

## Deserved Roles of Christian Faith and Medical Science in Healing and Deliverance

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### Abstract

Most often than not, while those in the Medical profession are doing a magnificent job of diagnosis and treatment of patients from the point of view of science, there also exist religiously inclined fellows who wonder whether science is all there is to seeking wholeness. It is often argued that instead of concentrating on science alone, the spiritual and psychological dimensions of the human person ought also to be taken into cognizance in the quest for holistic wellbeing. This work employs the sociological, theological and descriptive methods in the enquiry into this all-important topic. After digging into the concepts of Healing and Deliverance, we arrived at the basic understanding that healing entails much more than mere effecting the treatment or cure of psychosomatic ailments. Deliverance, as such, is seen as being part and parcel of healing, as it pertains specifically to curbing of the influence of evil spirits or completely rooting out of the presence of evil spirits in any person, place and object. In this light, the spiritual dimension is seen as the deepest aspect of healing which Jesus Christ brings, especially by means of the Christian faith. It is thus submitted therefore that there is every need for mutual cooperation between faith-healers and medical personnel. This, as it is expected, would yield unimaginable positive integral results in the healing and deliverance of their clients. In this respect, a few suggestions are put forth.

**Keywords:** Christian Faith, Medical Science, Healing, Deliverance

### Introduction

As Dr. Elmer Hess (2), the then President-elect of American Medical Association once observed,

Our medical schools are doing a magnificent job of teaching the fundamentals of scientific medicine. However, I am afraid that the concentration on basic science is so great that the teaching of spiritual values is almost neglected (cited in Kuhlman 2).

It is precisely on this note that we hope to examine the deserved roles of Christian Faith vis-a-vis Medical Science.

A working definition of Christian Faith and that of Medical Science reveal that Christian Faith simply means all that pertains to the system or set of beliefs/practices relating to Christianity or followership of Christ (*Chambers 21<sup>st</sup> Century Dictionary, Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*) while Medical Science, on the other hand, refers to a department of knowledge which has to do with the systematic observation or experiment targeted at principles or laws governing the health (or general wellbeing of the human person) (*The New International Pocket Dictionary of the English Language, Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*) or other objects so factored in. In a nutshell, where lies the melting point of Christian Faith and Medical Science in the healing and deliverance business? A broader exposé shall be offered on the concepts of Healing and Deliverance.

### Definition of Key Terms

The key concepts here are *Healing and Deliverance*.

The English word *heal* comes from the Old Saxon word *hal* meaning *whole*. In modern English it has the following meanings: to make whole or sound; to cure (a disease or

wound); to save, purify, cleanse, repair, amend; to become whole or sound; to recover from sickness or a wound; to get well; sickness or a wound; to get well (Claxton 8).

This presupposes that the term "healing" is often applied to various situations. Healing of a wound is a natural physiological process and a good example for clarifying the meaning of healing in other spheres. A wound may heal, leaving a scar. Yet further reoccurrence is possible. Medical experts who try to differentiate between cure and healing maintain that "a cure means the disease has been completely eradicated, never to return" (Claxton 8) while healing is not so complete and to the roots.

In the original language of the New Testament, the principal Greek words used in describing a cure, to heal, and to make whole are five: *Therapeus* (to treat); *Iaomai* (to effect a cure); *Sozo* (to save, rescue, deliver, keep safe, preserve, cure, make well, make whole); *Katharizo* (to cleanse); *Apokathistemi* (to restore whole) (Claxton 18).

Of these five Greek words, all except *Sozo* are used usually in a clinical context. *Sozo* is used in both clinical and non-clinical contexts. The imagery of what a mother hen does when a kite comes snatching its few day old chicks is very representative here.

*Sozo* more often means salvation from sin, sickness, meaninglessness, death and judgment. It also means salvation into freedom from the bondage of sin into health and life eternal now and hereafter. It means entry into a new man and a new age and a new life hid with Christ in God. It is most often found in the direct speech of Jesus to those healed by Him. For instance to the woman suffering from hemorrhage Jesus said: "Courage my daughter, your faith has saved you"

(Matt. 9:22). This could be said to be divine healing. The adjective *Divine* above goes to show that there are different sources, manners or methods of healing. By “divine” is meant the intervention of some supernatural force or power. In our context, God the Father, Jesus in the Holy Spirit is the divine figure. This is also termed “Faith-healing” in some quarters as distinct from medical, traditional, magic, occultic healing or otherwise.

Of the medical means scriptures direct that, “There are times when good health depends on doctors. For they, in their turn, will pray the Lord to grant them the grace to relieve and heal, and so prolong life” (Sirach 38:1-15).

There are different dimensions to healing: Spiritual, Psychological (or emotional) or Physical; the Spiritual is the deepest kind of healing Christ brings, in which case there would be repentance and forgiveness of sins; the Psychological could take the form of inner-healing of the emotions: anger, resentments, fear, etc.; the Physical is the type people are most used to. It refers to the healing of the body from effects of disease or accident as the case may be. It could be cancer, paralyzes, ulcer, or what have you? God specializes in the miraculous. Deliverance is also part and parcel of healing.

By *deliverance* is meant the Power to curb the influence of the evil one or completely root out his presence in any person, place or object. Any of the above dimensions – Physical, emotional and spiritual could be affected by demonic oppression in which case deliverance would be needed. This area needs serious discernment. We shall revisit the issue of deliverance later.

It is worth noting that when we talk of healing today we do not mean just one aspect of the human person. The goal of holistic medicine for instance, is positive wellness rather than absence of symptoms. According to Dr. R. Claxton (15), “recent research has shown that the state of the mind and spirit have a major effect on physical and mental health”.

Even Socrates was well aware of the need for healing of the Soul as well as of the body, and modern Western medicine has traditionally taught that doctors should treat the whole person. Greek “*holos*” from which holistic derives, means “entire and whole”. The focus of medicine therefore in modern times is the healing of the complete person – Spirit, soul and body.

In healing there is need for proper integration because:

A physically healthy person may be neither psychologically well integrated, nor spiritually well developed... A psychologically integrated person may show no evidence of spirituality and lack physical health.

A holy person may show signs of psychological repression as well as being physically ill (Claxton 35).

### **The Healing Ministry of Jesus**

Nearly one fifth of the four Gospels is devoted to Jesus’ healing ministry and discussions related to it. Twenty six cases of individual healings performed by Christ are recorded in the Gospels, and ten cases of multiple healings. Acts 10:38 records how “He went everywhere doing good and healing all who were under the power of the Devil, for God was with him”. Luke 4:16-21 records how “He undertook His Ministry of preaching, teaching and healing under the power of the Holy Spirit”.

He surrendered His whole life to the Father’s will for the Spirit to lead Him. And He did this gratuitously without any strings attached. Jesus was not under contract, like a Professor in a University, paid to teach the students who in turn had paid their tuition. It was an act done out of love, free of charge, a free gift. Jesus took completely the human form (Phil. 2:7) to an extent, that “He did not have in Himself the power to heal or proclaim the gospel (on His own accord) without the power from the Holy Spirit” (Claxton 35). By the singular act of His Baptism, the God-man was showing us that “where the Spirit is, there is the kingdom” (McManus 16). He tried to show that without God’s Spirit no one can drive out demons (Matt. 12:27-28).

We are often inclined to thinking that Jesus performed miracles, and healed the sick and cast out demons because He was the Son of God. In reality, “Jesus in His human nature (weakness) had not any power to drive out demons” (McManus 17).

The miracles of healing, to Jesus are signs or pointers to the reign of God here and now and signs of the future triumph of God’s kingdom.

The salvation which Jesus Christ proclaimed, comprises liberation from sin and from the domination of the evil one, and liberation from all those things that oppress people (Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Evangelization of the Men of Our Time) (n.30). And as Pope St. John Paul II teaches,

In the Cross of Christ not only is the redemption accomplished through suffering, but also human suffering itself has been redeemed...Christ has also raised human suffering to the level of redemption (John Paul II, *The Christian Meaning of Human Suffering*) (38).

Someone described Jesus’ miracles as “being like light in the night. They show us a way and enable us to hope that eventually we will see the complete light of day of which these are but a single day” (McManus 20).

In other words, the miracles of Jesus:

are not in themselves the presence of the full reality of the kingdom. The last enemy, death, already defeated in Christ, has still to be defeated in us. Jesus did not come to banish sickness or suffering or death here and now. He came to establish the reigns triumphantly in his Kingdom among us; His kingdom which is still to come, all sickness and suffering and even death will be abolished (McManus 20).

1Corinthians 15:25-26 confirms this assertion: “Christ must rule until God defeats all enemies and puts them under His feat. The last enemy to be defeated will be death. His methods of healing varied from place to place. Some were: By a word of command – as in the case of the girl proclaimed dead (Lk. 7:32-35); by touching - as in the case of Peter’s Mother-in-law (Matt. 8:5-6); by using certain objects – as in the case of the deaf-mute Mk. 5:35-40 as he used spittle.

Some of His healings were *Instantaneous*; others were in *Process* while some were *Delayed* healings. Some scholars classify them into two: *Instantaneous* and *Progressive*.

### **The Healing Ministry of the Church**

In the manner in which Jesus works through the power of the Holy Spirit He expects His disciples to work through that same power. He mandates them to heal and even perform

greater wonders.

In John 14:12 He says "I am telling you the truth. Whoever believes in me will do what I do. Yes, he will do even greater things, because I am going to the Father." Jesus Christ commanded the disciples to continue his healing mission. That healing power would be associated with believers (Mk. 16:17-18); in the introduction to the Rite of Anointing of the Sick, published 1972 we are instructed that part of God's plan is that we "should combat all illness and should prudently seek the blessing of good health. We will thus be able to play our part in the secular society and in the Church" (3).

The Church therefore recognizes the charism of healing. As such, the healing ministry and prayer ministry come within the realm of worship. Healing ministry goes with prayer and prayer is an act of worship (*Guidelines* ii). The *Guidelines* (2) further states that, "the Church cannot lose sight of the fact that she must also continue Christ's mission of bringing relief and succour to the sufferers and those who are troubled in mind, body, or spirit, through preaching, teaching and healing." (Matt. 9:35).

In Mark 16:17-18 Jesus lists signs that will be associated with believers: "In my name they will cast out devils; they will have the gift of tongues, they will pick up snakes in their hands and be unharmed; should they drink deadly poison they will lay their hands on the sick who will recover".

We can safely divide the healing ministry of the Church to two stages, namely: The Apostolic and the Modern/Contemporary Ages.

#### A) The Apostolic Age

In the book of Acts, there are nine cases of individual healings by the disciples and seven occasions of multiple healings. As Jim McManus of the Dominican Order rightly described: "What God began in the power of the Spirit through the ministry of Jesus, He continues through the same Spirit in the name of Jesus in the ministry of the Church. All ministry is in the name of Jesus and in the ministry of the Church. All ministries are in the name of Jesus in the power of the Spirit" (McManus 33). So as to continue with His ministry, Jesus gave His followers the gift of the Holy Spirit and of His own name. As John 15:16 has it – "The Father will give you whatever you ask of him in my name". In Acts of the Apostles 3:6, St. Peter used this gift "Silver and gold I have none... in the name of Jesus...". Speaking in the name of Jesus always made Jesus present.

In the face of persecution the Church prayed for miracles of healing in the name of Jesus and God answered that prayer (Acts 4:31). Wherever the apostles took the good news of Christ they also brought His healing love to the people. Peter's shadow healed the sick (Acts 5:15-16); Paul's handkerchiefs and aprons healed many (Acts 19:11-12).

The proof of the Gospel is not found in eloquent words but in deeds performed by the power of God's Spirit. In other words, what we do in the name of Jesus is the testimony of what we preach or teach. In Mark 16:20, the Lord proved the truthfulness of their preaching by the signs and wonders that accompanied them. 1 Corinthians 4:19-20, the Kingdom of God is not a matter of words but of power.

It is obvious therefore that the early Church did not only believe in divine healing, it also prayed for God to work

miracles of healing.

#### B) The Modern/Contemporary Era

As Jim McManus asserted in relation to the healing Ministry, the prayers of the Liturgy manifest our faith in God. In our prayers we ask God for strength in our weakness, joy in our sorrows, light in our darkness. We pray to be filled with the Spirit, to be filled with the power of His gifts. These prayers reveal our God. Our God is a God who saves, who heals and delivers from evil, who comforts, enlightens and strengthens his people (39-40).

In the introduction to *The Rite of the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick*, published 1972 we understand that "it is part of God's plan that we should combat all illness and should prudently seek the blessing of good health. We will thus be able to play our part in the secular society and the Church" (3). And in the more recent *Guidelines for the Healing Ministry in the Catholic Church in Nigeria*, the Bishops stressed that, "the Salvation which Jesus Christ proclaimed comprises of liberation from sin and from the domination of the evil one, and liberation from all those things that oppress people" (1).

The Bishops went on to emphasize the fact that "the Church cannot lose sight of the fact that she must also continue Christ's mission of bringing relief and succour to the suffering and those who are troubled in mind, body, or spirit, through preaching, teaching and healing" (2). The Church also heals through certain sacraments and sacramental which are signs of God's presence. Sacraments could simply be defined as outward signs of the inward graces received through the Church (Lang 561). And Sacramentals are liturgical actions, sacred signs and objects introduced by the Church signifying spiritual effects achieved through the intercession of the Church (Lang 560; *Guidelines* 11).

According to the Catholic Christian faith, for instance, three basic healing Sacraments are identifiable, namely: Reconciliation, Anointing of the Sick and the Holy Eucharist.

#### Reconciliation

In the Sacrament of reconciliation, the wounds of sin are healed and forgiveness of sins by God is as well offered. And since sin affects not only our vertical but also horizontal relationships, it also inflicts wounds on the sinner, on his or her neighbour and indeed on the whole Church.

For instance, parents can sin against both God and their children by neglecting their children. In like manner, children may sin against God and their parents by abandoning their parents and not showing them love.

This sacrament, inner wounds are healed as sad memories of relationships, of self-esteem or self-image are deeply healed. By this means, the person accepts with gratitude some past events and is capable of loving and forgiving someone while he or she realizes that he or she is lovable. Herein, the whole of this individual is not merely forgiven but renewed. As it were, the power for auricular confession which is derived from Christ's mandate in John 20:23: "whose sins you forgive are forgiven..." is manifested here. There exists an assurance of pardon and peace through absolution. The sacramental grace is given and the sinner feels spiritually lighter and less

burdened. An English psychiatrist once declared, "If I were able to obtain forgiveness for the sins of the patients in my clinic, I would be able to discharge half of them tomorrow" (cited in Egbunu 113).

### **Anointing of the Sick**

In this sacrament, the sick encounters our Lord Himself and experiences His saving and healing presence and touch. *The Official General Introduction of the Rites of Anointing and Vatican* (1972) gives us encouragement in the ministry of praying for healing: "Part of the plan laid out by God's providence is that we should fight strenuously against all sickness and carefully seek the blessings of good health; so that we may fulfill our role in human society and in the Church" (McManus 26; McNutt 279). Through the reception of this sacrament one is strengthened against the temptations of the Evil one and against anxiety over death; provided with the forgiveness of his or her sins; and when expedient for the welfare of the soul, restores their bodily health.

It is rather unfortunate that many people ignorantly associate this sacrament with death instead of healing. It was generally called Extreme-Unction or Last Sacrament. So when the priest was invited to the sick person it was a sign of the gravity of the situation rather than a sign of hope and recovery. Consequently, many persons were scared stiff of this sacrament. And even now that is known as Anointing of the Sick; the word, *perriculum* (danger) is misunderstood. It has been misinterpreted by many to mean only danger of death. In the real sense of the word, it could be used to refer to danger of going blind, deafness, paralysis, depression, senility, etc. In U.S.A. even "Spiritual Aridity" is included. Let Catholic doctors also learn to send for the priest when the anointing is needed.

### **The Holy Eucharist**

As the Second Vatican Council (*Decree on Ministry and Life of Priests* n.18) emphasizes, this sacrament, "...Contains the Church's entire spiritual wealth...Through His very flesh, made vital and vitalizing by the Holy Spirit. He offers life to men...the Eucharist shows itself to be the source and apex of the whole work of preaching the Gospel".

The Vatican II Council still describes the Eucharist as, a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a band of charity, a paschal banquet in which Christ is consumed, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of the future glory is given to us (McManus 74).

In the Mass, the Priest prays specially at various times for health of both mind and body, also for healing and strength. Worthy of special note is that just after the Lord's Prayer at Mass we normally pray for the three fold deliverance. Deliver us Lord from every evil and grant us Peace in our day. In your mercy keep us free from sin and protect us from all anxiety. Obviously the Church specifically prays for protection against crippling anxiety here as if to tell us that the solution to anxiety is total trust in God. That is faith. McManus (77) relates how "a psychiatrist once complained that about 90% of his patients were mentally sick because of anxiety, and that anxiety is a spiritual condition which he can do very little to alleviate".

The Holy Eucharist remains the most powerful means of intercession. And Jesus in the Eucharist is the *perfect medicine*. When one receives the Doctor of Doctors and the *Master-healer*; and when one *swallows, digests* and *assimilates* Jesus into one's system, one would have the *psychotherapist par excellence*.

It is only the Catholic Christian especially that can forcefully and rightly say "He that is in me is greater than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4). Jesus does not just give the perfect diagnoses and treatment, but He Himself is the perfect medicine. There is an enormous in Booking Masses for one's intentions. In it lies the greatest power for deliverance.

As earlier stated, the Church also experiences healing through Sacramentals. By sacramental here we simply mean sacred signs which bear a resemblance to the Sacraments, they could be blessed religious objects used in evoking the worship of God. e.g. Crucifix, Medal, Incense, Olive oil, etc. they possess no power in themselves but are aids to prayer. The Christian God, for instance, is a God of nature and He cannot be confined to any particular method of operating or healing. Examples of such sacred signs and symbols abound. e.g the following:

### **The Cross or Crucifix**

On the Cross where hangs Jesus, there is so much power. John 3:14 - As Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so the son of man must be lifted. And when I am lifted up, I will draw all men to myself; a fiery serpent (Num. 21:8); Look unto me and be you saved (Isaiah 45:22).

### **Through Water**

The prophet Elisha heals miscarriages through blessing of salt and Water (Holy Water) (2 Kings 2:19-21). Holy water is also mentioned in Num. 5:16. Jesus tells the man born blind after touching his eyes with mud and spittle to go and wash at the pool of Siloam (John 9:7).

### **By Use of Olive Oil (Oil of Gladness or Anointing)**

Olive oil is recommended for anointing the sick (James 5:14); the apostles anointed the sick and healed them (Mark 6:13); olive oil is meant for mollifying wounds (Isaiah 1:6).

### **By Means of Incense**

Incense is used for God's divine purposes (Mal. 1:11); as means of worship (Rev. 8:4).

### **By Laying on of Hands**

They shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover (Mark 16:18). The sick can lay hands in reverse (Luke 6:19). Anything He so desires could also be used. Jesus used Spittle to heal the deaf mute ((Mark 7:32-35); Jesus decided to use Mud and Saliva to heal the blind (John 9:1-11); Hezekiah used a poultice to heal himself. For Isaiah had told Hezekiah's servants, "Make an ointment of Figs and spread it over he boil and he will get well again" (Isa. 38:1-7). Peter's Shadow healed (Acts 5:15); Paul's handkerchiefs and apron or towel healed many (Acts 19:12).

- The Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary is one of the most efficacious means of God's holy touch.



### Through Word of Command

This is because the Word of God is something alive and active and it cuts more finely than any double-edged sword (Heb. 4:12). Whoever says to this mountain. (Mark 11:23); Rise, take up your bed and walk (John 5:8).

Besides all that have been listed, the sign of the Cross, pleading of the Blood of Jesus and a disciplined and orderly use of the Holy Ghost Fire. Even praise worship, natural food or drink, human breath or touch, herbs/drugs could be very therapeutic.

At this juncture, it might be necessary to recognize that it is not every Divine Healing that is *instantaneous*. Some could be *progressive*, while others are even *delayed*.

### Medical Personnel as Facilitators of God's Healing

Every healing comes from God and it is by that very fact divine: The natural process of recovery can be facilitated or encouraged. Hippocrates separated the practice of healing from magic, superstition and religious notions. He believed, however, that there are natural powers in the body to heal itself. On the Recovery power of the Body the 16<sup>th</sup> Century French Surgeon, Ambroise Pare, made a fundamental statement while recording his war experience, "I dressed him to the end of his case and God healed him" (Claxton 12).

Elmer Hess once made some powerful remarks, "a doctor can diagnose, he can give medication. He can give his patient the best that Medical Science has given to him and to the world – but in the final analysis, it is the Divine Power of God that heals" (Kuhlman 2). He went on to explain further, thus a doctor has the power to set a bone, but he must wait for Divine Power to heal. A surgeon can skillfully perform the most difficult of operations; he may be master with a scalped, using every facet of his well-trained intellect. Yet he must wait for a higher power to do the actual healing – for no mere human being has ever been given the power to heal (Kuhlman 3).

Elmer never minced words when he said,

Any doctor who lacks faith in the Supreme Being has no right to practice medicine; ... a physician who walks into a sick room is not alone. He can only minister to the ailing person with the material tools of scientific medicine. His faith in the higher power does the rest. Show me the doctor who denies the existence of the Supreme Being, and I will say that he has no right to practice the healing art (Kuhlman 2).

It should be borne in mind carefully therefore that "theology and science, practical Christian living and the art of medicine, are inextricably bound up in one whole. They are complementary, not conflicting" (Claxton 6).

This explains why the Church is in her health care services involved in building hospitals, leprosaria, clinics, homes for the disabled, primary health care, and psychiatric medicine (*Guidelines* 6). She is said to be in divine still. Indeed all healing is divine, whether physical, psychological, spiritual or even socio-economic. But that which pertains to the *Salus animarum* (salvation of souls) is far greater.

### The Need for Mutual Co-operation in Healing

There are usually three attitudes among Christians in

relationship to sickness, prayer, medicine. Those who believe that the healing of physical sickness is completely the work of the medical personnel and not a matter of prayer; those who think that all healings should really come through prayer and that in an ideal situation, Christians should not subject themselves to medical attention; and those who hold that the sick could seek healing through both prayer and medical help. Truly, there is need for that mutual understanding in the healing ministry because, "Neither medicine, psychotherapy nor psychiatry can offer an all round solution."

A renowned medical practitioner, Dr. Robert once brought home this point when he said, "Healing comes about not only through scientific medicine, especially if practiced in a personal and caring way, but also through the wholeness and health of personal corporate life, including prayer and may indeed sometimes be miraculous" (Claxton 6).

Again, "Faith, rightly understood, is an important and indispensable part of receiving healing... The love of Christ has enormous healing power rightly understood, exercised and appreciated" (Claxton 6).

The Pittsburgh Medical Bulletin, Official Publications of Allegheny County Medical Society is quoted in Kathryn Kuhlman's book, *I believe in miracles* as cautioning physicians against trying to be arbiters of fate, because nobody can say when anyone is going die. Even when all the medical evidence indicates that there is no hope for a patient, the bulletin declared, "The doctor must remember that the will of God, and little understood mechanisms in the human body, may intercede on patient's behalf" (Kuhlman 147).

"The physiological activities of the human body and the will of God", the bulletin stated, "may permit the continuation of life and a certain degree of comfort and well-being in some cases where pathological examination and clinical evidence preclude the existence of hope." (Kuhlman 148)

Therefore, Christians, especially, are called upon not to be arbiters of fate and extend an absolutely hopeless prognosis although evidence of the same appears to be present, in as much as there are powers and factors beyond our ken, which may permit a reasonably comfortable existence in spite of incontrovertible evidence to the contrary" (Kuhlman 147-148). As a matter of fact, no case is hopeless.

What prevents a medical doctor, for instance, from referring certain cases that are spiritual to the right quarters? Thanks to God too for the Homeopathic means of diagnosis in our day. Many are being referred for prayers. And in the same vein, should anything prevent the faith-healer from referring certain necessary cases to the medical quarters? Did God not say we have to honour the physician? (Sirach 38:1-5).

The prevalent problem we have seems to come from the angle of the psychologist or psychotherapist who tends to see everything from his own point of view. Even when there are apparently cases for deliverance or casting out of unwanted spiritual elements or intruders, in which case the victims suffer from subjection, obsession, affliction, and perhaps, possession or other forms of oppression, it ought to be borne in mind, however, that, either side of the divide (medical or faith) would be wrong to the extent that it presumes it has the answer to all problems. And they would be right also to the extent that they are able to see that none of them (medical or faith) alone has a solution to all cases.

### **The Deliverance Ministry Today**

The devil as the arch-enemy of God is out fighting very furiously, determinedly, purposefully, violently and silently too, to deceive, defile, deform, defeat, dribble, destroy, afflict and kill the heritage of God. It is not uncommon in our days to find people who, though regular in the churches as the Church pews, have the “seeds” of the devil in their lives.

They are found not only in our higher institutions or Universities. They are groomed up from the earlier stages of education such as secondary, primary or nursery schools. In these schools, in their families or among their friends they go into covenant with the devil. In doing this the devil has devised many means as he remains master strategist in this respect. The devil and his agents spend overtime in their job and they seem even to be more astute in their dealings than the children of God are with the things of God.

In fact, the present situation has led some people to conclude that “we are living in the Era of the Devil”, or “an age of the Devil’s Pentecost”. A time when Satan is pouring out his venoms to counter what Jesus Christ is doing through the Holy Spirit. The *Civitas Dei* (the kingdom of God) is constantly in combat with the *Civitas diaboli* (the kingdom of Satan). And battle raging between Christ and Satan.

Satan tries to wield his power through spiritism, superstition, fortune-telling, magic, false religious and cults as never before in human history. There are *counterfeits* all around, who lay claim to great powers including the power to heal the sick, perform miracles, and deliver the oppressed or possessed. The Devil and his agents are trying to have a field day in our land as they disguise themselves as angels of light (2 Cor. 11:14). They come in different shades and colouring: as mesmerizers, nature healers, spiritual healers, prophets or prophetesses. And many people, either ignorantly or foolishly rush from one excitement to the other as these self-acclaimed “Saviours”, parade or dance before their eyes. Some go into buying or consulting of horoscopes even on newspapers, magazines or social media pages – all of which do not help. Occult healing and deliverance methods would not help either. Rather, the end result is the oppression and enslavement by the occult of millions.

Deliverance or true freedom from the clutches of Satan is possible only through Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

The power for miracles is not dead. Neither medicine, psychology, depth psychology, psychotherapy, nor psychiatry can offer any lasting solution in this matter. Magic and secret cults are virtually impotent. And it is futile to turn to the traditional religion or any other non – Christian religion in this regard.

We are encouraged to pray for personal deliverance and even deliverance of others (Matt. 6:7-13). However, one needs to be really equipped for the spiritual warfare as one need to call to mind the ugly episode of some Jewish exorcists in Acts of the Apostles 19:11-17.

In the *Guidelines on the Healing Ministry*, the Catholic Bishops of Nigeria exhorted that, “the Faithful are encouraged to pray for deliverance from demonic attack. But actual cases of demonic possession should be reserved for exorcism” ( 22).

### **Action Points or Suggestions**

It would be necessary at this juncture to harp on a few points

for serious consideration by both the faith healers and medical professionals:

Traditionally, many believe in healing miracles. In many cases, however, they do not believe it can happen through their instrumentality. Doctors and others involved in the medical profession are called upon to believe that Jesus wants to heal in a more divine or more direct and spiritual manner in their families, clinics or hospitals. There is every need therefore as they go on their daily duties to dedicated all to Jesus and even pray before treating their patients. Prayer should not be a last resort.

If God must save others through those in the medical profession, they should strive too, to live according to the ethics of the profession despite all odds.

Cases abound where many in this time-honoured profession are into the serious and of course dirty business of helping people to procure abortions. In fact, this act of terminating the unborn child is becoming a lucrative business for so many in the profession. It would appear as if the Hippocratic Oath – “to save life” is no longer binding on medical doctors.

The care-free or non-challant attitude of some medical doctors in their chosen profession is a point of concern to so many people. It is a serious loophole fast dragging the name of this revered profession to the mud. This is so much that the resultant effect has seen doctors leaving some operation materials in the body of their patients. This needs to be squarely addressed.

No case is actually hopeless before God. There are incurable diseases but there is no incurable person. No matter how medically hopeless a case may be, medical professionals should not be telling their patients that there is no hope.

Prayers for healing should not be centered on the body alone. For holistic healing to take place, the mind and the spirit should be taken care of too. And as a matter of fact, we must realize that Jesus waits to heal us more spiritually because the body avails nothing in eternal terms.

Laying on of hands could be so therapeutic. Therefore, the medical practitioners can lay hands on the sick and pray for them. Some precautions, however, are necessary in a case where, for instance, the opposite sex is involved. It is advisable in the case of a woman for a man to allow her put her hand at any “unsafe” place, then place his on top of hers, before praying over.

Prayer for healing should always include prayer for the medical profession in general. If God heals without recourse to medicine, fine. Pray for right medical help, diagnosis, treatment, effectiveness, protection from harmful side effects.

God can also relieve pains, distress, producing a remission. Prolonged ill-health can also end in death, since none of us would be fully healed until we get to heaven.

### **Conclusion**

In the milieu of antiquity, disease, injury and death were the common heritage of mankind. However, with the growth in science in the modern/contemporary era, medical problems which have been as ancient as man himself have been conquered through scientific inventions and discoveries. To a very large extent, the menacing effects of some medication-defying and malignant ailments have been put to rest through the utilization of these scientific discoveries. On the other

hand, it is emphasized here healing is part of the very nature of God. That since He is always ready to heal, humans ought to be ready to cooperate with Him in our different fields for the holistic wellbeing of mankind.

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