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A LUTHERAN RESPONSE TO THE ROLE OF HEALING AND THE HEALER IN
AFRICAN INDEPENDENT CHURCHES

A Thesis
Presented to the Faculty of
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Systematics
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

By
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May 2021

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To my wife Josephine and my children Jasper Jr, Joy and Jeanne, although you were miles away from me, charting with you always gave me the strength to soldier on with my writing.

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	viii
ABBREVIATIONS	ix
ABSTRACT	x
CHAPTER ONE	1
INTRODUCTION	1
THE THESIS	2
THE CURRENT STATUS OF THE QUESTION	3
THE DISSERTATION IN THE CONTEXT OF CURRENT SCHOLARSHIP	6
THE METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURE TO BE EMPLOYED	10
THE OUTCOME(S) ANTICIPATED	12
CHAPTER TWO	14
AFRICAN INDEPENDENT CHURCHES (AICS) AND THEIR TEACHINGS	14
INTRODUCTION	14
MAIN CHARACTERISTICS	15
Self-appointed Leadership	15
No Written Theology	15
Healing and Deliverance from Evil	15
Free Form of Worship	17
Ritualistic Prayer	17
Leaders' Idolization	18
AICS IN THE BROADER CONTEXT OF AFRICAN COSMOLOGY	18
BRIEF COMPARISON AND CONTRAST WITH CLASSICAL PENTECOSTALISM	21

SUMMARY.....	26
CHAPTER THREE	27
HEALING AND HEALERS IN AFRICAN INDEPENDENT CHURCHES (AICS)	27
THE CONCEPT OF HEALING IN AFRICA.....	27
Religion as the Center in African Traditional Society’s Diagnosis.....	29
Religious Leaders in African Traditional Society	30
Medicine Man.....	30
Diviners	31
Mediums	31
Seers	32
Priests	32
How Healing in African Traditional Society Is Done	33
EPILEPSY AND OTHER MENTAL PROBLEMS’ TREATMENT BY TRADITIONAL RITUALS.....	34
African Traditional Society View on Epilepsy.....	34
African Traditional Society Ritualistic Healing of Epilepsy	36
CONCEPT AND IMPORTANCE OF HEALING IN AICS	39
THEOLOGY OF HEALING AND HEALERS IN AICS.....	40
View of Healing.....	40
Deliverance from the Power of the Demons.....	41
Christology and Pneumatology	42
Healing Service in Legio Maria Church: A Case Study.....	43
Background.....	43
Their Service.....	43

Their Healing Session and Exorcism.....	44
Healing at the Specific “Sacred” Places Outside the Church.....	46
CRITIQUES OF AIC THEOLOGY IN AFRICA AND ABROAD	47
One-Sided View of Healing.....	47
Existence of the Devil/Demons	49
Revelation Beyond the Word	50
SUMMARY.....	51
CHAPTER FOUR.....	52
LUTHERAN HOLISTIC PERSPECTIVE ON HEALING	52
THE MEDICAL APPROACH TOWARD HEALING.....	53
PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH TO HEALING.....	54
THE SPIRITUAL APPROACH TOWARD HEALING	55
Jesus’ Holistic Healing Ministry	55
Jesus’ Healings as Miracles and Their Significance	57
Church’s Deputized Holistic Healing Ministry	59
The Healing Word	59
The Healing Sacraments.....	61
THE EXISTING GAPS WHICH THE ELCK SHOULD ADDRESS.....	64
Separating the Word and the Spirit.....	65
Quest to Go Back to African Religiosity in Times of Crisis	66
Failure to Address the Naturalistic Worldview of Healing	68
Failure to Address the Idea that Suffering and Sickness Are Punishments for Specific Sin.....	70
Failure to Account for the Existence of Demon in ELCK.....	73

Other Lutheran Theologians' Take on Exorcism After Luther	77
HOW LUTHERANS ACCOUNT THEOLOGICALLY FOR THE CURE OF THE BODY	79
THE ROLE OF CONGREGATIONAL CARE FOR A CHRISTIAN STRUGGLING WITH SICKNESS	82
SUMMARY	84
CHAPTER FIVE	86
CONCLUSION.....	86
BIBLIOGRAPHY	92
VITA.....	97

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ABBREVIATIONS

AICs	African Independent Churches
ELCK	Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya
LCMS	The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
LC	Large Catechism
SC	Small Catechism
WA-T	Weimar edition of Luther's table talks, <i>Tischreden</i> .

ABSTRACT

A conversation with a parishioner, who left the church when her son was suffering from epilepsy and claims he could not be healed even after a series of prayers from her Lutheran pastor, revealed the extent of the influence of African Independent Churches (AICs) among members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya (ELCK). Many people in Kenya who are suffering from chronic illnesses find it difficult to maintain their faith in such moments of crises and are tempted to seek quick remedies from AICs' healers. These healers claim that salvation and the healing of the body are not separate realities. Indeed, in AICs bodily healing is a sure sign of salvation, and it is guaranteed in this life for those who truly believe. This thesis seeks to articulate clearly for congregants in the ELCK and others a holistic Lutheran approach to healing in relation to factors such as medical treatment and prayer for healing from demonic oppression, and how bodily healing is distinct from and linked to the forgiveness of sins as the effective spiritual antidote that heals persons from their sins and reconciles them to God. The thesis shows that healing encompasses the whole person, body and soul. Yet at the core of healing is the restoration between man and God through forgiveness of sins, which in this life may or may not be accompanied by bodily healing. However, care must be taken not to interpret lack of bodily healing or sickness as a sign of judgment for a specific sin. Moreover, prayers for healing and medical treatment must not be seen as antithetical in a holistic approach to healing. Finally, the thesis acknowledges the existence of the devil and demons, but also their limited power against the baptized when confronted in Christ. The thesis is the first Lutheran holistic approach to healing in response to the role of healing and the healer in AICs.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Everybody wants to be healthy—a life free from pain and inability to perform one’s duties effectively. With the arrival of sickness, joy tends to be dispelled, efficiency is frustrated, comfort is reduced, and both resources and self-esteem seem to vanish either temporarily or permanently. People ask why sickness happens and what to do about it. Ludwig states that “it is during a serious bout of illness that many raise the question of theodicy—‘if God is good, why does he allow me to suffer?’ thus, the God of the universe or another cosmic power may be called in to answer the problem of pain.”¹ Practically speaking, in an African context, some of the diseases stimulating people to look for “healers” could find their treatment in medical facilities. This calls for the creation of awareness among the congregants concerning the need for proper medical checkups during these periods of sickness, drawing their attention away from the typical conclusion that sickness is a sign that God has abandoned them and teaching them sound Christian doctrine on healing.

While serving as a parish pastor, I came to realize that when confronted with sickness or various health issues, many people around my parish, though professing Christianity, ran to local healers associated with African Independent Churches (AICs).² These healers tell people the perceived causes of their ailments and claim to have the ability to heal them. Their followers even pay large amounts of money or livestock to secure their services. What caught my attention most, as a pastor, was that even Christians in the mainstream churches, when attacked by serious

¹ Garth D. Ludwig, *Order Restored: A Biblical Interpretation of Health Medicine and Healing* (St. Louis: Concordia Academic Press, 1999), 29.

² These churches are also at times called African-Instituted Churches. See Ogbu Kalu, *African Christianity: An African Story* (Pretoria: University of Pretoria Press, 2005), 3:310–13.

diseases, run to these healers for help as a last resort. A case in point was when a congregant who had lapsed sometime before my installation to the parish eventually rejoined the church and told me that what had made her leave initially was her desire to seek an AIC healer for her sick son. He was suffering from epilepsy and, according to her, could not be healed even after seeking prayers in the Lutheran church. She then opted to seek an outside healer and ended up joining an AIC, where she claimed her son was healed. Further conversation with her revealed that there were more Lutherans she knew who were seeking help from the same healer.

This episode made me realize that the attractiveness of AIC healers was a perennial problem affecting many even in my parish. That experience has led me to ask a few questions, such as what are AICs and how do they understand the role of healing and the healer? Could Lutherans visiting AIC healers be a widespread problem in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya (ELCK) as a whole? And if so, what cultural and religious reasons drive them to such groups? What could be the gap(s) in Lutheran theology and practice that may lead people to perceive an inability or a deficit in its teaching when dealing with healing or illness? How should ELCK address this challenge from a biblical and confessional perspective?

The Thesis

This paper will propose to argue that AICs operate with a theology of healing and the healer focusing one-sidedly on physical healing as deliverance from satanic oppression and, moreover, that a Lutheran *holistic* theology of healing is best equipped to respond to AICs' claims in an African context. Worship in AICs has healing and deliverance at its center and is marked by spontaneity, exuberance, and enthusiasm.³ Such worship is also the primary setting

³ Mika Vahakangas and Andrew A. Kyomo, eds., *Charismatic Renewal in Africa: A Challenge for African Christianity* (Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 2003), 13.

for people's quest to get quick results of deliverance from the grip of the devil and the demons, who AICs see as either causing or worsening sicknesses.⁴ The thesis will seek to understand the basis for AIC's theology and practice of healing and healers, locating it in the context of the African spirit worldview. In dialogue with Ludwig's work on health and other Lutheran authors writing on spiritual health and warfare, the thesis will offer a Lutheran holistic approach to healing in an African context that includes the forgiveness of sins, accounts for questions about physical healing, and does not avoid the demonic dimension of sickness.

The Current Status of the Question

John Mbiti, an Anglican priest from Kenya and Professor in African theology and religion, observes that in Africa cosmology, people use religion to find out the mystical cause of diseases. He paints for us a picture of how sickness and healing fit into such world.⁵ The medicine man holds a central place in determining who has sent the disease to the sick person in order to prescribe the right cure. There are also minor and major illnesses and troubles. The minor complaints like an upset stomach, headache, or cuts are treated with herbs and other medicines known to the community. On the other hand, major ones, which are characterized by persistent and serious complaints, require the knowledge and skills of the medicine man. He is obliged to find the religious cause of such illnesses or complaints, which many a time is said to be caused by magic, sorcery, witchcraft, breaking a taboo, or the work of spirits. He prescribes a cure which may include herbs, religious rituals, and the observance of certain prohibitions. The medicine man also takes preventive measures to assure the sufferer that the trouble will not come again.

⁴ Vahakangas and Kyomo, *Charismatic Renewal in Africa*, 15.

⁵ John Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 2nd ed. (Nairobi: Heinemann, 1991), 139.

Kenya is not exceptional in the high value its society places on healing. This feature of African life may explain the popularity of AICs among the people. The rush to get immediate healing is so rampant in Kenya that most of AICs call open air meetings inviting people to come to their healing services. One may be tempted to think that the people who gather in these meetings are members of AICs, but people from virtually all denominations join together and expect healing to happen at these services. While some go back to their former denominations after the perceived healing has taken place, some remain with the AICs as followers of the healer. These converts in turn invite others who might be having the same need to seek for the solution to their sicknesses in their newly found healing church. Even some hospitalized patients leave the hospital and stop taking medications as they seek to get a more lasting solution from these healers. Worship, for these people, must result in bodily wellbeing but also spiritual wellbeing (involving exorcism) if necessary.

There are scanty resources addressing AICs directly in the context of Kenya, but there are other resources that can help us describe the place of healing in AICs. A case in point is that of a self-proclaimed prophet, Dr. Owuor of the Repentance and Holiness Ministry in Kenya. He announced at the Nakuru revival meeting in Kenya that the Lord had spoken to him and told him that He had seen the suffering of His people and He was now coming to heal and set them free, so that it might be known to all other religions and in heaven that Jehovah is God. Owuor assured his hearers that the lame and the paralytic would walk in jubilation, and the deaf and dumb be healed; that cancer, leukemia, diabetes, and HIV/AIDS would be gone from people's blood stream and their condition restored. People who have psychosis, mental illness, psychiatric cases, and depression would be set free from their ailments.⁶ Such meetings always involve a

⁶ David Owuor, "Chronicles of the End Time Revival," *Highway of Holiness* (blog), date of publication,

handful of people giving testimonies about their miracles of healing.

Outside the African context, a few Lutheran writers have addressed the problems associated with sickness and healing soundly. For example, Martin Scharlemann argues that healing is the restoration of a sinner to the Father in Jesus Christ, and that nowhere does Jesus suggest that removal of suffering was his primary mission nor that the banishment of suffering in this life is anything we should expect as believers.⁷ Indeed, dealing with sin, not suffering, was Jesus' primary concern. However, Scharlemann agrees that God uses physicians as instruments to bring succor for the body; and just as the Gospel is for the soul, so is the medicine for the body. Similarly, Ludwig asserts that the goal of biblical healing is neither the curing of all disease as the most important factor, nor is its goal the mastery of an emotional problem or restoration from a psychological crisis. Instead, biblical healing aims at restoring order within the whole person.⁸ In this holistic view, nothing is more crucial to this goal than that healing by which a person is reconciled to God in Jesus Christ. Finally, Arthur Just basically corroborates this view by saying that Jesus' miracles of healing continue today in the Gospel and the sacraments, which testify that Jesus is present to perform acts of release for his creation in order to recreate it and restore it to wholeness.⁹ There is a need, however, for Lutheran literature on healing to interact with the African context, particularly in addressing the view of the AICs.

accessed April 25, 2020, <http://www.highwayofholiness.us/chronicles-of-the-end>.

⁷ Martin H. Scharlemann, *Healing and Redemption: Toward a Theology of Human Wholeness for Doctors, Nurses, Missionaries and Pastors* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1965), 44.

⁸ Ludwig, *Order Restored*, 55

⁹ Arthur A. Just Jr., "The Medicine of Immortality: Healing for a New Creation" (paper presented at the First Annual Conference of the Good Shepherd Institute, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, IN, November 5-7, 2000), 20.

The Dissertation in the Context of Current Scholarship

The distinctive characteristics of the AICs as laid down by Mika Vahakangas and Andrew Kyomo include a worship marked by potent enthusiasm and exuberance; a new awareness of Satan and his agents; or believing that a person can be negatively influenced by Satan, demons, or evil spirits in order to acquire bad habits, sickness, and suffering.¹⁰ AICs also teach that one could be robbed of God-given blessings and freedoms.¹¹ Healing and deliverance, they say, are not separated; prayer for healing is the prayer for God to deliver the victim from the bondage of the devil and demons, which either cause or worsen sickness.¹² Sundkler adds that their healing message promises quick results and immediate relief.¹³

The African scholar John Mbiti, who investigates extensively the African perspective on healing, recounts that what Africans refer to as “medicine” has no equivalence in the English language. He says,

For Africans, medicine is used for many purposes, one of which is to put things right and to counter the forces of mystical evil. There are, therefore, friends of the society who are engaged in the positive use of mystical forces. Thus, there is medicine to cure the physical condition of illness, there is also medicine to cure the mental and religious causes of illness.¹⁴

Mbiti takes the stand of a sympathetic observer of the African view of medicine and healing, especially when he asserts that medicine men—together with other friends of the society—help to stabilize society through their knowledge, skills, and religious activities.. They are channels of good health, good fortune, fertility, peace, and welfare. He therefore sees medicine men as a true

¹⁰ Vahakangas and Kyomo, *Charismatic Renewal in Africa*, 13–16.

¹¹ Vahakangas and Kyomo, *Charismatic Renewal in Africa*, 16.

¹² Vahakangas and Kyomo, *Charismatic Renewal in Africa*, 16.

¹³ Bengt G. M. Sundkler, *Bantu Prophets in South Africa*, 2nd ed (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 236.

¹⁴ Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 171.

public asset.¹⁵ In their observations on the Luo tribe of Kenya and the Sukuma tribe of Tanzania, Joseph Healey and Donald Sybertz refer to the medicine man as a local doctor or divine healer. The divine healer, they hold, uses mysterious power to find the cause of persons' misfortunes and to make magical curative and protective medicine. They go on to make the point that the Luo people and the Sukuma people refer to Jesus as the chief healer or medicine man. Healey and Sybertz deduce that this insight informs an important part of an African Christology. This brings them to the conclusion that healers in the AICs perform the deputized role of Christ amongst his flock.¹⁶

The description of Jesus as the chief healer is supported by Kofi Appiah-Kubi. Drawing from John 10:10, he notes that Jesus came so that people may have life and have it in abundance. Yet living amidst poverty, misery, sickness, and suffering, Africans wonder where this abundant life is. Appiah-Kubi scolds the mainline churches for failing to address the spiritual and physical needs of the Africans. He alleges that they "have not taken the command of the Master to heal the sick, cleanse lepers, cast out the devil and raise the dead."¹⁷ He asserts that since the mainline churches came to Africa with hospitals, they have thereafter overstressed the importance of physical medicine and treatment to the exclusion of spiritual healing. This is the gap, which he says, AICs have filled by offering the antidote against the mysterious malignant powers that trouble Christians, namely, by healing people in the power of God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit. Thus AICs assert that total personal healing is the gift of God which He pours on his believing

¹⁵ Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 171.

¹⁶ Joseph Healey and Donald Sybertz, *Towards an African Narrative Theology: Faith and Culture* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 85–86.

¹⁷ Kofi Appiah-Kubi, "The Church's Healing Ministry in Africa," *Ecumenical Review* 27, no. 3 (July 1975): 230, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edb&AN=6426844&site=eds-live>.

community.¹⁸ Mugambi and Magesa corroborate Appiah-Kubi's claim that the AICs do not use charms or magic but pronounce healing in the name of Jesus Christ, who has overcome all evils, principalities, and cosmic powers.¹⁹

While some African scholars, like Mbiti, hold that medicine is used for many purposes including putting things right in society by countering the forces of mystical evil, and that those who engage in the positive use of mystical forces are therefore friends of the society, C. Epie contends against this assertion by saying "sorcery, witchcraft, magic and divination are not exclusively features of African traditional society. They are characteristics of unchristian societies, nothing else."²⁰ Darrell Arthur McCulley also reacts against the AICs by holding that a supernatural healing is not a proof of God's involvement, since apostates as well as saints can be seen to cure miraculously. He further notes that demons still can cause illnesses and afterwards withdraw to make it appear as a supernatural healing. Finally, the author asserts that "Satan is capable of pulling off some small moments of relief or repair that may look miraculous, however he is not God."²¹

Highlighting a holistic approach to healing, Garth D. Ludwig, former Lutheran pastor and emeritus faculty of Concordia University, Irvine, gives a balanced view:

[N]o longer can we assume that the body is the sole territory of the medical doctors, nor the mind the sole province of psychotherapists, nor the spirit the singular category of pastors and priests. The stressors that attack us do not remain in the neat little

¹⁸ Kofi Appiah-Kubi, "Healing Ministry," 235–36.

¹⁹ J. N. K. Mugambi and Laurenti Magesa, eds., *The Church in African Christianity: Innovation Essays in Ecclesiology* (Nairobi: Action, 1998), 46.

²⁰ C. Epie, *Following Christ in Africa* (Lagos: Criterion, 1991), 57.

²¹ Darrell Arthur McCulley, "The House Swept Clean: A Biblically Balanced Pattern for the Diagnosis, Exorcism, and Pastoral Care of the Victims of Demonic Possession" (2002), other student pub. <https://scholar.csl.edu/osp/1>.

compartments that we may assign them. We have been holistically created even as the process of healing is holistic at its core.²²

Ludwig's holistic approach to health and healing includes modern medicine's doctors and psychotherapists in an ordinary clinical perspective for treating illness. Such a holistic view also accounts for the place of spiritual healing, including dealing with forms of bondage to the world of spirits. This paper borrows from Ludwig's position, which holds that in the New Testament the demons are a cause of diseases and that Jesus healed many who were possessed by these evil spirits. The presence of diseases was linked to the activity of Satan and the bondage of people under the evil kingdom.²³ He is aware that the healing system in Africa involves spiritual powers ranging from gods, spirits, demons, to ghosts, whose goal is to restore the afflicted to good health.²⁴ He acknowledges that medical doctors have treated many who are suffering from various diseases, though some diseases have proved to have no solution.²⁵ At the same time, he strongly asserts that the forgiveness of sins is the most potent healing medication known to humankind.²⁶ In the Christian narrative, the forgiveness of sins sets things right with God. It should be an important part of any comprehensive theological account of healing.

Taking into account all the elements of his proposal, Ludwig views healing holistically as he aligns the elements of his argument to the broader theme of his book, which highlights how healing must be seen in the context of God's work to sustain and restore order in creation. Other Lutherans have recently written on the Christian life as a struggle against the attacks of Satan through which God works to form theologians. Quoting Luther, John Kleinig asserts that

²² Ludwig, *Order Restored*, 148.

²³ Ludwig, *Order Restored*, 97–98.

²⁴ Ludwig, *Order Restored*, 44.

²⁵ Ludwig, *Order Restored*, 55.

²⁶ Ludwig, *Order Restored*, 205.

as soon as the word of God grows in a believer, the devil persecutes him, and this drives him to seek and love God's word from where he gets his help.²⁷ This implies that when the devil attacks, one realizes his own spiritual weakness and lack of wisdom and this makes him rely on the power of the Holy Spirit and the wisdom of God's word. In so doing, he bears the cross together with his Lord and suffers with him in the church.

Hartung highlights that the devil inflicts sufferings like personal illness, creates stress and trouble in the life Christians, beats them down, finds a way to cause them to lose heart, and tempts them to feel they are carrying their burdens alone.²⁸ He also works to undermine the work of the church begun by Jesus Christ and causes the faithful to question their beliefs. He concludes that we need not to deny Satan's existence. Through the Word and prayer, and through vigilance and accountability, we need only to shrug off Satan strategic opposition to the plan of salvation flowing from the goodness of God and from His Christ.²⁹ The implications of these reflections on the Christian life as a spiritual attack require further consideration in terms of their application to a broader Lutheran approach to healing in an African context.

The Methodological Procedure to Be Employed

The methodology which will be employed in this thesis first involves locating healing in African cosmology through a sociocultural religious description of the Africans' approach to

²⁷ John W. Kleinig, "Oratio, Meditatio, Tentatio: What Makes a Theologian?" *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 66, no. 3 (2002): 265, <http://search.ebscohost.com.csl.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lsdar&AN=ATLA0001410752&site=ehost-live>.

²⁸ Bruce M. Hartung, *Holding Up the Prophet's Hand: Supporting Church Workers* (St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia, 2011), 11–17.

²⁹ For a Lutheran model of the Christian life or sanctification as a struggle between God and Satan, see the dramatic model in Leopoldo A. Sánchez M., *Sculptor Spirit: Models of Sanctification from Spirit Christology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2020), 89–114.

healing offered by African writers such as John Mbiti. This thesis will then describe AICs' claims and approach to healing, highlighting physical healing but also their theological basis and insights on healing as a whole. This involves using some popular sources of AIC churches in Kenya. In response to the AIC approach to healing, the thesis will finally lay out a Lutheran *holistic* perspective on healing in dialogue with Lutheran authors such as Ludwig and others. These authors encourage modern medicine as a way to deal with treatable diseases in hospitals, appreciating psychiatric services which can help cure diseases involving mental challenges. They also show an appreciation for understanding sickness in the context of Satan's attacks and offer evangelical responses for dealing with spiritual struggle.

The thesis contextualizes a Lutheran holistic response to the African context. At the core of this approach, healing will be viewed first and foremost as a restoration between humans and God through the forgiveness of sins with the result that spiritual healing may or not always correspond to bodily healing. At the same time, this approach will attend to the place of body and mind, as well as the problem of the demonic, in a Lutheran approach to healing. In short, our holistic perspective will help us to offer an African Lutheran response to the role of healing and healers in AICs.

In terms of limits, this thesis will focus on AICs and thus will not look extensively into the similarities and differences between AICs and classic Pentecostal theology and churches. Similarly, it will not deal with the healings by the witches and sorcerers, who even Mbiti concurs are seen as the enemies of the society;³⁰ instead, it will concentrate on healing and healers as seen by AICs for whom healing in the name of Jesus is a key mark of being the true church of Christ the healer. Finally, this thesis will at times consider but not investigate extensively the

³⁰ John S. Mbiti, *Concepts of God in Africa* (Southampton: Camelot, 1970), 224.

methods and practices by which AICs draw and retain people to follow their teachings or practices.

The Outcome(s) Anticipated

This research will provide vital information to the ELCK in order to educate her members on the theology of the AICs, particularly on healing and healers, in an African context. It will recognize the gap(s) between what is being taught (or not being taught) in the Lutheran Church concerning healing (e.g., are Lutherans holistic in their teaching?) and what the people are hearing or understanding regarding healing in their culture and especially in AICs (e.g., the need for healing to deal with the demonic). This thesis will deploy a Lutheran holistic approach to healing as a tool to analyze and critique the theology of AIC on healing and the healers.

Acknowledging the need for going to hospitals when people are sick, fleeing to Jesus as the surest refuge from the demons, and receiving the forgiveness of sins through the means of grace, this paper will point its readers to a holistic view of healing. At a practical level, our approach should clarify some issues surrounding healing, such as its limit, purpose, relation to God's word, etc. For instance, salvation does not relieve Christians from suffering but is part of cross bearing as Christians follow Christ. Or, the absence of physical healing often has nothing to do with lack of spiritual healing or faith in the Gospel. Parishioners can be encouraged to seek medical attention and psychiatric care as needed, yet physical healing is not seen as an end in itself. Moreover, the Gospel of the forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God shall be placed at the center of holistic healing, especially, in times of spiritual attack and cross bearing. Finally, it will be shown that demons are real and they do attack, but their attacks ought to be seen within the context of God's use of spiritual attacks to drive His children to Jesus. Our approach to healing contextualized to the African context will offer the ELCK important insights

from Lutheran theology to assist her in teaching a proper view of healing in response to AICs.

CHAPTER TWO

AFRICAN INDEPENDENT CHURCHES (AICS) AND THEIR TEACHINGS

Introduction

The word “independent” in African Independent Churches has taken on various meanings, which cast some ambiguity on the term. Ogbu points out these variations as follows: “African Indigenous/initiated/instituted and independent churches.”¹ He then gives his own definition of AICs as “autonomous church groups with an all African leadership and an all African membership.”² He qualifies this definition by noting that some of these groups broke away from former mission churches, while others arose spontaneously around a charismatic or prophetic personality; and moreover, that these groups’ beliefs and practices are drawn from a number of Christian groups.³ Following the lead given by Ogbu, this research will use the term African Independent Churches or AICs.

Francis classifies AICs into two major types. These include “the prophetic churches and the healing churches.”⁴ Depending on the period of development, he categorizes them as colonial and post-colonial.⁵ The colonial one is associated with messianic movements that were fighting colonial masters with a view to independence. The ones emerging post-colonially had a special interest in Africanizing the image of Jesus, showing a messiah who is not only for blacks but who is black himself. A typical example of the latter type is the Legio Maria Church in Kenya

¹ Kalu, “African Christianity,” 415.

² Kalu, “African Christianity,” 415.

³ Kalu, “African Christianity,” 415.

⁴ Francis Anekwe Oborji, “Healing in the African Independent Churches.” *Studies in Interreligious Dialogue* 15, no. 2 (2005): 185, <http://search.ebscohost.com.esl.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lsdar&AN=ATLA0001545086&site=ehost-live>.

⁵ Francis, “Healing in the African Independent Churches,” 185.

led by Simion Ondeto, which we described briefly in chapter one.

Main Characteristics

Self-appointed Leadership

In justifying their authority, AIC leaders tend to oppose a due process of *rite vocatus* (that is, a public call process mediated by the church) and claim that they get their authority and the validity of their call in an unmediated way or directly from God. Allan adeptly describes how in AICs “their legitimacy hails from a belief in divinely appointed leaders who do not seek human recognition, and from their time-tested strengths as major denominations in their own right.”⁶ The motivation to form a particular AIC is pegged on their conviction that it is the Holy Spirit who is directing them to do so, hence they view their mission as a God-ordained and directed enterprise.

No Written Theology

AICs lack formulated confessions and theological handbooks which unite and guide them in their beliefs. Allan reports their declaration that “we may not be articulate in written theology, but we express faith in our liturgy, worship, and structures.”⁷ AIC leaders also do not depend on written sermons as they claim that the Holy Spirit gives them spontaneously what to say. As a result, their sermons are sometimes not theologically sound and mixed with African traditional religious practices.

Healing and Deliverance from Evil

The AICs’ aim and struggle is to fill the existential gap between the African worldview

⁶ Allan H. Anderson, *African Reformation: African Initiated Christianity in the 20th Century* (Trenton: African World Press, 2001), 17.

⁷ Anderson, *African Reformation*, 217.

concerning miseries like sickness, poverty, barrenness, and evil spirits, and the proper “Christian” worldview on healing and response to illness. AICs practice exorcism to bring about healing on the victims of cosmic spiritual forces—something they claim the Western Church has been unable to address due to their secularizing worldview. Their authority over illnesses and spirits is buttressed by a literalistic approach to the Bible. [briefly explain what you mean by literalistic approach (not understanding types of literature/metaphor/prophecy?)] Reporting on Legio’s interpretation of Revelation, Kustenbauder attests that:

The book of Revelation is thought by members to contain specific references to Legio. For example, the apocalyptic black horse and its rider in Revelation 6 are thought to represent Legio and its Messiah. Six of the seven churches of Revelation 2–3 are identified with the mission churches. The church at Philadelphia is identified with Legio, and its message is received as a message for Legio.⁸

This biblical literalism is coupled with a strong sense that the experiences of the biblical worldview are immediately accessible today. Thus AICs hold that “the Gospel has immediacy and becomes relevant to life experiences focusing on divine intervention in daily life situations through a constant emphasis on the supernatural.”⁹ In their services, testimonies on healing and miracles received by the people for whom the healer prayed are narrated as a way of glorifying God and making people know that the God they serve is a miracle-working God. Appiah-Kubi significantly reports on how people claiming to be healed by AICs give their testimonies in praise of the healer and the particular denomination:

I was ill for a very long time. I tried all forms of treatment, to no avail, and the doctors declared me a hopeless case. I was advised by a friend to go to prophet or prophetess so-and-so, the leader of an indigenous African Christian church; I did and now I am better.¹⁰

⁸ Matthew Kustenbauder, “Believing in the Black Messiah: The Legio Maria Church in an African Christian Landscape,” *Nova Religio* 13, no. 1 (August 2009): 25, doi:10.1525/nr.2009.13.1.11.

⁹ Anderson, *African Reformation*, 220.

¹⁰ Appiah Kubi, “Healing Ministry,” 219.

The healing in this case is attributed to a faith hero and a given AIC from where the healer comes. This emphasis on the centrality of the healer and his associations in accessing God's power to deal with sickness and spirits is typical in AICs.

Free Form of Worship

AIC worship is characterized by free and exuberant modes of worship as opposed to the mainline liturgically organized worship of mission churches. Deji asserts that "they have given a home to a more fascinating and exciting form of worship with singing, dancing, clapping, and stamping of the feet."¹¹ Most of their songs are spontaneous and indigenous, making ample use of traditional tunes. Members are zealous for mission, organize open air meetings which they call crusades, and invite people to come forward to receive miracles. This indigenous worship focus arguably leads to the faster growth of AICs in Kenya as compared to other mainline churches, but such worship also raises questions about the extent to which indigenous expressions embody the Christian story or offer an altogether alternate view of reality.

Ritualistic Prayer

Free forms of worship, however, are not necessarily antithetical to the role of rituals in these churches. As Deji points out, for instance, that many of these churches have special places of prayer variously referred to as "Mercy-land," "place of refuge," "Garden," etc."¹² Deji also highlights that when AIC members go to these prayer sites, they use some materials to help them in their prayers: "These include some model prayer books with 'holy names,' the book of

¹¹ Deji Ayegboyin and S. Ademola Ishola, *African Indigenous Churches: An Historical Perspective* (Lagos: Greater Heights), 31.

¹² Ayegboyin and Ishola, *African Indigenous Churches*, 28.

Psalms, candles, incense and palm-fronds.”¹³

Leaders’ Idolization

The followers of AIC leaders see them as their spiritual heroes, and what they say is taken as an authoritative word from God. Some leaders call themselves “apostle,” “mightiest prophet,” “messiah,” and have the tendency to arrogate to themselves powers and authority that are not biblically warranted. Kustenbauder, writing on Legio Maria Church of Kenya reports that the members of this church at its inception “hailed Ondeto as Baba Messias (Father Messiah) and ‘the living God.’”¹⁴ The tendency of seeing AICs’ leaders as supermen who hold the spiritual destiny of the laity in their hands is a common phenomenon. Allan asserts that “members are the clients of the prophets who may be the custodian of powers to overcome the ills of life.”¹⁵ It can thus be argued that the healer is the single, most important figure in mediating between the African world of spirits and the sick person in local AICs by channeling God’s powers to people held in bondage to such spirits.

AICs in the Broader Context of African Cosmology

Christianity is not, in every case, a product of western colonial expansion. Allan observes that the first church initiated by Africans for Africans is the ancient Ethiopian Church founded by Egyptian Copts in the sixteenth century—a church independent from any European church.¹⁶ In order to pattern their worship style after the Israelites’ way of worship, the devout referred to

¹³ Ayegboyin and Ishola, *African Indigenous Churches*, 28.

¹⁴ Kusternbauder, “Believing in the Black Messiah,” 12.

¹⁵ Anderson, *African Reformation*, 171.

¹⁶ Anderson, *African Reformation*, 45.

the “Ethiopian nation as Zion and their capital city Aksum as the New Jerusalem.”¹⁷ Their unity and devotion was so strong that even when the Muslims conquered their neighbors in Egypt, their churches and traditions still survived.

Early attempts at indigenization reveal various results and aims. For instance, Allan mentions the example of Francisco Kassola, a Catholic catechist from Angola, who in 1632 AD created a new church and claimed that he was the son of God and had healing powers.¹⁸ He criticized missionaries in his preaching and attempted to Africanize Christianity in his own controversial ways. For this reason, the other missionaries tried to arrest him, though he disappeared never to be heard of again.¹⁹ In the Congo, the earliest prophet-healing movement ever recorded was started in 1704 by a woman, prophetess Kimpa Vita, who was popular for healing barren women and was known by her baptized name of Dona Beatrice.²⁰ She was an ecstatic prophetess who used to have dreams and visions. In her preaching, she condemned “both the Catholic Church and traditional charms, saying that crucifixes and images were new charms replacing the old ones, and all were equally evil.”²¹ Her revolutionary teachings were also aimed at the restoration of the independence of the Kongo nation, giving her indigenous movement a more anti-colonial political profile.²²

The number of AICs increased with the growth of Christianity under colonial powers. A significant phenomenon is that “most churches, particularly those that were founded in the early period, arose out of the protest against the white domination within the mission founded

¹⁷ Anderson, *African Reformation*, 46.

¹⁸ Anderson, *African Reformation*, 47–48.

¹⁹ Anderson, *African Reformation*, 48.

²⁰ Anderson, *African Reformation*, 48.

²¹ Anderson, *African Reformation*, 49.

²² Anderson, *African Reformation*, 48–49.

churches and against political domination.”²³ Africa had a good many church leaders who spearheaded movements with a view toward liberation from the missionary dominant churches. In Malawi, Chilembwe of Nyasaland founded the Providence Industrial Mission in 1914 and became a political and religious liberator of his people.²⁴ Moses Oremolade of Nigeria founded the praying societies of Cherubim and Seraphim while in Kenya, and the Agikuyu Independent Church Movement in Kenya arose to preserve African traditions and customs.²⁵ Ignatius Lekhanyane of South Africa founded Zionism, which spread into Botswana and Zimbabwe. By emphasizing healing and the early return of Christ, Zionism “gave hope to a people that were already suffering from schizophrenia due to the erosion of political socio-economic and cultural values.”²⁶

Allan observes that the largest AIC in Tanzania was the Church of the Holy Spirit started by Lutheran evangelist Felix Kabuga in 1953, although half of its members eventually returned to the Lutheran fold in 1962.²⁷ In Uganda, some of the AICs rejected the use of modern medicine, eating of pork, and vaccinations programs, though they permitted beer and polygyny. A case in point is the “Society of the One Almighty God, founded by a prominent chief in Uganda known as Mugema.”²⁸ Kalu adds his voice to this history of the AIC churches by narrating how Alfayo Odongo Mango, whom he describes as strong-willed individual, emerged as a key religious and political personality in the Luo tribe of Kenya.²⁹ Odongo Mango, an

²³ Mugambi and Magesa, *Church in African Christianity*, 44.

²⁴ Mugambi and Magesa, *Church in African Christianity*, 44.

²⁵ Mugambi and Magesa, *The Church in African Christianity*, 43.

²⁶ Mugambi and Magesa, *The Church in African Christianity*, 43.

²⁷ Anderson, *African Reformation*, 144.

²⁸ Anderson, *African Reformation*, 144.

²⁹ Kalu, *African Christianity*, 320.

Anglican evangelist, first had a vision in 1916. Reportedly, he was knocked down by the “Spirit,” and thereafter began to preach, heal the sick, foresee the future, and assert the need for an African-led church in the face of foreign domination.³⁰ Once again, one sees a desire to move Christianity in a more “African” direction with various results.

To sum up, one could argue that AICs across the continent were attached in some way to the existing missionary churches before pulling out to form their own independent churches. They moved toward creating their own churches and traditions with a view toward having free Africanizing worship and liberating their people from what they saw as missionary churches’ domination. In most cases they claim to have experienced a vision or a dream that compelled them to stand against the colonial oppression and the mission churches.

Brief Comparison and Contrast with Classical Pentecostalism

Although AICs have existed as early as the sixteenth century, Pentecostalism in Africa, as Allan observes, emerged especially in 1970, partly in reaction to the bureaucratization process in established churches.³¹ AICs were founded by charismatic Africans in mainline churches, while Pentecostal churches were influenced by later charismatic movements in Europe and America: “Many arose in the context of interdenominational evangelical campus and school Christian organizations.”³² Kalu elaborates on this development by arguing that “clearly the most high profile of African Pentecostal groupings have deep roots in the students’ Evangelical movements of the 1950s and 1960s—Student Christian Movement, Scripture Union, and Campus

³⁰ Kalu, *African Christianity*, 320.

³¹ Anderson, *African Reformation*, 170.

³² Anderson, *African Reformation*, 170.

Crusade for Christ.”³³ One can therefore conclude that the Pentecostal movements were started and managed by the youths who were more educated and less economically deprived, while the AICs were mostly begun by the elders who rallied their people around them in their quest for more independence from the mission churches. Allan remarks that “at first they were ‘nondenominational’ churches, but in recent years, as they’ve expanded, many of these churches have developed denominational structures, several prominent leaders have been ‘episcopized,’ and some are now interdenominational churches.”³⁴

The differences among Pentecostal churches sometimes are so slim that even Allan does swing from one name to another, since he refers to them as Classical Pentecostal, Charismatic churches, and newer Pentecostal.³⁵ Even some AICs may be seen as Pentecostal churches. Allan therefore argues that the Pentecostal movement is not all that different from the prophet-healing branch in the AICs, since they are similar in terms of their responses to the existential needs of people operating according to the African worldview.³⁶ Both of them talk of a personal encounter with God through the Spirit and claim to be healing the sick and delivering them from the powers of the devil or evil spirits. After a thorough scrutiny of AICs and Pentecostals, Allan is of the view that the Pentecostal churches are the new AICs while the AICs are the Old AICs, slight differences notwithstanding: “It’s for this reason that the newer Pentecostal and Charismatic churches are included in a book about AICs and indeed, they may be regarded as AICs. This is not to say that there are no tensions or differences between the ‘new’ and the ‘old’ AICs.”³⁷

³³ Kalu, *African Christianity*, 399.

³⁴ Anderson, *African Reformation*, 170.

³⁵ Anderson, *African Reformation*, 18–19, 168.

³⁶ Anderson, *African Reformation*, 168.

³⁷ Anderson, *African Reformation*, 168.

Although different AICs have different attitudes toward traditional religious practices, most of them across Africa have a clear stand, which they share with the Pentecostals, against certain traditional practices like witchcraft. Even though the Pentecostals “don’t try as much as AICs to offer solutions for traditional problems, yet they do address the problems faced by AICs, but offer a radical reorientation to a modern and industrial global society.”³⁸ Whereas there is a certain cosmopolitanism or global awareness in Pentecostalism given its international profile, AICs tend to operate in a more communitarian or local sphere of thought and influence. Another distinction between these groups may be seen in their approaches to ritual. For instance, Pentecostals practice healing by laying on hands or praying for the sick. AICs accompany praying for healing with the use of various symbolic objects such as “blessed water, ropes, staffs, papers, ash.”³⁹ Moreover, most AICs display a distinctive uniform from the rest of the members of Pentecostal churches. They usually wear white robes with sashes and in some cases military-like khaki clothing.

Concerning traditional practices, Kalu observes that “the Pentecostals demonize the AICs as being in covenant with spiritual forces in African indigenous religion.”⁴⁰ Pentecostals oppose several AIC practices that they perceive as having some traits of African traditional religions, and demonic-oriented practices from which they feel AIC attendees should be delivered. Since Pentecostals view the Christian life as a power encounter and a spiritual battle, they caution their members to “be wary and test the spirits.”⁴¹ It can be said that Pentecostal Christianity emphasizes the experience of the Holy Spirit as the power which helps the believer to overcome

³⁸ Anderson, *African Reformation*, 171.

³⁹ Anderson, *African Reformation*, 17.

⁴⁰ Wilhelmina J. Kalu, Nimi Wariboko, and Toyin Falola, eds., *African Pentecostalism: Global Discourses, Migrations, Exchanges and Connections* (Eritrea: Africa World Press, 2010), 41.

⁴¹ Kalu, Wariboko, and Falola, *African Pentecostalism*, 41.

evil forces and indicates their new birth or born-again status. The born-again person is expected to exercise strict morality, which includes avoiding adultery, drinking alcohol, and smoking cigarettes, among other things. They insist on testimonies whereby people must say the point at which they started experiencing the new birth and confess sins from which they have been saved. In their gatherings, worshippers who want to be saved “are urged to step forward at the Altar Call in order to receive the infilling of the Holy Spirit, which is stressed as the single most important way to become cleansed of worldly, defiling forces.”⁴² Pentecostals believe that when somebody has the Holy Spirit, evil forces cannot overcome them.

Unlike most AICs which use traditional instruments like drums and shakers, Pentecostals use electronic musical instruments with which they seek to attract large number of hearers as they preach indoors and outdoors. As we noted earlier, AICs depend mostly on non-published literature and have no Bible schools for training their church leaders, while Pentecostals have increasing amounts of published literature (especially popular) and Bible training centers. As Allan observes, Pentecostals

make use of schoolrooms, cinemas, community halls, and even hotel conference rooms for their revival meetings. Church leaders sometimes travel the continent and inter-continently, and some produce glossy booklets and broadcast radio and television programs. They are often linked to wider international networks of independent Charismatic preachers, some of which (by no means all) are dominated by North Americans⁴³

Furthermore, Kalu adds that Pentecostals appeal to the urban and the middle-class quest for the resources of modernity, which serve as a coping mechanism for urban dwellers confronted with the harsh realities of unemployment.⁴⁴ This implies that many who are jobless, homeless,

⁴² Kalu, *African Christianity*, 392.

⁴³ Anderson, *African Reformation*, 171.

⁴⁴ Kalu, Wariboko, and Falola, *African Pentecostalism*, 44.

and sick find a loving family in Pentecostal churches and hence become socially secure. Quoting Asamoah-Gyadu, Allan states that “in AICs the prophets are the custodians of powers to overcome the ills of life and members are the clients while in the Pentecostals, each believer is empowered through the baptism of the Holy Spirit to overcome the ills of life.”⁴⁵ African Pentecostals propagate prosperity gospel and this characteristic can be traced to “American ‘health and wealth’ movements,”⁴⁶ although they tend to contextualize their gospel to suit the diversified needs of African people.

Pentecostals have not remained static, just as any other religious movement. They have undergone some developments, which include the quest for a pure Christian life among its adherents and increased utilization of modern mass media communication in propagating their gospel. In addition, they have launched large campaigns for open air preaching, and the construction of megachurch buildings, which attract many hearers. Over time, they have also produced massive number of authors in the move toward self-theologizing so as to substantiate their doctrines.

Kalu locates Pentecostal growth in three phases. Phase one began in the 1970s as a move to rid the church of African traditional religion, and is characterized by “the puritanical temper and evangelical thrust.”⁴⁷ The next phase came about in the “1980s and it involved contact with American evangelists’ prosperity gospel and intensive use of the media.”⁴⁸ The third phase entered in the 1990s, and Kalu describes it as a period in which “there was a reversal to holiness

⁴⁵ Anderson, *African Reformation*, 171–72.

⁴⁶ Anderson, *African Reformation*, 185.

⁴⁷ Kalu, Wariboko, and Falola, *African Pentecostalism*, 52.

⁴⁸ Kalu, Wariboko, and Falola, *African Pentecostalism*, 52.

ethics, and the prophetic/apostolic theological emphasis.”⁴⁹ It is from this time forward that the indigenous pastors began to write their theological literature, but also “to build large ministries and assert their independence.”⁵⁰

Summary

This chapter has explored AICs’ origins, two major categories of AICs, their main characteristics, and their distinction from Pentecostals. The two categories of AICs are colonial and post-colonial. The colonial type highlights the role of church leaders as liberators from colonial masters, while the post-colonial type has a more direct interest in Africanizing Christianity. The general characteristics of AICs include having a self-appointed prophet-leader who claims to have an immediate call, operating without written theology but mostly depending on dreams and visions, focusing on mostly bodily healing and deliverance from the power of the devil, and having ritualistic prayers, ecstasy, and speaking in unintelligible languages in their services. AICs are found in most African countries. Their founders are often former mainline church elders who got discontented with the mainline worship style or administration methods. In these AICs, they select some appealing aspects from the mainline churches and combine them with elements from African traditional religion, thereby exhibiting some syncretistic tendencies. Although AICs are similar to Pentecostal churches in their stress on exorcism and the Holy Spirit’s immediate operation outside the Word, Pentecostals still see AIC members as not being in league with the African traditional spirits and thus as not being born-again. Otherwise, the differences in their worship style are arguably so slim that sometimes Pentecostals are seen as New AICs and AICs as old AICs.

⁴⁹ Kalu, Wariboko, and Falola, *African Pentecostalism*, 52.

⁵⁰ Kalu, Wariboko, and Falola, *African Pentecostalism*, 52.

CHAPTER THREE

HEALING AND HEALERS IN AFRICAN INDEPENDENT CHURCHES (AICS)

The Concept of Healing in Africa

In African traditional societies, health involves the bodily wellbeing of an individual, his being in good relationship with the neighbors or community, and his harmonious living with the rest of creation and God. To be healthy, as Appiah-Kubi puts it, should not be only as “the absence of bodily ailment but as symptomatic of a correct relationship between people and their environment, which includes their fellow beings; the natural as well as the supernatural world.”¹ To illustrate this, in African society, a barren woman who does not feel sick but is unable to give birth is often perceived not to be in good health. This is because barrenness may be seen as a curse from God. As Mbiti puts it, “in many societies, it is believed that God punishes individuals through illness, misfortune, barrenness or death.”² Her barrenness does not only affect her but also her relationship with her husband, and subsequently the whole community, which may be seeing itself as harboring a person being punished by God. This organic view of life resonates with Bongmba’s assertion: “An individual’s health is tied to the health of the family, its health to that of the village and the villages to the quality of its waters and land.”³

Sick persons could also be deemed not merely as the sole causes of the disease which they suffer from, but as the victims of misfortune wrought on them by community members or relatives. For this reason, it is incumbent upon the community leader to diagnose the actual cause of sicknesses affecting its members. Appiah-Kubi corroborates this by noting that “the victim

¹ Appiah-Kubi, “Healing Ministry,” 232.

² Mbiti, *Concepts of God*, 77.

³ Elias Kifon Bongmba, *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to African Religions* (West Sussex: Blackwell Publishing Limited, 2012), 437.

himself may not be the offender but may suffer from the sin or offence of a relative.”⁴

In African traditional society, illnesses and misfortunes usually take a religious perspective and it is thought that they are caused by disjointed relationships among God, humans, and the community. The cause of illness, as observed by Kalu, can be

a contravention of moral code. For instance, the earth deity supervises the moral order of the land. Matters such as stealing, adultery, other forms of wrong doings and breakdown in social relations are abomination to her. Failure to propitiate is visited by afflictions which takes different forms such as illness or misfortunes. The manifestation may be individual or communal . . . disease, could therefore, be caused by social and natural cause.⁵

Illness is therefore seen by African traditional society as “an imbalance in the relationship between social, natural, and supernatural forces.”⁶ When illness attacks someone, the victims usually ask why it affects them and not another person. As Jules-Rosette puts it, “illness entails a personalization of misfortune.”⁷ When Africans pursue the probable source of the misfortune, like in the case of a car accident affecting an individual in the company of other unaffected passengers, they readily conclude that there is a “personalization of misfortune.” However, they also easily think that such illness or misfortune could have been initiated by “some witch who owes the victim a personal grudge, or the action of some aggrieved ancestor who has chosen this way to express his displeasure to his descendants.”⁸ This view implies that behind any illness, there is always someone or a spirit causing it. Ferdinando corroborates this approach to healing:

Traditional approaches are concerned with the pursuit of the meaning of an illness or an accident, and they locate it in primarily personal terms. Accordingly, they do not

⁴ Kofi Appiah—Kubi, “Healing Ministry,” 231.

⁵ Kalu, Wariboko, and Falola, *African Pentecostalism*, 70.

⁶ Bennetta Jules-Rosette. “Faith Healers and Folk Healers: The Symbolism and Practice of Indigenous Therapy in Urban Africa.” *Religion* 11, no. 2 (April 1981): 128, <http://search.ebscohost.com.csl.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lsdar&AN=ATLA0000792822&site=ehost-live.128>

⁷ Bennetta, “Faith Healers and Folk Healers,” 130.

⁸ Bennetta, “Faith Healers and Folk Healers,” 130.

deny the fact that snake venom and lightning kill, or that germs and microbes make people sick. Rather, in the words of one informant, 'it may be quite true that typhus is carried by lice, but who sent the infected louse? Why did it bite one man and not another?' In contrast, secular western approaches focus exclusively on the empirical factors responsible for the suffering, and do not pursue the question, 'why?', at all. Not unreasonably African peoples are not satisfied with this, which would leave them, as it leaves westerners, in a meaningless and inexplicable cosmos.⁹

Religion as the Center in African Traditional Society's Diagnosis

Mbiti gives an accurate depiction of the approach to illness in African traditional society.

Africans "use religion to find out the mystical cause of the disease, to find out who has been responsible for it or has sent it to the sick person."¹⁰ Since illness is thought to be caused by an impersonal being, people are driven to invoke a personal God, whom they believed is omnipotent, the giver and sustainer of life. Any means leading to the restoration of health is seen to be in alignment to the will of God. Whatever interferes with good health is assumed by Africans to be against both community and God himself. Vahakangas and Kyomo confirm that the things which interfere with life "are against the Supreme Being whose purpose is to see that life is abundant to the living and he is the Conqueror of the powers in human life."¹¹

Having found the probable cause of sickness, Africans then seek a cure from religious leaders who could offer help to the sick. Religious leaders are the mediating figures through whom Africans have encountered the healing hand of God. Whatever help they get from these leaders, they count as coming from God himself. These leaders include "medicine men, diviners,

⁹ Keith Ferdinando, "Towards a Biblical and Pastoral Approach to Illness in African Context with Particular Reference to HIV/AIDS," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 40, no. 2 (April 2016): 112, <http://search.ebscohost.com.csl.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lsdar&AN=ATLAn3925105&site=ehost-live>.

¹⁰ Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 139.

¹¹ Vahakangas and Kyomo, *Charismatic Renewal in Africa*, 148.

mediums, priests, ritual elders, rainmakers, seers and rulers.”¹² In the next section, we describe some of these religious leaders’ functions in relation to healing.

Religious Leaders in African Traditional Society

Medicine Man

In the event of sickness, the sufferer would go to the medicine man for aid. The medicine men “carry out the work of healing the sick and putting things right where they go wrong.”¹³ He is not a trained doctor in a modern sense, but uses “herbs, religious rituals and observances of certain prohibitions or directions. The medicine man takes preventive measures, in addition to assure the sufferer that the trouble may not come again.”¹⁴ If parents or grandparents were medicine men, then it is possible that one of their descendants could take over the work of healing from them upon their death. In some situations, people could get a call to serve in this capacity even if their lineage did not have any medicine man in it. They could receive this call “through a dream or a constant visit from a spirit.”¹⁵ Even without formal training, the medicine man to be becomes an apprentice of the existing one so that he can learn “how to diagnose diseases and people’s troubles of every sort, how to handle the patient, how and what to prescribe as the cure, and in general how to perform one’s duty as a medicine man.”¹⁶ The communal importance of the medicine man in providing diagnosis of sickness and assurance of health to the afflicted is buttressed and more or less institutionalized by a system of calling and apprenticeship that passes on the tradition to future generations.

¹² Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 153.

¹³ Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 153.

¹⁴ Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 155.

¹⁵ Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 155.

¹⁶ Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 155.

Diviners

In traditional African society, it is thought that diseases are evil things which are not brought about by bacteria, fungi, viruses, or other natural causes, but caused by evil people who could manipulate the spirits in order to affect innocent persons with diseases. Mbiti explains that, in this context, the diviner's role is to tell "who may have worked evil magic, sorcery or witchcraft against the sick or the barren, find out which spirit may be troubling a possessed person, what it wants and what should be done to stop the trouble"¹⁷ Mbiti observes that they use "methods of finding out the unknown by means of pebbles, numbers, water, animal entrails, reading the palm, throwing dice . . . they often have their own language."¹⁸ The diviner's performance of these rites during healing rituals arguably creates among their clients further confidence in their claims.

Mediums

Mediums mostly work together with other religious leaders like medicine men, diviners, or priests and "they can get in touch with the spirits at will."¹⁹ There is an elaborate process which the medium goes through in order to communicate with the spirits and this involves

ritual drumming, dancing, and singing until the person become possessed, when she often falls down without being aware of it. Under this possession she may jump about, beat herself, bang her head, walk on fire and thorns, and do other things which she would not do when in her normal self. It is during such possession that she communicates with the spirit world."²⁰

Mbiti also observes that the communication with the spirit world is unidirectional in that

¹⁷ Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 157.

¹⁸ Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 157.

¹⁹ Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 158.

²⁰ Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 158.

“most of the communication through a medium comes from the spirit world to human beings; people rarely have messages to deliver to the spirit world.”²¹ The mediums would specify the person involved in causing the disease and prescribe the revealed cure to the sick person or ritual for the restoration of his situation. Like medicine men, they either inherit or have a training from the priests, other medicine men, or diviners.

Seers

Seers, as their name suggest, have natural gifts or abilities of seeing things that have been done in secret, which the one going to them for help cannot know, or events that are yet to happen. It is thought that some of them receive these revelations through “dreams and visions, in addition to being able to use their intuition.”²² These abilities are presumably employed in the diagnosis of present or future disease.

Priests

These are people trained to take care of religious places, offer prayers and sacrifices on behalf of people, and receive gifts and offerings on behalf of the divinity. For someone to be a priest, they must have extensive knowledge “in matters of myths, belief, traditions, legends, proverbs, and in the religious practices of their people.”²³ They could volunteer themselves to be priests or be seconded by their own parents, especially when “the parents have the feeling that God (or a divinity) helped them to get the child, or as an expression of gratitude for other blessings they may have received.”²⁴ As part of their training, priests over time can learn various

²¹ Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 158–59.

²² Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 159.

²³ Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 159.

²⁴ Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 161.

prayers, dances, songs, rituals, skills, crafts, and all aspects of their religion. They can intercede on behalf of the sick with prayers and offer their sacrifices to the divinity to obtain their health.

How Healing in African Traditional Society Is Done

Healing in African traditional society involves discovering the cause of the illness, dealing with it, and annihilating it. Healing serves restorative and preventative ends: “For the common people . . . religion is very largely the means of reinforcing life, of proper precautions against powers which might destroy them.”²⁵ Religion and medicine are seen as the same thing. The religious leaders are the ones charged with the role of “putting in order those systems, structures, and feelings which have been disrupted causing imbalances and suffering in the life of individuals and society at large.”²⁶ Again, religion and medicine serve similar ordering and balancing functions in African cosmology.

Every African community has a way of dealing with forces seen as a threat to good health. This includes illnesses, barrenness, curses, witchcraft, and other misfortunes. When someone gets ill, the services of the medicine man, diviner, medium, seers, or priests are sought. Healing is an elaborate procedure whereby the healer identifies the nature and cause of sickness, which eventually informs the type of cure to be prescribed. The healing process is not a one man show, but a co-participation of both the patient and the healer in the process toward restoration. As Ndung’u, borrowing from Leakey, notes, “the patient was expected to participate in the healing process. He/she had to lead the way by confessing to the medicine man his/her sins.”²⁷ The

²⁵ Appiah-Kubi, “Healing Ministry,” 232.

²⁶ Nahashon W. Ndungu, “Persistence of Features of Traditional Healing in the Church in Africa: The Case of the Akurinu Churches in Kenya.” *African Journals Online* 1, no. 2 (2009): 88, <https://www.ajol.info/index.php/tp/article/view/51596>

²⁷ Nahashon, “Persistence of Features,” 91.

ceremony for healing encompasses “confession, atonement, and forgiveness.”²⁸ The healer tells the patient: “Sick man I have come to chase away your illness. I will also chase away the evil spirits which have brought it. Confess the evils you know and those you do not know. Prepare yourself, for you are about to vomit all these evils.”²⁹ The place where the illness is inhabiting the patient’s body is often believed to be the stomach. Kenyatta says that “at the end of every sentence the sick man licks the guard and spits in the water. In doing this he pretends that he is vomiting by saying: ‘I vomit the illness and the evil spirits that are in my body.’”³⁰ By the end of the ritual, the healer pronounces the patient free from illness. This assurance has a special psychological effect on the patient, and is what, according to African traditional society, “distinguishes the traditional and the modern medical practices.”³¹ In this way, the traditional medicine men claim to fill the gap left by the modern doctors. Ndung’u observes:

Whereas our modern doctors deal with the physical aspects of a disease, they do not answer such pertinent questions as ‘why’ the attack and ‘how’ to avoid a recurrence. Their advice is that ‘if you fall sick again, consult a doctor.’ In the traditional approach to healing however, the patient not only gets the treatment, but also an explanation as to why he/she fell sick, and an insurance cover in form of [*sic*] protective charms against people with evil eyes, or he/she performs an action which forestalls a recurrence of the problem. It is this assurance that is driving all and sundry to the medicine men in the modern times.³²

Epilepsy and Other Mental Problems’ Treatment by Traditional Rituals

African Traditional Society View on Epilepsy

Epilepsy poses a case in point, even a lens, to understand how sickness and healing is

²⁸ Appiah-Kubi, “Healing Ministry,” 232.

²⁹ Jomo Kenyatta, *Facing Mount Kenya: The Tribal Life of the Gikuyu* (London: Mercury Books Press, 1961), 292.
https://www.sahistory.org.za/sites/default/files/file%20uploads%20/jomo_kenyatta_facing_mount_kenya_the_tribal_lifbook4me.org_.pdf

³⁰ Kenyatta, *Facing Mount Kenya*, 293.

³¹ Ndung’u, “Persistence of Features ,” 91.

³² Ndung’u, “Persistence of Features ,” 91.

approached in an African context. In African traditional society, epilepsy is believed to be non-responsive to modern medicine, but responsive only to the healing ritual done by the traditional religious healers. Kendall-Taylor, who has done research on seizure disorder in Kilifi among the Mijikenda people, gives insight into how the coastal people in Kenya view epilepsy. In Mijikenda culture, illnesses are caused by a system of spirits, which Kendall-Taylor identifies as “natural spirits, malevolent spirits, ancestral spirits, and Islamic spirits.”³³ Epilepsy is believed to be caused “when one passes the residence of a Natural spirit or if the spirit is attracted to the ‘sweetness’ of the person's blood.”³⁴ Seizure disorder (SD) occurs when the natural spirit attacks a child and stops when it leaves him. Tremors and convulsions occurring during the attack are perceived to be the child’s effort to flee from the spirit and the spirit’s resistance he gets in return.

The natural spirit “is attracted by the smell or taste of certain children’s blood. The spirit's preference for specific types of blood is used to explain why the spirit is attracted to some children and not others, and why some cases of SD are more persistent than others.”³⁵ If the natural spirit (also called *Nyagu* among the Mijikenda tribe in Kenya) continues to visit the child, “the spirit reaches full maturity when the child is between the ages of five to ten, and at this point, the condition transforms from *Nyagu* to epilepsy.”³⁶ The Mijikenda also believe that the epilepsy-causing spirit “may be transmitted from mother to child while breast-feeding. For this

³³Nathaniel Kendall-Taylor, “Treatment Seeking for a Chronic Disorder: How Families in Coastal Kenya Make Epilepsy Treatment Decisions,” *Human Organization* 68, no. 2 (2009): 144, accessed June 19, 2020. www.jstor.org/stable/44148546.

³⁴ Kendall-Taylor, “Treatment Seeking,” 144.

³⁵ Kendall-Taylor, “Treatment Seeking,” 144.

³⁶ Kendall-Taylor, “Treatment Seeking,” 144.

reason, a mother with epilepsy is not to breastfeed her children.”³⁷ Epilepsy presents a concrete challenge when dealing with people’s existential desire to learn the causes of and solutions to their condition in a way that makes sense or is acceptable culturally and communally.

African Traditional Society Ritualistic Healing of Epilepsy

The Mijikenda treatment of epilepsy focuses on communicating with spirits and addressing the needs and desires of these spirits. To appease the spirits, “the healer may offer the spirit an herbal or root concoction.”³⁸ The healer determines the spirit behind the cause of a problem, and this informs how he should deal with the spirit and administer appropriate treatment. Mijikenda healers have two stages of healing which they apply on an epilepsy victim: “Removal and deflection.”³⁹ Removal involves stamping out the spirit completely, while deflection involves ensuring that the removed spirit does not return to the victim. It is believed that the more the natural spirit dwells in a person, the more it develops high affinity for that person’s blood.⁴⁰ The treatment after the prolonged stay of the natural spirit therefore becomes very difficult and close to impossible. As Kendall-Taylor describes it, “an immature Natural Spirit is weak, can be easily pulled from the child, and be prevented from re-entering. As the spirit matures, treatment becomes more difficult. For this reason, in the traditional system, early treatment of this condition is paramount.”⁴¹

In removing the natural spirit (*Nyagu*), healers mainly use two methods: “Driving out the

³⁷ Nathaniel Kendall-Taylor et al., “Comparing Characteristics of Epilepsy Treatment Providers on the Kenyan Coast: Implications for Treatment-seeking and Intervention,” *Rural and Remote Health* 9, no. 4 (2009): Natural Spirits, para. 4, www.rrh.org.au/journal/article/1253.

³⁸ Kendall-Taylor et al., *Natural Spirits*, para. 6.

³⁹ Kendall-Taylor et al., *Natural Spirits*, para. 5.

⁴⁰ Kendall-Taylor et al., *Natural Spirits*, para. 5.

⁴¹ Kendall-Taylor et al., *Natural Spirits*, para. 5.

spirits using herbal baths, root concoctions, or dung that the spirit is known to dislike, and the second one is to entice it out of the person through offerings.”⁴² Again, the method involves removing the natural spirit by means of a smell *Nyagu* does not like. In this process, as Kendall-Taylor describes, the medicine man uses three leaves known in Mijikenda as *Mtasalafu*, *Mrori*, and *Mrashapungu*:

You must bring these leaves and tear them up and mix them in a container [bucket] of water. You may have to go far to find these, but for me they are not far. The child must come and be washed in the water [with the leaves]. It is very important to wash the head of that child. If you are able it is good to get elephant dung and burn this near the child to smoke him [the child]. The spirit does not like these two things and will go from the child.⁴³

A similar procedure is the removal of the spirit by waving a cloth or basket in front of an epileptic person in order to ward off the spirit causing epilepsy. Kendall-Taylor records this process:

First, I go to select those herbs. I put them in a container and fill it with water. When it has been mixed very well, I grab the child and dip his head into the water. Then I put the child on the ground and wave a basket over him 7 times. I do this thing in three different places where I know the *Nyagu* likes to stay [the doorway, the rubbish area, and under a tree]. This is an easy treatment and is not long.⁴⁴

The second method applied to heal a natural spirit is to entice it out of the person through offerings. The offerings may include “incense, herbs, rose water, honey, and animal blood.”⁴⁵ In this process, the healer narrates how he uses both a red chicken and a black chicken:

I kill the black chicken and put its blood on the ground. This attracts the *Nyagu*, which leaves the person to drink the blood. Then I kill the red chicken and put its blood on the ground also. This pulls the *Marahani* spirit [a very powerful Muslim

⁴² Kendall-Taylor et al., *Natural Spirits* para. 6–10.

⁴³ Kendall-Taylor et al., *Natural Spirits*, para. 7.

⁴⁴ Kendall-Taylor et al., *Natural Spirits* para. 9.

⁴⁵ Kendall-Taylor et al., *Natural Spirits*, para, 12.

spirit... I then tell the *Marahani* to kill the *Nyagu* who is weak from the words of the Koran. If the *Marahani* is able to defeat the *Nyagu*, the epilepsy will be cured.⁴⁶

When the natural spirit has been removed, the healers use a technique to deflect a future re-entry of the natural spirit: “The two most common practices were to periodically repeat the bathing technique mentioned above and to construct an amulet.”⁴⁷ The amulet could be a “pouch which the individual wears on a string around their neck, arm, or leg and it contained materials which the spirit dislikes including herbs, roots, or parts of particular animals like the claws of a bird.”⁴⁸ With this, especially the claws, *Nyagu* will know that it will be defeated and “he would not make an attempt to come to a child who wears these things.”⁴⁹

Equally dreaded is the belief that epilepsy could be transferred between family members “if specific rituals are not performed following the death of a member with epilepsy.”⁵⁰ When an epileptic person dies, the family is to employ a special burial rite, in which “the family must have a traditional healer present to prepare a special herbal mixture that each family member must wash themselves with. The concoction is believed to repel the spirit of the deceased.”⁵¹ It is feared that if these rituals are not performed properly, “the spirit of the dead relative may return and the next child born may have the condition.”⁵² As we shall see in the subsequent section, the belief that illnesses are caused by the demons or evil spirits, and the ritualistic procedures of their removal and deflection so require, is going to shape the perspective which the AICs take while handling Africans’ illnesses and misfortunes such as epilepsy.

⁴⁶ Kendall-Taylor et al., *Natural Spirits*, para, 13.

⁴⁷ Kendall-Taylor et al., *Natural Spirits*, para, 14.

⁴⁸ Kendall-Taylor et at, *Natural Spirits*, para, 15.

⁴⁹ Kendall-Taylor et al, *Natural Spirits*, para, 15.

⁵⁰ Kendall-Taylor et al, *Ancestral Spirits*, para. 4.

⁵¹ Kendall-Taylor et al, *Ancestral Spirits*, para. 4.

⁵² Kendall-Taylor et al, *Ancestral Spirits*, para. 4.

Concept and Importance of Healing in AICs

Because Africans thought the mission churches did not answer adequately what caused their illnesses so as to stop future recurrences, and why a particular victim was to suffer such illnesses instead of others, they sought churches where their concerns could be holistically addressed in the African way. Ndung'u observes: "It is therefore not accidental that these AICs are drawing followers either as part-time or full-time members from the main line [*sic*] churches, which have not addressed these issues adequately."⁵³ AICs, in responding to Africans' perceived needs, see healing as what happens when the biblical message goes "a long way towards meeting the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of people, and it offered solutions to life's problems and ways to cope in a seemingly threatening and hostile world."⁵⁴ The motive behind AIC's focus on healing is the thought that God always wants people to exhibit life in abundance by being physically, emotionally, and spiritually healthy.

Jesus came that we might have life, and have it in abundance (John 10:10). The question, as Appiah frames it, is "where is this abundant life in the midst of poverty, misery, sickness, and suffering? How can the Church, through the uniting and freeing process of Christ, help to create a healthy population in a healthy society?"⁵⁵ Such theodical questions arose from the assumption that the church's presence should result in complete eradication of poverty, misfortunes, illnesses, and all anti-life forces.

By failing to address the eradication of sickness, mainline churches were seen by AICs as lacking authenticity. In response, the AICs wanted to offer a place where the NT signs and miracles could be made real in the lives of their adherents. This conviction gave the AICs the

⁵³ Ndung'u, "Persistence of Features of Traditional Healing in the Church in Africa," 95.

⁵⁴ Anderson, *African Reformation*, 252.

⁵⁵ Appiah-Kubi, "Church's Healing Ministry in Africa," 230.

impetus for thinking that their new-found churches should take to heart their identity as the embodiment of Christ and his healing ministry on earth, and thus heed the command of the Master: “Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. You received without paying; give without pay” (Matt. 10:8).⁵⁶ Health belongs to God and illnesses belong to Satan, so that “if there is anything that interferes with our health or relationships, then it must be from the devil.”⁵⁷

Theology of Healing and Healers in AICs

View of Healing

The presence of physical illnesses in a person is an indication that he is also spirituality unhealthy, “for one cannot be spiritually healthy when one is sick.”⁵⁸ If there is anything that works against one’s wholeness and wellness, it must be the work of the devil. “When relationships are strained, God in Jesus Christ comes to restore and heal the broken relationships in order that the body may remain whole.”⁵⁹ This enables the healed person to fully participate in society without any hindrances. Most of the AICs deny the benefit of western medicine. Some of their adherents “believe that the power of all modern medicine and sometimes traditional African medicine is good, but that this is nothing without faith; and God, the all-knowing and all-seeing, gives meaning and fulfilment to the work of humanity”⁶⁰ Thus “hospitals alone cannot deal with witchcraft and evil forces.”⁶¹ Healing is equated with salvation in that when somebody is saved,

⁵⁶ Unless otherwise noted, scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

⁵⁷ Anderson, *African Reformation*, 45–46.

⁵⁸ Mugambi and Magesa, *The Church in African Christianity*, 45.

⁵⁹ Mugambi and Magesa, *The Church in African Christianity*, 47.

⁶⁰ Appiah-Kubi, “The Church’s Healing Ministry,” 236.

⁶¹ Appiah-Kubi, “The Church’s Healing Ministry,” 236.

such salvation must include being free from illness and evil spirits. As Allan puts it: “Many AICs see ‘salvation’ not exclusively in terms of salvation from sinful acts and from eternal condemnation in the life hereafter (the salvation of soul), but also in terms of salvation from sickness (healing), from evil spirits (exorcism), and from other forms of misfortune.”⁶²

Deliverance from the Power of the Demons

Deliverance from the power of demons, whose existence and plot to destroy the believers is acknowledged by AICs, is at the center of their belief. They believe that sins like drunkenness, adultery, and stealing are not effects of original sin, but are caused when someone is possessed by the demons and driven to doing what they do not want. They also believe that illnesses, though caused by other agents, have the archenemy Satan behind them. As Vakahangas puts it, “a person can be negatively influenced by Satan, demons or evil spirits to acquire bad habits, sicknesses, bad dreams suffering and failure in life.”⁶³ During healing services, AIC healers always cite Jesus’ power over evil spirits who are seen as the main cause of sickness. Healers see themselves as people vested with the power to cast out demons in the name of Jesus, who in his ministry also cast them out. They see their work as being in continuity with Jesus’ ministry. The healer exhorts the sick to have faith as the means through which their healing is possible.

The AICs believe in the Bible as God’s word and “a source for power” for the believer.⁶⁴ They lean on a literal interpretation of the Bible, taking it as prescriptive rule of life for their adherents. A case in point is their emulation of Moses, who takes off his shoes when he comes in the presence of God (Exodus 3:5). So some adherents also take off their shoes when entering

⁶² Anderson, *African Reformation*, 233.

⁶³ Vakahangas and Kyomo, *Charismatic Renewal in Africa*, 16.

⁶⁴ Vakahangas and Kyomo, *Charismatic Renewal in Africa*, 14.

the churches. As we noted earlier in the thesis, this biblical literalism is coupled with a strong sense that the experiences of the biblical worldview are immediately accessible today. The same prescriptive principle applies to healing narratives in the Bible, which must define the church's identity today as God's instrument of deliverance from sickness caused by demonic spirits. The church is thus fundamentally defined, and its authenticity confirmed, by its healing activity.

Christology and Pneumatology

AICs view Jesus primarily as a victor over illnesses. As Healer, Jesus is “the powerful conqueror over sicknesses and afflictions for which potent answers are always sought.”⁶⁵ Thus they associate the saving identity of Jesus mainly with his triumph over diseases. By being close to Jesus, adherents do not expect to have any illnesses in this life. For Jesus has come to bring life in full, and this must necessarily include physical and mental wellbeing.

The Holy Spirit is the one to whom all credit is given for almost everything that takes place in the church.⁶⁶ AICs see to it that people do not think they manipulate the Spirit. Instead, the prophets are seized by the Spirit and display little actions or utterances of their own. The Spirit causes people to receive the power to prophesy, speak in tongues, heal, exorcise demons, have visions and dreams, and live holy lives. The Spirit directs the life and the worship of the church. AICs have a high esteem for the gift of healing as the manifestation that best demonstrates a person's true spiritual fellowship with God. As Allan points out, “Christ endows people with various gifts of grace especially the gift of healing. This gift makes it possible for a person to have a dynamic relationship with God.”⁶⁷ Acts of healing, therefore, serve as a primary indicator

⁶⁵ Anderson, *African Reformation*, 233.

⁶⁶ Anderson, *African Reformation*, 224.

⁶⁷ Anderson, *African Reformation*, 232.

of Christ's and the Spirit's presence and activity in AICs.

Healing Service in Legio Maria Church: A Case Study

Background

Legio Maria is the largest AIC to have broken away from the Roman Catholic Church: "It is an offshoot of the Legion of Mary, a Catholic lay organization from Ireland."⁶⁸ It was started in 1936 by a Catholic catechist named Simeon Ondeto. Scott and James, quoting Barret, note that the Legio Maria draws its members from Roman Catholics, Protestants, and Pagans, and that "Simeon Ondeto is recognized as the spiritual head, Baba Mtakatifu," which means "holy father."⁶⁹ Ondeto's followers see him as

the African Messiah who has come to help his people, and to deliver them from oppression, suffering, and the white man's domination.... There are three major figures in this cult: Simeon Ondeto (Silvius Maussius Ondeto— popularly called 'Savior Messiah Holy Father'); Mama Regina Owitch, and Gaudencia Aoko. Their headquarters are situated in the South Nyanza Province of Kenya, at a place they call Got Kwer ('The Mount of Atonement').⁷⁰

Despite their withdrawal from Roman Catholicism, they still maintain their liturgical tradition and order, including things such as the use of Latin in the mass, liturgical colors, holy water, burning of incense, and candles. Membership estimates range from twenty thousand in 1964 to two million in the 1990s.⁷¹

Their Service

A video by Levis Musumba, Ktn (Kenya Television Network) News producer, in St.

⁶⁸ Scott A. Moreau, James Henry Owino Kombo, and Francis Juma Ogeke, "An Introduction to the Legio Maria," *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology* 10, no. 1 (1991): 10, https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/ajet/10-1_010.pdf

⁶⁹ Moreau, Kombo, and Ogeke, "Introduction to the Legio Maria," 10.

⁷⁰ Scott, Kombo, and Ogeke, "An Introduction to the Legio Maria," 10.

⁷¹ Kustenbauder, "Believing in the Black Messiah," 12.

Helena Legio Maria Church, Western Kenya, gives a picture of how their service looks like on the ground. Before the beginning of the service, the prophet/healer seeks the grace and intervention of the image or portrait of Ondeto whom adherents see as their messiah, and of the mother of Ondeto whom they hold to be the mother of the messiah. There is a role swap, whereby Jesus the Messiah is replaced by Ondeto and the mother of Ondeto takes the place of Mary the Mother of Jesus. The service begins with a procession where adherents implore Mary, the mother of the Messiah, to be gracious to them. Upon entering the church, they all kneel on the floor with women on the left-hand side of the house and men on the right-hand side, so that men and women do not mix together. They burn incense at the altar and place the sacramental elements at the center of the altar table, covering them with the pall. Women in their menstrual period are not allowed to enter the church because they are ritually unclean according to the levitical laws—an example of a literalistic reading of the Bible. The Legio Maria service is not over until the communicants are served with holy communion. Unwedded couples, men with two wives, and divorcees are not allowed to partake in holy communion. They do not have public confession and absolution, for they believe that confession is individually addressed to God and not for the members of the church to practice collectively. Every Legion Maria worshiper must have an altar in their houses where they pray and that reminds them of the presence of the Lord.

Their Healing Session and Exorcism

The healing session takes place after holy communion outside the church building, around a big erected wooden cross. Those who have needs converge daily at the sanctuary to seek the intervention of Holy Mary in their different afflictions. While seeking intervention, everyone prays the rosary. The prophet/leaders put on special clothes for healing. The healing process is carried out by ordained and anointed men called prophets. It is believed that they are the

mediators of God and no one is allowed to contradict their prophecies. Meanwhile the worshippers keep on moving around the cross while they wait for the prophets to pray for healing power. They believe that Jesus Christ the crucified is always there on the cross, but when invoked descends through the mediator to heal the people in need. They start the healing process by sprinkling water on the sick, which they believe has Christ's power for healing.

The healers/prophets ecstatically tell the sick what is troubling them, and the sick in the same manner confirm these unveilings. They use candles of different colors dedicated to different saints—for example, purple is dedicated to St. Joseph; red to St. Michael, also known as Patron of soldiers; green, St. Catherine; and blue, St. Mary. The blue candle is used when they want to pray for peace and restoration. When somebody is sick or possessed, they use red candles and vestments in their prayers to exorcise the demons. This is mostly done by St. Michael, who also foretells the future for them. They wear red vestments and cloths, which are a symbol of the Spirit. They diagnose afflictions/problems. One of the prophets scribbles his thoughts on a paper and gives it to the healer to read and interpret. Healers flash the red cloths around the kneeling sick worshippers in order to ward off the evil spirit, while the healer touches the parts of the body mentioned by the sick to be affected. This ritual seems to instill confidence in the sick that they will get better. Healers then proceed to wipe off the evil spirits with a towel, after which they pray for the Holy Spirit to come. Under the influence of the evil spirit, the sick convulses, quake, shriek, twitch, and speak in tongues. This speaking is perceived to be coming from the demons inside him, and helps the healer know whether the demons have left him or not. If the sick says “no,” it could mean that the devil has refused to come out and this leads to further prayer with rosaries until the spirit announces his departure through the sick person.

The exorcism takes over one hour as the healers continue to shake the rosary over the sick

person's body. When the sick who are possessed finally come to their senses, they are pronounced fully delivered from slavery under the power of darkness. Yet they themselves often cannot remember the battle they were in few hours ago. After the exorcism, all church members are healed by drinking holy water. This is boiled water, blessed by the prophet, which is believed to have powers to heal simple diseases like stomachaches. In keeping with a literalistic reading of the Bible, they base this practice on John 4:14, which reads, "but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." After drinking the holy water, people make the sign of the cross. Children are cleansed by dipping the rosary in holy water, which is a sign of their protection from evil spirits. Those seeking healing are not necessarily members of Legion Maria Church, but also come from outside their denomination. Their healers even claim to heal madness.⁷²

Healing at the Specific "Sacred" Places Outside the Church

Frank Otieno, a Ktn News reporter, interviewed an unnamed Legio Maria Church "prophetess" at a place known as *Kit Mikai*, which the Legio Maria claim to be sacred. The ritual process begins with the prophetess, who accompanies the healer-prophet, praying the rosary at the entrance of the cave to intervene for the sick. The church's prophetess claims that she goes to the cave under the command of God, who tells her to pray on behalf of the needy. She receives this message through dreams and visions. Sick people sit and wait there while the healer goes deep inside the cave to seek wisdom and power with which to minister to them. Inside the cave,

⁷² Musumba Levis, "The Legio Maria church |Culture Quest," *KTN News*, Oct 7, 2018, YouTube Video, 00:27:57, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CG_KNQZytuc.

the healer-prophet offers prayers before beginning the service to the sick. On each side of the cave, there are burning candles and remains of already burned candles, which are evidence of daily prayers taking place inside. In the center of the cave, there is a big stone which acts as an altar for the worshippers. On top of this altar, there is a Bible with a religious hat placed on it, and pictures of the founding prophet and prophetess.

When the prophet comes back wearing a green tunic, he covers the sick with a green and red cloth. As he prays, he waves a long wooden cross over the sick and commands the demons inside them to quit. As he does this, the prophet brushes them with a cow's switch to cleanse them from the evil spirit. There is evidence of removal of shoes before entering the sanctuary, a practice that could have been borrowed from Exodus 3:5. The cave is also used for individual meditation on the Bible. Interestingly, the same cave was used as a sacrificial place for the gods by African traditional religions before the arrival of Christianity.

Legio Maria adherents testify that their healing services have been an oasis of help to many demon-possessed persons. Upon visiting their services, whether as an insider or outsider from other denominations, those seeking healing attest they have met the place where their burdens are relieved. Worship in AICs is valuable to many in African society because illnesses are a commonplace phenomenon, and people long to find a spiritual hospital within the church where they can get rid of their sicknesses.⁷³

Critiques of AIC Theology in Africa and Abroad

One-Sided View of Healing

The AICs argue that the mission church is one-sided in their treatment of illness by dealing

⁷³ Otieno Frank, "Legio Maria rituals." *KTN News*, May 2, 2011, YouTube Video, 00:05:00 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EfvnkRtxM2M>.

only with the physical body without concerning themselves with the spiritual or psychological aspects of the patient's health. Appiah points out that

the mission hospitals have tended until now to treat the patient as a physical object: a case, a number and a candidate. One of the chief complaints by most African patients in these modern church hospitals is that the doctors speak *about* them but not *to* them, look at their charts and take their temperature but do not touch them as persons.⁷⁴

Although some mission hospitals have counseling departments, they fail to explain the supernatural or demonic cause of the diseases. This sounds inadequate to the Africans because the disease itself may not be as dreadful as its cause, which if not addressed, may still cause harm. Attributing all calamities to evil forces, AICs resort to religion to help free the victims from demonic oppression. AICs see the forgiveness of sins as mere theoretical salvation, while the healing of the body is viewed as real salvation in the lives of Christians. Thus Allan asserts that "they embrace not only the theoretical salvation of the soul, but also the practical here and now expression of healing from sickness and deliverance from all types of evil forces and misfortune."⁷⁵

The statement, "one cannot be spiritually healthy when one is sick,"⁷⁶ summarizes the AICs' belief that someone cannot claim to be saved when they are physically ill. This belief makes ill persons doubtful about their faith. The sick undergoes spiritual anguish and even end up in despair if they are ill and fail to receive physical wellbeing as proof of God's acceptance. Salvation and healing become synonyms to the extent that AICs can claim: "Our churches are not only churches, they are hospitals."⁷⁷ Most AICs' adherents still believe in going to hospitals when they are sick, but they still hold that western medicine "is nothing without faith; and God,

⁷⁴ Appiah-Kubi, "The Church's Healing Ministry in Africa," 238.

⁷⁵ Anderson, *African Reformation*, 238.

⁷⁶ Mugambi and Magesa, *The Church in African Christianity*, 45.

⁷⁷ Appiah-Kubi, "Healing Ministry," 238.

the all-knowing and all-seeing, gives meaning and fulfilment to the work of humanity.”⁷⁸

Existence of the Devil/Demons

The belief in the presence of demons/evil spirits is common in AICs. They view demons as forces opposing life, which are out to attack, afflict, persecute, and destroy human beings. The chief agents of the demons are those who deal in witchcraft, who channel and manipulate the demonic powers to carry out their ills. Yet the presence of these demons was often denied by western missionary churches. Samoah-Gyadu corroborates the claim that “in most cases the mission denominations, however, dismissed witchcraft as a psychological delusion and a figment of the unscientific indigenous world view.”⁷⁹ In African traditional society, people could seek protection and cure from such evil powers from diviners, healers, and the medicine men. Significantly, the western mission’s denial of the demonic ended up creating a gap which the AIC prophet-healers stepped in to fill.

Exorcism of the devil tends to take on the dimension of “spiritual wrestling,” wherein “the healer would often cite Jesus’s power over demons and over Satan who is paraded as the author of sickness.”⁸⁰ By mere command, these healers see themselves as enacting the NT era’s exorcisms, thus extending Jesus’ ministry to the devil-afflicted persons. Mugambi and Magesa explain further: “They understand their mission as that of controlling all evil and spiritual forces that threaten to interfere in God’s ordered world.”⁸¹ The AICs’ exorcist sees himself as the doer

⁷⁸ Appiah-Kubi, “Healing Ministry,” 236.

⁷⁹ J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, “Witchcraft Accusations in Christianity and Africa,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 39, no. 1 (January 2015): 24, <http://search.ebscohost.com.csl.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lsdar&AN=ATLAn3769931&site=ehost-live>.

⁸⁰ Mugambi and Magesa, *The Church in African Christianity*, 46.

⁸¹ Mugambi and Magesa, *The Church in African Christianity*, 46.

of the miraculous deeds, suggesting that power comes from (or at least, through) him, but the sick person is also demanded to have faith in order for the healing process to end successfully. This begs the question of where the sick person's faith comes from, and it appears that to them such faith is generated at least in part by the sick deep inside themselves.

Revelation Beyond the Word

According to Appiah-Kubi, AICs are convinced that “Jesus came that we might have life, and have it more abundantly,”⁸² and yet they wrestle with the mind-boggling question, “where is this abundant life in the midst of poverty, misery, sickness and suffering?”⁸³ For this reason, AIC prophet healers do not only seek to cure the illness but also answer the question “why?” To them, if God is good and all-powerful, and wills that they live a full healthy life on earth, then they should not expect misfortunes and troubles crossing their way. The way healers discover the course of the illnesses or problems affecting believers is through dreams and visions. Allan supports the practice by stating that “the wider spread use of dreams and vision is also a biblical practice.”⁸⁴ Such dreams and visions allow the healer to tell patients what they are suffering from before they say it.

This diagnostic prophecy “is sufficient to guarantee the alleviation, and the supplicant is satisfied.”⁸⁵ Through their diagnoses, healers attract outsiders who think they will take care of their concerns and bring relief and boost the confidence of insiders who are convinced they are worshipping in a true Christian miracle-working church.

⁸² Appiah-Kubi, “Healing Ministry,” 236.

⁸³ Appiah-Kubi, “Healing Ministry,” 236.

⁸⁴ Anderson, *African Reformation*, 248.

⁸⁵ Anderson, *African Reformation*, 237.

Summary

This chapter discusses the concept of healing in Africa, according to which the wellbeing of an individual and sound relationship with his neighbor and environment are the overriding factors in determining health. In the African mindset, the cause of diseases and afflictions remains the puzzling question, and its answer is only found religiously with the aid of the religious leaders who claim their authority comes from God. Religion is also largely seen as the means of restoring people to a healthy life, thereby making religion and medicine synonymous. AICs and African traditional religion share a worldview in which the demonic is the cause of human afflictions. They see in exorcism the antidote to health restoration and give it the central place in their healing services. AICs equate healing to salvation, or at least see healing as the necessary external manifestation of a saved soul.

This chapter also explores how African traditional healing is acting as a fertile ground on which AICs' healing and exorcism practices are hatched. Traditional perspectives on the healing of epilepsy in an African context present difficulties when it comes to the acceptance of its treatment with modern medicine. A brief assessment of AIC's healing in Legio Maria offers a local case study of a syncretistic Africanization of Catholic piety and shows how its ritual functions religiously in a way that appeals to the African person seeking healing. The AICs' approach to healing accommodates a literalistic view of biblical interpretation that makes certain practices prescriptive for their rituals. Seeing Jesus' major role on earth as the chief healer and taking from his command to go and heal the sick, AIC ministries focus on bodily healing and spiritual healing if possible.

CHAPTER FOUR

LUTHERAN HOLISTIC PERSPECTIVE ON HEALING

A human being is a whole person with spiritual, psychological, and physical needs (1Thess. 5:23). The anthropological datum that “we are not souls living in bodies but rather that we are ‘soul-bodies’ or ‘spirit-bodies’ is what is known as the *holistic* perspective of the human being.”¹ Sickness creates a distortion in the body and its functions, which calls for the need to restore it to some normalcy or balance. Within the mind, disease makes one psychologically unstable and can lead to lack of self-esteem and the inability to engage in healthy relationships. As Ludwig points out, “because psychological stability is related to being in control, disease cripples our capacity to make decisions and to build relationships.”² In the spiritual realm, moreover, diseases trigger the theodical question, “why me, Lord?” as the sick person struggles to come to terms with his condition in light of belief in God. The attack may make the sick “cast doubt about the sovereignty of God and his promise of grace.”³ To undo or reverse the disorder which is created by the presence of diseases and afflictions, the healing process must begin. Ludwig unequivocally asserts: “Disease has created a distortion in human nature that can only be corrected if that order is restored.”⁴ This chapter argues for a Lutheran holistic approach to healing that addresses the challenges raised by AICs’ approach to healing in an African context.

¹ Ludwig, *Order Restored*, 30.

² Ludwig, *Order Restored*, 23.

³ Ludwig, *Order Restored*, 23.

⁴ Ludwig, *Order Restored*, 30.

The Medical Approach Toward Healing

An example of material medicine is cited in Isaiah 38:21, where Isaiah advises King Hezekiah to dress his boils with the poultice derived from figs. The objective was to secure the healing of Hezekiah and restore him to physical wellness using medicinal remedies from nature. Although the methods vary, there is in various cultures a concern for the restoration of the body. Likewise, in the hospitals of today, medical systems are aimed at restoring the sick persons to health. But these systems also offer a theory of causation for diseases. Medical science would “provide an explanation for how an illness or disease came to exist. It also supplies a reason why a particular patient fell ill, and it often speaks to the social phenomenon of illness or sickness.”⁵

The causes of disease can be explained in relation to immediate and ultimate causes. Ludwig sheds some light on the causal approach to and understanding of disease as the basis for why the non-western world view is prone to show dissatisfaction with western medicine. The immediate cause of disease, he says, “refers to the immediate, observable reason for the disease. Examples of such causes are pathogens, malignancies, and wounds. Immediate cause explains *how* a person becomes ill.”⁶ He goes on to explain the ultimate causes as referring to “the meaning and the purposes behind the illness. Example of such causes are genetic susceptibility, stress, ‘bad luck,’ magic, spirit beings, or ‘God’s will.’ Ultimate causes explain *why* a person becomes ill.”⁷

Ludwig pursues the matter further by noting that “modern medicine is uncomfortable with ultimate causes and almost always will skirt the question or seek to persuade the patient that the

⁵ Ludwig, *Order Restored*, 46.

⁶ Ludwig, *Order Restored*, 48.

⁷ Ludwig, *Order Restored*, 48.

question cannot be answered.”⁸ This timidity concerning ultimate causation can be a reason why some Africans working with a worldview shaped by African religiosity will not be satiated with western medical treatment. Even if they get healing from the hospital, they will still end up asking, “what did I do to deserve this?” or “who sent this disease to me?” In so doing, they will always feel the need for a religious approach toward their healing to avoid the recurrence of such illness. To use Ludwig’s earlier distinction, the *how* of the disease does not answer the *why*.

Psychological Approach to Healing

In the medical field, Ludwig highlights that “no single medicinal system can possibly offer all the resources to combat the ills that oppress our common humanity.”⁹ God does use different professions and persons to secure healing for the suffering lot, which include “psychologists, psychiatrists, and therapists whose treatment are meant to overcome the ‘impotence of the Self’ we sometime experience.”¹⁰ Ludwig points out that diseases do not only enter “through the biochemical processes of the body,” but also through the processes of the mind.¹¹ He further explicates that “schizophrenia, bi-polar disorders, and depression are just as real as cancer and pneumonia and can at times be more painful.”¹² Getting a solution when a mental disease like epilepsy attacks one in an African community has been a great challenge even amongst professed Christians. Some think that diseases such as epilepsy are caused by an evil spirit, so they do not even consider consulting the appropriate medical practitioner. They do not seriously consider that consulting a mental health professional in order to ascertain the causes of and treatment for

⁸ Ludwig, *Order Restored*, 48.

⁹ Ludwig, *Order Restored*, 125.

¹⁰ Ludwig, *Order Restored*, 125.

¹¹ Ludwig, *Order Restored*, 125.

¹² Ludwig, *Order Restored*, 125.

disease might be another possible means of restoration. Ludwig reminds us that God is able to work healing holistically, attending to the psychosomatic, and that he can also do so through medical practitioners such as psychiatrists and psychologists. Among parishioners in African settings, a more holistic approach to healing can create awareness among those who have been cured of psychosomatic illnesses that God can indeed heal mediately. Such an awareness can in turn reduce the shame associated with the use of western medicine as well as the urge of many parishioners (even Lutherans) to seek AIC prophets for “real” healing.

The Spiritual Approach Toward Healing

From a theological perspective, spiritual healing is received when one hears the life-giving word of God, the Gospel. By this creative Word, Jesus comes to offer healing and restoration to the broken heart, bringing us into communion with God and one another. As Ludwig says: “He offers us forgiveness of our sins and fellowship in the Kingdom of God.”¹³ This forgiveness is not a type of healing that is limited to the spiritual realm, but flows to the mind and even the body. It engages the whole person. A case in point is when Jesus heals the paralytic person by pronouncing his sins forgiven (Mk. 2:5). This forgiveness permeated the heart and the paralysis of the body vanished. Ludwig asserts that “the *forgiveness of sins* by God is the most potent healing medication known to humankind.”¹⁴ The realization of this forgiveness rekindles new joy in the believer and “our self-worth is restored. The meaning of life is renewed.”¹⁵

Jesus’ Holistic Healing Ministry

When Jesus began his public ministry, he announced that his mission was not going to

¹³ Ludwig, *Order Restored*, 205.

¹⁴ Ludwig, *Order Restored*, 205.

¹⁵ Ludwig, *Order Restored*, 205.

revolve around proclaiming the Good News only but also include delivering people from sickness (Lk. 4:18-19). Mark remarks that Jesus “healed so many that those with diseases were pushing forward to touch him” (Mk. 3:10). Ludwig frames this focus on healing as good news, saying: “The Messiah has come to *restore order* to a world that was distorted by the power of sin and the lethal effects of disease.”¹⁶ Jesus’ methods of healing included healing by command, like in the case of the healing of the ten lepers (Lk. 17:14). Sometimes he healed by touching the sick, like in the case of healing the leper (Mt. 8:2-4). There are some instances when he used physical elements, like when he used saliva mixed with earth to heal the blind (Jn. 9:6-7). Although he himself did not use oil to anoint the sick in order to secure healing, Mark reports that he instructed the disciples to anoint the sick with oil (Mk. 6:13), James reiterates the same practice (Jas. 5:14-16). “Anointing guests with oil, especially on the head,” Ludwig observes, “was a common procedure in that age and signified that the person was included in all the blessings of the household.”¹⁷ Jesus used these healing methods compassionately and indiscriminately while handling the sick, as opposed to what Ludwig refers to as “the cold, clinical procedure that concentrates on disease states rather than on the person.”¹⁸ Noticeably, Jesus did not require a specific spiritual precondition which the sick was to attain in order to earn healing be it moral standards or improvements, the need to have prior repentance, or spiritual maturity. Rather, Jesus welcomed and healed the sick just the way they were.

Ludwig locates the centrality of the spiritual meaning of healing in the concept of the “Shalom” of God, which he understands as involving the Messiah’s “‘recovery’ of God’s creation, to mend the broken relationship between God and humankind as well as to mend the

¹⁶ Ludwig, *Order Restored*, 101.

¹⁷ Ludwig, *Order Restored*, 89.

¹⁸ Ludwig, *Order Restored*, 90.

distortion that disease had brought to human lives.”¹⁹ Shalom was the end goal of the mission of Jesus Christ, and thus the vision or desired end for his healings. The desired end in this case, however, was not ultimately physical health and wellness, but rather to welcome all into the kingdom of God, where God himself rules by exerting his just reign in the hearts of believers. According to Ludwig, Jesus views the kingdom of God as “the personal entry of God into the lives of people, reconciling them to Himself in a manner in which there is a new order, a new community.”²⁰ Faith was an aspect of Jesus’ healing ministry as in the case of healing the woman with the issue of blood (Lk. 8:48). Jesus praised the receptive faith in him of those who had been healed because “faith receives the blessings of the kingdom.”²¹

Jesus’ Healings as Miracles and Their Significance

Citing Millar, Ludwig agrees concerning the healing miracles of Jesus that, “like all signs, they were meant to be read. They testified not simply that the Kingdom had come, but that it had come in Jesus.”²² In this context, the fact that Jesus was healing the sick had nothing to do with undermining the role of the doctors of his day, much less prohibiting their medical practice. Indeed, Ludwig notes instead that Jesus “seems to affirm the doctors of his day and implies that God’s healing power can work through their ministrations and medications.”²³ This observation can best be understood against the backdrop of a text such as Luke 5:31, where Jesus asserts: “It is not the healthy who need the doctor, but the sick.” The doctors during Jesus’ time were using medicine to treat the sick, just as during Paul’s times when he refers to Luke as his physician

¹⁹ Ludwig, *Order Restored*, 102.

²⁰ Ludwig, *Order Restored*, 103.

²¹ Ludwig, *Order Restored*, 104.

²² Ludwig, *Order Restored*, 106.

²³ Ludwig, *Order Restored*, 92.

(Col. 4:14).

The difficulties surrounding our understanding of the miracles of Jesus in their context include the fact that in the first century, “God was thought of as dealing directly with the affairs of men in the natural order of life.”²⁴ For example, when a tower fell on some people in an unexplainable way, it was commonly thought that this was God’s direct action on specific sinners (Lk. 13:4). In the Newtonian age, however, miracles are seen as “events that stand in contradiction to general laws sustaining the universe.”²⁵ It is therefore apparent that the term miracle can mean different things to persons with different assumptions about reality, but the NT understanding of miracles is that they are “*signs* that the kingdom of God was breaking through into the world of men.”²⁶ A sign is not the reality itself but points to the reality, the kingdom of God. Miracles are not the ultimate reality which God wanted us to have as his church, but a sign pointing to that deeper reality, which is the coming of the kingdom in his Son Jesus Christ. This means that those who are saved and drawn into his kingdom by faith will not fret at the presence or lack of the sign itself. Such a sign would, in any case, only point the sick to where they are already even if not fully so until the eschaton, namely, in the enjoyment of the blessing of the kingdom of God. Instead of seeing their sickness as a reason to despair, the suffering will rather rejoice in the Lord always because they have already acquired the gift and the treasure that is the kingdom itself. This insight takes us then to propose how the church should therefore understand healing ministry.

²⁴ Ludwig, *Order Restored*, 106–107.

²⁵ Ludwig, *Order Restored*, 107.

²⁶ Ludwig, *Order Restored*, 108.

Church's Deputized Holistic Healing Ministry

Most twenty-first century Christians want to have an everyday experience of the miracle-working power of Jesus in their churches and lives. They want deputized healers to convince them that Jesus, the chief physician, is still amid them in his full power—the same power which Jesus displayed in his own ministry and during the apostles' time. As a reaction to this view, some hold that Jesus' miracle ministry ended with Jesus himself, arguing that he “healed for the singular purpose of proving that He was the Son of God.”²⁷ The follow-up question to this argument, in the words of Ludwig, is, “why does He instruct His own disciples to heal?”²⁸ Lest we fall into extreme positions, it is important to remark that even today God does healing miracles in his church, “sometimes in a natural manner and sometimes in ways that are beyond the pale of human explanation.”²⁹

The Healing Word

Without denying that Jesus can work miraculously today in physical and mental healing, we will now argue that the surest way through which one can receive the healing touch of Jesus as a member of God's kingdom is through his instituted Word and Sacraments. This evangelical center must be rediscovered in a context where healers' claims to healing normally serve as the surest way to confirm a sick person's standing before God. We must go back to basics. The preaching of God's Word as the law and the gospel is the linchpin around which the community of believers gather to hear the order-restoring word, through which the forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God are delivered to poor wretched sinners. The law exposes sins and

²⁷ Ludwig, *Order Restored*, 105.

²⁸ Ludwig, *Order Restored*, 105.

²⁹ Ludwig, *Order Restored*, 108.

pronounce the sinner as doomed and dead. Here, as Forde puts it when describing a theologian of glory using the analogy of an addict, the sinner realizes that his cure does not come from “optimistic appeals to glory, strength, wisdom, positive thinking, and so forth because those things are themselves the problem.”³⁰ Optimistic appeals are the way of the law, which can show the problem but not provide the solution. Following the analogy of the addict, Forde explains further how theologian of the cross approach their spiritual ills:

They operate on the assumption that there must be—to use the language of treatment for addicts—a “bottoming out” or an “intervention.” That is to say, there is no cure for the addict on his own. . . . The cross is the death of sin, and the sinner. The cross does the “bottoming out.” The cross is the “intervention.” The addict/sinner is not coddled by false optimism but is put to death so that a new life can begin.”³¹

The Gospel delivers promises that God for Christ’s sake is not angry with sinners, but looks for them to heal and make them new creatures. Kolb and Arand describe this divine work in terms of ‘rescue’ and ‘rebirth’ as follows: “the promise of Christ delivers the power to become the children of God by pronouncing rescue and rebirth on those who have strayed from their heavenly Father.”³² This description of God’s saving and life-creating act through the Word aligns with Ludwig’s strong assertion that “a well-delivered sermon, presenting Christ as the redeemer from sin and the Hope of the Ages, is as valid a healing experience as the church can perform.”³³ The importance of the aforementioned insights in a context where healers glory themselves in their power and appeal to the powers of the sick to be healed cannot be overstated.

³⁰ Gerhard O. Forde, *On Being a Theologian of the Cross: Reflections on Luther’s Heidelberg Disputation, 1518* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 17.

³¹ Forde, *Theologian of the Cross*, 17.

³² Robert Kolb and Charles P. Arand, *The Genius of Luther’s Theology: A Wittenberg Way of Thinking for the Contemporary Church* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2008), 141.

³³ Ludwig, *Order Restored*, 206.

The Healing Sacraments

In baptism, a person who is fractured and maimed with sin is washed, recreated, and made whole again in the holy waters through the power of the Holy Spirit: “This is the beginning of wholeness because, by means of this covenant, the individual is made a member of God’s kingdom of joy.”³⁴ This restoration of the baptized to wholeness has nothing to do with making him completely immune to physical diseases, lest somebody should fear his baptism to be invalid on account that he is still suffering from different sicknesses. Although baptism proffers restoration to wholeness, it is at the same time, as Sundberg observes, “the beginning of a perilous Journey of life.”³⁵ In his baptismal catechesis, Luther explicates clearly what such journey beginning in baptism entails when he notes that “it is no joke at all to take action against the devil and not only to drive him away from the little child but also to hang around the child’s neck such a mighty, lifelong enemy.”³⁶ At the time of baptism the devil marks the child as the target of his wrath and he will use all the weapons at his disposal to win his prey over. The struggle begins, but God is also at work in the life of the baptized.

Baptism is a reminder and a proof that the child has become whole and been restored to the Father, but the devil wants to mar the relationship by tempting us to doubt our baptismal promises. In God’s hands, however, baptism continues to heal and it is “a stimulus for Christians to practice the stewardship of health.”³⁷ In baptism, Christians are sealed with the Spirit, who is the down payment of their bodily resurrection (Eph. 1:14). When their wholeness is interfered

³⁴ Ludwig, *Order Restored*, 208.

³⁵ Walter Sundberg, “Satan the Enemy,” *Word and World* 28, no. 1 (2008): 32, https://scholar.google.com/scholar?hl=en&as_sdt=0%2C26&q=walter+Sundberg+satan+the+enemy&oq=w

³⁶ Small Catechism X.3 in Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000), 372.

³⁷ Ludwig, *Order Restored*, 208.

with through bodily sickness, they go back to their baptism and there receive healing anew in the promise that in Christ they share in a bodily restoration despite the present physical struggles illness bring. In God's mystery, sometimes Christians experience proleptic signs of bodily healing, and sometimes they do not. Yet in the context of faith in the promise, even suffering functions under God as a Word-forming experience that moves the Christian from untried faith to tried, purified faith. This return to the assurance of baptism even in suffering is still for the Christian's good and joy in that, even though the devil marks the Christian as his prey, he trusts that Jesus marks him as a precious jewel, sealed and signed for eternal salvation, which includes the full restoration of the body.

Ludwig also asserts that "Holy Communion is a powerful healing sacrament of the church."³⁸ The partakers' sins are forgiven with the assurance of not only receiving health restoration in the present life, but also a life which transcends the present one—eternal life. In the present, however, one of the things needed as preparation for the Lord's Supper is self-examination (1 Cor. 11:28), which involves contrition and faith. This self-examination leads to confession of sins and the pastor's absolution of the penitent sinner, pronouncing forgiveness within earshot of the person. The person is then fully healed of his sins, and in some sense even from psychological and bodily diseases associated with harboring such sins. Ludwig writes: "One of the major reasons we have problems with ill health is because we are not willing to confess the unhealthy emotions that block our quest for wholeness."³⁹ For example, if one bears a grudge against another, he would be tempted to rationalize the defense of this grudge and this could aggravate psychosomatic diseases. As an example of this holistic approach to disease and

³⁸ Ludwig, *Order Restored*, 209.

³⁹ Ludwig, *Order Restored*, 214.

health, Ludwig recalls the action of Dr. Toney, who while treating his patients,

demanded of all his patients that they come to terms with the toxic resentments and guilt that dominated their attitudes. He told them that there could be no healing unless they allowed Christ to release them from the slavery that made them ill. What they needed was a new centering, and this centering could only come through the Gospel of Christ's forgiveness and love.⁴⁰

When one confesses his sins, his sin-sick soul gets the balm and the cure which it so direly needs. Psychologically, health is recovered. Self-esteem and dignity are also restored as relationships with neighbors turn from sour to friendly. Consequently, the person's immune system is boosted, and his physical, bodily health also improves. This holistic healing may go beyond the psychosomatic diseases to alleviate other chronic diseases, as it pleases the Lord.

Christians find their healing as they gather around the Word and the sacraments. According to Lantz, "Christians would benefit from seeing the divine service as the source of healing not only for sin, but also for its effects: self-centeredness, guilt, anxiety, loneliness, grief, and, not least of all, physical and intellectual sickness."⁴¹ By hearing the Word and receiving the Lord's Supper, we meet the Lord himself in his means of grace. He touches us with his body and nourishes us with his blood. Through the healing-delivering touch of the body of Jesus in his Supper, those touched can receive mental and physical healings even today. Lantz quotes Harrison's pertinent observation in relation to healing in the church today that:

If Christ today dwells in his church, via his Gospel preached and sacraments administered, can we deny that there is no healing going on in the church today? Who of us would deny it? Who of us has not seen personally a remarkable turn of medical events in any individual for whom we prayed? Yet we must admit that in this mean time, all the glory of Christ lies veiled under the cross.⁴²

⁴⁰ Ludwig, *Order Restored*, 215.

⁴¹ Kurt A. Lantz, "Healing in the Divine Service," *Lutheran Theological Review* 26 (2014): 8, <http://search.ebscohost.com.esl.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lsdar&AN=ATLAI FZK190617001280&site=ehost-live>.

⁴² Lantz, "Healing in the Divine Service," 10.

Well-known is St. Ignatius of Antioch's description of the Eucharist as "the medicine of immortality," an expression based on the conviction that the sacrament is a participation in the promise of resurrection life with Christ. This eschatological-healing view of the Supper needs further attention in the African context, where non-sacramental churches abound and God's means of grace do not hold a place in the churches' theology or practice of healing. There is a sense in which the Lutheran church, through the sacraments, already has healings taking place in their divine services through the means of grace, which are heavenly medicine for sick-souls who gather around their Savior. The Lord's Supper also nourishes Christians, including the sick, who do not disdain living under the cross even as they await the great and final healing of the whole person in the resurrection of the body and the new heavens and earth.

The Existing Gaps Which the ELCK Should Address

The Lutheran Confessions, as they are communicated to us in the Book of Concord, do not allow gaps to obscure or weaken the Lutheran recognition of the existence of the devil. The Confessions portray him as the chief adversary from whom the baptized should pray for God's deliverance. Luther interprets what it means to pray in the face of the reality of the "evil one" in the last petition of the Lord's Prayer: "It seems to be speaking of the devil in order that the entire substance of our prayer may be directed against our arch enemy."⁴³ This is an important claim that needs to be taken seriously by Luther's followers today, particularly in an African context where belief in the world of spirits is relevant to healing discourses and practices. Which raises the issue of gaps in the teaching of the Lutheran churches of Africa concerning healing and

⁴³ Large Catechism III.113 in Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000), 455.

healers. Below we will discuss the gaps that still exist because of a sort of benign neglect to apply or implement the appropriate Lutheran teachings, or due to misperception or inadequate understanding of our Lutheran teaching among congregants of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya (ELCK). Some of the misunderstanding might be caused by influence from AIC teachings, which is rampant in Kenyan society, both in the villages and through mass media.

Separating the Word and the Spirit

AIC adherents, like their Pentecostal and Charismatic brothers and sisters, emphasize signs, miracles, and spiritual experiences as true marks of Christianity: “These signs are interpreted as evidence that those who receive them stand unmistakably in the succession of the Apostles.”⁴⁴ The persuasive way AICs assure their clients to come to their services expecting miracles makes even baptized Lutherans run to them for the healings they promise. They argue that “healing must occur in the same miraculous fashion as in the ministry of Jesus Himself, that is, by spontaneous remission.”⁴⁵ Less appreciated is the possibility that God can heal through ordinary means too. Moreover, some of the baptized Lutheran members do not appreciate the importance of Word and sacrament in an overall approach to healing. Instead, they tend to operate in a way that separates the Word and the Spirit in their outlook on life. When it comes to healing, they tend to see the Spirit at work apart from or before the Word. Quoting Luther, Lindberg asserts instead that “the Holy Spirit comes by the Word which is heard, and which is Jesus Christ.... Thus Spirit, Word, and Christ belong together.”⁴⁶ He notes that “the Word then is always the

⁴⁴ Carter Lindberg, *The Third Reformation? Charismatic Movements and the Lutheran Tradition* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1983), 259.

⁴⁵ Ludwig, *Order Restored*, 179.

⁴⁶ Lindberg, *The Third Reformation?*, 273.

essential outer sign for the presence of the Holy Spirit.”⁴⁷

According to this view, the Holy Spirit uses the Word to call people to Christ for healing, which means that the church is centered on the Word even if it appears weak and foolish to many. AIC healers and those who seek them often look for definitive proof of the Spirit’s work not in the Word but in extraordinary signs and wonders. Lindberg adds: “The church’s beginnings are foolish and weak for they consist of preaching the crucified Christ. This beginning means that throughout its life the church must remain under the cross.”⁴⁸ In Gospel accounts, we see that in many occasions people who sought for miracles as their chief goal were often scathed by Jesus. For instance, when Jesus was approached by the Pharisees to perform miracles for them, he did not approve of their quest and instead answered them: “An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah” (Mt 12:39). He pointed them instead to the true life-changing, and healing sign, which is his death and resurrection. Ultimately, the only miracle a Christian can bank his hope on is the cross and its message of restoration in Christ. The Spirit does not point us to extraordinary signs and wonders for the assurance of our salvation, but rather to faith in Christ in whom we have eternal life.

Quest to Go Back to African Religiosity in Times of Crisis

Some African Christians still have appetite for their former traditional religious life experiences, and they see Christianity as new patching skin for their African religion. Ezenweke borrows Mbiti’s description of Africans “as being notoriously religious.”⁴⁹ This description

⁴⁷ Lindberg, *The Third Reformation?*, 273.

⁴⁸ Lindberg, *The Third Reformation?* 274.

⁴⁹ Elizabeth Ezenweke and Ikechukwu Kanu, “Perspectives of Syncretism and its Modern Trend: A Case of Christian and African traditions,” *UJAH: Unizik Journal of Arts and Humanities* 13, no. 2 (2012): 72, <https://www.ajol.info/index.php/ujah/article/view/84694>.

implies that whatever they do or whatever happens to them, Africans deem to be under the control of the Higher Powers over them. This is why in most cases, they want to know the one who is behind their afflictions as part of the process of their healing. Ludwig also observes this search for the *why* of sickness not only in Africans but in other non-Western communities:

Members of most non-Western societies are usually not satisfied with explanations of disease that focus only on immediate causes. ‘They want to know *why* in one child in the same family as another child—eating the same food, sleeping in the same room—leukemia developed, and did not in the sibling.’⁵⁰

Due to such religiosity, Africans think that the mainstream churches do not seem to address adequately physical healing in their services, and as a result AIC become the best option for sick people. The gap among Lutherans in responding to their parishioners’ African religious concern for healing could be something caused by failure to teach the Spirit’s healing power available through the means-of-grace Word, particularly in the Lutheran divine service—a power to forgive sins, which can also give psychological healing, and even bodily healing as it pleases God. AICs, fraught by a one-sided view of healing, focus only on bodily healing as a sign of salvation at the expense of the spiritual dimension of healing through faith in Christ and his promises. It is important to observe then that physical healing in this life is not the ultimate goal of life in Christ and “no physical healing will ever make us immortal.”⁵¹ The ultimate goal is incorporation into God’s kingdom through faith in Christ, which strengthens our hope in God’s promises of forgiveness of sins and eternal life and looks forward to God’s Shalom when we will be fully healed and restored forever as a whole person. At times, we get a glimpse of this new resurrection life even now when, even in the midst of death and suffering, the Lord provides healing. Lutherans need to account for God’s power to heal spiritually, mentally, and physically

⁵⁰ Ludwig, *Order Restored*, 48.

⁵¹ Ludwig, *Order Restored*, 197.

through his Word as he wishes, while not falling into an over realized eschatology that avoids life under the cross in the here and now.

Failure to Address the Naturalistic Worldview of Healing

The Church today is apparently faced with some extreme views held by some of her members on healing and exorcism. They are either silently opposed to the church's official teachings or hold these extreme views alongside the church's teachings. Gibbs points out that one of these views is "the naturalistic, 'scientific' view that every ailment has a purely medical explanation and hence a potential medical cure, with no room for either demonic activity or supernatural healing."⁵² Sometimes Christians mistakenly assume that the healing touch of Jesus was possible during his ministry, but this golden era of healing essentially ended with the death of Jesus—though a slight extension of healings in Jesus' name is allowed into the time of apostles' ministry. Accordingly, they tend to believe that current medical treatment is above spiritual healing and the only remaining hope when somebody is sick in the hospital. The situation grows worse when the symptoms persist after obtaining medical treatment, for in such cases, one is only left to endure pain stoically. It is true that with the arrival of modern science the research done by medical doctors to combat illnesses affecting human beings has been of great help to many. Scharlemann notes that modern medicine "has been able to overcome many illnesses which in former centuries decimated whole populations."⁵³ But if in praising the benefits of medical science one stops short of saying that Jesus is the great physician, the one who alone heals mediately by using the doctors as his masks in the world, and by his healing touch in Word and sacrament, to restore health and life as it pleases him, then, medical science

⁵² Gibbs, Jeffrey A. *Matthew 1:1-11:1*. Concordia Commentary (St. Louis: Concordia, 2006), 225.

⁵³ Scharlemann, *Healing and Redemption*, 13.

becomes reductionistic and leads to a *de facto* naturalistic worldview.

At the same time, there are some Christians who stress that the demonic powers can have no real effect whatsoever on the baptized, and should that happen, then such intervention is just an illusion that needs to be quickly dismissed. Yet this view implies that the battle between the demonic powers and believers is over and there is no difference between the now and the not yet. Such claims send a wrong signal “as if the reign of God could not break in today with miracles and sign and power and healing.”⁵⁴ AICs take advantage of this gap even among Lutherans concerning the real battle waging between God and the devil in the lives of Christians, as their healers pray for the sick and people with various afflictions, assuring them that the disease will unequivocally be healed in the name of Jesus. Rather than denying demonic oppression in disease, or promising absolute deliverance from disease in every case, Christians are called to discern the spirits under the Word of God. Gibbs remarks should be taken seriously: “All claimed experiences, whether of demonic influence or of miraculous healing, must be subjected to scriptural scrutiny, and nothing can violate the great truths of biblical theology.”⁵⁵ By and large, we should also add that the hope diseases can be eradicated by medical means or spiritual means is ultimately a fallacy, because we do not live here on earth as immortals. We are but mortals on earth. We do not even know the circumstances that will terminate our lives on earth, and to insist that one somehow should not die if one is truly a believer, is to live in overt protest to the Word of God which decrees, “to dust you shall return” (Gen. 3:19). Indeed, the new life in Christ is ours even now, but it is also hidden with God in him until his appearing at the last day. At that time, death, the last enemy will be destroyed (1 Cor. 15:26).

⁵⁴ Gibbs, *Matthew 1:1-11:1*, 225.

⁵⁵ Gibbs, *Matthew 1:1-11:1*, 225.

Failure to Address the Idea that Suffering and Sickness Are Punishments for Specific Sin

Suffering is a comfort-marring experience which leads many a Christian to lament before God and ask themselves whether they did something to deserve such punishment. It is true that God neither created man to be sick nor to die, but after the Fall, sicknesses and death became the lot of humanity (Gen. 3:16-19). Disease “is a result of *sin*, the alienation of the creature from the Creator.”⁵⁶ Yet there is no causal necessary relationship between specific sin and disease, so that the victim of illness must be its cause due to some sin which makes him deserving of suffering (cf. Lk. 13:1-5). Otherwise stated, just as the healthy are not healthy because of their specific righteousness, the sick is not sick because of their specific sinfulness or unrighteousness. Yet this thought pattern is not only characteristic of African traditional religion and AICs, but also the late Judaic belief system. Scharlemann substantiates this basing his argument on John 9:2:

There was a popular notion among later Jews that any instance of sickness was the particular consequence of some specific sin, Jesus categorically repudiated such a nexus in the case of the blind man, about whom the disciples had asked, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”⁵⁷

However, the Jews did not invent the concept themselves. They read Num. 12:1–6 and found that God struck Miriam with leprosy because of her sins of backbiting Moses. Moreover, David and Bathsheba’s child died because of their adultery (2 Sam. 12:18) and Elisha’s servant was struck by leprosy when he accepted inordinately the gift which Naaman gave to Elisha (2 Kings 5:27). The retribution theory of disease found its traces in these Old Testament texts, but even in these texts there was hope for the repentant ones. In the New Testament, sometimes sick people were left without hope and even relatives fled from the sick (Jn. 5:7). It was like they were saying, “if God himself is against this person, who are we to be of help to him?”

⁵⁶ Ludwig, *Order Restored*, 27.

⁵⁷ Scharlemann, *Healing and Redemption*, 73.

Concurring with Amundsen and Ferngren, Ludwig says that “suffering in general and sickness in particular were seen not simply as punishment but rather as chastisement that was not vindictive but corrective.”⁵⁸ This could be perceived when the Psalter pronounces as blessed those who are disciplined by God (Ps. 94:12). Humanly speaking, sickness brings stigma, poverty, abandonment by friends and relatives, despair, faith imbalance, and sometimes it may make one relentlessly angry with God. When the church sees diseases as a “normal” phenomenon, Ludwig finds himself objecting vehemently and notes that “we ought not to glorify disease or romanticize its deadly intentions.”⁵⁹

Everybody is susceptible to diseases. Disease can affect a person who is a strong believer, like in the case of Timothy’s stomach’s problem (1Tim. 5:23), and even Paul was very sick when he went to preach to the Galatians (Gal. 4:13-14). This implies that even the righteous can suffer and hoping for an answer to suffering by asking the question, “why me Lord,” is not a solution. This is because any answer to this question just invites another yet unanswerable question: If God is sovereign or powerful, why does he not bring to an end everything that afflict us? Although God does not rejoice in Christians’ suffering, he is the sovereign Lord, who does not fight with the devil as an equal to him but as a defeated one under him. In spite of this, he permits the devil to bring afflictions even to believers, and in doing so he strengthens their faith (cf. Job.1:12). Luther theologizes adeptly about the relationship between God and the devil, speaking of “the devil as a mask God wears, or as a hoe in the hands of the gardener breaking up the ground making it ready for planting.”⁶⁰ God can use the devil for his purposes while

⁵⁸ Ludwig, *Order Restored*, 73.

⁵⁹ Ludwig, *Order Restored*, 23.

⁶⁰ Timothy George, “Where Are the Nail Prints? The Devil and Dr. Luther,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 61, no. 2 (2018): 253, <https://search.proquest.com/openview/ea86f5142d667210c530bdd1e90ca8e2/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=47286>

thwarting the devil's plans. The devil wants to use a situation of suffering to drive us away from God, but God can use it to bring us closer to the Word and prayer.

In the midst of their spiritual attacks, Paul strengthens the church in Rome with this promise: "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28 NIV). It is important to note that this promise is not an explanation of suffering. It is simply a proclamation. It makes the quest for getting an exact explanation on how God works in every case of suffering, or the rationale behind his action or apparent absence in the midst of suffering, irrelevant, irreverent, and immaterial. The only comfort a Christian has in the midst of suffering is not an explanation of the why. Such an explanation in a specific case of suffering is hidden from us, belonging to what Luther called the "hidden God" (*deus absconditus*). The Christian's only hope lies in grasping God as he is revealed to us in his promises. Luther called God in his promises the "revealed God" (*deus revelatus*). As Forde observes, the human attempt to explain why the hidden God chooses to do some things and not others cannot comfort us. In fact, peeking into the hidden God can bring about the opposite effect: "The explained God is not the God who seeks the lost, but the God whom the lost (even if with the aid of grace) must seek and attempt to appease, the just rewarder of pious effort, the God of law who always turns against us."⁶¹ We do not seek comfort in a theodicy that explains why some suffer and others do not in this or that way. Instead, we direct those suffering to the Gospel, the proclamation of God's love for his suffering children in Jesus Christ. The search for answers on the hidden God is an endless search without success, and we only find the answer in the revealed God who comes to us in Jesus and the Scriptures.

⁶¹ Gerhard O. Forde, *Theology Is for Proclamation* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 31.

Failure to Account for the Existence of Demon in ELCK

This is perhaps the main gap that results in AICs' thriving in a Kenyan context, since their main stress is on driving out the demons whose existence African society readily acknowledge. The Lutheran church has a long history of acknowledging the existence of the demonic, starting with Luther himself. Luther recognized demonic influence as a main factor behind false doctrine. There was a strong sense of the demonic in Luther's world: "The reformers still understood the devil to be the 'prince of this world' even after his defeat by the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus."⁶² This recognition is more evident in most of the reformer's works. Bennet observes that Luther mentions the devil nineteen times in the Smalcald Articles⁶³ and eighty-four times in the Large Catechism.⁶⁴ Luther views the rejection of and contempt shown to the Word and godly life as the work of the devil:

His purpose is to make us scorn and despise both the Word and the works of God, to tear us away from faith, hope, and love; to draw us into unbelief, false security and stubbornness, or, on the contrary, to drive us to despair, atheism, blasphemy and countless other abominable sins. These are the snares and nets; indeed, they are the real "flaming darts" which are venomously shot into our hearts, not by the flesh and blood, but buy the devil.⁶⁵

Luther stresses the importance of the revealed Word as the surest anchor one can grasp to be safe from the deception of the devil. The devil is also crafty in that he leads people to ridicule the very Word they can turn to for help in their struggles. We see an example of this when healers direct sick people to look for miracles of healing, while at the same time saying nothing about or seeing as insufficient the Word that creates faith in the Gospel and hope in God's

⁶² Robert H. Bennett, *I Am Not Afraid: Demon Possession and Spiritual Warfare* (Saint Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 2013), 129.

⁶³ Bennett, *I Am Not Afraid*, 130.

⁶⁴ Bennett, *I Am Not Afraid*, 132.

⁶⁵ Bennett, *I Am Not Afraid*, 132.

promises.

The way the reformer responded with a critical eye to the devil's "miraculous" appearance, when he was meditating on Christ's suffering and death on a Good Friday is worth considering.

This narration of Luther confirms his encounter with the devil:

On Good Friday, I was in my room in fervent prayer when suddenly appeared upon the wall a bright vision of our Savior Christ, with the five wounds, steadfastly looking upon me, as if it had been Christ himself corporally. At first sight, I thought that it had been some celestial revelation, but I reflected that it must needs be an illusion and juggling of the devil, for Christ appeared to us in his Word, and in a meaner and more humble form; therefore I spake to the vision thus: Avoid thee, confounded devil: I know no other Christ than he who was crucified, and who in his Word is pictured and presented unto me. Whereupon the image vanished, clearly showing of whom it came.⁶⁶

The experience reminds Luther that he neither depends on nor desires new revelations.

From him we learn that Christians who stick to the Word and sacrament are not tossed by the waves of the passing grandeur of the devil and bravely tell Satan to quit his tricks. This a Lutheran example of discernment and renouncing the devil and all his ways. The counsel of Luther is handy and realistic for Christians. They should be vigilant. He asserts that "we will not go about securely and heedlessly as if the devil were far from us, but will at all times expect his blows and fend them off."⁶⁷ This warning is relevant even to Christians today, that is, they should not ignore the devil as if he is already dead and buried, or think mentioning him is needless because he has been exterminated. Instead, we should take the devil seriously as a roaring lion who is out to devour his prey. The best response to the demonic is neither to overly focus on it nor to ignore it altogether, but rather to be vigilant.

In the seventh petition of the Lord's Prayer, Luther observes that the Greek translation of

⁶⁶ Martin Luther, *The Table Talk of Martin Luther*, trans. and ed. William Hazlitt (Philadelphia: Lutheran Publication Society, n.d.), 126 (cf. WA-T 1:287, 8-27).

⁶⁷ Large Catechism III.109 in Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, 455.

“deliver us from the evil one” encompasses “the devil as the sum of all evil,”⁶⁸ who hinders our prayers. In the Luo catechism, which the ELCK Lake Diocese uses, the phrase “Deliver us from evil” has been translated as “*To warwa e richo*,”⁶⁹ which means “but deliver us from sin.” This translation shows that Christians are more focused on spiritual salvation from sin than on thinking that the devil is also their enemy from whom they need to be delivered. The new hymnal (*Ibada Takatifu*), used in ELCK, rightly translates this part as “*Utuokoe na yule mwovu*,”⁷⁰ meaning “deliver us from the evil.” When it comes to the baptismal rites, both the children and adult baptism sections do not capture Luther’s exorcism rite of baptism. Luther’s exorcism clearly demonstrates that the devil inhabits a human being, or at least keeps the person in bondage to his realm and influence. More significant, the rite includes the command, the Word of God, that drives the devil away. The only thing mentioned expressly in relation to the devil during ELCK’s rite of baptism is the baptismal vow: “*An adagi Satan gi tichne kod timbene duto*.”⁷¹ The vow translates as follows: “I renounce the devil with all his works and all his ways.” The message sent by this vow is that the devil is outside of the one to be baptized, and the baptized is to resist him so that he may have no room in his life. Recognizing the devil’s existence and people’s need for deliverance from its power, Luther saw baptism as a little exorcism by which God delivers from Satan’s reign to bring them into God’s kingdom. To be saved is nothing other than “to be delivered from sin, death, and the devil, to enter into Christ’s kingdom, and to live with him forever.”⁷²

⁶⁸ Bennet, *I Am Not Afraid*, 134.

⁶⁹ Henry Kabasa Okombo, trans., *Katekismu Matin Mar Dr. Luther* (Kisumu: National Printing Press Ltd, 1998), 169.

⁷⁰ *Ibada Takatifu: Kanisa la Kilutheri* (Chelsea, Michigan: Sheridan Printing, 2013), 86.

⁷¹ ELCK, *Chenro mar Lemo*, 19.

⁷² Large Catechism III.109 in Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, 459.

The exorcism section of Luther's baptismal rite of 1923 is currently missing in many liturgies, including ELCK's official liturgy (*Ibada Takatifu*). Luther begins the rite with the officiant blowing three times under the child's eye, saying, "depart though unclean spirit and give room to the Holy Spirit."⁷³ The sign of the cross is then put on the forehead and the heart of the child being baptized. Satan is then cast out and the baptized is thereby marked as God's own. The exorcism does not stop here. It continues even up to the prayer offered during the baptism which commands the devil to depart:

I adjure thee, thou unclean spirit, by the name of the Father + and the Son + and the Holy Ghost + that thou come out of and depart from this servant of God, N., for He commands thee, thou miserable one, he who walked upon the sea and stretched forth his hands to sinking Peter.⁷⁴

The devil is commanded and ridiculed as miserable. Jesus is depicted as the one who is omnipotent over creation. Unlike AICs' healers who purport to have gifts and powers in themselves to exorcise the demons, Luther holds that "there is no power on the officiant, the power and the command to depart originates in Jesus."⁷⁵ This power is not in the rituals per se, as most of the AICs think. They see power in things such as the color of the vestments, incense, the sprinkling of the water on the sick, chasing the devil with the crosses, and other external rituals. But Satan will always sneer at these, since these are not the Word of God. Sundberg corroborates this fact, by warning against the temptation to trust in mere rituals by saying that:

Signing with the cross . . . anointing the breast and shoulders with oil, signing the crown of the head with chrism, putting on the christening robe, placing a burning candle in the hand . . . are not the sort of devices and practices from which the devil shrinks or flees.⁷⁶

⁷³ Bennett, *I Am Not Afraid*, 144.

⁷⁴ Bennett, *I Am Not Afraid*, 146.

⁷⁵ Bennett, *I Am Not Afraid*, 146.

⁷⁶ Sundberg, "Satan the Enemy," 32.

The devil flees at the person who trusts in the promises of God in the Word and sacraments. However simple they may be, these means of grace are effective in exorcising the devil because in, with, and under them, Christ presents himself as the protector par excellence of a Christian against the demonic powers.

Other Lutheran Theologians' Take on Exorcism After Luther

This brief section focuses on notable confessional theologians including: C.F.W Walther, Francis Pieper, and Helmut Thielicke. Walther lived from 1811–1887 and was the first president of the LCMS and parish pastor of...Francis Pieper (1852–1931) was...Thielecke...Each of these men [maybe say something about the fact that they addressed exorcism/the demonic realm, etc.]

Walther held that “Satan does not have any power except that which has been granted to him by God.”⁷⁷ He quotes Quenstedt, who gives some signs and symptoms of the behavior a possessed person may exhibit:

The knowledge of foreign languages as well as arts and science which the possessed person have never before learned and if they are freed, no longer know; knowing and stating things which are hidden, which have happened elsewhere in very distant regions, or which are in the future; superhuman or supernatural power and strength; the exact reproduction of the voices of birds, sheep, cattle, etc.,... Obscenity in speech; monstrosity in gesture; horrifying screaming (Mark 5:5); blasphemy toward God and scorn for the neighbor; fury and violence against one’s own body and against the others watching (Mathew 8:26; 17:15; Mark 5:5; Acts 19:16).⁷⁸

Walther took after Luther in believing that only God can drive out the devil and that where Jesus stands, the devil must flee.⁷⁹ He saw the Lord’s Supper as the means by which Jesus Christ presents himself in his body and blood to the partakers, with the result that the stronghold of Satan is dislodged in a person through the forgiveness of sins: “Where sin is forgiven, Satan is

⁷⁷ Bennett, *I Am Not Afraid*, 149.

⁷⁸ Bennett, *I Am Not Afraid*, 150.

⁷⁹ Bennett, *I Am Not Afraid*, 152.

emptied of his power and loses all hope of victory.”⁸⁰ Walther witnessed a case of a girl who exhibited the symptoms of uttering foreign thoughts and falling on the ground weeping and moaning to be delivered by God from her afflictions. He had to treat her spiritually and “she did not come to rest until she realized that it was not she that was uttering those thoughts. Satan had taken the possession of her lips.”⁸¹ Walther was fully aware that there were some skeptics who did not believe in the existence of the devil and he warned that “the skeptics will call this superstitious notion.”⁸² This was a call for Lutherans not to assume that the devil does not exist.

Pieper also addressed skeptics. He offered a profound insight by revealing that Satan operates most when people are confirming his absence. He writes, “The fact that men do not know this [that they are doing the work of the devil], yes, even deny the existence of the devil, is likewise due to the operation of the devil.”⁸³ He agrees with Walther that the devil may afflict the children of God in various ways even by possessing them, but “such possession cannot occur by Satan’s power. God must provide His passive consent for any such case of possession as it pertains to one of His children.”⁸⁴ This position is relevant to this paper, because it informs the readers that the devil can afflict Christians, and only as a defeated enemy, as one who only acts as a mask of God.

Thielicke also confirmed the presence of the demonic and its influences. He acknowledged that if one recognizes that there is evil, then the same thought must presuppose the existence of

⁸⁰ Bennett, *I Am Not Afraid*, 152.

⁸¹ C.F.W. Walther, *The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel: Thirty-Nine Evening Lectures* (St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1989), 394.

⁸² Walther, *Law and Gospel*, 394.

⁸³ Bennett, *I Am Not Afraid*, 153.

⁸⁴ Bennett, *I Am Not Afraid*, 154.

the devil. As he puts it, “how can one discuss evil without discussing the devil.”⁸⁵ The theologians of his time were beginning to take devil possession as superstition, and this made him draw a conclusion that unbelief begins with “the rejection of all thoughts of the devil.”⁸⁶

Thielicke argues for the impossibility of personal communication with the demon. He says:

In dealing with the demonic power, there is no personal communication. . . . On the contrary, what takes place is “possession” by an alien force and an attack on human personality. Thus, exorcism in the name of God is the only form of an encounter with demonic power and the dominion to which it aspires.⁸⁷

He also asserts that exorcism is not only a matter of driving away the devil from the possessed, but also involves “filling with the Spirit of God, which drives the demonic spirit out of the victim, restores threatened identity, and brings to light the original person.”⁸⁸ Thielicke correctly sees that there is no word formulation, or magical words, or premeditated chants that can exorcise the demon: “Illuminating words are of no avail against demons. Words can even come under the power in the form of the spirit of the age. What avails against demons is only the word of command, the authority that is ascribed to Christ when he drives out demons.”⁸⁹ Thus the AIC notion that there is a certain way of pronouncing words which can scare the devil away is out of tune with the Christian faith. Lutherans should therefore stick to the Word of God alone when dealing with the demonic.

How Lutherans Account Theologically for the Cure of the Body

All healings come from God.⁹⁰ Jesus is the chief physician who heals immediately and/or

⁸⁵ Bennett, *I Am Not Afraid*, 157.

⁸⁶ Bennett, *I Am Not Afraid*, 157.

⁸⁷ Bennett, *I Am Not Afraid*, 159.

⁸⁸ Bennett, *I Am Not Afraid*, 159.

⁸⁹ Bennett, *I Am Not Afraid*, 159.

⁹⁰ Ludwig, *Order Restored*, 197.

mediately. As we noted earlier, the use of material things to effect healing is evident even in the OT, as we see when Hezekiah was instructed to make a poultice of fig tree to apply on the boil in order to secure his healing (Is. 38:21). In this case, God is the doctor, who uses the poultice-maker as his hand-glove to heal the sick. Moreover, knowing that there were doctors during his time, Jesus did not brush off their roles in the society, “. . . it is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick” (Mt. 9:12). As we said earlier, holding doctors in high esteem also continued even during the time of the apostles. Luke himself participated in treating the apostle Paul and his team (Col. 4:14). The Lutheran church, being a church established on the foundation of the apostles and prophets has been adopting the same attitude of recognizing doctors as healing tools in the hand of God. For this reason, the ELCK has built a number of hospitals not only for its congregants but for all in need of medical services, not in the name of science but in the name of God.

In the divine service, when Christian gathers around the Word and sacraments as God’s guests, they expect to meet Jesus himself in his Word and in his body and blood. This is a real meeting with Jesus who touches them with his healing powers. We noted before that his touch and healing are not exclusively for spiritual healing but can also involve bodily and psychological healing. Christians should have confidence that in the divine service, their sins and guilt are wiped. This relieves them of self-centeredness, anxiety, loneliness, grief, depression, lack of self-esteem and all other physical diseases associated with the sin. As much as Lutherans would agree that there are very many miraculous healings happening even in the Lutheran churches today, they do not crave such healing as the proof for their salvation, or as a substantiation of God’s favor toward them, or as an overt necessity which God commands all the physically sick to acquire in this body. Lutherans instead cling to the Word and sacrament, and

thus by faith cling to the will of God in times of suffering and sickness. The forgiveness of sins, which restores the relationship between God and the sinner, is not limited to spiritual healing only. When one's sin is forgiven, the psychological burden of guilt and shame is wiped, and the person's dignity is restored. This creates a healthy relationship between the person and God and his fellow neighbors. As Ludwig puts it, "God's forgiveness cures our guilt and restores our self-worth."⁹¹

To account for bodily healing, it is also imperative to account for those who are apparently not healed. The pursuit of health is not the ultimate goal of life here on earth. Even during Jesus' ministry, in a multitude of sick persons, not all were healed (Jn. 5:1-5). Scharlemann correctly points out that Jesus' healing was "a token of that full restoration which God had in mind for all his faithful ones at the end of history."⁹² By faith, sick Christians should face their affliction with acceptance by keeping on fighting without denying the faith and abandoning their struggles against suffering: "there is no greater testimony to the power of Christ than that which shines from the bed of a sick person who miraculously accept suffering."⁹³ The acceptance of suffering then becomes a more powerful miracle worth witnessing than the miraculous healing itself the world typically expects, for such acceptance itself is not possible without God's intervention. Ludwig highlights the benefits which can by grace be reaped from suffering: "God can work through our sicknesses to develop within us a profound, Christian-like maturity. This is a graceful acceptance of sickness and turns our attention from the suffering to a healthy, purposive attitude."⁹⁴

⁹¹ Ludwig, *Order Restored*, 205.

⁹² Scharlemann, *Healing and Redemption*, 86.

⁹³ Ludwig, *Order Restored*, 190.

⁹⁴ Ludwig, *Order Restored*, 191.

It is equally true that even those who were healed by Jesus later died. Even Paul who was treated by Dr. Luke later died. The same happens with the sick in various hospitals treated by doctors even today. Scharlemann has an excellent observation that “health is only a penultimate, a next-to-the-last gift and not the ultimate reality.”⁹⁵ Ludwig borrows Luther’s thought on this point by noting that if one makes “health a supreme goal of his life, the ‘*summum bonum*’ of human existence, then health has become an idol of his own making.”⁹⁶

Unlike the thought of many, the greatest healing and victory is death in Christ. Lutherans do not see death as the end of life, but as uninterrupted peaceful rest in the Lord, as being with Christ in expectation of the resurrection at his return. Simeon experienced the peace of the Lord when he held the baby Jesus in his hands and asked God to grant him the desire of the saved ones, which is a blessed death in the sight of the Lord. His joy in dying in faith is expressed by Luke, and included in the divine service (Nunc Dimittis): “Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation (Lk. 2:29-30). Lantz holds firmly “that our God has come not only to share in our life and death, but also to heal us unto the resurrection makes even death a healing. It brings an end to our earthly struggles and we gladly depart in peace.”⁹⁷ Any Lutheran approach to sickness and health must account for the eschatological framework of the Christian narrative.

The Role of Congregational Care for a Christian Struggling with Sickness

The congregation consists of believers who have come together in Christ and gathered around his means of grace to grow in faith and love. Their main call is to serve the neighbor, and

⁹⁵ Scharlemann, *Healing and Redemption*, 86.

⁹⁶ Ludwig, *Order Restored*, 128.

⁹⁷ Lantz, “Healing in the Divine Service,” 28.

this duty becomes more immediately urgent in times of illness and affliction (Mt. 25:31). Scharlemann puts it rightly that in a congregation, “the individual is not alone, especially not in his illness. For the very presence of illness provides the opportunity for corporate service.”⁹⁸ Sickness may also be a blessing in disguise to the congregation if understood in relation to the cross. Such instance of serving the sick can be the opportunity for Christians to serve Jesus in the person of his sick brothers and sisters (Matt. 25:36). Such situation presents “Christ-in-need to the congregation.”⁹⁹ When Christians spontaneously serve the sick amid them, they are offering their lives as a living sacrifice to God (Rom. 12:1). This visitation of love is a great consolation to the sick, who sees himself as blessed to be visited by Jesus Christ himself in the person of his fellow congregants. As Scharlemann asserts, “in their services to the sick, church members become little Christs.”¹⁰⁰

As they pray for healing, consolation, and endurance for the sick, this in turn strengthens the faith of the whole congregation as they witness God comforting the sick and filling them with hope. The congregation then becomes both the giver and the receiver of compassion, which means they are also prepared so that, whatever becomes their lot and that of their needy neighbor, they will be strong as the sick whom they are praying for. Paul summarizes the comfort of mutually sharing in each other’s burdens: “If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer” (2 Cor. 1:6).

The laying of hands on the sick person is a very important ritual which Jesus himself commanded his apostles to do: “. . . they will place their hands on the sick people, and they will

⁹⁸ Scharlemann, *Healing and Redemption*, 100.

⁹⁹ Scharlemann, *Healing and Redemption*, 100.

¹⁰⁰ Scharlemann, *Healing and Redemption*, 101.

get well” (Mk. 16:18). The pastor may place his hand on the sick person, while praying for him as this depicts and enacts Christian love and concern. Ludwig also observes: “To touch a person who is suffering is a sign of concern from fellow believers and from friends. Touching provides a point of contact that breaks through the barrier of loneliness and fear; it is a message of reassurance.”¹⁰¹ The congregation’s visitation can also be the opportunity for the sick person to confess their sins, or, they may need private confession and the pastor still can do this to the sick and announce to them the forgiveness of sins. Such visitation may also be accompanied by giving of the holy communion, which is the “potent healing medication,”¹⁰² which restores the Christian to wholeness. The holy communion partaken by the sick heals the soul, mind, and even the body if God wills. Even if healing is not realized in the physical body, the joy and the confidence of restoration is so precious that the sick can say with Paul: “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us” (Rom. 8:18).

Summary

This chapter presents a Lutheran holistic perspective that responds to the one-sidedness of AICs’ perspective on healing as immediate and guaranteed bodily health for the sick. Our findings reveal that there are gaps in the teaching of confessional Lutheran churches regarding healing. There are some inadequacies in catechizing the congregants on the holistic aspect of healing in relation to the Lutheran theological tradition. Those gaps include not dealing head on with the following problems seen in AICs: Separating the Word and Spirit, quest to go back to African religiosity in times of crisis, naturalistic worldview, and retribution theology. There is a

¹⁰¹ Ludwig, *Order Restored*, 219.

¹⁰² Ludwig, *Order Restored*, 205.

sharing of worldview between African traditional religion and AICs on the devil or evil spirits as the cause of diseases, and on the necessity of the religious dimension of healing—including the idea that specific sickness come from specific sins. On the Lutheran side, gaps not dealt with include subtle or overt denials of the devil’s existence and influence, and speaking about medical healing to the exclusion of other forms of healing.

We argued for a holistic view of health, including bodily, psychological, and spiritual aspects. In bodily healing, Lutheran theology can assert that medical doctors are the gloves of God through which he works healing mediately as he pleases. The psychological disorders can also be taken care of by counselors and psychiatrists, and such complications can be addressed without seeking for hidden mystical means. Spiritual healing involves reconciliation with God through the forgiveness of sins. This comes through the preaching of the Gospel and administration of the sacraments, which brings Jesus to the hearers. Through baptism, the evil spirit is exorcised, and he indeed departs when the hearer receives the promises of the Gospel by faith. The Lord’s Supper brings about the real bodily touch of Jesus, who works healing spiritually but also in a way that can restore mental problems and even offer bodily healing. The research also acknowledges that Jesus himself healed, though he did not heal all with whom he came into contact. Even in today’s church, Jesus heals, but this does not mean his disciples today crave for such healings as if it is the guarantee of their salvation or a definitive sign of God’s favor toward them. Christians fully depend on God in season and out of season, taking their afflictions as the manifestation of God’s fatherly will as they live under the cross. With this understanding, we bring to a close our consideration of the inherent gaps existing in a Lutheran approach to healing that addresses the AICs’ one-sided view of healing in an African context.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

The theological tenet guiding AICs is that Africans should be liberated from the captivity of the demonic powers, which cause sicknesses, calamities, and afflictions. They are of the opinion that the mainline churches have failed to address the core of the problem. The driving force toward diseases' eradication is the belief that Jesus said he came to bring life in abundance (John 10:10). The AICs' expectation, therefore, is that that all saved people must exhibit physical wellness by having a body which is totally free from diseases and suffering. Failure to achieve this in this life, and for every affliction, means that one's faith is still weak, or that one does not believe enough or is living in unbelief. Appiah-Kubi's theodical question reveals the bone of contention as he asks, "where is this abundant life in the midst of poverty, misery, sickness and suffering?" The premises of the AIC argument also stem from the thought that all diseases are brought about by the devil, who is the archenemy of God, such that whereas God always wants good and health for persons, Satan always wants evil and disease for them. This thought pattern does not exist in isolation, but grows in the seedbed of African traditional religion, which has always believed that malevolent spirits are the sources of human suffering.

One of the findings in this research is that the proposition on which the AICs build their approach to healing and the healer, namely, that abundant life promised by Jesus must especially and even necessarily lead to perfect bodily healing, is not in tune with the intent of Jesus' teachings and practice. Even during Jesus' ministry on earth, not all people He came into contact with were healed (Jn. 5:5:1-5). Martin Marty corroborates this insight: "Nowhere does Jesus suggest that the removal of suffering was his primary mission. Nor does he anywhere hint that the banishment of suffering is anything we should expect as believers. Indeed sin, not suffering,

was his primary concern.”¹ The apostles themselves, in spite of having great faith in Jesus, faced many afflictions and diseases (1 Cor. 1:7-9; Gal. 4:13-14). Even if healing from a specific bodily affliction is not realized, this does not negate God’s love for the afflicted in Christ. What we should firmly hold onto is that God works even in our misfortunes, our limitations, and our weaknesses. The AIC healing strategy tends to scrape off the power of the Word and sacraments, especially when they encourage people to find help in themselves by strongly believing, praying hard, as they “choose their own means of ascent to God rather than receive God’s descent to them.”²

The Lutheran Church stands for a holistic approach of healing. Pertaining to bodily healing, ELCK holds that medical doctors are instruments which God uses to heal mediately. This position does not demean or contradict Jesus’ miraculous healings, but simply acknowledges the various ways he works to heal. Medical healing, at the same time, is not an antidote to all human being’s health complications. There is no promise or guarantee that if one goes to hospital, then they will be healed: “The New Testament points our eyes to the reality of the resurrection, not to an age of medical glory in the here and now.”³ When by grace one is healed medically, the honor and glory still goes to God, who can both heal mediately or immediately. The same can be said of healing for psychiatric needs. Psychiatrists and counselors can counsel patients and their counseling can be therapeutic to them. There is a strong conviction among Lutheran authors that spiritual healing, which involves the forgiveness of sins addressed to the penitent sinner, is the “most potent healing medication known to humankind.”⁴ When one

¹ Martin E. Marty and Kenneth L. Vaux, eds., *Health /Medicine and the Faith Traditions: An Inquiry into Religion and Medicine* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 302.

² Lindberg, *The Third Reformation?*, 118.

³ Ludwig, *Order Restored*, 109.

⁴ Ludwig, *Order Restored*, 205.

is healed spiritually, they become a living branch of God's vine. They are reconciled to God and their souls' wounds are completely dressed. Such status brings about psychological healing, as one's dignity is restored. The peace of mind brought about by the forgiveness of sins can also trickle down to the healing of the body as God wills. God's healing mission is what the church does every day in her ministry. The Word emancipates from the power of the devil and the Lord's Supper brings the touch of Jesus to the sick persons' bodies and souls, and they are healed in Christ. In the holy waters of baptism, sins are washed, and the devil is exorcised. The position of this research is that Lutherans believe in miracles—miracles of salvation, restoration, and new life. When we witness the miracle of salvation, we also see a sign of healing, of the kingdom of God at work even now. We see people believing in Jesus without the melodramatic advertisement of AIC miracle services, which focus on the power of the healer rather than the power of the Great Physician in his life-giving word. ELCK's divine service is, in a sense, already a service of healing. People's sins are forgiven and God himself, through the Word and sacraments, exorcises the demons.

By laying out the building blocks for a holistic Lutheran approach to health, our thesis has also drawn attention to the gaps in catechesis that should be filled by the ELCK to address the claims of AICs. The thought that the church is not complete without experiencing miracles of healing is leading many to translate the miracles of Jesus in worldly terms. Healing becomes synonymous with material prosperity, with striving to run away from both the suffering Christ and the Christian life of suffering. The AICs do not associate suffering with the life the Savior calls his disciples to, and instead, see the Christian life solely as a participation in the victory of Christ in this life. Those who suffer are then seen as immature Christians. Luther addressed this issue five-hundred years ago, saying: "He who does not know Christ does not know God hidden

in suffering. Therefore he prefers, works to suffering, glory to the cross, strength to weakness, wisdom to folly, and, in general, good to evil.”⁵ Luther clarified that such people “hate the cross and suffering and love works and the glory of works.”⁶ Suffering is not to be romanticized, but in God’s plan it is also not to be reduced to a negative, demonic experience. Suffering may be a preparatory school for growth in faith and love: “God can work through our sickness to develop within us a profound, Christlike maturity. This is a graceful acceptance of sickness and turns our attention from the suffering to a healthy purposive attitude.”⁷

Our research points out that although God can and does indeed heal the body, lack of bodily healing is by no means a sign of lack of spiritual healing. It also shows that spiritual healing is more than bodily healing, though the former can also include the latter as God sees fit. Even if it means that one of us may die, Christians do not live under the fear of death, and indeed, death does not interrupt the lovely relationship believers have with Jesus. By faith in Christ and the power of his resurrection, life lost is a life gained. As Lantz puts it, given that “our God has come not only to share in our life and death, but also to heal us unto the resurrection makes even death a healing. It brings an end to our earthly struggles and we gladly depart in peace.”⁸ When our health gives way to illness and eventually to death, accepting death with courage is also a witness that death has no victory over us. Dying with Jesus in expectation of the resurrection and the final destruction of death, therefore, is indeed a great miracle of healing.

In terms of recommendations, African Lutheran pastors should teach a holistic view of healing, Christian life under the cross in the midst of sickness, and help others discern what

⁵ Forde, *On Being a Theologian of the Cross*, 82.

⁶ Forde, *On Being a Theologian of the Cross*, 82.

⁷ Ludwig, *Order Restored*, 191.

⁸ Lantz, “Healing in the Divine Service,” 27.

miracles mean and do not mean. This can be achieved, for instance, by teaching the benefits of baptism in the life of the baptized, including its link to exorcism and the power of the Spirit to drive out demons through the Word. Together with baptism, pastors should also highlight the significance of the Lord's Supper, both as the means of grace and healing balm to the sick, as well as the necessity of repentance and absolution. The sacramental implications of holistic healing for a Christian should be considered, showing how the forgiveness of sins can also deal with our shame, guilt, and fear, and in doing so can also bring healing to our relationships and bodies. The theodical question "why me?" will trouble the hearts of many a sick parishioner. In such moments, the pastor should organize Bible studies where he teaches Christians not to peek into the hiddenness of God for answers to the why of suffering, but rather to rely on the revealed Word as they let God be God in their lives.

Pastors should also acknowledge the need to deliver God's people not only from sin, but also from the evil one. However, they should remind God's people that Satan is not God's equal, as dualists hold. The devil exists, but as a defeated enemy, whose every attack is not merely done out of his volition but with permission from God (cf. Job. 1:12). In his providence, God uses Satan's attacks on believers to make them depend more strongly on God through prayer and meditation in God's promises. God can use these circumstances to strengthen a Christian's faith from being untried to being tried and refined to persevere in the faith and withstand further spiritual attacks.

Finally, lay people and clergy should visit the sick to pray with and for them in times of crisis. Visitation does not only inspire a sense of solidarity, but acts as a sign of love and concern for the sick. Through visitation, the sick will see Christ himself in the person of the visiting ones, especially when they have Bible readings and prayers with them. The congregation should draw

into its programming chaplaincy or para-chaplaincy activities, whereby pastors, deaconesses, and elders have a roster of the sick whom they will visit and pray for.

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