

TANGAZA COLLEGE

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN AFRICA

HEALING AND ANOINTING AMONG THE EWE OF SOUTHERN TOGO:

A PASTORAL CHALLENGE

**Essay submitted to the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of
Bachelor of Arts in Religious Studies.**

BY

FABIEN SOGNON, SMA.

SUPERVISOR: Dr MARY GETUI

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STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this long essay is my original work achieved through my personal reading, scientific research method and critical reflections. It is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Bachelor of Arts in Religious Studies. It has never been submitted to any other college or university for academic credit. All sources have been cited in full and acknowledged.

Signed: 

Name of Student: Fabien Sognon, SMA.

Date: 02. 02. 2002.

This long essay has been submitted for examination with my approval as the College supervisor.

Signed:.....

Name of Supervisor: Dr Mary Getui.

Date: 07. 02. 2002.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this work to the Society of African Missions. I pay tribute to my family, relatives and friends especially to my nephews and nieces, Ayi Sognon and Amavi Sognon.

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CHAPTER ONE-INTRODUCTION

I.0. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Within any human society, the question of healing is a crucial one. Health is a major concern for all. The longing for healing has been a universal human desire. In Africa particularly, where people are very often exposed to all sorts of diseases, the search for cures is an important part of the struggle for survival. Sickness is thus seen as a threat to health. Naturally, people have developed different methods in fighting sickness. Western scientific medicine has made undoubted progress, which enables people to enjoy a longer average life expectation than in earlier times. Evidence of efforts to maintain health and to overcome diseases in order to prevent untimely death can be found in all cultures everywhere. The Ewe people of southern Togo have also developed different ways of fighting sickness. Among them, sickness is seen as an attack that disturbs the harmony between human beings, the cosmos and God. A person declares himself or herself sick in relation to the representation that he or she has of health and this is largely a cultural matter. As Ugueux points out, there is a construction and a cultural representation of sickness as a social phenomenon.¹ The Sacrament of healing which also has its own structure according to the Catholic Church, does not follow the same process as found in the traditional setting. For Christians, this Sacrament is provided to strengthen the sick and bring them healing and forgiveness. Are Christians satisfied with the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick when they still have to bear in mind what the healing process involves for them in the traditional sense? How can both processes be reconciled so that

¹Ugueux, Bernard, Guérir À Tout Prix?, Paris: Les Editions de l'Atelier/Editions Ouvrières, Collection Questions Ouvettes, 2000, p.19.

people do not feel lost when they have to go through the process of healing according to their Christian faith?

I.1. AIM AND OBJECTIVES

This project intends to evaluate the healing process among the Ewe people in relation to the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick. In this study, therefore, I shall try to explore what the Ewe people believe and practice with regard to health and sickness, as well as their reasons for these beliefs and practices. It is my hope that this will throw more light on the understanding of Ewe practices with regard to healing, and also assist and support a pastoral healing ministry for those who may be called or assigned to serve the Ewe people.

I.2. ORGANIZATION OF THE WORK AND METHODOLOGY

This essay is divided into five chapters. Chapter One, which incorporates the introduction, will consist of the statement of the problem, aim and objectives, the methodology, the reason for my choice of this topic and its limitations. Chapter two will deal with a brief survey of the Ewe society. The Ewe worldview with special reference to health will also form part of this chapter. Chapter three will look at the healing beliefs and practices among the Ewe. Chapter four will survey the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick with reference to the Bible and the Catholic Church. Chapter five will examine a possible inculturation of the Sacrament of the Sick with regard to the healing process among the Ewe. A general conclusion and personal recommendations will come in this last chapter.

My sources include literature that deals with the Ewe, as well as other communities. This is only in cases that have relevance to my topic. I will also make use of information received through interviews and questionnaires I sent out for this purpose. Books and any other materials related to this topic will be used and referenced where appropriate.

I.3. CHOICE OF TOPIC

During my pastoral work in Nairobi, I have been working in hospitals like Nairobi and Kenyatta. I have assisted some patients with whom I have had insightful conversations. I came to discover that despite the treatment they are given in hospital regarding their sicknesses, most of them still have strong faith in their African practices regarding sickness. In the future, I shall have to accompany sick people in my ministry. In order to minister well to them, I feel the need to know first their understanding of health, sickness and healing. I would also hope to better understand what is involved in the healing process and what is the meaning of each element in this process. How can the anointing of the sick be part of their process of healing? How can we celebrate this sacrament so that people's traditional heritage can be of value and represented in the sacrament?

I.4. SOURCES AND LIMITATIONS

In this study, I shall limit myself to the Ewe of Togo. The Ewe can be found in at least three countries (Togo, Ghana, Benin) and any attempt to cover all of them would be too demanding. I find it necessary to restrict myself to a smaller area. This study does not pretend to cover fully all that needs to be covered in health and sickness among the Ewe people. Nonetheless, much of what is relevant to pastoral ministry, will be addressed.

CHAPTER TWO THE EWE WORLDVIEW

INTRODUCTION

In the first part of the chapter, I present the Ewe² worldview, the people, the culture and their religious beliefs. It is not my intention to go into much detail about the cultural world of the Ewe but to stress what might be relevant to my topic namely on healing and anointing. In the second part of the chapter, I will point out the various definitions one can find about health and sickness from a Christian perspective and a secular perspective. This will lead me to some common the Ewe encounter and their causes.

II.1. THE EWE WORLDVIEW

According to Schiele Jerome, a worldview can be defined succinctly as "the overarching mode through which people interpret events and define reality. It is a racial or ethnic group's psychological orientation towards life. It provides a group with a structure for expressing its own cultural truths, a way to organize its experiences and interpretations into a logical and fairly stable conceptual scheme."³ Having defined what a worldview is about, it will be in this frame that I am going to look at, about the Ewe people. I will try to see what characterizes them as people, their culture, religious beliefs and their attitude towards health and sickness. But before that, one important aspect we all have to bear in mind throughout this work is the emphasis on collectivity, especially in human relations, as an essential value within the African worldview. As Schiele underlined it, considerable emphasis is placed on a collective conceptualization of human beings and on collective survival. This is because, in the Afrocentric worldview, individual identity is conceived

² "Ewe" is both the name of the people I shall be treating in this work and the language they speak

³ Schiele, Jerome, Human Services And The Afrocentric Paradigm, New York: The Haworth Press, 2000, p.1.

as collective identity.⁴ The African adage "I am because we are and because we are, therefore I am"⁵ captures the essence of this belief. In this way, individual identity is similar to a spiderweb. As the composition of a spiderweb is a series of interconnected and interdependent strands, if one strand is touched, the entire web shakes. Thus, the individual is never separated from his or her corporate identity and the influences of the broader and intimate social milieu. To understand the individual, therefore, one must understand the milieu in which the person is socialized.⁶ For the Ewe as well, the communal aspect is very important since it is interdependence that makes them what they are.

II.2. GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION

Ewe land is bordered on the South by the Atlantic Ocean and in the East by the Mono River, which divides Togo and Benin. The Volta River borders the West. In the North lie approximately the central parts of both Ghana and Togo, which form that border. The Ewe land forms the southern half of the Republic of Togo and that part of Southern Ghana known as the Volta Region. The Ewe land has a fairly constant equatorial climate. There are two rainy seasons, with the major rains between April and July and the shorter season from September to November.

II.3. THE PEOPLE

Tradition shows that the Ewe migrated from somewhere in North Africa near the River Niger. However, the first place of settlement, of which tradition is more certain, was Ketu or Oyo in Nigeria. This place was called "*Amedjope*" (meaning "where man originated", according to the Ewe). Their departure from Ketu or Oyo was believed to have taken

⁴ Ibid. p.27.

⁵ Mbiti, John, African Religions and Philosophy, Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1970, p.141.

⁶ Schiele, J., op. cit., p.27.

place in the 15th or 16th century⁷. They left in two large groups. One group settled near the Mono River, calling the place Tado, while the second group continued on and settled between the Haho and the Mono Rivers, naming the location Notsie⁸. Notsie was founded between Lome (the capital of Togo) and Atakpame and lies today on the railway line connecting these two towns. It is considered to be of historical importance to the Ewe as it was the actual center from where people later dispersed⁹. From Notsie, but also from Tado, the Ewe moved in various directions and groups until they came to their present settlements. It must be noted that all the people presently in Eweland were not originally Ewe speaking¹⁰ although they all claim a common ancestor.

II.4. THE CULTURE

The Ewe have a rich culture¹¹, which they pass on from one generation to the next. The culture is dynamic, always on the move, and never static. The richness of the Ewe culture lies in its contact with numerous other African cultures during the "exodus", and after the final settlement.¹² Culture, we are told, "is the integrated sum-total of behavior traits that have been learned, and have not only been manifested and shared by the members of a society, but also have been passed on from one generation to another in uninterrupted succession."¹³ Culture then, "has an answer (sometimes merely rough and ready) to every question that can be asked. It is a prearranged design for living"¹⁴. Since the culture is

⁷Ward, W.E., A History of The Gold Coast, London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1948, p.127.

⁸Ward, W.E., *Ibid.*

⁹Wiegrabe, P., ed., Ewegbegbalexle: Akpa Enelja, Lahr: Johannes-Agbaletafe, 1963, p.23.

¹⁰ I am referring here to the other ethnic groups like the Adja and the Añlō. They also claim to have a common ancestor with the Ewe.

¹¹It is impossible for me to go into much detail in this facete of the richness of the Ewe culture since it is beyond the scope of the present work. But it is mentioned here, in relation to the treatment of healing among the Ewe people.

¹²Ward, E. W., *op. cit.*, p.129.

¹³Sarpong, Peter, Ghana In Retrospect, Tema: Ghana Publishing Corporation, 1974, p.vii

¹⁴Allport, Gordon, Pattern and Growth in Personality, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1961, p.167.

learned and does not depend on inborn instincts, this must be passed on from one generation to the next in a well disciplined manner, usually taking the form of myths, history, stories, riddles, proverbs, art and craft. This cultural heritage of the Ewe, and all Africans, includes the belief in the existence of one Supreme Deity and other minor deities.

I must point out that respect for people, especially respect for elders, is highly recommended in the Ewe culture. This is inculcated into the Ewe right from infancy. The Ewe highly respect all that is virtuous and just; they detest vice and any form of wickedness, impurity and injustice. They are also peace-loving people. They are a very sociable people. They show this in their everyday life, especially through singing, drumming and dancing. They sing and dance both in joy and in sorrow, as well as in times of relaxation. Besides that, a negative point I should point out is that there is no room for achievement motive. The elders give all the rules. The children have little or no room for initiative. The life of the people has been shaped by their taboos.¹⁵

Culture is the very life of a people, their beliefs and practices, their passions of love and hate. For the Ewe, the cultural heritage beliefs are all inter-woven to form their very life.

II.5. THE EWE RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

Like other Africans, the Ewe believe in a supernatural ruling power that created humanity, the universe and all that it contains. The Supreme Being, whom the Ewe call Mawu¹⁶, is a good, kind and patient Father. Besides "Mawu", the Ewe acknowledge the

¹⁵ For example, it is taboo to whistle in the night. When it is raining, it is taboo to have one's bath, using soap. It is taboo to hit someone with food, or a broom. It is taboo for the chief to greet and shake hands with a woman in her menstrual period. It is taboo to mourn for the death of the first-born that dies soon after birth. It is taboo to bring a new born child into the open before the naming eighth day.

¹⁶ "Mawu" in Ewe language means literally:

Ma = "that one", "that person", "that man". Ma can also be taken as a verb to mean "share", "separate", "distribute".

existence of minor deities whom they call "trowo", or "mawuviwo" (minor gods). These "trowo" are servants and messengers of the Supreme Being. "Mawu", as well as intermediates between "Mawu" and human beings. The whole life of the Ewe is based on religion. The well-known African theologian, John Mbiti says "each African people has its own religious system with a set of beliefs and practices. Religion permeates into all the departments of life so fully that it is not easy or possible always to isolate it"¹⁷. This is true of the Ewe as a group as well. The Ewe feel that their entire dependence is on the Supreme Being and other deities. The deities, according to the Ewe, bring joy or sorrow, riches or poverty, health and sickness. In sickness, the Ewe must consult deities who will give directives as to the cure¹⁸. But they know also that all people are mortals and so each must die one day. The people must endeavor, therefore, to win the favor of their deities. For the Ewe, religion is an inherited and a shared possession for the entire community. As a inheritance, it must be transmitted by the entire community from one generation to the next. It must be upheld and proclaimed by each new generation and, in turn, passed on to their children through oral tradition, myths, proverbs, observances and practices. Prayer and self-dedication to God in worship is, however, a common phenomenon among the Ewe. They pray to express their sentiments and dependence on God. They talk to God in the most intimate way, which expresses a parent-child relationship existing between them and God. When they are in distress or in sickness, or when problems seem insoluble, the Ewe say: "Mawu, look upon my miseries and help me". Even though

Wu = "to excell" or "to be superior to", or "to be above others".

Mawu = "that one is superior to all", or "the Other who is above all".

¹⁷ Mbiti, John, African Religions and Philosophy, Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers Ltd, 1995, p.1.

¹⁸The following chapter will make this clearer when I will look at healing methods among the Ewe.

Mawuga is "far away in the heavens" it is only He who has the power to help. In sickness, one has to call him.

II.6. THE EWE UNDERSTANDING OF SICKNESS AND HEALTH

II.6.a. DEFINITIONS OF HEALTH AND ILLNESS

What is health? What is sickness? Robert Wilson states that, "Defining health and illness is no parochial task, and it is far from a purely theoretical exercise. What we demand as health and deprecate as disease influences our inquiries, our care, and our total sweep of social medical action"¹⁹. Perceptions of health and illness vary from one culture to another. The World Health Organization (WHO) (1946) defines health as "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity"²⁰. This definition of WHO has been qualified by some scholars as too utopian and static, failing to include the cultural and spiritual dimensions²¹. According to a study by the Christian Medical Commission (CMC), "Health is a dynamic state of well-being of the individual and the society; of physical, mental, spiritual, economic, political and social well-being; of being in harmony with each other, with the material environment and with God"²². This definition of CMC adds some new elements to the WHO definition, particularly the notion of spiritual, economic, and political well being. Health, according to the CMC, is seen as a dynamic condition and not as an entity that humans can possess or keep at any given time. A person is neither completely sick nor completely

¹⁹ Robert. Wilson, The Sociology of Health: An Introduction, quoted in: Maloof, Patricia, Sickness and Health in Society, Concilium, 1991/2, p.21.

²⁰The Preamble to the Charter of the World Health Organization, as cited in: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol.8.

²¹Ugueux, Bernard, Guérir à Tout Prix?, Paris: Les Editions De L'Atelier/Editions Ouvrières, Collection Questions Ouvertes, 2000, p.63. See also: Thielmann, Lars, "Illness, Healing and Health: Economic, Legal and Social Dimensions", In: Chauvet, Louis Maric, and Tomkja Miklos, eds., Illness And Healing, London: SCM Press, 1998:5, p.27.

²² Healing and Wholeness- The Churches' Role in Health. The Report of a study by the Christian Medical Commission, World Council of Churches, Geneva, 1990, p.6.

healthy but is always in a dynamic process. This new 'CMC' definition differs from the WHO definition in that, health is no longer essentially an individual affair but includes society. The WHO has subscribed to this aspect of health and its constitutional review board suggested a new definition of health by stating: "Health is a dynamic state of complete physical, mental, social and spiritual well-being and not merely the absence of disease"²³.

According to the Ewe worldview, and also the broad African world view, a human being is conceived as a complete entity, needing healing for his or her whole being, spiritually, socially, physically, psychologically and culturally. Being healthy means, thus, being in harmony within oneself, with the social group, with the divinities, the ancestors and the other numerous spirits of the land, and of course, the Creator-God. The necessity of maintaining good relationships with people living bodily in the world, and the ancestors is essential to good health. Such a vision of health helps us to articulate the meaning of sickness. Sickness may in actuality refer to disease and/ or illness. As quoted by Maloof, Fabrega has demonstrated that disease and illness are really reflecting two different perspectives. Disease connotes the biomedical model in that it involves recognition of biological and/ or physiological malfunctioning. Illness refers to the experience and perception of disease within the socio-cultural context. It refers to the way the individual, his family and social network recognize, explain and respond to disease.²⁴ Engelhardt views disease and illness as explanatory models which reflect multiple factors and various levels of abstraction of a common phenomenon.²⁵ Sickness is viewed not

²³ "Review of the Constitution and Regional Arrangements of the WHO", Executive Board, 101st session, EB 101/7, Geneva, WHO, 1997.

²⁴ Robert, Wilson, *op.cit.*, p.21

²⁵ *Ibid.*

only as a threat to one's existence but also as any disturbance of the inner harmony in the human person. It is a disarticulation of the human being in his or her relations with the different axes of network with others. The aim of health seeking is to restore the equilibrium. Health is then perceived as a goal. What are the possible causations of sickness?

II.6.b. CAUSES OF SICKNESS

When sickness strikes among the Ewe, it is first of all necessary to find out, through divination, the possible natural or preternatural causes. There are many factors that cause sickness. Among the Ewe, like other cultures, they know that certain illnesses are brought on by natural causes: a variety of accidents, lack of prudence (drink and so on), parasites, etc. Sickness can be physical, emotional, social, and spiritual. The sickness could be taken as the result of neglect of an ancestor or some other spirits of the land, the result of violation of a social prohibition like adultery, incest, murder or after a diagnosis, the diviner could attribute the cause of the disease to the life-sapping activities of evil human agents: witches, wizards, sorcerers. In most cases, causes of disease remain mysterious. As Mbiti puts it, African peoples feel and believe that all the various ills, misfortunes, sicknesses, accidents, tragedies, sorrows, dangers and unhappy mysteries which they encounter or experience, are caused by mystical power in the hands of a sorcerer, witch or wizard. For example, a bereaved mother whose child has died from malaria will not be satisfied with the scientific explanation that a mosquito carrying malaria parasites bit the child and caused him or her to suffer and die from malaria. She will wish to know why the mosquito bit her child and not somebody else's child. The only satisfactory answer is

that "someone" sent the mosquito, or worked other evil magic against her child.²⁶ We would say that African people have no purely physical experiences. They have mystical experiences of a religious nature. Since everything seems to be caused either by someone directly or through the use of mystical powers, we have to treat sickness through both an understanding of the physical as well as the spiritual world. It is in this context that we must see sickness and its treatment.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I will say that for the Ewe, there is only one God, Mawu, who is the Father and Creator of all things. The Ewe have their own philosophies towards life and things spiritual, and anyone who suggests that the Ewe have to use other peoples philosophy in order to arrive at their own God, will be doing the Ewe a great injustice. For the Ewe, the existence of God and the powers of their spirits are undeniable and indisputable facts. This is the specter through which I will look at the Ewe in their dealing with sickness and healing. Without the existence of God and powers of other spirits, it will be very difficult for them to face sickness and treat it since they rely on these powers. To understand the Ewe better, one must enter into their daily activities and customs. This will be my task in the next chapter as I consider their healing methods.

²⁶ Mbiti, op. cit., p.200.

CHAPETR III: HEALING METHOD AMONG THE EWE

INTRODUCTION

In the second chapter, I have emphasized the need of getting to know the Ewe worldview, the people, their culture and their religious beliefs. I also tried to define sickness and health as well as some causes of sicknesses. As we shall see now, health and sickness have to be understood within the cultural framework for healing to be effective. In this chapter, I shall be looking at the healing methods in general and among the Ewe in particular. This involves the consultation of the healer, the diagnosis and treatment of sickness, as well as the process of healing. Finally, I will conclude the chapter by describing the role of the community in the healing process.

III.1. HEALTH AND SICKNESS WITHIN THE EWE CULTURAL MILIEU:

MEDICINE AND CULTURE.

Patricia Maloof has noted that, the health system, like other cultural systems (e.g. kinship, religious and economic systems), is a symbolic system built out of meanings, values and behavioral norms. In many societies, three overlapping spheres of health care can be identified: the popular sector, the folk sector and the professional sector.²⁷ Each of these sectors has its way of explaining and treating sickness. They define who the healer is and who the patient is, and specify how the healer and patient should interact. In certain societies, the role of one sector may be minimal or have pre-eminence over the others.²⁸

In this part of the work, I will focus on the popular sector and the folk sector, These two

²⁷ The popular sector consists of how people deal generally with sickness. The professional sector consists of the system based upon biomedicine as well as the professionalized indigenous healing traditions. The folk arena consists of healing specialists who are not considered as part of the official medical system; their forms of healing may be secular or religious in nature, or a combination of the two.

²⁸ Maloof, Patricia. "Sickness and Health in Society", *Concilium* 1991 2, p.20.

sectors are more relevant to the Ewe than the professional sector, which consists of a system based on conventional medicine. Even here, my focus will be more on the folk sector because when the popular sector fails, the Ewe have to definitively go to the folk sector. The popular sector, while mostly directed towards the role of the family in recognizing and coping with illness, also includes the broader base of social networks and community. It is the lay area of society where sickness is identified and it is the family who is consulted to give advice. Interaction is informal, and the role of the healer and the patient may be reserved at any given time. Both share common assumptions about health and sickness and are linked by commonalities of kinship, friendship, work associations, religious membership and so on. According to Kleinman, about seventy to ninety per cent of sickness is handled within this sphere in many societies. Even when they do move outside the popular domain, the family provides the major context for when and where to seek care and how to evaluate the treatment.²⁹

III.2. CONSULTATION OF THE HEALER/DIVINER

When someone falls sick, it is the role of the family or immediate community to take action. The first action is to try to see what they can do as a community for that person since the whole community is affected. When one is sick, he or she is sick in his or her entire being, and being a member of the community, he/she affects and weakens the vitality of the entire group. The healing process therefore takes place at both the personal and the community level. The sick are healed as individuals and as a community.

To treat the sick, the Ewe first use what we have mentioned above as the popular sector. The members of the extended family and the in-laws of the sick person have to be told quickly. They in turn have to try and see what can be done. They visit the sick person as

²⁹ Ibid.

soon as possible. If the sick person is able, he/she will explain to them how the sickness came about. Otherwise, the family members will have to tell the story of how it happened. The visitors will comfort the sick person and at the same time suggest some medical remedies. They can bring to the sick person whatever they have, including money, in order to help him/her. They will regularly visit the sick person to see how he/she is progressing. In addition to consultation with family and extended family, the process also includes self-medication³⁰ and advice from friends, neighbors and co-workers about how to handle such a disease. Everyone is welcome to suggest therapy. However, when the disease persists for a certain period of time, the family has to seek proper medication. This will lead them to consult a healer, diviner or a specialist.³¹

III.3. DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT OF SICKNESS BY THE HEALER

The role of the healer is to determine the origin of the sickness, as to whether it is a ordinary sickness or bewitchment. Whichever the case, holistic healing, according to Domingues, is in fact the significant characteristic of the healing function of traditional healers in Africa. Just as sickness touches the person on all levels of being, so the cure will only be effective if it can act and be seen to act on all those levels.³² This applies as well to the Ewe. Every healing activity touches all the levels of the person. It is worth noting that often, the spiritual and social dimensions are deemed the most relevant, if not in the symptoms, then certainly in the diagnosis and in the cure. Regarding the diagnosis, Shorter would hold the view that:

³⁰ This includes use of some medicines known as remedy for some usual sicknesses. i.e., headaches, stomach-aches, diarrhoeas.

³¹ The healer's activities of healing diseases by using herbs or symbols has tremendous impact on the people.

³² Domingues, Fernando, Christ Our Healer, Nairobi: Paulines Publication Africa, 2000, p.67.

The traditional doctor carries out a diagnostic interview in which actual physical examination plays quite an insignificant part. Much more important are the questions put to the sufferers. These may concern their relationships with their family and business associates. Has the illness followed upon a quarrel? What are the patients' expectations and future plans? Were they preparing to go on a journey? Did they have a new business venture in the pipeline? How has their illness affected these plans and future relationships? May be the patients' social relationships and anxieties are reflected in the subconscious, so questions are asked about dreams. If patients have had no apparently relevant dreams, they may be given a drug to help them have dreams. Although herbal cures and remedies may be prescribed, an equally important therapeutic role may be given to forgiveness and reconciliation, or to the right performance of duties in family or society.³³

The interest put on the diagnosis among the Ewe shows well the importance of the social implications of the condition on the patient. The family and associates are not only involved in the healing process but might at times be the cause of the evil. Some members of the family can because of jealousy send the sickness to one member of the family. It is the role of the healer to find out if they are the cause or not.

Basically, people often encounter two kinds of sickness. These are bodily sickness, which can be treated by natural medicines (massage, herbal medicines), and illness, which occurs as a result of the break down of human relationships both with the living and the 'living dead'. After determining the nature of the sickness, the healer will then be able to decide the best way to go about treating it. As we have mentioned above, the cultural system plays a pivotal role in this. Sickness is treated in relation to the way people understand their own structures. A healer must explain the sickness in such a way that it is personally and socially meaningful. These explanations can be used to effect the treatment. The description given by the patient to the healer about his state is influenced

³³ Shorter, Aylward, Jesus and the Witchdoctor: An Approach to Healing and Wholeness, Maryknoll: New York, 1985, p.58.

by numerous factors such as cultural beliefs, including definitions of health and illness, cultural explanations of anatomy and so on. In fact, multiple causation of illness is a well-known phenomenon, but some causes may be given more emphasis than others by the patient and may include what are commonly termed 'folk beliefs'. Explanations are attempts to give some order and meaning to events by relating them to one's cultural context. This underlines the conception of the universe and what it judges to be reality. People want to find explanations for sickness in their own culture. They are not only looking for cures (therapy) but also for an explanation for the ultimate cause of the evil. The reason behind this is that they might be guilty of something, either a revenge of an ancestor, jealousy of a parent or questioning oneself on what one might have done to offend God to be punished like that. The explanation that the patient himself/herself will give of his/her sickness is important for the discernment of a healing demand, even though he/she is not capable of expressing it in an adequate way. The way he/she perceives and explains his/her sickness is important. Without this step, there might be a problem especially when the healer and the patient do not share the same conception of sickness and the same worldview. Having said this, let us now look at how the process itself is carried out.

III.4. THE PROCESS OF HEALING

The Ewe believe in a harmonious existence between human beings, the Cosmos and God or the Supernatural power. Sickness, on its side, introduces a disharmony between these components and seeking health implies an attempt at restoration of this harmony. This is a concern not only for the individual but for the whole community as well. The work of the healer/diviner is to be able to identify at which level and how this

disharmony came to be and to find out how to appease the ancestral spirits, by offering sacrifices and prayers in order to obtain healing. This has an effect on the patient, and gives him/her faith and confidence for recovery. The healer/diviner will then be able to restore and to rebuild the harmony that was broken. At times, he has to do this by divination. To begin with, it is the patient who will have to consult the oracles to find out the causes of his/her sickness. The healer/diviner in his ritual throws on the ground some cowrie shells. If the sickness is very serious, the number of the cowrie shells will be seven, if otherwise, he will use three. After communicating with the spirits, the healer/diviner is then able to tell from the position of the cowrie shells on the ground the origin of the sickness. He will determine whether the person bewitching or responsible for the sickness is a close relative or not. The healer/diviner then will prescribe things the patient has to do and observe and things he/she should not do in order to recover. Another way of finding out the cause of sickness is that the healer/diviner might ask the patient to bring a cock for diagnosis. The healer will then pour libation. By so doing, he communicates with the spirits of the ancestors. He will give some maize to the cock to pick. If the cock picks all that are given, it will mean the sickness is natural. But if the cock refuses to pick the maize, it will mean it is a bad omen. To elucidate this better, I will give here a concrete example of one of our neighbors at home whose name is Koku. It happened that Koku suddenly had swollen feet. He consulted a healer/diviner. The healer/diviner in his divination said that he had walked on bad medicine, the result of which was his swollen feet. The role of the healer/diviner here is to counteract the power sent by the person causing that kind of havoc. The healer/diviner after consulting the spirits through the cowrie shell method, used some herbal medicines, spitting on them

and touching the feet of Koku three times. This was repeated for three days and Koku was cured.

The healer/diviner represents at the same time the priest, offering sacrifice for the whole community³⁴. His function is to assist the community live in good relationship with the ancestors. He is the mediator between the ancestors and the living.

In the rituals, the community has to be involved. The ritual process includes the use of symbols. These symbols are cowrie shells, herbs, roots, leaves and animals. These symbols are to be accepted as signs of healing by both the healer and the patient. If not, it will be difficult for the healer to reach his goal. The patient and the healer need to share the same belief system for healing to occur. The healer manipulates the symbols in order to achieve his goal. According to Stuart Bate:

All healing processes involve emotion transfer. In its simplest form this can be understood as the transition from negative emotions of feeling unwell to more positive emotions of feeling better.³⁵

The efficacy of herbal medicine depends on the incantations and rituals of sacrifices and offerings to the ancestors and spirits. This calls for reconciliation which involves a communitarian dimension. Healing is then perceived as a victory of good over evil, of restoration of the harmony that has been affected. The battle has to mobilize the physical and psychological defenses of the patient. Sometimes the healer takes the place of the sick person during some nocturnal battles or he will substitute an animal as an expiatory victim. What is most important is that the patient should have total trust in the

³⁴ Diviners are, generally speaking, responsible for finding the secrets of events and causes for sicknesses and mishaps. They may also be medicine men who supplement their arts of findings with the cure of their suppliants. There is also a great belief that some of them have supernatural powers as a special gift. That is why they serve in the same time as priest by offering sacrifices.

³⁵ Bate, Stuart, "The Mission to Heal in a Global Context", in: International Review of Missions, Vol.XC Nos. 356/357, p.75.

competence of the healer and in the efficacy of his strength due to his familiarity with the supernatural world. Faith is thus required from the patient.³⁶ It is necessary for the patient and the healer to believe in the validity of the healing process. The patient is prepared to put his/her trust in the healing process with the expectation of a positive outcome. If the patient does not believe in the healing process, it will be very difficult for the healer to lead the sick person through the ritual process and to manipulate the symbols of healing which carry the power required for healing to occur. Over this issue, the healer can admit the patient into his/her own family, his/her own house for as long as necessary for treatment. The sick person has to obey the healer totally in whatever he commands him/her to do. This might include a food menu, the taking of some medicine and so on. This way of healing involves as well, a kind of self-healing capacity within the patient. The healing does not only occur on the physical level but the psychological and emotional levels as well. It will be difficult to point out each particular level since all aspects are integrated in the process. As we have mentioned earlier, "the transition from negative emotions of feeling unwell to more positive emotions of feeling better" is very important. It is not enough to tell the patient that he/she is healed. Emotionally, he/she should really feel that his/her sickness is over.

III.5. THE ROLE OF THE COMMUNITY

As we have seen, sickness is not just a individual problem but a community problem. Meinrad Hebga has said that, "Africans are people who, when illness occurs to one of them, suspend their activities, come together in order to fight back the evil. Illness,

³⁶ Even in religious setting, faith was at the center of Jesus' healing works. He expected nothing but an act of faith from his patients. Many times, faith was a priori to the performance of miracles.

sufferings are important moments of special solidarity and renewal in the society"³⁷. This statement reflects well the attitude of the Ewe community with regard to sickness. As we have mentioned above, when sickness occurs, it is a problem for the whole community. The whole community feels defeated and tries its best to reestablish the harmony that has been broken. In Shorter's understanding, the roles of the social community in general, and of the family in particular, are of paramount importance in the traditional experience of sickness and healing. Families and friends encamped on the grounds adjacent to hospitals to accompany relatives or close acquaintances who are undergoing treatment are a common sight in Africa. Human relationships are an unavoidable part of the situation of sickness and they need to be treated, but they are also an indispensable component of the process of healing.³⁸ This is proved among the Ewe by the support they give to the sick person. As we have mentioned earlier, the Ewe visit the sick person by offering whatever they have to help him/her recover. This might be money, food, medications and so on. They will never let the sick person alone. There will be someone to watch over him/her all the time, even in a hospital where the presence of nurses makes this unnecessary. Shorter, relating his own experience about the social concern of sickness and the sick as a focus of solicitude on the part of their family and immediate community said this:

In 1978, when I was on the staff of a large theological seminary in Tanzania, I fell ill with a bad attack of malaria lasting a full eight days. During that time all the African staff and virtually all two hundred students called on me in my sickroom, hanging around and murmuring the Swahili condolence *ugua pole* -- 'sympathy in your sickness'. The room was continually full of people, with people even sitting on the bed,

³⁷ Hebga, Meinard, "Healing in Africa", *Concilium*, 1991:2, p.61.

³⁸ Shorter, Aylward, *Jesus and the Witchdoctor: An Approach to Healing and Wholeness*, Maryknoll: New York, 1985, p.62, 67.

although I was in no condition to be social. It was touching but it was tiring.³⁹

Among the Ewe as well, they keep always visiting the sick person throughout. The sick are usually far from lonely in their illness. And for the sick person, it is a proof of love for him/her that he/she is not alone. He/she feels supported and encouraged morally. For the family, the maximum is done to prevent any cause for regret at not having done enough to look after the sick person. The attention the family pays to the sick person is a very solid one. If it happens, despite all their effort, that the person dies, the grief of the family will be mitigated. They will attribute his/her death to destiny or to the will of God. But if on the other hand, the sick person has not been able to receive proper care, as in the case of a tragic accident, the grief of the family will be immense. Whichever the cases, the family has to do their best to assist the sick by mobilizing all their resources.

CONCLUSION

From what we have said, we can deduce that there is always a need to find explanations whenever somebody gets sick. The patient does not only look for healing but as well the patient is also interested in knowing how the sickness came about. It is a search for sense. How did it happen and who might have been the cause, are some of the questions that people ask. Is it an expression of the unhappiness of the ancestors or what? Though the patient might not be able to give a concordant explanation of the sickness, his/her contribution is very much valued. Let us now look at the sacrament of the anointing of the sick.

³⁹ Ibid., p.56.

CHAPTER IV

THE SACRAMENT OF ANOINTING OF THE SICK

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I shall be looking at the historical development of the Sacrament of Anointing and particularly focusing on the scriptures. I shall be examining what the Holy Bible has to say about anointing and how the Sacrament developed over the years until its actual form today in the Catholic Church was arrived at.

IV.1. BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

OLD TESTAMENT:

Oil was an item in common use in the ancient world. In the Old Testament, there is abundant evidence of anointing with oil, both for secular and religious purposes. Oil was used for sanitary and therapeutic purposes and for the completion of the bathing process (Ez 16:9). Anointing can be a symbol of joy, (Is 61:3) therefore, there is no ointment when people are mourning (2Sam 14:2). Those freed from captivity can also be anointed (2Chr 28: 15). Kings, Priests and Prophets were anointed with oil as a sign of their special divine call and of the gift of God's Spirit to help them (1x 28:40-42; 1Sam 10:1; 24:6; 1Kgs 19:16). The most common significance of the use of oil was consecration, sanctification and fortification.

NEW TESTAMENT:

In the New Testament, Jesus and his followers made use of oil. Two references to anointing the sick have been influential in the historical development of the Sacrament. The first is Mark 6:13, which says: "They expelled many demons, anointed the sick with oil and worked many cures". That was part of the disciples' ministry of preaching and

healing, participating in Jesus' own ministry. The Council of Trent saw this as an "insinuation of the institution of the Sacrament of Anointing". Traditionally, the scriptural evidence for the sacrament of anointing comes from the letter of James, placing the care of the sick in the context of other pastoral situations. It says:

Is anyone among you suffering? He should pray. Is anyone in good spirits? He should sing praises. Is anyone among you sick? He should summon the presbyters of the church, and they should pray over him and anoint (him) with oil in the name of the Lord, and the prayer of faith will save the sick person, and the Lord will raise him up. If he has committed any sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. (Jas 5:13-16).

Oil was also used for treating wounds, healing the sick and preparing the dead for burial (Mk 16:1). The use of oil speaks of strength and health, of consecration and God's Spirit.

IV.2. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENTS OF THE SACRAMENT OF ANOINTING OF THE SICK: THE FIRST EIGHT CENTURIES

According to Mick Lawrence, the history of the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick can be divided into two major periods. The first eight centuries of the Church's life was one period, where one perspective prevailed, and the second began with the Carolingian reforms of the ninth century. A different perspective became dominant and prevailed until the reforms of the Second Vatican Council.⁴⁰

In the first eight hundred years, the sacrament was clearly seen as a rite for the sick. Anointing was a sacrament of healing and part of the Church's normal care for the sick. The liturgical books show a great concern for the blessing of the oil by the bishop but offer no evidence of a formal rite for doing the anointing. The blessing strengthens the oil with divine power. Who it was that applied this oil on the sick person was not that

⁴⁰ Mick, Lawrence, Understanding The Sacraments Today. Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1987, p.95.

important. Certainly it was appropriate for the bishop himself to do so, but if it was not possible for the bishop to visit all the sick regularly, then the sick could be anointed by a presbyter (priest) or by a lay person. There are even indication that sometimes the sick could anoint themselves with the holy oil.⁴¹ The oil was applied in various ways, often by anointing the afflicted part of the body or by drinking it.⁴² Pope Innocent I (c.416) supposes that the oil blessed by a bishop can be used by all Christians, to carry out anointing in their personal needs or those of their family, thinking particularly of the need to heal the sick.⁴³

In that early period there was more stress on the bodily effects of the anointing than on the spiritual effects. This was a sacrament of healing, and it was intended for the care of the sick, not the dying. At the same time, there was still that wholistic approach to healing which recognized that body and spirit are not separate entities and that God came to save the whole person. The sacrament was intended to promote wholeness of body and mind and soul and spirit.

IV.3. FROM CHARLEMAGNE TO VATICAN II

In the ninth century, the emperor Charlemagne supported a major reform of the liturgical rites of the Church within his realm. To unify his kingdom he sought a uniformity of Church worship. This Carolingian reform had a great impact on the practice of anointing. Before this reform, as we have said above, lay people could anoint, even sick people

⁴¹ Gusmer, Charles, "Anointing of the sick", in: The New Dictionary of Theology, eds. Joseph Komonchak, Mary Collins, Dermot Lane, Wilmington:Michael Glazier, 1987, p.24.

⁴² Bausch, William, A New Look At The Sacraments, Mystic, Connecticut: Twenty-third Publications, 1983, pp.206-7.

⁴³ Klein, Gregory, Pastoral Foundations Of The Sacraments: A Catholic Perspective, New York: Paulist Press, 1998, p.117.

could anoint themselves or take the oil as internal medicine.⁴⁴ But after the reform, the anointing with oil was restricted to presbyters (priests) and bishops. Lay people could no longer anoint themselves or their sick relatives. The reform also produced a ritual on how the anointing was to be done.

At the same time the anointing began to be associated with the rites for the dying and deathbed reconciliation. Because the sacrament of penance could be received only once in the early Church, it had become common to put it off until the moment of death. Since this sacrament had to be celebrated by an ordained clergy, and since it was customary that the anointing could not be given to penitents until they had been reconciled, it was natural that the anointing would become part of the deathbed ministry. The sequence became penance, followed by anointing and concluding with viaticum. In the twelfth century the order was changed to penance, viaticum and anointing. As the anointing of the sick became "Extreme Unction" (last anointing), there was a natural change in focus concerning the effects of the sacrament. Usually the sick person was dying when the sacrament was celebrated, so physical healing was not generally experienced or expected. The Council of Trent (1545-63) took place after several centuries of such practice and theory. The Council refrained from ratifying the stress on anointing as a sacrament of the dying. The Council said, instead, that the anointing was to be administered to the sick, especially to those who were dangerously ill and seemed near death. Thus the Council left the door open for the reforms of the Second Vatican Council in our own time, which restored the sacrament as a sacrament for the sick, not just for the dying. Due to these reforms, the change of the name from "Extreme Unction" to "Anointing of the Sick" became obvious. To stress the healing purpose of that sacrament, the conciliar Fathers of

⁴⁴ Gusmer, op.cit.

the Second Vatican Council in 1963 proposed to reform and strengthen its discipline as well as its ritual celebration. The Council Decree on the Sacred Liturgy says:

Extreme Unction, which may also and more fittingly be called 'anointing of the sick', is not a sacrament for those only who are at the point of death. Hence, as soon as any one of the faithful begins to be in danger of death from sickness or old age, the appropriate time for him to receive this sacrament has certainly already arrived.⁴⁵

Again in 1964, the Second Vatican Council Dogmatic Constitution on the Church states:

By the sacred anointing of the sick and the prayer of priests the entire Church commends the sick to the suffering and glorified Lord, and asks that he lighten their suffering and save them (Jas 5:15-15); the Church exhorts them, moreover, to contribute to the welfare of the whole people of God by associating themselves freely with Christ's passion and death (Rom 8:17; Col 1:24; 2Tm 2:11-12; 1Pt 4:13).⁴⁶

With the Second Vatican Council, the very significant change of name, from 'Extreme Unction' to the old name of 'Anointing of the sick' appears to emphasize more its healing aspect rather than the forgiveness of sins. This gave a new light to the nature of the sacrament as it is stated in canon 998 of The Code of Canon Law of 1983:

The anointing of the sick, by which the Church commends to the suffering and glorified Lord the faithful who are dangerously ill so that He may support and save them, is conferred by anointing them with oil and pronouncing the words prescribed in the liturgical books.

The Second Vatican Council, in implementing the biblical text of James, mentions first the healing effect of the sacrament and places the conditional effect of the forgiveness of sins second. Nevertheless, in pastoral practice, integral healing (physical and spiritual)

⁴⁵ Vatican Council II, Sacrosanctum Concilium, n. 73.

⁴⁶ Vatican Council II, Lumen Gentium, n.11.

and raising up by the Lord were relegated to second place: emphasis was placed almost entirely upon spiritual healing of sin and final anointing for glory.⁴⁷

In the same way, the Catechism of the Catholic Church also deals with the sacraments of healing, and stipulates that:

The Lord Jesus Christ, physician of our souls and bodies, who forgave the sins of the paralytic and restored him to bodily health, has willed that his Church continue, in the power of the Holy Spirit, his work of healing and salvation, even among her own members. This is the purpose of the two sacraments of healing: the sacrament of Penance and the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick.⁴⁸

IV.4. THE PRESENT RITUAL OF ANOINTING OF THE SICK

The rite as prepared by the Congregation for Divine Worship⁴⁹ places the sacramental ministry in the context of a wider pastoral care of the sick. The introduction to the rite highlights the role of the whole Christian community in caring for the sick.⁵⁰ Doctors and other health-care personnel share in the ministry in their own special roles. All baptised Christians are urged to participate in the ministry to the sick, offering them their love and care and celebrating the sacraments with them. The rite urges frequent visits to the sick not only by the priest but also by the family, friends and other members of the community of faith.⁵¹ The liturgy of anointing can be celebrated for a group of the sick in a communal rite of anointing or for an individual. It may be celebrated within Mass or as

⁴⁷ Coriden, J. A., and others (ed.), The Code of Canon Law, A Text and Commentary, Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 1999, 703.

⁴⁸ The Catechism of the Catholic Church, n.1421, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1995, 357.

⁴⁹ This Congregation is in charge of the celebration of liturgy in the Catholic Church.

⁵⁰ The Rites of the Catholic Church, Vol.1, New York: Pueblo Publishing Company, 1976, p.582.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p.582.

a separate rite. It may be celebrated at home, in Church, or in a hospital or institution.⁵² In all these circumstances the basic elements of the rite are the same.

The introduction to the rite lists three elements as central to the sacrament of the anointing of the sick: the prayer of faith, the laying on of hands, and the anointing with oil.⁵³ It is the prayer of faith that James says will save the sick person. In this sacrament, “it is the people of God who pray in faith”, the rite notes. That is why it is so important that the community of faith gather around the sick person for the celebration of this sacrament.⁵⁴ The laying on of hands is an ancient gesture that carries several meanings. The touching of the person is a gesture Jesus often used to heal the sick. It is a gesture of blessing. The anointing with oil symbolizes some of the same things as the laying on of hands.

In the current rites the sick person is anointed on the forehead while the priest says:

Through this holy anointing, may the Lord in his love and mercy help you with the grace of the Holy Spirit.⁵⁵

Then the priest anoints the sick person’s hands, saying:

May the Lord who frees you from sin save you and raise you up.⁵⁶

Where possible, other parts of the body may also be anointed, especially the area of pain or injury. The rite recommends an abundant use of the oil so that it will be an effective symbol and notes that the oil should not be wiped off afterwards.

⁵² Ibid., p.586.

⁵³ Ibid., p.583.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p.587

⁵⁶ Ibid.

IV.5. THE EWE UNDERSTANDING OF THE SACRAMENT OF ANOINTING OF THE SICK

Among the Ewe, if there is a sacrament that Christian people have little knowledge about, it is the sacrament of anointing of the sick. Many people would be able to say something about all the other sacraments (Baptism, Eucharist, Reconciliation, Confirmation, Holy Orders, Marriage) but when it comes to the Anointing of the Sick, they just see it as a gate to death. If somebody is sick, and they call for the priest, the first idea that comes to many peoples' minds is that there is no hope, and that is why they have called for the priest. Calling for the priest is seen as the kiss of death. Most of the time, it is put off until the last possible moment. The arrival of the priest actually hastens death by frightening the patient. Therefore it is when the doctors can do no more, that they call in the priest. The priest just has to prepare the person to die. The idea that the sacrament could bring healing to the sick is often ruled out by many. People still look at the sacrament of anointing of the sick as the extreme unction, which was the case before Second Vatican Council. In my enquiries about the sacrament of the sick from some Ewe people, the answers given were not much but focused on the fact that this sacrament calls to mind the dying of a patient. To the question what this sacrament means to them, they responded by saying,

- It is a sacrament to prepare the sick person to leave this world worthily.
- It is a sacrament for the dying.
- We have no idea of what it is.

How many times have you gathered around a sick person to celebrate this sacrament?

- Not even once.

- Only once since I was born.

Was there any hope that the sick person would recover from his/her sickness?

- There was no hope that was why they called in for a priest, or
- A chance for survival was very minimal.

While working in hospital as assistant chaplain myself, I was involved in the administration of this sacrament only twice. Mostly, when I ask some catholic patients if they want me to call a priest for them to give them the sacrament of anointing, they immediately reject this proposition by saying they are not yet dying.

In the light of the reform of this sacrament, it has to be celebrated with the whole Christian community. The Christian community should express its love and care for the sick by giving them support of every kind. The sick should feel loved, cherished, and not abandoned. People have to see this sacrament more as one for the sick than a last rite for the dying. Though some people know that the old views have changed somehow, they are not sure what this sacrament means today or when it should be celebrated.

CONCLUSION

The Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick is one of the usual ways Catholics encounter the healing and redemptive presence of Christ. This Sacrament is about healing but it is a prayer for the healing of the whole person. It may result in physical healing. It may offer healing of the spirit. And since spiritual and physical healings are interdependent, the Sacrament may foster healing of both body and spirit. In most cases, people pray for physical healing. If God judges that bodily healing is best for the sick person, such healing will result from the sacrament but this sacrament calls us to accept God's will and to submit to whatever God decides. Throughout the history of the Church,

this sacrament had gone through different stages. However, among the Ewe, a lot still needs to be done to make people understand properly this sacrament, its meaning, its use and application.

CHAPTER V

TOWARDS A THEOLOGY OF HEALING AND ANOINTING AMONG THE EWE

INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, we looked at the history of the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick from its beginning until its present stage. This chapter will point out some of the important elements present in the Ewe traditional setting and see how this can be expressed better in the process of the anointing of the sick. As has been seen, healing methods have an important significance for the Ewe people. The challenge here is to try to inculcate these methods so as to help people to understand better what they do when it comes to the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick.

V.1. ACCEPTANCE OF THE EWE TRADITIONAL WAY OF HEALING

The first thing to point out here is the necessity for understanding of the traditional Ewe worldview and in particular sickness. This worldview can interact with the Christian worldview, which is the belief in One God who is the creator of everything that exists and who gives life to every being. So far, there is no conflict between the Ewe belief in God and the Christian belief. The acceptance of One God as Creator of the universe is a positive sign that is already there in the Ewe traditional beliefs. Therefore, the first stage of the Church is to understand the Ewe way of healing and accept some aspects, while others may need to be reviewed, especially on the side of divination. The Church needs to assimilate what is compatible with the gospel from local cultural healing systems. This will give assurance and comfort to the sick who will have no problem in understanding what sickness means without having to confine themselves to other interpretations: the

fact that sickness is viewed as a disharmony between the relationship of the patient to his/her environment (God, Others, Community...) and that healing is to seek restoration of this harmony, is a commonly shared view. The Christian Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick does not seek to restore only health to the individual but also reestablishes the good relationship between the patient and God as is the case also with the traditional Ewe practice. A priest, using some symbols and rituals that are significant to the patient, mediates the procedure in Ewe healing methods. This procedure is also found in the administration of the Sacrament, which requires a priest, the use of oil, the imposition of hands and the prayers. The patient who finds them meaningful for him or her in the process of healing accepts all these means. Still, in the Christian view, the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick celebrated in a Christian community aims at healing the whole person, i.e. body and soul. It can bring about physical healing as a manifestation of a personal or inner healing. Hetsen and Wanjohi explain that:

When the community of the faithful gather together for the anointing and laying of hands on the sick person, he/she knows himself/herself to be worthwhile in the eyes of the community. Self-esteem is strengthened, and the whole community, including the sick one, is invited to surrender to that reality which Jesus called "Father". This surrender will make the community aware of its limitations and "woundedness", and will also transcend it. Genuine prayer does not leave people untouched. It can change people's hearts by making them receptive to the Spirit.⁵⁷

The attitude of Jesus regarding healing as presented in the Gospels is marked by an integrated approach. Jesus heals on several levels at once- physical, emotional, psychic, social and religious. This is similar to the view of the Ewe traditional healers, who also seek to restore the whole person to his or her formal or initial equilibrium. Wholeness

⁵⁷ Hetsen, Jac, & Wanjohi, Raphael, Anointing and Healing in Africa, Nairobi: Gaba Publication, 1982, p.20.

thus is one of the main requirements for a meaningful and fruitful celebration of the anointing of the sick. We can affirm again with Hetsen and Wanjohi that:

Wholeness is a much wider concept than being physically healthy, or physically cured. It seems to be synonymous with what is traditionally called salvation or redemption. Becoming whole or healthy, in this wider sense, seems very close to what we call grace.

Becoming whole is a process of enlightenment through understanding, by allowing the light of Christ to shine on us. Wholeness is harmony, growth, and integration. It means being at home with oneself, one's neighbour, and God. It means being pure and single in mind, not fragmented or divided. It is transparency, with no hidden intentions.⁵⁸

In other words, we need others to become whole. We need to belong to the fellowship of Christ, and a community, where people are one at heart, where they pray authentically, and where all together are gradually formed into his Body.⁵⁹ In like manner, the Ewe healer operates a whole treatment which is community-based in its healing practices.

V.2 THE IMAGE OF THE PRIEST IN COMPARISON TO THE IMAGE OF THE DIVINER.

The priest or the healer is a person recognized as one who can restore personal health by using plants, substances and supplementary methods such as divination and rituals. He/she is a messenger from the ancestors (spirits) and plays many roles according to the circumstances of people. He/she acts as medicine man, diviner, priest. The role played by him/her among the Ewe regarding healing is a role of mediator between the sick or his/her family and the ancestors. It is through him/her that people are able to communicate to the ancestors and it is still through him/her that the ancestors communicate to the people. It is not possible to go directly to the ancestors without

⁵⁸ Ibid., 28.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 28.

having to pass through the mediation of the diviner. Everyone acknowledges his/her role in the community and every person owes him/her that respect. Periodically, once a year, a feast is celebrated to commemorate the ancestors and the diviner has to play an important role in this celebration. He/she is the one who receives the sick person, diagnoses his/her sickness and then indicates what should be done for recovery. The healer cannot heal without the assistance of the spirits. He/she receives his/her call to heal and to reveal the divine will to people through obedience to the ancestors' spirits on the occasion of his/her initiation. He/she depends upon the ancestors' spirits who are finite beings. He/she cannot perceive the causes of sickness directly nor perform miracles immediately like Christ would do. He/she can only heal herbally and gradually, and the motives for healing others can sometimes be all too human. On the contrary, he/she destroys in order to construct.⁶⁰ The medicine he/she prepares is not prepared in a proper hygienic condition.⁶¹ He/she uses the ancestor to justify his/her failure.⁶²

The Catholic Priest's vocation, however, is of a higher level because it is a divine call through the Holy Spirit, the infinite being and divine person. The healing power here dwells in the Holy Spirit. The Church should remove prejudice against traditional healers and be engaged in dialogue with the traditional healers. The conflict comes when the traditional doctor claims that, besides the use of herbs, he is acting under supernatural powers in the diagnosis and treatment of diseases and misfortune especially when it comes to divination. The Ewe perceive a Catholic priest as being more a healer than a diviner. Through him, and through his anointing, healing can occur. He plays a role of

⁶⁰ In the process of healing sometimes, somebody can be killed in order to save the other party.

⁶¹ The healer/diviner spits on the medicine in the process of preparation, which is not good. He/she can give his/her own sickness to another person.

⁶² If the healer/diviner is not able to heal, instead of referring the person to a doctor, he/she attributes his/her failure to the anger of the ancestors.

mediator, the one who takes people to God and through prayers brings God's grace to people.

The Church should not object to or reject the herbalist because he/she is privileged with information about the curative properties of herbs and proceeds to use them to heal people. It is universally admitted that some plants contain medicinal values. With regard to the Sacrament of Anointing of the sick in the Church, the healing power that touches the sick is Christ himself and not the priest administering the sacrament. The patient feels comforted and cared for by the community to which he belongs. Moreover, in the process of healing, healing may be spiritual, psychological, or physical, or a combination of these.

V.3. THE PRESENCE OF THE FAMILY AND WIDER COMMUNITY

As I have mentioned in the previous chapters, the attention to the sick by the members of the family or wider community among the Ewe is very solid. The sick are always cared for by their family members and members of their community. This is a positive step we can retain from the Ewe tradition. The Second Vatican Council in its present ritual of the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick has stressed the fact that other members of the Christian community should be involved in this celebration and regards it as a Christian community matter rather than something between the priest and the patient. This new insight brought forward by the Second Vatican Council stresses the presence of the Church, the body of Christ. It ought to be noted that the Ordo⁶³ envisages the celebration of the Sacrament not only in homes and sick rooms, but also in public Churches, with the

⁶³ Ordo: A manual published by a diocese prescribing the dates of liturgical seasons and movable feasts, determining the rank and kind of festivity and liturgical colors to be used. The Ordo Unctionis infirmorum is a liturgical ordo and not simply a compendium of liturgical rites. The concept of ordo involves a recognition of a larger pastoral plan, within which a variety of liturgies are appropriately celebrated.

gathering of all the faithful, so that the Sacrament becomes a true ecclesial and communal liturgy.⁶⁴

With regard to the role the community has to play in healing, we should notice that Jesus never dealt with the problem of sickness as a private matter, but always in the context of community relationships. It is therefore the community that helps the patient to reach the healer. That is why the Christian community ought to be involved in the healing ministry by encouraging prayers for the sick and by restoring relationships through confession and forgiveness of sin (Jas 5: 14-46). Let us here remind the Ewe community, of its duties to care for every member, to protect the innocent, and to respect the dignity of the person.⁶⁵ The community itself by its presence and support for the sick can be a sacrament of healing. Here as well, I praise the actions taken by the first missionaries in Eweland, whose main concern was not only the evangelization of the soul, but also the promotion of Christian love within the community of the believers (Jn 13: 34-35), and the struggle against sickness and ignorance.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Ordo Unctionis, nos.80-82.

⁶⁵ The Catechism of the Catholic Church, nn.1907; 2273; 2288, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1995.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 32; 1735.

V.4. RECOMMENDATIONS

The general impression I got, while working on this subject, is the fact that the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick is unknown practically to many of our Christians. My survey revealed to me that less than 10 per cent have attended the celebration of this Sacrament. Many of them still have not yet understood that this Sacrament is not a rite intended for a sick person at the point of death, but as already noted "as soon as anyone of the faithful begins to be in danger of death from sickness or old age, the fitting time to receive this Sacrament has already arrived"⁶⁷. Another reality regarding this Sacrament is the availability of the ordained minister. Due to his many ordinary duties, to attend to all the sick of his community and administer properly this Sacrament may be difficult.

Since understanding illness and mediating healing is culturally constructed and conditioned, it is important to develop a model of ministry which takes the cultural factors into account among the Ewe. We know that there has been a danger in adopting practices that are incompatible with the gospel message. Not all the healing practices among the Ewe are worthy of inclusion. There are some practices that are very superstitious, having a magical connotation, e.g., those of consulting the spirits through the cowrie shell method to find out the cause of sicknesses, which at times are just natural sicknesses. Since they must find out a cause, they end up sometimes by wrongly accusing innocent people of being the cause. In the light of the gospel, some of the practices need to be purified or rejected. Christians need to be re-instructed about the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick. Catechism needs to be done on this issue for Christian communities, so that they may be more aware of what this Sacrament really means. We

⁶⁷ The Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Liturgy, n.73.

should make it known to them as well that efforts are already being made to integrate the traditional way of healing into this Sacrament.

Regarding the minister, we can point to three stages in the evolution of this Sacrament. The first is that the blessing of oils was reserved to a Bishop, but its use was made available to all the Christians. At this stage, anyone in the community could anoint: the baptized, deacons, presbyters, and bishops. Even self-administration by the sick was allowed. Since that has been the case in the past, is it necessary and proper today to reserve anointing to priests or bishops? The second stage of development is the gradual reservation of the anointing to bishops and presbyters. During this period, the usage of "Extreme Unction" was developed. Forgiveness of sins and anointing were closely tied. There is an obvious connection between this and the reservation of the Sacrament to ordained priests. But what about those who die without receiving either the sacrament of reconciliation, or the anointing of the sick? If possibility is given to the lay people to anoint, they could be able to give anointing to the sick instead of leaving the sick to die without this sacrament.

The third stage of development came with the Second Vatican Council, where there was a desire for a more regular celebration of the Sacrament, not tied to the immediate danger of death. Here again, we are still faced with the insufficient number of available priests especially when it comes to the celebration of anointing of the sick. The questions that one may ask here are, should the Sacrament be more readily available to the sick, in any situation of serious illness? We know from the fact that some areas or outstations only receive the visit of the priest twice or thrice a year. Why not extend the anointing of the Sick to deacons, and even to the baptized faithful, particularly those authorized to

celebrate baptism, preside at communion services and bury the dead? This was asked in post-conciliar theology. The requirement of the Ordo according to which the minister of anointing is necessarily the bishop or priest, is irrelevant to many parts of some parishes, and to many outstations today. If in the earliest times, lay people could anoint with the oil blessed by the bishop, why could this privilege not be given to the laity today so that in the absence of a priest, they could administer the anointing? The faithful can be allowed to bring home oil for use, in a manner similar to the use of blessed water but this should not be confounded with the celebration of the Sacrament.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have looked at some elements in the Ewe traditional way of healing. These elements, if introduced into the practice of healing among Ewe Christians today, will give the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick a better meaning for them. In definitive, people need to understand this sacrament better. The pastors should stress more on the healing aspect while instructing people. Its application needs to be much more common among the faithful.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

In a general overview of the work presented in the chapters above, it will be noticed that I have made an effort to present the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick as the Ewe perceive it. There is need for the Church to situate its understanding of health and healing within the Ewe worldview, which perceives health as more than physical well being. It should be seen as a state that entails mental, physical, spiritual, social and environmental harmony. It should also be seen as a state of balance within all these realms. Pastors should be aware of this concept to be able to reach the Ewe in their innermost being. On the other side, the Ewe Christians need to grasp more the meaning of the sacrament and how it should be applied. It is the duty of the ministers to bring people to that awareness and explain to them the significance of the Sacrament.

In chapter I, I have tried to present the worldview of the Ewe people and their understanding of health and sickness as well as their beliefs on causes of sickness. Note must be made here that each culture has its own way of conceiving the above and the Ewe are no exception. Their worldview has been a big determinant in their outlook of this phenomenon and their approach to health and sickness.

This worldview and approach leads me into the second chapter in which I have tried to deal with the Ewe methods of dealing with the phenomenon. The methods are based on their religious perceptions of the human being as not just a material entity but one with a body and soul. This takes me into the spiritual realm as well.

In the third chapter, an effort was made to go through the historical development of the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick from the beginning of the Catholic Church. Following this up we now have it in its present form. The last two chapters are an effort

to present the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick in an Ewe context. It is more of an effort to pull together the two views on sickness and healing into a more integrated ceremony, which gives a better understanding of the Church Sacrament in the light of the traditional customs and religious values of the Ewe. Inculturation is the aim of this work, to present this Sacrament in an African form in which its practice would be more meaningful in the lives of the Ewe people.

The experience of serious illness is always a time of trial for the patient, friends and relatives. It brings us face to face with our mortality. Thus the Christian is called to respond generously to the needs of the sick. This effort is a challenge to the Church and her members especially in her [the Church's] bid to plant the Gospel into other cultures. She comes into contact with making the "word dwell among us". it is her [Church's] duty and that of the local pastors and laity to try to contextualise these Church values that no doubt have come to us embellished with a foreign culture.

This effort to make the Gospel at home in non western cultures, especially that of the Ewe, particularly in relation to the Sacrament of healing, no doubt will be my long-term goal. It is a vision, which in its entirety is urgent and needs to be given attention by the Church as a whole and the ethnic group involved.

My work is therefore, an effort to respond to the Church's efforts to make Christianity more at home in Africa and among her peoples. And to go in line with the recent African Synod in its proposition 34, which said that:

Inculturation of the liturgy, provided it does not change the essential elements, should be carried out so that our people can better understand and live our liturgical celebrations. It is therefore recommended that those parts of the liturgical celebration which can be changed in order to

enhance an intelligent, conscious, and meaningful participation in it should be inculturated according to agreed norms⁶⁸.

There is therefore an urgent need to focus on the issue of inculturation and healing.

⁶⁸ Browne, Maura, The African Synod Documents, Reflection, Perspective. New York: Orbis Book, 1996, proposition 34, p.98.

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INTERVIEWS

Mc West Adotevi Christiane

Amouzou Gervaise

Amouzou Madeleine

Fiodehome Philippe

Sognon Lucie

Adator Jules