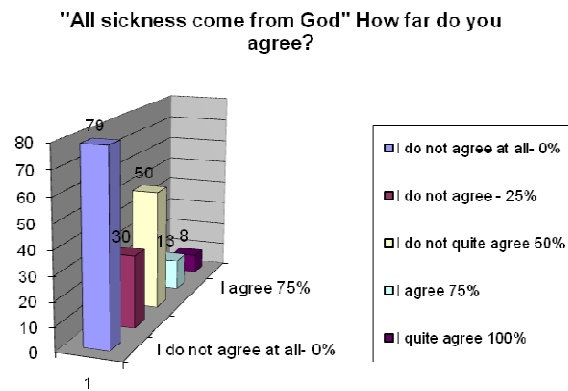


FIG. 12: Graphic on "Is God the cause of sickness."

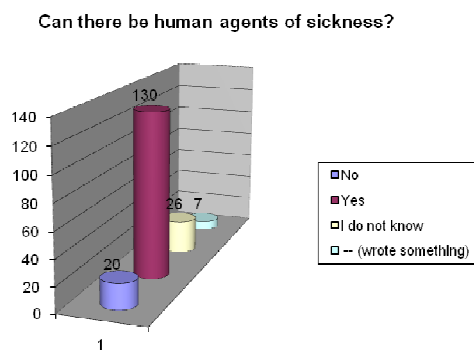


FIG. 13: Are there human agents of sickness?

In categorising the nature of sickness, it was discovered that sickness was attributed to physical, mental, psychic and moral ailments. Interesting was the categorisation of existential insufficiency - hunger and poverty along the lines of sickness. Living in sin categorised as moral sickness is also seen here as a type of sickness as we saw in our treatment of sickness in the scriptures and sickness in Igbo land.

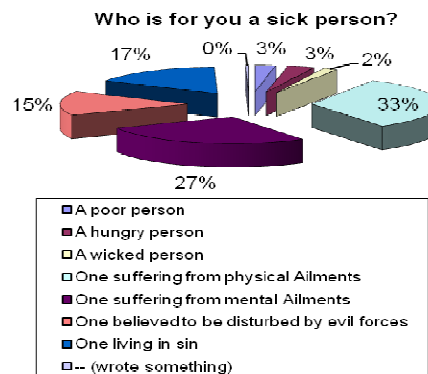


FIG. 14: Who is a sick person?

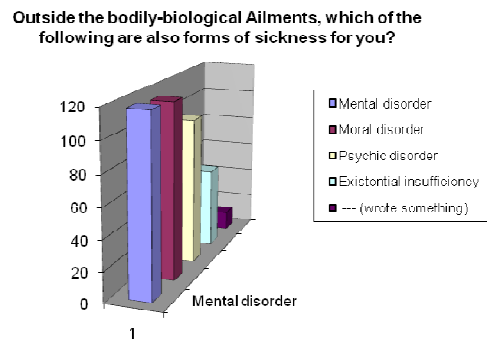


FIG. 15: Forms of sickness

The notion of sickness as a deficiency and emanating from evil causation inimical to man, accounts then for the random quest for healing and deliverance miracles.

2.3 THE RANDOM QUEST FOR HEALING AND MIRACLES

In the Igbo society, we noticed a random quest for healing and miracles. Sylvester Nwodo in his write-up describes the situation thus:

„Our time today gives a strong evidence of a deep-seated hunger for miracles and healings. The uncanny proliferation of churches in our society leaves in its wake shrewd and dangerous effects that arrest attention. The worst effect is the incarnation of unholy rivalry and acrimonious craze for miraculous and healing powers found amongst many Christian churches today“.⁴⁶⁶

In the interview of one of the priests involved in the healing ministries in the course of data collection, he stated that sickness is a deficiency and hence ought to be eliminated or healed. Asked further whether every sickness must be healed, he answered in the affirmative stating that God did not create us half. But eventually he said, not every sickness can be healed. And whoever comes to God must not expect God to heal all sickness. Analysis of the research shows that though there is the belief that all sickness must not be healed, but there is the strong belief that healing must or can be sought for. 72% believe that healing must be sought for.

⁴⁶⁶ *ibid.*, 8.

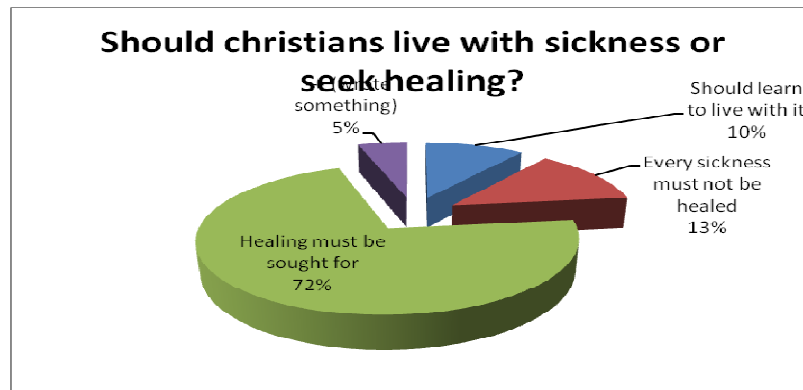


FIG. 16: Living with sickness

And since medical treatment is not affordable for many and in some cases not at the reach of most people, they turn then to faith healing. The medical advancement is slow and the costs of the services are exorbitant, so that the last resort is to turn to God.⁴⁶⁷ This then goes to explain the random quest for healing and miracles among Christians in Igboland today.

In this quest for healing and miracles, every inexplicable healing result is termed miracle. It will be pertinent here to explain the term miracle and when a healing could be termed a miracle.

Miracle is a word mostly used by Evangelists today. At the popular understanding of miracle there is an overtone of magic and people are credulous about the marvellous. According to Aylward Shorter, being credulous about the marvellous is “a common trait of human nature, but Jesus did not encourage a pursuit of the marvellous. He played down the marvellous element in his healing and wonder-working, putting the emphasis instead on people’s faith”.⁴⁶⁸ The definition of miracle according to Shorter does not depend on our state of scientific knowledge since it is not science that turns a cure into a miracle. He rather defined miracle as “the overwhelming experience of God’s power and love. Faith which is a falling in love with God is what opens the door to the experience of miracle”.⁴⁶⁹

The church does not proclaim a miracle (healing) because the phenomenon is inexplicable but because it happened under the environment of faith and prayer. If not so, accord-

⁴⁶⁷ *ibid.*, 5.

⁴⁶⁸ Shorter Aylward and Njiru Joseph N., *New Religious Movements in Africa*, Nairobi Kenya, Paulus Pub., 2001, 36.

⁴⁶⁹ *ibid.*

ing to one of the interviewee, Rev. Fr. Ekweke, a lecturer in one of the seminaries in Nigeria said, “Hospitals will be courts of miracle and doctors, miracle workers”. Miraculous healing abounds all over the world and the church recognises them when they are genuine like at Lourdes. But for a healing to be termed miraculous, it must satisfy three conditions: it must be spontaneous, it must be provable, and it must be lasting. Majority of the interviewed about 88% believed in miraculous healing and 59% said they have experienced miraculous healing before.

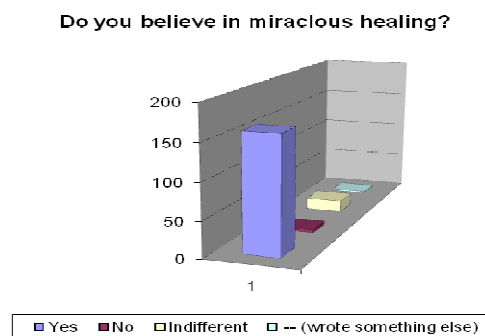


FIG. 17: Belief in miraculous healing

Have you experienced miraculous healing before?

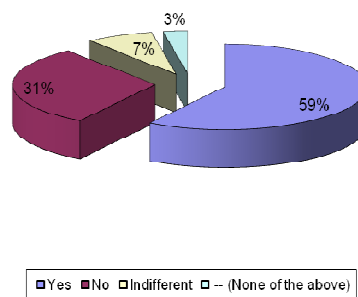


FIG. 18: Miraculous healing experience

About 77% of the interviewee believed that people could and did have healing powers and to be healed miraculously they listed faith in God (70%) as prerequisite, then faith in the healer and finally believing that one will be healed. The belief in miraculous healing is strong, that is the belief that people can be healed through prayers as we can see above. Asked whether she agreed to the fact that we can also be healed through prayers without going to Hospital, one of the interviewee- a young postulant has this to say: “If you have faith in God, you will be healed. For instance, my father and I prayed to God with strong faith towards his illness in 1998 and he was healed. Up till now he is fine.”

The random quest for miracles for whatever reason, be it financial or faith reasons feeds the boom and proliferation of healing homes and ministries to meet the demand.

2.4 THE BOOM AND PROLIFERATION OF HEALING HOMES AND MINISTRIES

The result of the craving for healing is a proliferation of healing homes and ministries as Nwodo rightly noted:

„Our time today gives a strong evidence of a deep-seated hunger for miracles and healings. The uncanny proliferation of churches in our society leaves in its wake shrewd and dangerous effects that arrest attention. The worst effect is the incarnation of unholy rivalry and acrimonious craze for miraculous and healing powers found amongst many Christian churches today“.⁴⁷⁰

These homes are booming with activities and people come from far and wide to partake in its ‘fruits’. In Evangelical circles, night vigils and crusades are held. People sing and pray till dawn. The vigil type of crusades has also found its way into the Catholic Church, in the Catholic healing ministries in the form of night adorations before the Blessed Sacrament in some parishes. And new ministries and healing homes are springing up every now and then. The financial gains are also not ruled out as motivating factor.

Just as new churches are springing up rampantly, so also are new healing homes and ministries. Huts and open shades are transformed or turned into churches or worship centres and loudspeakers mounted in order to be heard. The band, the choruses and clapping of hands lure worshippers to these ‘miracle-seeking homes’ or “churches”. If the central message is not healing and deliverance, it is prosperity “gospel” – my God is not a poor God. There are two problems associated with people living in this region: sickness and poverty. No wonder an ICM Poll for the BBC programme: “What the World Thinks Of God” carried out in ten countries in January 2004 suggests that Nigeria is most religious nation in the world.⁴⁷¹

⁴⁷⁰ Sylvester Nwodo: “Crave for Miracles and healing; The Pernicious Problem of our time,” in *Tourch Magazine*, 2000, 8.

⁴⁷¹ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/wtwtgod/3490490.stm>.

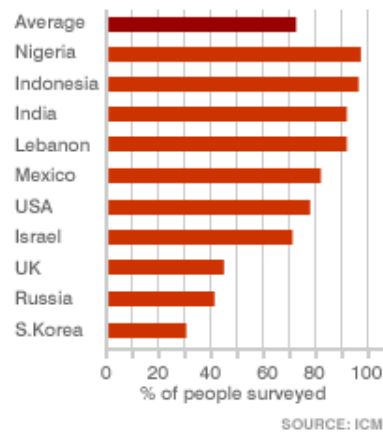


FIG. 19: ICM Poll result for BBC

In this ICM Poll, over 90% of Nigerians said they believed in God, prayed regularly and would die for their belief. This religiosity accounts then for the frequent search for religious solutions to problems.

2.5 THE PHENOMENON OF HEALING MASS

In Chapter 5 of part 1 (5.7), we tried to analyse the phenomena of healing mass tracing its origin in the catholic circle. We also tried to elaborate on the methods of prayers in these masses in which prayer for healing are offered. During the field research we tried to find out how many have attended these healing seasons before. 72% said they have attended a healing mass before while only 23% has not. This shows how expanded the circle of sympathiser has grown. It could be that many went out of curiosity but judging from the fact that majority of the interviewed hovered around the circle of priests and seminarians, one could see the level of interest.

Have you attended a healing mass before?

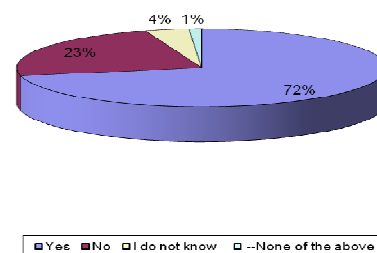


FIG. 20: Graphic on healing Mass attendance

On the other hand, there were some of the interviewed who refused to accept the concept of healing Mass saying that “there is nothing like ‘healing mass’”. They maintained that all masses were capable of healing and therefore there should not be a particular mass that should be termed “healing mass” while the others were not.

To the question: “The holy mass is in itself a healing celebration. How far do you support this statement?” The result came out thus:

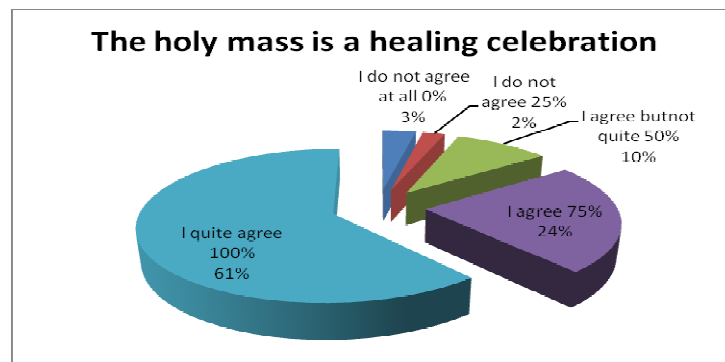


FIG. 21: Do you see the holy mass as a healing celebration?

59% of the interviewed said they agreed totally while 23% said they agreed. In other words, majority see the holy mass in itself as a healing celebration. It is on this basis that the opponents of the “healing mass” base their argument.

Let us look at some of the elements of the healing Mass that we discovered in the research that either makes the practice cherished by many or makes some people sceptical of the practice.

2.5.1 Emotionality in worship

One of the reasons why the opponents of the healing mass oppose it is the excessive display of emotionality in worship in the name of “praise and worship”. The line of argument here is that one has got to differentiate between entertainment and worship. They argue that the healing masses with music bands, the clapping of hands, dancing and the shouting of “praise the Lord, hallelujah” intermittently serve only the senses or sensual satisfaction and not the deep spiritual gratification. A practice many see as an influence from Pentecostalism. They liken these gatherings at times to a pop music concert. Visitors of “pop music concerts express their ecstasy with their own gyrations and

applause. Pop music appeals to the senses. It is a delight, but nothing more” as Joe Ed Furr noted in his Article, „Worship or Entertainment“. According to him:

„Some churches imitate pop music concerts in the name of “praise and worship”. Lights flash, videos fill the screen, singers engage in “liturgical dancing”. The music is loud and its beat is strongly similar to that of secular music. Worshippers wave their arms in the air and applaud.

When the emphasis is on audio-video stimulation, then God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit become “excuses” to indulge the senses in “worship” that does not lead to a higher plan of godliness, spirituality, and Christian maturity. In this environment people become totally enamored by the phenomenon of “worship” rather than being enthusiastic about serving God. The worship “experience” is their focus rather than the work of God which is by faith“.⁴⁷²

Proponents of the healing mass and the praise and worship phenomena found mostly in the charismatic circles argue that “delight” has also a place in worship citing Psalm 111:2 where delight was used to describe the pleasure we should find in our worship of the Lord. „Songs of praise, joy, and thanksgiving are a delight to the heart“. Their question then is: Is it wrong to enjoy praising the Lord? To justify the practice of clapping hands and using bands and drums instead of the orthodox musical instruments like organ and piano, the bible quotation where the injunction to praise the Lord with cymbals, clapping of hands and dance was made is often cited.

For the common and poor masses that go to these healing masses, one is tempted to assert that it is rather the psychological relief that they experience after these services that lure them to it. Besides their poor financial state that make hospital unaffordable, those who are not looking for healing attend it as a psychological relief of their condition. Some of those I interviewed accepted to have attended healing mass before and have, at least, forgotten their worries through the praise songs and gospel band music during the service.

This view also reflected itself in the answer to the question: Do you agree that it is actually the ritual that heals and not the priest? 28% said they quite agree, 24% agreed but

⁴⁷² Furr Joe Ed, “Entertainment or Worship?” in <http://www.singingschool.org/Entertainmentorworship.htm>, Feb. 2010.

not quite and 19% do not agree at all. Hence we have those who believe in the efficacy of the ritual itself and those who believe in the power of the priest or both.

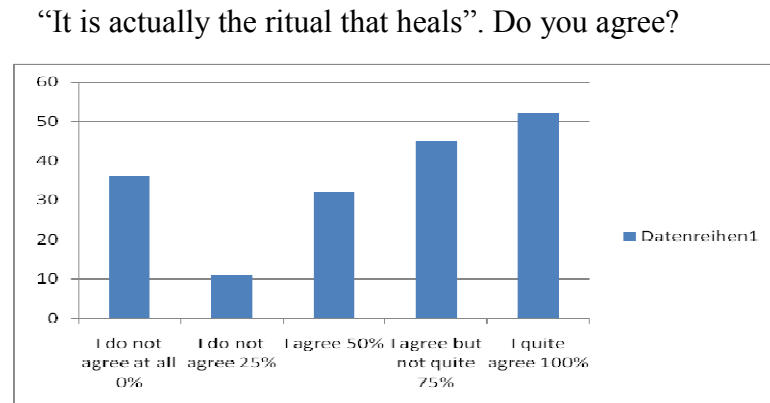


FIG. 22: Is it the ritual that heals?

2.5.2 Between orthodoxy and renewal

The tension between entertainment and worship as noted above is rooted in a clash between orthodoxy or tradition and renewal. Since the revival of the charismatic renewal movement in the Catholic Church in Igboland, pro- orthodox catholic liturgical practices accuse it of eroding the catholic teaching and practice as well as allowing much Pentecostal influence. They refuse to clap or dance in the church and prefer to maintain the orthodox catholic method of greeting with: “praise be to our Lord Jesus Christ, now and forever amen” in place of the new charismatic method of greeting with: “praise the Lord. Hallelujah” which they identify with Pentecostalism. On the use of musical instruments, orthodox or traditional Catholics refuse to accept the use of band, drums or local instruments and gospel choir at the Holy Mass which they see as serving only entertainment. They will rather prefer organ, piano and a traditional church choir. For this group of traditional Catholics, “the key virtue in worship is truth (orthodoxy) and tradition (worship styles and forms from the past). Emotionality is seen as disorder and vice“. Decency and order in worship is „seen by some as a subdued atmosphere where emotion is shunned. ‘Order’ is defined as a stoic behaviour. No loud, fast songs. No excitement. No clapping“⁴⁷³

⁴⁷³ Ibid.

Supporters of the Renewal on the other hand stress the fact that we live today in the age of excitement and what does not excite the people does not appeal much to them anymore and that explains the exodus to the Renewal Movements and in our case study to the healing masses where they hope to “experience” something “exciting”. It also explains the problem of pastoral migrations that we shall treat later. Supporters of the Renewal movements would argue with Joe Ed Furr thus:

„The extreme interpretation of ‘decency and in order’ has produced assemblies that are boring. People sing half-heartedly. They doze through communion. Sermons are blended. Such monotony does not produce spirituality or maturity. These churches often have bad reputations for being filled with strife, arguing, and complaining. It is commonplace to find a long-term practice of hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, and envy among the members. The decline in the membership of these churches is a scandal. These things are the fruit that signal dysfunctionality in these churches“.⁴⁷⁴

Some of those interviewed Igbo Catholics living in Diaspora cited the decline in the number of young people in churches in Europe and America as a result of this tension between Orthodoxy and Renewal. They argue that young people in Europe today cherish rhythmical or gospel hymns at the Mass more than the traditional hymns. The Church, according to Joe Ed Furr “needs to strike the middle-ground between sleepy boredom and excessive sensual stimulation. We need to create encouraging assemblies that do not run to excess to achieve that goal“.⁴⁷⁵

In trying to strike a balance between orthodoxy and renewal, pastors of souls at times face the problem of solidarity and collegiality.

2.5.3 The problem of solidarity and communion (collegiality)

Solidarity can be defined as “a community of feelings, purposes etc” or “a community of responsibilities and interests.”⁴⁷⁶ Solidarity has to do with feelings for those in need, feelings for the poor and the sick in their situation. In the Encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, a major document of Catholic Social Teaching, “Pope John Paul II identifies the

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁶ <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/solidarity>, March 2010.

concept of solidarity with the poor and the marginalised as a constitutive element of the Gospel and human participation in the common good.”⁴⁷⁷

Collegiality on the other hand, is a cooperative interaction among colleagues, it is a shared power and authority vested among colleagues. In the Roman Catholic Church, collegiality refers to the doctrine explicitly taught by the Second Vatican Council that “the bishops of the world, collectively considered (the College of Bishops) share the responsibility for the governance and pastoral care of the Church with the Pope.”⁴⁷⁸

In the pyramidal scale of this pastoral care and responsibility and chain of order, the priests are then directly accountable to their bishops.

In fieldwork encounter with some priests mostly some who are engaged in the healing ministry, they made us understand the dilemma they face in the tension between orthodoxy and renewal, between solidarity and communion with the bishop (collegiality). They have the rubrics of the liturgy to follow and the rising demand for liveliness and excitement from many. If he holds on to the letters of the rubrics word for word, he risks “sleepy boredom” that may culminate in pastoral migration. If he tends towards solidarity, trying to satisfy the aspiration for liveliness and excitement in the liturgy, he risks straining the thread of communion with the bishop or authorities of the church for doing things aliturgical or not in line with the rubrics. Some of the priests in the healing ministry claim to be the ones in the field, and therefore, are in touch with the miseries and helplessness of the people and hence are challenged by compassion to act, to do something and to show solidarity with the people in their need or in their sickness. It is a challenge to act, to identify with, to offer solutions or risk pastoral migration.

2.5.4 Pastoral migration

By the term pastoral migration, in this work refers to the practice whereby people leave their parish community to attend Holy mass or other pastoral activities in another parish community. We discovered that the practice is proliferating and wanted to find out what the reasons could be. In the last few years since the practice of healing masses became rampant, we see people from other parishes carrying holy water cans going to places where healing masses are held. It must however be noted that the practice whereby peo-

⁴⁷⁷ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Solidarity>, March 2010.

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid.

ple travel to other places for holy mass either out of time convenience or preference has always been in existence but it has become more frequent in the last years. It is however worthy of note here that the pilgrimage ritual to local centres as it is in the Holy Lands where pilgrims march on foot has not developed in Igboland. We do not have many holy shrines with outstanding history as pilgrimage centres. This exodus or pastoral migration noticed now in Igboland could however be part of a process in the institution of the act of pilgrimage in Igboland. Priests in some parishes are now beginning to erect Grottos in their parishes to serve as pilgrimage centres.

However, in our survey, we tried to find out the reasons for the migrations in search of healing masses elsewhere.

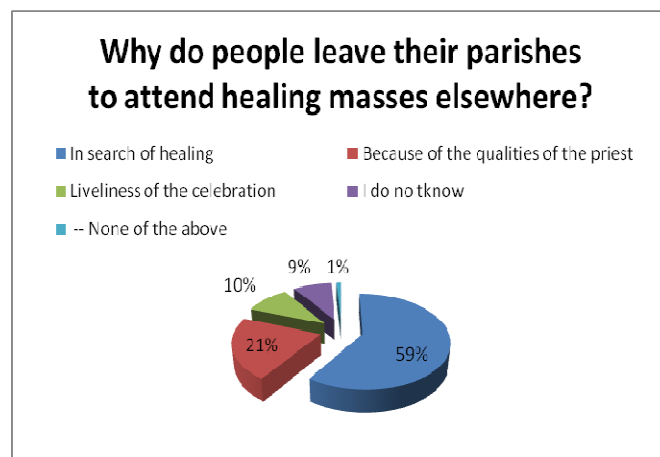


FIG. 23: Pastoral migration

59% of those interviewed see the search for healing as the major reason why many leave the celebration of the holy mass in their parishes to attend the healing masses elsewhere. 21% assess the qualities of the celebrating priest whom they can confide. Some may conceive the priest as being more powerful in his sermon and more edifying than their own parish priest. One of the interviewed, Engr. Livinus Ebe puts it thus: “Some people are attracted by the penetrating, consoling, re-animating sermons of those priests”. However, 10% go because of the liveliness of the liturgical celebrations there.

A priest involved in the healing ministry who was interviewed in the course of our research confirmed the view that many are attracted by the powers or gifts of those priests they go looking for. According to him: “we are differently gifted (cf. Rom.12:1-6; Eph. 4:11ff; 1Cor.11:4ff). They found that there is a gift given to me by God which their par-

ish priest do not have. Not that their parish priest has nothing but perhaps gifted in another area”.⁴⁷⁹

Again, we tried to find out how the interviewed would feel assuming they were parish priests seeing their parishioners attend mass elsewhere.

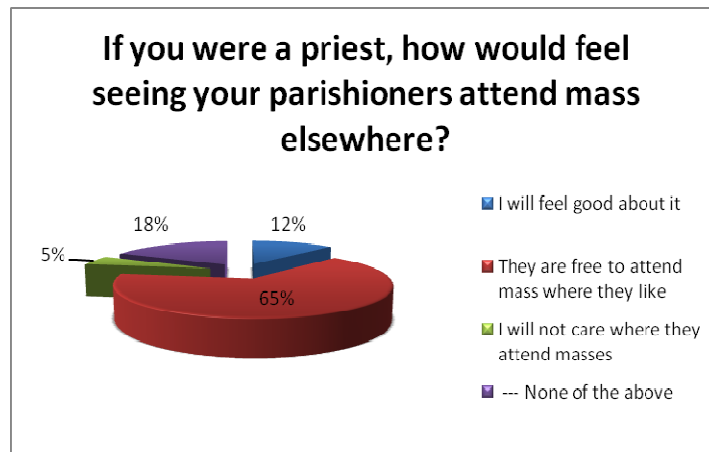


FIG. 24: On the priest and pastoral migration

65% of the interviewed said people are free to attend mass where they prefer which is correct since no one can be forced to attend mass at a particular place. However, a pastor of soul concerned about the welfare of his flock and eager to improve will definitely care. 5% said they would not care where their parishioners attend the holy mass on Sundays. We therefore wanted to find out whether a priest was among the 5% that said they would not care where their parishioners attend masses or the 12% that said they would feel good about it.

⁴⁷⁹ A priest (P.) involved in the healing ministry

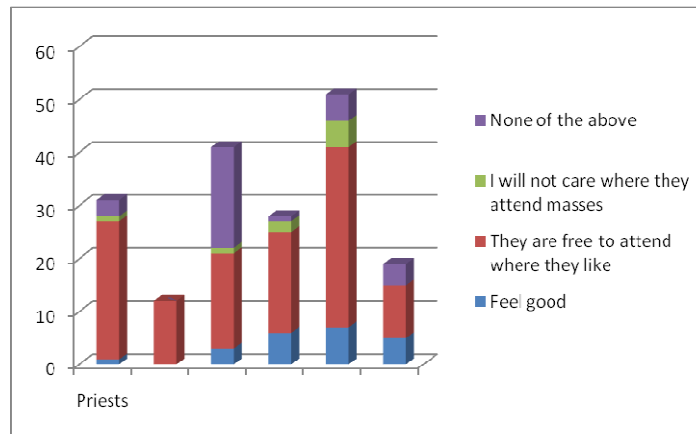


FIG. 25: On priest and pastoral migration according to professions

As can be seen on the graphic, some priests, though not a significant number said they would not care where their parishioners attend mass. It raises a question mark for a pastor of soul who says he does not care where this flock attend masses, because he could see himself one day celebrating mass alone in an empty church. Some of those who care much then either try to improvise for their flock so that they do not go elsewhere in search of healing represents the response of one Mr Odu: “If some of my parishioners attend a healing mass in some other parishes once in a big while, this is tolerable. But if my parishioners form the habit of abandoning my parish to attend healing masses elsewhere on a regular basis, then I am afraid, I should do something to arrest the ‘ugly trend’”.

In most cases the priest begins his own healing services in his own parish which may then be prone to aberrations when he is not gifted in this.

One of the actions that could be taken at times to curb the “ugly trend” when the priest does not begin his own ministry, is inviting “priests healers” to the parish community.

2.5.5 “Importation” of healers to parish communities

There is this practice of inviting gifted priest healers to parishes where the healing services are not held and people come from different places to these services. Such scenes are characterised by long lines of holy water cans lined up for blessing by the priest healer as these holy water blessed by this priest is held in high esteem and are attributed with higher healing efficacy. This picture becomes present when one thinks of the heal-

ing services of the Catholic Prayer Ministry of the Holy Spirit Elele some years back. This practice was for the poor and aged who could not make the long journey to the ministry's healing centre of much advantage as the healing services were brought to their neighbourhood, or to their own parish communities.

Some priests were against this practice as it tended to portray in some way their own powerlessness in this regard. An educationist, Mr Odu, in the course of our survey confirmed this fear when asked about his opinion when "priest healers" are invited to parishes, he said: "I find the invitation of priests healers okay but it can also be counter-productive sometimes: the people now look down on their own parish priest as incompetent, weak and unholy. But only few priests can invite the priest healers lest he would be under rated by his parish people".

The survey showed generally no overwhelming majority for those in support of the practice.

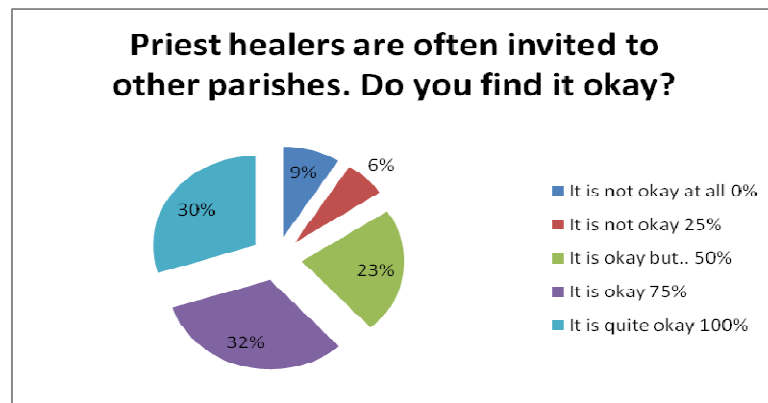


FIG. 26: On Invitation of "priest healers"

An analysis of the survey according to professions showed the following results:

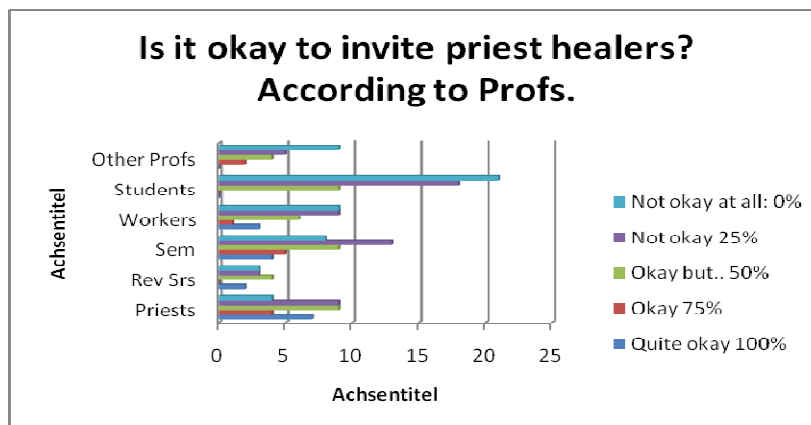


FIG. 27: On invitation of "priests-healers" according to profession

Priests, Sisters, and Seminarians and some workers were not so critical of the idea of inviting priest-healers to parishes to hold healing masses but students and people from other professions were. A good number of priests and seminarians support the idea. Survey showed however that some priests would rather start their own ministry rather than invite others which might portray them as not having such spiritual powers.

2.5.6 Giving Testimonies and showing appreciations during healing masses

The practice of giving testimonies during healing masses or gatherings where prayers are offered for healing has become a normal practice. The practice is such that after a prayer session or a healing mass, people who felt God touched their lives in any form or who felt God healed them of their sicknesses would be asked during the next session to come forward and give testimonies. In other words, the faithful or worshippers are called upon to tell the congregation how God through the ministration of the healer touched their lives or healed them. These testimonies are often followed by signs of appreciation. Some would say because God did this for me, I would do this or that in appreciation.

In our research, we asked people when they were prayed for and healed, if they showed appreciation. 78% of those interviewed said that they did show appreciation while 2% said they did not show appreciation. 16% of those interviewed were indifferent to the question. 4% declined or wrote something else.

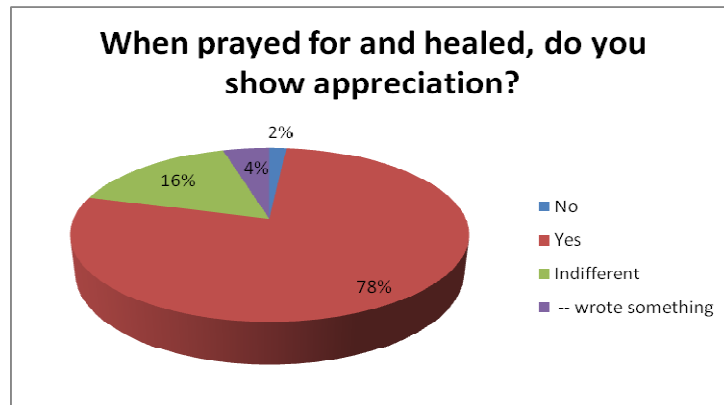


FIG. 28: On showing appreciations after healing

Again we wanted to find out if these appreciations were demanded by the healer or whether the people did that out of their free will. 62% said it was done freely in appreciation for what God has done for them, 16% said they did it because it was normal that one shows appreciation when one receives a favour. Only 7% said the appreciation was demanded or expected by the healer.

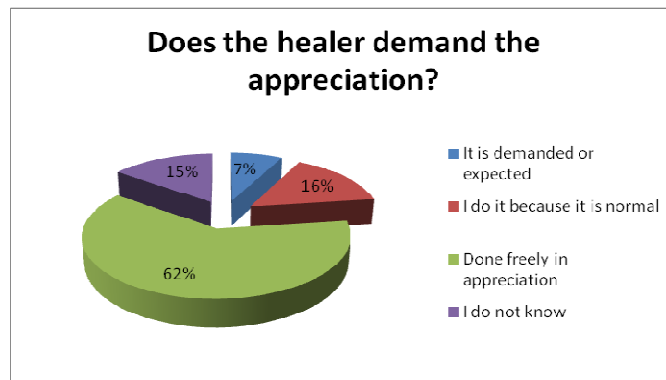


FIG. 29: Appreciations for healing

While acknowledging the place and importance of testifying what God has done for us and thanking Him for his goodness, it still calls to mind to examine the place and role of these testimonies. What are the intentions of asking people to come and give testimonies for what God did for them before the congregation? To whom does it benefit – the ministry or the ego and advertisement of the powers of the minister? Is it biblical? Did Jesus demand testimonies before the congregation from those he healed? The aim of asking these questions is to avert aberrations. It is recorded in the Bible that Jesus

healed people with disease and infirmities and warned them not to tell anybody but they went about proclaiming it everywhere. In the case of the healing of the ten lepers (Luke 17, 11-19), Jesus complained that only one came back to thank God but the emphasis here is on being grateful and more so the evangelist Luke wanted to bring this gentile who came back to say thanks on the lime light. Jesus demanded a gift after healing but the gift he demanded was faith and a life without sin: "Go and sin no more". The Acts of the Apostles and the Pauline epistles recorded no incidence of the apostles asking those healed to come forward and give testimonies. Testimonies should serve as faith-building and should proclaim the dawn of the kingdom of God and not the ego of the healer as he is only an instrument. Testimonies serving the ego of the healer can only fuel competitions among priests.

2.6 COMPETITION AMONG PRIESTS

A worrisome trend in the understanding of the priesthood can be noticed in the analysis of our research. Though some priests interviewed said that they do not care where their parishioners go to mass, still one notices a certain degree of competition among priests. Some priests or pastors of souls simply begin the healing ministry in order to give their faithful that which they seek elsewhere even when they are aware that they do not possess the healing gift.

And some of the priests involved in the healing ministry complain that the brothers instead of supporting their ministries are often very critical. Some whose healing ministries have become successful are often not spoken good of by others. They therefore see it as accruing from jealousy.

One notices some level of competition among priests even among those that are already in the healing ministry. One tries to make his ministry the best or build the best edifice that outwits the others while the others delve into it in search of cheap popularity. Nwodo summarised it thus:

„Some fellows delve into it for cheap popularity. To be famous and to appear extraordinary before men as one having inscrutable and ineffable powers to do anything is the propelling force. In this regard, they are honourably respected, anxiously sought for and they always parade impeccable influence close to that of the gods. For them, the super-

powers can come from anywhere insofar as their problem-scourged clients are freed and their material gains on the increase“.⁴⁸⁰

This can in turn lead to more efforts to increase the financial overturns of the ministries thereby leading to aberrations. This in turn exposes a trend that is also eating deep into the younger generation of priests in Igbo-land today, namely a yearning urge for material or financial comfort. This again shows itself in the affluence in the generation of the younger priests. The generation of younger priests in defence counter the above criticism by citing some examples in Europe in the past centuries where the societal situation at the moment elevated the priest to a respectable position in the society and the priest was ranked alongside the city mayor, the medical doctor and the school director then, though secularism has reduced this trend in recent times.

2.7 ABERRATIONS

Charismas are gifts from God and healing is one of the charismas Paul enumerated in his letter to the Corinthians as we elaborated in Chapter 4 (4.2.3.2) of the first part of this work. But man often tends to extremes. The phenomena of healing and the healing ministries in the Igbo church are not void of these extremes or aberrations. Cyriacus Ogu tried to summarise the present situation of things in the church in Igbo land thus:

„Presently, issues, notions and actions gravitating around Christian healing and exorcism have reached the peak of their realities, implications, uses and above all abuses. Though so many good things are done today in the name of Christian healing and exorcism, so many bad and queer things are also done today in the name of Christian healing and exorcism. More so, all these happenings are seriously attributed to the power of the Holy Ghost or the blood of Jesus. Our people are confused. They cannot easily distinguish between the genuine and the non-genuine claims of the healers“.⁴⁸¹

We tried to find out some of these abuses noticed in the healing ministries. 36% of those interviewed noted using the gift of healing to exercise authority or power. In this case some try to show their authority or power, showing that they could command forces. This is the case when people are threatened with these powers in order to enforce sub-

⁴⁸⁰ Nwodo Sylvester, “Crave for Miracles and healing”, *Tourch Magazine*, 2000, 9.

⁴⁸¹ Cyriacus Oguh et al., “Healing and Exorcism: Implications and realities”, in *Tourch Magazine*, 2000, 5.

ordination or respect. Such threats could at times be in the form of threatening to place a curse on somebody. 34% said they noticed the danger of becoming too proud on the part of some of those bestowed with these gifts. They see themselves as been superior to others. If they are priests, other priests appear inferior or less holy. As a result they carry themselves high. 28% pointed to the financial exploitation that may be implicit in the healing ministries.

The aim of the gift of healing will definitely be misplaced if the healer concentrates on the financial advantages that accrue out of such ministries as a result of the practice of testimonies and appreciation as we treated above.

The fact still remains that most parishes in Igbo-land are poor as to maintain or make the priest comfortable. And the priest depends on the parishioners for his livelihood and daily meal. The bitter truth is then that many start this healing ministry knowing that it will attract crowd and augment their financial status. Some try to learn the art of conducting a healing session even when they know that they do not have this charisma.

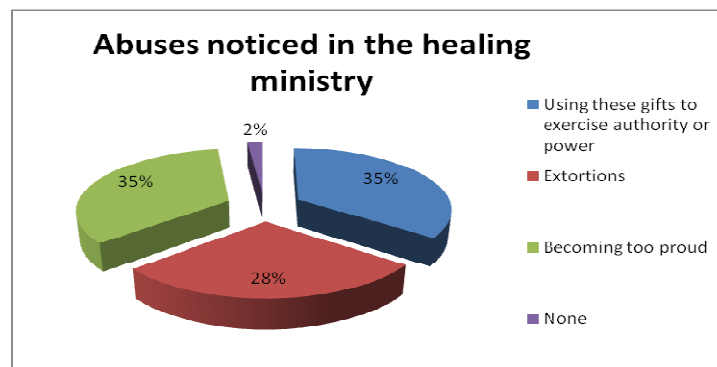


FIG. 30: Abuses in healing ministry

Furthermore, we tried analyse the abuses people notice in the healing ministry according to the views of the different professions among those interviewed. It is interesting to note that 23 out of the 34 priests interviewed noted power or authority, extortions and arrogant as abuses or aberrations inherent in the healing ministry of today. Even the priests themselves are aware of these aberrations. Almost all the professions noted these three: using the gifts to exercise power, extortions and pride, as aberrations but among the three, majority of students saw pride as top on the list, followed by power and authority.

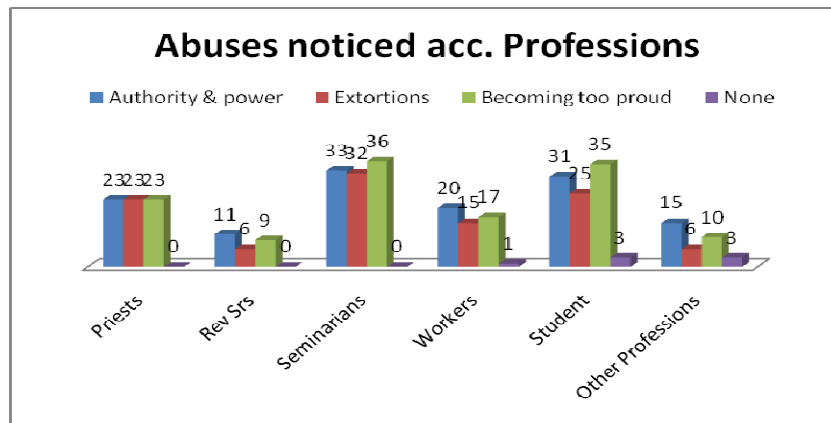


FIG. 31: Abuses according to professions

2.8 CARRYOVERS OF TRADITIONAL BELIEFS ON SICKNESS TO CHRISTIAN LIFE

The Igbo people were adherents of the traditional religion before the turn of Christianity. One still notice today in some cases a certain degree of “carry-overs” from the traditional approach towards sickness and healing in our present day Igbo Christians. It is a fact that these Christians live in this environment and society with this approach, moreover a very good percentage of the present day Igbo generation of Christians were converts from the traditional religion or their parents or grandparents were, so there is bound to be an influence from this traditional healing system.

Asked if they will still send for a priest when they become sick while hospital treatment is free, a good number of the interviewed about 41% responded in the positive.

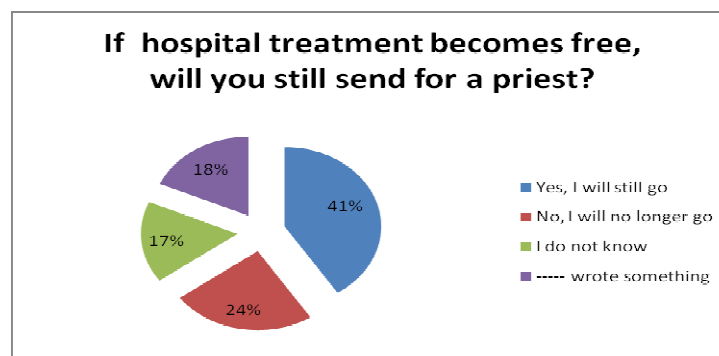


FIG. 32: Between hospital and sending for a priest

One notices today that people do come to a priest and asks him to touch their head because they have headache. In some occasions of family root healing as it is called in charismatic circles, sacramentals or even cross or a bottle containing holy water is buried in a compound to counter evil forces just like people in the traditional setup burial charms in the ground. At times rosaries are worn like amulets in the traditional context. Dioka, one of the interviewed identified the root of this problem: “The problem comes from a type of transference of traditional mentality of going to the Juju Priest when the Igbo man is sick, they now go to the priest when they are sick to pray for them for healing instead of going to the juju priest as they used to do before”. They then carry over some of the pagan practices like the practices that assure protection against evil forces into Christianity. It is the role of the Theology of Inculturation⁴⁸² today to purify, refine and reinterpret these practices in the spirit of the Christian teaching⁴⁸³ so that the people can authentically identify with the parish community which is also a healing community with Christ the healer at the head.

2.9 ROLE OF THE COMMUNITY IN EFFECTING HEALING

The Igbo man or woman like any African man or woman is community oriented and this context not only influences his life and carries him along but also his health as well. We tried to illustrate the role of the extended family in the life of the individual in part one (1.3.2) of this work and the sense of community among the Igbo in (1.3.3). Though individual sin is also offence against the community as it distorts the harmony with the ancestors, one is also not left to suffer alone. When he gets sick, the community rallies around him.

In our research we discovered that the community still plays a vital role in effecting the healing of the individual. The Igbo believe that “when the eyes weep, the nose weeps alongside”-(anya bewe, imi ebewe). No matter the level of sickness, a family does not abandon their sick ones and this sense of love and concern helps in effecting healing. Here is a community that cares, feels, accepts and gives the sick a sense of belonging. Such a community provides a conducive atmosphere for a speedy recovering. Hence the

⁴⁸² Inculturation is the process of enrooting or implanting the Christian message in a particular culture, so that the Christian message not only becomes a part of the culture but also refines and purifies the culture becoming its life principle. Cf.: Iweadighi Sabinus, *Glaube und Kultur: Zur Inkulturation des Glaubens*, Magister Diplomarbeit (M.A. Thesis), Universität Wien 1998, 32-33.

⁴⁸³ Ibid., 30-34.

majority of the interviewed see their experiences of the sense of community in their parish as one of exclusive importance.

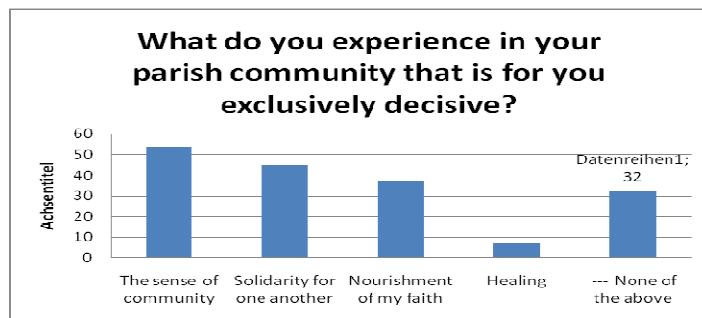


FIG. 33: Experiences in the parish community

Today with the advent of Christianity and many Igbo people have become Christian converts, the Christian community with its sacramental care and charity together with its schools and hospital establishments play a significant role in healing the whole man. The expectations however vary.

2.10 EXPECTATIONS OF THE FAITHFUL FROM THEIR PARISH COMMUNITY AND PASTORS

The expectations of the faithful or majority of the interviewed from their parish community range from helping them attain eternal salvation (52%), while about 22% expect the church to dispense the sacraments. There are three expectations that are of interest to us in this survey. About 9% of those interviewed expect bodily healing from the parish community, an expectation that has long been left for the medical sciences in the West. 8% expect their parish community to offer them material help while 7% expect the church to help them alleviate their poverty.

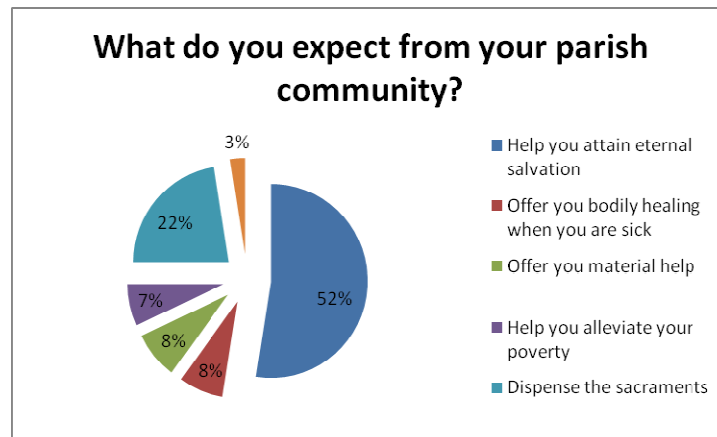


FIG. 34: Expectations from the parish community

Analysing the above result we discover that most of those interviewed expected salvation and the dispensing of the sacraments (Eucharist, Penance, Extreme Auction etc) from the church. Only a few percentages expect bodily healing and material help or alleviation of poverty, making on the whole 23%. Analysing the result according to age, it is also interesting to note that this is mostly the younger generation between 25 – 45yrs of age.

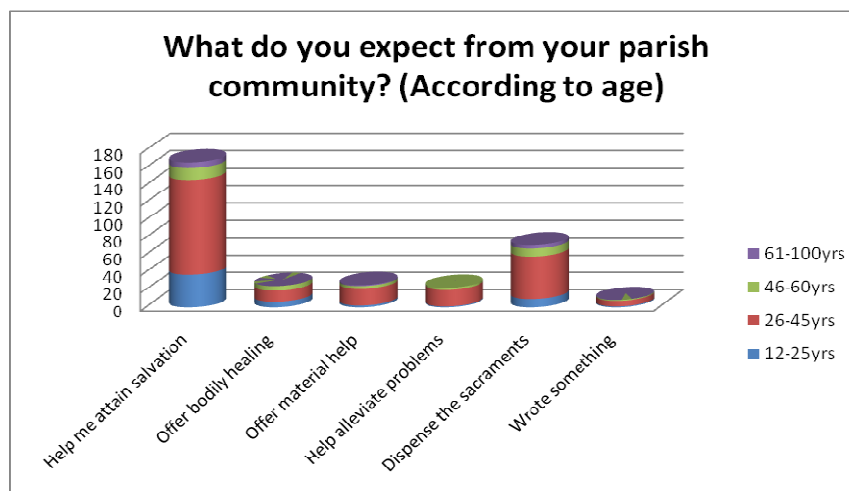


FIG. 35: Expectations from the parish community according to age

We notice also that contrary to expectations almost none of the older people interviewed expects healing from the church what one will expect them who are old and sick to expect. It is rather the younger ones who still have the future to conquer who expect that and who go for it judging from the statistics of those who have visited a healing mass before.

In analysing these results, we noticed two classifications of people giving answers to these questions. The first group is the group that is anchored in the orthodoxy – the well

known established pattern of thought and ritual of the catholic tradition and a second group that is renewal inclined expecting the church to move an inch out of the established orthodoxy. One notices a certain tension between orthodoxy and renewal. This tension is felt in the parishes where many tend towards the charismatic renewal tenets that allow influences from the Pentecostal churches and the so called prosperity churches (see 2.5.2. of part II). A common maxim that one hears from these prosperity churches is: “My God is not a poor God”.

The three fundamental functions of the church: *Liturgia*, *Diakonia* und Proclamation of the good News (*Verkündigung*) involves Caritas – helping the faithful in their material needs or to alleviate their poverty. So the expectation could be understood. But the young church in Igbo land that has largely depended on help from the flock and from the church in the West to stand on its feet must also begin to learn not to remain on the receiving end but learn to give in the sense of organising caritas from within.

Many expect healing from the church and as we saw in our analysis of the phenomena of healing in chapter 4 of part one, healing could be spiritual, somatic, psychological, and these three forms of healing encompasses the whole person. In the church we talk also of sacramental healing – healing we receive through the dispensation of the sacraments. Holistic healing was implied in the traditional healing system of the Igbo, so those who expect healing from the church expect this also. Hence asked the type of healing they expect from their parish communities, 55% of the interviewed opted for spiritual healing while 25% for psychological healing and 16% for bodily or somatic healing.

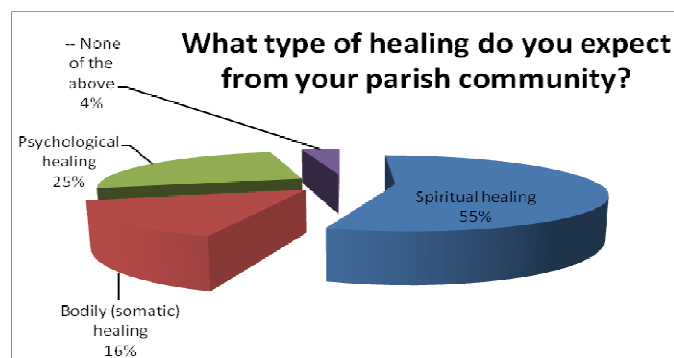


FIG. 36: Type of healing expected from the parish community

The expectations of the people on their parish community, implies also expectations on the parish priest. We also tried to find out what these expectations on the priests were.

2.11 EXPECTATIONS OF THE FAITHFUL ON THEIR PRIESTS.

About 43% of those interviewed expect from their pastors of soul-nourishing sermons that will help them attain eternal salvation.

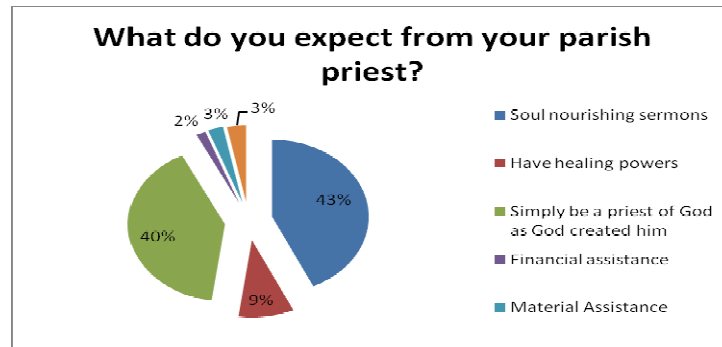


FIG. 37: Expectations from the parish priest

They expect him to prepare his sermon well, open the word of God for them and bring it to their level of understanding. Though they enjoy some level of enthusiasm in the sermon in the form of choruses in between but the sermon of the pastor should not be more of singing, clapping of hands and dancing as it is often the case but more of the proclamation of the word of God. Majority of the youths expect from their priests to nourish them with the word of God and to be simply a priest of God as God created them.

40% does not expect the priest to be a lord, a magician or have extraordinary powers but simply be a priest of God as God created him serving them with whatever gifts God might have endowed him with. However 9% expect him to have healing powers while altogether 5% expect financial and material help from the priest. Asked again whether their pastor must have healing powers, 60% said no, the priest must not have healing powers while 23% said he must have healing powers. This means that the group sees healing as an essential part of the priesthood. According to Fr. P. Ndubuisi, a priest involved in the healing ministry whom we interviewed, "if the function of a priest is to heal, then every priest must heal." He added however that: "The ultimate goal of every Christian is salvation not healing, because you can be healed here on earth but still be dammed in heaven."

About 15% expect bodily healing from their pastors. Sure every priest is in the service of Christ who is the healer of all infirmities and he partakes in the mandate of Christ to go out to the whole world first to preach and to heal the sick as a manifestation of the

dawn of the kingdom of God. Our exploration of the spiritual gifts in 1 Cor. 12, 9ff and the calling in of elders in James 5.13-18 to pray for the sick in Chapter 4.2.3 of part 1 above, has tried to show that the Holy Spirit gives his charisma of healing to whom he willed and this can be a priest or a lay faithful. The Epistle of James implores the sick to call in the elders of the Church so that they can pray over them and heal them and if they have committed sins, they shall be forgiven which has become the basis of the sacrament of extreme unction and faith-healing. The question remains: must every priest have healing powers? Is every priest a healer as a result of the sacerdotal ordination? Is healing embedded in the office of the priest or is it not a spiritual gift that is given by the Holy Spirit to some whom he willed? An exegetical exploration of James 5.13-18 as we noted in chapter 4 above showed some scholars are saying that the elders in James 5 were called not because healing was embedded in their office rather because they were representatives of the community of faith. And none of these elders should act alone in his name as an individual.

The voice of the majority of those interviewed, speak also against a trend that is gradually gaining foot in the Igbo church. Before people usually visited a priest of God with their gifts for the priest since the priest was considered poor and lived from the benevolence of the people. Today things have changed. The number of those expecting financial and material help is increasing gradually. The question is whether it is as a result of the picture of the priesthood presented to them in the midst of the itching poverty or if it's based on Christian charity - on the gospel injunction of Christ to his disciples to give the multitude something to eat. We therefore tried to find out the notions of the priest the people have today.

2.12 NOTIONS OF PRIESTS AND THE PRIESTHOOD

We tried to find out the prevailing notions of the people about priests and the priesthood. At the same time, we investigate how priests and seminarians see themselves or their vocation. The analysis of these notions is important today in the theology of vocations. In the western world gone are the days when the position of the priest in the society was so high such that beside the city major, the doctor and the teacher, the parish priest was next in rank as we have noted above. Today with the influence of secularisation, this influence has dwindled. In Africa in general and in Igbo-land in particular, the

priest is held in high esteem and his words has weight just as the words of the “dibia” or “eze muo”- diviner are words from the gods and are taken serious.

From our study, 37% of those interviewed see the priest as a man of God, 23% as “another Christ”, 19% as a holy man, 12% as a prophet while 6% see him as healer. 3% see the priest as a king. None of the interviewed saw the priest as a magician.

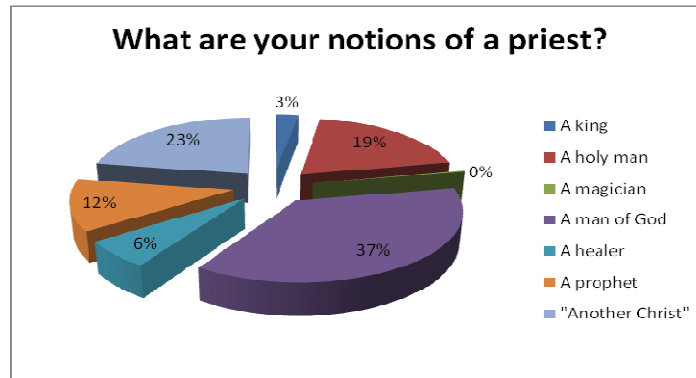


FIG. 38: Notions of the priest

Though the number of those who see the priest as king is small but this notion could be understood either theologically in the sense of seeing the priest as sharing in the kingly office of Christ or understanding it in the worldly sense of seeing the priest as living a kingly life. In that sense priesthood will be erroneously seen as a means to a life of affluence. Again if a priest is seen as a healer, that explains then the expectations of healing from the priest. According to Livinus Ebe one of the interviewed asked about his notion on priests had this to say: “A priest is a king by divine ordination by virtue of his priesthood. He is a holy man: This is cardinal to be an intermediary between God and his people. He is a prophet also by virtue of his priesthood. He is another Christ: ‘christianus alter christus est’. And St. Bernadette Soubirous echoes it saying ‘a priest at the Alter is Christ on the cross.’”

2.13 FEELINGS FOR AND INCORPORATION OF THE SOCIAL CONDITIONS OF THE PEOPLE IN WORSHIP

We discovered that it is because the healing ministries or the crazing prosperity ministries springing up in Igbo-land touch the people in their social conditions, feel with them on the spot where it aches and try to incorporate these in worship that is the reason why the number of their sympathisers are increasing.

Some of the interviewed told us that after attending the worship seasons of the healing ministries with singing, clapping and dancing, they forgot at least for some moments their miseries; even though they went home to face the miseries again. In what they call home ministries in charismatic circles, they tried to incorporate the social conditions of the patients in what they call “healing the roots”. One must also note that since many gifts and offerings come in form of thanksgiving into these ministries, many of them are given out in charities to the poor and socially deprived.

2.14 WHO HEALS YOU?

With the contemporary medical advancement though not yet readily available to the common Igbo man, we wanted to find out to whom the Igbo Christian of today attributes his healing in both medical and faith healing. When the sick person goes to the hospital and the doctor prescribes a drug which he/she takes to get well again, who has healed him?

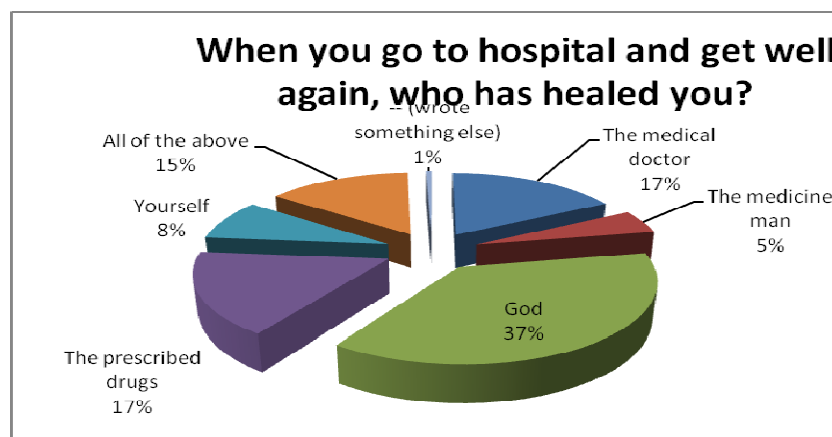


FIG. 39: Who heals?

37% of the interviewed said it is God who has healed confirming the Igbo belief that “chi n’agwo oria”, - it is God who heals sickness and thereby confirming what the Igbo name “chikadibia” – God is greater than the medicine man (diviner) expresses. In spite of that however, a formidable percentage still attributed the healing to the medical doctor (17%), the prescribed drug (17%), the medicine man (5%) or to the faith or will of the sick person himself (8%). 15% saw all of the above as contributing factors to the healing. This could indicate either a shift in conception, which means a process has been set in motion or confusion in the face of the many options – the healing auction.

However it is God who heals and these other healers are vessels, instruments and agents of healing used by God to wrought healing. It is God using human vessels to heal (Eccl. 38,1-9). It is God who gives doctors the grace to diagnose and in that case, according to Fr. Peter Ndubuisi: “praying (by the healer) is calling on God to come and mediate. When we open our mouth, it is for people to hear and not God. It is God who affects the healing. God’s mercy brings healing. God pardons and heals.”

In the Holy Mass itself, which is also a healing sacrifice, it is according to Ebe Livinus, actually Christ the victim at the sacrifice (ritual) and the same time the high priest at the sacrifice (ritual) who heals.

We also tried to find out whether it is actually the rituals at these healing seasons that heal or whether they were only means of transporting the healing powers.

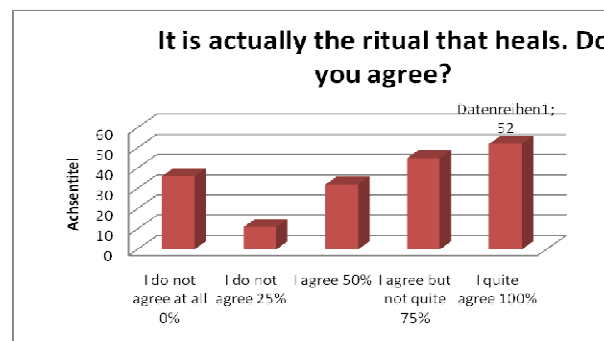


FIG. 40: Ritual and healing

We noticed from the graphic above that the majority tend to agree that it is the ritual that heals.⁴⁸⁴ The Igbo attach much importance to the rituals. Hence the woman who

⁴⁸⁴ “A ritual is a set of actions, performed mainly for their symbolic value. It may be prescribed by a religion or by the traditions of a community. The term usually excludes actions which are arbitrarily chosen by the performers, or dictated purely by logic, chance, necessity, etc. .

A ritual may be performed on specific occasions, or at the discretion of individuals or communities. It may be performed by a single individual, by a group, or by the entire community; in arbitrary places, or in places especially reserved for it; either in public, in private, or before specific people. A ritual may be restricted to a certain subset of the community, and may enable or underscore the passage between religious or social states.

The purposes of rituals are varied; with religious obligations or ideals, satisfaction of spiritual or emotional needs of the practitioners, strengthening of social bonds, social and moral education, demonstration of respect or submission, stating one's affiliation, obtaining social acceptance or approval for some event — or, sometimes, just for the pleasure of the ritual itself.

In psychology, the term ritual is used in a technical sense for a repetitive behavior systematically used by a person to neutralize or prevent anxiety; it is a symptom of obsessive-compulsive disorder. In religion, a ritual can comprise the prescribed outward forms of performing the cultus, or cult, of a particular observation within a religion or religious denomination. Although ritual is often used in context with worship performed in a church, the actual relationship between any religion's doctrine and its ritual(s) can vary considerably”. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ritual> May 2010.

feels relieved after dancing and clapping during the healing. This again points to the tension between sensual relief and real worship as we treated above. This poses the question of who is it that heals? Is it the ritual, the priest with healing powers, the prescriptions or something else? However P. Ndubuisi disagreed by saying that the method has nothing to do with the healing efficacy. So it is God who effects healing. He augments what is lacking to manifest his presence.

2.15 ON THE TRADITIONAL HEALING METHODS

Before the advent of Christianity subsequent the advent of western medical treatment in company with the missionaries, the Igbo had their traditional healing methods which we have elaborated in the first part of this work. Some of these pagan healing practices lost their credibility with the missionaries. Christians resorted to the western healing methods or faith healing in seeking relief from illnesses. Today one notice some elements of syncretism resulting from the mixture of both religious practices or even a mixture of the traditional herbs with the western medications that at times result to further health hazards. We wanted to find out from the interviewed who are predominantly Christians what we should do with our traditional healing methods.

What should be done with the carryovers from the traditional religion into the Christian practice among some Igbo Christians? What could be the best pastoral approach to the situation? Can such “carryovers” be tolerated in the Christian message without watering down the Gospel message? Are there some elements in the traditional system that are good and that could be upheld and developed? One of the questions I asked all those interviewed in this work was; what do you think we should do with our traditional healing method? About 90% of those interviewed about opted that we take what is good in it and uphold them.



FIG. 41: What to do with the traditional healing methods

Asked what we should do with our traditional healing method: a young priest Fr. Simon has this to say: “It is the traditional medicine in western culture and society that developed into modern and contemporary medicine. But Africa as a continent being what it is, and stuck in time has refused to move forward. If African traditional medicine, should survive, it is supposed to be open to progress and move forward into modern and contemporary medicine. This is important for Africa with the continental heterogeneous gene pool serving as the module for research and methodology in order to help cure the diseases that are stereotypically specific to African populace.”⁴⁸⁵

Again asked what they think is good in our traditional healing system, majority of the interviewed noted the emphasis on the use of herbs to cure sickness.

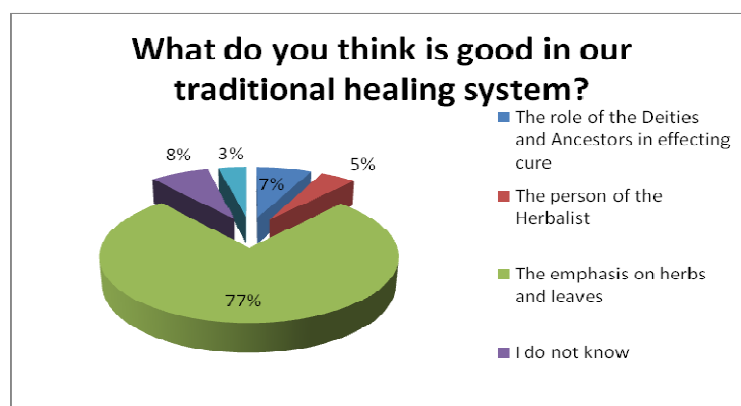


FIG. 42: What is good in the traditional healing system?

They opted that those herbs and leaves which the “dibia” – medicine man uses to cure peculiar sicknesses should be researched on and modernised and whatever is fetish in

⁴⁸⁵ Fr. Simon Udemgba, a young Igbo Priest living in America.

them should be removed – they should be acculturated and modernised. Asked what he thinks is good in traditional healing method: a young Igbo priest had this to say: “Everything in traditional medicine and method is supposed to be important if only if we understand, conserve, use and explain it for the ever changing human theory of knowing and application.”

2.16 ACCEPTING AND LIVING WITH SICKNESS

Sickness as we rightfully pointed out in the first part of this work, in the treatment of the phenomenon of sickness, is a deficiency in being and man has always sought to confront it. We have tried to find out how the present day Igbo person sees sickness, whether he still believes that sickness must be healed at all cost. The degree at which health is considered important is a sign of how sickness which is a negation of this health will be regarded. 73% said their health is very important to them while 26% said it is important showing that almost 99% saw their health as being important to them.

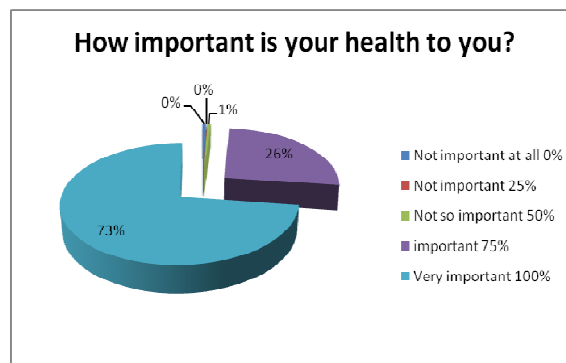


FIG. 43: Importance of health.

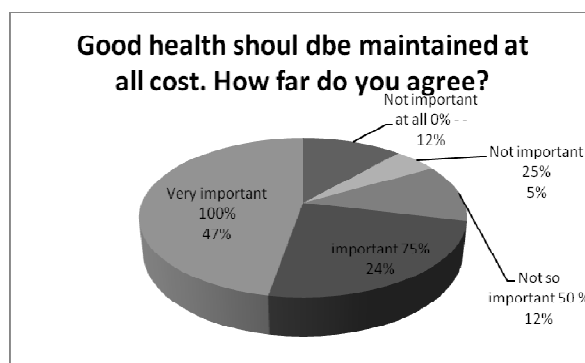


FIG. 44: Maintenance of good health

On the question of whether good health should be maintained at all cost, 47% said they quite agreed with this assertion while 24% agreed. 29% said not so important, that is those who do not agree with the assertion that health should be maintained at all cost even though their health is very important to them show that a significant number still see sickness as part of human existence. This is evident in the answer to the question whether every sickness must be healed. Only 20% supported the idea totally and this is the group that goes after healers or seeks any means to get well. Under this group we find those who are ready to apply both orthodox and unorthodox methods to get well again. Christians among this group are those that will then fall back to the traditional healers or healing method when they get sick.

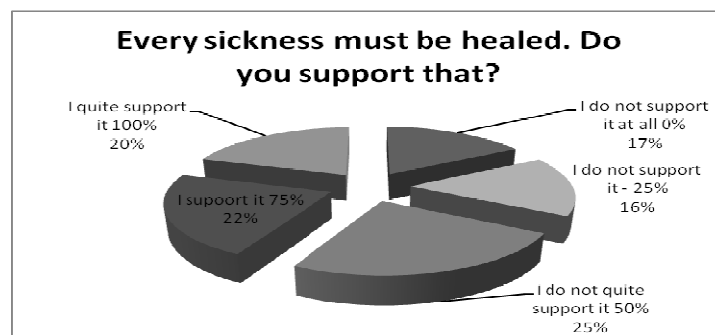


FIG. 45: Must every sickness be healed?

Honest attempt to get well should be made; healing should be sought for but not at any price. We tried to find out whether Christians should be taught to live with their sicknesses, accept it as the will of God or should they seek ways of healing the sickness. Majority of the interviewed showed 72% in agreement that healing should be sought and we see again the group that maintained that healing must not be sought for at all cost making 13% of the results. 10% of the interviewed are of the opinion that Christians should learn to live with their sicknesses. It is also pertinent to note that there are in Nigeria, Christian denominations that abhor medical treatment or refuse to take medical treatment when they are sick. They do not go to hospital.

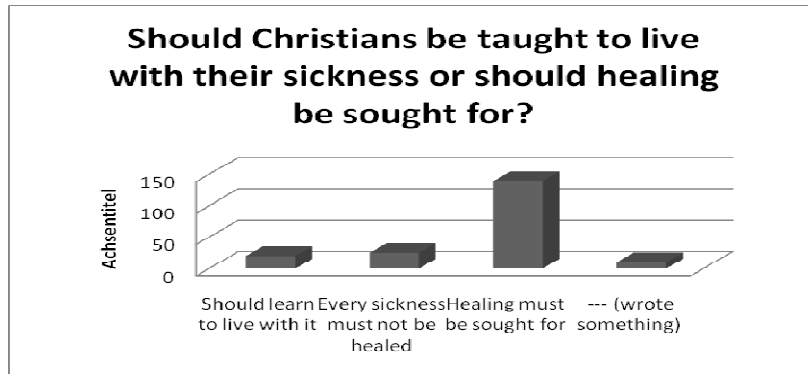


FIG. 46: Living with sickness

However, the recent craze for healing in Igbo land tends to portray a trend that relegates the salvific aspect of suffering and sickness. The cross theology has got to be reinstated or re-emphasized in the Igbo approach to sickness and suffering.

2.17 TRACING THE INFLUENCE OF WESTERN CULTURE ON THE VIEWS OF DIASPORA IGBO

An Igbo proverb says: “*onye ngapu ka onye ulo ihe ama*” – a traveller knows more than one who always stays at home. After the Biafran civil war 1966- 1970, many Igbo people left Igbo land in search of green pastures, in order to survive. Today the Igbo people are found in many parts of the world. This dispersal and contacts with other cultures brings with it also change or transformation in old ideas and conceptions.

As a result of that we tried during our data collection to interview some of the Igbo in diaspora.

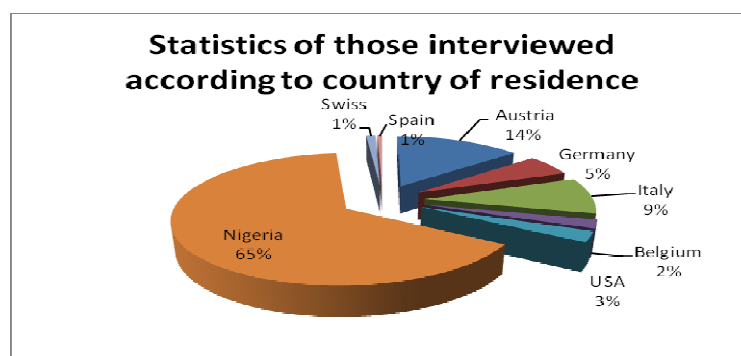


FIG. 47: Statistic of those interviewed according to residence

Though the majority of those interviewed about 65% are people living in Nigeria, the remaining 35% were living in Europe and America. We noticed that the exposure to other cultures and the enlightenment brought by education also influenced the perception of many Igbo in the Diaspora.

It is this change resulting from education, enlightenment and exposure to other cultures that helped eliminate some cruel practices like the killing of twins in the Igbo culture. We noticed also some changes among the Igbo in the Diaspora in regard to perception of sickness and healing as well as a growing sympathy for the traditional elements of our culture. The shifting of the healing machinery to the medical science in the western world has also influenced the Igbo in the Diaspora. Many of those exposed to these cultures will definitely seek a doctor for treatment rather than seeking faith at first instance or go to take herbs when he gets sick. One of the interviewed, a young priest living in the United States for some years now made this remark when asked what he thought was the reason why people went after healers when they got sick rather than to Hospital: "Initially, I used to look at it from faith perspective. But with exposure to other cultural milieu and its social underpinnings, I am beginning to see it differently. In my own opinion, I think it is more of the derivation of fewer alternative sources of healing with cost being the fundamental decisive factor. If modern health facility is readily available and within the reach of all and sundry, you will see a dramatic change of attitude towards "healers" and their healing ministry."

We have tried to analyse the results of the field in the above chapter, in the following chapter we hope to look at the theological implications and interpretations making some pastoral suggestions as solutions and reinstating what appears in the recent craze for healing to have been neglected.

CHAPTER THREE: PASTORAL THEOLOGICAL INTERPRETATIONS

3.0 INTRODUCTION

The research findings and the data analysis calls for a pastoral theological interpretation. In some cases it calls for a reinstatement of the values and teachings of the Church that the emerging but not called for competition with evangelical Pentecostalism, tends to water down or make the people forget. In this subsequent chapter we intend to draw some pastoral theological inferences and make some suggestions based on the findings above. Finally we shall enumerate the Papal Instruments on praying for healing as well as the Instructions of the Nigerian Bishops Conference on gatherings where prayers for healing are offered.

3.1 WHO HEALS ACTUALLY? A FUNDAMENTAL THEOLOGICAL QUESTION.

The question of who heals is a fundamental one. Is it the medical doctor or the medicine man or even the priest healer or is it the sick person himself? Let us explore this question.

3.1.1 Human expertise but God's work: A mystagogical catechetic

We have noted above the relationship between pastoral care and medicine. We have also noted the attempt of the medical science to believe that it is the lord of its own self. We have also dealt with the issue of healing by faith. The question remains: who actually heals? Is it the medical doctor that stitches my broken hand and it gets well again? Who and what is at work? Is it the medical expertise and know-how of the doctor? What role does the doctor assume here? Even the priest healer that prays for the patient in the

case of faith healing and the patient gets well: who has healed the patient? Is it the priest - healer or is he only an instrument?

3.1.1.1 Situation of the sick man: Salvation and healing

In stressing the relationship between sin and sickness, between sin and death, Beinert using the exegeses of the Pauline letter to the Romans on sin and death, described sickness as a state of “relationslessness” – lack of relations. He described it as a state of loss of communication with oneself, with God and with ones environment. The Pauline “death being” or “sin before God” influences in every sickness and every psychological affliction, the salvation and the integral healing of man.⁴⁸⁶ The “sin before God”, - the “death being” and the physical individual death have the common characteristics that it causes a state of “relationlessness” and loss of communication.⁴⁸⁷ He notes:

„sickness restricts the sick in many ways; he has pains, must have to give up many things he has been used to, he is in hospital distant from his normal environment and more still distant from people he has been used to, he sees himself as helpless, has got to rely on the goodwill and benevolence of the doctors and nurses whose measures he often don't understand.... Visitors come but they often only make him feel his state of alienation more. They go or they remain but if it lasts longer, he is off; and they will only add then to his loneliness instead.”⁴⁸⁸

Linking sickness to its etymological understanding of “sich kringeln” – “Verkrümmung”, as when one is pierced with an arrow, Beinert continues, the sick lives in a state of communicationslessness; he falls back to himself and is alone just as sin leaves the sinner in a state of relationslessness.

Sin leaves man broke, bent and disstructured -“ein verkrümmter, ein verspannter, ein verkrüppelter Mensch” – just like the sick. He notes:

⁴⁸⁶ Beinert Wolfgang, Heilender Glaube, 44.

⁴⁸⁷ *ibid.*

⁴⁸⁸ *ibid.*,45: Translation mine: Original Text: „durch die Krankheit, ist er vielfältigen Restriktionen unterworfen: Er hat Schmerzen, muss auf viele gewohnte Dinge verzichten, ist im Krankenhaus seiner gewohnten Umgebung und weithin auch den gewohnten Bezugspersonen entrückt, sieht sich hilflos, dem Wohlwollen von Ärzten und Pflegern ausgeliefert, deren Maßnahmen er meist nicht versteht.... Besucher kommen aber sie machen die Sonderbefindlichkeit meist nur noch deutlicher. Sie gehen und bleiben, dauert es länger, ganz weg; so sind sie Anlass zu noch tiefere Einsamkeit“.

„...he (the sinner) falls back to himself alone. He has through his action precisely broken the relationship to God, the source of all being and life. He can no longer communicate with anybody – neither with God, nor with his environment, in whose definition God appears as source of all reality, not even with himself, the image of God. Sin is in this sense actually like death.“⁴⁸⁹

In actual fact sickness and sin are both on the part of man, the end of every form of relationship, the falling into a deep dark existential hole, into an existential nothingness or emptiness.

In this situation of existential nothingness or emptiness, the Gospel message goes to annul the powers of sin and the powers of this “sin before God” – the “death being”, not only in word but in deed.⁴⁹⁰ And this is what Jesus did that earned him the name “Christus Medicus”- the healer and saviour:

„He cured both the physically and psychologically sick, he turned with care and love to the disadvantaged of the society – the lepers, the Tax collectors and Prostitutes – all who were cut from the society and forced into loneliness. He helped those under the bondages of injustice to freedom. In actions, which had a psychosomatic effect, he made his message clear: the Kingdom and reign of God has come“⁴⁹¹

Sickness and sin lead into existential loneliness, existential emptiness and the salvation wrought by Jesus is all encompassing, it is holistic.

The salvation brought by God is not simply an alternative to mans experience of the existential nothingness rather it is its annihilation. The saving act of Christ expelled this existential loneliness from the centre of man.

Salvation is the negation of the death bound negation. It is the negation of the “death being”⁴⁹².

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid.,; *Translation mine*: Original Text: „... er ist auf sich selbst zurückgeworfen. Er hat in seiner Tat, ausdrücklich oder einschlußweise, die Beziehung zu Gott, der Quelle allen seins und Lebens abgebrochen. Nun kann er mit niemanden mehr kommunizieren – mit Gott sowieso nicht, aber auch nicht mit seiner Umwelt, in deren Definition Gott als Urheber aller Wirklichkeit auftaucht; ja nicht einmal mit sich selber, der desgleichen Gottes ist. Sünde ist in diesem Sinne tatsächlich so etwas wie der Tod“.

⁴⁹⁰ *ibid.*, 46.

⁴⁹¹ *ibid.* Translation mine: Original Text: “Er heilt die physisch und psychisch Kranken, er wendet sich in Sorge und Liebe den Randexistenzen zu – den Aussätzigen, den Zöllnern und den Huren – alles Menschen, die in die Vereinsamung gedrängt waren. Er verhilft denen zu Befreiung, die unter Ungerechtigkeit zu leiden haben. In Handlungen, die psychosomatische Auswirkungen haben, macht er den Tenor seiner Botschaft verständlich: Das Reich und die Herrschaft Gottes sind angekommen“.

⁴⁹² *ibid.*, 47.

On the part of the sick person – the Christian, this negation (reconciliation) will be concrete in the ability to withstand pain and sickness, work on them and not flee from them or try to suppress them. And so “*ein actives Tun*” – a concrete action is needed on the part of the person.

It is on the basis of this “*actives Tun*” – concrete action, then that the “*ärztliches Tun*” – medical act on the sick is to be understood.⁴⁹³ It means then according to Beinert, the “*mögliche intensivierung des Kampfes gegen die Krankheit, also the Förderung der Sanitas-Komponente im Begriff Salus*” - „a possible speedup of the fight against sickness, it means the enhancement of the „*Sanitas*“ component of the „*Salus*“ – Salvation concept „. So the act of the medical doctor serves also the salvation concept. There is only one healer and curer of all afflictions. „I am Yahweh your healer and doctor” (Ex.15, 34) the book of Exodus tells us. In that sense the doctor is only an instrument in the hands of God.

Just like the act of Reconciliation – the gospel of Christ, the healing acts of Jesus restored the severed communication with God, the environment and oneself, so also the act of the doctors tries to restore the communicationslessness caused by the sickness and thereby restore the relationship to ones environment and to oneself.

„...with the patient’s recovery from a sickness, the communication which he in view of the coming death, needs to live, is restored. ...Moreover, the doctor from the scientific (medical) point of view fulfils a duty which death demand of him“⁴⁹⁴

The doctor fulfils the duty which death (clinical death) demands from them. It is true that human life is limited but most people die before their time. Death and sickness are a communication break and it is the duty of the doctor to prevent this untimely and unnecessary break in communication and relationship.

„Life is obviously limited but we are still a little bit far away from its end. ... seen on that basis, many die before their time. The doctor therefore is above all obliged to prevent this unnecessary and untimely communications bridge.“⁴⁹⁵

⁴⁹³ *ibid.*, 47.

⁴⁹⁴ *ibid.* Translation mine: “mit der Gesundung wird dem Patienten ja die Kommunikation wiederge-schenkt, deren er lebensnotwendig bedarf, auch und gerade unter dem Aspekten des kommenden Sterbens.... Darüber hinaus, erfüllt der Arzt eine Aufgabe, die auch aus der naturwissenschaftlichen Sicht vom Tod gefördert ist.“

⁴⁹⁵ *ibid.*: Translation mine: “Das Leben hat zwar eine unüberschreitbare Grenze aber wir sind von ihr noch weit entfernt. ... so gesehen, sterben die Meisten vor der Zeit. Diesen nicht notwendigen Kommunikationsabbruch zu verhindern, ist der Arzt allemal verpflichtet.“

Beinert further argues, that as long as sickness, like death is a limiting situation – „*eine Grenzsituation*“, which one suffers, it demands the norms of „*salus aegroti*“ – the meta-physical health - „*Wohlbefindlichkeit*“ of the Patient”.

The doctor`s treatment tries to end or prevent the isolation connected with sickness and death. At times the loneliness of the sick can be the result of a wrong behaviour. Health problems at times could be the result of wrong behaviours against the fifth commandment, in the sense of not taking care of one`s health.

The doctor is then not only obliged to provide medical care, human warmth and care but also pastoral help. He cannot leave it to the pastors of soul alone but must himself be a „spiritual therapist“. According to Beinert: „Das Gegenmittel gegen Sünde und `Todwesen` ist die Liebe, ...im letzten heilt immer nur die Liebe.“⁴⁹⁶ – „The Antidote against sin und the `death being` is love, ...after all only love can heal“.

What applies here to the doctors in terms of healing applies to all priest-healers who pray for people to get healed. He is an instrument, a vessel of divine healing and a vessel that transports something from one angle to another. In this case, when the priest heals, he plucks from the divine and implants it in the human. He is a mystagogue.⁴⁹⁷ He is only an instrument used by God to effect healing. He plucks from the divine mysteries of the healing Lord and makes it relevant and effective for the people of God. He leads the sick into the mystery of Christ`s healing powers.

⁴⁹⁶ *ibid.* 48-49.

⁴⁹⁷ Mystagogy means etymologically the act of initiating into the sacred. In the Greek language „*mystagogein*“ – „*in die Mysterien einführen*“ – means introducing the mysteries, leading in the mysteries. Originally, it meant the teaching of the apostles in the ancient mysteries. The teaching priest is the mystagogue. It was used in the early church to designate the introduction and teaching of the catechumenes. It has to do with leading the one initiated into the mystery and has a common root with pedagogy. The father of Christian Mystagogy was Bishop Cyril of Jerusalem whose „sermons have been considered the archetype of mystagogical homilies, though more recently, they are seen as one approach to Mystagogy, among several others“. Maximus the Confessor (a.d. 665) gave mystagogy a new twist giving it a monastic taste at a time when many people were leaving the church in disillusionment and he wrote his mystagogia in order to bring them back to their earlier faith. So mystagogy in the patristic was seen as „a pastoral practice for the recuperation of the baptised who had grown disillusioned and indifferent towards the church if not towards Christ“. In the roman catholic theology of the new time, the concept of mystagogic catechetics is connected with Karl Rahner. Rahner introduced the mystagogy for modern men and women living in a world in crises of religion. Cf.: <http://de.wikipedia.org/Mystagoge> (2.Juni 2010); David Regan, *Experience the Mystery: Pastoral possibilities for Christian mystagogy*. Collegeville, Minnassota, Liturgical Press, 1994, 15; in: <http://books.google.de/books>, Juni 2010.

The blessings of the church reveal the many facets of the relationship between God's work and human action.⁴⁹⁸ This is evident in the sacrament of Extreme Auction. The anointing priest is acting in the name of the Church, in the name of Christ.

Christ has already paid the price for our healing and salvation. He has borne our grieves, our sicknesses and carried our sorrows and pains. He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities and by His stripes we are healed. (Isaiah 53:4-5).

In this sense the role of the doctor or the priest healer is mystagogical. He is bringing to completion what has already been started or even ordained by Christ the healer. What happens in healing is nothing but human action in practice but God's deed using human instruments. The healing has been willed by God. Healing like salvation „was not a question anymore. He has already done it. All that is left is 'receiving' it. Healing (sacramental healing) was purchased in the atonement. It is as available as salvation".⁴⁹⁹

So it is God who heals. He is the author and finisher of our being. The role of the healer is to release the kingdom of God on earth just as healing is a manifestation of this kingdom. The primary role of the apostles and consequently of the priest is to proclaim the kingdom of God and not healing. Healing was secondary and should manifest this kingdom.

Karl Rahner, in his mystagogical catechetic⁵⁰⁰ noted that God had for long touched man and the human nature, may be in moments of unconscious dialogue with God, in those moments when we start asking about the essence of our existence, when we start asking God why?, or why me? And God begins to tell us through his human instruments that he cares about how we feel and knows what we are going through. When he tells us

⁴⁹⁸„Die Segnungen der Kirche offenbaren die vielschichtigen Zusammenhänge zwischen dem Wirken Gottes und menschlichen Tun. Wie der Schöpfer sich freut an den Dingen und Lebewesen, die er geschaffen hat, so freut sich die Kirche an all den Werken und Erfindungen, die der Mensch in Erfüllung des Kulturauftrags Gottes: „Macht euch die Erde untertan“ geschaffen hat. Das Brausen der Motoren unserer Flugzeuge, der Schiffe und Straßenfahrzeuge ist für die Kirche gleichsam das technische Ja und Amen des Menschen zum Auftrag Gottes“. Martin Pauli, „Predigt zur Segnung eines Feuerwehrfahrzeuges“, in Konrad Baumgartner et al (Hrsg.), *Der Prediger und Katechet; Kasualpredigten 1; 114 Jahrgang*; Sonderheft 1975, 183.

⁴⁹⁹ Cf.: <http://www.alighthouse.com/plordyourhealer.htm> .

⁵⁰⁰ Mystagogical catechetics for Rahner is teaching or leading people to realise that God touched our lives long before we became conscious of that. „Die Grundidee der Mystagogie geht davon aus, dass bereits geschehen ist, was dann erklärt wird. Dieser Gedanke wurde in den letzten Jahrzehnten neu aufgegriffen. Karl Rahner spricht von einer mystagogischen Katechese. In seiner Theologie zeigt er, dass der Mensch schon längst von Gott berührt ist, vielleicht schon in einem unbewußten Gespräch mit Gott steht, wenn er nach dem Sinn seiner Existenz fragt. Diese Realität dem Menschen aufzuzeigen, ist mystagogische Katechese“. Cf.: Eckhard Bieger S.J., „Mystagogie“, in <http://www.kath.de/lexikon/liturgie/index.php?page=mystagogie.php>, (Mai 2010).

through his word that he loves us with an everlasting love and that he has written our names in his palms right from the day of our baptism and that nothing can erase it. Though the level or degree at which we feel this healing touch or experience may vary according to culture and understanding.

3.2 ATTITUDE TOWARDS SICKNESS AND HEALING IN EUROPE: A COMPARISON.

The attitude towards sickness and healing and the approaches to them in Europe and Africa differ. Many factors may contribute to this difference in approach. For sure the level of understanding and the financial or economic situation in Africa is a major contributing factor. Many patients cannot afford the exorbitant hospital bills and therefore resort to faith healing through prayers or fall back to old traditional methods of healing that may appear cheaper. Some resort to go to the chemists which come cheaper as well. Most of these are simply people who have learnt the trade and not the profession. Many of them are not pharmacists, they never studied pharmacy, but simply attached themselves to people who are already practicing and learnt in the course of time the prices of the drugs and the knowledge of drugs that heals a particular ailment. Usually when patients come, and describe their ailments, they prescribe and sell the drugs to them. The patients in this case only pay for the drugs and save the doctors cost. Also on the ontological aspect, the attitude towards sickness and healing in Europe differs from that in Africa. This can be seen in the results of a similar study in Europe.

3.2.1 A similar study in Europe from Dr Markus Beranek: „Gemeinde als Heil/land“ – „The parish community as a place of salvation/healing“.

The Missio Aachen in Germany commissioned the Department of Pastoral Theology of the University of Vienna, to carry out a research on the topic: „Gemeinde als Heil-Land“ – translated: „The Parish community as a place of salvation and healing“. This research was carried out in four parishes in Germany and Austria. The aim of this study was to show that the Christian parish communities today are also capable of giving the

modern man of today this sense of holistic healing – salvation and bodily healing of bodily impediments.

The Research: „The parish community as a place of salvation and healing” attempted to place the whole parish community life and relationships under the optical lens of empirical, deductive and inductive investigations and to ask: How far does the Christian faithful from the point of view of their personal and subjective perception, experience their parish community as a saving and life healing place? Dr Markus Beranek of the Institute for Pastoral Theology at the University of Vienna under the moderation of Prof. DDr. Paul M. Zulehner, then wrote a Dissertation from the results of this research. He placed the research under four theses:

- The relationships of the faithful among themselves. „Die Beziehungen der Menschen untereinander”.
- The community as a place where people experience God. „Die Gemeinde als Erfahrungsort Gottes”.
- The parish community as a place of fulfilment, a place where the individual can remain human or achieve his humanity. „Gemeinde als Ort der Menschwerdung des Einzelnen”.
- The parish community as a place that encourages and empowers love and solidarity. „Gemeinde als Ort, der zu solidarischer Liebe ermächtigt”⁵⁰¹.

In his work, Beranek traced the relatedness of the concepts „salvation“(Heil) and „healing“(Heilung). In Europe in the course of time the question of healing and salvation has been separated from each other. Healing has in recent times only be explained and analysed symbolically and in the long run transferred to the sphere of medicine. According to Prof. Dr. Ulrich Eibach: It is now about salvation, not healing - „*Es geht uns um heil werden, nicht um Heilung*”.⁵⁰² Our concern now, our emphasis is on getting saved, getting fit, getting whole and not on healing. Healing has been reduced to spiritual wholeness and bodily healing shifted to school medicine. This explains perhaps the outcome of Beranek’s research in which from all interviewed none was expecting bodily

⁵⁰¹ Beranek, Markus, *Gemeinde als Heil/Land*, Dissertation, Uni Wien 2002.

⁵⁰² Eibach, Ulrich, „Heil und Heilung“, in www.lippische-landeskirche.de (March 2010).

healing from the parish community or from the priest. Experiencing bodily healing in the parish community was not an issue among those interviewed.⁵⁰³

This is in contrast to our research in Africa, where about 16% of those interviewed expected bodily healing from their parish community or from their priest.



Fig.48: Type of healing expected from the parish

In Europe on the other hand, healing of bodily sickness has been shifted to the highly developed and accessible medical science in Europe. This goes to explain why expectation of bodily healing from the parish community was not an issue in the research in Europe. The social security system in place makes it possible for everybody to have access to medical treatment when they are sick.

Again the degree of understanding and exposure in Europe built on a certain degree of rational thinking which questions the rationality of going to seek the help of faith when you have the convincing alternative medical science is also a factor. Moreover the Europeans unlike the Africans before the advent of Christianity were not used to going to the priest (traditional religion's priest) for help when they have bodily ailments.

However, as long as medical science continues to meet its limitations, the people are also slowly getting fed up with what Professor Paul M. Zulehner called: „a machinery-apparatus of a healing technique”- „eine Maschinellapparative Heiltechnik” and a

⁵⁰³ „Nicht gefragt ist körperliche Heilung. Alle, die Gemeinde aus der eigenen Erfahrung, also aus der Innenperspektive kennen, wissen von heilenden Erfahrungen zu erzählen, dabei spielt aber das erleben körperlicher Heilung überhaupt keine Rolle. Das Thema „Gemeinde als Heil-Land“ löste bei den Befragten durchwegs einen Überraschungseffekt aus und bot einen Anstoß zum Nachdenken. Hier zeigt sich sicher ein sehr wesentlicher Unterschied zu Gemeinden beispielsweise im charismatischen Kontext“. Beranek, Markus, 190.

„technical -health — overhauling – process” „Gesundheits-TÜV”,⁵⁰⁴ that risks the loss of touch with human dignity and they are in recent times taking recourse now to alternative medicine. Many in Europe are falling back today to homeopathic medicine and esoteric practices. The Africans and the Igbo in particular however has also got to accept the fact that the cross is an inevitable part of Christian life and theology.

3.3 REINSTATING THE CROSS THEOLOGY IN IGBO MENTALITY.

According to Prof. Greshake, we have got to differentiate between „heilung” -bodily healing, health restoration, life and health support and „endzeitliches Heil“ - eschatological salvation. At the same time, the faithful Christian should be able to taste, to have a glimpse, to experience now the gift of salvation, happiness and life development as the wonderful gift of God’s kingdom that he promised us and that is at hand now.⁵⁰⁵

Behind this is not an utopical ideal of a „perfect health“, rather healing is understood here as the „power or will to be human and to remain human“, even in the midst of possible physical or psychological sicknesses, disablement or impediments. To remain human is to accept the fact that there is no perfect and lasting health and that ill health is then part of human existence.

Watching the trend of events among the Igbo Christians in regard to the rampant search for healing and in some cases at all cost, one tends to notice a trend that relegates the reality of suffering as been part of human reality. There is today the tendency of neglecting the cross of Christ in this rampant craze for miracles and healings. According to Nwodo:

„The present craze for miracles and healing (powers) has surreptitiously injected into our Christianity a lot of toxins. The most unfortunate manifestation of this is the craze for crossless Christianity amongst our teeming Christians“.⁵⁰⁶

Surely suffering or sickness is a lack and was not part of God’s plan for man, though it has become part of human reality. Christ took the way of the cross and enjoined all that

⁵⁰⁴ Zulehner Paul, *Pastoraltheologie*, Band 3: Übergänge, 60.

⁵⁰⁵ Greshake, G. Glück: *Systematisch-theologisch*, LThK 4 (1995), 759-760.

⁵⁰⁶ Nwodo Sylvester, *Tourch Magazine*, Enugu, 2000, 5.

want to follow him to take their cross everyday and follow him. Hence the cross theology is part of the Christian spirituality and theology. To be a Christian is to be a bearer of the cross of Christ. Christ was tempted to choose between the suffering Messiah and a crossless Messiahship. He chose the former and made it the way of his followers. Therefore getting rid of all sufferings in the life of a Christian will be a continuation of the temptation of Christ – Christianity without cross and a crossless Christianity is no Christianity at all.⁵⁰⁷ And the rampant craze for healing is as a result of a wrong notion of the relationship between Christianity and the cross.

The importance of the cross in the life of a Christian should not be underestimated as Oguh would summarise: „The cross is not only redemptive, it has healing effects as well.. for example, on our soul – deflating it of its pompous ego, making it humble to realise the creator in the midst of created things vying for attention”.⁵⁰⁸

Some proponents of the African liberation theology are of the opinion that the African man has enough cross to carry in his poverty, indigence and helplessness and therefore they should not be lead an extra cross upon or in this case should not be made to carry an extra cross - sickness. But the maxim „change what you can change, what you cannot change accept” remains actual and current. Sickness has become part of human reality. It is right and justified to seek genuine ways of healing sickness when they come. Christians should seek relieve of their sickness and trouble. About 72% of the interviewed in our study as we saw in the graphic in Chapter 2.3 of this second part of the work said Christians should be made to seek healing when they become sick rather than living with the sickness.

But accepting sickness and seeking genuine ways of alleviating sufferings or healing sicknesses when they come and bearing them with patience and endurance folded in hope when they cannot be cured has got to be resounded again and again. According to Oguh, it is accepted that: „all human ailments cannot be solved medically, nevertheless, all ailments must not be subjected to anointing, rebuking of the spirits, ministrations and Holy Ghost firing on people. Virtue stands in the middle. The Holy Spirit has the fire

⁵⁰⁷ *ibid.*

⁵⁰⁸ Oguh Cyracius et al., “Healing and Exorcism: Implications and realities”, in *Tourch Magazine*, Enugu, 2000, 6-7.

that builds or restores or put things in order and not just to destroy. The blood of Jesus cleanses and saves us. It does not enslave or condemn us”.⁵⁰⁹

It is simply not possible to be a disciple of Christ without embracing the cross as Pope John Paul II would say. Mother Theresa of Calcutta saw suffering as a positive value that man possesses which God does not possess: „The created being has a positive value which God does not have – suffering! God envied man this condition and took it upon himself by being a victim of suffering”.⁵¹⁰

There is no Christianity without cross and so the cross theology has got to be reinstated in the psyche of the Igbo Christian. And proper and orthodox teachings of the church on suffering, sickness, healing and exorcism should be expounded.

Christ did not heal all the sick people in Israel; neither did he raise all the dead in his time from the dead. All the disabled and possessed people of his time were not healed and freed from their troubles. Christ healed the sick, restored the disabled, and raised the dead when it goes to manifest the dawn of the kingdom of God and when it serves to bring people to faith in God. And the fact that he himself was not spared from suffering demonstrates that we have got to learn to accept situations of suffering or sickness as they come to us, more so when we are plagued with incurable sickness or disability, hence as the Papal Instructions on Prayers for Healing says:

„Yet not even the most intense prayer obtains the healing of all sicknesses. So it is that St. Paul had to learn from the Lord that «my grace is enough for you; my power is made perfect in weakness» (2 Cor.12:9), and that the meaning of the experience of suffering can be that «in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the Church» (Col 1:24).”⁵¹¹

Christ who did everything good as the Scripture tells us but did not heal every sickness in Israel in his time, gave us the ability to overcome suffering and to smile and as Carlo Cremona would enjoin us: resist the violence of pain by looking at the cross in order to be like it.

⁵⁰⁹ *ibid.* 7.

⁵¹⁰ Cf. Rev. Carlo Cremona: Article: “Care for the Sick and the Fathers of the Church”, in http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/hlthwork/documents/.

⁵¹¹ Papal Instructions on Prayer for Healing, 1, 5.

3.4 „BEING ALL THINGS TO ALL MEN”: THE PRIEST AND HIS FAITHFUL.

Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 9.19), presented himself as trying to be all things to all men.

„For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more. And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law, though not being myself under the Law, that I might win those who are under the Law; to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, that I might win those who are without law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men that I may by all means save some. And I do all things for the sake of the gospel, that I may become a fellow partaker of it”. (1 Cor. 9.19-23)

This periscope seemed to have been taken literally by some and they use it to justify the tendency of a pastor of soul tearing himself down in the bid to satisfy all the needs of his faithful. In our case study, this axiom of trying to be all things to all men is used to justify priests who start ministries simply because they see that their faithful are in need of it even when they know that it is not their charisma. This refers to priests who start healing ministries so that their parishioners will not go elsewhere in search of that or so that they will not be rated as not being powerful.

But what does St. Paul mean in his assertion of „being all things to all men”?

This periscope according to Piper⁵¹², has to do with what missionaries have to do when they come into contact with other cultures. It has to do with adapting to other cultures and ways of life of the people with whom the missionary comes in contact with but without offending God. That means adapt as much as you can but in non-sinful ways. The aim of Paul in becoming all things to all men was to win others (verse 19); to save others (verse 22) and to be partaker in the benefits of the gospel himself (verse 23). The big question remains: should we imitate Paul in trying to be all things to all men? Is it correct to transfer this to the pastoral life of the priest in a parish community bearing in mind that we are all gifted differently? Paul gave the answer in his first letter to the Corinthians 12:7-11 as he writes:

⁵¹² Piper John, „God Almighty Series”, Feb. 1996, in www.desiringgod.org, (March, 2010)

„Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and still to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines”. (1 Cor. 12, 7-11)

Every one of us is gifted in some way. We only need to discover where our talents lie and use them for the common good. Some priests may be good in preaching, some may be good in administering, some may be good in counselling, some in teaching, some in prayers, and some may be gifted in praying for the sick to be healed. No one can be master in all trade as St. Paul would ask in 1 Cor. 12.29: „Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? But earnestly desire the higher gifts”.

We should all rather be gifted as St. Paul will say, in desiring the „higher gift” – love, in loving and caring for the sick in the Church’s pastoral care of the sick.

3.5 PASTORAL CARE AND MINISTRY TO THE SICK

The Church is „rooted in charity and founded on charity” and therefore seeks to welcome the sick as Christ did. Christ came to proclaim the good News of the Kingdom of God and the signs and wonders – the miracles were signs of the dawn of the Kingdom of God among men. Healing was not his primary mission as we noted earlier in this work but the proclamation of the kingdom. As he went about proclaiming the Good News, he met the poor, the hungry and the sick and had compassion with them. He associated with the poor and proclaimed the good News to them. He fed the hungry and healed the sick. That was the beginning of charitable works and pastoral care to the poor, the hungry and the sick. Jesus then sent out his disciples to continue the work he started in the great commission in Mark 16, 15-18:

„Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs

will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.“ (Mark 16, 15-18).

Ministry to the sick and the poor occupied an important place in the pastoral ministry of the Apostles following the example of their master Jesus. They later appointed the seven deacons to take care of the needy, the sick and the poor and they shared their goods in order to help the needy, the sick, and pilgrims. This Christian charity according to Carlo Cremona, separated the early Christians from other men, something which was unknown to the ancients, was born with Jesus. In this way hospitals were born and works of mercy no longer had barriers in their way. Carlo Cremona further described the origin of the Church's pastoral ministry to the poor and the sick thus:

„As the Church gradually acquired freedom of action (the apostolic period, great monks, and then the great Fathers of the East and the West) hospitals, leper colonies and isolation hospitals –Lazarett – “*Pestkrankenhaus*” (this last in Latin being derived from the name of poor Lazarus from the Gospel parable) sprang up. In these institutions monks or mere Christians engaged in volunteer work with joy. Without any repugnance at all they bore the presence of all forms of human misery in order to serve Christ in person within their sick brethren. ‘I was sick and you came to me, helped me, and took care of me’.”⁵¹³

Particularly in this time, one could say as Cremona puts it: „It was as if compassion overflowed into misery to the point of neglecting it and running after it: so much misery but an equal amount of compassion.” And that became the Church's way of life bringing healing and salvation to the world. Though in the last few centuries in the history of the Church there seemed to have been retardation if not suppression of the theology and ministry of healing until in the last few decades with the emergence of the Charismatic group on the scene of the contemporary history of the Church. The question has been raised whether the healing mandate of Christ was only relevant at the beginning of the Church than today. But a survey of the Church history however shows that the Fathers of the Church in different epochs have always stressed the importance of the pastoral care and ministry to the sick. Carlo Cremona in his article: „Care of the sick and the

⁵¹³ Cf. Rev. Carlo Cremona, “Care for the Sick and the Fathers of the Church, in http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/hlthwork/documents.

Fathers of the Church” listed St. Anselm, St. John Chrysostom, St. Augustine and in the recent times Mother Theresa of Calcutta as leading examples of the saints in the field of the care of the sick in the Church.⁵¹⁴

For Christ, according to Carlo, nothing can be worst than seeing people in their sickness and suffering and turning the back on them without offering them help. Theology should therefore not turn her back on the sick or relegate or delegate the mission given to her by Christ to free his people from the bondage of sin and sickness. On the other hand, Häring warns that concentrating the healing dimensions of the work of Christ only to the aspect of biological healing - healing wounds, would turn out to be a narrowing of theology.⁵¹⁵

Therefore the pastoral care and ministry to the sick should be holistic; it should aim at the whole man. Science should open its door to God and faith expelled from the medical laboratories. It should accept its limitations but should not see these limitations as weakness or failure but as a challenge to embark on researching man and the universe, thereby doing justice to the biblical injunction of Genesis at creation to increase and multiple and subdue the earth.

⁵¹⁴ *ibid.* “*St. Basil* created a hospital-town in the environs of Cappadocia. They called it “*Basiliade*”. *John Chrysostom*, the protector and the defender of the poor was exiled by the Empress Eudoxia for denouncing her publicly for having wrongfully gained the vineyard of a widow which had been destined for a hospital for the poor which he administered. .
St. Jerome in letter number LXXVII to Oceanus gave great praise to a certain Fabiola, a woman who was the subject of much gossip but was a convert to Christianity. Fabiola had paid for the creation of a hospital for the poor.
“She was the first person to establish a hospital for all the sick people she found in the street: deformed noses, empty eye sockets, withered arms and legs, extended stomachs, skeletal thighs, rotten flesh full of worms.. How many times did she herself carry those suffering from leprosy to the hospital on her shoulders..She fed them with her own hands and gave a spoonful of broth to those living corpses” (Letter number LXXVII).
Augustine of Hippo, according to his biographer Possidius, only went to homes where there were orphans and the sick. In the rules of the monastic order he established there is a special chapter relating to caring for the sick. He presents Jesus as the great physician of humanity who does not write a prescription for the chemist *but creates the medicine with his own blood*, in the exercise of his Humanity. *“Come to me all you who are heavy laden and I will give you rest.”*
 In our times we can think of *Padre Pio*, Follereau.. and thousands of others, everywhere, missionaries in the leper colonies. But let us not speak only of the past. Let us speak also of the present, of those who are alive today. *Mother Theresa*, and many, many others ignored amidst the fire of warriors. This is what the official world knows how to do: not to love but to kill! All the good of which man is capable is the exclusive gift of God. Outside this there is only misery and sin.”

⁵¹⁵ Häring Bernard, *Frei in Christus; Moral Theologie für die Praxis des Christlichen Leben*; II, 61, 62: “Für Christus kann nichts als schlimmer gelten, als Menschen in ihren Leiden zu sehen und sich von ihnen abzuwenden, ohne ihnen Hilfe zu leisten.”; „Es ist eine bedeutende Verengung der Theologie, wenn sie das heilende Tun Christi nur im Blick auf dem apologetischen Zweck von Wunden betrachtet.” .

The Church today on her side should not lose sight of the fact that she must also continue Christ's mission of bringing relief and succour to the suffering and those who are troubled in mind, body and spirit through preaching, teaching and healing.⁵¹⁶

In the bid to do justice to this holistic healing of man, the Church establishes hospitals, trains doctor and nurses to care for the sick. The Church establishes schools to train the mind with conscience, in justice and morality. In this way it helps in creating a sound/healthy mind in a sound/healthy body – „*Mens sana in corpore sano*”.

In the sacrament of penance, the Church heals the sickness of the soul – the sickness of sin (moral sickness) uplifting souls to God. And in the sacrament of Extreme Unction it strengthens the sick asking God for healing if it is his will and for strength and courage if it is incurable or a sickness unto death. This holistic approach to man and to sickness is the goal of a hospital pastoral.

3.5.1 Visions of a hospital pastoral in Igbo land

As Bernard Häring rightly pointed out in our reference above, salvation and health are closely related to each other as Christ is our Saviour, our Redeemer and the healing godly Doctor.⁵¹⁷ The missionaries came to Igbo land establishing Churches and missions, as well as building mission schools and hospitals. These mission hospitals according to a statement of the Conference of Catholic Bishops of Nigeria, continue the healing ministry of Jesus through direct care, outreach services and related health and human services or activities. They collaborate with others in bringing services to those who need them most.

In the spirit of this collaboration we are therefore calling for an active and functional hospital pastoral in Igbo Land. This will not only help in curbing the excessive craze for healing homes but also will be in line with the mandate of Christ to his church. There should be a cordial co-operation between the medical doctor, the nurses and the priest in the treatment of the patient. Pastors of souls should establish contact with the doctors

⁵¹⁶ Cf.: Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria (CBCN); *Guidelines for the Healing Ministry in the Catholic Church of Nigeria*, Sovereign Ventures, Lagos, 1997, 2.

⁵¹⁷ Häring Bernard, *Frei in Christus*, 61.

and nurses of the clinic and hospitals in their parishes and the hospital establishment should allow priest-patient contact to ensure a spiritual and sacramental care of the sick in their hospitals. The parish priest should from time to time make it a point of duty to visit the sick lying in the hospitals or clinics in his parish territory. A centralised diocesan hospital Chaplaincy should be instituted while big hospitals should be assigned their own chaplaincy with a priest assigned as a chaplain. The laity could be trained and assigned as lay co-workers in the chaplaincy.

Man is an integral entity – spiritual, corporal and psychic. In order to achieve a wholesome healing therefore, each of the aspects must consider the other. The medical concerned more with the somatic must not neglect the spiritual and psychic and vice versa. So a functional hospital pastoral will not only serve a holistic approach to healing but will also tackle and heal a major root of sickness that is at times over sighted or neglected. Most often, to assure effective healing it is necessary to first heal the roots.

3.6 HEALING THE ROOTS

As a matter of fact, medicine tries to fight the roots of a sickness in order to heal it – „*Krankheitserreger*“. In our treatment of healing through medicine in part one of this work, we noted the process of healing as comprising of Aetiology as the first procedure whereby the cause or root of the sickness is sought out first and tackled so that the therapy could be followed effectively. But at times it is not only medical factors - somatic factors – that are the major roots of sicknesses. According to Bernard Häring, it is not only medical factors that determine the health of a particular people, it rather has to do with the fundamental questions of the lifestyle, healthy working conditions, healthy family structures, mutual trust, a peaceful environment or atmosphere and concern for a peaceful world around the sick person.⁵¹⁸

People whose lifestyles are unhealthy and who as a result of that got sick turn to the hospital or to the healer to heal them of the somatic sickness that is the result of the poor

⁵¹⁸ ibid., 63: “Es geht um grundsätzliche Fragen des Lebensstils, gesunder Arbeitsverhältnisse, gesunder Familienstruktur, gegenseitiges Vertrauen, um ein Klima des Friedens, der Mitsorge für eine heilere Welt’.”

or bad lifestyle they are living, if they get well to go back to the same bad lifestyle again, the chances that they will get sick again are high. People who are living or working in an unhealthy condition turn up for healing and expect healing from a sickness that is the result of these poor conditions. People living under a tense family condition filled with hatred and quarrels turn up for healing and after getting healed, they return to this „hate environment”. This may not be medical factors but psychological or spiritual factors even. It is then the question whether it is not better to heal the roots first.

Today in some hospitals in Europe, the collaboration among the sciences- medicine, theology and psychology - is so advanced that one finds in some hospitals psychologist, psychotherapists and hospital chaplains (priests) working together with the doctor in the care of the sick. There are cases where a sacramental absolution through the reception of the sacrament of penance has being sequential to healing, preceding the treatment of the doctor or as a follow up to the counselling of the psychotherapist. Christian psychotherapists continue to give witness to this level of faith – the power of sacramental healing in guilt counselling, a level they cannot ascend in coaching. Man is an integral entity – spiritual, corporal and psychic. In order to achieve a wholesome healing, each of these aspects must consider the other.

In every culture like the Igbo where there is this belief in ancestral lines, there is this false notion that the sins of the ancestors are inherited through the family line and that without healing those sins, descendants will continue to suffer various problems. There is also the notion that curses in the family lines do affect the health state of the descendants. These curses or sins of the ancestors are sometimes considered as the root of the problems or sicknesses in the family and these roots have got to be investigated for the sicknesses to be healed. This belief or practice in some areas borders on shamanism.

Healers in Igbo land have discovered this aspect of the causes of sickness as a result of family root connections and are going after it today in Nigeria. This practice has spread in Igbo land along with the Charismatic movement. One of the healers I interviewed in the course of this work spoke from what healers in Nigeria today call „Family root Ministries” or „Home Liberations”- „*Olu Ezinaulo*”. It is a ministry that attempts to heal the wounds in the family in order to effect healing of the persons. In most cases, it can be a curse that is placed on somebody in the family or the spirit of the late father of a family that is disturbing the health and progress of the children. The healer goes to the family and conducts prayer sessions with deliverance prayers to free the family from the curse.

They call this healing the family roots in order to make way for the total healing of the person.

Aberrations here are also not lacking, when many healers demand exorbitant prices and make long list of what the families have to provide for the prayer group to come for the cleansing. Asked about this one of the Catholic priests involved in this has this to say: „Among the Pentecostal churches, they make stipulations and demands. But in the Catholic Church if there are priests who demand it, I do not know. But in home Liberations, the priest can make some demands to take care of those accompanying him.” It is as a result of this and some other aberrations resulting from the incessant search for healing and the proliferation of healing ministries in the Church in Igbo land and other places that the Church issued the Papal Guidelines for prayers for healing and the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria issued also guidelines regulating such gatherings where prayers for healing are offered.

3.7 THE CHURCH’S GUIDELINES

The Church acknowledges the fact that the faithful could gather to pray for healing and that there are gifts or charismas of healing. As St Paul says: „All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who distributes to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses” (1 Cor. 12:11) and the Church cannot dictate for the Holy Spirit. The Church therefore issued a Papal Instruction on prayers for healing in order to curb or check aberrations emanating from such prayer-gatherings where healing is sought for. On their own part, the Nigerian Bishops Conference also issued Guidelines binding on all who engage in the healing ministry. We shall outline the major points of these Guidelines below.

3.7.1 The Papal Instructions on prayers for healing

The Papal Instructions on gathering for healing-prayers stipulated the following guidelines:

- It is licit for every member of the faithful to pray to God for healing, but it should be led by an ordained minister.
- The gatherings for healing-prayers are liturgical if parts of the liturgical books of the church are used; otherwise it is a non-liturgical gathering.
- The permission to hold such services must be explicitly given by the local ordinary.
- Anything resembling hysteria, artificiality, theatricality or sensationalism, above all on the part of those who are in charge of such gatherings, must not take place.
- Prayers for healing – whether liturgical or non-liturgical must not be introduced into the celebration of the Holy Mass, the sacraments, or the Liturgy of the Hours.
- When the celebration is over, any testimony can be collected with honesty and accuracy, and submitted to the proper ecclesiastical authority
- According to Art. 8 – § 1, the ministry of exorcism must be exercised in strict dependence on the Diocesan Bishop. The exorcising minister must be the official empowered by the local ordinary. And the prayers of exorcism contained in the *Rituale Romanum* must remain separate from healing services, whether liturgical or non-liturgical.
- It is absolutely forbidden to insert such prayers of exorcism into the celebration of the Holy Mass, the sacraments, or the Liturgy of the Hours.

3.7.2 Instructions or Guidelines of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) on Healing

The Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) issued the following Guidelines or Instructions on healing or gathering and praying for healing:

- It is God's plan that we should combat all illness and should prudently seek the blessings of good health.
- Jesus healing was integral. That is to say, he healed the whole person - body, mind and spirit -and not just one part of him.
- Preoccupations with Demons, seeing demons where there are none, blaming them for all troubles, having obsessive fear of them and preaching about them excessively, are marks of a superstitious trend that does not find support in Christian tradition. The Church cautions against such undue preoccupations.
- Praying for healing, must be within the context of other ministries of the church: sacramental, ministry of the word, ministry of charity.
- It must take place within the Eucharistic celebration, and proper care must be taken to safeguard the decorum and integrity of the Liturgy. Three periods are prescribed: namely, the introductory rite, at the end of the Liturgy of the Word, and after the Post Communion Prayer.
- Setting up of healing centres are to be discouraged.
- There should be no advertisements of healing activities, in such a way as to attract undue attention to the person of the minister. Testimonies which aim at exciting admiration and the adulation of the minister should be discouraged.
- There should be no prescription of prayers that could suggest magical efficacy: (like burying cross, Psalm at Midnight etc)
- Catechetical in healing ministries are to educate the faithful to wait on the will of God for the answer to their prayers
- There should be no recourse to ordeals, such as flogging or beating, or other practices such as oat taking that are harmful or dehumanizing to, or violate the freedom of conscience

- All monies movable and immovable property accruing from healing ministry are to be administered in accordance with the laid down norms and principles of the Diocese or religious community to which an individual minister of healing belongs. On no account should a minister appropriate such material proceeds to himself or herself
- Trading in any form is forbidden.
- The charging of fees for ministries, producing articles for sales –such as clothing, soap, cosmetics, jewellery, etc to which miraculous powers are ascribed should be discontinued.

3.8 „TEST ALL, AND RETAIN WHAT IS GOOD”: EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

Evaluation

From time immemorial, the Igbo have discovered that to be healthy is to live. Without life, there is no affection, no love, no thinking, no belief and no man. And since illness or disease is an indication that life itself is being threatened and the gate of the grave is gradually opened, man must of necessity find means of combating it. Hence the pursuit of health is the gravest concern of the Igbo person today.

The Igbo are communal by nature. Hence anything that separates a man from the cherished attachment, participation and active involvement in the community struggle, constitutes a strong alienation. When a man is healthy, he adjusts himself to the needs and aspirations of his community, fulfilling his social functions as well as his moral obligations. The Igbo indeed recognize this inevitable fact when they say: „Good health is the magic of wealth”. They believe that all is in vain without good health, and that nothing can be achieved under ill health.

The Igbo think a lot about diseases and suffering and regard them as hostile influences and agencies that beset man from cradle to grave. Consequently, they develop a sort of pathology through which their attitudes towards suffering and their treatment of diseases can be discerned. They think that sufferings are a concatenation of several factors

– natural, supernatural or spiritual. Hence for the Igbo sickness can either have a natural causation, a supernatural causation or spiritual/mystical causation.

Underlying the three basic causes of suffering is a psychic fact: the moral life and conduct of the sufferer. For the Igbo, sickness, disease and suffering are the results of guilt. The sick or the suffering person is one who has gone contrary to the laws of the land and of God. The nexus between offence and suffering is so strong that the Igbo firmly believe that any evil plan against an innocent fellow attracts the anger and the vengeance of the gods.

To be healed then, the traditional Igbo man turns to God for healing. The diviner discerns who has being offended and recommends sacrifice which the traditional priest offers. It is only after this, that the „medicine man” – the herbalist can then apply his treatment to heal the somatic effects. This is the conception of health, sickness and healing as Christianity entered the Igbo world.

With the advent of Christianity, many Igbo men and women today have become Christians. Western medicine came alongside Christianity as well. There seemed to have been a clash of conceptions. Science has for long dichotomized man along the sides of body, mind and spirit (soul), with medicine occupying itself with the „soma” – the body and the resulting somatic malfunctions. Consequently, God seemed to have been alienated from the medical laboratories. The whole man was no longer the object of research and healing.

For the converted Igbo christians, health or life still remains the „*summum bonum*” – the highest good in life hence the Igbo will say „*ndu bu isi*” – life is first and foremost. This view of sickness as having to do with the whole man and his relationship to God and the community is still alive today among the people. This life and health for some has to be maintained at all cost. In the face of sickness then, one notices among the Igbo Christians today, a certain degree of carry-overs from the traditional conceptions. Many take recourse to God for healing. Though the poverty situation could be cited as a reason but the belief in God as the author of life and healer of all sicknesses is strong. As a result, the parish community is seen as a place of salvation and healing. The encouragement from the priest and the parish community is not only helping the sick and the diseased attain eternal salvation but also being able to draw the healing grace of God closer to them.

The result of this consequent search for healing is the booming of healing centres, a pastoral problem plaguing the church in Igbo land today. Many healing centres are springing up here and there. The worm has also entered the catholic communities. The so-called „healing masses” are becoming rampant in many parishes. Some faithful measure the powers of their pastors on their ability to heal or conduct the healing masses. If the parish priest is not able to conduct the „healing masses”, the faithful migrate to other parishes where they believe there are ‘spiritually capable’ priests that conduct such masses. In the bid to retain their flock, most pastors of souls assume ‘called to healing’ and hence inaugurate their own healing programmes in their own parishes, even when they know that they do not have the charisma.

On the other hand, the quest to unravel the causes of sickness and disease has, in modern times, led to the springing up of different evangelical congregations with equally different faces and directions. The result is often a rampant report of aberrations. The aberrations have even spread into the catholic congregations. To this effect, the Pontifical Liturgical commission issued Instructions on gathering for ‘healing prayers’ and the Nigerian Bishops Conference as well issued Guidelines on Healing Masses along which any gathering for prayers in which healing is sought for, must be oriented.

This work was an attempt to investigate the root of the problem of sickness and the search for its healing. We have tried to analyze the problem and suggest pastoral solutions. In doing this, we made use of both literatures and empirical research.

Using literatures, we have tried in the first part of this work, to treat the Igbo religious and social worldview, their understanding of man, life and health as well as the Igbo traditional conception of sickness and healing. An overview of the advent of Christianity in the Igbo society showed the ambient of contact between the existing traditional conceptions and the Christian belief with its resulting influences and problems which became our object of research in the empirical part of the work whose statistical analysis and pastoral theological interpretations formed the bulk of the second part of this work. The findings or results of our research among other as follows:

1. For the Igbo man, his health is very important to him but in spite of that many are not opting that it should not be maintained at all cost, an indication of the influence of the Christian tradition.

2. The rampant search for priest healers and the resulting „pastoral migrations” in search of healing are as a result of poverty and the unaffordable cost of medical treatment for many.
3. We noticed a certain shift in the conception of sickness. Majority saw sickness as a normal biological malfunction while lesser saw it as a curse or an omen. They saw sickness as been caused by a normal bodily disorder and less by the evil spirits or fellow human beings. They do not give God or the gods the blame for all sicknesses but the majority still believe strongly that there can be human agents of sickness. This current conception of sickness among the Igbo show also the influence of the Christian tradition among the people interviewed.
4. It was interesting to discover that majority counted poverty and hunger as a form of sickness when asked to define who is for them a sick person.
5. The Igbo people believe strongly that healing should be sought for when one is sick. Majority believed in miraculous healing and many (59%) said they have experienced miraculous healing before.
6. Majority of the interviewed (72%) have attended a healing Mass before and believed strongly that the Holy Mass is a healing celebration.
7. Many experience the emotionality in worship in forms of songs, dance and clapping as temporary relief of their worries hence they are ready to stay in the church patiently as long as the priest holds them there. On the ritual itself, whether it is the ritual that heals or not, we have those who believed in the efficacy of the ritual itself and those who believed in the power of the priest or both.
8. We discovered a certain tension between orthodoxy – those who want to maintain the traditional way of worshiping in the Catholic Church - and renewal – those who are open to new methods of worship. In this sense also the Priest mostly the priest healer faces the problem or dilemma of solidarity with the problems of the people on ground and communion (Collegiality) with his Bishop and the teachings of the Church.
9. The main reason for „pastoral migration” noticed in the Church in Igbo land in regard to attending healing Masses is predominantly the search for healing and secondly because of the quality of the priest. 65% of the interviewed said their parishioners are free to attend Mass where they like.

10. The idea of inviting priest healers to parishes was not rejected generally though some priests would rather start their own healing ministries in order not to portray themselves as not having such powers.
11. 72% said they do show appreciation after a priest has prayed for them. 62% said they do it freely, while 7% said it was demanded and 16% said it was normal to show appreciation.
12. Competition and some element of jealousy were noticed.
13. Three major aberrations or abuses were noticed in the healing ministries: using the powers to exercise authority, extortions and pride.
14. The research noticed some elements of carry-overs from the Traditional Religion into the Christian faith like using the Christian sacramentals the same way charms were used in the Traditional Religion.
15. The community plays a very vital role in the healing of the individual.
16. The people expect their parish community to help them attain eternal salvation while a certain percentage of the interviewed expect from their community bodily healing and to help them alleviate their poor condition.
17. The interviewed opted that we should take what is good in the traditional healing system and 77% opined the emphasis on herbs and leaves.
18. The interviewed are of the opinion that healing must be sought for.
19. We noted also a remarkable shift in conceptions between the Igbo in diaspora and those at home in Nigeria pointing to the influence of the cultures in which they are living in.
20. A disturbing observation is a dwindling consciousness of the Christian understanding of suffering, seeing suffering as part of human existence. Learning to accept and live with sickness and not believing that every sickness must be healed even when they are incurable. They are then ready to go from one place to another and from one church to another.

In view of these findings, we tried to make suggestions among which are the idea that the cross theology has got to be reinstated, that people has got to see more the salvific dimension of suffering and the church in Igbo land has got to institute a pastorally sor-did ministry to the sick.

Concluding Remarks

It is God who heals whether through the hand of the medical doctor or through the healing gift of the priest healer. They are all instruments of „Yahweh your healer”. Accepting sickness and seeking genuine ways of alleviating sufferings or healing sicknesses when they come and bearing them with patience and endurance folded in hope when they cannot be cured has got to be resounded again and again. There is no Christianity without cross and so the cross theology has got to be reinstated in the psyche of the Igbo Christian. Pastoral care and ministry to the sick has always been the strength of the Christian church, just as „*diakonia*, *caritas*, and *eucharist*” has being the essence of the church, so must also the pastoral care and ministry to the sick be reinvigorated in the church in Igbo land. Medical science has got to see man as a whole and sickness should not be treated in isolation. The whole man should be healed.

Praying for the sick and the exercise of the charisma has always been integral part of the church, priests and people engaging in pray seasons for healing should follow the norms, guidelines and instructions of the church on how to carry out such gatherings. It is not everywhere where wonders or miracles happen that the spirit of God is at work. Let us be guided by the biblical injunction: „Test all; hold fast that which is good” (1 Thes.5,21). Christ gave us the ability to overcome suffering and to smile and as St. Francis will say, let us resist the violence of pain by looking at the cross in order to be like it.

ABBREVIATIONS

AAP: Afrikanische Arbeitspapiere (Journal der Institut für Afrikanistik Universität Köln)

AFER:

BC: Before Christ

AD: Anno Domino (After the birth of Christ)

Cf.: Confer

Transl.: Translation, Translator

Ch.: Chapter

Pub.: Publisher

p.: Page

pp.: Pages

ibid: ibidem

Vol.: Volume

OSB: Order of St. Benedict

Gen.: Genesis

Isa.: Isaiah

Ex.: Exodus

Ps.: Psalm

AV: Vulgate

RSV: Reversed Standard Version

NT: New Testament

ICM: A Research Consultant Firm

CBCN: Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria

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QUESTIONNAIRE

▶ 1. How do you understand the word Church?

God	☐
The Pope	☐
„Uka Fada"	☐
The Laity	☐
The Baptised	☐
House of God	☐
The Clergy	☐
The Religious	☐
None of the above	☐

▶ 2. How important is your health to you?

--	-	+/-	+	++
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

▶ 3. What is good health for you or who in your opinion is enjoying good health?
(more than one answer is allowed)

Lack of pain	☐
Sate of bodily well being	☐
State of mental well being	☐
.....	☐

▶ 4. „Good health should be maintained or sought for at all cost". Do you agree to this statement?

--	-	+/-	+	++
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

▶ 5. If you are sick tomorrow, whom will you send for first?

QUESTIONNAIRE

A medical doctor	☐
A Priest	☐
A Juju priest	☐
Like to be taken to the hospital first	☐
A Chemist	☐
Treat yourself	☐
For minor Ailments, I try to help myself first. For serious ones I go to the doctor	☐
.....	☐

▶ 6. What does sickness mean to you? (more than one answer is allowed)

A curse	☐
A Trial	☐
A cross	☐
An Omen	☐
An ordinary biological Malfunction	☐
A means of blessing	☐
A means of attaining salvation	☐
.....	☐

▶ 7. As an Igboman, to what do you attribute your sickness when you are sick? (more than one answer is allowed)

The gods	☐
Fellow human beings	☐
Witches	☐
Normal bodily disorder	☐

Carelessness on your part ☐

Poverty ☐

Evil spirits ☐

..... ☐

▶ 8. Who is for you a sick person? (more than one answer is allowed)

A poor person ☐

A hungry person ☐

A wicked person ☐

One suffering from physical Ailments ☐

One suffering from mental Ailments ☐

One believed to be disturbed by evil forces ☐

..... ☐

▶ 9. Outside the bodily-biological Ailments, which of the following are also forms of sickness for you? (more than one answer is allowed)

Mental disorder ☐

Moral disorder ☐

Psychic disorder ☐

Existential insufficiency ☐

..... ☐

▶ 10. „All sickness come from God“. How far do you agree to this statement?

- - - +/- + ++

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

▶ 11. Can there be human Agents of sickness? When yes name some.

No ☐

QUESTIONNAIRE

Yes ☐

I do not know ☐

..... ☐

▶ 12. „Every sickness must be healed“. How far do you support this statement?

- - - +/- + ++

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

▶ 13. Should Christians rather be taught to learn to live with their sickness or should they look for ways of curing them?

People should learn to live with their sickness ☐

Every sickness must not be healed ☐

Healing must be sought for ☐

..... ☐

▶ 14. When you are sick and go to the medical doctor or medicine man and after taking his prescriptions, you become well again. Who has healed you? (more than one answer is allowed)

The medical doctor ☐

The medicine man ☐

God ☐

The prescribed drugs ☐

Yourself ☐

All of the above ☐

..... ☐

▶ 15. What do you understand under the term Healing?

Relieve from physical pain or biological Ailments ☐

Relieve from psychological Ailments ☐

Forgiveness or relieve from Sin ☐

All of the above ☐

▶ 16. Do you believe in miraculous healing?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Indifferent ☐

..... ☐

▶ 17. Have you experienced miraculous healing before?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Indifferent ☐

..... ☐

▶ 18. What do you think is important for you to be healed miraculously?

Faith in the healer ☐

Faith in God ☐

Believing you will be healed ☐

Attending a healing session ☐

..... ☐

▶ 19. „People can and do have healing powers, charisma or gifts“. How far do you agree to this view?

- - - +/- + ++

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

▶ 20. Have you attended a „healing mass“ before?

Yes ☐

QUESTIONNAIRE

No ☐

I do not know ☐

..... ☐

- ▶ 21. What do you think is the reason why people leave their parishes to go to other parishes for the „healing masses“?

In search of healing ☐

Because of the qualities of the priest ☐

Liveliness of the celebration ☐

I do not know ☐

- ▶ 22. What do you think is missing in their own parish priest, that they go elsewhere looking for?

Healing powers ☐

Lively celebration of the Holy mass ☐

Understanding for the people's Ailments ☐

Nice Sermons ☐

..... ☐

- ▶ 23. Priest healers are often invited to other parishes to hold healing masses, How far do you find it okay?

- - - +/- + ++

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

- ▶ 24. In all your experiences in your parish, is there any key experience, that is for you positively or negatively decisive?

No ☐

Yes ☐

I do not know ☐

..... ☐

- ▶ 25. What do you experience in your parish, that you do not experience in the same way in other groups?

The sense of community ☐

Solidarity for one another ☐

The nourishment of my faith ☐

Healing ☐

..... ☐

- ▶ 26. What do you expect from your parish community ? (more than one answer allowed)

To help you attain eternal salvation ☐

Offer your bodily healing when you are sick ☐

Offer you material help ☐

Help you alleviate your poverty ☐

Dispense the Sacraments ☐

- ▶ 27. What type of healing do you expect from the church or particularly from your parish community? (more than one answer is allowed)

Spiritual healing ☐

Bodily (somatic) healing ☐

Psychological healing ☐

----- ☐

- ▶ 28. What do you expect from your parish priest? (more than one answer is allowed)

Soul nourishing sermons ☐

Have healing powers ☐

QUESTIONNAIRE

Simply be a priest of God as God created him ☐

Financial Assistance ☐

Material Assistance ☐

..... ☐

▶ 29. What are your notions of a priest? (more than one answer is allowed)

A King ☐

A holy man ☐

A magician ☐

A man of God ☐

A healer ☐

A prophet ☐

„Another Christ” ☐

▶ 30. Must your parish priest have healing powers?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Indifferent ☐

..... ☐

▶ 31. The holy mass is in itself a healing celebration. How far do you support this statement?

- - - +/- + ++

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

▶ 32. „It is actually the ritual that heals and not the priest”. Do you agree?

- - - +/- + ++

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

▶ 33. If you were a priest, how would you feel when you see your parishioners attending this „healing masses” in other parishes?

I will feel good about it ☐

They are free to attend mass where they like ☐

I will not care where they attend masses ☐

..... ☐

▶ 34. What do you think, should people rather attend healing mass when they are sick or should they go to the hospital?

Go to the Hospital ☐

Look for spiritual healers and attend healing prayers ☐

Only trust in God ☐

..... ☐

▶ 35. What do you think is the reason why people go after the healers when they are sick rather than go to the hospital? (more than one answer allowed)

Ignorance ☐

Fanatism ☐

Poverty ☐

Believe in God ☐

Bad experiences with doctors and hospitals ☐

High Hospital Bills ☐

..... ☐

▶ 36. Though you are a Christian, what do you think we should do with our traditional healing method (traditional medicine)?

Do away with it ☐

Take what is good in it ☐

Uphold and support it, without changing it ☐

I do not know ☐

..... ☐

- ▶ 37. What do you think is good in our traditional healing method (traditional medicine)?

The role of the Deities and Ancestors in effecting cure ☐

The person of the Herbalist ☐

The emphasis on herbs and leaves ☐

I do not know ☐

..... ☐

- ▶ 38. Some people believe that we can also be healed of our sicknesses through prayers without going to the hospital or Juju priest. Do you agree?

- - - +/- + ++

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

- ▶ 39. Have you gone to other churches or confessions that are not your church or confession before in search of healing?

Yes I have ☐

No I have not ☐

I have nothing against it. ☐

.....

- ▶ 40. If renouncing your faith or leaving your present church or confession is stipulated as the condition to be healed by a healer, would you be ready to renounce your faith in order to be healed?

Yes, as long as I will be healed ☐

No ☐

I do not know ☐

..... ☐

- ▶ 41. If Hospital treatment becomes available and free as well tomorrow, will you still go to healing homes, healing masses or to Juju priests?

Yes, I will still go ☐

No, I will no longer go ☐

I do not know ☐

..... ☐

- ▶ 42. When you are prayed for and healed, do you show appreciation? If yes how?

No ☐

Yes ☐

Indifferent ☐

..... ☐

- ▶ 43. Does the healer demand the appreciation or do you do it out of your own gratitude?

It is demanded or expected ☐

I do it because it is normal ☐

Done freely in appreciation ☐

I do not know ☐

- ▶ 44. People can be gifted from God, but often we abuse these gifts. Which of these abuses have you noticed before? (more than one answer allowed)

Using these gifts to exercise authority or power ☐

Extortions ☐

Becoming too proud ☐

None ☐

- ▶ 45. Have you been promised healing by a healer before and at the long run nothing happened?

QUESTIONNAIRE

Yes	☐
No	☐
I do not know	☐
.....	☐



Please could you give us the following Informations about your person. ([Privacy and Anonymity is assured](#)).

1. Your Age

2. Your Sex Male ☐ Female ☐

3. Profession Priest ☐ Rev. Sr. ☐ Seminarian ☐ Worker ☐ Student ☐
Other Professions ☐

4. Confession Catholic ☐ Anglican ☐ Evangelist ☐ Pentecostal ☐ Je-
hovah Witness ☐ Moslem ☐ Traditional Religion ☐ Other
Religions ☐

5. Your Pre- Austria ☐ Germany ☐ Italy ☐ Belgium ☐ USA ☐ Nigeria
sent Resi- ☐
dence

THANK YOU SO MUCH !!!

TEXT SCRIPT OF THE ORAL INTERVIEWS

I wish to put down to paper here the oral interviews conducted besides the Questionnaires.

ORAL INTERVIEW WITH A PRIEST HEALER INVOLVED IN THE HEALING MINISTRY IN NIGERIA: FR. PETER

Sabinus: What is good health for you?

Fr. Peter: Man is a limited being, bond to be in Lack; lack in human health. Good health then is the absence of lack. Good health is a sign of good living.

Sickness is a lack, a human defect: This lack may have a spiritual or material cause.

For Fr. Peter ill health is caused by the gods. Sickness as a punitive measure.

Sickness may have a spiritual cause that may turn to affect bodily function.

But the presence of the Divine Being can restore the body again.

Sabinus: Is there a need for every sickness to be healed?

Fr. Peter: Yes! God did not create us half. But eventually not every sickness can be healed. Whoever comes to God must not expect God to heal all sickness.

Sabinus: Who heals then?

Fr. Peter: God heals but using human Vessels. (Eccl. 38:1-9) God gives Doctors grace to diagnose. God's presence: Praying is calling on God to come and mediate.

Disposition of the healer. Hands extended and not speaking – prays within. I dispose my mind to God, communicate with God. When we open our mouth, it is for people to hear and not God.

Sabinus: Must every priest have healing powers?

Fr. Peter: If the function of a priest is to heal, then every priest must heal.

However, the ultimate goal of every Christian is salvation not healing, because you can be healed here on earth but still be damned in heaven.

Sabinus: Who heals?

Fr. Peter: It is God who affects the healing. God's mercy brings healing. God pardons and heals.

Sabinus: What is important in order to be healed?

Fr. Peter: Faith – being conscious that you will be healed, trusting the place you come to be healed and the person of the healer.

Sabinus: What is the reason why people go to other parishes for the healing mass?

Fr. Peter: We are differently gifted. (cf. Rom. 12:1-6; Eph. 4: 11ff; 1 Cor.11:4ff)

They found that there is a gift given me by God which their Parish Priest do not have. Not that their Parish priest has nothing but perhaps gifted in another area.

There are degrees of powers in healers.

The healers are also vulnerable. Handlaying is not Handplacing. Somebody can be possessed and the evil spirit can enter the healer by handplacing. There have been cases of that. Our hands – (the palm) are porous, have openings, evil powers, or influence can enter or penetrate. But just spread the hand over the person.

Sabinus: How does healing function?

Fr. Peter: Check the source of the power.

Healing is a method where one lives his normal life.

The method has nothing to do with the healing efficacy.

Healing is something you live out, you allow yourself to be used.

If you do not see or have that power, do not imitate. It is no presupposition, assumption that fire will go out. Do not imitate.

Sabinus: What do you say about showing appreciations after receiving healing?

Fr. Peter: Among the Pentecostal Churches, they make stipulations and demands. But in the Catholic Church if there are priests who demand it, I do not know.

But in home Liberations, the priest can make some demands to take care of those accompanying him.

Sabinus: Some abuses are noticed among healers, what do you say to that?

Fr. Peter: It is seen often on the part of those imitating. It is only when that efficacy is not there, that people try to find ways of affecting it, thereby extorting people.

Some of these abuses occur because people at times are trying to get what they do not have.

Sabinus: If hospital treatments become free or cheaper, do you think people will still come to you?

Fr. Peter: Most people have gone to the hospitals but it was not possible to cure, so they come to God the Ultimate.

Some come to the healer because they are poor. I send some people even back to the doctors when I notice that they have a bodily sickness – when I discover he needs drugs to accompany healing.

ORAL INTERVIEW WITH A LECTURER REV. FR. DIOKA IN ONE OF THE MAJOR SEMINARIES IN IGBOLAND

Sabinus: Fr, What do you think is the reason why people run from place to place in search of healing?

Dioka: „The church has got to be more devoted and committed to its mission from Christ. The more the church cares for the needs of the people, the more they will stop running about looking for miracles and healing”.

Sabinus: What is the reason why people go to priests when sick instead of going to hospital?

Dioka: „The problem comes from a type of transference of traditional mentality of going to the Juju Priest when the Igbo man is sick, they now go to the priest when they are sick to pray for them for healing instead of going to the juju priest as they used to do before”.

TEXT SCRIPT OF THE INTERVIEW WITH ENGR. LIVINUS EBEH, A CIVIL SERVANT AT THE MINISTRY OF WORKS OWERRI.

Sabinus: How important is your health to you?

Livinus: My health is very important. Without good health it is practically impossible except with the special grace of God to do good – temporal or spiritual. Hence the admonitions in Sir: 30:14-25; promises of God : Is. 58:8; Jer. 30:17 and John’s desire for friends 3 Jn:1:2.

Sabinus: Should good health be maintained or sought for at all cost?

Livinus: It will not profit a man if he gains the whole world and/or good health and suffers the loss of his own soul in the end. Only legitimate means pleasing to God should be used to seek good health.

Sabinus: What does sickness mean to you?

Livinus: A curse from God because of disobedience – „the ”Fall” Gen.; Lev. 26:14-16
It is also a means of attaining salvation if accepted with Christian fortitude as a trial or as a cross.

Sabinus: To what do you attribute your sickness?

Livinus: To Poverty to some extent: lack of necessary resources to maintain good health.

Sabinus: Who is a sick person for you?

Livinus: One living in sin is sick: Sin is the greatest and worst sickness yet curable if the patient desires to be cured.

Sickness comes from God. : God’s permissive will.

Sabinus: Should Christians seek healing or learn to live with their sickness?

Livinus: People should learn to live with their sicknesses if it is incurable or beyond their means. But healing should be sought for by legitimate means unforbidden by God. (Which means there are forbidden means of healing?)

Sabinus: Who heals?

Livinus: God is the true healer through the instrumentality of the doctor and the drugs including one’s own personal contribution.

Sabinus: Do you believe in miraculous healing?

Livinus: Miraculous healing abounds all over the world at Lourdes for example.
I have not experienced it but I have seen, heard and read of many – some around me.

Sabinus: What is needed to be healed miraculously?

Livinus: To be healed miraculously, faith in God is absolute requirement and also believing you will be healed if it is God’s Will.

Sabinus: Do you agree that people can have healing powers?

Livinus: I agree totally that people do have healing powers. These gifts or powers abound in the church even as promised by Christ. But we must distinguish these gifts from the „mirabilia” of the evil one – the devil.

Sabinus: Have you attended a „healing Mass” before?

Livinus: There is nothing like „Healing Mass”. All masses are capable of healing.

Sabinus: Why do people leave their parishes to go to „healing Masses elsewhere?

Livinus: People leave their parishes for other parishes for healing mass in search of healing. This is the cardinal reason. Also because of the qualities of the Priest, because they believe that the priest has „Powers” which the other priests don’t have.

Those who leave most of them believe the healing powers are missing in their own parish priest. This is the cardinal point. As secondary reason is the nice sermons. Some people are attracted by penetrating, consoling, re-animating sermons of the priest.

Sabinus: Is it right to invite priest healers to other parishes?

Livinus: I find the invitation of priests healers okay but it can also be counter-productive sometimes: the people now look down on their own parish priest as incompetent, weak and unholy. But only few priests can invite the priest healers lest he would be underrated by his parish people.

Sabinus: What do you expect from your parish community?

Livinus: I expect from my parish community to help me attain eternal salvation. This is both individual and collective responsibility. Also offer material help if and when in need of it.

Sabinus: What are your notions of a priest?

Livinus: A priest is a king by divine ordination by virtue of his priesthood.

He is a holy man: This is cardinal to be an able intermediary between God and his people. He is a prophet also by virtue of his priesthood.

He is another Christ: „*christianus alter christus est*. And st. Bernadette Soubirous echoes it saying „a priest at the Alter is Christ on the cross.”

Sabinus: It is the ritual that actually heals. Do you agree?

Livinus: In the mass, it is actually Christ the victim at the sacrifice (ritual) and the same time the high priest at the sacrifice (ritual) who heals.

Sabinus: What should we do with our traditional healing system?

Livinus: We should take what is good in our traditional healing method. Many of them, although unstandardised and unrefined are good.

TEXT SCRIPT OF THE INTERVIEW WITH AN EDUCATIONIST MR ODU OF UMUEZEGWU IHITTE

Sabinus: Do you believe in miraculous healing?

Odu: „If you watch the TV regularly you will observe that people are healed miraculously on a regular basis. Some people who came on crutches go home carrying their crutches on their heads. Some blind people whose relatives brought them to the Prayer/healing centres go home without any helper – shouting ‘Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!’”

Sabinus: Assuming you were a priest, how will you feel if you see your parishioners attend Healing Masses elsewhere?

Odu: „If some of my Parishioners attend a healing mass in some other parish once in a while, this is tolerable. But if my parishioners form the habit of abandoning my parish and attend healing masses elsewhere on a regular basis, then I am afraid, I should do something to arrest the „ugly trend””

Sabinus: Do you show appreciation when healed?

Odu: „If a priest or Evangelist prays for me and I am healed, I should show gratitude to the Almighty God because HE in fact, has healed me. Only God heals. I can offer a sacrifice/sacrifices to the Almighty God. I can show gratitude to God by helping the poor and by doing many other acts which will prove acceptable to God. Failure to thank God will be comparable to the ingratitude of the nine Lepers who went away after they had been healed leaving only one Leper to go and thank Jesus Christ”.

Sabinus: Does the healers demand it?

Odu: „Under normal circumstances, the healer should not demand any gratification. God gave him the healing power free. The beneficiary discovers that it is natured for him to thank the healer. The healer should know that if he abuses the healing power which God has endowed him with, God may decide to nullify the power which the healer is abusing.”

INTERVIEW WITH A YOUTH: GLORIA (POSTULANT)

Sabinus: Can there be human agents of sickness?

Gloria: On Agents of sickness: There are Agents of sickness. They can be one's friends, Kinsman, business partners etc. who are envious of one's progress.

Sabinus: Must all sicknesses be healed?

Gloria: The nature of the sickness dictates its curability. Sicknesses from birth are resistant to healing.

Some sicknesses are beyond medical healing. In such circumstances we refer to healing homes.

Sabinus: Do you agree to the fact that we can also be healed through prayers without going to Hospital?

Gloria: „If you have faith in God, you will be healed. For instance, my father and I prayed to God with strong faith towards his illness in 1998 and he was healed. Up till now he is fine.”

Sabinus: Have you attended a healing mass before?

Gloria: „To me all masses should be called healing masses because Jesus is really present in the communion we are receiving everyday. It is only to have faith in God.”

Sabinus: Do you show appreciation when healed?

Gloria: „When my father was healed without spending money on drugs. We latter did thanksgiving prayer to God.”

INTERVIEW WITH REV. FR. SIMON UDEMGBA, A YOUNG NIGERIAN PRIEST LIVING IN AMERICA:

Sabinus: What do you think is the reason why people go after healers when they are sick rather than go to Hospital?

Simon Udemgba: „Initially, I used to look at it from faith perspective. But with exposure to other cultural milieu and its social underpinnings, I am beginning to see it differently. In my own opinion, I think it is more of the derivation of fewer alternative sources of healing with cost being the fundamental decisive factor. If modern health facility is readily available and within the reach of all and sundry, you will see a dramatic change of attitude towards „healers” and their healing ministry.”

Sabinus: What should we do with our traditional healing method?

Simon Udemgba: „It is the traditional medicine in western culture and society that developed into modern and contemporary medicine. But Africa as a continent being what it is, stuck in time has refused to move forward. African traditional medicine should, if it should survive, is supposed to be open to progress and move forward into modern and contemporary medicine, for Africa with the continental heterogeneous gene pool serving as the module for research and methodology in order to help cure the diseases that are stereotypically specific to African populace.”

Sabinus: What do you think is good in our traditional healing method?

Simon Udemgba: „Everything in our traditional medicine and method is supposed to be important if only we understand, conserve, use and explain it for the ever changing human theory of knowing and application.”

Sabinus: What do you think is needed to be healed?

Fr. Ekweke: „The church does not proclaim a miracle (healing) because the phenomena is inexplicable but because it happened under the environment of faith and prayer. If not so, hospitals will be courts of miracle and doctors, miracle workers”.

Sabinus: What do have to say to people demanding something to pray for people to be healed?

Fr. Ekweke: „Healing is an aspect of the proclamation of the kingdom and should be free of charge”.

ABSTRACT

SICKNESS AND THE SEARCH FOR HEALING IN IGBOLAND: A PASTORAL THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

INTRODUCTION

The Igbo is a tribal folk in the eastern part of Nigeria. Before the advent of Christianity, the Igbo were adherents of the African Traditional Religion (ATR). They had their belief systems. Their cultural and religious belief systems were in some aspects imbedded in superstitious beliefs. Health is for the Igbo person very important and he/she does everything possible in his/her power to preserve this life. Sickness, which is seen as a danger to this health, is pursued to make sure it is eradicated as much as it is possible. There were traditional therapeutic methods of healing before the coming of western medicine. There were the herbalists (*Dibia*), who through the application of herbs and leaves try to effect the cure of sicknesses; and the priests of the traditional African Religion who tried to find out the curse and also offered sacrifices to appease the gods, who often could be regarded as the cause of sickness. The community as the forum in which the individual lives, play a very vital role in the issue of sickness and its alleviation.

Today with the advent of Christianity in Igbo land, some of the superstitious beliefs were abolished and the Christian faith is flourishing unhindered with the increasing number of parish communities. The missionaries built hospitals. Gradually the African Traditional Religion is giving room to the Christian Religion; most superstitious beliefs are losing their holds on the people since explanations for most of these phenomena are discovered. Western medicine has almost overtaken the traditional therapeutic healing methods. But sickness remains in the lives of the people and the search for its healing continues.

The health system is poor and there is no *Health Insurance* so that the sick can be sure of getting adequate treatment. In most cases, poverty prevents people from getting better treatment for their sicknesses. Many die of simple ailments because of this problem. There are many private hospitals and the hospital bills are often so exorbitant that the poor could not afford it. Faith and hope in God the Creator and Healer seem to be the

only possible way out and at times cheaper, while some tend to fall back to the old traditional therapeutic methods. On the other hand, one notices among the Igbo Christians the tendency of transferring the traditional ideas into the Christian faith. Many who cannot afford the cost of hospital treatment run from one healing centre to the other in search of healing. What does the pastor of soul and the Christian community do in the face of this? The earlier catholic sacerdotal concept of a priest been „all things to all men” seem to have beclouded the sound interpretation of the Pauline theology of charisma.

Jesus commissioned his Apostles to go and proclaim the Good News and to heal the sick. Today in the Nigerian church and in Igbo land in particular, the method of prayer healing is becoming the order of the day. People seek for healing in the Church and outside the Church. Many healing homes are springing up here and there. Within the Catholic Church, the demand for healing among the faithful is spreading like a wild fire. Priests in many parish communities try to adapt to this demand by organising the so called „healing mass” outside the normal Eucharistic celebration in order to satisfy the pastoral need of their flock and in most cases to forestall a type of „pastoral migration” that might occur. This development has led to many challenges and problems. These challenges and problems in relation to sickness and the search for healing are going to be the object of this study.

Motivation

Having grown up in a Continent plagued by sickness and disease together with a lack of adequate health and medical care coupled by poverty, it became of interest to research into this topic. Having also experienced a young and fast growing church that in recent days tend to take the biblical injunction of Christ to go and proclaim the gospel and heal the sick serious. The strong influence of the fast growing prosperity evangelical churches with emphasis on healing and deliverance seemed to have taken its toll on the Nigerian Christians. Search for healing became the order of the day with many aberrations reported. The traditional understanding of sickness and the Christian understanding of suffering seemed interesting to compare in the face of some carry-overs or syncretistic mixtures of the two.

Again coming to Europe to study and seeing the sophisticated and praiseworthy medical system in place and the somehow elimination of God from the medical laboratory and

the almost complete entrusting of the function of healing to medicine. It raises the question: Who heals?

A similar study was carried out in Europe to determine how far the faithful in four selected parish communities in Austria and Germany see their parish communities as a place of healing and salvation – „Gemeinde als Heil/Land”. The result was interesting as it was discovered that none of the interviewed expected bodily healing from the parish community. Medicine has taken over that function. It was interesting then to compare it with the situation in Africa.

PURPOSE/ AIM

This research is an attempt to present a socio-cultural study of the intricacies between sickness and healing among the Igbo people of Nigeria. The main question that confronts us in this research is: how do the Igbo view *sickness* and *healing*, and how far does the Christian faithful from the point of view of their personal and subjective perception, experience their parish community as a saving and healing place, and what role can the community play in healing? This will help us find the distant cause of the rampant search for healing today and offer suggestions.

With the recent rampant erection of healing centres with much emphasis on healing and deliverance with the bizarre rush and search for this healing offer in the Igbo Christian communities today, it is the aim and objective of this Research to look into the meaning of health, sickness and healing and its pastoral - theological implications among the Igbo.

In the present-day Christian worship, large gatherings for healing prayers are gaining enormous ground in the Christian communities in Igbo land. „Healing Masses” are taking precedence over ‘thanksgiving’ and ‘sacramental’ masses in many parishes. Today it is now called „Adoration”. The faithful migrate regularly from one parish to the other in search of healing and healers. There are at times reports of aberrations.

It is our aim to find out through the empirical research, the current views of the Igbo to health, sickness and healing. What do the Igbo Christians expect from their pastors of souls and their parish communities? What could be the reason for the „pastoral migration”? Why do the people seek faith healing instead of going to the hospitals? What are the dangers, when a priest tries to offer his people something he cannot or does not have

the gift for? Must a priest be „all things for all men”? Must we allow ourselves to be influenced by the Pentecostal churches or must we imitate them so as not to lose our faithful? The aim of this study is to try to find answers to some of these questions.

APPROACH

As a matter of approach, first we intend in this work to explore with the help of written texts and Literatures the „status quo” – what is before, during and after the contact of the Igbo culture with the Christian faith. Then the research will try to investigate through Interviews and Questionnaires what the Igbo conception of sickness today is, the attitude towards sickness and healing and the accompanying theological and pastoral problems. We shall then present the results of the fieldwork interviews whose statistical analysis and pastoral theological interpretations will form the bulk of the second and empirical part of the work.

The work is divided into two parts: the first part deals with the fundamentals and is divided into five chapters. Chapter one will try to expose the Igbo socio- religious worldview so as to know why the Igbo believe what they believe. Chapter two tried to explore the Igbo Anthropology analysing the Igbo concept of life, and man. Chapter three dealt with both the general concept of health, sickness and disease and the biblical Christian conception and ended with the Igbo understanding of sickness. Chapter four then tried to explore the Phenomenology of healing, the biblical Christian conception of healing and the Igbo traditional healing method. Chapter five then accessed the advent of Christianity into the Igbo culture and the effects pointing to the situation of things in the Igbo church today with regard to the problem of sickness and healing.

The second part of the work dwelt on the empirical research. This part is divided into three chapters: Chapter one will explain the procedures of the field work and the data collection, while chapter two will be on the interpretation and evaluation of the results of the empirical research and chapter three will posit some pastoral-theological recommendations in regard to the problem under study followed by some concluding remarks.

METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION

This study made use of both deductive and inductive methods of study. Using the deductive method we moved from the general conceptions of health, sickness and healing

concentrating more on the biblical and Christian conceptions to the particular Igbo understanding or conception of sickness and healing. The aim of this method was to place the traditional Igbo conception of sickness and healing alongside the biblical Christian conception so as to see how far the contact with Christianity changed the Igbo conception and the other way round to see what elements of the traditional conception was carried over into Christianity as the Igbo became Christians. This may go a long way to help us find the reason for the rampant quest for healing among Igbo Christians and the crippling up of healing centres in Igbo land today. This formed the bulk of the first part of the work and we made use of written texts and literatures in this part of the work.

We then used the inductive method in the second and empirical part of the research. This part of the study was a qualitative and quantitative inquiry. Open-ended, unstructured interviews were conducted with a native doctor (medicine man): Nwokorie Uwalaka, a priest involved in the healing ministry: Fr. Peter, a priest involved in the training of future priests: Fr. Dioka, a lay person Engr. Livinus Ebe, an Educationist Mr Odu, a youth- Gloria and an Igbo in diapsora living in USA. The datasets were analyzed using recursive abstraction – analyzing without coding whereby the datasets are summarized.

In the quantitative inquiry, a research questionnaire was formulated and distributed in Nigeria and to some Igbo living Overseas and the data analyzed and the statistical graphs used in the work.

RESULTS

Generally, one could say that the poverty level of the people and the lack of Enlightenment in some cases account also for the random quest for spiritual healing which is also cheaper since most of them cannot afford the cost of medical treatment in the hospital. The result of this then is that the faithful migrate from one parish to the other where they feel the priest there has healing powers. Faced with this problem the priests are in a way forced to start their own healing season in order to retain their flock even when they are aware that they do have the gift of healing. The results of our study could be summarized thus:

1. The rampant search for priest healers and the resulting „pastoral migrations” in search of healing are as a result of poverty and the unaffordable cost of medical treatment for many.

ABSTRACT

2. It was Interesting to discover that majority counted poverty and hunger as a form of sickness when asked to define who is a sick person.
3. The Igbo people believe strongly that healing should be sought for when one is sick. Majority believed in miraculous healing and many (59%) said they have experienced miraculous healing before.
4. Majority of the interviewed (72%) have attended a healing Mass before and believed strongly that the Holy Mass is a healing celebration.
5. Many experience the emotionality in worship in forms of songs, dance and clapping as temporary relief of their worries hence they are ready to stay in the church patiently as long as the priest holds them there.
6. The main reason for the „pastoral migration” noticed in the Church in Igbo land in regard to attending healing Masses is predominantly the search for healing and secondly because of the quality of the priest. 65% of the interviewed said their parishioners are free to attend Mass where they like.
7. The idea of inviting priest healers to parishes was not rejected generally though some priests would rather start their own healing ministries in order not to portray themselves as not having such powers.
8. 72% said they do show appreciation after a priest has prayed for them. 62% said they do it freely, while 7% said it was demanded and 16% said it was normal to show appreciation.
9. Three major aberrations or abuses were noticed in the healing ministries: using the powers to exercise authority, extortions and pride. Some sort of Competition among priest healers and some element of jealousy among those who do not have the gifts were also noticed.
10. The people expect their parish community to help them attain eternal salvation while a certain percentage of the interviewed expect from their community bodily healing and help to alleviate their poor condition contrary to the study in Europe where no one expected bodily healing from the community.

CONCLUSION

Treating the topic of healing is a difficult terrain to thread on but I hope with this work we have contributed something to the discussion about sickness and the search for heal-

ing. We have tried to find or suggest reasons for the rampant upsurge of healing home in Igbo land and the issue of healing masses in the Catholic Church.

It is God who heals whether through the hands of the medical doctor or through the healing gift of the priest healer or even the herbalist with the knowledge of herbs. They are instruments of „Yahweh your healer” (Ex.15.26). That however does not justify every method of healing. Sickness is a deficiency and justified methods of alleviating this problem should be sought. Accepting sickness and seeking genuine ways of alleviating sufferings or healing sicknesses when they come and bearing them with patience and endurance folded in hope when they cannot be cured, has got to be resounded again and again. Christianity teaches that there could be something positive in sickness and suffering. There is no Christianity without cross and so the cross theology has got to be reinstated in the psyche of the Igbo Christian.

Pastoral care and ministry to the sick has always been the strength of the Christian Church, just as „*diakonia*, *caritas*, and *Eucharist*” has being the essence of the church, so must also the pastoral care and ministry to the sick be reinvigorated in the church in Igbo land. Medical science has got to see man as a whole and sickness should not be treated in isolation. The whole man should be healed.

Praying for the sick and the exercise of the charismas has always been integral part of the church, priests and people engaging in pray seasons for healing should follow the norms, guidelines and instructions of the church on how to carry out such gatherings.

„KRANKHEIT UND DIE SUCHE NACH HEILUNG IM IGBOLAND: EINE PASTORAL-THEOLOGISCHE ANALYSE“

(MMag. Sabinus Iweadighi)

ABSTRAKT

Einführung

Igbo ist ein Stammesvolk im Südost Nigeria in West Afrika. Vor ihrer Christianisierung, waren sie Anhänger der Afrikanischen Traditionellen Religion (ATR). Einige Elemente dieser Religion waren abergläubisch. Gesundheit hatte für sie oberste Priorität und sie taten alles um die Gesundheit zu erhalten. Krankheit wurde als Gefahr für die Gesundheit angesehen und man versucht sie zu eliminieren. Dafür gab es die Mediziner mit Kenntnissen der heilenden Kraft der Blätter und Wurzeln und die Priester der Traditionellen Religion (Wahrsager), die versuchten die Ursache der Krankheit zu finden und den Göttern oder Ahnen, die oft als Verursacher der Krankheit angesehen werden, Opfer darbrachten. Das Volk also hatte seine therapeutischen Methoden oder Heilungssysteme vor der Ankunft der westlichen Medikamente. Die Gemeinde aber spielte eine sehr wesentliche Rolle.

Mit der Christianisierung des Igbo Landes wurden viele Christen und heute wächst und gedeiht der christliche Glaube. Die Missionare brachten das Spitalwesen. Viele abergläubische Praktiken wurden abgeschafft. Aber Krankheit und die Suche nach Heilung sind geblieben und werden auch immer da bleiben.

Heute suchen die Igbo nach Heilung sowohl innerhalb als auch außerhalb der Kirche. Jesus hat seine Apostel und damit die Kirche gesendet, die Frohe Botschaft zu verkünden und die Kranken zu heilen. (Mtt.28,19, Lk.10,9). Und so gehören Heilung und Heiligung (Heil und Heilung) zum Grundauftrag der Kirche. Gebet um Heilung wird häufiger und im Igbo Land entstanden viele Heilungsheime. Heilungsgottesdienste werden in den katholischen Gemeinden gefeiert, die dann zu pastoralen Herausforderungen und Probleme führen. Diese Probleme und Herausforderungen im Bezug auf Krankheit und die Suche nach Heilung sind Objekte dieser Studie.

Motivation:

Aufgewachsen in einem Kontinent, der neben Armut auch von Krankheiten und Seuchen manchmal heimgesucht worden ist, wo es an der notwendigen gesundheitlichen Fürsorge mangelt, einem Kontinent der aber auch tief religiös ist, sind Motivation und Interesse an diesem Thema: Krankheit und die Suche nach Heilung groß geworden. Die Motivation führt auch aus der Erfahrung heraus dass ich die junge und schnell wachsende Kirche Afrikas erlebt habe, die in der jüngsten Vergangenheit den Missionsauftrag Jesu sehr ernst genommen hat. Es gibt auch einen starken Einfluss der Wohlstands-, Pfingst- und Evangelikalen Kirchen, in denen Gebet um Heilung und Befreiung von den bösen Geistern gepflegt wird, auf den nigerianischen Christen, besonders Katholiken. Die Suche nach Heilung durchs Gebet wurde auch in der Katholischen Kirche im Igbo Land bemerkbar. Die Igbo waren Anhänger der Afrikanischen Traditionellen Religion vor der Ankunft des Christentums. So gibt es manchmal eine Übertragung der Elemente traditioneller Religion ins Christentum. Heiler treten öfters auf und es gibt Berichte von Missbräuchen in einigen Fällen. Da es oft zu synkretistischer Mischung kommen kann, ist es wichtig das traditionelle Igbo Verständnis von Krankheit und christlichem Verständnis vom Leiden zu durchleuchten.

Die lobenswerte Errungenschaft der Schulmedizin oder medizinische Forschung und die daraus folgende Gefahr Gott aus dem Labor zu entfernen und der Erfolg in der Heilkunst Medizin allein zuzuschreiben erweckt die Frage: Wer heilt eigentlich?

Eine ähnliche Studie in Europa: "Gemeinde als Heil/Land" untersuchte in wie fern die Menschen in einigen Gemeinden in Europa ihre Gemeinden als Heilungsort erleben. Niemand erwartete körperliche Heilung von der Gemeinde weil die Medizin diese Aufgabe schon übernommen hat. So war es auch interessant, diese Studie mit der Situation in Afrika zu vergleichen.

Ziele

Diese Studie ist eine sozio-kulturelle und religiöse Studie der Begriffe Krankheit und Heilung im Igbo Land Nigeria Afrika. Unser ist Ziel in erster Linie zu erörtern, wie die Igbo Gesundheit, Krankheit und Heilung verstehen. Vielleicht als Hilfe um die ferne Ursache der heutigen pastoralen Probleme im Bezug auf Krankheit und die Suche nach

Heilung in der Kirche im Igbo Land zu verstehen und entsprechende Lösungen anzubieten.

Im Igbo Land entspringen fast überall jetzt Heilungsheime und viele freie Kirchen, die Heilung und Befreiung von bösen Geistern durchs Gebet anbieten. Auch viele Teilen der Kirche im Igbo Land sind von diesem Trend erfasst. Heilungsgottesdienste werden in den Pfarren angeboten und Versammlungen, wo Gebete um Heilung erbeten werden, werden immer mehr. Gläubige pilgern von einer Pfarre zur anderen auf der Suche nach Heilung. Auch Priester machen ihre eigenen Heilungsgottesdienste oder „Adoration“, wie man das heutzutage nennt, um die eigenen Gläubigen in der Pfarre zu behalten. Es kommt dann zu unorthodoxen Praktiken, die bis zum Missbrauch der Charismen führen kann.

Unser Ziel ist es auch durch die empirische Untersuchung die heutige Einstellung der Igbo Christen gegenüber Gesundheit, Krankheit und Heilung zu skizzieren. Was erwarten die Igbo Christen von ihren Seelsorgern und von ihrer Gemeinden im Bezug auf Krankheit und Heilung? Warum die „pastorale Migration“? Warum besuchen die Kranken die Heilungsgottesdienste statt ein Spital aufzusuchen? Welche Gefahren lauern wenn ein Seelsorger versucht das anzubieten, was er nicht kann oder für das er nicht begabt ist? Muss der Priester alles können? Müssen wir uns von der evangelikalischen Kirchen beeinflussen lassen oder sie nachahmen, um die Gläubigen nicht zu verlieren? Unser Ziel ist es durch diese Studie Antwort auf diese Fragen zu finden.

Schritte

Die Arbeit ist in zwei Teile aufgegliedert.

Als erster Schritt wollen wir im ersten Teil mit Hilfe von Texten und Literaturen die Grundlagen untersuchen, nämlich die Igbo Kultur vor, während und nach dem Kontakt mit der christlichen Religion. Dieser erste Schritt wird dazu dienen, das Fundament auf dem der „Ist-Zustand“ der christlichen Kirche im Igbo Land aufgebaut hat, gründlich zu untersuchen.

Der erste Teil der Arbeit ist in vier Kapiteln gegliedert:

Kapitel eins hat die soziale und religiöse Weltanschauung der Igbo erleuchtet. Dies wird uns helfen zu verstehen, warum die Igbo, das glauben, woran sie glauben.

Kapitel zwei beschäftigte sich mit Igbo Anthropologie und wie sie Gesundheit und Gebet verstehen.

Kapitel drei durchleuchtet sowohl das allgemeine Verständnis als auch das biblisch-christliche Verständnis von Gesundheit, und Krankheit und schließt mit dem Igbo Verständnis von Krankheit und Leiden ab.

Kapitel vier behandelt das biblisch-christliche Verständnis von Heilung. Und schließlich behandelt das fünfte Kapitel die Ankunft des Christentums im Igbo Land und wie der christliche Glaube einige Elemente der Igbo Kultur beeinflusst oder verändert hat.

Der zweite Teil der Arbeit ist der empirische Teil und ist in drei Kapiteln gegliedert: Das erste Kapitel erklärt die Durchführung der Interviews und Fragebögen. Kapitel zwei analysiert die Ergebnisse der Befragungen. Kapitel drei zieht dann pastoral-theologische Schlüsse und macht Vorschläge.

Methode

In dieser Studie wurden die deduktive und induktive Methode angewandt. Mit der deduktiven Methode sind wir von dem allgemeinen Begriff der Gesundheit, Krankheit und Heilung ausgegangen aber anlehnend an dem biblisch-christlichen Verständnis bis zu dem spezifischen Igbo Verständnis von Gesundheit, Krankheit und Heilung.

Unser Ziel hier war es das traditionelle Igbo Verständnis von Gesundheit, Krankheit und Heilung mit dem biblisch-christlichen Begriff von Gesundheit, Krankheit und Heilung zu vergleichen, damit man sehen kann in wie fern die Kontakte mit dem Christentum – die Christianisierung Igbo Lands, das Igbo Verständnis von Krankheit und Heilung verändert hat. Auf der anderen Seite wollten wir sehen ob etwas von dem traditionellen Verständnis ins Christentum mitgenommen wurde. Vielleicht hilft uns das erklären warum im Igboland heute so viele Heilungsheime oder Heilungsgottesdienste entspringen und viele Christen heute auf der Suche nach Heilung durch Gebet sind. Der erste Teil dieser Arbeit beschäftigte sich mit dieser Darstellung mit Hilfe von Literaturen.

Der zweite und empirische Teil der Arbeit bediente sich der induktiven Methode. Dieser Teil war Großteils eine qualitative und quantitative Forschungsarbeit. Nicht strukturierte Interviews wurde mit folgenden Personen durchgeführt: mit einem Medizinmann: Nwokorie Uwalaka über die traditionelle Igbo Heilungsmethode, mit einem Priester – Fr. Peter, der einen Heilungsgottesdienst leitet; mit einem Priester Fr. Dioka, der in der Ausbildung der künftigen Priester tätig ist, mit einem Laien: Livinus Ebe, der den Heilungsgottesdiensten kritisch gegenüber steht, mit einem Lehrer Mr. Odu, einem Jugendlichen: Gloria und mit jemandem aus dem Igbo Land: Simon Udemgba, der in der Diaspora – im Ausland (USA) lebt.

Der Großteil der Datengewinnung in diesem Teil geschah durch den Fragebogen. Fragebögen wurden ausgeteilt in Nigeria und zu Igbo im Ausland verschickt. Die Daten wurden ausgewertet und die Ergebnisse präsentiert.

Ergebnisse:

Im Allgemeinen, könnte man sagen, die Armut, und die mangelnde Aufklärung sind die Gründe für die dauernde Suche nach Heilung. Unsere Studie erzielte die folgenden Ergebnisse:

1. Eine der Hauptgründe für den großen Drang bei der Suche nach Heilung durch Gebet und für die “pastorale Migration” ist, dass die Menschen arm sind und die medizinische Behandlung sehr teuer und oft nicht erreichbar ist.
2. Interessant war es zu beobachten, dass viele der Befragten auch Armut und Hunger als eine Form von Krankheit anführten.
3. Die Igbo glauben, dass Heilung, wenn man krank ist, gesucht werden muss. Viele glauben an Wunderheilung und ca. 59% sagten, sie haben Wunderheilung einmal erlebt.
4. Ungefähr 72% der Befragten haben schon einmal einen „Heilungsgottesdienst“ besucht und glauben sehr stark, dass die Heilige Messe in sich heilend ist.
5. Viele erleben den Ausdruck von Emotionen im Gottesdienst in der Form von Gospel Gesängen, Tanz oder Hände klatschen bei diesen lebendigen Heilungs-

gottesdiensten als heilend. In dieser Zeit vergessen sie all ihre Sorgen und ihren Kummer, die sonst auf ihnen lasten. Deswegen sind sie bereit, so lange in der Kirche zu bleiben, als die Feier dauert.

6. Viele, die ihre Pfarrgemeinde verlassen um die Heilungsgottesdienste in einer anderen Pfarre zu besuchen („pastorale Migration“), tun dies weil sie auf der Suche nach Heilung sind oder die Qualität oder Eigenschaften des Priesters ziehen die Leute dorthin. 65% sagten die Gläubigen sind frei die Hl. Messe dort zu besuchen wo sie es wollen.
7. Die Gedanke „Priester—Heiler“ zu eine anderen Pfarre einzuladen ist allgemein nicht abgelehnt worden. Einige Priester würden allerdings ihre eigenen Heilungsgottesdienste beginnen statt einen fremden Priester einzuladen, aus Angst vor Unterschätzung.
8. Ungefähr 72% der Befragten gaben an dass sie dem Priester nach dem Gebet um Heilung Geschenke machen. 62% tun das freiwillig während 7% meinten, dass der Priester das verlangt. Für 16% war es üblich nach der Heilung danke zu sagen
9. Drei Missbräuche wurden genannt, die bei den Heilungsgottesdiensten und unter den Priester-Heiler geschehen nämlich: Hochmut – auf andere die diese Gaben der Heilung nicht haben werde oft herabgeschaut; es wird oft Missbraucht als Mittel zu finanziellem Gewinn oder Leute Geld aus der Tasche zu ziehen (sie sind oft reich weil sie viel von den Leuten-„Geheilten“ bekommen), und sie zeigen oft Macht und Autorität und drohen oft mit Fluch um Gehorsamkeit zu erzwingen. Andererseits beobachtete man einen gewissen Neid auf die Heiler jenen, die diese Gaben nicht haben.
10. Die Gläubigen erwarten grundsätzlich von der Christlichen Gemeinden Hilfe zur Erlangung des Heils aber ein gewisses Prozent der Befragten erwartet von der Gemeinde sowohl körperliche Heilung als auch Hilfe zur Überwindung der Armut. Dies ist im Gegenteil zu einer Studie in Europa, wo niemand mehr von der Gemeinde körperliche Heilung erwartet.

Schlussbemerkungen

Das Thema Heilung ist ein schwieriges Thema. Aber ich hoffe, wir haben mit dieser Arbeit etwas beigetragen zu der Diskussion über Krankheit und Heilung. Wir haben versucht, Antwort zu finden zu den Rätseln warum so viele Heilungsheime im Igbo Land entstehen und wie es mit den Heilungsgottesdiensten in der Katholischen Kirche ist.

Es ist Gott, der heilt, entweder durch den Arzt im Spital oder durch einen Priesterheiler, dem die Gabe der Heilung geschenkt worden ist oder auch durch die Traditionalen Medizinmänner, die mit Blättern und Wurzeln Krankheiten heilen. Sie alle sind Instrumente Gottes, - „Yahweh dein Heiler“ (Ex. 15.26). Krankheit ist ein Mangel und berechtigte Mittel und Wege zu Behebung dieser Mängel sollen gesucht werden. Andererseits, Krankheit und Leid anzunehmen und sie in Geduld zu ertragen, wenn sie unheilbar sind, ist eine menschliche Leistung. Die christliche Lehre betont auch dass Krankheit und Leid auch etwas Positives in sich haben können. Es gibt kein Christentum ohne das Kreuz und so muss auch die Kreuztheologie in der Psyche der Igbo Christen betont werden.

Pastorale Sorge für die Kranken ist immer die Stärke der Kirche gewesen. Diakonie, Caritas und Verkündigung sind die Selbst-Vollzüge der Kirche und sie kennzeichnen die Kirche. Die Kirche im Igbo Land muss angesichts der Armut der Menschen auch die pastorale Sorge für die Kranken und Leidenden zu einer großen Aufgabe machen. Medizin oder Schulmedizin muss in der Behandlung den ganzen Menschen in Betracht nehmen. Krankheiten sollen nicht unabhängig von allen anderen Umständen – soziale, religiöse, spirituelle, psychische, behandelt werden. Der ganze Mensch soll behandelt werden.

Für die Kranken zu beten und die Ausübung der Gaben – die Charismen ist immer ein Teil des kirchlichen Lebens gewesen. Priester und Gläubige, die diese Aufgabe im Namen der Kirche und in der Kirche wahrnehmen, sollen sich an die Normen, Richtlinie, und Anweisungen der Kirche binden.

PERSONAL DATA

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