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APPRAISAL OF ΘΕΡΑΠΕΙΑ (HEALING) OF TEN LEPERS (LUKE 17:11-19) IN CONTEXT OF HEALING IN THE CHRIST APOSTOLIC CHURCH, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Good health is basic to human existence. From time immemorial man has strived for the recovery of his health since sickness and diseases bring pain and discomfort. Where medical treatments prove to be inadequate man often resort to prayers and/or consultations with traditional healer. Healing played a prominent role in the ministry of Jesus. In line with His mandate to evangelize and heal the sick, the Christ Apostolic Church (CAC) makes healing one of its major missions. While much literature has been written about healing, divine healing and healing practices, very few scholars have tried to apply the episode of the healing of the ten lepers in Luke 17:11-19 to CAC. This paper seeks to find out how far CAC conforms to the healing practice of Jesus Christ. Using hermeneutics and exegesis as tools of interpretation of biblical texts and descriptive surveys as method of analyzing practices, the study finds out that healing is vital for total human development. It concludes that healing is a core element of the worship and ministry of CAC which serves as a pathway to salvation and recommends that Church leaders should adopt the healing principle of Jesus revealed in the Gospel of Luke.

Keywords: θεραπεία, Healing, Healing miracle, Leprosy, Christ Apostolic Church (CAC)

INTRODUCTION

Healing involves the restoration of broken relationship between individuals, humanity and the universe. In the healing of Jesus, it entails not only the restoration of bodily ailments but also includes spiritual restoration. A human being is a combination of the body, the mind, and the spirit such that the whole is greater than the part (Wilkinson, 2019:195). The human being exists in relation to his environment and disruption in either can result in ill-health. Jesus did not limit his healing process to the restoration of the body alone. He made sure that spiritual healing accompanied physical restoration in all of His healing processes. Confession of faith followed many of his miracles whether before the healing or after the restoration

of their ill health. Biblically, healing is regarded as a supernatural intervention that sometimes requires the use of human agency in the form of faith (Akintunde, 2014: 52–59).

Healing, which is a function of Jesus in the New Testament, is possible in terms of faith in Him. The atmosphere of faith makes the impossible possible as it relates to the healing of the sick. Health is something everybody aspires for in order to enjoy the fruit of labour in life fully. Presently, man is concerned with health because of various challenges in this era. The need for healing in this regard necessitates medical treatment and alternative health solutions. Healing is related to

salvation, as salvation refers to physical, mental, spiritual, or social wholeness for the Christian. It involves health of the body, mind, and soul in totality, especially in the context of Jesus healing ministries. Faith is put first in Jesus healing ministry as it involves the holistic process involving the entire person (body, mind, and spirit). God has given both natural and supernatural resources of healing whereby he equips the body with natural healing powers and healing resources abound in creation (Barker, 2019:110–112). This paper examines divine and human reactions to illness, diseases, and anything that poses threat to human existence in view of God's original purpose for men's healthy living. The study uses the concept of *θεραπεία* of Luke's Gospel as the Bible text in view of its healing practices as they relate to that of the Christ Apostolic Church in Nigeria.

Healing of Ten Lepers (Luke 17:11-19)

The story of the cleansing of leprosy follows the standard scheme of miracle narratives in Luke's Gospel, according to which miracles provoke some form of praise to God. What distinguishes this miracle story from other narratives about healings performed by Jesus is the way in which Luke intentionally does not reveal until later that the thankful leper was actually a Samaritan (v.16b). In other words, the story has a plot twist since Jesus calls the Samaritan a foreigner. (Calloud, 2020: 122–125). The setting "between Samaria and Galilee" (v.11) hints already that there is going to be a crossing of certain boundaries. The structure of the passage consists of two parallel parts: approaching and plea for mercy (vv.12-16), and announcement of healing and reaction to it (vv.14, 17-19), all in the context of travel narrative and discussion with Pharisees. The story has two primary obstacles: first, leprosy as a disease, and, second, the fact that

one of the healed lepers is a Samaritan. While being a reminder of Jesus' healing ministry, the story, consistent with Luke's overall theology, demonstrates that God's salvation surpasses the confines of Israel and has precursors in the Old Testament, as seen from the case of Naaman (2 Kgs 5:1-19). The theme of temples in this story is implicit. For instance, the mention of Samaria reminds of a long-standing quarrel between Jews and Samaritans over whether worship ought to occur in Jerusalem or Mount Gerizim (Douglas, 2017).

In addition, the reference to "the priest" (v.14) suggests the question who the priest in this case should be. However, the decision to come back to Jesus rather than proceed with a trip to the temple indicates awareness of the presence of God's power in Jesus' words. Thus, in reality, the Samaritan sees that Jesus, rather than ancestors or temple observances, provides God's presence. The positioning of the event in geography – "between Galilee and Samaria" – implies a symbolic overcoming of hostility between communities. Since the setting is vague "the village," the reader is initially led to assume that it is a Jewish background until the revelation comes about. The term "master" shows lepers' recognition of Jesus' exceptional power (Hemphill, 2019).

Moreover, Jesus' cautious initial reply to lepers' request "go show yourselves to the priest" as well as the command to obey before their cleansing, resembles what happened in the story about Naaman (2 Kgs 5:1-19). The author employs various expressions of the healed state – "cleansed, healed, and saved" – to describe restoration of all aspects of human condition. The Samaritan's uniqueness lies in the fact that, having recognized the cause of healing, he returns to give thanks, worship, and

bless God – an act surpassing conventional temple practices (Bricklach, 2015: 360). The sudden revelation about Samaritan leper's identity subverts cultural conventions and highlights Luke's theology, suggesting that non-Jews might be more aware of God's operations in the world than people inside the community (Barth, 2017: 348–350). Finally, the expression "your faith has saved you" used by Jesus in addressing the Samaritan (v.19) is repeated several times in Luke (7:50; 8:48; 18:42). It implies salvation of the entire individual and inclusion in the kingdom of God, as opposed to merely a healing of the disease. In short, salvation is achieved not on the basis of ethnic or ritual superiority, but mercy and trust toward God.

Healing Practices in the Christ Apostolic Church

Healings can be done any day, Wednesday and Friday are usually days reserved for this purpose. Sometimes, the sick is made to stay in the pastors' houses, while faith homes can serve as clinics or maternity centers. As Kato (2014) reports, Article XII, Section I of the C.A.C. creed does not recognize medical treatment in hospitals or traditional healers such as "green water," banana stem, or other things. Healing is thus achieved through a sequence of confession of sins (which the C.A.C. believe is a common cause of sickness), laying on of hands, anointing with olive oil if necessary, drinking and washing with sanctified water, and prayer made in the name of Jesus Christ commanding illness to flee. Other means used include invoking the power of the blood of Jesus and sanctified water which, in turn, help in warding off evil forces and neutralizing any form of poison in the body (Hodgson, 2015).

Critics have argued that the manner of prayers appears as though the church compels God into actions or that believers are forbidden from using

medicines, according to Douglas (2017), the church responds by asserting that the prayers are only an exercise of Christ-given authority, and the promise made by divine healing is one that would restore the sick believers. According to Wilkinson (2019), the 1930 great revival saw many people come into the church after witnessing miracles. The testimonies involved abandoning idols, charms, magic books, and ritual objects which, in most cases, were burnt publicly. In Ilesa, people of different religions including Muslims attended the revivals, and some traditionalists even gave up deities such as Oya, Osun, and Sigidi together with rings.

The same happened in Efon where carved images, masquerades, magic books, and charms were surrendered and burnt; some even for several days. Most of the people who did surrender ended up becoming leaders in the churches (Casey, 2017: 129). In Oke-Ooye, many individuals came with varied sicknesses like prolonged pregnancies, blindness, epilepsy, infertility, and financial difficulties and testified to be healed instantly. For example, at the Oke-Bola revival in Ibadan, there are documented cases of about 2,538 people who testified to being healed of conditions such as delayed pregnancies, back pains, blindness, infertility, gonorrhea, and even resurrection from the dead within just three weeks in 1930. However, compared to what happened in Oke-Ooye, miracles performed in Oke-Bola far exceed: lepers were healed, the lame walked, the deaf heard, the blind regained their sight, the mute became vocal, and the crazy healed. Cases of convulsions in children ended; and the evil spirits were seen openly bowing down before the superiority of Joseph Babalola (Barker, 2019:115).

Conclusion

The spectacular nature of Jesus' healings found in these documents could be attributed to the depiction of Him as the divine source of healing and restoration. Indeed, this healing capacity stems from His divine person, as He is the Son of God sustained by God and the Holy Spirit, and who passed the healing virtue to the sick through commandments. Whenever the sick believers accepted the word, they got connected to the divine healing virtue of Jesus through His spirit. (Henri-Ukoha, 2014:98). It, therefore, suggests that Jesus' healing ministry depended on His divine character and divine powers of God and Holy Spirit. Against this background, the study recommends that healing should always be an important ministry of Gospel preaching, and the Church should always embrace such a ministry like Jesus did. Leaders of C.A.C. must maintain their biblical commitment to this ministry of healing, observing all its aspects as shown in Luke's Gospel.

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