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An Understanding of Healing in African Christianity: The Interface between Religion and Science

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ABSTRACT

Most of African Christian Churches place a lot of emphasize on healing practices as a response to the teaching of Jesus Christ. This explains why churches or crusades that practice healing in Africa are very popular and command the greatest numbers of adherents. According to these churches, the Lord commanded them to heal, and so they heal. Although some of these churches do not discourage the use of modern medicine, they are convinced that spiritual healing is a higher method than the effort to compete with God and yet there are others that completely discourage the use of modern medicine. Seen from the modern Kenya where science is understood to be the foundation of development and progress and religion as an important stand. This paper assesses African Christian Church believe on the relationship between religion and science. It also explores African Christian Church's attitude spirituality has had on African Christian Church healing practices.

INTRODUCTION

The issue of religion and health is found as an integral part of faith in all religions good health. In fact, the redemptive messages taught by all religions are expressed in terms of deliverance from a state of bad health to acceptable and full heath as expected and intended by the creator. The ministry of healing was paramount in the teaching of Jesus Christ from the very beginning. Jesus was referred to as the great physician and the healers. Jesus healed many people during his ministry on earth and demonstrated that his healing was intrinsic to the gospel. Jesus indeed used healing to demonstrate to John the Baptist that he was the "one who was to come (Lk 7:18 -23).

On the other hand, healing has been practiced from time immemorial in Africa as an essential component of African spirituality. African integrates their Spirituality and healing practices and systems of medicine in their worldview. This African worldview emphasizes on the relatedness of healing and the African traditional religion. For this reason, the efficacy of all traditional medicine is always interpreted as the work of the Supreme Being and thus the Akan proverb "People Cure. God Heals". It is not therefore possible to separate African healing from African spirituality since disease and illness is interrelated with the Supreme Being and the universe.

In the pre-colonial period, the African healers rendered their services of healing to the community for a modest fee. Among such healers were diviners, seers, priests, herbalists and ritual elders. The introduction of Christianity and colonization in the nineteenth century however, marked the decline of African healing practices in many parts of Africa. The Christian missionaries perceived that African healing practices were superstitions, ignorance and that it lacked scientific evidence. It was for this reason that the missionaries and colonial governments discouraged and even punished those who practiced Africa healing and other beliefs associated with traditional healing.

The newly introduced Christian faith however, introduced western medicine and constructed hospitals to heal the sick using modern scientific methods. Indeed the 18th and the 19th philosophies in Europe swept clean the idea of Christian healing. Luther and Calvin among others believed that “the day of miracles was past and the “the gift of healing disappeared with the other miraculous powers which the Lord was pleased to give for a time” (Kelsey, 17). In the same way existentialism argued that there were no bases for Christian healing for God was no longer active in the world.

It was this emptiness of healing in their new-found faith that the Africans found inadequate. In the 1920’s and 1930’s, new African Christian Churches emerged out of the political, educational and cultural struggles. The Africans who belonged to mission churches left and formed independent churches outside mission control to enable them infuse elements of African spirituality in their faith. One of this spiritual belief which was absent in the missionary Christianity was healing.

African Christian perceived Jesus Christ as an active participant of all healing experiences including those brought into effect by traditional healers, western medicine and more importantly those brought about by miracles. It is such African Christian churches that continue to emphasize the practice of healing in their churches today. The healing of physical illness is seen as telling evidence that the spirit of Christ is actually present and at work among Christians. Indeed, some are so convinced about healing through Jesus that they do

not allow their adherent to attend to modern hospitals.

In his book, *Christian Healing: The Anointing of the Sick* (2007), Rinaldo Ronzani writes about the sacrament of the anointing of the sick in the Christian Church. He explains that anointing is a gift offered to the seriously ill or those close to death. Ronzani admits that many people in this world need healing. It is therefore the responsibility of the church to offer the sacrament to those who are rejected, discriminated against, stigmatized and abandoned. He further explains that the Christian community is called to be prophetic and to reach out for the sick.

In his first chapter, Ronzani address the issue of African healing. He observes that “health is a major concern ... in Africa where people are very often exposed to all sorts of diseases” (Ronzani, 2007, p. 15). He states that Africans see sickness as “lack of harmony and balance” (Ronzani, 2007, p. 16). The Church therefore is called to respond in such a way that the faithful will experience the gift in a tangible manner (Ronzani, 2007, p. 16). He argues that to serve the needs of the sick the church should recognize that it is God who ill regardless of the approach taken. He writes:

The combination of both – scientific skills as well as resources from a spiritual view – seems to be the last approach, as it deals with the whole person (Ronzani, 2007, p. 18).

Ronzani further examines the Independent Churches in Africa and shows that these Churches place great emphasis on the healing ministry. The people flock to crusades meetings and other healing services with great enthusiasm and with high expectation. He also explains how the Catholic Church has for many years encouraged medical research. They have built hospitals and medical schools to assist treat the sick people. Influenced by the Charismatic renewal in the last forty years, there is now among the Catholics an “emphasis of the experience of baptism in the spirit...Prophecy, healing and deliverance from evil” (Ronzani, 2007, p. 21). Apart from individual healing practiced by those who have received the gift of healing, the Catholic Church also has “healing masses and healing retreats” (Ronzani, 2007, p. 21). All these

demonstrate that the African Church experience and practice healing today in most of the churches.

Morton T. Kelsey in his book *Psychology, Medicine and Christian Healing* has provided a comprehensive summary of the ancient art of healing in Christian history. He noted that modern Christian Churches do not see any direct relationship between worship and healing the sick. The Christian Church, he argues, is contented that our bodies can be sufficiently be handled by medical and physical means and that sickness is God's disciplinary gift (Morton 1988, p. 20). The general attitude of the Church can thus be summarized:

Here the job of the Church is to impact ethical and moral values by teaching and by example or by social action - by building hospitals and providing social agencies, for instance. There is no way to bring in healing, nor any need to do so (Morton 1988, p. 9).

Kelsey attributes the lack of concern by the church for Christian healing to the Western worldview which is closed and has "no place for active presence of divine power operating in the world (Morton 1988, p. 265). This attitude seems to be prevalent in the main stream Churches today. Despite this attitude, Kelsey concludes that healing has always been integral part of the Christian practice. He writes:

Many of us have concluded that Christian healing was an integral part of Christian practice and evangelism in its most vital period of growth and is still an integral part of ministry today (Morton 1988).

James L. Cox and Gerrie Ter Haar have written an interesting book entitled *Uniquely Africa* (Cox & Ter Haar, 2003). The book is a collection of works by scholars who explored "uniquely African identities which include the encounter with Christianity with traditional Societies" (Cox & Ter Haar, 2003). In his article, Leslie E. T. Shyllon discusses the role of ministers in the African Independent Churches. He shows that such ministers are powerful individuals who performed not only rituals, but they also performed healing and exorcism (Cox & Ter Haar, 2003, p. 20). This point was further emphasized by Mercy Amba

Aduyoye who indicated that AICs, and in this case, Aladura Church, are firmly rooted in healing prayers. She observes that this concern of prayer and healing is an extension from African Religion. She notes:

Traditional prayers requests are made for prosperity, for procreation and all that brings life, victory and power. Health and healing are central to these Churches, as they are to adherents of African Religion (Cox & Ter Haar, 2003, p. 98)

She further argues that among the Prosperity Gospel Churches, casting out demons and faith healing are replacing both Western and African traditional medicine (Cox & Ter Haar, 2003, p. 100). Ezra Chitando, in his article also stress on the role and importance of AICs in Zimbabwe. He says that these Churches have achieved remarkable success in health and healing. He further argues that the Churches have adopted African interpretations of disease and have gone ahead to use the African approach to healing. He writes:

The churches have provided an alternative therapeutic system and their interpretation of illness and disease closely parallels the traditional one. Their use of cloths, symbols and dances is inspired by the traditional concepts (Cox & Ter Haar, 2003, p. 113).

This study was concerned with documenting the African traditional elements found in the African Christianity and how African Religion and therefore contributed to the African Christianity.

The Story of Archbishop Milingo about his gift of healing has been written by Gerrie ter Haar in her book, *How God Became African* (2009). Archbishop Milingo, a Catholic priest of Zambia healed people from physical and mental ailments through the power of Christ. The Catholic Church found it difficult to allow him to continue healing services since the idea of healing was not accommodated in the western worldview which did not believe in the intrusion of evil spirits. She observed that:

European mission, on the other hand, rejected the popular belief in evil spirits, which apart from any theological considerations implied an unacceptable rupture with the scientific type of thought that the

western Christian Church has appropriated since the enlightenment (Gerrie, 2009, p. 26).

Due to this position held by western worldview and indeed the church, Milingo was transferred to Rome where his healing powers were kept under watch. Although he was able to attract many followers many of whom he healed, the church had difficulties comprehending his healing abilities. Indeed, “some considered him to be mad – and his theological views; the term “superstition” could be heard in this contest, both in missionary circles and in the Vatican” (Gerrie, 2009, p. 26).

Ter Haar suggests that this “closed minded dogmatism” is also common among scientists who adhere to the materialist paradigm of the world. She however notes that “recent research using classic scientific methods does suggest some new and interesting ways of understanding spiritual phenomena (Cox & Ter Haar, 2003, p. 7). She observes than euro-sciences one of these sciences and religion closer. Quoting Chalmers, Ter Haar observes:

Neuro-science, in his view, will be a (major) part of a new and more comprehensive theory that will bridge the gap between science and subjective experience (Cox & Ter Haar, 2003, p. 7)

Francis Anekwe Oborji has discusses the healing churches in African. He confirms that the centers for prayer assemblies for healing are flourishing in Africa. He notes that healing practices are contacted by unskilled founders and priests and bishops of established churches (Oborji, 2005, p. 138). The Pentecostal Churches on the other hand, like the North American mega-churches, seems to be concerned with blessing, achievements, victory, prosperity among other types of success. Some of their most prominent pastors have entered politics.

Another type of Christianity discussed by Gifford is spirit Christianity. This type of Christianity in Kenya tends to emphasis on spiritual forces. Some of the churches have borrowed from African traditional culture and thus has its emphasis on spirits, witchcraft and sorcery. Others have been influenced by western cultism while others on demonic forces. He further notes that this phenomenon is not necessarily restricted to one denomination but cut across the board. It is

observed that all these churches have great emphasis on healing which became the central activities in most of the churches.

Francis Anekwe Oborji in his book, *Towards a Christian Theology of African Religions* (2005) has added his voice to express the importance of healing in African churches. According to him, “most African Independent Churches practice faith – healing”(Oborji, 2005, p. 149) and that the main worried of most of the churches is associated with healing. Oborji explains that healing in African churches are influenced by African religion, He thus observes:

When faced with difficult times, some African Christians turn to traditional religious practices to obtain practical and quick results. Since this Christians come from the background of their traditional religions. They concentrate on searching for what good and on protecting themselves from evil (Oborji, 2005, p. 145).

Diane B. Stinton’s book; *Jesus of Africa* (2004) has a chapter which describes models of contemporary African Christologies. Here Jesus is perceived in Africa as a life-giver and traditional healers. In this book which is a product of her research, Stinton says that the image which resonate with most African Christians of that of Jesus the healer. One of her interviewee from Kenya responded thus:

Obviously for any African, the image of healing is important. Healing is a ministry within Africa tradition because our understanding is that a person is whole, and we try to alleviate anything that interferes with the wholeness of life (Stinton, 2004, p. 65).

An *Encyclopedia of History, culture and Controversy* (2015) edited by Arri Eisen and Gary Laderman has several articles that address the issue of healing in all the traditions of the world. A few of these articles are on African healing. Among them is an article by Adam K. arap chepkwony on “African Traditional medicine and Healing” (Eisen & Laderman, 2015, pp. 642-648). Here he discusses African traditional healing practices from pre-colonial period to the present. Of importance in this article is his suggestion that African healing can work in collaboration with western medicine for the betterment of health serves of the sick in Africa

(Eisen & Laderman, 2015, p. 647). In the same book, hazel Ayanga has written on AIDS, Science and religion in Africa. She is content that AIDS epidemic has been interpreted “according to African cultural; ways of explaining disease” (Eisen & Laderman, 2015, p. 165). She concludes her paper by suggesting that AIDS has forced traditional medicine men/women to work together with modern medicine.

She writes:

It is imperative that a holistic approach be taken to manage it (AIDS). Religion and Science need to work hand in hand. This is beginning to happen (Eisen & Laderman, 2015, p. 645)

Nkurunziza R. K. Deusdebit book entitled, *Understanding Religion and Science in the African context* (2002), has several chapters write by various scholars in Africa on the issue of religion and science. He notes that the attitude towards science and religion has become a source of controversy. Alice Tuyizere for example has argued that African people strongly believe that religion and science are opposed to each other. She explains that for some people science invalidates religion and that the two disciplines are contradictory (Nkurunziza & Mugumya, 2002, p. 22). Tuyizere finally support the idea that although religion and science address questions from different perspectives, they should however work together. She writes:

The two should come together without fusing. There should be interactions, dialogue and mutual interaction between science and religion rather than confrontation and segregation (Nkurunziza & Mugumya, 2002, p. 25).

Brofman Martin in his book: *Anything can be Healed* (2006) explores quite a uniquely different school of thoughts on healing. After healing himself from a terminal illness that had defeated doctors to treat, he came up with two main assumptions. First, he argued that anything can be healed – even those diseases that clinically fail to have therapy or cure. Secondly, he believed that everyone is a healer in his or her own capacity with an inborn knowledge of there being a cure for everything. He argues that:

...those we call healers have the ability to have successful results with the process. We believe that everyone is born with this ability and only needs to learn how to use the tools they already have. To this degree, we believe that we are all healers, either latent or accomplished (Brofman, 2006, p. 2).

The book then goes further to enlist ways and techniques in which one can become a healer and heal himself or herself without relying on healing by another persons’ intervention. The objectives of this study were, to investigate African Christian Church believes on healings; to explore African Christian Church understanding on the role of medical healing; to assess the what the African Christian Church believe the relationship between religion and science and to enumerate the influence African spirituality has had on African Christian Church.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research study was descriptive, seeking to investigate the interplay between religion and science. This method was chosen because it secured both qualitative and quantitative information from the respondents. The locale for the study was Kenya. The study selected African initiated churches from various counties that emphasized on African concept of healing. The various churches were identified using non-probability purposive sample. The target group in this study was both pastors, church leaders, and those who have experienced healing within the various churches that were purposefully sampled. The respondents were identified through non-probability purposive sample. A sample size of 219 respondents was used. The data was collected using questionnaires, interviews and Focus Group discussion. The data was analysed using both qualitative and quantitative methods.

RESULTS

Demographic profile of respondents

The study sampled a total of 219 respondents through questionnaires. The demographic profile of the respondents had distributed representation of various churches in Kenya as follows:

Church	Number of Respondents
African Gospel Church	62
African Inland Church	24
Seventh Day Adventists	21
Catholic	16
King's Outreach	52
Pentecostal Churches	19
Other Churches	25
TOTAL	219

Table 1: Distribution of respondents for the study

Out of the above sample, 92 of the respondents were purely from churches while 127 or the rest were from university students.

Results for respondents from the church sample

There were several questions posed for the respondents to answer that were focused on discerning the respondents' views on the following:

- faith healing and miracles,
- scientific healing in relation of their faith,
- relationship between science and religion,
- the potential of science and religion to coexist.

For this specific sample, respondents were to tick either agree, disagree or maybe to the questions or statements of the questionnaires. The following were the questions asked and their overall results:

	Question	Responses	Frequency	Percent
1	I believe in a supernatural being called God.	Non-response Agree	2 90	2.2 97.8
2	I believe in a personal God that takes interest in individuals, hears and answers prayers.	Agree Disagree Maybe	90 1 1	97.8 1.1 1.1
3	I believe that there is life after death.	Nonresponse Agree	2 90	2.2 97.8
4	I believe that science and religion can peacefully coexist.	Nonresponse Agree Disagree Maybe	4 52 24 12	4.3 56.5 26.1 13
5	I believe that God created the world as narrated in the Genesis story in the bible.	Nonresponse Agree Disagree	2 89 1	2.2 96.7 1.1
6	I believe that the world was not created but evolved over time.	Nonresponse Agree Disagree Maybe	5 5 77 5	5.4 5.4 83.7 5.4

7	Science tried to compete with God.	Nonresponse Agree Disagree Maybe	4 67 13 8	4.3 72.8 14.1 8.7
8	I believe that science and religion are often in conflict.	Nonresponse Agree Disagree Maybe	5 70 12 5	5.4 76.1 13.0 5.4
9	I don't believe in faith healing at all.	Nonresponse Agree Disagree Maybe	2 4 81 5	2.2 4.3 88.0 5.4
10	I believe that one can be healed through faith alone.	Nonresponse Agree Disagree Maybe	1 78 12 1	1.1 84.8 13.0 1.1
11	I believe that God heals the sick.	Agree Maybe	91 1	98.9 1.1
12	I believe in modern medical healing.	Nonresponse Agree Disagree Maybe	4 47 34 7	4.3 51.1 37.0 7.6
13	I believe in the African traditional healing.	Nonresponse Agree Disagree Maybe	1 25 51 15	1.1 27.2 55.4 16.3
14	I believe that the African Christian healing has borrowed a great deal from the African traditional healing.	Nonresponse Agree Disagree Maybe	1 25 44 22	1.1 27.2 47.8 23.9
15	I believe that the age of the earth is approximately over 3 million years as approximated by science.	Nonresponse Agree Disagree Maybe	1 15 26 50	1.1 16.3 28.3 54.3
16	I believe that the age of the earth is approximately 6000 years as narrated in the bible.	Nonresponse Agree Disagree Maybe	1 51 7 33	1.1 55.4 7.6 35.9

Table 3-2: Summary of questionnaire questions and their response

From the questions and their results, the frequency column represents the total respondents per option on a given question; percentage column is an out of a hundred rate on the questions' responses.

Results for respondents from the students' sample

Participants from this sample population were asked to state if they are a member of any church.

All the sampled individuals belonged to either one of the churches mentioned above. A number of several other questions were also asked through questionnaires. The following is the key questions asked with their responses as follows:

	Question	Responses	Frequency	Percent
Q 1	Do you believe in faith healing?	Yes No	101 26	80 20
Q 2	Do you know of anybody who has been healed?	Yes No	68 59	54 46
Q 3	Is science important in Kenya?	Yes No	125 3	98 2
Q 4	Do you believe in medical healing?	Yes No	122 5	96 4
Q 5	What does your church teach about science?	Positive Negative	122 5	94 4
Q 6	Is there a conflict between science and religion?	Yes No	82 45	65 35
Q 7	Do you believe in creation or evolution?	Creation Evolution	117 10	92 8
Q 8	Does science tend to compete with God?	Yes No	88 39	69 31

Q 9	Have you ever experienced personal healing?	Yes	42	33
		No	85	67
Q 10	Can science and religion complement each other?	Yes	41	32
		No	86	68

Table 3-3: Results from the student sample

There was also a need to analyse some specific questions more in-depth with relation to the respondents' churches. These questions were treated special because they would latter on help in

discerning whether some respondents' beliefs in healing were tied to the practices at their churches. These questions and their results were as follows:

Do you know of any person that has been healed through faith?

Church	Respondents	Yes	No
AGC	20	8 (40%)	12 (60%)
AIC	24	13 (54%)	11 (46%)
SDA	21	9 (43%)	12 (57%)
Catholic	16	8 (50%)	8 (50%)
Pentecostal	21	12 (57%)	9 (43%)
Others	25	18 (72%)	7 (28%)
TOTAL	127	68 (54%)	59 (46%)

Table 3-4: Church comparative response analysis on whether respondents knew people that had been healed.

2) **Is there conflict between science and religion?**

Church	Respondents	Yes	No
AGC	20	14 (70%)	6 (30%)
AIC	24	8 (33%)	16 (67%)
SDA	21	17 (81%)	4 (19%)
Catholic	16	12 (75%)	4 (25%)

Pentecostal	21	15 (71%)	6 (29%)
Others	25	16 (64%)	9 (36%)
TOTAL	127	82 (65%)	45 (35%)

Table 3-5: Church comparative response analysis on the conflict between science & religion

3) **Have you ever experienced any personal healing?**

Church	Respondents	Yes	No
AGC	20	18 (90%)	2 (10%)
AIC	24	4 (17%)	20 (83%)
SDA	21	5 (24%)	16 (76%)
Catholic	16	4 (25%)	12 (75%)
Pentecostal	21	4 (19%)	17 (81%)
Others	25	7 (28%)	18 (72%)
TOTAL	127	42 (33%)	85 (67%)

Table 3-6: Church comparative response analysis on personal healing

4) **Can science and religion be complementary?**

Church	Respondents	Yes	No
AGC	20	6 (30%)	14 (70%)
AIC	24	8 (33%)	16 (67%)
SDA	21	5 (24%)	16 (76%)
Catholic	16	10 (63%)	6 (37%)
Pentecostal	21	8 (38%)	13 (62%)
Others	25	4 (16%)	21 (84%)
TOTAL	127	41 (32%)	86 (68%)

Table 3-7: Church comparative response analysis on complementarity

This section was a complete overview on the analysed results that were derived from the instruments of research. Each result was simply described in this section but no attempts to discuss the reasons for specific trends were done. The discussion of these research findings can be found in the next section.

DISCUSSIONS

Demographic profile of respondents

Although there was specific intentional target of the King’s Outreach church members as respondents to the research, respondents from the other churches

were purely randomly selected. The study had no way of predetermining the exact church a respondent belonged to beforehand in view of the sampling methodology that was applied. Interestingly however, it turned out that most of the respondents were from the African Gospel Church followed by the case study King’s Outreach Church,

Africa Inland Church, The Seventh Day Adventists and the Catholics as represented by the pie chart below.

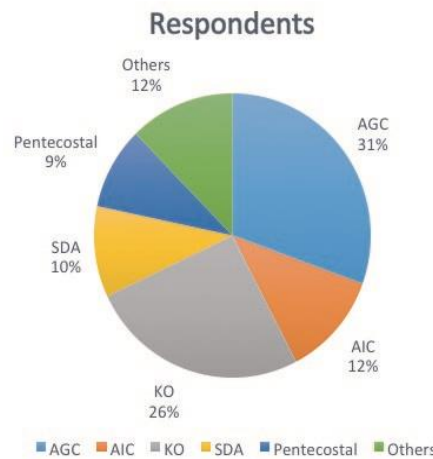


Figure 4-1: Respondents chart

What this could mean is that the African Gospel Church has more popularity in comparison with other churches from the population that the study selected a sample from. Kenya is a predominantly Christian country with almost three quarter of the population subscribing to the Christian faith. There are over 4000 registered churches in Kenya from different denominations and faiths. According to the 2009 Census,

Protestant Christians tops the list of popularity followed by the Catholic population

2 The non-Christian population include

the Muslims, the Hindus, the Traditionalists, many people who do not subscribe to any religion and a small number of people who are not sure where

they stand. The mainstream churches in Kenya as at 2016 include The Roman Catholic Church, The Anglican Church, The Full Gospel Churches, The Presbyterian Church of East

Africa, The African Inland Church, The Methodist Church and the Baptist Church among other churches.

From the above discussion, the study succeeded in sampling at least a number of respondents from all the mainstream churches in Kenya. The popularity of the African Gospel Church can be attributed to the fact that AGC is one of the dominant church in Kericho County from where the sample was selected, and it was logical that most of the respondents would have belonged to the African Gospel Church.

1 Registrar of Churches in Kenya

2 Churches in Kenya have developed competitive atmosphere where most of the time

the question of which church is greater than the rest arises. Amidst this atmosphere, the believers tend to subconsciously tend towards the seemingly dominant church and shift from church to church as the dominance curves change.

The dominance trait is most of the time gauged through the actual structural buildings of the church; the organisations of the church leadership; the financial capability of its believers where a church where most members own cars is termed as dominant to the rest; the instruments and networks a church possesses among others. Using these traits, it could be said that AGC is the most dominant church in Kericho County which explains why the sample expectedly ended up containing more respondents from the AGC than any other church. It is however wrong to say that AGC is the most dominant church in Kenya because different churches exhibit different popularity and dominance across different counties in Kenya. A church thus can be 100% popular in one county and almost unheard of in other counties. Initially, the research intended to sample 300 respondents and sent out the same number of questionnaires to the 300 respondents. However, only 219 questionnaires came back. There was a keen note of discipline exhibited from the respondents from the King's Outreach Church who returned all the questionnaires assigned to them and filled neatly all the questions. However, some seeming secrecy blanketed the churches especially when one asked questions about Dr. David Owuor, their spiritual leader (Prophet) or the significance of some of the practices that the church believers subscribed to. In totality however, the sample population's variety turned out exactly as anticipated by this study. The different beliefs different African Churches have towards healing could be to some level of confidence be extrapolated by this sample.

5 Discussion of the Results from the Church Sample

To ward off ambiguity, these results were selected purely from church settings on Sundays before, during or after church services. This was a sample

of exactly 92 participants. The primary reason why the study needed to have a sample derived from purely church going respondents was to find out whether the current misunderstanding between religion and science stems out from religion's misunderstanding or lack of acknowledgement for science. Could it be that religion had no regard at all for scientific facts or did it respect scientific facts as long as they wouldn't interfere with the interpreted religious facts?

For example, Galileo Galilei was condemned by the Church for 'vehement suspicion of heresy' when he supported heliocentrism. At this time everybody thought that the earth was stationary with the sun orbiting the earth's axis as opposed to heliocentrism idea where in fact it was the sun that was stationary with the earth revolving around it. Did the church at that time disregard a scientific fact or was it an attempt to suppress the fact to prevent it from generating a religious challenge among the believers? There were several questions that intended to find out what the church respondents thought about science as follow:

1) I believe that science and religion can peacefully coexist.

For the past millennium, science has made quite several discoveries inventions and innovations that either directly or indirectly challenge the legitimacy of religious believes. For example, Dinosaurs fossils of over 200 million years have been found and brought doubt to the biblical account of the origin of earth that puts earth at merely 6,000 years old; space research and travel has been achieved to the far ends of the universe casting doubt on the exact position of heaven; medicines, drugs and therapeutic procedures have been developed that have reduced the dependence on people on religious healing; heliocentricity has been proven nullifying the previous interpretations of the bible that held the theory of everything revolving around a fixed earth and several other discoveries. The problem however is whereas science believes in researching, accepting and adopting proven changes to its facts, religious facts remain constant. Changing anything in the bible for example amounts to blasphemy and anyone who attempts to do so is viewed as an advocate of evil. In fact, the bible itself has verses like Revelation 22:18 that

forbid any changes to it. That said and done, a biblical fact will remain valid religiously even a thousand years from now whereas a scientific fact today might not be valid scientifically tomorrow. One of the respondents who seemed to be a scientist posed some very interesting questions in an informal interview. "The bible says God created only Adam and Eve, where did all those other people that Cain used to interact with and even marry come from?" he asked. Studied that attempt to answer this question give valid explanations that suggest that he must have married his sister. But if people keep asking such questions and asking them to the people that might not have convincing arguments to counter, the relationship between science and religion become a problematic one. When this project was in its initial stages at the university, organising a meeting and calling it a science and religion meeting would have attracted only people that take religion as one of their courses at the university. A pure scientist would have asked like one did "What has science got to do with religion?" During the first ever data collection fieldwork that took place at a religious crusade in Eldoret, religionist showed seeming hostility to the research team just because the research team adopted at first a purely scientific data collection mechanism. You couldn't question any of the over a hundred thousand random attendees at the crusade without being suspected of malice or ill intentions by the persons that had been assigned the responsibility of sentinels. Perhaps this was one of the unintended consequences that occurs because of the conflict between science and religion in Africa because you couldn't even take a photograph of anything at the crusade if you introduced yourself as a scientist. However, when the researcher took a less scientific approach suddenly there was a better and more positive response. This time one could have even taken photographs. One of the respondents who was a bishop at the crusade defended this behaviour citing that most scientists come to their crusades to poke holes into their practices and invalidate the many miracles that such a crusade ends up supposedly attracting.

The other questions were as follows:

2) I believe that the world was not created but evolved over time.

3) Science tries to compete with God.

4) I believe that science and religion are often in conflict.

5) I believe in modern medical healing.

6) I believe that the age of the earth is approximately over 3 million years as approximated by science.

Several questions also intended to gauge whether African Christians are affected by African culture or whether African culture influences the beliefs and practices of African Christians on healing as follows:

7) I believe in the African traditional healing.

Prior to the Portuguese invasion of East Africa, there was no Christianity in Kenya. But there were still many religions from the several tribes of Kenya. These Religions manifested in forms of rituals, practices and beliefs that acted most often as moral guidelines to the local inhabitants. After Islam and Christianity came to Kenya, there was a serious disregard of these local religions and specifically the Muslims labelled anyone who wasn't a Muslim as a 'pagan' (kafiri). This must have caused stigmatization and made the local religions and value systems look like they were all inferior and bound for doom. People converted to either Muslim faith or the Christian faith and eventually there were more Christians and Muslims than 'pagans'. The two religions prevailed against the local religions. However, even to date, so many Kenyans are caught between their local religious practices that are mostly called traditional religions and their new found Christian faith. For example, a community that used to pray to their local god under a mugumo tree would still pray under the tree but to a different god. You will find Christian songs being sang and prayers being mixed with traditional rituals at funerals, weddings, memorials and wakes. Every Christian in Kenya can be said to be subscribed to a given traditional value system that is most of the time concurrent with his or her tribe. The beliefs in the local traditional rituals and their healing ability is one of the things this study needed to find out. Only 27.2% of the sampled population agreed to have faith in traditional healing. This however sounded interesting because one of the

things new converts are told is to abandon their traditional faiths and beliefs and follow the Christian beliefs, probably the reason why 55.4% of the sampled population disagreed to this question. The dilemma that Kenyan Christians face in their day today life can be further seen from the fact that 16.3% of the sampled population could not decide whether or not they believed in the African traditional healing.

8) I believe that the African Christian healing has borrowed a great deal from the African traditional healing.

As already discussed above, most Kenyan Christians are caught between pure traditional beliefs and pure Christian beliefs. For example, if a sick person fails to be healed at hospitals, the next resort would be the church for a healing miracle from God. However, if even the church fails to heal the person, desperation would make the same person who sometimes has strong faith in Christianity to go to traditional healers as a last resort. Contrary to the negative publicity that African traditional healing gets, studies show that sometimes people get healed. The psychological conviction by a believer in traditional healing goes a long way to causing his or her own body to stimulate mechanisms to heal itself. Some of the healing methods employed involves giving the sick herbal medicines and even recommending some behavioural changes – sometimes just like modern day hospitals. If someone for example believes that he or she is cursed (this happens a lot in Kenya), how do you treat or heal that as a doctor? There isn't a scientific medicine discovered out there that can break all possible forms of curses! In fact, science might view cursing as a psychological phenomenon where a seemingly cursed person starts would attribute all the negative things that happen to his life to be because of the curse. Science would argue that the negative things would have happened anyway even if the person would not have been cursed. But do you tell that to a person who strongly believe in the existence of curses? If you do for example, do they believe? Christianity offers prayers as one of the mechanism for breaking curses for example. But the way different churches would go about these prayers would give away a lot of hints on the level of influence African traditional healing practices have on modern Christianity in

Kenya. Most often than not, you will find a preacher 'shouting out' his prayers just like a traditionalist would have 'shouted out' curse breaking charms and the 'cursed' person would most often than not be seen rolling on the ground (if not only falling) just like traditionalists would do. It should be noted that the original evangelistic missions by the Portuguese in Kenya had no trace at all of such behavioural worship characteristics. This begs this question where respondents were to air their views on the level of influence that traditional healing has had on Christianity. Especially healing. Once again, only 27.2% believed that African traditional healing has an influence on the modern Christian healing. A majority (47.8%) seemed to disagree with this statement and 23.9% thought that maybe there was some significant level of influence. The study assumed that the people who said 'maybe' seemed to 'agree' that there is some influence. This thus meant that 51.1% agreed with this statement.

9) I don't believe in faith healing at all.

Someone sceptical would argue that faith healing does not work or doesn't exist all in all. One respondent for example noted that a sick Christian would for example go to the hospital to get tuberculosis treatment and when he or she is healed, all credit would be given to miracles and it will be said as a testimony at the church of the healing power of God with serious disregard of the medicines and the doctors. "They say doctors treat and then God heals, but if doctors wouldn't have treated the tuberculosis, God would have had a dead person to heal" the respondent argued. Some very commercial faith leaders who own churches in Kenya have exploited the Christian faith of their believers and turned it into an avenue to make money, generate political followings and create employment. Initially, the church was to be a non-profit making entity that survived on tithes to spread the word of God and help the disadvantaged in the community. These days in Kenya, just switching through television or radio stations on Sundays give an exactly opposite picture of the church. You will hear some preachers selling 'holy' water at surprisingly alarming prices. Some will keep mentioning their Mpesa numbers every few minutes of preaching and will quote so many bible verses that would make you feel guilty for not

sending your 'tithes' via your mobile phone. These preachers would give you a minimum limit on the amount of acceptable 'tithes' and the whole scenario would feel like paying insurance for your car. Recent reports have unearthed malicious practices where some preachers use science or buy accomplices to fake healing miracles. One such interesting occurrence was when a preacher was found using potassium permanganate to fool believers that they were cursed. Believers would have their feet washed and the water would surprisingly turn purple with sewing

needles sunk at the bottom of the washing basin. The preacher would proclaim that the person had been cursed and he the 'mighty healer' had broken the curse. Any person watching this could have been baffled by the occurrence and just because it would have been hard to explain and because the hard to explain phenomena happened at a church, someone would have been quick to call it a healing miracle. If this is what the mainstream preachers do to fake healing miracles, how do you believe in faith healing when the scenarios you cite as faith healing turn out to be clever science from crafty people? Anyway, interestingly this study showed that 88% believed in faith healing. Only 4.3% agreed with this statement and 5.4% seemed to be undecided. This question was not at all after the religious beliefs in faith healing but just beliefs in any type of healing where one needs faith as one of the recipe of regaining health.

10) I believe that one can be healed through faith alone.

This statement was antagonistic to the previous statement. 78% seemed to agree with the statement and the reasons revolved around personal experiences of faith healing and experiences of other people with faith getting healed. One respondent argued that if you had faith in something or anything at all, the faith gives you a sense that things can only get better. Interestingly, the respondent used an example of a cursed person. If a person has faith that he or she has been cursed, things will start 'getting worse in a better way'. Such a person will blame every misfortune on the curse. But if you do something to the person and make him or her have faith that the curse is gone, the person would notice more positive occurrences

and seem blind towards the negative occurrences. A scientist would have created a debate around this scenario but to the cursed person's point of view, healing has occurred and changed his life! Only 13% disagreed with this statement while just 2.2% seemed undecided.

11) I believe that God heals the sick.

This was a pure test on the respondents' Christian faith towards healing. The study expected 100% agreement with this statement but 1.1% seemed not to be sure if God heals the sick. The reason for the minority dilemma might be as reiterated earlier a result of the rise in proven incidences of staged healings.

The rest of the questions intended to tell if a respondent is a true Christian through asking them about some religious facts that all Christians share as follows:

12) I believe in a supernatural being called God.

It was no surprise when 97.8% of the respondents professed their belief in God. The sample was purely from a religious setting and one would expect such response because the entire Christian faith is based on the belief in God above everything else. In fact, the remaining 2.2% is made up of respondents who did not respond to the question. This might be assumed to be because maybe they thought that it was an obvious question or even felt offended by the question for one reason or the other. There was however no record of anyone who said that he or she didn't believe in God from this sample.

13) I believe in a personal god that takes interest in individuals, hears and answers prayers.

97.8% of the sample population once again agreed to this belief. It was only logical that if you believed in God then you would still have beliefs of a personal god that is represented by God. However, there might be a small chance that some respondents could not tell the difference between this question and the previous question, a challenge that perhaps altered their response to this question. Whereas the previous question specifically tested respondents' beliefs on the biblical God, this

question was targeted to respondents who didn't believe in the bible. One would perhaps lack faith in the bible but still have a conscience that tells him or her that even though they do not believe in God, there is something or someone superior somewhere out there.

14) I believe that there is life after death.

Again, 97.8% agreed to this biblical fact. Well, what kind of a Christian would one have been if he or she didn't believe in this hope giving promise that the bible offers? The bible specifically says that the dead would resurrect and live forever after death.

15) I believe that God created the world as narrated in the Genesis story in the bible.

This is one of the places in the bible where religion starts parting ways with science because whereas there are 96.7% respondents who subscribed to this belief, there are several scientific theories of the earth's origin like 'The Big Bang' that totally pay no regard to the religious views on the origin of the world. In fact, 1.1% of the sample seemed to disagree with this biblical fact with the rest of the sample opting not to respond to the question at all.

16) I believe that the age of the earth is approximately 6000 years as narrated in the bible.

This is also one area in which science greatly challenges the accuracy of biblical facts. One might imagine that scientists intentionally go out of their way in a bid to discredit or disapprove religious facts. On the contrary, most scientists in history were very religious people. In fact, when Galileo Galilei supported the fact that the earth goes around the sun and not the other way round, he argued that it was in line with what the bible said and even quoted a number of scriptures to support that. But the church as well responded with counter scriptures⁸ against his theory and eventually prosecuted him for blasphemy. It is interesting enough to note that even years later there is still a subtle friction between science and religion in form of competing facts. For this question as an example, 54.4% believed that the world was 6000 years old. A large portion (35.9%) of the rest were in dilemma about this

biblical fact. Probably because of their encounter with other equally convincing

be over the 6000 years stated in the bible.

CONCLUSIONS

There is a lot of knowledge that still needs to be understood about the interaction between science and religion in the African Christianity perspective. However,

as a religious pastor on Sundays. The relationship between science and religion in the African perspective is in such a way that each faction is allocated its own time and set of behavioural criterion. Even in school, a religious class teaching creation can be immediately followed by a history or biology class teaching evolution

responses from the university samples in most parts matched the responses from purely church samples. This study can therefore conclude safely that even though there are some few competitive principles against each other between science and

There seem to be mental boundaries that mark the limits each can go. The study thus concludes that science and religion can indeed co-exist when the right paradigm of thoughts is cultivated.

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