

**FAITH HEALING AS DRIVING FORCE IN CHURCH PLANTING:
AN EVALUATION OF THE PROCESS OF ESTABLISHMENT OF
THE CHRIST APOSTOLIC CHURCH IN ISOKO LAND, NIGER-
DELTA OF NIGERIA**

By

Sunny Manyo Ekpaogba & H. A. Oripeloye
Smekpaogba@jabu.edu.ng haoripeloye@jabu.edu.ng
Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies
Joseph Ayo Babalola University
Ikeji-Arakeji, Osun State

Abstract

This study seeks to assess impacts of faith healing in church planting ministry. Works of scholars such as G. N. Toryough, Charles C. Ryrie, and Stephen Parsons on faith healing focus merely on the effects of faith healing on church growth with little or no attention on impact of faith healing on church planting, particularly in region where the church has been well established. The success of most pioneers of the Christ Apostolic Church in Isoko region was owing to their gifts of faith healing. This made the CAC to spread rapidly to every nook and cranny of the region with some towns having several assemblies within two decades. The authority of the CAC worldwide rewarded the region by establishment of a campus of the CAC Seminary that covers Edo, Delta and Bayelsa States at Irri town, the first CAC District of Isoko region. The outline of this paper is as follows; first, it reflects on African and biblical concept of healing with references to healings of Jesus Christ and his early disciples, as recorded in the Gospels, the Acts and the Epistles. It also evaluates healing ministries of the pioneer church-planters and the impacts of their healing ministries in Isoko land. Findings show that many of the church-planters were healed in the healing ministries outside the region, and they also continued the same in Isoko land. This article concludes with recommendations that church-planters should seek empowerment of the Holy Spirit who will direct their evangelism.

Keywords: Faith Healing, Church-Planting, Evangelism, Spirit Empowerment, Traditional Medicine.

1. Introduction

The matter of health is vital to mankind irrespective of race, nationality and the level of technological advancement. Health is wealth, and one does not know the value until he/she loses it (Adelowo, 2006). Health as defined by World Health Organization (WHO) is “A state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (WHO Constitution, 2020). Good health in Africans’ perception is the state of physical, mental, social, spiritual and emotional stability of oneself, family members, and one’s the community (Omonzejele, 2008). African concept of health is deeper than WHO’s, spanning the families, ancestors, and individual communities. Africans believe life, health and wholeness are attainable as long as one lives in harmony with fellow his beings, spirit of the ancestors, divinities and nature (Silis, 1972). As a result, offences against fellow kin are transgressions against their common ancestors, and infractions against the community’s ethos. On the other hand, conventional medicine is based on principles of modern science, particularly the biological and physiological sciences. It focuses on the symptoms instead of the causes, it is based more on pharmaceuticals and surgical intervention.

The African traditionalists’ perception of health and healthcare system is akin to other cultures of the world, as every religion, no matter how primitive or crude they may seem, have their own concept of good health

and healthcare delivery systems. For instance, in Nigeria, the way of understanding treatment of disease for several centuries was primarily religious, even up to the most part of the 19th century (Roder, 2009: 286). Common ailments that are curable with simple medications are termed natural. Nevertheless, when supposed common illness defies treatment, it is considered as the handiwork of the enemy or that an evil spirit is responsible. This is not to say that the Africans only do have religious concept of health and healing. History has it that the Western world thrived on religious medicine for over fifteen centuries (Roder, 2009). Religiously, holy names were written on papers and worn by pregnant women, or carved into fruits such as apples and eaten for healing and protection (Barnes, 2000). Simple medications such as antibiotics and aspirin were not discovered until the late 19th and 20th centuries.

2. Scholars Perspective of the Causes of Sickness

Scholars have stated various causes of sickness to be lack of sleep, chronic stress, anxiety, immune condition, digestive disorders or abuse of drug, alcohol or medications. Several other illnesses are as a result of nutrient deficiencies or excesses. Some of the ailments caused by nutritional excesses or deficiencies can be cured if not at the terminal state, naturally when the situation is treated accordingly. From religious perspective sickness is as a result of over work, attack of demons (Mark 5:4-5), repercussion of sins (Psalms 107:17), rejecting God's word, and marital

infidelity (Num 5:27) (Ryrie 1956: 353). Dopamu (1999: 169) an African traditional religion scholar avers that sicknesses are caused by natural, supernatural (witches or sorcerers), and mystical action (spirits), ancestors, and divinities as punishment for offense against humans or spirit beings.

3. Methodology

This study adopts historical critical approach, which entails primary and secondary sources of data. The primary source consists of interview, with respondents drawn from the three administrative subunits of the Christ Apostolic Church (CAC) in the region – namely; CAC Iyede; CAC DCC, CAC Irrih Zone and CAC Victory Zones, Ozoro. A total of 48 respondents were drawn from the fifteen districts. They included the three (3) DCC/Zonal Superintendents, fifteen (15) District Superintendents, fifteen (15) elders and fifteen (15) deaconesses. The choice of respondents is significant to the study as most of them are custodians of records and eyewitnesses to the establishment of CAC in the land. Secondary data were obtained from archival material, journal articles and the Internet.

4. Health, Illness and Healing in Isoko (African) Traditional Context

Sound health in *Omakpokpo* in Isoko (*alafia* in Yoruba, *ahuike* in Igbo, *lafiya* in Hausa), which literarily means “sound body” connotes life of total wellbeing, as a result of peaceful coexistence with fellow humans and the living dead (ancestors). This is evident in the belief that man, his immediate family, community and ancestral world cohabit, and must have peaceful

relationship. Africans conceive sickness can be caused by sinful acts against the gods (e.g. breaking of taboo) or offence against fellow beings; the acts of demons/witches and spells from enemies (Abogunrin, 2004: 1). African traditional religion adherents recognize an ultimate God who is in control of the universe, and diverse spirits inhabit trees, rivers, mountains, crossroads, and groves which may either be well or ill-disposed to man. They also believe sicknesses can be caused by spirits. Sicknesses caused by spirits are usually without obvious symptoms and natural cures. Onyeji (2020: n.p.) adds that sickness supposed to be caused by spirits are likely not diagnosable scientifically, and may defy orthodox medicine. Nevertheless, some ailments assumed to be mystical may just serve as signs or pointers to offences or breaking of a taboo, and when sufferers reconcile, the ailment ceases itself. Oosthulzer (1992:18) list the main causes of diseases from African viewpoint as sorcery, witchcraft, pollution, and spirit possession, neglect of one's ancestors, relatives and communities. We shall proceed to evaluating methods of healing in ATR so as to understand why faith healing was embraced in the context of this study.

4.1 Methods of Healing in African Traditional Medicine

African traditional medicine is interwoven with its indigenous religion (Mume, 1972), and it is fundamentally based on superstition and sustained by belief in magic and witchcraft (Dodu, 1975). What is the different between magic and witchcraft? Magic is the power of apparently

influencing events by using mysterious or supernatural forces; while witchcraft refers to the belief and practice of magic, which varies across different cultures. The powers of witchcraft appear necessary for most traditionalists because they believe they can achieve all desirable things of life through it. Most times, healers (witchdoctors) deal with metaphysical issues that are beyond the ken of biology, chemistry, or reason (Roder, 2009). The dimensions to curing every sickness in African traditional healing entail different diagnostic procedures (Abogunrin, 2004). These processes include consultation with spirits or divinities; and dialogue or negotiation with other witchdoctors. This is necessary because the African religious cosmology includes the existence of spirits and divine beings that cannot be properly defined (Igenozu, 2004: 145).

Sicknesses diagnosed to be caused by the spirits are directed to witchdoctors, '*Oboh*' in Isoko, '*Babalawo*' in Yoruba, '*Boka*' in Hausa '*Ezeh-umoh*' in Igbo - who will prescribe the rites or sacrifices to be performed. Sometimes, witchdoctors mediate between the afflicted and the forces behind the problem, and help to reach reconciliation. Various processes of curing sicknesses are discussed below.

- (i) Herbal Medication: It is the practice of using herbs, parts of trees, animal matter in treatment of sickness (Abogunrin, 2004). They are the commonest means of treatment in African traditional medicine.

- (ii) Water Therapy: This is the methods where either warm or cold water is employed to treat an ailment. Cold or hot water bath therapies are very effective in treating cases such as strained vein and severe headaches, boils, backaches, waist pains, cold feet and rheumatism.
- (iii) Heat Therapy: This is the method whereby a patient is made to sit beside a fire with the ailing part near the fire. Such fire is usually made of wood and sometimes with certain herbs and incantations.
- (iv) Massage and Bone Setting: Massaging allows free flow of blood to all parts of the body, soothes stiffened and strained nerves, veins and aligns parts of the body in their proper positions. Bone setting and massaging adjust broken bones, muscles, and nerves joints.
- (v) Bloodletting: Blood-letting is the method of removing poison or impure blood from the body. It is done through incisions, use of abstraction cans, cut snail shell or animal horns. Blood-letting is effective for the treatment of dog bites, snake bites, scorpion sting and bullets wounds.
- (vi) Use of 'Black-soap': African medicine practitioners make use of 'black-soup' for washing the body, to dispel spells which are supposedly impeding the sound health in persons.
- (vii) Magic: Spiritualists control the supernatural world through magic. An example of magic in the Yoruba religion is 'magun' (literarily, 'do not mount') which may cause the death of any man that has sex

with another person's wife. Magic is believed to protect against attacks and bullets shot (Jegade, 2020: 213).

- (viii) Incantations: Incantations are made on objects for patients to be eaten, worn as amulets, put in pocket or tied to places within the home or premise.
- (ix) Sacrifice: Sacrifice connotes effecting ransom or redemption through shedding blood of animal and other form of sacrifices.
- (x) Amulet: Amulets are pieces of medicine designed like jewelries such as ring, bracelet or hand, foot and waist band, believed to give protection against evils or disease.
- (xi) Incision: Concoction may be ingested or infused through an incision which may serve as deterrent to putative enemy witch.

5. Biblical Background on Healing

Biblical healing refers to the act of restoring health and wholeness, as revealed and described in the bible, seen in the ministries of prophets in the Old Testament (O.T), Jesus Christ and his Apostles. It encompasses physical, emotional and spiritual healing. There are numerous miracles of healing in the O.T. and N.T. In fact, many people believe there were more miracles than those recorded, although there are no indication that some were not reported (Cressey, 1962:283), To name a few, the Israelites were cured of poisonous snake bites by looking up to the Brazen Serpent set up by Moses under the commandment of God (Num. 2:18). King Abimelech

was healed when Abraham prayed for him when he was plagued for taking Sarah (Gen 20:1-18); Moses (Exod. 4:24-26); Miriam (Num 12:1-15); King Hezekiah (Isa 38:1-22).

On the other hand, the New Testament is well supplied with healing events, and emphasizes on the importance healing by several words employed to describe healing. *Sozo* “I save,” means “make whole;” *Soteria* indicates “deliverance from danger, suffering, enemy, sickness, etc.” It also refers to spiritual and eternal salvation granted immediately to those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Lord and Saviour. *Therapeneu* means caring for the sick, to heal, and *therapon* refers to an attendant caring for the sick. *Iomai* means “cure or physical treatment.” *Therapeneuo* denotes care or attention in the N.T medical service, health and healing (Luke 9:11, Rev 22:1) (Abogunrin, 2004:2). All aforementioned that healings spanned physical healing, exorcism, and resuscitation were evidenced in Jesus’ and his Apostles’ ministries.

6. Faith Healing

Faith healing is the phenomenon of seeking to effect physical, mental and spiritual recovery without any medical, scientific, or physical remedies wholly comprehensible within the five physical senses (Akhilomen, 2004). Some Christians are of the opinion that administering scientific or herbal medicines may form part of the process of God’s divine healing (Batchwan, 2000:9). In their opinion, God has created either the herbs or intellectual

power of scientific medicine for man's wellness. Skeptics of faith healing aver that the gift of healing is a phenomenon of biblical dispensation, and that it died with the apostolic age. John Calvin opines "The gift of healing, like the rest of the miracles, which the Lord willed to be brought forth for a time, has vanished away in order to make the new preaching of the gospel marvelous forever (Calvin, 1559). Nevertheless, Abogunrin (2004) observes that testimonies are beginning to make existence of faith healing more acceptable to people within and outside Christian community despite dissenting voice against belief in faith healing by western influence. In fact, successful those experiencing tremendous growth in ministries nowadays are those that claim to have abilities to perform miracles. People will continue to run after faith healing ministers as long as access and cost of other medicine are without their reach (Folarin, 2018). Let us explore the different types of faith healing.

6.1 Categories of Faith Healing

Faith healing is categorized as follow:

- (i) **Physical healing:** Physical healing comprises cures of ailments such as fever (Mark 1:27), leprosy (Luke 17:11-19), paralysis (Matt 9:2-8), deaf and dumb (Mark 7:31-37), restoring sight (John 9:1-7), and etcetera.
- (ii) **Spiritual Healing:** Spiritual healing is a practice focused on restoring balance and well-being by addressing the spiritual aspects of an

individual. It entails curing insanity, restoring victims of ritualists who have lost their glory, stabilizing emotional breakdown of people who suffered disappointment (Hagar in Genesis 21:8-21, and Tamar 2 Sam 13).

- (iii) Resuscitation of the Dead. Examples of this type of healing include the raising of the son of the widow at Nain, raising Lazarus, the daughter of the Centurion. It supposed that resuscitation of the dead is two-fold healing as it includes remedying the cause of death and restoring life afresh (Abogunrin, 2004:19).

7. The Isoko People of Niger-Delta

The Isoko tribe inhabits the tropical rain forest area of the Niger-Delta, Nigeria. The region of modern Isoko land occupies an area of over 1,200 square kilometers, with a residual population of over 2.1 million people made up of 19 clans. They are enclosed by the Urhobo in the west and the Anioma people in the north, the Ijaw in the south, and the Ase River in the east (Ikime, 1972; Okpevra, 2013). However, the scope of this study extend beyond the present geographical sphere of the Isoko people, to most towns of the present Urhobo, Anioma, Ijaw tribes, in the west, north, south, and the Ase River in the east respectively. Above all, it is germane to note that the Urhobo tribe and the present Isoko people have a common descent, as it is evident in the similarities in culture, language, food and virtually everything by the both tribes. History shows that the ancestors of Effurun-

Otor in Ughelli LGA of Urhobo land are descents from Erowa (Isoko land), while Effurun in Uvwie migrated from Effurun-Otor, including so many interwoven ancestries between Isoko and Urhobo peoples (Morrison, 2011). The Isoko region occupies an area of about 1,200 square kilometres, with a residual population of over 2.1 million people, made up of nineteen (19) clans, with further expansion as follow: Ada, Araya, Aredhe, Aviara, Bethel, Ellu, Emede, Emevor, Enwhen, Erowa, Ibrede, Idheze and Igbide. Others are Igbuku, Irri, Itebiege, Ivori, Ivrogbo, Iyede-Ame, Iyede, Ofagbe, Okpe-Isoko Olomoro, Onogboko, Orié, Otibio, Otor-owhe, Owhe, Owhelogbo, Oyode, Ozoro, Umeh, UroUtue, and Uzere (Ekpaogba, 2011). The population which consist of indigenes and non-indigenes is surging due to numerous tertiary institutions such campuses of the states' university as Ozoro and Oleh, with about 500 people per square kilometres compared with the average of 198 for Delta State and 130 for Nigeria.

Geographically, Isoko land is enclosed by the Anioma tribe in the North, the Ijaw in the South, the Ase River in the East, and the Urhobos in the West. The works of scholars such as Nabofa (1997) supposes that while some groups of people of the Isoko and Urhobo tribes migrated from ancient Benin, they met people in the present Isoko land at their arrival. Reference to Benin in the traditions of the Isokos and Urhobos could well refer to later (rather than founding) migration into areas already inhabited by groups who spoke the Isoko and Urhobo languages. It is so argued because the Benin

migration was the latest that they are the most remembered. For example, the Igbide clan of the Isoko is usually traced to the Awka people of Eastern Nigeria. Consequently, there is tendency to confuse one for the other.

Modern mythology influenced by Christian ideology equated the Isoko traditional religion's gods and goddesses with the Devil (*Edho*) as evil, and the Christian God (*Oghene*) has the supreme, omnipotent, omniscient and good God; The cult of ancestor (*Esemo*) which is paramount and attracts the descendants of the same lineage up to eighth generations (*ogbolua-eren*). The chief priest of the cult of the ancestors (*Okparan*) is usually the eldest male of the family (Ekpaogba-Akporube).

The major divinities among the Isoko people are the *Igbe*, *Olukun* and *Emete-Ame* (mammy-water), which is connected to spirits of the water world. In addition, individual communities have deities which are linked to the ancestry saga. Ozoro town has *Erin-Okpe*, Oleh has *Olihor*, Aradhe, Ellu has *Eni*, *Orise-owhe* of the Owhe, and so forth.⁵ Other gods like *Ayilala*, *Elerugberu*, and *Umawun* (masquerade cult) seem to have been brought into the region from tribes such as the Yoruba, Kwale (Ukwani) or Ibo (Igbo) (Okolugbo, 1984).

8. Early Phase of Christianity in Isoko Land

The early phase of the Christianity in Isoko land was led by the Niger Mission and the Delta Pastorate Church, led by James Johnson and the initial works of Bishop Ajayi Crowther in the Niger Benue Commission.

The French Roman Catholic came on-board the Niger due to the establishment of the French trading company on the Niger in 1880. Father Louis Cavagnera has established group of converts at Ozoro and Aviara. Rev. Father Bartley was posted to Ashaka to oversee the Ndusumili and Isoko assemblies by 1933, and in 1954, Ozoro parish was carved out to oversee the Isoko churches (Okolugbo, 1984). The Baptist Mission began at Sapele, from where it spread to Eku, Abraka and the Isoko land. The Methodist and Qua Iboe Churches followed after (Erivwo, 1979). The first assembly of Faith Tabernacle (FT) was planted in Isoko land by Isaiah Edemenya, who was converted from the CMS through his reading of the periodic magazines from Philadelphia, USA. Sponsored from the headquarters of FT in Umuahia, he planted a FT assembly in Ase, and later established assemblies at Araya, Aviara, Ada, Ivrogbo, and Ewhen, all of which are boundary towns with the Ukwuani and Delta Igbos. Other branches were planted in Emede town in the year 1936 by Mr. Emadu and two brothers; Emmanuel and Joseph Okugbe. The trios were converted to Christianity in the course of their business at Olokumo, in Ekpeyan land, in the Eastern part of Nigeria. The FT church further spread to other Isoko towns by the efforts of converts who came from Benin, Sapele, Warri, Agbarho and Yoruba land to do business in Isoko land (Erivwo 1979). The next stage was that of indigenous churches such as the Eternal Sacred Order of the Cherubim and Seraphim (C&S), the Church of the Lord “*Aladura*”

(Anderson 2001: 80-82); and the Celestial Church of Christ (CCC) all by the activities of traders from western Nigeria (Agbaje, 1995) Isoko before the year 1960.

The FT fellowship metamorphosed into the Nigerian (British) Apostolic Church, which as a result of doctrinal disagreement, split into the Christ Apostolic Church and The Apostolic Church (TAC) in the early 1940s. Moreover, the secession favoured the latter in terms of members, ordained ministers, including landed property. This can be inferred from Alokan's summary of the membership of the CAC in the aftermath of Joseph Ayo Babalola's 1948 revival campaigns in the Isoko region:

The CAC in Warri had four pastors, led by S.A. Adeola, seven non-ordained workers, three mid-wives, 11 elders, including Donedo and Asokeji; Sapele with three pastors led by R.A. Adodo, seven non-ordained workers, three midwives and 26 elders, including N.A. Akpojo and J.E. Ighodaro, as well as CAC Good Women leaders, led by Mrs Stella Ikoko. ... Agbor-Asaba had two pastors, eight non-ordained workers, 15 deacons and deaconesses. Urhobo had three pastors, five non-ordained workers and 11 eleven men and women leaders. Kwale had for pastors led by J.O. Minari, eight non-ordained workers, 15 elders, and finally, Isoko District had four pastors, led by D.O. Olujobi, and forty-nine non-ordained workers including GE. Offeh and M.A. Atijihor (Alokan, 1991).

Above excerpt of CAC membership indicates that the majority of members of the erstwhile Nigerian (British) Apostolic Church parted with the TAC

faction who had upheld the use of medicine and prayers for healing, instead of faith healing stance of the CAC, led by Odubanjo. It also meant that the CAC party was left with no church assembly within the Isoko region.

9. The Christ Apostolic Church Faith Healing and Church Planting in Isoko Land

David Yongi Cho, “Every territory has their controlling spiritual forces. There is no space that has no dominant spiritual being. If ever you would like to establish a church in a certain area, you have to challenge the powers of the community first. If you can defeat the devil, then you can build your church” (Yongi Cho, 1988:40). Church planting as modelled in Acts of the Apostles has not changed. The Lord Jesus himself reiterate that people will not believe unless they see miracles (John 4:16). That statement is as true today of people in the entire world as it was in the days of those Galileans (Livingstone, 1974). For example, the miracle of healing the cripple in Acts 3, was followed by preaching that added thousands to the disciples. In Acts 5:12, Philip replicated the same pattern in the town of Samaria, and when the crowd saw the miraculous signs they paid attention to his preaching (Toryough, 2004). Folarin (2019) observes that divine healing brings sinners to repentance, and they become members of the church they received healing. Jesus emphasized the relevance of having spiritual power to challenge the forces of darkness, and therefore, commanded his disciples to wait for empowerment before they embark on preaching the gospel. Luke

24:49 reads, “And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.” Joseph Ayo Babalola endowed with the Holy Spirit as promised by the Lord would lead birth a Pentecostal revival that left an indelible landmark in Isoko land and its environs. Records have it that the secession of the CAC from the Apostolic Church in 1943 left the former with pockets of members in each town, without tangible property. Arriving in Isoko land with mission of revival and healing, at his departure, the CAC Isoko District, which was administered under Irri District, became well established with thousands of membership, and will become third largest church after the Roman Catholic and the Anglican churches. Babalola’s evangelistic campaigns were marked with miracles of healings and deliverances, and the available beneficiaries were organized into assemblies that thrive in Isoko land till date.

Similarly, majority of the CAC assemblies in Isoko land were pioneered by Healing Evangelists or those who were healed in their ministries. To mention a few, Esther Enatiku was healed in Babalola’s revival campaigns in 1948 and planted CAC, Owhe; John Erimu received healing in Elizabeth Gallowei healing home in Uwherhun land, and planted the CAC, No. 1, Ozoro; Rebecca Omotor also a beneficiary of the healing ministry of Elizabeth Gallowei and founded the CAC, No. 2, Ozoro; Samuel Oduose was healed in the ministry of Elizabeth Gallowei and planted the CAC, Emede; the CAC, Ottor-Iyede was founded by Johnson Emedafe

Eturoma who was also healed in Elizabeth Gallowei healing ministry. Peter Umukoro was healed by a man of God, and became pioneer of several assemblies of the CAC in the Isoko region. Several other assemblies of the CAC were planted by beneficiaries and associates of faith healing of the pioneer missionaries of the CAC in Isoko region. These beneficiaries of divine healings were instrumental to the spread of the CAC in Isoko region and beyond. To mention a few, the CAC Ashaka, in Ukwani land (Delta State) was planted by the request of one Mr. Lawrence Enamize who was healed of a prolonged illness in healing home of John Erimu; the CAC, Omoku, River State, was planted in the year 1984 by the request of one Sunday Okpara who was healed in the Faith Healing Home of John Erimu; The first CAC, Uro was founded by when one Clifford Imire who was brought from Ijebuland to Uro (Urhobo land) received his healing during the ministerial activities of Peter Okoro. By the dawn of 2000, the CAC had spread to every nook and cranny of Isokoland. Some towns had more than one assembly, as most of those who were healed were called to ministry or felt like replicating such healing ministry at home as a result of their encounter with God. They also attached healing homes to their mission house to cater for those awaiting their miracles. Nevertheless, many of these sick lived a long period without healing.

9.1 Challenges faced by Healing Evangelists

It is pertinent to remark that there were challenges encountered by healing evangelists. In the first place, they were accused of practicing medicine without medical qualifications. Any death recorded in their healing meetings could lead to legal action against them, which were sponsored by envious medical professionals in the community. The fear of litigation resulted in reluctance to admit those who would have benefited from their faith healing ministries.

There was also lack of trained health assistants or nurses render good care to the sick, coupled with unavailability hygienic accommodation for the sick. Many faith healing homes were hurriedly arranged, and there was overcrowding in rooms available. This sometimes lead to patients without accommodation, which may affect their health conditions.

In addition, there was inadequate financial contributions as most families of the sick were already impoverished due to various places they had gone for healing. Primarily, majority of the healing ministers thrived on offerings and vows which were sometimes as little as 45 Cl of Kerosene, or a packet of fire matches. As survival measure, they emphasized making vows or a pledge, and the dangers of owing God the vows made. Some of those who got healed would end up borrowing to pay their vows before leaving for their homes.

9.2 Practices of the Church-Planters

- (i) Use of Hand Bell: The use of hand bell is a practice that was given to Joseph Ayo Babalola from the time of his call. It was said that God told him that he should ring his bell several times, and accompanied with the echo of the name of Jesus Christ to signal the presence of God, and powers of darkness will be dismantled.
- (ii) Use of Consecrated Water: The Africans believe in the use of means and symbols such as consecrate water (holy water), candles, anointing oil, and other religious tokens in their devotion endeared them than verbal prayers.
- (iii) Speaking in Tongues: The emphasis on experiencing the power of the Spirit is a common characteristic in CAC, where the Holy Spirit is the agent of healing and deliverance for people.
- (iv) Ecstatic Dance: Loud praise is one of the characteristics of the CAC. According to Oshun (2018), it is done with great joy and enthusiasm, which may include great amount of drumming, dancing, and clapping of hands and shouts of joy and hallelujahs.
- (v) Clapping of Hands: The CAC is also known for its clapping during praises. As an '*Aladura*' denomination, in its style of praising of God involves one's whole being amidst noises and shouts, clapping of hands, dances and musical instruments including drums and cymbals (Psalms 34:1; 47:1; 81:1; 95:1, 6; 50:23;150).

- (vi) **Prophecies:** Prophetic ministry is one of the companions of most healing ministries of the pioneer church planters in the CAC in Isoko land. The gift of prophecies enables healing ministers to foretell the fate of those who seek healing and to guide them through the process.
- (vii) **Confession of Sins before the Prophet:** One of the effective methods of healing is the private confession of sin to the prophet of God. This is not out of place, as James 5:15 says, “Confess your sins to one another. Check the methods of healing discussed above.
- (viii) **Making of Vows:** It was a common practice among most of the healing prophets to ask the sick or their family to make vows unto the Lord.
- (ix) **Shout of Alleluia:** The CAC was known for their shout of Alleluias. Such practices have become the legacies of the Church in later years. Shouts of “Hallelujah,” “Amen,” “Hosannah,” “Ogo,” etc, interspersed worship and charge the atmosphere into that of joy and sacredness is, to say the least, indescribable and rapturous (Oshun, 2018).

9.3 The Contributions of CAC to Social and Religious Life in Isoko Land

The CAC mission like other evangelical outreach has shaped the religious and social life of the Isoko people in various ways. Few will be highlighted below.

Church-planting: All the forerunners of CAC in Isoko land cater for the churches they planted until they were well established. Most of the

beneficiaries and witnesses of the healing miracles donate their lands for the church building. Some of them were invited for evangelism and church-planting within Isoko land and other regions. For example, John Erimu was invited to plant churches at Ise-Ekiti (Yoruba land) in the year 1978; Izuebo Igbo land in 1979; Arawarien (Urhobo land) in 1981; Ashaka (Ukwani land) in the year 1983; Osekwahike (Igboland) in 1983; Unenurie (Urhobo land) in 1987, Ugute (Ukwani land) in 1990; Omoku in Cross River State in the year 1984 (Erimu, 2010).

- (i) Healing Homes: All the church-planters have faith-home where the sick. These serve as temporary residence for those who were brought for healing.
- (ii) Composition of Gospel Songs: Several songs in the Isoko dialect were composed by them through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Most of the choruses were composed in the process of prophesying.
- (iv) Mentorship/Tutelage of Ministers: Several of the past and present ministers of Isoko land served as catechists under and were mentored by these church-planters.
- (v) Quick Expansion: The healings, deliverances and prophetic ministries enabled the CAC mission to grow in quick succession in Isoko land.

10. Conclusion

Even though there are somewhat inadequacies in the healing methods offered by ministers of Christian faith healing ministries, they were able to take advantage of the biblical prophetic tradition, for the benefits of the Isoko people. Their structures, especially in the areas of doctrinal teaching of the faith healing, healing home and churches still exist for the common service to humanities.

11. Recommendations

Evangelists and church-planters must wait on Lord for spiritual empowerment to be able withstand evil forces of unreached territory. They should not be inspired by motivation to owning a big congregation.

- (i) Establishing Faith Homes where patients are given care and taught the word of God will assist and encourage growth of faith healings.

References

- Abogunrin, S.O. (2004). Biblical Healing in African Context, in *Nigerian Association of Biblical Studies: Biblical Studies Series*, Number 3.
- Adelowo, Dada (2006). Issues in Public Affairs, Volume 1. Ilorin, Majab Pub.
- Agbaje, A.A. (1995). Makers of the Church in Nigeria, edited by Omoyajowo, J. Akinyele. CSS Bookshop.
- Akhilomen, O. Don. Faith Healing and the Spirit of Beelzebub a Critical Appraisal of Pentecostal Practices in Nigeria, in *Nigerian Association of Biblical Studies: Biblical Studies Series*, Number 3.
- Alokan, A. (1991). The Christ Apostolic Church 1928 – 1988. Ibukunola Printers Ltd.
- Alokan, J.A. (1996). *Christ Apostolic Church @ 90*; C.O. Oshun, *Origins of Christ Apostolic Church*.
- Anderson, Allan (1996). The hermeneutical processes of Pentecostal-type African Initiated Churches in South Africa, *Missionalia*, 24:2, August
- Barnes, S. Jessica and Claudette (2002). The Asian Population, 2000 U.S. Census Bureau. Electronic document. <https://www.census.gov>
- Bennette, Dennis and Rita Bennette (1989). The Holy Spirit and You (Coverdale), Bridge Logos Publishers.
- Bennett, Tony (1989). Social and economic development: An introduction. New York: Guildford Press.
- Britannica, (2025). “Religious Beliefs,” Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com>> 25 Jan.
- Calvin, John (1559). Institutes of Christian Religion, IV, Trans. Ford Lewis Battles, LCC, XXI.
- Cressey, M.H. (1962). “Miracles,” New Bible Dictionary 2nd Edition, (ed) J.D. Douglas et al. Lancaster Inter Varsity Press.
- Dictionary of African Christian Biography (2022), Online edition.
- Dodu S.R.A. (1975) “Meeting the health needs of our developing countries, past, present and future.’ *Vol. 5*, 1 1975, Uninarsitas

- Dopamu, P.A. (2004). Biblical Healing in African Context, in *Nigerian Association of Biblical Studies: Biblical Studies Series, Number 3*.A.A. Agbaje, Makers of the Church in Nigeria, edited by Omoyajowo, J. Akinyele. CSS Bookshop.
- Ekpaogba-Akporube, Johnson (2010). Okparan of Ethe-Esakpe family, Egbidu Street, Etevie Quarter, Ozoro.
- Ekpaogba, M. Sunny (2011), The establishment of the Christ Apostolic Church in Isokoland, Delta State. A long essay presented to the Department of Religious Studies, Joseph Ayo Babalola University, Ikeji-Arakeji, Osun State.
- Ekpaogba, M. Sunny (2024). John Oviemuno Erimu: 1914 - 2015: Biography of an African revivalist in the Christ Apostolic Church, Delta State. JABU International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences, *Vol. I*, Issue 2.
- Erimu, O. John. CAC Ozoro No. 1. Interviewed by this researcher on 15th May, 2014, at his resident/church premise, Ofakpo Street, Erovie Quarters, Ozoro.
- Erivwo S.U. (1979) *A history of Christianity in Nigeria*. The Urhobo, Isoko and Itsekiri, Ibadan: Daystar Press.
- Ekpaogba, M. Sunny (2011). The origin and growth of Christ Apostolic Church in Isoko land of Delta State, Nigeria. A B.A. project submitted to the Department of Religious Studies, Joseph Ayo Babalola University, Ikeji-Arakeji, Osun State.
- Folarin, O. George (2019). Tenets of Christ Apostolic Church, A centenary history of the Christ Apostolic Church, 1918 - 2018, (Yet to be released).
- Igenozza, A.O. (2004). Exorcism in the ministry of Jesus and demonology in the African context, in *Nigerian Association of Biblical Studies: Biblical Studies Series, Number 3*.
- Ikime, Obaro, (1972). The Isoko people: A historical survey, Ibadan University Press.

- Jegede, Obafemi (2016). *Encyclopaedia of the Yoruba*, Toyin Falola and Akintunde Akinyemi (Eds.) Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Livingstone, E.A. (1974). "Miracle" in the *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 2nd Edition. London: Oxford University Press.
- Morrison, O. Jessa (n.d). *The Isoko People of Niger Delta*. Nigeria Gallaria, www.nigeriagallaria.com. Retrieved on 18th April, 2022.
- Mume, J.O. (1973). *Traditional Medicine in Nigeria*. Agbarho: John Traditional Naturopathic Hospital.
- Nabofa, M.Y. (1992). Adam the evangelist, in *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*. Ibadan: Daystar Press.
- Okolugbo, Emmanue. (1984). *The History of Christianity in Nigeria: The Ndosunmili and Ukwuani*. Daystar Press: Ibadan.
- Omonzejele F. Peter (2008). African concept of health, disease, and treatment: an ethical inquiry, National Library of Medicine, National Centre for biotechnology information.
- Onorefa, S.A. DCC Superintendent, CAC Powerline, Ughelli. Interview on the 5th of November, 2017 at his church premise, Ughelli.
- Okpevra, U.B. (2020). *Origins of the Isoko People of South-Central Nigeria Reconsidered*. December 2013.
- Oosthulzer, C, Gerhardus (1992). *The healing prophet: Afro-Christian church*, vol. 3. New York: E.V. Brill.
- Osun, C.O. (2018). "Aladura Spirituality: A New Understanding of God," in *A Centenary History of the Christ Apostolic Church Nigeria, 1918-2018*: Yet to be published.
- Oshun, Bunmi. (2018). "Worship in African Independent Churches". The example of the Christ Apostolic Church, Nigeria," in *A Centenary History of the Christ Apostolic Church Nigeria, 1918-2018*. Yet to be published.
- Onyeji (2020). Many Nigerians link mental illness to supernatural causes – Survey: Premium Times, 17th January, 2020. n.p.n www.premiumtimes.ng.com. retrieved 20th April, 2022.

- Parsons, Stephen (1986). *The Challenge of Christian Healing*. London: SPCK.
- Oyedipe P.A. Francis (1979). The achievement of Nigerian elite in metaphysical matters: Preaching of the Nigerian Anthropological and Sociological Association Annual Conference.
- Roder, Wolf (2009). Healing in the sacred realms: Readings in Anthropology of Religion, Second Edition, edited by Richard Warmes, James Garber, and R. Jon McGee. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Ryrie, C. Charles. (1956). "An acts of divine healing." *Bibliotheca Sacra*, volume 113, No 452.
- Silis, D.C. (1972). *International Encyclopedia of Social Science*, Vol. 5 and 6. New York: Macmillan Press.
- okayToryough, G.N. (2004). Healing Miracles and their impact on Church planting and Growth: A case of selected examples of Nigerian Church planters, in *Nigerian Association of Biblical Studies: Biblical Studies Series*, Number 3.
- Yongi Cho, Paul. (1985, 1988). *Expand your horizon: How to make your faith work*. Melbourne: Dove Christian Book.