

UNIVERSITY OF GHANA
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES

HEALING THE 'INCURABLE':

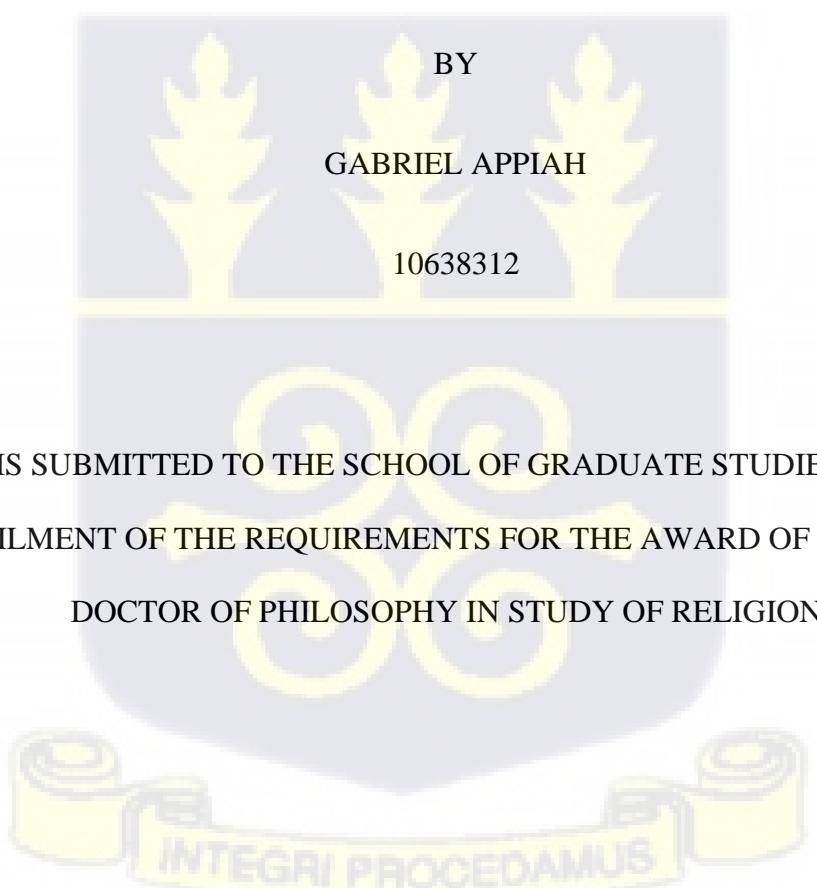
A CASE OF THREE NEO-PROPHETIC HEALERS IN GHANA

BY

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10638312

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES IN PARTIAL
FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN STUDY OF RELIGIONS



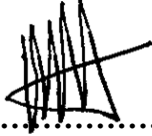
INTEGRI PROCEDAMUS

DEPARTMENT FOR THE STUDY OF RELIGIONS

DECEMBER 2023

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that this thesis is my own original research work carried out in the Department for the Study of Religions, University of Ghana, under the supervision of Prof. Rose Mary Amenga-Etego and Rev. Prof. James Chris Thomas.



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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the neo-prophetic healers' claim of healing 'incurable' diseases in Ghana. Several studies have been done on the neo-prophetic healers and their churches, however, these scholarly works have not included the neo-prophetic healers' claim of healing 'incurable' diseases. It was this gap in the literature that the study responded to. The Neo-prophetic healers chosen for the study were Bishop Antwi Boasiako, Rev. Isaac Osei Bonsu, and Bishop Daniel Obinim.

The study adopted ethnographic theology and case study approaches to investigate the neo-prophetic healers' claims of healing 'incurable' diseases. A period of seven months was spent in the field to interact with the churches under study, by attending healing services organised by the healers in Kumasi and Accra for participant observation and identifying respondents for interviews. Forty-one (41) respondents were interviewed, 14 respondents from each church except in the case of MOGPA, where 13 respondents were interviewed. Grounded theorising by Tite Tiénou was adopted as the theoretical framework for the study. The theory was used to explore the Ghanaian neo-prophetic healers' claim and their clients' interpretation of biblical narratives on healing 'incurable' diseases.

The study revealed three principal findings. First, 'incurable' diseases among neo-prophetic healers and clients are unexplainable diseases that defy biomedical care. Such diseases are believed to occur because of sin, bewitchment, curses, and manipulations by spirit entities. Second, Neo-prophetic healers' claim of healing their clients' 'incurable' diseases is based on the disappearance of symptoms, the elimination of *Otanfo* (the enemy) and the exorcism of the spirit entities involved. Third, Neo-prophetic healers and clients

are ‘ordinary or popular readers’ who engaged in grounded theologising. They interpret and re-interpret Bible passages within the Ghanaian cultural context to address their existential needs including ‘incurable’ diseases. Clients of neo-prophetic healers believe that ‘incurable’ diseases can only be healed by these neo-prophet healers who are seen as ‘powerful men of God’ that are able to speak to the situation.



DEDICATION

To my late wife Christina Efuah Danquah and children, Nana Yaw Boachie and Lucinda

Rebecca Appiah.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you Lord for your mercy and grace. To Professor Rose Mary Amenga-Etego, I am superbly indebted to you. Her care, kind-loving heart and strong peaceful composure fuelled this thesis and I am intrinsically grateful to have been mentored by her. Indeed, her commitment to the supervision of the thesis was extraordinary. It was a privilege to have her as my mentor and supervisor. I am also thankful to Rev. Professor James Chris Thomas for his insightful ideas for the development of my thesis and his encouragement especially when I was in my lowest point in life.

I was also privileged to have such great ideas, motivation and encouragement that contributed to the completion of my thesis from Rev. Fr. Prof. George Ossom-Batsa, Rev. Dr. A.N.O Kwakye, Rev. Prof. Atiemo Abamfo, Prof. Nicoletta Gatti, Prof. Elizabeth Amoah, Dr. Rabiatu Ammah, Dr. Ernestina Novieto, Dr. Ben-Willie Golo, Dr. Lawrence Boakye, Dr. Godfred Nasiah, and Dr. Isaac Boamah. I am so grateful to Ms. Christelle Atikpo, Kwasi Abugah and Prince Dwomoh, staff at the Department for the Study of Religions, University of Ghana for their supports.

I am indebted to the Missions Academy, University of Hamburg's Short-Term Fellowship Programme in Theology for the opportunity granted me to study at the Institution. It was an opportunity that provided the much-needed new environment for healing and self-recollection as well as working on my thesis. I am grateful to Rev. Dr. Anton Knuth, Dr. Claudete Beise Ulrich, and Silvia Frau Huber for the opportunity given to me through the fellowship. I am thankful to Professor Werner Kahl for his supervision and insightful contributions to my work during my time of fellowship at Missions Academy. I am

indebted to all the other scholarship holders of the Missions Academy, University of Hamburg for their academic contributions, support, and encouragement during the period.

I am also thankful to Prof. Emmanuel A. Obeng, Nana Kobina Nketsia V of Essikado-Sekondi, Rev. Dr. Francis Acquah and Dr. Ebenezer Appah Bonney for their academic contributions towards my education. To my friends who had served as role models to me, I am thankful for their encouragement and inspiration toward the completion of my thesis. I am thankful to lawyer Abdul Wahab Abdul Basit, Dr. Kojo Okyere, Dr. Iddrissu Shaibu Adam, Dr. Confidence Bansah of the Department of Religion and Human Values at the University of Cape Coast, Dr. Stephen Jantuah Boakye, Dr. WinCharles Cocker, Department of Communications, University of Cape Coast, Dr. Leonard Annamah, a former PhD candidate of the University of Ghana and to all my colleagues, Rev. Kwaku Asare, Eugina Tawiah Adam, Samuel Adjornor, and Rev. Isaac Boapeah, Department for the Study of Religions, University of Ghana.

I am indebted to Mrs. Grace Adjei a graduate student at the School of Nursing and Midwifery, University of Ghana, for taking the pains to read through my thesis work. Also, I am thankful to Hectoria Blankson for her great assistance during my fieldwork with MOGPA. To all the Abroso family (International God's Way Church) in Cape Coast, Kumasi, and Accra, I so much appreciate their support and willingness to help me in identifying respondents. I am also thankful to all the Church members of the New Era Chapel International who assisted me during my research work.

To my family, I am thankful to my Mum, Rebecca Appiah for her constant prayers, especially when I was overwhelmed with circumstances beyond my control, and to my

mother-in-law, Gladys Nkrumah for her support in taking care of my children, even when she was also grieving. To Isaac Appiah, Melody Appiah Duku, and Serwaa Okyere, I am thankful for their understanding, support, and prayers during my studies.



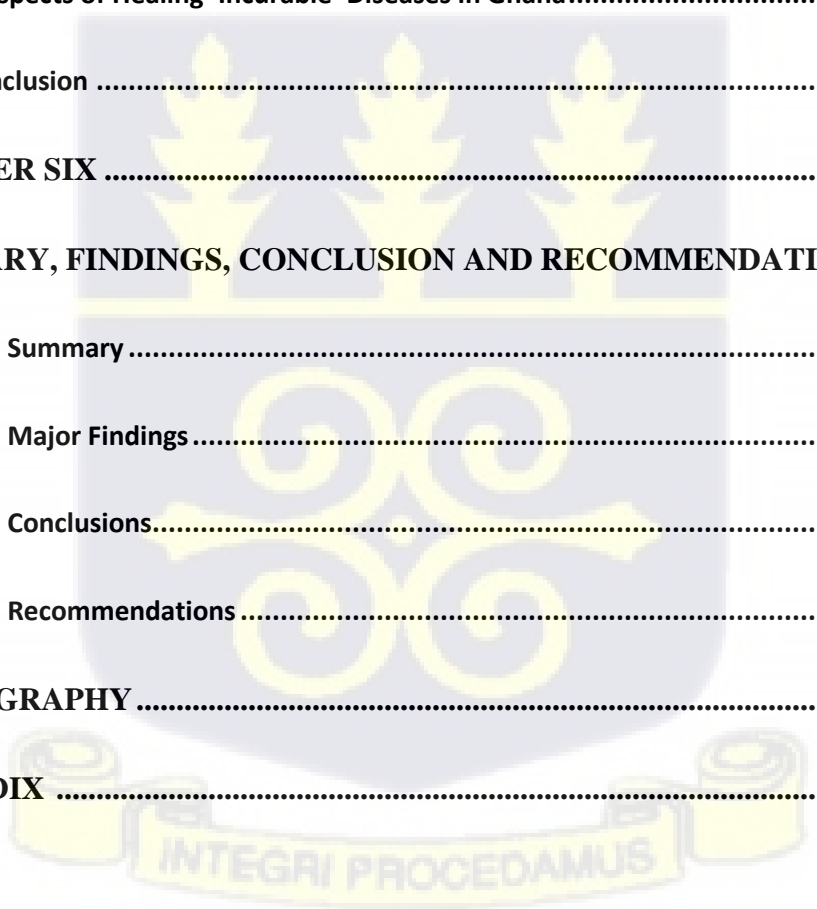
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background to the Study

Healing is of concern to humanity from ancient times to the current generation because diseases and illnesses are a threat and underpin our very existence as humans. The claim by religious healers to healing 'incurable' diseases has attracted considerable attention since ancient times.¹ The question posed based on such a claim is that, have such claims to heal 'incurable' diseases by the neo-prophetic healers been investigated? What are the neo-prophetic healers' understanding of 'incurable' disease?

In Ghana, healing ministries have sprung up in many places: cities, towns and even villages in remote areas. Healing sessions or meetings are organised in some cases with little consideration to the conduciveness of the places where such meetings take place.² It is a common practice in Ghana, that classrooms in public schools, recreational grounds, or open spaces are used by various neo-prophetic healers for organising healing services. These healing ministries do not discriminate in terms of the days or hours of meeting. Healing services claiming to heal all sorts of diseases including the 'incurable' could be organised

¹ Olympia Panagiotidou, "Religious Healing and the Asclepius Cult: A Case of Placebo Effects," *Open Theology* 2, no. 1 (2016): 82.

² Gabriel Appiah, "Healing Practices among the Neo-Prophetic Groups in Ghana: Case Study of Three Selected Neo-Prophetic Churches" (Unpublished M.Phil Thesis, University of Cape Coast, Ghana, 2013), 5.

during working hours, mid-nights' services, weekdays as well as weekends for a long period of hours as directed by the "Holy Spirit", coupled with serious 'noise making'.

Ghanaian neo-prophetic healers and churches are Pentecostal-type movement whose beliefs and practices are mostly influenced by the traditional worldview.³ The neo-prophetic movement and healers belong to another type of Pentecostal movement because they acknowledge the ethos, style and emphasis that is Pentecostal⁴, however, they differ from the mainstream Pentecostals (classic Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal and charismatic) because they transmit the gospel message through the African milieu.⁵ Neo-prophetic churches developed or came into the Ghanaian religious scene in the 1990s. Some of the prophets believed to have pioneered the neo-prophetic movement are Prophet Francis Amoako, Prophet Salifo Amoako and Emmanuel Apraku who is passionately referred to as 'Apraku my daughter.' Other popular neo-prophetic leaders in the Ghanaian religious scene include Prophet Angel Daniel Kojo Obinim of International God's Way Church, Bishop Edmund Antwi Boasiako of New Era Chapel International, Prophet Ebenezer Opambour Yiadom of Ebenezer Miracle Worship Centre, Rev. Obofour Antwi of Anointed Palace Chapel, Prophet Nigel Gaisie of Prophetic Hill Chapel, and Prophet T.B. Joshua of The Synagogue Church of All Nations (from Nigeria). These prophetic healers are popular in the Ghanaian religious scene because of their acclaimed fame of healing.

³ Cephas N. Omenyo and Wonderful Adjei Arthur, "The Bible Says! Neo-Prophetic Hermeneutics in Africa," *Studies in World Christianity* 19, no. 1 (2013): 50.

⁴ Cephas N. Omenyo and Abamfo O. Atiemo, "Claiming Religious Space: The Case of Neo-Propheticism in Ghana" *Ghana Bulletin of Theology* 1, no.1 (2006): 55.

⁵ Omenyo and Arthur, "The Bible Says!" 50.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The claim by religious healers to healing ‘incurable’ diseases has attracted attention since ancient times. Darpan Singh and Shauna Ajinkya⁶ and Linda Chatters⁷ expressed how religion had influenced health in ancient times in caring for people with ‘incurable’ diseases. Ancient Greek beliefs and healing practices provide a link between religion and health.⁸ Olympia Panagiotidou⁹ and Anthony Fauci¹⁰ argued that religion was connected to health in ancient Greece because the Greeks saw diseases as punishment from the gods for human error, and religious healers used sacrifice, prayers, and incantations to mollify divine anger. In a similar way, Peter Bartmann, Jakob Beate, Ulrich Laepple and Dietrich Werner¹¹ and Keener¹² asserted that Christians relate religious beliefs to health by resorting to prayers, laying on of hands, use of oil and cloth as means of seeking the divine intervention for healing during sickness. Kris D’Atri,¹³ Fauci,¹⁴ and Koenig Harold and

⁶ Darpan K. M. Singh and Shauna Ajinkya, "Spirituality and Religion in Modern Medicine," *Indian Journal of Psychological Medicine* 34, no. 4 (2012): 399.

⁷ Linda M. Chatters, "Religion and Health: Public Health Research and Practice," *Annual Review of Public Health* 21, no. 1 (2000): 335-367.

⁸ Harold G. Koenig, "The Connection Between Psychoneuroimmunology and Religion," in *The Link between Religion and Health: Psychoneuroimmunology and the Faith Factor*, ed. Harold G. Koenig and Harvey J. Cohen (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 11-30.

⁹ Panagiotidou, "Religious Healing and the Asclepius Cult: A Case of Placebo Effects," 82.

¹⁰ Anthony S. Fauci, "Encyclopedia of Pestilence, Pandemics and Plagues," in *Encyclopedia of Pestilence, Pandemics and Plagues*, ed. Joseph P. Byrne (Westport, Greenwood Press, 2008), 594-595.

¹¹ Peter Bartmann, Jakob Beate, Ulrich Laepple, and Dietrich Werner, *Health, Healing and Spirituality. The Future of the Church's Ministry of Healing* (Tubingen, The German Institute for Medical Mission, 2008): 18, 47-51.

¹² Craig S. Keener, *Miracles: The Credibility of the New Testament Accounts*, 2 vols. (Baker Books, 2011), 20.

¹³ Kris D'Atri, "Health and Healing in the New Testament," *Spiritual Diversity and Social Work Initiative*, accessed February 20, 2021, <https://spiritualdiversity.ku.edu>.

¹⁴ Fauci, "Encyclopedia," 594-595.

Harvey Cohen¹⁵ attested that the search for divine intervention by Christians to their health problems was due to their views on disease causation.

This connection between religion and health is also present in the Ghanaian as well as wider African context. Peter White,¹⁶ David Westerlund¹⁷ and Daniel Avorgbedor¹⁸ had all posited that traditional healers, diviners, and ‘medicine men’ related religious beliefs to health issues. They argued that diseases that were believed to have been caused by the breaking of taboos, curses, punishment from ancestors were healed through sacrifices, prayers of supplication, ritual cleansing, and exorcism. However, Kofi Brimah,¹⁹ Kojo Senah,²⁰ Ingrid Waldron²¹ and Lily Kpobi, and Leslie Swartz²² maintained that Christian missionaries and the introduction of biomedical institutions devalued, marginalised, delegitimised, and banned traditional religious and healing practices in Ghana, thus weakening the relations between religion and health in Ghana. Yet, the popularisation of neo-prophetic healers as competent healers in the Ghanaian religious scene as competent healers presents a challenge to the above view.

¹⁵ Harold G. Koenig and Harvey J. Cohen, "Introduction," in *The Link Between Religion and Health: Psychoneuroimmunology and the Faith Factor*, ed. Harold G. Koenig and Harvey J. Cohen (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 3-10.

¹⁶ Peter White, "The Concept of Diseases and Health Care in African Traditional Religion in Ghana," *HTS Theological Studies* 71, no. 3 (2015): 2-7.

¹⁷ David Westerlund, "African Indigenous Religions and Disease Causation: From Spiritual Beings to Living Humans" in *African Indigenous Religions and Disease Causation* (Brill, 2006), 96.

¹⁸ Daniel Avorgbedor, "Dee Hoo! Sonic Articulations in Healing and Exorcism Practices of the Anlo-Ewe," *The World of Music* (2000): 9-24.

¹⁹ Kofi B. Brimah, "Traditional Healers in Ghana: So Near to the People, Yet So Far Away from Basic Health Care System," *Tang* 6, no. 2 (2016): 2.

²⁰ Kojo Senah, "In Sickness and in Health: Globalization and Health Care Delivery in Ghana," *Institute of African Studies Research Review* 17, no. 1 (2001): 84, 85, 87.

²¹ Ingrid Waldron, "The Marginalization of African Indigenous Healing Traditions within Western Medicine: Reconciling Ideological Tensions & Contradictions Along the Epistemological Terrain." *Women's Health and Urban Life* 9, no. 1 (2010): 4.

²² Lily Kpobi and Leslie Swartz, "Indigenous and Faith Healing for Mental Health in Ghana: An Examination of the Literature on Reported Beliefs, Practices and Use of Alternative Mental Health Care in Ghana," *African Journal of Primary Health Care & Family Medicine* 11, no. 1 (2019): 1-5.

This study into the neo-prophetic healers' claims of healing 'incurable' diseases in Ghana argues that though some studies had been done on this category of churches and their healers, serious attention has not been given to the issue of healing 'incurable' diseases. For instance, while Cephas Omenyo and Abamfo Atiemo,²³ Omenyo and Wonderful Adjei- Arthur²⁴ have discussed the origin, characteristics and neo-prophetic interpretation of the Bible in Africa, Joseph Osafo, Isaac Agyapong, and Moses Asamoah,²⁵ James Isaac Kwasi Kwateng-Yeboah²⁶ acknowledged neo-prophetic healers' views on mental illness and the prosperity gospel. Thus, the above literature does not include 'incurable' diseases. This provides a gap in the literature, which this study seeks to fill, that is, the Ghanaian neo-prophetic healers' claim to healing 'incurable' diseases.

1.2 Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study is to investigate Ghanaian neo-prophetic healers' claim of healing 'incurable' diseases. The study has two major research objectives, and these are to:

1. Examine Ghanaian neo-prophetic healers' understanding of 'incurable' diseases and their healing practices.
2. Unearth the indigenous Ghanaian beliefs and practices influencing neo-prophetic healers' claim to healing 'incurable' diseases.

²³ Omenyo and Atiemo, "Claiming Religious Space," 56.

²⁴ Omenyo and Arthur, "The Bible says!" 55.

²⁵ Joseph Osafo, I. Agyapong, and M. Kumi Asamoah, "Exploring the Nature of Treatment Regimen for Mentally Ill Persons by Neo-Prophetic Ministers in Ghana." *International Journal of Culture and Mental Health* 8, no. 3 (2015): 325-339.

²⁶ James I. K. Kwateng-Yeboah, "I WISH YOU PROSPERITY!: Analysing the Social Effect of the Prosperity Gospel on Poverty Alleviation in Neo-Pentecostal Accra, Ghana" (Unpublished Master thesis, University of Oslo, Norway, 2016), 5.

To achieve the above, two sub-objectives have become necessary. These are to:

- a. Conduct case studies on three Ghanaian neo-prophetic healers.
- b. Identify indigenous Ghanaian beliefs and practices underpinning the notion and practices of healing ‘incurable’ diseases in Ghana.

1.3 Research Questions

To enable the researcher to investigate Ghanaian neo-prophetic healers' claim of healing ‘incurable’ diseases, two major research questions were posed, which are to:

1. How do Ghanaian neo-prophetic healers’ understanding of ‘incurable’ diseases underpin their healing practices?
2. Which indigenous beliefs and practices are influencing Ghanaian neo-prophetic healers’ claim to healing ‘incurable’ diseases?

To achieve the above, two sub-research questions became necessary for the realisation of the study. These are:

- a. How can case studies on three Ghanaian neo-prophetic healers provide data for an understanding of their claim and practices of healing ‘incurable’ diseases?
- b. Which indigenous Ghanaian beliefs and practices underpin the notion and practices of healing ‘incurable’ diseases in Ghana?

1.4 Scope of the Study

The focus of the thesis is to investigate the neo-prophetic healers' claim to healing ‘incurable’ diseases among three selected neo-prophetic healers in Accra and Kumasi-

Ghana. To interrogate the neo-prophetic healers' claims of healing 'incurable' diseases, the researcher observed the conditions of patients who testified to have been healed by the selected neo-prophetic healers before and after healing. The researcher also interviewed some of the patients and their relatives.

The study also assessed the selected neo-prophetic healers' understanding of incurable diseases. The selected healers, Bishop Daniel Obinim of International God's Way Church, Bishop Antwi Boasiako of New Era Chapel International and Rev. Isaac Osei Bonsu of Moment of God Prayer Army were chosen because of their acclaimed fame as neo-prophetic healers and also because they are known by people in their communities and the Ghanaian religious scene as neo-prophetic healers capable of healing all manners of diseases.

1.5 Methodology and Methods of Data Collection

1.5.1 Methodology

To investigate the neo-prophetic healers' claim of healing the 'incurable,' the researcher adopted ethnographic theology and case study as the approaches for the study. The ethnographic theology approach enabled the researcher to balance theological traditions enshrined in texts with theological traditions embodied in practice.²⁷ Ethnographic theology as an approach was used because neo-prophetic healers are individuals who are influenced by their Christian ideas and beliefs on how to interact and interpret the world

²⁷ Natalie Wigg-Stevenson, "What's Really Going On: Ethnographic Theology and the Production of Theological Knowledge," *Cultural Studies↔ Critical Methodologies* 18, no. 6 (2018): 423-429.

within which they live. The use of the approach in investigating the neo-prophetic healers' claim of healing the 'incurable' enabled the researcher to synthesise the reality on the ground rather than basing my analysis solely on theological traditions found in texts. The effect of this was that it enabled the researcher to abstract the neo-prophetic healers' ideas and realities of their claims to healing incurable diseases through observations and interviews.²⁸ Besides, the approach enabled the researcher to study the neo-prophetic healers' experiences and to reflect theologically on such experiences. This was done by observing their complex theological and practical dynamics in particular situations like deliverance, laying on of hands, use of items and exorcism as modes of healing the 'incurable.'²⁹

Furthermore, ethnographic theology was adopted for the work because the researcher sought to understand the neo-prophetic healers' claim of healing the 'incurable' based on their experiences on the ground, within their cultural context. The researcher was confined to the environment of the neo-prophetic healers for six months. This is because ethnographic theology involves participating overtly and covertly in people's daily lives for an extended period, monitoring what happens, listening to what is said and asking questions through formal and informal interviews.³⁰ The use of ethnographic theology as an approach helped me to have direct and sustained contact with the neo-prophetic healers which enabled the researcher to observe and investigate the neo-prophetic healers' claim of healing the 'incurable' partly in their appropriate human experience. Also, the use of

²⁸ Kent D. Miller, "Organizational Research as Practical Theology," *Organizational Research Methods* 18, no. 2 (2015): 279.

²⁹ John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* (Norwich-London: SCM Press, 2016), 1.

³⁰ Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson, *Ethnography: Principles in Practice* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 3.

ethnographic theology permitted the researcher to analyse the neo-prophetic healers' claim of healing the 'incurable' with critical reflexivity towards representational forms and be in the position to defend the reliability of their claim to healing the 'incurable.' This is because the researcher was in context dialogue with the neo-prophetic healers' experience on healing to investigate their claim of healing the 'incurable.' For instance people who claimed to have accessed the neo-prophetic healing claims were assessed.

In additional to ethnographic theology, the researcher also used the case study method to investigate the healers' claim of healing 'incurable' disease. Case study was used because like other research strategies, it a way of investigating an empirical topic by following a set of pre-specified procedures.³¹ Based on investigating the neo-prophetic healers claim of healing the 'incurable' the descriptive case study was used to narrate the experiences of the healers and other selected respondents. Though the researcher selected three neo-prophetic healers for the study, it is worth noting that cases such as Daniel Obimin, Antwi Boasiako and Issac Osei Bonsu which were used as case studies are all examples of the neo-prophetic healers hence making the design a single case study design. The use of the single case design explained that the selected neo-prophetic healers are representatives or a typical case of the neo-prophetic healers that captured the circumstances and conditions of everyday experiences of the neo-prophetic healers in a commonplace situation. The single case design served as critical case that tested the grounded theologising which is embedded in the healing experiences of the healers by confirming, challenging, and expanding the grounded theologising as a theory.

³¹ Robert K. Yin, "Design and Methods," *Case Study Research* 3, no. 9.2 (2003): 9-16.

The use of case study in the collection of data allowed the researcher to use multiple evidence resources to acquire an array of information on the experiences of the healers within their real-world context. This contributed to knowledge on the neo-prophetic healers' claim of healing 'incurable' diseases. The combination of ethnographic theology and case study in investigating the neo-prophetic healers' claim of healing the incurable broadened the scope and influenced the findings of the study, making it possible to present a two-dimensional perspective in the experiences of the healers within the larger neo-prophetic group. Also, the period of time the researcher spent with the neo-prophetic healers in their environs as required of ethnographic theology accorded him the status of an 'insider' and researcher detachment was comprised. However, there were instances where healers or respondents did not see the researcher as an 'insider' and detached themselves. In such instances, the researcher resorted to the case study method with the aid of technological devices such as phone and digital recorder to access information in order not to influence the behaviour of the respondents by his presence.

1.5.2 Methods for Data Collection

To investigate the neo-prophetic healers' claims to heal 'incurable' diseases, the researcher used primary and secondary data. With the primary data, he conducted fieldwork in which he carried out participant observation and in-depth interviews. For the participant observation, the researcher attended healing services and interacted with various respondents in Accra and Kumasi. The use of participant observation helped him to study the selected cases in their actual environment while acknowledging my presence in the neo-prophetic healing services. This enhanced my understanding of the neo-prophetic

healers' claims of healing the 'incurable' within their context. Also, the use of participant observation helped the researcher to observe and identify some key features of the neo-prophetic healers' healing ministry in their natural environment. The researcher spent seven months immersing himself in the case studies of the three selected neo-prophetic healers. The selected healers for the study were Bishop Daniel Obinim of International God's Way Church in Kumasi, Antwi Boasiako of New Era Chapel International in Kumasi, and Isaac Osei Bonsu of Moment of Glory Prayer Army (MOGPA) in Kumasi. Though the selected healers were stationed in Kumasi, they had branches in Accra and other places in Ghana, thus making them mobile. In these case studies, the researcher interacted with each healer and his church for a period of two months except the case of Rev. Isaac Osei Bonsu, which was for a period of three months. Thus, a period of seven months was spent interacting with them because both ethnographic theology and case study required considerable time to study the experiences of the neo-prophetic healers in their own context.

These three neo-prophetic healers were selected among the neo-prophetic healers in Ghana because of their acclaimed fame for healing all kinds of diseases including the 'incurable' diseases. Also, these healers were selected for the study because they avail themselves as competent religious healers within the current Ghanaian religious scene. Interviewed in each case study, were the healer, three individual members who claimed to have been healed from an 'incurable' disease, two relatives of people who claimed to have been healed by the healer, two members from the prayer and fasting group who supported the healer with prayers during healing programmes, and two members from the song ministration team who supported the healer with song ministration during healing services

were interviewed. Thus, a total of 14 people were interviewed in each case study in addition to participant observation. This sample of respondents from case study was reasonable for the study. According to Bernard and Ryan,³² 20-60 knowledgeable people are enough to uncover and understand the core categories in any well-defined cultural domain or study of lived experience.

During two months' interaction with Daniel Obinim and his International God's Way Church, the researcher attended healing services organised by the healer. For instance, the researcher attended the Healers' Tuesday Church Services at Tema, Sunday Church Services in Kumasi as well as Thursday Church Services in Accra. The benefits of the participant observation at the church were that it helped the researcher to gain first-hand information on the healers' experiences of healing and while also witnessing testimonies by individuals who claimed to have been healed by Daniel Obinim. One of the challenges the researcher encountered during the period of research with the healer had to do with his long hours of church service. Obinim's normal Sunday service could last for eight (8) hours. This made my interaction with the healers' time consuming and tiring.

In addition, the researcher attended some Thursday Counselling Sessions, Friday Healing Services and Sunday Church Services of the New Era Chapel International by Bishop Antwi Boasiako at Fieyesia-Kumasi for a period of two months. The use of participant observation enabled the researcher to observe the healer's engagement of and interpretation of passages in the Bible in his attempt to heal 'incurable' diseases. This observation

³² Harvey Russell Bernard and Gery W. Ryan, *Analyzing Qualitative Data: Systematic Approaches* (LA: SAGE Publications, 2010), 41.

expanded the researcher knowledge of grounded theologising, which was used as the theory for the study, making it more practical.

The researcher also interacted with Rev. Isaac Osei-Bonsu of MOGPA by attending and participating in the MOGPA Abrankese All-night Service on several occasions, the Morning Dew on Thursdays, Early Rain on Wednesday evenings and Sunday services at Kumasi for a period of three months. This enabled the researcher to identify other respondents besides the healer for interview. The participation in healing services of the healer helped in observing the healer's practices of healing 'incurable' diseases in a natural setting without influencing the behaviour of the respondents. A challenge the researcher faced with the case of Rev. Isaac Osei Bonsu was that respondents were initially unwilling to volunteer information and that prolonged the period of that case study.

The secondary data, on the other hand, allowed the researcher to make use of published books, scholarly journal articles, electronic data, and other credible internet sources. The use of secondary data helped researcher in acquiring information relevant to this research.³³ Also, the use of the secondary data helped me to identify the gaps within existing literatures related to the research topic. Some of the secondary data such as published books, scholarly journals, articles, and credible internet sources were used in the review of related literature on the topic under study as presented below.

³³ John Hamilton, *Primary and Secondary Sources* (ABDO, 2005), 8.

1.6 Literature Review

The literature reviewed the contributions of relevant materials on the topic under study. It first traced religious healing in Ghanaian Christianity, the African perspective on health, sickness, and healing. Secondly, it evaluates the theological reading and interpretation of scripture in Africa and the theology of health and healing.

1.6.1 Religious Healing in Ghanaian Christianity

Kofi Appiah-Kubi in his book *Man cures, God heals: Religion and Medicine Practice among the Akan of Ghana*³⁴ presupposed that the power to heal is always embedded in the divine and not humans. This explains why various religious groups including the church have been seeking divine intervention to heal diseases considered as ‘incurable’ since ancient times. In Musa W. Dube, in her ‘HIV and AIDS Curriculum for Theological Institutions in Africa’³⁵ corroborated the claim that God heals by arguing that the Bible depicts God’s will as healing to all humankind and creation and that the responsibility of the church is to serve as the midwife of God’s will. She further debated that if the church is responsible to carry out the will of God on earth, then the church must bring healing and salvation to all humankind. The question that permeates from such assertion is ‘Are the churches involved in seeking divine intervention for people with various ill-health?’

³⁴ Kofi Appiah-Kubi, *Man Cures, God Heals: Religion and Medical Practice among the Akans of Ghana* (Allanheld, Osmun, 1981),55.

³⁵ Musa W. Dube, "HIV/AIDS Curriculum for Theological Institution in Africa," in LA Phiri, B. Haddad, M. Masenya, (eds.), *African Women HIV/AIDS and Faith Communities* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publication, 2003), 157.

Adam Mohr in his work "Missionary Medicine and Akan Therapeutics: Illness, Health and Healing in Southern Ghana's Basel Mission, 1828-1918."³⁶ clarified the missionaries' involvement in religious healing by pointing out that religious healing by the church (missionaries) is a long-time practice. He gave instances in connection to how the healing practices of Christian Blumhardt and his nephew Johan Christoph Blumhardt of Wurttemberg, influenced Elias Schrenk (a Basel missionary in Ghana) to invest more in Christian healing and deliverance during the pre-colonial period. Also, to establish the point that missionary churches engaged in religious healing during colonial and post-colonial Ghana, Adam³⁷ referred to how the Faith Tabernacle recorded the healing experiences of its congregation amid the 1918-19 Spanish influenza and pleuropneumonia in the Sword of the Spirit. Adam³⁸ further asserted that at the peak of the influenza, many people who could not be cured by the hospitals resorted to Faith Tabernacle healing centre – 'Faith Home' for divine intervention and were prayed for and healed. Many Ghanaians who survived testified to the divine healing in that instance without scientific medication and this made people flock to the church.³⁹

Pobee, in his work "Health, Healing and Religion: An African View,"⁴⁰ proves that the connection between religious healing and the Church was not peculiar to the missionary churches alone. He asserted that one of the major tenants of the AICs was to heal. Pobee elucidates his contention by quoting Article 13 of the Mosama Disco Christo Church,

³⁶ Adam Mohr, "Missionary Medicine and Akan Therapeutics: Illness, Health and Healing in Southern Ghana's Basel Mission, 1828-1918," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 39, no. 4 (2009): 429-461.

³⁷ Adam Mohr, "Capitalism, Chaos, and Christian Healing: Faith Tabernacle Congregation in Southern Colonial Ghana, 1918-26," *The Journal of African History* 52, no. 1 (2011): 70-71.

³⁸ Mohr, "Capitalism, Chaos, and Christian Healing," 71.

³⁹ Mohr, "Capitalism, Chaos, and Christian Healing," 71-72.

⁴⁰ John S. Pobee, "Health, Healing and Religion: An African View," *International Review of Mission* 90, no. 356/357 (2001): 55-57.

which explicitly states that healing the sick is part of their mission.⁴¹ The evidence of religious healing as a feature of the AICs prophets is affirmed by Clifton Clarke in his work “Towards a Functional Christology among African Indigenous Churches in Ghana,”⁴² and Brigid Sackey in her work “Charismatism, Women, and Testimonies: Religion and Popular Culture in Ghana,”⁴³ as they expressed the healing activities within the AICs in Ghana and beyond (other African countries). Besides, religious healing is also evident in mainline churches, Abamfo, Atiemo argued in “The Evangelical Christian fellowships and the Charimatization of Ghanaian Christianity”⁴⁴ that features of Pentecostal/Charismatism such as healing, praying aloud, drumming, etc. infiltrated its way into the mainline churches during the late 1980s. To buttress his point, Atiemo⁴⁵ articulated that, mainline churches such as the Presbyterian Church and Evangelical Presbyterian Church engaged in such renewal traditions (speaking in tongues, healing, deliverance and so on) that were prominent in the Pentecostal/Charismatic faith. The assertion that there were traces of religious healing within the mainline churches as far back as the 1980s was affirmed by Adam⁴⁶ who articulated that the success of the Faith Tabernacle and its Pentecostal branches in religious healing forced the Presbyterian Church of Ghana to also, engage in healing in the 1960s and subsequently establish a religious healing centre (Grace Deliverance Centre) at Akropong in 1996.

⁴¹ Pobee, "Health, Healing and Religion," 57.

⁴² Clifton R. Clarke, "Towards a Functional Christology among African Indigenous Churches in Ghana," *Missionalia: Southern African Journal of Mission Studies* 33, no. 1 (2005): 146-147.

⁴³ Brigid M. Sackey, "Charismatism, Women, and Testimonies: Religion and Popular Culture in Ghana," *Ghana Studies* 8, no. 1 (2005): 170-172.

⁴⁴ Abamfo O. Atiemo, "The Evangelical Christian Fellowships and the Charimatization of Ghanaian Christianity," *Ghana Bulletin of Theology* 2 (2007): 44-65.

⁴⁵ Atiemo, "The Evangelical Christian Fellowships," 40-50.

⁴⁶ Mohr, "Missionary Medicine and Akan Therapeutics," 429, 461.

The above literature posits a claim that the manifestation of the religious healing in Ghanaian Christianity goes as far as the missionaries' period. It is construed as a fact that though religious healing was patronised in Ghana during the missionary era, it was done mainly due to the failure of biomedical treatment. The case of the Faith Tabernacle Church during the influenza period in 1918-19 exemplified above confirms this assertion. Also, it could be deduced from the above that Christian religious healing in the Ghanaian religious scene was rather vibrant within the AICs and Pentecostal/Charismatic, and this may have influenced revivalist tendencies within mainline churches which compelled them to engage in religious healing. The review of literature on Christian religious healing in Ghana gives an insight into the link between religion and health. However, attention has not been given to the claims of various Christian groups in Ghana such as the neo-prophetic healers' claim to healing 'incurable' diseases. It is based on this gap that the researcher seeks to investigate the claim by the Ghanaian neo-prophetic healers to healing the 'incurable' diseases.

1.6.2 The African Perspective on Health, Sickness and Healing

Hance Mwakabana in his work *Crises of life in African Religion and Christianity*,⁴⁷ contended that African world view is deeply rooted in the African Religion which permeates every facet of their daily activities making a whole person a religious being in a religious world. He went on to assert that to the African the presence or absence of rain, giving birth to naming a child, cutting, and planting trees, and the well-being or health of

⁴⁷ Hance A. Mwakabana, ed., *Crises of Life in African Religion and Christianity* (Geneva: LWF Studies, 2002), 11-12.

members of the community are all under the scope of religion.⁴⁸ The above assertion supposes Traditional African Religion is an integral part of the Africans. This assertion is substantiated by John Mbiti in his work “Main Features of Twenty-First Century Christianity in Africa,”⁴⁹ that the Africans are deeply religious beings who interpret events as having spiritual connotations. Awuah-Nyamekye in *Managing the Environmental Crisis in Ghana: The role of African Traditional Religion and Culture with Special Reference to the Berekum Traditional Area*,⁵⁰ attested that the African attach spiritual connotation to events mostly because in the African perspective reality is in two dimensions the mundane and supra-mundane of which the two are interrelated and inseparable. It is believed that one’s fortune in life is determined and influenced by one’s interactions with this material and spiritual worlds⁵¹ According to Abraham Akrong in his article “Jesus with the face of an ancestor,”⁵² to live a fulfilled life free from life-negating factors, it is required that individuals live in harmony with the cosmic law that gives spiritual protection, as well as obeying the social norms that govern the community.

Kingsley Larbi in his *Pentecostalism: The Eddies of Ghanaian Christianity*,⁵³ stated that being fulfilled in life or wholeness of a person in the African context means prosperity, protection from evil spirit, good relationship with one’s deity, long life, and good health, which signify the attainment of salvation, especially among the Akan of Ghana. Larbi

⁴⁸ Hance, *Crises of Life in African Religion and Christianity*, 13.

⁴⁹ John Mbiti, "Main Features of Twenty-First Century Christianity in Africa," *Missio Africanus Journal of African Missiology* 1, no. 2 (2016): 79-80.

⁵⁰ Samuel Awuah-Nyamekye, *Managing the Environmental Crisis in Ghana: The Role of African Traditional Religion and Culture with Special Reference to the Berekum Traditional Area* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014), 61-64.

⁵¹ Abraham Akrong, "Jesus with the Face of an Ancestor," *Ghana Bulletin of Theology* 1, 1 (2006): 20-24.

⁵² Akrong, "Jesus with the Face of an Ancestor," 20-24.

⁵³ Emmanuel K. Larbi, *Pentecostalism: The Eddies of Ghanaian Christianity* (Dansoman-Accra: CPCS, 2001), 11-13.

further elucidated that it is within this traditional African philosophical worldview of cosmic law and their concept of wholeness or salvation that the Africans interpret health and also deal with sicknesses that befall them.⁵⁴ That health in African perspective is life's main fulfilment corroborated in Elizabeth Amoah's work "African Traditional Religion and the Concept of Poverty"⁵⁵ as she posited that health to the African comprises everything worth living, the total wellbeing of a person. It could be argued from the African perspective that to function as a being or attain health, one must be at peace with the supernatural. This presupposes that in times of ill-health or sickness the African would have to deal with the spiritual dimension of their ill-health if there is any.

Abamfo Atiemo in his work "Mmusuyi and Deliverance: A Study of Conflict and Consensus in the Encounter between African Traditional Religion and Christianity"⁵⁶ exemplified how come the African deals with spiritual demission to ill-health and sicknesses by elaborating that to the Africans especially the Akan of Ghana sicknesses that defy natural medications are an aberration in life and that divine solution must be found to it. The traditional practice of seeking divine intervention to illness when all necessary natural remedy to a particular disease fails has generated the view of what is known as *honam mu yadee and sunsum mu yadee* (natural and spiritual diseases) among the Akan of Ghana.

⁵⁴ Larbi, *Pentecostalism*, 12-13.

⁵⁵ Elizabeth Amoah, African Traditional Religion and the Concept of poverty in Peter J. Paris, (ed.), *Religion and Poverty: Pan- African Perspective* (Durham& London: Duke University Press, 2009), 111-113.

⁵⁶ Abamfo Ofori Atiemo, "Mmusuyi and Deliverance: A Study of Conflict and Consensus in the Encounter between African Traditional Religion and Christianity" (Unpublished MPhil. Thesis, University of Ghana, 1995):22-23.

The above literature on the African perspective to health explains that to the African (Akan) health is embedded in the concept of salvation. To the Africans health and ill-health are emphasised in the omnipresent dichotomies of natural and spiritual. This implies that when the African Akan is sick the necessary remedy will be sought and applied, however, they resort to spiritual or divine intervention when the illness persists. The above literature is revealing since it brings out some of the reasons underpinning the African Akan beliefs on 'incurable' diseases. Thus, it is useful to the researcher in investigating the neo-prophetic claim of healing 'incurable' diseases in Ghana.

1.6.3 Theological Readings and Interpretation of Scripture in Africa

Eric Anum in his work "The Reconstruction of Forms of African Theology: Towards effective biblical interpretation",⁵⁷ projected that the experience of encountering other ways of reading, understanding and practising the scripture enriches the African Christian understanding and interpretation of phenomena within their cultural milieu. Anum further articulated that Christianity, as introduced in African, was coloured by Christian Europe or Western culture which made it difficult for the Africans to make sense of the biblical text in the contexts and situations in which they lived.⁵⁸ Eric Anum in his work "The usage of the Bible in African missionary history: The Legacy of New Testament usage in Africa,"⁵⁹ posited that the African Christians though did not fully understand the theological interpretation and message of the Western missionaries who saw themselves as carriers of

⁵⁷ Eric B. Anum, "The Reconstruction of Forms of African Theology: Towards Effective Biblical Interpretation." (PhD Dissertation., University of Glasgow, 1999): 14-20.

⁵⁸ Anum, "The Reconstruction of Forms of African Theology," 14-20.

⁵⁹ Eric B. Anum, "The Usage of the Bible in African Missionary History: The Legacy of New Testament Usage in Africa," *The Ghana Bulletin of Theology* 1,1 (2006): 70-74.

the ‘truth’ to Africa, still adhered to the missionaries interpretation and scripture readings until the middle part of the 20th century that the Africans became aware of the need for identity and self-expression.

Anum added that the need for African identity and self-expression necessitated the formation of the African Instituted Churches which engaged in a theologising process that was later taken over by African theologians whose aim was to enculturate the gospel within the African socio-cultural settings,⁶⁰ an instance of such theologising or theology on the ground by African scholars are the theology of the Twana of South Africa, a theology developed by ingeniously redeploying the saturated signs of the cross, the book and the coin to bear meanings as non-Westerners⁶¹. Another is the Gbaya theology which combines the Gbaya worldview and their traditional beliefs in the transfer of the Scripture message or translation of the biblical text.⁶² Besides, the *melagbe* theology was a means to interpret the Bible text of Psalm 118:17, Galatians 2: 20 and John 14: 19 to deal with African existential needs; thus, the theology of *melagbe* expatiated that one could be a true Christian and a true African.⁶³

It could be inferred that African theologians engaged in various forms of theologising and interpretations of what they regarded as the ‘hidden aspect’ of the gospel for the gospel message to make sense to their cultural milieu. George Ossom-Batsa, in his work “African

⁶⁰ Bortey, "The Usage of the Bible in African Missionary History,"74.

⁶¹ Bortey, "The Usage of the Bible,"74-75.

⁶² Philip A. Noss, "Translators' Words and Theological Readings," *The Bible Translator* 53, no. 3 (2002): 331-335.

⁶³ Noah.K. Dzobo, *Meleagbe Theology: A New Perspective in Africa Theology* (Ho: E.P. Church Press, 1986):1-2.

Interpretation of the Bible in Communicative Perspective”,⁶⁴ supported the above assertion that African theologians theologised to address the existential situation that brings about an integral development of the person (Africans) and their environment. However, African theologians do not do the reading and interpretation of the Bible message alone, the ordinary African reader, or popular readers who are not trained and unskilled also engaged in theological readings.⁶⁵ The point worth noting is that the interpretations of the gospel are done by people who have been trained and have acquired the necessary theological tools to do so as well as others who also engage in theologising without any form of institutionalised acquisitions. The ordinary or popular reader may not have been trained as a theologian or a Bible scholar with the necessary skills, yet they interpret the gospel considering their existential needs, situation, or experiences to bridge the message or text to their current occurrences. Thus, they contextualised the Bible message to deal with their experiences. The above inferences confirm the assertions of Anum⁶⁶ and Ossom-Batsa⁶⁷ projection of the ordinary or popular reader as believers in the community who read and interpret the Bible based on revelational knowledge or the Holy Ghost power and apply it to their lives especially in times of trouble or when struggling with a specific condition.

It is argued from the literature above that the ordinary reader or popular reader in Africa interprets and analyses the Bible to draw out the implication of the biblical text to suit their context. The above literature review is relevant to the research since it could be deduced

⁶⁴ George Ossom-Batsa, “African Interpretation of the Bible in Communicative Perspective,” *Ghana Bulletin of Theology* 2 (2007): 93.

⁶⁵ Anum, “The Reconstruction,” 80.

⁶⁶ Bortey, “The Reconstruction of Forms of African Theology,” 80.

⁶⁷ Ossom-Batsa, “African Interpretation of the Bible in Communicative Perspective,” 93.

that the neo-prophetic healers, based on their African cultural context and belief, interpret the Bible text heuristically based on revelational knowledge, or aided by the Holy Ghost to create a utopian society free of ill-health. Also, it is inferred from the literature above that neo-prophetic healers as ordinary or popular readers engage in grounded theologising to apply the Bible text to lived experiences and conditions, and by so doing have made themselves the thaumaturgus healers claiming to heal of all diseases including ‘incurable.’

1.6.4 Theology of Health and Healing

Abigail Evans posited in her work *Redeeming Marketplace Medicine: A Theology of Health Care*,⁶⁸ that Christians do not go to church only for comfort and solace but also due to the church’s ability to address their health-related problems. Her work brought to bear that a theological foundation is crucial to ground the church’s health and healing ministry to offer holistic health in present-day society. The assertion of the author is relevant to the current research because based on common observation, people who claim to be sick from all sorts of diseases resort to church and healers in the hope of relief. Healers in the process of healing engage in theologising health and healing by relating and interpreting biblical texts or events to suit their present experiences. The deductions above affirm the projection by Cephas Omenyo and Wonderful Adjei Arthur in their work “The Bible says! Neo-prophetic hermeneutics in Africa,”⁶⁹ that to the neo-prophetic the Bible is relevant when it speaks to their personal needs or cultural context, they therefore based whatever they do

⁶⁸ Abigail Rian. Evans, *Redeeming Marketplace Medicine: A Theology of Health Care* (WIPF and Stock Publishers, 2008),1-6.

⁶⁹ Omenyo and Arthur, "The Bible says!" 61-65.

on the narratives that they derived from biblical texts for justification. It could be inferred from the above that though the neo-prophetic healers are influenced by their context, they justify their understandings of health and healing from the Christian perspective. The question that arises is: What are the theological views concerning health and healing? The contention is that both Testaments of the Bible do not hold the same theology on health and healing.

Judith Hill in her article “Health, Sickness, and Healing in the New Testament”,⁷⁰ expressed that a common Old Testament theology of health, sickness and healing is that God is the creator of humans (Adam and Eve), and that God thoroughly understands the workings of the human body. She further posited that God as the creator of humans (first human beings) and knowing the workings of the human body infers that God is the only one capable of healing all human infirmities.⁷¹ It could be argued based on Hill’s assertion that when one is sick and all other means of remedy fails it is likely that one will turn to the creator (God) who is believed to understand human physiology better and restores good health. Good health as having a harmonious relationship with God is another theology of health, sickness, and healing in the Old Testament. Diseases and sicknesses in the Old Testament were seen as coming from God.⁷² The perception that good health in the Old Testament is evidence of having a relationship with God is affirmed by James Morgante in his article “Toward a Theology of Wellness”,⁷³ as he expressed that disease in the Bible is

⁷⁰ Judith L. Hill, "Health, Sickness and Healing in the New Testament," *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology* 26, no. 2 (2007): 151-195.

⁷¹ Judith, "Health, Sickness and Healing in the New Testament," 151-195.

⁷² Morton T. Kelsey, *Healing and Christianity: In Ancient Thought and Modern Times* (Harper & Row 1973), 23-55.

⁷³ James Morgante, "Toward a Theology of Wellness. Health, in the Judeo-Christian Tradition, is Understood Holistically and Connected to the State of One’s Relationship to God," *Health Progress* 83 (6) (2002): 19-23.

attributed to various sources especially sin (original and personal sin) and evil agents but the popular and persistent Hebrew notion of disease is God's punishment for disobedience and sin. Accordingly, the Old Testament theology emphasises healing as a sign of divine forgiveness while health is a result of obeying divine commandments that guarantee it.⁷⁴

The above argument supposes that health in the Old Testament period was concomitant to having the right relation with God by observing His laws; thus, breaking the laws resulted in disease. Evidence to these is seen in the Mosaic code that spelled out specificities of actions necessary for good health which involves staying in the right relationship with God.⁷⁵ Also, Old Testament texts such as Exodus 4:11, Deuteronomy 32:39, Jeremiah 30:11-15, etc. attest to the fact that sin is a breach of relation with God which resulted in the catharsis of punishment on the people to discipline and restore them. It is revealed in the work "Healing Practices among the Neo-Prophetic Groups in Ghana",⁷⁶ that though the New Testament acknowledges broken relationship with God as the cause for ill-health it gives a progressive view to the fact that it is mostly not the case. Rather, the New Testament features demons as a major determinant of ill-health. This corroborates Kelsey's assertion in his book *Healing and Christianity: In Ancient Thought and Modern Times*,⁷⁷ as he expressed the view that the New Testament's view of demonic causation of diseases featured from the early beginning of Jesus' teaching and healing performance, and it was dominant throughout the apostolic and early missionary work. The study further interceded

⁷⁴ James, "Toward a Theology of Wellness," 21.

⁷⁵ James, "Toward a Theology of Wellness," 20-22.

⁷⁶ Appiah, "Healing Practices among the Neo-Prophetic Groups in Ghana," 6- 30.

⁷⁷ Morton, *Healing and Christianity*, 23-57.

that healing in the New Testament was mostly based on God's sovereign will through compassion, love, and goodwill for humanity.⁷⁸

1.7 Theoretical Framework

Theoretical framework serves as a guide to interpreting the existence of a lived experience. To investigate the Ghanaian neo-prophetic healers' claim of healing 'incurable' diseases, the researcher adopted grounded theologising by Tite Tienou for the study. Grounded theologising is the reflection on biblical text to ascertain human lived experiences within their context.⁷⁹ Grounded theologising examines the processes on how humans or groups of people interpret the biblical text or narrative in their own experience or cultural context. That is based on what the scripture reveals, personal experiences, and the stories their society narrate about humans as well as what they may have read.⁸⁰ This is a continuous process due to the diversity and rapidly changing cultural and social processes in contemporary society as well as the influence of media.⁸¹ The point is that people are of different cultural and social settings; therefore, the Bible cannot be interpreted in one context to fit all socio-cultural settings. This makes grounded theologising an unceasing process.

⁷⁸ Appiah, "Healing Practices among the Neo-Prophetic Groups in Ghana," 63.

⁷⁹ Robert J. Priest, "Experience-Near Theologizing in Diverse Human Contexts," in *Globalizing Theology: Belief and Practice in an Era of World Christianity*, eds. Craig Ott and Harold A. Netland (Baker Academic, 2006), 180-195.

⁸⁰ Tite Tiéno, "Themes in African Theology of Mission,," in *The Good News of the Kingdom: Mission Theology for the Third Millennium*, eds. Charles Van Engen, Dean Gilliland and Paul Pierson (MaryKnoll: Orbis Book, 1993), 239.

⁸¹ Priest, "Experience-Near Theologizing in Diverse Human Contexts," 180-195.

Haynes⁸² posited that in grounded theologising there is a theological work of analogy as an important social effect. She further explained that Christian groups mostly place themselves in the narrative of the scripture. For example, if a character in the Bible obtained some result by doing something, then they also must attain the same result by doing the same thing. Believers read the narratives of the scripture and make an analogy between their experience and those of the Bible.⁸³ In engaging grounded theologising as a theory in research work, scholars such as Tienou and Hiebert⁸⁴ and Priest⁸⁵ recommended that researchers examine theology and human experience, and theology and its conversation partners.

Theology and human experience suggest that theologians focus on producing context-sensitive theological discourses in a specific cultural context.⁸⁶ With this, the research seeks to abstract believers' ideas and realities of a particular experience by engaging in field study within the confined context of the people or group under study, as posited by Priest⁸⁷ and Naomi⁸⁸. Also, theology and conversation partners explain the methods that could be used by theologians to study human experiences.⁸⁹ This enabled the researcher to interpret neo-prophetic healers' experiences through logical entailments, formal consistency, abstract rationality, and cultural realities to generate a theological understanding of their experiences without overly relying on biblical text.

⁸² Naomi Haynes, "Theology on the Ground," in *Theologically Engaged Anthropology*, ed. Derrick J. Lemons (Oxford University Press, 2016), 271.

⁸³ Naomi. "Theology on the Ground," 273-275.

⁸⁴ Paul G. Hiebert and Tite Tiénou, "Missional Theology." *Mission Focus: Annual Review* 10 (2002): 39.

⁸⁵ Priest, "Experience-Near Theologizing in Diverse Human Contexts," 182-83.

⁸⁶ Paul and Tite, "Missional Theology," 40.

⁸⁷ Priest, "Experience-Near Theologizing in Diverse Human Contexts," 83.

⁸⁸ Naomi, "Theology on the Ground," 274.

⁸⁹ Priest, "Experience-Near Theologizing in Diverse Human Contexts," *Globalizing Theology*, 83.

According to Priest⁹⁰, Tienou and Hiebert,⁹¹ and Haynes⁹² one could engage in philosophical assumptions (experience distant) or anthropological and ethnographical methods that will enable the theologian to understudy places within human settings to unearth the understanding of their lived experiences. Priest⁹³ stated that conversation partners push the theologian in different directions. He explained that while philosophy pushes the theologian toward logical entailments and abstracts rationality, anthropology as a conversation partner push theology to acquire understandings of human realities to generate theological discourses reflective of such considerations. Notwithstanding the differences in the two conversational partners, Hiebert and Tienou⁹⁴ call for theology to be done in dialogue with both conversational partners just to understand and bring the lived experience into a meaningful relationship with philosophical assumptions.

The adaption of grounded theologising as a theoretical framework helped the researcher to understand the selected neo-prophetic healers' claims of healing the 'incurable' and their use of biblical narratives in interpreting their lived experiences. This also enabled the researcher to engage the scriptural reflections or interpretations given by my respondents because that fitted the cultural and theological sensibility of the experiences of the neo-prophetic healers' claim to healing the 'incurable.' The theory helped the researcher not only to engage in hard intellectual work but also to be in context-dialogue with diverse neo-prophetic healers' experiences as the researcher investigated their claim of healing the 'incurable' and assessed the conditions of patients they claimed to have healed, both before

⁹⁰ Priest, "Experience-Near Theologizing," 83-84.

⁹¹ Paul and Tite, "Missional Theology," 40.

⁹² Naomi, "Theology on the Ground," 273-275.

⁹³ Priest, "Experience-Near Theologizing in Diverse Human Contexts," 85.

⁹⁴ Paul and Tite, "Missional Theology," 40-41.

and after healing. The theory also helped me to understand the beliefs underpinning neo-prophetic practices on healing ‘incurable’ diseases in Ghana and the theologising (biblical interpretations) they make on ‘incurable’ diseases with respect to their cultural context.

1.8 Structure of Work

The study consists of six chapters. Chapter One is the introduction. It comprises the background to the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, research questions, literature review and theoretical framework. The rest includes the methodology and methods of data collection, the scope and significance of the study. Chapter Two explores health and healing in Ghana. The chapter focuses on the conceptualisation of health in the Ghanaian society, Ghanaian (with particular reference to the Akan, Nankani, Ga and Ewe) notion of disease, ill-health and healing in the Ghanaian context.

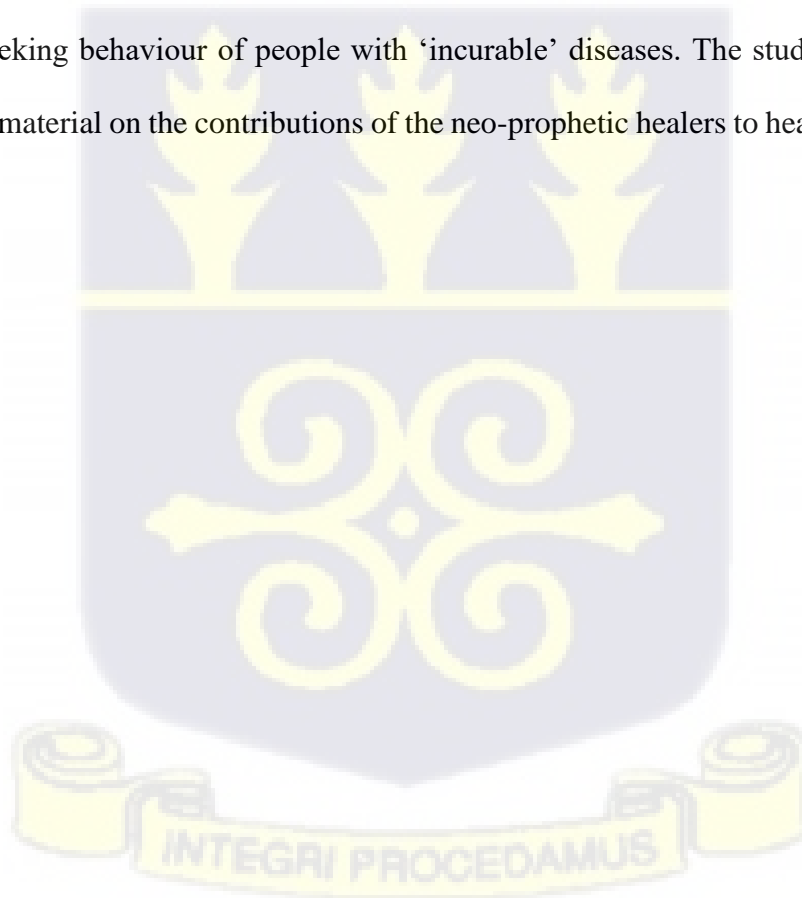
Christianity, health, and healing in Ghana are discussed in Chapter Three. This chapter provides a brief historical background of the Church in Ghana’s (Historic Mainline Churches, African Independent Churches and Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches and Neo-prophetic Churches) understanding and approaches to healing. The chapter concentrates on the churches and their understanding of health, disease/ill-health, and healing in Ghana.

Chapter Four deals with neo-prophetism and healing in Ghana. The chapter provides the case studies of the three selected neo-prophetic healers: Antwi Boasiako, Isaac Osei Bonsu and Daniel Obinim. The fifth chapter examines the phrase healing the ‘incurable’. This fifth chapter deals with the justification of healing the ‘incurable’ by the Ghanaian neo-prophetic healers, neo-prophetic practice of *akwankyere*, certification of healing by

patients who claimed to have been healed and their relatives, challenges encountered both by healers and patients, criticism of healing ‘incurable’ diseases and the prospects of healing ‘incurable’ diseases in Ghana. Chapter Six is the conclusion which comprises a summary, the major findings, and recommendations.

1.9 Significance of the Study

The study adds up to literature on charismatic renewals in Ghana with specific reference to the neo-prophetic healers. It provides an intense relevance in helping to understand the health-seeking behaviour of people with ‘incurable’ diseases. The study will serve as a resource material on the contributions of the neo-prophetic healers to health care in Ghana.



CHAPTER TWO

HEALTH AND HEALING IN GHANA

2.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses health and healing in Ghana. It focuses on the conceptualisation of health in some selected Ghanaian society (with reference to the Akan), the notion of disease, ill-health and healing in the Ghanaian context. Health and healing in Ghana are discussed because it will enable the researcher to examine the indigenous Ghanaian beliefs on health and healing and how they have influenced the neo-prophetic healers' practices of healing the 'incurable'. Besides, the chapter, by examining the notion of disease, ill-health, and healing, exposes the neo-prophetic beliefs and practices underpinning 'incurable' diseases in Ghana.

2.1 The Conceptualisation of Health in the Ghanaian Society

This section of the work discusses the concept of health and healing among Ghanaians by exploring their notion of disease, ill-health, and healing. There are various ethnic groups in Ghana and each of them has its own understanding of health. The Akan, Ewe, Ga, and Nankani are some ethnic groups in Ghana⁹⁵ that interpret health within their cultural milieu.

⁹⁵ Divine. E. K Amenumey, *Ghana: A Concise History from Pre-Colonial Times to the 20th Century*. (Accra: Woeli Pub. Services, 2008), 7-20.

2.1.1 Conceptualisation of Health in the Akan Society

Among the Akan of Ghana, the word health is referred to as *apomuden* which means ‘well-being or good health’ and translates literally as “strengthened joint.” It is a common belief in the Akan society that *apomuden* (well-being) brings about *ahuoden* (strength). Strength, in a sense, becomes the by-product of *apomuden* (well-being). The above assertion indicates that among the Akan of Ghana, if the individual has good health (wellbeing) the person is said to have *ahuoden*. However, if the individual does not have *ahuoden*, then the person is not well. There is a common adage among the various Akan societies that says, *Se wote apɔ na se wowɔ ahuɔden a, wo betumi aye adwuma*. This implies that if one has good health and strength the person is fit to work. Among the Akan of Ghana, it is observed that three basic words such as *apomuden*, *ahuoden* and *nkwa* (well-being, strength, and life respectively) are popular with regards to health. *Apomuden* and *ahuoden* are explained above, however, *nkwa* which is life is as a result of *apomuden*-wellbeing and *Ahuoden*. Without the two, *apomuden* and *ahuoden*, one’s life (*nkwa*) is said to be limited on earth. The above Akan understanding of health is embedded in their cultural expressions. For instance, it is a common practice among two individuals to make enquiry of their health or wellbeing after the exchange of greetings by asking the other person ‘*w’apɔ mu te sen?*’ ‘how is your health?’ The most popular response to this question by observation is ‘*Nyame n’adom*’ which means ‘by the grace of God.’ The cultural expression, mostly after exchanging greetings among two Akan individuals such as ‘by the grace of God’ links health to religion within the Akan perspective.

According to the Akan worldview, good health is being free from all life negating factors, which implies the well-being of the mind, body, and spirit. This includes living in harmony

with one's neighbour, the environment, one's self and all levels of reality such as the physical, social, spiritual, natural and the supernatural.⁹⁶ To the African Akan people, the concept of health is interwoven with religion and this influences their notions on health and wholeness.⁹⁷ To be in good health one must control the craving and must be spiritually upright just to be in good relation with mystical forces that are capable of giving protection as well as meting out punishment for disobedience and human mischief.⁹⁸ It could be inferred from the above that the Akan' view on health is not purview to the physical or temporal aspect alone but rather compounded with spiritual connotations. The Akan' conceptualisation of health purports the idea or belief that things do not just happen and that events have causes.⁹⁹ Diseases and sicknesses are an aberration in life, therefore when suffering, or in a condition of ill-health, the cause of the problem must be sought out and a solution found to it.¹⁰⁰ It could be argued from the above that the Akan concept of health influence their notion of disease and ill-health and sickness.

2.1.2 Conceptualisation of Health in the Nankani Society

Health among the Nankani people of Northern Ghana is referred as *inn masum* (body shade or coolness). The cultural expression *inn masum* among the Nankani people implies that the human body is protected and is blessed by the spiritual beings who oversee offering

⁹⁶ Appiah-Kubi, *Man Cures, God Heals*, 2-15.

⁹⁷ Gregory O. Ajima and Eyong U. Ubana, "The Concept of Health and Wholeness in Traditional African Religion and Social Medicine," *Arts and Social Sciences Journal* 9, no. 4 (2018): 3.

⁹⁸ Gregory O. Ajima and Eyong U. Ubana, "The Concept of Health," 3-4.

⁹⁹ Appiah, "Healing Practices among the Neo-Prophetic Groups in Ghana," 6.

¹⁰⁰ Appiah, "Healing Practices among the Neo-Prophetic Groups in Ghana," 6-7.

such protection.¹⁰¹ Again the cultural expressions of the Nankani people testify that their understanding of health is rooted in the *yaaba malima* (ancestral worship). However, due to modernity, such spiritual aspect of health has been incorporated into modern scientific medical health care.¹⁰² This presupposes that the people of Nankani, in their health care delivery, resort to both the spiritual and the bio-medical means in their bid to access good health. The combination of both the traditional health care rituals and bio-medical remedies as solution to health needs is expatiated by Amenga-Etego in her study where she indicated that the people of Nankani combine the traditional and the modern health remedies when suffering from health problems and that the traditional aspect of the Nankani health seeking behaviour rather focuses on the supernatural forces that are related to health.¹⁰³ Amenga-Etego re-emphasised in her work that though the people of Nankani adhere to the orthodox medication, their beliefs on health are rather extracted from their traditional health system which the spiritual aspect of health is always central.¹⁰⁴

2.1.3 Conceptualisation of Health in the Ga Society

The Ga people are an ethnic group in Ghana whose understanding of health is not far from that of the Akan and the people of Nankani. In the Ga community, basic cultural expressions are used to infer that there is a link between health and religion. In the Ga traditional setting, health is referred to as *gbɔmɔtsoŋ hewale kpakpa* which literally means ‘body strength

¹⁰¹ Rose Mary Amenga-Etego “Interplay of Traditional and Modern Concepts of Health,” in *Reclaiming the Human Sciences and Humanities Through African Perspectives*, ed. H. Lauer and K. Anyidoho (Accra: Sub-Saharan Press, 2012): 322.

¹⁰² Amenga-Etego, “Interplay of Traditional and Modern Concepts of Health,” 321.

¹⁰³ Amenga-Etego, “Interplay of Traditional and Modern Concepts of Health,” 322-323.

¹⁰⁴ Amenga-Etego, “Interplay of Traditional and Modern Concepts of Health,” 321.

good.’ The common greeting in the Ga society is *te oyɔɔ tɛɛɛ?*, meaning ‘how are you?’ and the response to such greetings by Ga people is *dromɔ naa mi ye ojogbanɛ* meaning ‘By grace I am fine’ The above expressions demonstrate the Ga understanding that health is not only of the physical dimension but also related to a supernatural deity or being. The view of the Ga society that health is of two dimensions is exemplified by Margaret Field in her book, *Religion, and Medicine of the Ga people* as she attest to the spiritual dimension of ill-health among the Ga community by positing that a person could be influenced by a bad *gbefi*.¹⁰⁵ Field articulates that, among the Ga society, persons under the influence of a bad *gbefi* are not considered as wrong doers but rather sick persons.¹⁰⁶

2.1.4 Conceptualisation of Health in the Ewe Society of Ghana

There are different Ewe dialects in the Ghanaian Ewe society and for the purpose of this study, emphasis was placed on the Anlo Ewe culture tradition and dialect, which is popular among the Ewe societies because it is recognised as the most studied Ewe dialect in the educational institutions in Ghana.

Among the Ewe society of Ghana, health is termed as *agbe*. It is a common practice among members of the society to enquire about one’s health and know how the families and neighbours are faring (Alex, personal communication, September 10, 2021). Cultural expressions that are common among the Ewe people in their bid to know the wellbeing of a neighbour includes *mifoa* which implies ‘how are you’ or *mile agbea* meaning ‘how is

¹⁰⁵ Margaret J. Field, *Religion and Medicine of the Gã People* (London, Oxford University Press, 1937), 96-98.

¹⁰⁶ Field, *Religion and Medicine of the Gã People*, 97.

your health'. The most common response to such Ewe cultural expression is *eii, Mawu ta, mie le agbe* which basically implies 'yes, by his grace.' It would be argued that the above cultural expressions by the people of the Ewe community are implicative in the sense that they recognise *Mawu* (God) as the source of health. It could be deduced from the above that, the Ewe people like other ethnic groups in Ghana by conceptualising health, link health to religion.

Though the researcher discussed the conceptualisation of health among some selected ethnic groups such as the Akan, Nankani, Ga and Ewe in Ghana, the Akan of Ghana were used as a reference to the study because they form the majority group among the various ethnic groups in Ghana.¹⁰⁷ Also, the selected neo-prophetic healers for the study are people of Akan origin though their churches have expanded to other parts of Ghana. Besides, it is observed that most prophetic healers in Ghana express themselves through the Akan language, especially Twi. This assertion corroborates Appiah-Kubi's claim that the Twi dialect of the Akan people has become the lingua franca of most Ghanaians.¹⁰⁸

2.2 Notions of Disease, Ill-Health, and Sickness among the Akan, Nankani, Ga, and Ewe

The different ethnic groups in Ghana have their own unique cultural beliefs and practices to which they profess and observe to. This section of the work uncovers the notions of disease, ill-health, and sickness among selected ethnic groups such as the Akan, Nankani,

¹⁰⁷ Appiah-Kubi, *Man Cures, God Heals*, 1-6.

¹⁰⁸ Appiah-Kubi, *Man Cures, God Heals*, 1-5.

Ga and Ewe in Ghana. These ethnic groups were selected among the various ethnic groups in Ghana because their ontological views could be generalised to represent the worldviews of other ethnic societies in Ghana. By generalising the selected ethnic societies' notions on disease, ill-health, and sickness, the researcher brought out the common elements underpinning their notions of disease, ill-health, and sickness to compensate for the other ethnic groups in Ghana.

Besides, it is impossible to study the cultural beliefs of all the various ethnic groups in Ghana in this study. According to Geoffery Parrinder, results from the study of three to four tribes are enough and have the value to uncover and describe the cultural beliefs and practices of other ethnic groups¹⁰⁹ Based on the above assertion by Parrinder, it could be inferred that examining notions on disease, ill-health, and sickness among the Akan, Nankani, Ga, and Ewe would produce valid results that would be extended beyond to represent other various ethnic groups (in Ghana).

Furthermore, the study on the notions of disease, ill-health, and sickness among the selected ethnic groups in Ghana brings to bear the indigenous Ghanaian views on 'incurable' diseases. These selected ethnic groups represent indigenous Ghanaian societies with large Christian converts; hence, their notions of disease, ill-health, and sickness enabled me to assess how the indigenous beliefs influence the neo-prophetic healer's practices of healing the 'incurable.'

¹⁰⁹ Geoffery Parrinder, *West African Religion: A Study of the Beliefs and Practices of Akan, Ewe, Yoruba, Ibo, and kindred peoples* (London, Epworth Press, 1947), 3.

2.2.1 The Akan Notion of Disease, Ill-health, and Sickness

The cultural beliefs of the Akan form the basis of their notion of disease. The traditional worldview of the Akan projects that their understanding of the disease is seen through the lenses of its causation. Among the Akan diseases could be caused by physical or natural, social, and spiritual factors.¹¹⁰

The Akan have the empirical understanding and belief in physical or natural diseases.¹¹¹ The Akan belief in the natural origin of diseases is corroborated by Kwame Gyekye in his book *An Essay on African Philosophical Thought: The Akan Conceptual Scheme*, as he expressed that the Akan do not completely reject the natural causes of an event.¹¹² The existence of herbalists and the use of herbs were the most popular means of dealing with ill-health and diseases that were believed to have natural causation before the introduction of Western biomedical practices.

Lily Kpobi and Leslie Swartz appeared to have agreed with the recognition of natural causes of diseases among the Akan by identifying that even in the colonial era, there were well-organised herbalists in Ghana who treated natural diseases with herbs.¹¹³ For instance, the activities of an Akan medical doctor Oku Ampofo who abandoned bio-medical practices in the late 1940s to provide space for Ghanaian herbalists to practise alongside medical doctors, indicate the Akan belief in the natural cause of disease. Ampofo is said

¹¹⁰ Pashington Obeng, "Asante Catholicism: An African Appropriation of the Roman Catholic Religion," in *African Spirituality: Forms, Meanings and Expressions*, ed. Jacob K. Olupona (NY: Crossroad, 2000), 376-377.

¹¹¹ Appiah-Kubi, *Man Cures, God Heals*, 14, 66.

¹¹² Kwame Gyekye, *An Essay on African Philosophical Thought: The Akan Conceptual Scheme* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995), 77.

¹¹³ Lily Kpobi, and Leslie Swartz. "Indigenous and Faith Healing in Ghana: A Brief Examination of the Formalising Process and Collaborative Efforts with the Biomedical Health System," *African Journal of Primary Health Care & Family Medicine* 11, no. 1 (2019): 1-5.

to have compiled medicinal plants and herbal remedies for healing diseases among people in the community.¹¹⁴ This suggests that the Akan do not completely rely on superstitious answers and solutions to address ill-health. Twumasi in his book *Medical System in Ghana: A Study in Medical Sociology* refers to these types of diseases as *honam mu yadee* (physical illness).¹¹⁵ Jimoh Amzat and Oliver Razum in their work *Health, disease, and illness as conceptual tools* corroborated with Twumasi's assertion by arguing that in the traditional belief system, (such as the Akan of Ghana) disease termed as physical or natural refers to the bio-medical explanation of disease which conforms with the germ theory of disease and is based on pathogenic causation such as microbial agents such as viruses, bacteria, worms, and fungi.¹¹⁶ Amzat and Razum further articulated that illnesses which were regarded as physical or natural also included injuries and accidents such as broken bones and the ingestion of bad substances into the body. It could be inferred from the foregoing that in the traditional belief system such as the Akan of Ghana, diseases that are believed to have bio-medical causal factors are expected to be healed and cured or treated by medication, be it with herbs or biomedicine. However, disease that defies all tested forms of medication and treatment is regarded as spiritual disease.¹¹⁷ Spiritual disease or ill-health among the Akan of Ghana is referred to as *sunsum mu yadee* (spiritual illness).

The spiritual disease or sickness is inflicted on an individual, household, clan, community, nation or (even the world) through one's evil deeds, moral disobedience, curse or spell from some sorts of supernatural deities such as God, the gods, ancestors, witchcraft, and evil

¹¹⁴ Kpobi, and Swartz. "Indigenous and Faith Healing in Ghana," 3.

¹¹⁵ Patrick Twumasi, *Medical System in Ghana: A Study in Medical Sociology* (Accra, Ghana Publishing Corporation, 1975), 70-95.

¹¹⁶ Jimoh Amzat and Oliver Razum. "Health, Disease, and Illness as Conceptual Tools." In *Medical Sociology in Africa* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2014), 21-37.

¹¹⁷ Amzat and Razum. "Health, Disease, and Illness as Conceptual Tools," 34.

magicians.¹¹⁸ Atiemo further posits and exemplifies deeds as including stealing, adultery especially with a father or brother's wife, incest and bearing false witness, having sexual intercourse in the bush, touching sacred object with what is a taboo to it, eating forbidden food, refusal to conduct proper burial and funeral rites for dead relatives, bearing grudge with a neighbour and neglecting to attend to the gods and ancestors all of which may attract some form of *mmusu* (evil) unto a person or a community.¹¹⁹ *Mmusu* (evil) among the Akan may include or be in the form of epidemics or sickness that defies well-tested cures.¹²⁰ Amzat and Razum in their study magnified Atiemo's above assertion by articulating that diseases or sicknesses that were attributed to spiritual forces' presented symptoms that were usually medically unexplainable or with medically explained symptoms that were beyond medical remedies and could not be cured through scientific means.¹²¹ It could be deduced from the above that in a traditional belief system as such the Akan of Ghana, 'incurable' diseases are ailments that are attributed to divinity. However, traditional belief system poses or denotes two major types of 'incurable' disease. There are diseases that profess medically explained symptoms and are scientifically verified as such but cannot be treated and cured by medically tested cures for such diseases. Such ailments though are, however, acknowledged and known by the medical field but in the traditional belief system of the Akan believes that the causal factors are not scientifically inclined.

In the work of Gabriel Appiah "Healing Practices among Neo-prophetic groups in Ghana: Case Study of Three Selected Neo-prophetic Churches", affirms this assertion of the Akan

¹¹⁸ Atiemo. "Mmusuyi and Deliverance,"18-28.

¹¹⁹ Abamfo Ofori Atiemo. "Mmusuyi and Deliverance: A Study of Conflict and Consensus in the Encounter between African Traditional Religion and Christianity,"17-34.

¹²⁰ Atiemo. "Mmusuyi," 34.

¹²¹ Amzat and Razum, "Health, Disease, and Illness as Conceptual Tools," 34.

traditional belief system, by echoing the sentiments of some patients, who claimed to have eye problem, common cold and malaria but could not be cured or healed by medical professionals, after receiving quality medical attention. They were only restored through divine intervention.¹²² Besides, with regard to this category of ‘incurable’ diseases, even though the scientific explanation to causal agent of a particular disease is accepted among the Akan society, the ‘why me?’ factor makes them to attribute such diseases to a divinity, be it God, gods, witchcraft, magic, induced by spell or curse. The ‘why me?’ incites them into a broader consultation to seek for the cause of the illness and find solution to it. There are cases where individuals suffering from known scientifically explained diseases such as dysfunctional uterine bleeding and diabetes claim their illnesses were caused by personal sin or demonic influence¹²³ they accordingly sought for divine intervention to their ill-health.

The second category of ‘incurable’ diseases deduced based on the Akan notion of disease above – it is a type of disease that has mystical symptoms which are unexplainable to science and cannot be cured by medical science. An instance of this mystical disease is that an individual might feel ill and unwell but upon thorough medical examination is told that there is absolutely nothing medically wrong with him or her but continues to feel ill and unwell. This occurrence is corroborated in Appiah’s work where he identified a patient who claimed to have felt ill for months and visited most of the renowned hospitals in Ghana, but upon medical examination, doctors could not diagnose her of any disease and the sickness persisted until she sought for divine intervention.¹²⁴ Cecil Helmen in his book *Culture*,

¹²² Gabriel Appiah, "Healing Practices among the Neo-Prophetic Groups in Ghana," 68-75.

¹²³ Appiah, "Healing Practices among the Neo-Prophetic Groups in Ghana," 70-91.

¹²⁴ Appiah, "Healing Practices among the Neo-Prophetic Groups in Ghana," 72-75.

Health and Illness stated that sometimes patients feel that something is wrong in their lives – physically, emotionally or socially, only to be told after a medical examination that there is nothing wrong with them. However, they still feel ill and unhappy.¹²⁵ Now the relevant question is ‘Could it be said that feeling ill without any diagnosed disease after one has been medically examined be enough grounds to label such condition as unexplainable and mystical?’ Or “Should mystical symptoms and unexplainable illness rather not be attributed to the lack of proper scientific tools available for diagnoses?”

Kenneth Boyd in his work “Disease, Illness, Sickness, Health, Healing, and Wholeness: Exploring some Elusive Concepts” referred to the act of feeling ill without any medically diagnosed disease as Munchausen’s syndrome.¹²⁶ Individuals with Munchausen’s syndrome frequent hospitals claiming to be ill but after medical examinations, it is revealed that nothing is medically wrong with them. Such patients engage in the systematic practice of deliberate and calculated simulation of disease to gain attention.¹²⁷ Kenneth Boyd further posited that patients with Munchausen’s syndrome succeed in being recognised as sick. Unfortunately, their sickness is doubtfully a disease but rather more of a psychopathic personality or personality defect which may have emanated from anti- social behaviour due to un-accomplishment, loss of job, and other related problems in life.¹²⁸ This Munchausen’s syndrome is more condoned among faith seeking understanding groups who rather rely on belief system. However, Appiah does not agree with Kenneth Boyd’s assertion because his explanation on Munchausen’s syndrome seems to define health as the absence of disease

¹²⁵ Cecil G. Heiman, *Culture, Health and Illness* (Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann, 1991), 120.

¹²⁶ Kenneth M. Boyd, "Disease, Illness, Sickness, Health, Healing and Wholeness: Exploring Some Elusive Concepts," *Medical Humanities* 26, no. 1 (2000): 11.

¹²⁷ Boyd, "Disease, Illness, Sickness, Health, Healing and Wholeness," 10-13.

¹²⁸ Boyd, "Disease, Illness, Sickness, Health, Healing and Wholeness," 12.

which is not the case of traditional belief system such as among the Akan of Ghana. The Akan traditional belief system views health beyond the absence of disease to a more socio-cultural context¹²⁹ thereby linking causation to socio-cultural context.¹³⁰

2.2.2 The Nankani Notion of Disease Ill-health and Sickness

The Nankani notion of disease goes beyond the physical symptoms of disease and bodily function to include one's religio-cultural conditions.¹³¹ This implies that the Nankani society's understanding of disease and ill-health includes one's interpersonal relationship with others as well as the spirit world. Rose Mary Amenga-Etego maintained in her work "Interplay of Traditional and Modern Concepts of Health" that, it is a common traditional perspective among the Nankani society that a breach in personal relationship results in disharmony and chaos which brings about disease.¹³² Disease is not seen as a physical component only but also as spiritual and that is why the society of Nankani tackles ill-health from the medical (be it the traditional medicine or bio-medicine) and spiritual strands. When one is sick, one pours libation to the spirit world just so to find the cause of the illness even though one may resort to the hospital.¹³³ Amenga-Etego's assertion that the Nankani society sees disease as caused by spiritual forces as well as bio-medical means is corroborated by Samuel Osei- Somuah who articulated in his study that the Cerebro-

¹²⁹ Richard. W. Lieban, "The Field of Medical Anthropology," in *Culture, Disease, and Healing: Studies in Medical Anthropology*, ed. D. Landy (New York: MacMillan, 1977), 15-23.

¹³⁰ Leonard B. Glick, "Medicine as an Ethnographic Category: The Gimi of the New Guinea Highlands," *Ethnology* 6, no. 1 (1967): 36.

¹³¹ Amenga-Etego "Interplay of Traditional and Modern Concepts of Health," 323.

¹³² Amenga-Etego "Interplay of Traditional and Modern Concepts of Health," 323.

¹³³ Amenga-Etego "Interplay of Traditional and Modern Concepts of Health," 322-325.

Spinal Meningitis-CSM (*Agweterikesia*) among the Nankani people was categorised as a natural disease and a non-hospital disease.¹³⁴

It could be argued from the above that among the Nankani of Ghana, CSM which is regarded to be caused by bio-medical means is believed to be a type that could be sent to the hospital for treatment and be cured. Whereas CSM which is supposedly a non-hospital disease is believed to be caused by witchcraft and other supernatural forces which make such CSM disease 'incurable' to biomedicine and therefore, could only be treated and cured through spiritual interventions. Seeking spiritual intervention could mean building harmonious relationship with the spirit world as well as correcting social offences. This inference affirms the assertion of Twumasi and Bonzi that in the Ghanaian traditional belief system, the diagnosis of illness is considered as a diagnosis of social offence and the curing of illness requires writing of some social wrongs.¹³⁵

2.2.3 The Ga Notion of Disease, Ill-health and Sickness

The Ga like any other ethnic group in Ghana believe that the spirit world controls the physical world and that events that happen in the physical world might have already taken place in the spirit world.¹³⁶ It is this belief of the dual worlds that colours their notions of disease, ill-health, and sickness. Diseases such as paralysis, stomach-ache, madness, dumbness, barrenness, though considered to have natural causes among the Ga society, are

¹³⁴ Samuel Osei-Somuah, "Socio-Cultural Perception of Communities in Kassena-Nankana District of the Upper East Region towards Cerebro-Spinal Meningitis" (PhD dissertation, University of Ghana, 2011):16-41.

¹³⁵ Patrick A. Twumasi and Stephen. K. Bonzi. "Developing a Health Care System in Ghana," *Journal of the National Medical Association* 67, no. 5 (1975): 340.

¹³⁶ Field, *Religion and Medicine of the Gã people*, 97-115.

believed to have supernatural connotations as well. This is affirmed by Margret Field, who opined that in the Ga society the medicine man's herbs have no power in themselves to act physiologically on patient but it is rather presumed as an agent through which the supernatural beings act to bring about healing.¹³⁷ It could be argued from the above that the Ga society like any other African traditional societies always seeks for the spiritual explanations to events even when events or diseases have bio-medical factors or scientific explanations. This is basically due to their belief in dualism and the 'why me' factor as Richard Gheman in his work *African Traditional Religion in Biblical Perspective* posited that with African traditional worldview, even if one accepts the scientific explanation to ill-health, there is the need to seek for a deeper explanation for the cause of sickness.¹³⁸ This deeper explanation to the cause of ill-health and sickness is seeking for the spiritual or mystical causes to ill-health to know whether such ill-health or sickness is caused by bewitchment, curse, magic or punishment from gods and ancestors. For instance, Margaret Field mentioned that among the Ga society *dzeawan* smites with mortal illness when called upon to avenge people.¹³⁹

Among the Ga people of Ghana, spiritual intervention to disease and sickness is mostly sought when diseases or sicknesses are considered as obscure. Obscure diseases are believed to be caused by supernatural entities and supernatural intervention is required to cure such diseases.¹⁴⁰ Sicknesses that are 'incurable' are believed to be inflicted on the individual as punishment for breaking a specific taboo, annoying the gods, or caused by a

¹³⁷ Field, *Religion and Medicine of the Gā People*, 114.

¹³⁸ Richard J. Gehman, *African Traditional Religion in Biblical Perspective* (Nairobi: Brick Court, 2005), 17-18.

¹³⁹ Field, *Religion and Medicine of the Gā people*, 116-117.

¹⁴⁰ Field, *Religion and Medicine of the Gā people*, 117-118.

spell or curse on the part of an envious neighbour. According to Margret Field, these obscure (incurable) diseases are remedied through the effort of a medicine-man who spiritually diagnoses the cause of the illness and prescribes a solution to it.¹⁴¹ For instance, she testifies that when the illness is of an obscure kind, the *Kla* may be consulted to make a prescription through a medicine man of whom the *Kla* would have a direct contact with to help with a remedy to the illness. The *Kla* might ask for a chicken in some instances and go ahead to tell the patient the causes of their predicament and what the *Kla* dislikes about the patient.¹⁴²

The inferences drawn from above is that among the Ga people of Ghana, diseases that are believed to be ‘incurable’ (obscure) are caused by the supernatural means and the natural means cannot provide a remedy for. People or individuals within the Ga communities in Ghana who encounter such obscure illnesses resort to medicine men who spiritually diagnose the cause and divine intervention is sought to relieve them. Divine intervention to alleviate ‘incurable’ disease could be in the form of appeasing the gods, correcting specific wrong doings, forming harmonious relationship with one’s deity of worship, neighbour, or communities. It also means fortifying oneself against witchcraft and people who afflict with evil magic.¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ Field, *Religion and Medicine of the Gā people*, 119-121.

¹⁴² Field, *Religion and Medicine of the Gā People*, 115-116.

¹⁴³ Field, *Religion and Medicine of the Gā People*, 134-139.

2.2.4 Notions of Disease, Ill-health, and Sickness among the Ewe of Ghana

Among the traditional Ewe societies of Ghana especially the Anlo Ewes, it is assumed that illnesses have both the physical and the spiritual components. This is basically due to the belief that the human being is made up of both the material and the spirit worlds.¹⁴⁴ Diseases that are regarded as natural are treated with herbs or presented to the hospital for treatment. Caroline Walker Mills posits that diviners mostly consult their oracles to determine the cause of one's illness. If a person's sickness has no spiritual cause, the person may be advised by the diviner to treat it with a traditional remedy or resort to the hospital.¹⁴⁵ Caroline Walker Mills in her study *Spiritual check-up: The art of healing in Anlo-Afiadenyigba, Volta Region* articulates an instance where Torgbui Husuniji Avuworda (a healer and the diviner of Afa Oracle) after consulting the oracle to inquire about the cause of illnesses, recommended patients to seek hospital treatment for their ailments which had no spiritual causation.¹⁴⁶

With diseases that are believed to be spiritual among the Ewe societies, the cure is impossible unless the spiritual disturbance is cleared, or the sick is reinstated with the gods. Breaching of taboo, bad juju, evil magic, and witchcraft are some possible spiritual means by which one could get sick among the Ewe society¹⁴⁷ Diviners or medicine men are consulted to know the cause and the remedy for diseases caused by spiritual entities.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁴ Caroline Walker Mills, "Spiritual Check-Up: The Art of Healing in Anlo-Afiadenyigba, Volta Region," *African Diaspora ISPs*. 42. (1998): 1-5.

¹⁴⁵ Caroline Walker Mills, "Spiritual Check-Up," 17-18.

¹⁴⁶ Caroline Walker Mills, "Spiritual Check-Up," 17.

¹⁴⁷ Ted Nelson-Adjakpey, *Penance and Expiatory Sacrifice among the Ghanaian-Ewe and their Relevance to the Christian Religion* (Rome: Dal Vicariato di Roma, 1982), 17, 18, 86, 87, 119-127.

¹⁴⁸ Mills, "Spiritual Check-up," 2-17.

The Ewe traditional belief system expatiated above indicates that they have the notion that diseases could have natural and spiritual causation. Diseases that have natural causes are cured by medical professionals or herbs while diseases that defy all forms of natural medications are considered to have been caused by supernatural agents. Illnesses believed to be activated by supernatural forces are considered 'incurable' to the medical field. Diviners and others with supernatural powers in the societies are rather consulted to spiritually investigate the cause of their sickness and find a lasting solution to it.

2.3. Healing in the Ghanaian Context

Health seeking in Ghana includes the use of multiple healing systems such as the indigenous medical system, faith systems and bio-medical healthcare.¹⁴⁹ According to Lily Kpobi, and Leslie Swartz these medical systems have co-existed for many years in Africa including Ghana.¹⁵⁰ It could be argued, that the indigenous medication and the traditional faith system of healing have existed in Ghana since these are major components of the Ghanaian indigenous practice. However, same could not be said for the bio-medical practices because it was introduced to Africans by the Western world. The above assertion is corroborated by Peter White in his study, "The Concept of Diseases and Health Care in African Traditional Religion in Ghana" as he expressed that the African traditional healer's healing process is holistic and this caused them to address issues of ill-health from two main perspectives, which are the physical and spiritual.¹⁵¹ Healing in Ghana is dependent

¹⁴⁹ Kpobi, and Swartz, "Indigenous and Faith Healing in Ghana," 1.

¹⁵⁰ Kpobi, and Swartz, "Indigenous and Faith Healing in Ghana," 1.

¹⁵¹ White, "The Concept of Diseases," 1-7.

on the supposed causal factor of the disease since the believed causal factor for a particular illness influences the patients' health seeking behaviour.

In the Ghanaian society, individuals may resort to the use of herbs or bio-medicines to treat and cure their illnesses.¹⁵² Lily Kpobi, and Leslie Swartz further articulate that most Ghanaians resort to non-biomedical means of treatment when saddle with ill-health.¹⁵³ Among the traditional societies of Ghana, indigenous medicine men use objects such as herbs, bark and roots, feathers, dead snakes, dead scorpions, eggshells, skeletons of lizards, feet of bird of prey and hedgehog to enhance healing.¹⁵⁴ However, in the context of contemporary health care traditional medicine has been made more scientific in Ghana. For instance, there are various institutions in Ghana that research into plant medicine and are training traditional medicine practitioners as part of their degree programmes.¹⁵⁵ The Ghanaian society resort to the hospital during ill-health, but they mostly employ orthodox medications as well as the traditional medicine for treatment of diseases as posited by Mary Amenga-Etego as in the case of the Nankani society of Ghana.¹⁵⁶

Diviners, sorceress, and traditional healers are among those consulted when specific ill-health is believed to be caused by supernatural force.¹⁵⁷ Healing diseases that are supposedly caused by spirits in the Ghanaian traditional societies involves animal sacrifice. This is done to exchange one's life with the animal's or could be based on the demand of the spirit in order to be appeased, spiritual cleansing for which animals are killed in most

¹⁵² Kpobi, and Swartz, "Indigenous and Faith Healing in Ghana," 4.

¹⁵³ Kpobi, and Swartz, "Indigenous and Faith Healing in Ghana," 5.

¹⁵⁴ Field, *Religion and Medicine of the Gã People*, 110.

¹⁵⁵ White, "The Concept of Diseases," 5.

¹⁵⁶ Amenga-Etego, "Interplay of Traditional and Modern Concepts of Health," 324.

¹⁵⁷ White, "The Concept of Diseases," 6.

instances and the blood is poured on the head or feet of the sick person – a process of exorcism that connotes the expelling of the spirit believed to have caused the illness and prayers which are said through the pouring of libation.¹⁵⁸

2.4. Conclusion

Good health among the Ghanaian indigenous societies is not only the absence of disease but also includes forming harmonious relationship with one's deity of worship, their neighbours and being free from negating instances in life. Among the indigenous Ghanaian society, health is linked with religion. The traditional Ghanaian societies believe that illnesses are caused by bio-medical and spiritual agents. Diseases that defy all potent medications or have unexplainable symptoms are regarded as 'incurable.' Even diseases whose bio-medical agents are known and are explainable by science are considered 'incurable' on the grounds that the causal agent is not natural. The causal factor of a disease then determines the approach or method for healing. Diseases that are believed to be of natural causes are cured by traditional herbal medicines or by orthodox medication depending on the patient's preference. However, diseases that resist different forms of medication over a period or have strange symptoms and unexplainable occurrences are directed to people believed to have spiritual powers for further investigations and subsequent solution.

¹⁵⁸ White, "The Concept of Diseases," 5-6.

CHAPTER THREE

CHRISTIANITY, HEALTH, AND HEALING IN GHANA

3.0 Introduction

Religion plays numerous roles in the lives of many individuals in the world including Africa, Ghana. The Christian landscape in modern Ghana comprises churches established by European missionaries which include Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian and Evangelical Presbyterian.¹⁵⁹ Besides the churches founded by missionaries, Emmanuel Akyeampong indicated the African Independent Churches like the Pentecostal and Charismatic churches as being part of the Ghanaian Christian landscape.¹⁶⁰ Emmanuel Akyeampong categorises the Ghanaian Christian landscape into three which he terms as the ‘three veins’ as exemplified above. Other scholars have emphasised the neo-prophetic churches as a ‘fourth vein’ or rather the recent proliferating churches in the Ghanaian Christian landscape.¹⁶¹ The emergence of neo-prophetic churches as a recent Christian renewal movement in Ghana is corroborated by David Stile Ocran in his work “Neo-prophetism in Ghana: A Case Study of some Charismatic Churches in Ghana”.¹⁶² Also, Gabriel Appiah’s study on “Healing Practices among the Neo-Prophetic groups in Ghana”

¹⁵⁹ Emmanuel K. Akyeampong, "Christianity in Ghana: An Introduction," in *Christianity in Ghana: A Postcolonial History*, vol. 1, ed. J. K. Asamoah-Gyadu (Accra, Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2018), ix.

¹⁶⁰ Akyeampong, "Christianity in Ghana: An Introduction," ix-xiii.

¹⁶¹ Cephas and Atiemo, "Claiming Religious Space," 53.

¹⁶² David B. Stiles-Ocran, "Prophetism in Ghana: A Case Study of some Charismatic Churches" (Unpublished M.Phil Thesis, University of Ghana, 2004), 130-133.

attested to the fact that neo-prophetism is a contemporary phenomenon in the Ghanaian religious scene.¹⁶³

As a practised religion in Ghana, Christianity provides striking contributions to healthcare. This chapter provides a brief historical background of the Christian churches in Ghana with regard to Historic Missionary Churches, African Independent Churches, Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches, and Neo-prophetic Churches' understanding and approach to healthcare and healing. The chapter helps to unearth the theological notion underpinning the various Christian groups in Ghana, and their practice of healing with specific reference to the Ghanaian neo-prophetic healers and how their understanding of 'incurable' diseases underpins their practices of healing.

3.1. Historic Missionary Churches and their Approach to Healthcare and Healing

The mainline church's approach to healthcare and healing in Ghana is examined to understand the theological notions underpinning the missionary practice of healthcare and healing in Ghana. Also, examining the missionary churches' approach to health care and healing serves as a yardstick to measure the theological notions unpinning the healing practices of other Christian groups such as the neo-prophetic healers in Ghana, who claim to heal 'incurable' diseases. This is because the missionary churches served as a standard for the Ghanaian Christian religiosity or the carriers of the truth to Africans,¹⁶⁴ and were used as a measure in order to better comprehend how the Ghanaian neo-prophetic healers, based on the Christian principles, fulfilled their felt needs such as healing the 'incurable'

¹⁶³ Appiah, "Healing Practices among the Neo-Prophetic Groups in Ghana," 2.

¹⁶⁴ Anum, "The Usage of the Bible in African Missionary History," 14.

through the African way of life. This section of the work gives a brief historical background of missionary churches in Ghana and their approach to health and healing.

3.1.2 Brief History of the Missionaries' Churches in Ghana

The missionaries' activities became grounded in Ghana after unsuccessful efforts of individual missionaries such as Chretien Proten, Henrick Huckuff, and Jacobus Capitein. However, the arrival of the Anglican priest, Rev. Thomas Thompson, in Cape Coast from 1752-1756 marked a turning point in the missionaries' attempts to Christianise Ghana.¹⁶⁵

A striking contribution of Rev. Thompson was that he arranged and sent three locals to England to be trained as evangelists. One of the said locals was a youth named Philip Quaake, who returned as an ordained priest. Philip Quaake, upon his return from England, worked as an evangelist and a schoolmaster in Cape Coast until his death.¹⁶⁶ The effort of Philip Quaake to evangelise did not extend beyond Cape Coast.

Major evangelism in Ghana started with the Basel missionaries at Osu, Accra in 1835, and they later moved to Akropong on the hills in Akuapem, where they laid the foundation of the Basel Missionary Church in Ghana (later Presbyterian) in Ghana.¹⁶⁷ It was around that same year of 1835 that the Wesleyan Church (later Methodist) was established in Cape Coast- Ghana, led by Rev. Joseph Dunwell.¹⁶⁸ The Methodist Church was later introduced

¹⁶⁵ Cephas N. Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism. A Study of the Development of Charismatic Renewal in the Mainline Churches in Ghana* (Netherlands: Boekencentrum, 2006), 49.

¹⁶⁶ Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, 50.

¹⁶⁷ Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, 53.

¹⁶⁸ Paul K. Boafo, "The Methodist Church Ghana: From the Beginnings to Autonomy, 1835-1961," in *Christianity in Ghana: A Postcolonial History*, vol. 1, ed. J. k. Asamoah-Gyadu (Accra, Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2018), 51.

in the Asante part of Ghana in 1839. The Methodist Church was accepted by the Asante people through the support of the then Asantehene.¹⁶⁹ Following the Methodist Church was the re-entry of the Roman Catholic Church to Ghana.¹⁷⁰ Two Roman Catholic priests, Father Auguste Moreau and Father Eugene Murat, arrived at Elmina in 1880 and through their activities, the Catholic Church in Ghana was revived.¹⁷¹ Other missionary churches such as the American Episcopal Evangelical Zion was established in Keta in 1898 through the efforts of Bishop J. Bryan Small, Moravian United Brethren Mission, Netherland Reformed Mission and the United Free Church of Scotland who settled in Gold Coast, Ghana with the aim of evangelising to the natives.¹⁷²

3.1.3 The Missionary Churches' Approach to Health and Healing in Ghana

The missionary churches' approach to health and healing in Ghana could mainly be attributed to their cultural matrix. A culture that was realistic and sceptical of supernatural inferences on the material world.¹⁷³ The missionary churches had come from a background that was buried in enlightenment, a cultural matrix that was imposed on rationalism and empiricism. They de-emphasised the miraculous and relegated the supernatural aspect of the Bible as a myth and misinterpretation. Even missionaries who affirmed the biblical miracles believed it was rather for the earlier dispensation (the Apostolic Age).¹⁷⁴ The assertion that de-emphasised miracles and regarded biblical miracles as the apostolic event

¹⁶⁹ Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, 58.

¹⁷⁰ Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, 47.

¹⁷¹ Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, 47.

¹⁷² Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, 59-62.

¹⁷³ Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, 43.

¹⁷⁴ Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, 44.

is corroborated by John Mac-Arthur who argued in his work, *Charismatic chaos*, that miraculous events and the gift of healing in the Bible were a temporary gift for the authentication of the Scripture as the word of God, and that, once that authenticity was established, the gift of healing ceased.¹⁷⁵ By inference, Mac-Arthur argued that the gift of healing and miraculous events in the Bible, though believed to have happened, are not to be anticipated in the present Church. It could be deduced that such was the mindset of the missionary churches in Ghana. The above deduction corroborates Joel B Kailing's work "A New Solution to the African Christian Problem", who stated that, other missionaries acknowledged the miracle and healing of Christ, but did not anticipate healing miracles in modern ministry.¹⁷⁶ Kailing further explained that the missionaries did not entirely debunk the supernatural miracles but rather preferred God's hand in normal events rather than the extraordinary ones.¹⁷⁷

The assertion above presupposes that notwithstanding the missionaries' beliefs in miraculous events such as biblical healings, they rather resorted to a more rationalistic and empirical means in dealing with health and healing in Ghana. For instance, the Roman Catholic Church believed in miracle gifts such as healing but when questioned on how the sick individual could be healed, their major position was through medication.¹⁷⁸ Even when prayer was accepted as a medium for healing the sick, the missionaries insisted that prayer should not dispense individuals from seeking natural medication that the creator had

¹⁷⁵ John MacArthur, *Charismatic Chaos* (Michigan: Oasis International Ltd, 1992), 51.

¹⁷⁶ Joel B. Kailing, "A New Solution to the African Christian Problem," *Missiology* 22, no. 4 (1994): 491-493.

¹⁷⁷ Kailing, "A New Solution to the African Christian Problem," 492.

¹⁷⁸ *Meeting for African Collaboration Symposium of the Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar: The Catholic Response to New Christian Movements' Objections and Misunderstandings* (Gweru, Mambo Press, 1995), 66-77.

put at their disposal.¹⁷⁹ It is further argued that praying for healing, without making use of the medical field, is tantamount to tempting God.¹⁸⁰ For instance, missionaries in West Africa like any other missionaries elsewhere in Africa, embraced the introduction of quinine as an anti-malarial drug and the use of mosquito nets for preventing malaria.¹⁸¹ In seeking to find scientific and empirical understanding to health problems, missionary churches in Ghana resorted to introducing Western medication in Ghana by spreading missionary medical officers across the then Gold Coast, as well as building medical facility centres, clinics, hospitals¹⁸², using a more rationalistic medical field approach towards health and healing. Examples are the Presbyterian Hospital at Agogo, and the Methodist Hospital at Wenchi.¹⁸³

It could be submitted from the above discussion that though the Christian missionaries accepted miracle gifts such as religious healing, they rather emphasised the rational and scientific explanation to health and ill-health. Such were their approach to health and healing in Ghana.

¹⁷⁹*The Catholic Response to New Christian Movements*, 77-78.

¹⁸⁰ *The Catholic Response to New Christian Movements*, 76-78.

¹⁸¹ Benjamin C. Diara, Johnson C. Diara and Nche George Christian, "The 19th Century European Missionaries and the Fight Against Malaria in Africa," *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* 4, no. 16 (2013): 91-92.

¹⁸² Jean Allman, "Making Mothers: Missionaries, Medical Officers and Women's Work in Colonial Asante, 1924-1945," *History Workshop Journal* 38, no.1 (1994): 25, 32-33, Oxford University Press.

¹⁸³ Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, 59-62.

3.2 African Independent Churches and their Approach to Health and Healing in Ghana

The AICs approach to health and healing is included in this section of the chapter because it will help assess the influence of the African worldview on the African-Christian approach to health and healing. It will also help to understand the ‘why and how’ African Christians engage in grounded theologising, which is the fusing of biblical occurrences with their worldview in interpreting their lived experience (especially with regards to health and healing).

The African Independent Churches are also termed as African Indigenous or Initiated Churches (AICs).¹⁸⁴ A common feature of the AICs is that it is purely indigenous and established in Africa by Africans for Africans with little or no link with the missionary churches and Western Christianity.¹⁸⁵ Other features of the AICs is that founders were mostly members who broke away from their mother churches, especially the mainline churches.¹⁸⁶ Some of them (AIC) were offshoots from the spiritual churches or were introduced by immigrants from Nigeria.¹⁸⁷ AICs are considered as spiritual churches¹⁸⁸ or *sunsum sore* (spirit churches) which consider faith, healing and prophecy as important practices.¹⁸⁹ The Church of the Twelve Apostles, The Musama Disco Christo Church, The Eternal Sacred Order of the Cherubim and Seraphim Society and The Church of the Lord

¹⁸⁴ Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, 36-37.

¹⁸⁵ Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, 37.

¹⁸⁶ Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, 73.

¹⁸⁷ Lone Acquah, *Accra Survey. A Social Survey of the Capital of Ghana, Formerly Called the Gold Coast, Undertaken for the West African Institute of Social and Economic Research, 1953-1956*. (London: London University Press, 1958), 148-150.

¹⁸⁸ Christian G. Baeta, *Prophetism in Ghana* (London: SCM Press, 1962), 7-16.

¹⁸⁹ Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, 74-75.

are examples of AICs that emanated from Christian missionary and the mainline churches in Ghana.¹⁹⁰

Christianity in Africa (Ghana) was coloured by the Western European culture was forced on Africans in the process of Christianising them. The result was that Africans accepted Christianity without integrating it into their lives and culture.

This engendered dissatisfaction among the African Christians because Christianity, as introduced by Europeans, could not address problems within the African cultural context.¹⁹¹

It was this dissatisfaction that compelled the African Christians to infuse Christianity with their cultural practices. In this sense Africans become Christians who do not completely ignore their cultural worldview. They engage in theological reflections which capture their situational experiences and the African viewpoint. For instance, most Ghanaian Christians would not be reluctant to consult a traditional priest in times of illness. The assertion above corroborates the position of Justice Ukpong who projected in his book, *African Theologies Now: A Profile* that Christian Europe focuses much on secularism in society and entrusts healing to hospitals, however, the African Christians will almost always seek healing in a religious context.¹⁹² Such was the approach of the AICs to health and healing, for their understanding of health and healing were influenced by their traditional worldview. An explicit example could be made of Sampson Opong who was regarded by the Basel

¹⁹⁰ Harold W. Turner, "A Typology for African Religious Movements," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 1, no. 1 (1967): 28.

¹⁹¹ Justice Ukpong, *African Theologies Now: A Profile*, (Eldoret: Gaba Publications, 1984), 4-7.

¹⁹² Ukpong, *African Theologies Now*, 5-11.

Missionary (Presbyterian Church) in Dormaa Ahenkro as a ‘big fetish man’ who used Christianity as a camouflage.¹⁹³

The understanding of health among Africans as discussed in chapter two professes that the Africans believe health to have spiritual connotations and that to address ill-health there is the need for spiritual intervention. This insight affirms the assertion of John Owusu Atuahene in his study, “A Comparative Study of the Prophets of African Indigenous Churches, and Akan Traditional Priests: A Critical Examination of their Training” where he articulates that the African believes that whatever happens to one’s health has spiritual linkage and can be restored through spiritual consultations.¹⁹⁴ It is within this context that AICs approached health and healing. Prophets and healers of the AICs resorted to divine intervention as well as the use of herbs in curing patients.¹⁹⁵ For instance, Prophet Harrison Ward, the prophet of the True Church of Christ and Christ Mission Church, Prophet Jehu Appiah and the prophet of the Twelve Apostles Church did not only resort to divine healing but also used and recommended the use of herbs to patients.¹⁹⁶ The view that AICs resorted to divine healing, as well as the use of herbs, is confirmed by Confidence Bansah in his article, “Missionary Christianity and Politics of Healthcare in Ghana” in which he emphasised that the AICs deserve encouragement and support for the use of traditional

¹⁹³ Hans Werner Debrunner, *A History of Christianity in Ghana* (Accra: Waterville Publishing, 1967), 311.

¹⁹⁴ John Owusu Atuahene, "A Comparative Study of the Prophets of African Indigenous Churches and Akan Traditional Priests: A Critical Examination of their Training" (Unpublished Mphil thesis, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, Ghana 2010), 23-24.

¹⁹⁵ Asamoah-Agyei Baffour, "Prophetism in Historical and Contemporary African Indigenous Churches in Ghana" (Unpublished M.A thesis, University of Ghana, 2006), 27-31.

¹⁹⁶ Asamoah-Agyei Baffour, "Prophetism in Historical and Contemporary African Indigenous Churches," 28-30.

elements (plant leaf, flower, fruit seed, stem, bark, and root, etc.) in healing patients despite the condemnation by the mainline churches and non-Christians.¹⁹⁷

From the above discussion on the AICs approach to health and healing, it could be deduced that the AICs are Christians who integrate some aspect of their traditional practices into the Christian theology. They do this by infusing biblical occurrences with their traditional beliefs, existential needs and cultural experiences and expectations. For example, in the African traditional world view, it is expected of ancestors, benevolent spirits, and God to intervene either through protection or healing when one experiences any form of misfortune. It is based on such traditional beliefs that African Christians seek religious relief for any misfortune that they experience. Health is seen as accorded by the divine and for that matter, ill-health and other related health issues were sought through such means. However, the AICs approach to health and healing was not solely by religious intervention as they also used local medications such as herbs. A basic argument pulled out by the researcher is that by common observation, some herbs and plants contain spiritual potency. Therefore, the use of such herbs and other local plants for healing still puts the AICs approach to healing within the religious context.

3.3 Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches and their Approach to Health and Healing

The discrepancies in the case of categorisation of Christian renewal movements in Ghana make it difficult for anyone to discuss Pentecostal/charismatic churches without a brief explanation of what they stand for. In view of Pentecostalism in Ghana, we have the

¹⁹⁷ Confidence W. Bansah, Missionary Christianity and the Politics of HealthCare in Ghana. *Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 115 (2016):225-226.

classical Pentecostal churches such as the Church of Pentecost, the Apostolic Church of Ghana, Assemblies Of God, Christ Apostolic Church and Foursquare Gospel Church,¹⁹⁸ the Neo-Pentecostal-Charismatic non-denominational fellowship which is exemplified as Women's Aglow Fellowship International, Full Gospel Men's Fellowship International (FGMFI) and the Independent Pentecostal/ Charismatic churches or neo-Pentecostal churches.¹⁹⁹ Examples of the Pentecostal/Charismatic churches include Light House Chapel International, Action Chapel International, Royal House Chapel, International Central Gospel Church, etc. The Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches are also known as Independent Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches or Neo-Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches.²⁰⁰ The Neo-Pentecostals are distinguished from the Classical Pentecostal churches due to their American Pentecostal worship styles in terms of music, their use of the English language and predominantly youthful membership.²⁰¹ However, the Classical Pentecostal Churches are different from other Pentecostal Churches due to their strong emphasis on the need for individuals to undergo the born again experience before claiming to be a Christian. Another is the strong emphasis on holiness and church discipline, strong belief in a post-conversion experience such as the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.²⁰²

This section of the chapter focuses on the Pentecostal-Charismatic churches and their approach to health and healing. The Pentecostal/Charismatic approach to health and healing is holistic. The Pentecostal/Charismatics believe that diseases may be caused by bio-medical conditions as well as spiritual causation. An instance could be made by Rev.

¹⁹⁸ Omenyo and Atiemo, "Claiming Religious Space," 57-58.

¹⁹⁹ Omenyo and Atiemo, "Claiming Religious Space," 58.

²⁰⁰ Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, 96.

²⁰¹ Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, 96-97

²⁰² Alfred Koduah, Classical Pentecostalism in Ghana, in *Christianity in Ghana: A Postcolonial History* (Accra, Sub-Sharan Publishers, 2018), 137.

Asafo-Agyei of the Great Eternal Harvest International Ministry who claimed that many illnesses could be prevented if people knew preventive healthcare methods.²⁰³ Asafo-Agyei explained that knowledge of good diet, personal hygiene, etc. are requirements for good health.²⁰⁴ To affirm Asafo-Agyei's views on health, it is argued that churches such as Light House Chapel, Action Chapel, Perez Chapel International and Royal House Chapel all engage in health services in Ghana. Francis Benyan in his work: "Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches and the provision of Social Services in Ghana" exemplifies that, Central Aids which is a charitable institution of the International Central Gospel Church, contributes to health care delivery in Ghana by organising various health screenings as well as donating medical equipment to hospitals in Ghana.²⁰⁵ These charismatic churches have hospitals and clinics that attest to their belief in the scientific and empirical understanding of health and health care delivery. Instances could be said of the Manna Mission hospital, Manna hospital, Asafo-Agyei hospital, Light House Mission hospital owned by the Pentecostal/Charismatic churches in Ghana.

Besides the Pentecostal/charismatic belief in a scientific approach to healthcare, they also attest to the religious connotation of health. Accordingly, they succumb to the assertion that sickness is more than pathophysiological and may be caused by spiritual disorder.²⁰⁶ The question is what may fuel such belief of the Pentecostal/Charismatic churches? The Pentecostal/Charismatic churches' belief of religious causes of disease is a blend of the

²⁰³ Daniel Eshun, "Study of the Social Ministry of some Charismatic Churches in Ghana: A Case Study of the Provision of Educational and Healthcare Services by Four Selected Churches" (Mphil Thesis, University of Ghana, 2013):87-88.

²⁰⁴ Eshun, "Study of the Social Ministry of some Charismatic Churches in Ghana,"87-88.

²⁰⁵ Francis Benyah, Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches and the Provision of Social Services in Ghana. *Transformation* 38, no. 1 (2021): 20-23.

²⁰⁶ Eshun, "Study of the Social Ministry of some Charismatic Churches in Ghana," 78.

Christian and traditional views that explain the world as both physical and spiritual. It is within this concept that the Pentecostal/Charismatic churches approach sickness by medicating while they pray for healing. A relevant example is the case of the leaders of Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches who adhere to scientific medication even though they organise healing crusades. Here, Dag Heward Mills's 'Healing Crusades' is instructive.

It could be inferred from the above that Pentecostal/Charismatic churches' approach to health and healing is a combination of empirical - scientific and religious approaches. It must be emphasised that the use of the bio-medical approach also includes alternative medications such as herbs that are scientifically proven to cure ailments. The religious approach to health and healing is basically influenced by their dual allegiance as Christians influenced by their traditions. It is a blend of Christian views and their traditional beliefs that form the Pentecostal/charismatic churches' notions on health and healing. This assertion corroborates the position of Cephas Omenyo and Atimo Abamfo who posited that, the Pentecostal/Charismatics balance the traditional worldview with the teachings of the Bible especially the New Testament.²⁰⁷

3.4 The Neo-Prophetic Approach to Health and Healing

Neo-prophetism is a contemporary Christian-related phenomenon that advocates and emphasises the re-visitation of a form of Christianity that specialises in providing the spiritual needs of the people.²⁰⁸ They stress on providing the spiritual needs of the people because, they argue that the spiritual world controls the physical world and that progress in

²⁰⁷ Omenyo and Atiemo, "Claiming Religious Space," 62-66.

²⁰⁸ Appiah, "Healing Practices among the Neo-Prophetic Groups in Ghana," 2-5.

or fortifying one's spiritual realm will eventually reflect all other aspects of their physical world, be it the socio-economic aspect of their lives. The above claim is an indication that such prophets are heavily influenced by their traditional worldview as expressed by Stiles-Ocran, in his study "Prophetism in Ghana: A Case Study of some Charismatic Churches".²⁰⁹ Stiles-Ocran's view above is corroborated by Cephas Omenyo and Adjei-Arthur who affirmed that the neo-prophetism is the hybridity of AICs, Classical Pentecostals, and Pentecostals/Charismatics whose beliefs are highly grounded in their African traditional worldview.²¹⁰

The neo-prophetic churches are a type of Pentecostal Christianity due to their ethos, style and emphasis that are supposedly Pentecostals but different from the mainstream Pentecostals because they focus more on spiritual power, interpretation of events (African biblical hermeneutics shaped by elements in the African context and global Pentecostal hermeneutical paradigms shaped by Pentecostal beliefs) and revelational knowledge which the prophets claim is powered by the Holy Spirit. Other topographies of neo-prophetism include their concept of *otamfo* (enemies: do not include only spirits being but also real human beings especially relatives and friends who are believed to be envious of one's progress), the practice of *akwankyere* (spiritual directions), exorcism and healing.²¹¹

There are two types of neo-prophetic movements as posited by Gabriel Appiah.²¹² He explains that there are the independent or autonomous neo-prophetic and the full-fledged independent denominational, neo-prophetic ministries turned into churches. The

²⁰⁹ Stiles-Ocran, "Prophetism in Ghana," 133-136.

²¹⁰ Omenyo and Arthur, "The Bible says!" 50-55.

²¹¹ Omenyo and Atiemo, "Claiming Religious Space," 58.

²¹² Appiah, "Healing Practices among the Neo-Prophetic Groups in Ghana," 5.

independent or autonomous neo-prophetics remain as revivalist entities with no attachment to any church.²¹³ Most of such leaders are ‘breakaway’ associate pastors or people who have been trained by other prophets or individuals who feel gifted to do God’s ‘work.’ People rarely attached membership to such category of neo-propheticism, indeed, a common expression among such groups is *mekɔ mpæbɔ* (I’m going for prayers). It could be argued that individuals do not attach membership to such a category of neo-prophetic because though it is a Christian-related group, it welcomes persons from other religious faith to join without being forced to convert. People attend such revivalist neo-prophetic meetings without the aim of becoming a Christian or member, but rather to seek solutions to their problems, be it health. For instance, the attendee could be a Hindu, indigenous religious adherent, Buddhist or of any other religious faith. The most pressing need is that their problems are presented, and a divine solution is found for them. When full-fledged independent nondenominational, neo-prophetic ministries become established as churches, they are termed neo-prophetic churches. This is because, most, if not all, of them, began as ministries.²¹⁴ Their organisational styles are generally characterised by indigenous leadership, management, and control. Their key doctrinal emphasis are prophecy, healing, and deliverance with miracle attached to them.²¹⁵ Membership is drawn from already-existing churches or people of other religious faith. Leaders or prophets of these categories seek to Christianise attendees of other religious faiths who experience a breakthrough with their health issues and other related problems. Examples of these neo-prophetic churches are International God’s Way Church headed by Daniel Obinim, New Era Chapel

²¹³ Appiah, "Healing, Practices among the Neo-Prophetic Groups in Ghana" 5-6.

²¹⁴ Appiah, "Healing Practices among the Neo-Prophetic Groups in Ghana," 5-6.

²¹⁵ Appiah, "Healing Practices among the Neo-Prophetic Groups in Ghana," 5.

International founded by Antwi Boasiako, Moment Glory Prayer Army founded by Isaac Osei-Bonsu, Ebenezer Miracle Worship Centre founded by Ebenezer Opambour Yiadom, House of Power Ministry International founded by Francis Kwateng, Life Cathedral of Isaac Boadu, and Alive Chapel of Elisha Salifu Amoako.

Neo-prophetic churches emphasise that health and well-being are of divine origin, mainly because the spiritual world controls the profane world. This assertion is coloured by their idea of cause and effect, which explains that every occurrence has a spiritual connotation. Events take place in the spiritual world before they appear in the physical world in a period.²¹⁶ This presupposes that to the neo-prophetics, experiences that are encountered in the physical world had already happened in the spirit world and so is their approach to health. The above indicates that the neo-prophetics apply religion or spiritual context to health notwithstanding their support for a scientific explanation to health issues. Even when scientific shreds of evidence are available for diseases and conditions, they still insist that every misfortune in life is manipulated by the devil and his agents.²¹⁷ Especially diseases and illnesses that cannot be diagnosed or cured by medical science, a disease that has medications but is not cured after countless medications are given is believed to be influenced by the spirit world. The above belief about health and wellbeing by the neo-prophetics is borrowed from their traditional worldview coupled with some aspects of the Christian view. This is mostly because they are Christians who seek to interpret the Christian gospel within their cultural milieu. The above observation affirms the assertion

²¹⁶ Appiah, "Healing Practices among the Neo-Prophetic Groups in Ghana," 5-9

²¹⁷ Appiah, "Healing Practices among the Neo-Prophetic Groups in Ghana" 5-10.

of Cephas Omenyo and Atiemo Abamfo that neo-prophetics are influenced by their traditional worldview.²¹⁸

In dealing with health-related issues such as illness and sickness, the neo-prophetic healers seek to understand the cause of sickness before they commence healing. They do determine the cause of disease or illness through revelational knowledge. In doing so, healers or the prophets reveal issues concerning the patient's sickness without the patient telling them. This assertion corroborates Paul Gilford's proclamation that in the charismatic renewals afflictions, blockages (misfortune) in the life of an individual Christian tend to no longer be identified by functionaries through questionnaire. A man of God is able through his special anointing, to identify and destroy one's affliction and ensure the fulfilment of one's blessed destiny without the person speaking.²¹⁹ The patients most likely affirm the revelation of the prophet about their illness either due to shock of accuracy or a feeling of obligation to authenticate what the prophet said. Evil forces, and personal sin are mostly identified as the causes of infirmities. In the process of healing the sick, prophetic healers resort to the use of spoken words and religious tokens or items; such practices are justified by quoting biblical inferences to support their acts.²²⁰ For example, the healing practices of Jesus, Paul and other characters in the Bible are heavily relied upon as a guide to healing the sick.

²¹⁸ Omenyo and Atiemo, "Claiming Religious Space," 55-59.

²¹⁹ Paul Gifford, *Ghana's New Christianity: Pentecostalism in a Globalizing African Economy* (Indiana University Press, 2004), 3-15.

²²⁰ Appiah, "Healing Practices among the Neo-Prophetic Groups in Ghana," 114.

3.5 Conclusion

The discussion on Christianity, health and healing in Ghana highlight the fact that the various Christian denominations in Ghana approach health and healing differently. It is noted from the above discussion that though missionary churches believe in miraculous events such as healing rather place emphasis on bio-medication and sought healing through an empirical-scientific approach. In dealing with health and healing it was noted that Pentecost/charismatic churches examine health and healing with both empirical-rational and religious approaches. For instance, it is a common practice to see a sick Ghanaian Pentecostal/Charismatic pray over his or her medications before administering them. Besides, the ICs and the neo-prophetic approach to health and healing is largely religious and even when a known scientific cause and explanation is attributed to a particular illness or sickness, they still insist on finding the religious causation to the illness and seek spiritual intervention to it. Especially diseases that are believed to have known medications but do not respond to medication are considered spiritually induced influenced and need spiritual intervention to cure such disease. Also, diseases that cannot be diagnosed by medical professionals are claimed to have spiritual connotation.

It is deduced from the discussion on Christianity, health, and healing in Ghana that the Ghanaian Christian has the theological notion that there is always spiritual connotation to health and healing. The Ghanaian Christians' theological notion of health and healing is a combination of their Christian views and their traditional beliefs. They theologise by integrating acceptable traditional practices with existing Christian theology to solve existential needs such as health and healing. Accordingly, Biblical passages referring to

analogous events or characters in the Bible are used to authenticate their theological notions.



CHAPTER FOUR

NEO - PROPHETISM AND HEALING IN GHANA

4.0 Introduction

This chapter examines the healing practices of the three selected neo-prophetic healers in Ghana. The chapter provides the case studies of the following neo-prophetic healers: Antwi Boasiako, of the New Era Chapel International, Isaac Osei Bonsu of the Moment of Glory Prayer Army, and Daniel Obinim of God's Way International Ministry. In each case study, there were fourteen respondents comprising the healer, three people who claimed to have been healed, two relatives of persons who claimed to have been healed, two members of the prayer and fasting group and two members from the song ministration team.

The names of interviewees mentioned in this study except for the neo-prophetic healers or leaders of the churches are pseudo names since it was agreed to conceal their identity due to some of the sensitive issues discussed in the study.

4.1 Case One: Bishop Edmund Antwi Boasiako of the New Era Chapel International

Prophet Edmund Kwabena Antwi Boasiako is the leader and the general overseer of the New Era Chapel International, which has its headquarters at Kumasi-Feyiase in the Bosomtwe constituency of the Ashanti Region. The church has members all around Ghana due to the bishop's revivalist nature and his acclaimed fame in healing all sorts of diseases

including ‘incurable’ ones. It is his revivalist and Holy Spirit filled nature to prophesy and to heal all manner of diseases that wins him members from across Ghana and beyond. He claimed to be endowed to heal by God, and that, the spiritual gifts of prophecy and healing were bestowed upon him as early as his teenage years. He said, “the grace to heal, prophesy and teach the word of God keeps improving from time to time because I am committed to doing my Father’s will - the God of Israel”. He also claimed that he was not like the other pastors who also started the ministry but gave up along the line due to challenges.²²¹

Bishop Antwi Boasiko is a graduate of the IT Ahamidyya Senior High School and a Theological Bible School both located in Kumasi.

Healing services for Bishop Antwi Boasiako’s New Era Chapel International could take place at any of their church meetings as directed by the Spirit. However, special days such as Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Fridays are mostly when members or adherents are challenged to bring or invite friends who are sick and burdened with sufferings. Monday evenings are basically for choir rehearsals whereas Thursdays are for consulting and counselling by the Bishop, Antwi-Boasiako.²²² The Thursday consultation starts at 8 a.m. and ends at 4 p.m., including people with ill-health and other related problems coming to see the bishop on a one-on-one basis. During the consultation and counselling process, the bishop claimed to base on revelational knowledge to diagnose the cause of one’s sickness and related suffering. The counselling is mostly a directive given to patients or adherents to remedy their sufferings. The consultation and counselling at the New Era Chapel

²²¹ Prophet Edmund Antwi Bosiako, interview, 6 December, 2019, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

²²² Prophet Edmund Antwi Bosiako, interview, 6 December, 2019, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

International were free initially but with time, a charge of 5 Ghana Cedis was conferred on any individual who desired to meet with the bishop in this regard.²²³

Bishop Boasiako confirmed that individuals with health-related problems who consulted him for counselling were asked after the counselling session to attend his healing and deliverance services which were held mostly on Fridays. However, if the individual could not attend the Friday healing services, he or she might attend the Sunday, Tuesday, or Wednesday services. He claimed that there were instances where people who had come for counselling for the first time were unaware of the days for healing services, and were mostly unprepared to stay, so for that matter they were advised to choose from Friday, Sunday, Tuesday or Wednesday services.²²⁴ Antwi Boasiako further explained that during a Sunday sermon that though the church's arrangement of deliverance and healing services areorganised on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays, he sometimes engages in healing the sick on Sundays because he just could not leave the sick untended to. He emphasised that normally, Sunday services were for teaching the 'Word of God' and not necessarily for prophetic and healing ministration.²²⁵

The Prophet of the New Era Chapel International claimed to heal all manners of diseases, from known medically diagnosed diseases to the unknown. The prophet narrated that he had encountered a lot of instances where people who claimed to have frequently visited hospitals for a cure were told by medical professionals that there was nothing wrong with them and that such individuals continued to feel unwell even after seeing a doctor yet hesitated to consult the prophet due to the following reasons: their disbelief in the neo-

²²³ Gabriel Appiah, Fieldwork, Personal Observation, 12 December, 2019, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

²²⁴ Prophet Edmund Antwi Bosiako, interview, 6 December, 2019, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

²²⁵ Gabriel Appiah, FieldWork, Personal Observation, 15 December, 2019, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

prophetic healers' ability to heal, pride due to their exposure to the outside world or higher level education, and sometimes the stigma attached to being seen in a neo-prophetic church.²²⁶ In a sermon, Prophet Antwi cautioned that his adherents should attend church service frequently to attain salvation, protection, and healing through Jesus Christ. He emphasised that it is only in Christ Jesus that good health and protection are guaranteed. He affirmed his assertion above by giving two Bible passages such as Psalm 127:1 "Unless the LORD builds the house, those who build it labour in vain." The prophet elaborated on this verse by explaining to the adherents that in humanly sense, it is prudent to take responsibility of yourself and health. However, he has seen countless people, both Christians and non-Christians, who have allowed the enemy to get hold of them because their focus is on their humane understanding rather than relying on Christ Jesus who is the author and finisher of their lives.²²⁷ He also quoted 1 Peter 2:24 "By His stripes you are healed". He explained this to mean that Christ is the only healer and so what seems impossible for medical professionals, is possible for the Lord Jesus Christ whose stripes give healing.

The prophet gave instances where medical professionals did their best yet were unable to help patients, however, such patients came to the Lord 'Most High' and their sickness and suffering ceased. He mentioned diseases such as autism, diabetes, asthma, epilepsy, malaria, stomach ulcer, headache, swollen stomach, infertility, and other unexplainable sicknesses in medical science got healed at his church.²²⁸ He cited an example during his sermon of a banker called Mr. Yeboah, whose wife consulted him due to the husband's

²²⁶ Prophet Edmund Antwi Bosiako, interview, 15 December, 2019, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

²²⁷ Gabriel Appiah, Fieldwork, Personal Observation, 15 December, 2019, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

²²⁸ Gabriel Appiah, Fieldwork, Personal Observation, 15 December, 2019, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

sickness. The prophet narrated how Mr. Yeboah was said to have woken up from bed with a common cold which got worse during the week, and later developed into ‘something else that made him incapacitated’ because the hospital could not diagnose what was wrong with him. The prophet claimed that although he prayed with Mr. Yeboah’s wife and admonished her to bring the husband to the church, the husband refused to come to see him and refused to use the tokens that his wife brought to him at home. The prophet expressed that the man died because of his disobedience and disbelief in the power of Christ to heal.²²⁹ Prophet Boasiako articulated further that Yeboah’s sickness could not be treated or cured by the hospital because it was a result of a spell cast on him by an office colleague whom, he dated and mistreated. He expressed that such illness and death could have been easily reversed and prevented by throwing five of the 20 pesewas coins into any river or stream in the particular locality where Mr. Yeboah’s mistress lived, to compensate the gods who were hired to kill him.²³⁰ Based on this scenario the prophet attested that not every disease or sickness is ‘hospital sicknesses’ meant to be treated at the hospital; some diseases are completely beyond the control and might of the medical professionals.

The healer of the New Era Chapel International expressed that the diseases or sickness that he healed had spiritual causes such as witchcraft and demonic manipulation, spell, personal offences, and breaching of family taboo.²³¹ He cautioned that some diseases which even have scientifically known causation become ‘incurable’ and defy all potent medication because they are manipulated by the spirit world. He indicated that patients who came to his healing services were examined through revelational knowledge to determine whether

²²⁹ Gabriel Appiah, Fieldwork, Personal Observation, 15 December, 2019, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

²³⁰ Gabriel Appiah, Fieldwork, Personal Observation, 15 December, 2019, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

²³¹ Prophet Edmund Antwi Bosiako, interview, 15 December, 2019, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

their sicknesses have any spiritual connotations. If one's illness was identified not to be related to any spiritual occurrences and could be treated by the hospital, he would humbly ask such patient to seek treatment from the hospital.²³²

In healing adherents who claimed to be sick with a particular disease, Antwi Boasiako as a healer asserted that there was no major requirement or prerequisite for patients to follow before accessing healing. All that was needed from the patient was obedience.²³³ When questioned about the faith of the sick person, the prophet stressed that obedience from patients enabled them to follow whatever '*akwankyire*' (spiritual directions) that the Holy Spirit gave him to tell the patient. In doing so, the patient has already exhibited faith in the power of Christ Jesus to heal.²³⁴ Antwi Boasiako also projected in an interview that he is one kind of a healer who always seeks the 'face' of the Lord through fasting and prayers. So as a healer, he did not need to do any other special thing to heal the sick.²³⁵ The healing process of Antwi Boasiako is coupled with a dramatic transition of his personhood from the ordinary to what seems as supernatural. The healing process starts right after a short sermon or sometimes mid-way of his sermon. Normally, there is always a song ministration after his short sermon or during preaching. It is within the contours of these worship songs that the healer seems to theatrically change from the ordinary to what seems to be a supernatural filled person charged by the 'Holy Spirit' to perform healing wonders.²³⁶ Once such

²³² Prophet Edmund Antwi Bosiako, interview, 15 December, 2019, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

²³³ Prophet Edmund Antwi Bosiako, interview, 15 December, 2019, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

²³⁴ Prophet Edmund Antwi Bosiako, interview, 15 December, 2019, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

²³⁵ Prophet Edmund Antwi Bosiako, interview, 15 December, 2019, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

²³⁶ Gabriel Appiah, Fieldwork, Personal Observation, 17 December, 2019, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

transformation takes place, the song ministrations cease and the whole congregation become silent.

Antwi Boasiako showed what in my opinion, is the likeness of Jesus (in video films such as the passion of Christ). He walked through the congregants, stared at them, called out names or pointed at individuals, then diagnosed their diseases and healed them.²³⁷ Bishop Antwi Boasiako in an interview emphasised that, the cause of certain sicknesses could not be disclosed because it might break relationships or create problems. He stressed that with issues of this regard, he normally prayed for the individuals and asked them to see him for detailed information concerning their sickness.²³⁸ Healing the patients takes the form of spoken words, laying on of hand and *akwankyere* (spiritual direction) which takes much part in the healing process and modes of healing performed by the prophet.²³⁹ In one instance as he walked through the crowd, he paused and screamed ‘*Meba Philippa, matie wo su, megye wo efi wo tanfo nsam ende*’ (my child Philippa, I have heard your cry, I will save you from your enemies today). He then waved the hand and said “*Yesu agye wo*”. Once that was said, a loud scream was heard and another from the so-called Philippa was then accompanied to the altar by the ushers and associate pastors to testify.²⁴⁰ In other instances, the prophet laid hand on the sick, though this is rarely done by him when healing the sick. This observation was collaborated by the prophet as he attested in an interview that, he did not usually lay hands on patients except such patients were incapacitated and were brought to the altar for him to examine their conditions.²⁴¹

²³⁷ Gabriel Appiah, Fieldwork, Personal Observation, 17 December, 2019, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

²³⁸ Prophet Edmund Antwi Bosiako, interview, 18 December, 2019, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-

²³⁹ Fieldwork, Personal Observation, 17 December, 2019, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

²⁴⁰ Gabriel Appiah, Fieldwork, Personal Observation, 22 December, 2019, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

²⁴¹ Prophet Edmund Antwi Bosiako, interview, 22 December, 2019, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-kumasi.

Besides, ‘*akwankyere*’ is the popular mode of healing by the prophet of the New Era Church, even when they prayed and laid hand on the sick, the patient was given some sort of *akwankyere* (spiritual direction) to follow. During my stay at the church, I observed that items such as lemon, apple, water, sugar, clay, salt, Coca-Cola, milk, communion wine, anointing oil, etc. were the tokens that the healer used to activate healing.²⁴² Bishop Antwi Boasiako attested in an interview that such healing items were used as and when he was directed by the Holy Spirit. He further explained that diseases caused by spells, witchcraft and breaking of taboos had their antidotes and while such antidotes were known and applied, the sufferer was released from such sickness.²⁴³ He exclaimed that there were people who called themselves prophets who were capable of seeing or diagnosing diseases, although such so-called prophets could not remedy diseases because they lacked the ability to find the proper antidotes to the patient’s sickness. Such prophets promised the sick adherent false hope, only for the patient’s sickness to return and then blame the patient for lack of faith. He explained that such prophets did not understand *akwankyere* and did not also strive to deepen their relationship with God through fasting, prayers and holiness. The prophet affirmed that it is only when one builds a harmonious relationship with God that the Holy Spirit reveals hidden secrets that will help remedy patients from their sicknesses. The prophet articulated that the ‘blame game’ by some prophets force certain patients to fake healing, on grounds that they may not be blamed for not having enough faith to activate healing.²⁴⁴

²⁴² Gabriel Appiah, Fieldwork, Personal Observation, 6 December, 2019 – 8 March, 2020, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

²⁴³ Prophet Edmund Antwi Bosiako, interview, 22 December, 2019, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

²⁴⁴ Prophet Edmund Antwi Bosiako, interview, 22 December, 2019, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

Antwi Boasiako expressed that if healers understand that healing is solely based on the sovereign will of God, they will not put unnecessary pressure on themselves and their sick clients who are not able to activate healing at one point or the other.²⁴⁵ The healer of the New Era Chapel International further argued that, sick persons who came to his healing services did not fake healing because he always educated them to understand that there is a time and season for everything. He quoted this phrase, “if God does not visit you today, he will visit tomorrow”, to encourage the ones who had not yet gotten their healing while a friend they came with had gotten theirs. “God works with time and season; God is never late” he said and then quoted a Bible passage from James 1:14 “All things work together for those who wait on the Lord”.²⁴⁶ to buttress his point. The prophet went on to argue that patients who come to him for healing cannot fool him with a fake healing because the Holy Spirit leads him during healing services. For that matter, he can easily tell if one is not healed but claims to have been healed.²⁴⁷

4.1.1 Patients and their Relatives

Theresa Owusu was a 14-year-old girl who was dragged to the church for months by her mother in search of healing. The young lady claimed to have been healed from autism by the healer. She confirmed that the mother brought her to the healing service a couple of

²⁴⁵ Prophet Edmund Antwi Bosiako, interview, 22 December, 2019, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

²⁴⁶ Prophet Edmund Antwi Bosiako, interview, 22 December, 2019, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

²⁴⁷ Prophet Edmund Antwi Bosiako, interview, 22 December, 2019, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

times before she had her breakthrough.²⁴⁸ The mother of the girl verified that the daughter had been autistic since infancy. She recounted that it took the daughter three years to stand and walk on her own, and that it was during their search for answers that they realised that she was autistic.²⁴⁹ She claimed the child's situation had been a serious headache to both her husband and herself. She cried out that the daughter had been in class two for the past 7-8 years because she could neither speak nor write and concentrate. When questioned whether any of their children had such a condition, she responded that there was no history of the autism in either family except this daughter of theirs, who was their second child. Their daughter's condition had made them a laughingstock among their neighbours and even their own family members.

Akuwa Stella articulated that it was during one of the Friday healing services that the prophet made mention of a young lady whose birthright had been stolen and replaced by witches in her mother's family. This was because that young lady had been born to save her family from poverty and would be a great figure in the nation. These witches in the mother's family were envious of this potential that had been endowed to her child by God, so they exchanged such potential with the autism disease. She revealed in an interview that the prophet prayed over five apples which represented Jesus and blessed an amount of Celtic salt that was to be used to bathe her daughter. She attested that the prophet instructed them to give one apple to the daughter to eat on each school going day (Monday to Friday) and the salt was to be poured into her bathing water for seven days.²⁵⁰ The mother of the girl, Akuwa Stella in an interview claimed the prophet revealed to her that the witches in her family spiritually exchanged the glory of her child during the naming rite of the baby

²⁴⁸ Theresa Owusu, interview, 3 January, 2020, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

²⁴⁹ Akuwa Stella, interview, 3 January, 2020, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

²⁵⁰ Akuwa Stella, interview, 3 January, 2020, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

was performed. The father of the girl, George Owusu also corroborated with his wife as he attested that they had seen tremendous improvement in their daughter's health after engaging in the *akwankyere* (spiritual direction) given to them by the prophet. He claimed that the *akwankyere* had implications on some of the wife's family members, narrating how during the period of the local salt *akwankyere*, two members of the wife's family got involved in a fatal accident while returning from a funeral. He expressed in an interview that the daughter could now speak, answer questions in class, and have some meaningful conversations with friends and teachers.²⁵¹

The parents of the young lady attested that some significant improvement in the health of their daughter marvelled her class teacher so much that she followed them to witness the healing services of the prophet. I did not see the condition of the young lady before she was brought to the healing service, I later identified them when they came to the altar to share their testimony and give thanks to God. I must attest that though she could engage in meaningful conversations during my interview with her, I still found her not to be completely normal because sometimes she could just stare at me until I repeated my question over and over. She could also not keep her balance and had saliva dripping off her mouth unintentionally. That notwithstanding, the parents and the people who knew her in the past claimed that there had been a tremendous improvement in her condition a month after her encounter with the prophet and that her condition kept getting better and better each day.²⁵²

In addition, another patient called Alex Ababio, with stomach ulcer also claimed to have been healed by the prophet during one of the Wednesday healing services. The prophet

²⁵¹ George Owusu, interview, 3 January, 2020, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

²⁵² Gabriel Appiah, Fieldwork, Personal Observation, 3 January, 2020, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

during the healing ministration moved through the crowd and grabbed the hand of an elderly man. He proceeded to mention the man's name and gave a graphical representation of the patient's home. The patient affirmed the description given by the prophet and this affirmation by the patient authenticated the spiritual powers of the prophet to the congregation as well as the other sick people who were present.²⁵³ The prophet went on to reveal to the patient that the stomach ulcer diagnosis made by the hospital he visited was not a physical condition (the stomach ulcer was not a hospital sickness) and that ulcer was just a camouflage by his enemies to destroy and kill him. The revelation of the prophet was corroborated by the patient as he supported the prophet and the rest of the congregation that though he had been on medication for the past two months and followed every regulation given to him by the doctor concerning his sickness, his condition kept on getting worse.²⁵⁴

The patient, in an interview, claimed that he reported back to the hospital because his condition was deteriorating. However, the doctor gave him an antibiotic medication and asked him to continue the medication and report back to the hospital if the condition worsened after the medication. The patient claimed that though he kept taking his medication, his condition became worse to the point of seeing bloodstains in his vomit.²⁵⁵ When questioned why he did not return to the hospital or change the hospital, he explained that it was at that point in his condition that his sister and friends advised that they see the prophet.²⁵⁶ Upon seeing the prophet, he was advised not to go back to the hospital again since his condition was not a physical condition to be treated at the hospital and that once

²⁵³ Gabriel Appiah, Fieldwork, Personal Observation, 8 January, 2020, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

²⁵⁴ Gabriel Appiah, Fieldwork, Personal Observation, 8 January, 2020, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

²⁵⁵ Alex Ababio, interview, 8 January, 2020, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

²⁵⁶ Alex Ababio, interview, 8 January, 2020, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

he returned to the hospital, the endoscopy test would be conducted and it would turn out that he did not even have stomach ulcer but rather stomach cancer.²⁵⁷ The prophet revealed to the patient that the supposed stomach ulcer developing into cancer was an evil machination orchestrated by colleagues at his workplace to threaten his career and subsequent promotion as an Area Manager at one of the Mineral Water Company in Kumasi.

The prophet went out to adjure what he referred to as the spirit of failure and setback that had been used to ensnare the patient by performing an exorcism on him. He also prayed over water and asked the patient to wash his feet and hands with it; this act of washing the feet and hands with water according to the healer symbolised freedom from any setbacks and failure in life with regard to the patient's career, and emphasised that no sickness could stop the patient from possessing his God-given riches on earth.²⁵⁸ In a further interview, the patient claimed that he was completely healed because he could now consume food and drinks that were prohibited by the hospital. He also claimed that he no longer vomited when he ate and could even skip food sometimes without experiencing any pains he had suffered prior to his healing.

The patient who claimed to have been healed also attested in an interview that he even forced himself to vomit but still did not see any bloodstains like he used to and there were neither signs of heartburns nor body weakness.²⁵⁹ He concluded that since he was no longer experiencing any symptoms two weeks after being prayed for, there was no need for him to revisit the hospital for he was completely healed. His argument was that he experienced such symptoms while on medication, however, such symptoms stopped after

²⁵⁷ Fieldwork, Personal Observation, 8 January, 2020, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

²⁵⁸ Gabriel Appiah, Fieldwork, Personal Observation, 8 January, 2020, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

²⁵⁹ Alex Ababio, interview, 8 January, 2020, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

he had been prayed for so there was no need to continue the medication or report to the hospital.²⁶⁰ This assertion of the patient who claimed to have been healed was corroborated by his sister Afia Blebu, who suggested that prayer and *akwankyere* were a continuum of medication and emphasised that God is the greatest healer, so there was no need to return to the hospital for proof since her brother's healing was evident.²⁶¹ The nephew (Kwasi Amo) of the patient who claimed to have been healed also confirmed that his uncle had been sick for months, however, he got well after the prophet's exorcism which was supposedly a deliverance from the spirit of failure and setback. He claimed his relative had been healed because he was now capable of engaging in things he could not do in the past when he was ill, such as skipping meals, not being able to sleep at night due to pains and walking for a period without getting tired.²⁶²

In another instance, a woman in her late forties claimed to have been healed by the prophet from long-term infertility. The woman, Gifty Aku Agyepong in an interview narrated that she struggled with serious health-related issues such as irregular bleeding or heavy bleeding during her period, which included severe backache and pains in the left leg. She expressed that she resorted to all sorts of pain-relief medications and other medicines until she was finally diagnosed with uterine fibroid.²⁶³ She said she suffered barrenness alongside her condition and reported that some medical professionals whom she confided in assured her that once the fibroid was taken care of medically, she would be able to conceive. However, ten years after the surgical operation she was still not able to conceive, and that became a nightmare for her since her condition had now forced the husband to

²⁶⁰ Alex Ababio, interview, 8 January, 2020, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

²⁶¹ Afia Blebu, interview, 8 January, 2020, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

²⁶² Kwasi Amo, interview, 8 January, 2020, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

²⁶³ Gifty Aku Agyepong, interview, 17 January, 2020, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

have a child with another woman.²⁶⁴ The husband used her condition as an excuse to marry another wife although they were both staunch members of the Pentecost Church.

According to her, the prophet made it known to her that the disease was brought upon her by the enemy to steal her joy in marriage. She stated in an interview that the prophet prayed by pouring anointing oil on her stomach and gave her *akwankyere* which comprised her rubbing the rest of the anointing oil he had prayed over on her stomach before sleeping. She was also asked to read Bible passages such as Psalm 23:1-4 and Exodus 23:26 every morning before she stepped out for her daily activities.²⁶⁵ Mrs. Agyepong confirmed that her encounter with the prophet, the subsequent prayers and obeying the *akwankyere* given to her made her pregnant within a period of two months which was unbelievable to her as well as her neighbours and some medical professionals who knew her medical conditions from the past.²⁶⁶ The husband Mr. Francis Agyepong in an interview attested that he was marvelled by the incident and they both agreed to name their son after the Prophet Edmund Kwabena Antwi Boasiako.²⁶⁷

Another relative of the couple who identified herself as Maame Yaa (the sister-in-law) affirmed the brother's wife's barrenness had been a major problem and almost caused them to divorce if not for the intervention of the prophet. She claimed to have recommended the prophet to the sister-in-law because the prophet was well known and very popular in Kumasi and beyond for his ability and spiritual powers to help barren women, women whose wombs had been removed due to medical conditions and even virgins to get pregnant.²⁶⁸

²⁶⁴ Gifty Aku Agyepong, interview, 17 January, 2020, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

²⁶⁵ Gifty Aku Agyepong, interview, 17 January, 2020, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

²⁶⁶ Gifty Aku Agyepong, interview, 17 January, 2020, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

²⁶⁷ Francis Agyepong, interview, 17 January, 2020, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

²⁶⁸ Maame Yaa, interview, 17 January, 2020, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

4.1.2. Prayer and Fasting Group

In this section, two members of the prayer and fasting group were interviewed on their contribution to the prophet's healing services. Frank Okyere who was the leader of the prayer group and one of the associate pastors professed that the major role of the prayer and fasting group was to intercede for the spiritual welfare of the church and break every attack that the enemy sent to the church, this attack could be on the prophet or the members who worshipped with them.²⁶⁹ He emphasised that healing and delivering patients from the bondage of sickness attracted a lot of attacks from the enemy. That is why it was necessary for the prayer and fasting group to intercede for the spiritual welfare of the church and its members including the prophet.

Okyere gave an instance when the healing of a particular patient involved exorcism, and it was members of the prayer and fasting group that helped in exorcising the patient by adjuring the demons or evil spirits out of the sick person.²⁷⁰ His argument was that the prophet at a given healing service dealt with a lot of patients and for that matter did not spend so much time exorcising a patient. The prayer and fasting group took over in cases where the patient required more attention to be delivered.²⁷¹ The role of the prayer and fasting group in the healing services of the healer as portrayed by Okyere was evident during my encounter with them. I witnessed in many instances where the sick fell and traversed after being prayed for by the prophet. While this happened, members of the prayer group took over and continued exorcising or laying hands on the patient.²⁷²

²⁶⁹ Frank Okyere, interview, 24 January, 2020, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

²⁷⁰ Frank Okyere, interview, 24 January, 2020, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

²⁷¹ Frank Okyere, interview, 24 January, 2020, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

²⁷² Gabriel Appiah, Fieldwork, Personal Observation, 24 January, 2020, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

Kasiewaa Fremaa corroborated Okyere's view on the role of the prayer and fasting group in healing by asserting that they engaged in spiritual warfare on behalf of the healer. She attested that before any healing service, the prayer and fasting group would have to pray earnestly seeking the favour and grace of God upon his servant (healer), so he could be used as a vessel to bring healing and freedom to the captive. She stated that: 'It is only by God's favour and grace that the prophet can heal and when you mention Antwi Boasiako, anyone who knows him calls him that powerful prophet but simple man, why is that so? Because the members of the prayer and fasting group are always on their knees praying for him and the church'.²⁷³ Fremaa expatiated that members of the prayer and fasting group did not only pray and fast for the prophet, but also for the patients who had been given *akwankyere* (spiritual direction) by the prophet. She claimed that they fasted and prayed together with patients who could fast as well as those who could not fast due to their condition.²⁷⁴ She specified that most of the tokens used for *akwankyere* by patients were either prayed over by the prophet or the fasting and prayer group. She claimed this was done to fortify such tokens spiritually and increase their healing potency.²⁷⁵

Fremaa's view was certified during my stay at the church, in one instance when I happened to be at the church premises an hour earlier before the actual starting time of the healing service. I witnessed the prayer and fasting group dedicating and asking the Holy Spirit to grace the pending healing service. I was also a witness to an event where members of the prayer and fasting group laid their hands on the healer and prayed for him after he had finished his healing ministrations.²⁷⁶ When I asked why that was done, Okyere and Fremaa

²⁷³ Kasiewaa Fremaa, interview, 24 January, 2020, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

²⁷⁴ Kasiewaa Fremaa, interview, 24 January, 2020, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

²⁷⁵ Kasiewaa Fremaa, interview, 24 January, 2020, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

²⁷⁶ Gabriel Appiah, Fieldwork, Personal Observation, 24 January, 2020, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

both said that the implication of the prayer was for God to increase the healer's healing anointing and make him extremely powerful in the spirit.

When questioned about his perspective on the nature of healing that took place at the church, Okyere responded that such healing miracle of the prophet was one of the authentic healing performances that he had witnessed in his lifetime under his own watch. He said that the healing miracles of the prophet are a continuum conundrum which cannot be comprehended by the human mind.²⁷⁷ He buttressed his views by stating that he never believed in the healing that so-called prophets claimed to perform until he encountered one personally at the New Era Chapel International. He claimed to have escorted his wife to one of the evening conventions held by the prophet due to security reasons, for the services were long and ended at dawn the next day, which made it unsafe for the wife to go home alone at that time of the morning.

He further reported that during the healing ministration, the healer prophesied that there was a man having strange feelings under his feet for the past two days, which felt like being pricked by needles or pins and asked him to stand up. Okyere claimed to have refused to yield to the call of the healer, but the healer insisted and then said, "please this is not a joke; that person has accidentally stepped on a spell which is having an effect on him, please stand up". According to Okyere, he got scared at this point but still decided not to stand up.²⁷⁸ He attested that what baffled him was the fact that the healer walked through the crowd and fetched him from the backseat where he was sitting and prayed for him. Okyere said that such a personal encounter made him have no doubt about the healing performed by the healer of the church.²⁷⁹ Also, Fremaa corroborated with Okyere's perspective by

²⁷⁷ Frank Okyere, interview, 24 January, 2020, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

²⁷⁸ Frank Okyere, interview, 24 January, 2020, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

²⁷⁹ Frank Okyere, interview, 24 January, 2020, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

claiming that there was no single time that it ever crossed her mind that the healing performed by the healer was not authentic. She explained that she had been in other churches and worked with many prophets and for that matter, she could detect if a prophet was acting dubiously. She further expressed that she also possessed some 'level of grace' based on her constant prayer and fasting, and so if something went wrong in the healing performances of the healer, the Holy Spirit would not hesitate to reveal it to her.²⁸⁰

4.1.3 Song Ministration Group

The song ministration group was a key component of the healing services of the healer of the New Era Chapel International. Mostly, songs were sung before and alongside healing performances or were used to interject healing performances. It was observed during my stay at the church that the healer could start a song for the choir to sing along with him during some sessions of his healing ministration. Such songs either served as a source of hope for the patients or reaffirmed the potent power of Jesus Christ as capable of healing the sick.²⁸¹

Mercy Owusu, a member of the church's song ministration group, explained that the song ministration group performed significant roles such as motivating and uplifting the spirit of the church members who could be in a state of hopelessness, and felt nothing could be done to redeem their situation. She argued that her role as a member of the song ministration group was to help church members and patients to connect spiritually with God during healing services through song ministration.²⁸² Owusu further mentioned that

²⁸⁰ Kasiewaa Fremaa, interview, 24 January, 2020, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

²⁸¹ Gabriel Appiah, Fieldwork, Personal Observation, 4 February, 2020, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

²⁸² Mercy Owusu, interview, 4 February, 2020, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

some patients received healing through worship songs that were sung without necessarily having an encounter with the healer.²⁸³ Owusu's assertion was corroborated by Emmanuel Frimpong who expressed the view that song ministration served as a medium through which God heals.²⁸⁴ He alluded that song ministration during healing services invoked the Holy Spirit to heal the sick. Frimpong supported his claim that song ministration invoked the Holy Spirit to perform miracles by quoting biblical passages such as 2 Kings 3:15, 1 Samuel 16:23, and Acts 16:25 where certain biblical personalities like Elisha, David, Paul and Silas used songs to invoke miracles to buttress his point.²⁸⁵ Both Owusu and Frimpong expressed their views that the healing performances by Antwi Boasiako were unique because most patients who resorted to the healer for healing got healed and they continued to have good health.

4.1.4 Summary

The healing services of Antwi Kwabena Boasiako were organised on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Fridays, and Sundays as stated earlier. The church is located at Kumasi-Feyiase in the Bosomtwe constituency. The healer's explanation of 'incurable' diseases is any disease that has spiritual connection. Such a disease has to be dealt with through spiritual intervention. For him, 'incurable' diseases have strange and unexplainable symptoms and could manifest as medically diagnosed diseases, yet the cause of the disease is spiritual. The healer concluded that medically diagnosed diseases with spiritual causative

²⁸³ Mercy Owusu, interview, 4 February, 2020, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

²⁸⁴ Emmanuel Frimpong, interview, 9 February, 2020, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

²⁸⁵ Emmanuel Frimpong, interview, 9 February, 2020, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

factors defy all potent medications or treatments except divine intervention. Such patients have to seek divine intervention before such diseases can be cured.

The healer exemplified that sometimes diseases such as malaria with known medical treatment can defy all potent medicines because of the causal agent. He emphasised that diseases caused by spells, witchcraft, punishment for breaching taboos, or from ancestors and other spirit beings are not and cannot be cured by the medical profession. The healer asserted that diseases such as autism, stomach ulcer, infertility, epilepsy, malaria, asthma, anasarca and strange explainable sickness have been healed only after the spiritual aspect was brought in. The healer in healing such diseases mostly resort to ‘*akwankyere*’ (spiritual direction) which involves the use of items for healing such as water, apples, drinks such as coca-cola, coins, clay, etc. Obedience is a major requirement that the healer seeks from the patient. The healer claims that without obedience, the patient cannot properly engage in the *akwankyere* as directed. Patients who claimed to have been healed mostly resorted to spiritual reasons and empirical evidence to certify their healing. Some of the empirical reasoning used to certify their healing includes the disappearance of symptoms, engaging in activities that they could not do when the sickness existed and the continuously acclaimed progress in their health condition.

The healer was supported by the prayer and fasting group and the song ministration group of the church in the healing process. The prayer and fasting group prayed for the healer and the church for spiritual fortification. They also helped the healer in the process of healing, including as exorcising patients when the need arose. Also, the song ministration group provided hope to patients through song ministration, as well as used worship songs to serve as the medium through which God healed the sick. The healer, prayer and fasting group, and the members of the song ministration group all engaged in theologising Bible passages

in their endeavour to express the power of Jesus to heal the sick, give hope to hopeless patients and reassure them that God rescued, freed, and healed people in the Bible and so He would do it for them as well.

4.2 Case Two: Isaac Osei Bonsu of the Moment of Glory Prayer Army

Rev. Isaac Osei Bonsu who is affectionately referred to as Rev. OB is the general overseer and the spiritual leader of the Moment of Glory Prayer Army, popularly known as MOGPA. MOGPA is one of the most popular prayer movements in Ghana and has associations all over the world. The internationally recognised prophet, affectionately referred to as Rev. OB by Ghanaians, is a Kumasi-based prophet. Members of his prayer group also refer to him as the ‘man of prayer,’ ‘servant of God’ or ‘papa of prayer.’²⁸⁶ Rev. OB had his secondary education at Prempeh College and is also a graduate of Covenant Theological Seminary Creve Coeur (Missouri) in the US.

The healing services of Rev. OB took place in various instances. There is a TV station called Aseda, where both recorded and live stream healing services of the prophet were aired. There is also a radio programme that had his healing services broadcast live. This radio healing ministration which was generally referred to as ‘Moment of Glory’ was aired on Sundays and Mondays. Another healing ministration of the prophet took place on Tuesdays, which was referred to as Early Rain. There was a ministration on Wednesday evenings called the ‘Mogpa Warriors Meeting’ at Adum-Kumasi, a bi-monthly meeting that took place at Anane Boateng Sport Stadium – Abrankese (all night services) on

²⁸⁶John Kwasi, Fosu, *Experiences of Pneumatic Phenomena in Contemporary Ghanaian Christianity as Appropriations of 1. Cor 12-14: A Critical Analysis* (Missionshilfe Verlag, 2019), 252.

Fridays, and the Sunday services which initially took place at the Kumasi Cultural Centre

- Apatakesee but currently at the Hall of Glory- Effianse, Kumasi.

Rev. OB attested in a sermon that prayer is the most powerful tool needed to deliver oneself from the bondage of the enemy. He further articulated that there had been countless instances where adherents resorted to the church with health problems that medical professionals tried their best but were not able to either diagnose the cause or cure such people. He cited an example during a sermon of a woman who had been cured of a mysterious skin disease through prayer. He based on such instances to caution adherents to be prayerful so they would not fall prey to the enemy. The above assertion of Rev. OB in his sermon affirmed that the neo-prophetic, based on the influence of the African traditional worldviews (spiritual world controls the physical), seek to fortify themselves in the spiritual realm which is believed to eventually reflect in all aspects of their physical existence or endeavour ²⁸⁷ Rev. OB explained that these illnesses were mostly unexplainable with strange symptoms or were diseases that were known in the medical field yet, they defied all potent medication or treatment. Examples of such categories of illnesses or diseases that compelled patients to have resorted to the prophet for healing included strange symptoms and unexplainable illnesses that medical professionals were unable to diagnose or cure, medically unexplainable pains and swollen body, serious health complications without any known medical explanation and cure (mysterious illnesses). One of such patients with an unexplainable cause of illness is discussed below.

Other categories of diseases that were observed included epilepsy, diabetes, infertility, kidney disease and many more, which were believed to defy all potent medications or treatments by patients even though there are medically known causes and treatments or

²⁸⁷Appiah, "Healing Practices among the Neo-Prophetic groups in Ghana," 2-3.

cure for these diseases.²⁸⁸ Such observation of diseases healed by Rev. OB substantiates the assertion of John Kwasi Fosu in his work: *Experiences of Pneumatic Phenomena in Contemporary Ghanaian Christianity as Appropriations of 1. Cor 12-14: A Critical Analysis* who he referred to a medical doctor who claimed to have witnessed and verified the healing power of Rev. OB as he healed diseases of various nature.²⁸⁹ It could be inferred from the above that, such beliefs about illnesses and diseases by the neo-prophetics are grounded in their traditional worldview and such beliefs are common among the Akan people of Ghana. This has been projected by Atiemo as being referred to by the Akan as *sunsumu yadee* (spiritual disease).²⁹⁰

In his book: *Dealing with afflictions*, the prophet made it known that afflictions such as sickness and disease are tools used by the enemy to suppress the lives of the believer.²⁹¹ Bible verses such as Ephesians 6:12 (For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places) were quoted to support the above claim. This supposed enemy (principalities) is regarded as the devil and his demonic agents comprising evil spirits and witchcraft who inflict health-related problems on people through food eaten in dreams, ancestral or family curse, spells, and curse from offending someone. Rev OB also asserted that a sinful lifestyle opens the individual up to be inflicted with diseases by evil spirits.²⁹² Sins such as fornication, adultery, pornography, false witness, and many other sinful behaviours were said to make the individual vulnerable to the attacks of the enemy. He cautioned believers to strive to live a righteous life and base their hope on the word of

²⁸⁸ Gabriel Appiah, Field Work, Personal observation 31 December, 2019, Moment of Glory Prayer Army Efinase-Kumasi.

²⁸⁹ Fosu, *Experiences of Pneumatic Phenomena*, 252-523.

²⁹⁰ Atiemo, "Mmusuyi and Deliverance," 22-23

²⁹¹ Isaac Osei-Bonsu, *Dealing with Afflictions* (Kumasi: MOGPA Publications, 2015), 10-11.

²⁹² Isaac Osei-Bonsu, *Spiritual Marriage* (Kumasi: MOGPA Publication, 2013), 1-6.

God (Bible) and the promises of God.²⁹³ Notwithstanding this, he also clarified to members that afflictions and infirmities do not only occur to sinful individuals and that Christians also suffer from afflictions such as health-related problems (diseases). Thus, prayer becomes the major tool to fight the enemy's afflictions such as illnesses and diseases.²⁹⁴ From the above it could be concluded that living a righteous life, dwelling on the word of God and being prayerful are the major requirement by Rev. OB for a patient to access healing. These requirements, though not practically mandatory, were observed to be spoken of by Rev. OB almost every time he preached or led prayer sessions with adherents.²⁹⁵

Besides, I observed during my study with MOGPA that, prayer formed the greater part of their activities. For one could not be a Mogparian and not pray, and in fact, prayer constituted all aspects of their healing services.²⁹⁶ There is also what is called 'red hot prayer' where Rev. OB during service led members in vigorous prayers and prophetic declarations. Examples of such prophetic declarations which are also referred to as prayer targets among members are "As I clap my hands and pray now, I soak myself in the blood of Jesus for my healing and health in Jesus name"²⁹⁷ or members could also repeat after the prophet this declaration "As I clap my hands and pray, any wicked powers and personalities working against my body, die with your dirty works in Jesus' name."²⁹⁸ This declaration prayer suggested that the 'principalities' that the neo-prophetic referred to in

²⁹³ Osei-Bonsu, *Dealing with Afflictions*, 10-12.

²⁹⁴ Osei-Bonsu, *Dealing with Afflictions*, 10-11.

²⁹⁵ Gabriel Appiah, Field Work, Personal Observation 31 December, 2019, Moment of Glory Prayer Army, Anane Boateng Sport Stadium-Abrenkasa, Kumasi.

²⁹⁶ Gabriel Appiah, Field Work, Personal Observation 31 December, 2019, Moment of Glory Prayer Army, Anane Boateng Sport Stadium-Abrenkasa, Kumasi.

²⁹⁷ Gabriel Appiah, Field Work, Personal Observation 25 December, 2019, Moment of Glory Prayer Army, Cultural Centre-Kumasi.

²⁹⁸ Gabriel Appiah, Field Work, Personal Observation 25 December, 2019, Moment of Glory Prayer Army, Cultural Centre-Kumasi.

Ephesians 6:12 do not include only evil spirits but also human entities that are used as a medium by such numinous powers to cause inflictions and infirmities on believers. It could be argued that such types of declaration prayers form consonance with Omenyo and Atiemo projections that, the neo-prophetic based on their African (Akan) worldview theologises the biblical enemy to include human characters who are envious of their progress, spread gossip, and use witchcraft or evil (juju) to undermine their health²⁹⁹

Healing by the prophet of MOGPA by observation mostly takes the form of prayer and the use of healing tokens which were coded as 'directions' or locally known as *akwankyere* (spiritual direction). Though the prophet does lay hand on the sick sometimes, these two are the most frequently recognised modes of his healing. Throughout my observation at MOGPA, I rarely saw the prophet laying hands on the sick although there were instances when the sick was exorcised. The prophet needed verification concerning specific healing testimony such as the sick being a minor (child) or paralysed. Even with these instances, it was observed that the prophet only touched foreheads of adherents or tapped them on the shoulders and said to them "It is well".³⁰⁰ Healing items included fruits (usually apples), salt, soap, water, communion wine, olive or burgess oil, cream, honey, milk, perfume and whatever item the adherents deemed appropriate were sometimes brought to the healing services to be blessed by the prophet.³⁰¹ There were specific healing services where the prophet gave a general spiritual direction to all the members. Adherents during a particular healing service might be asked to attend the service with fruits and in such circumstances

²⁹⁹ Omenyo and Atiemo, "Claiming Religious Space," 62.

³⁰⁰ Gabriel Appiah, Field Work, Personal Observation 28 February, 2020, Moment of Glory Prayer Army, Anane Boateng Sport Stadium-Abrenkasa, Kumasi.

³⁰¹ Gabriel Appiah, Field Work, Personal Observation 28 February, 2020, Moment of Glory Prayer Army, Anane Boateng Sport Stadium-Abrenkasa, Kumasi.

the service is labelled as 'Fruit direction service.' There is also soap, salt, toffees, milk or honey direction depending on what item the prophet recommended them to bring.³⁰²

In cases where there were no general directives from the prophet, adherents came to healing service with items such as salt, water, oil, communion wine or whatever items they preferred to be blessed by the prophet.³⁰³ These healing items were also sold by hawkers for a little extra cost at their (church) premises to adherents who might not be aware of the directives. These items were lifted during the prayer sessions or after the prayer sessions and were blessed by the prophet. It must be said that during my interaction and studies at the various healing services, I witnessed some adherents who fetched the sand or applied the dust from the prayer ground at Abrankese premises to their affected part believing to have a spiritual potency to heal them.³⁰⁴ In one other instance after an all-night service, I observed that most adherents would reach the fountain at the church premises either to wash their face or take a sip before leaving to their various destinations, for it is a popular belief among the adherents that the water in the fountain was blessed water that had the potency to relieve them from their problems (including health issues).³⁰⁵ It is a common perception among followers of MOGPA that various premises or places of worship were holy places and should, therefore, consider such places of worship as sacred, hence the things therein were believed to possess divine power to heal. It is through these declarative prayers, the use of healing or miracle items, and laying on of hands that the healer healed patients who resorted to him for healing.

³⁰² Gabriel Appiah, Field Work, Personal Observation 28 February, 2020, Moment of Glory Prayer Army, Anane Boateng Sport Stadium-Abrenkesa, Kumasi.

³⁰³ Gabriel Appiah, Field Work, Personal Observation 27 September, 2019, Moment of Glory Prayer Army, Independence Square Accra.

³⁰⁴ Gabriel Appiah, Field Work, Personal Observation 31 December, 2019, Moment of Glory Prayer Army, Anane Boateng Sport Stadium-Abrenkasa, Kumasi.

³⁰⁵ Gabriel Appiah, Field Work, Personal Observation 31 January, 2020, Moment of Glory Prayer Army, Efinase-Kumasi.

Healing of the sick by the prophet could occur at any point in time; individuals could experience healing through radio ministration, praying along with the prophet on a live stream or recorded healing service on television and at prayer grounds or places where they gathered for healing services. This was evident during my study as I had observed a series of testimonies of healing experiences that some individuals claimed to have encountered through MOGPA's radio ministration, and TV programmes, as well as personally participating in their various healing services.³⁰⁶ This affirmed that there was no special time or occasion for healing at MOGPA, one could experience healing even in the comfort of one's home. However, it is a common maxim among the prophet and the 'Mogparians' that Christians should fight for what is rightly theirs in the kingdom of God.³⁰⁷ Biblical passages such as Matthew 11:12 "And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffered violence, and the violent take it by force" was frequently quoted to support their maxim. Based on such beliefs, members preferred to attend healing services in person if possible, resulting in extremely large number of congregants at each healing service and gathering.

4.2.1 Patients and their Relatives

A Chicago-based Ghanaian businessman by the name Opong Matthew, in an interview, revealed that he fell ill and did not know what was wrong with him. He claimed to have trivialised his illness because he had been fit and healthy only to wake up and feel unwell. He expressed that what had seemed to him as a stomach upset caused by indigestion further

³⁰⁶ Gabriel Appiah, Field Work, Personal Observation 31 December, 2019, Moment of Glory Prayer Army, Anane Boateng Sport Stadium-Abrenkasa, Kumasi.

³⁰⁷ Gabriel Appiah, Field Work, Personal Observation 31 December, 2019, Moment of Glory Prayer Army, Anane Boateng Sport Stadium-Abrenkasa, Kumasi.

became severe.³⁰⁸ Oppong claimed that his condition became worse as he got dehydrated and saw blood stains in his stool frequently. After examining him, the hospital could not diagnose him of any sickness. He claimed the doctor expressed that the cause of his illness was unknown medically. Oppong Matthew narrated that it was upon preparing to come to Ghana to deal with some business problems that a few well-wishers advised him to visit MOGPA healing service. He claimed it was illogical to him initially, but he later yielded to the advice because even in Ghana his condition worsened, and he lost weight drastically.³⁰⁹ He claimed that with his worsened health condition, coupled with business issues, he decided to give MOGPA a 'try' since the medical profession in Ghana could not diagnose him of any particular sickness. He articulated it was on the November 22 all night service that the prophet in one of his declarations said, "any disease that has been placed on you by the enemy to destroy your business die by fire." He claimed to have instantly felt that some sort of water had been poured on him, stepping back from the crowd to examine himself, he realised he was not soaked.³¹⁰

Matthew expressed in an interview that two months after his healing encounter at the Abrankase all night, he no longer experienced any form of pains in his stomach, he did not become dehydrated anymore, no longer saw blood in his stool and that was when he believed he had been healed completely with a few weight gain here and there.³¹¹ Matthew claimed to have come to the Efinase service just to thank Rev. OB for being such a blessing to him before he returned to the US. However, upon meeting him, Rev. OB revealed to him that the caretaker of his car business had cast a spell on him to kill him so he could take over his car business in Ghana.³¹² He claimed Rev. OB disclosed to him that the chain

³⁰⁸ Matthew Oppong, interview, 31 January, 2020, Moment of Glory Prayer Army, Efinase-Kumasi.

³⁰⁹ Matthew Oppong, interview, 31 January, 2020, Moment of Glory Prayer Army, Efinase-Kumasi.

³¹⁰ Matthew Oppong, interview, 31 January, 2020, Moment of Glory Prayer Army, Efinase-Kumasi.

³¹¹ Matthew Oppong, interview, 31 January, 2020, Moment of Glory Prayer Army, Efinase-Kumasi.

³¹² Matthew Oppong, interview, 31 January, 2020, Moment of Glory Prayer Army, Efinase-Kumasi.

which was gifted by the caretaker was taken to Benin for rituals before given it out to him as a gift. He posited he was advised by Rev. OB not to wear any necklace until his Christian life had properly developed in righteousness. Mr. Oppong attested in an interview that the caretaker gifted him a gold necklace in 2018 when he was in Ghana. However, he almost forgot about it until in October 2019 when he was planning to come back when he remembered Astu, his caretaker's gift and wore it.³¹³

Oppong's claim of being healed of this mysterious and unexplainable sickness was confirmed by his daughter, Abena Agyeiwaa, who complained that the family were seriously worried about the father's condition, especially when a hospital in the States could not even diagnose the problem.³¹⁴ She claimed the father had been healed completely because ever since the father encountered the numinous power at the all-night, the family had seen improvement in his health. The father no longer took in ORS, he started driving around on his own, did not have diarrhoea anymore and started gaining weight. Agyeiwaa further affirmed that the father weighed 46kg when he got to Ghana and 41kg prior to his religious experience, however, the father weighed 51kg barely two months after his healing experience.³¹⁵ Abena Agyeiwaa's view was corroborated by one of the father's drivers by named Obubeng Amos who accompanied them to the church. He expressed that before Oppong's healing encounter, one could notice that he looked pale and awfully weak all the time. However, he had regained back his strength and even his weight had improved making him look lively and cheerful.³¹⁶

³¹³ Matthew Oppong, interview, 31 January, 2020, Moment of Glory Prayer Army, Efinase-Kumasi.

³¹⁴ Abena Agyeiwaa, interview, 31 January, 2020, Moment of Glory Prayer Army, Efinase-Kumasi.

³¹⁵ Abena Agyeiwaa, interview, 31 January, 2020, Moment of Glory Prayer Army, Efinase-Kumasi.

³¹⁶ Amos Obuabeng, interview, 31 January, 2020, Moment of Glory Prayer Army, Efinase-Kumasi.

In another healing instance at MOGPA, Mr. Christopher Mante claimed to have been healed from diabetes.³¹⁷ The man narrated that he had a sore on his left toe that would not heal for a longer period. He explained that he had taken it for granted and had not even given it much attention because the sore was not painful at the initial stage. However, with time the sore kept spreading and became awfully painful, so he went to the hospital for the sore to be dressed. Upon examination by the medical professionals, he was told he had diabetes.³¹⁸ Mante explained that he refused the medical report and resorted to MOGPA. He claimed to have engaged in the MOGPA radio prayer ministration which was aired on MOGPA radio for two consecutive times then later had the opportunity to visit the Abrankese all night.³¹⁹

Mr. Mante said that prior to the all-night service, there were two major directives from Rev. OB: a). members of MOGPA were asked to fast from Wednesday to Friday (till 12noon) if possible; b). Adherents were also asked to come along with any fruit of their choice to the 'all-night service' of which he obliged and went with an apple.³²⁰ He further expressed that during the all night prayers, he repeated series of prayer declarations after Rev. OB of one of which was, "By the speaking blood of Jesus as I pray and clap my hands, evil spirits behind my problems, I cast you out in the name of Jesus."³²¹ Mante's expression concerning the various prayer declarations (prayer targets) was observed throughout my studies at MOGPA. Adherents were made to repeat such prayers word for word after the prophet then pray on such declarations as prayer targets for about ten minutes.³²² Mante said that Rev. OB blessed the apple after the service which he ate instantly. Mante claimed

³¹⁷ Christopher Mante, interview, 31 December, 2020, Moment of Glory Prayer Army, Efinase-Kumasi.

³¹⁸ Christopher Mante, interview, 31 December, 2020.

³¹⁹ Christopher Mante, interview, 31 December, 2020.

³²⁰ Christopher Mante, interview, 31 December, 2020.

³²¹ Christopher Mante, interview, 31 December, 2020.

³²² Gabriel Appiah, Field work, Personal observation 28 February, 2020, Moment of Glory Prayer Army, Anne Boateng Sport Stadium-Abrenkasa, Kumasi.

to have seen the manifestation of the prayer declarations and the eating of the blessed apple fruit a week later, when he realised that the sore on his toe was shrinking until it was completely healed. When asked whether he had verified at the hospital that he had been cured of his disease, he vehemently argued that it was the painful sore on the foot that made him go to the hospital and led to the subsequent diagnosis. However, if the sore had healed for the past two months after the prayer and the *akwanyere* at MOGPA without any medication, it testified that he was completely healed.³²³

The wife of this man, Mavis Tawiah, confirmed that the man developed a sore on the foot which was later said to have been caused by diabetes. However, after joining MOGPA prayer ministrations and the subsequent fruit *akwanyere* (spiritual direction), the sore completely healed without any form of medication.³²⁴ The view of the man's wife was corroborated by an elderly woman by the name Paulina Mensah who identified herself as the mother-in-law to the man. She affirmed that she had recommended MOGPA to the son-in-law, for the God of MOGPA never failed and that was why she had been a mogparian since 2015. She attested that the son-in-law had a sore on the foot that never healed and complained a couple of times about numbness. However, after the fruit *akwanyere*, the sore was completely healed, and he did not complain of numbness anymore.³²⁵

Furthermore, in the case of Rev. OB as a healer, a female adherent called Ellinam Ama Tei, claimed to have been healed from epilepsy. She testified that she had first become aware of her condition (convulsions) at the age of ten years when she experienced grand mal seizures. Unfortunately, this type of seizure rather became frequent especially during her early teen and as an adult. She affirmed that her condition posed embarrassing moments

³²³ Christopher Mante, interview, 31 December, 2020.

³²⁴ Mavis Tawiah, interview, 31 December, 2020, Moment of Glory Prayer Army, Moment of Glory Prayer Army, Efinase-Kumasi.

³²⁵ Paulina Mensah, interview, 31 December, 2020, Moment of Glory Prayer Army, Efinase-Kumasi.

for her, especially through her high school education as well as her adulthood when she desired a stable relationship and marriage. She pointed out during her testimony that the difficulty in having a stable relationship, coupled with the embarrassment, neglect, and rejection by people whom she loved and those around her because of her condition, made her suicidal.³²⁶ It was in her desperation of seeking hope in times of her hopelessness that she encountered the MOGPA prayer group.

When asked in an interview why she did not resort to medication, she elucidated that she resorted to medication but such anti-epilepsy medication only reduced the seizure and could not prevent or control the seizure mostly around her time of menstruation.³²⁷ She expressed that around that period of the month, she experienced multiply seizures that made her go through inhuman pain and embarrassment, making her feel the medication was of no use to her. She consequently got fed up with it and discontinued the use of the drugs because her condition did not improve. She claimed to have prayed to the God of MOGPA during the healing service to redeem her from such embarrassment (disease). She also claimed to have acquired items such as water, salt, oil, and communion wine which she lifted to be blessed by Rev. OB.³²⁸ This blessing of tokens is a very popular practice by Rev. OB. He usually asked adherents to lift whatever token they came to the church with and then he prayed over these tokens (as discussed above). Adherents claimed the spiritual efficacy of these blessed tokens could not be compromised. Adherents who even engaged in the healing services via TV and radio claimed to have engaged in such practices by lifting their various items to be blessed by the prophet and shared their testimonies about the implication and spiritual potency of the blessed tokens.³²⁹ Mostly such blessed tokens

³²⁶ Ellinam Tei, Testimony, interview, 31 January, 2020, Moment of Glory Prayer Army, Efinase-Kumasi.

³²⁷ Ellinam Tei, interview, 31 January, 2020.

³²⁸ Ellinam Tei, interview, 31 January, 2020, Moment of Glory Prayer Army.

³²⁹ Gabriel Appiah, Field work, Personal observation, 31 December, 2019, Moment of Glory Prayer Army, Anne Boateng Sport Stadium-Abrenkasa, Kumasi.

were used by adherents based on their own discretion. The woman claimed to have drunk the water and the communion wine for a couple of weeks. She attested to have used the oil to anoint her forehead every morning and evening as well as putting a bit of the blessed salt in her water to bathe.³³⁰

Ellinam further verified in an interview that she had not experienced any form of seizure since she used those healing tokens for *akwankyere*, not even during her time of menstruation and for that matter, she was completely healed in Jesus' name.³³¹ Her argument was that previously; she could have recurring seizures around the time of her menses. However, she did not experience any form of seizure or loss of consciousness anymore after the *akwankyere* which implied that she had been healed. She proclaimed that she had not experienced a seizure for the past 8 months and clarified that the symptoms of epilepsy were very evident. She debated that once she did not experience any form of seizure anymore, it was no longer a medical problem in her view.³³² Throughout my time at the church, I did not witness the loss of consciousness during Ms Tei's testimony and my subsequent interview with her and the relatives. I however realised that she could be absent-minded for a while and later ask me to repeat what I said. Also, her left fingers were keenly observed to be jerking or twitching for about 30 to 40 seconds continuously.³³³ This observation was uncertain as to whether the jerking and twitching of two of her left fingers plus, being absent-minded sometimes for while was also a form of seizure that she failed to recognise.

³³⁰ Ellinam Tei, Testimony, 31, January, 2020.

³³¹ Ellinam Tei, Testimony, 31, January, 2020.

³³² Ellinam Tei, Testimony, 31, January, 2020.

³³³ Gabriel Appiah, Field work, Personal Observation, 31, January, 2020, Moment of Glory Prayer Army, Efinase-Kumasi.

Ellinam's proclamation was verified by a woman who identified herself as Auntie Joyce Enam. Auntie Enam claimed to have raised her. It is this Auntie Enam who testified that Ama's condition was discovered as a little girl due to the excessive jerking of arms, legs, and stiffened body, including her loss of consciousness.³³⁴ The auntie claimed that Ama might not have fully understood or become aware of her condition until the age of ten. She corroborated that the use of the healing items had stopped the seizure and that she was very surprised that she had not experienced any loss of consciousness for the past eight months.³³⁵ Auntie Enam's assertion that Ama had been healed was also affirmed by Philip Tei, the father, who expressed that his daughter's condition was critical and that for the seizures to cease for the past eight months was nothing less than a miracle from God.³³⁶ He further pointed out and showed me the scars on his daughter's body, wearing a sad face and expressing the protracted suffering of his daughter in the hands of the 'enemy'.³³⁷ I observed that Ama Tei had a scar and multiple rug burns on her hand, legs and face.³³⁸ She also showed me a deep scar burn on her back that testified that she had had seizures in the past years.

4.2.2 Prayer and Fasting Group

In MOGPA, adherents resort to prayers all the time since prayer is the actual foundation of the movement. Members (Mogparians) were admonished by the founder to pray without ceasing. According to Matilda Ofosuhene, members prayed and fasted for both the spiritual and the physical growth of the church. Furthermore, she articulated that prayer activated

³³⁴ Joyce Enam, interview, 31, January, 2020, Moment of Glory Prayer Army, Efinase-Kumasi.

³³⁵ Joyce Enam, interview, 31, January, 2020, Moment of Glory Prayer Army, Efinase-Kumasi.

³³⁶ Philip Tei, interview, 31, January, 2020, Moment of Glory Prayer Army, Efinase-Kumasi.

³³⁷ Philip Tei, interview, 31, January, 2020, Moment of Glory Prayer Army, Efinase-Kumasi.

³³⁸ Gabriel Appiah, Field Work, Personal Observation, 31, January, 2020, Efinase-Kumasi.

healing miracles that were witnessed in the church hence without prayer and fasting, much could not be achieved by the prophet with regards to healing.³³⁹ Matilda's view was corroborated by Sarah Lartey as she expressed in an interview that prayer and fasting had sustained the healing ministration of the prophet since 2011, and that it was through prayer that the healer had attained his current spiritual heights that had him known for his healing powers around the globe.³⁴⁰

Besides, she expressed that the healing and deliverance that was done by the prophet attracted a lot of attacks (both physical and spiritual) from the demonic world since their wish is to take people captive with diseases and other spiritual-related problems. Sarah Lartey emphasised that the duty of the prayer and fasting group is that they pray to ward off any pending attacks of the enemy against the man of God or the members of the church. She gave instances where the church suffered bad mouthing and twisted information about the founder, which she claimed were the works of the devil to destroy the church; but with fasting and prayers, such plans of the devil could not affect the founder.³⁴¹ She explained in an interview that peace of mind made the prophet to function effectively in his healing ministration and it was imperative for them to pray and fast to ward off anything that hindered the prophet from carrying out his healing activities.³⁴² She also gave an instance where the group prayed and fasted for a successful healing program, and testifying that in some cases the group went to the occasion grounds where the healing service would take

³³⁹ Matilda Ofosuhene, interview, 28 February, 2020, Moment of Glory Prayer Army, Anane Boateng Sport Stadium-Abrenkesa, Kumasi.

³⁴⁰ Sarah Lartey, interview, 28 February, 2020, Moment of Glory Prayer Army, Anane Boateng Sport Stadium-Abrenkesa, Kumasi.

³⁴¹ Sarah Lartey, interview, 28 February, 2020, Moment of Glory Prayer Army, Anane Boateng Sport Stadium-Abrenkesa, Kumasi.

³⁴² Sarah Lartey, interview, 28 February, 2020, Moment of Glory Prayer Army, Anane Boateng Sport Stadium-Abrenkesa, Kumasi.

place, to pray for a successful programme before the service commenced.³⁴³ The above assertion that prayer and fasting is the foundation of the MOGPA group was evident during my study with the group. It was observed among adherents that the term ‘Ablaze for God’ was synonymous to pray rigorously. A popular belief among the MOGPA group is that the Christian is in a constant battle with the enemy and that the believer cannot live a victorious life in Christ if they are not willing to engage the enemy in warfare (prayer).³⁴⁴

4.2.3 Song Ministration Group

Song ministration was a key component of the healing ministration of Rev. Isaac Osei Bonsu. Throughout my studies at the church, I observed that there was not a single time that the prophet engaged in healing ministration without songs. The prophet seemed to be a good singer himself and normally interfered the healing ministration with songs and such songs were backed up by the choir. Songs that were observed to have been sung during healing ministration included ones that depicted hope, encouragement, overcoming one’s enemy and the power of Christ as a healer.³⁴⁵

Fustian Abbey a member of the choir ministration as well as the MOGPA Mass Choir, in an interview explained that song ministration during healing service caused the adherent to be attentive and focused in church.³⁴⁶ Her argument was that most people who sought healing from the church were discouraged and overwhelmed by their problems, hence were mostly not focused. They normally slept off during healing services and that it was the

³⁴³ Sarah Lartey, interview, 28 February, 2020, Moment of Glory Prayer Army, Anane Boateng Sport Stadium-Abrenkesa, Kumasi.

³⁴⁴ Isaac Osei-Bonsu, *Breaking of Curses* (Kumasi: MOGPA Publication, 2020), 9-11.

³⁴⁵ Gabriel Appiah, Field Work, Personal Observation, 31, January, 2020, Efinase-Kumasi.

³⁴⁶ Fustina Abbey, interview, 31, January, 2020, Moment of Glory Prayer Army, Efinase-Kumasi.

song ministration that made them attentive and enforced such individuals to participate in the prayers and various prophetic declarations uttered by the prophet. She cited an instance where some adherents slept off at Abrankesa 'All night service' and argued that in some cases the ushers were not even able to control them to participate in the prayers.³⁴⁷ She, however, advanced her point that the song ministration was the only means that revived or kept adherents' alertness to prayer and follow prophetic declaration and *akwanyere* that are directed by the prophet. Abbey claimed that song ministration during healing services invigorated the adherents because worship songs always brought hope and encouragement which reassure them of the healing power of Christ Jesus.³⁴⁸ Abbey's view on their contribution of the song ministration to the healing of the prophet was corroborated by Mireku Eric, who expressed that the song ministration kept the adherents attentive and active in the church because it served as a source of entertainment. Mireku argued that it was the entertainment of the soul of the adherents through worship songs that enabled them to connect spiritually to God (numinous power) in order to assess their needs, be it healing and health-related problems.³⁴⁹ Mireku further cited Bible passages such as Joshua 6:1-21 to support his assertion that worship or song ministration could serve as a medium through which God performs miracles.

It could be inferred from the views above that song ministration contributed to the attainment of healing miracles of adherents. This argument is deduced from the views of Abbey and Mireku which exhibited that worship songs sang during healing services provided an intra (among congregants) and inter(personal) subjective entry points where adherents encountered paranormal experiences. I confirm that during my fieldwork and

³⁴⁷ Fustina Abbey, interview, 31, January, 2020, Moment of Glory Prayer Army, Efinase-Kumasi.

³⁴⁸ Fustina Abbey, interview, 31, January, 2020, Moment of Glory Prayer Army, Efinase-Kumasi.

³⁴⁹ Eric Mireku, interview, 31, January, 2020, Moment of Glory Prayer Army, Efinase-Kumasi.

stay at the church, I encountered a participatory paranormal experience. In this encounter, while the song ministration and prayers were ongoing the prophet gave a word of declaration, ‘lay your hands on your stomach, every food that I ate in my dreams receive fire and come out now by fire in the name of Jesus.’³⁵⁰ After this declaration, I observed that most of the congregants were vomiting. The question which preoccupied me at that moment was, ‘what kind of performance or fakery is this?’ Just as I was observing and asking myself these questions, I also began to throw up. I tried to stop it by clenching my jaws and mouth but could not help it so I ran to the gents to avoid embarrassing myself. This happened to me intermittently just like the other adherents had experienced. I did not understand the experience initially and I felt it was a coincidence, but the recurrence made me conclude such an experience as being a participatory consciousness which could not be understood by the logic of core science, rather, an inter-subjective entry point is needed with spirituality which was mediated by the prophet.

When asked in an interview about their impression of the healing that took place at MOGPA, both respondents said that the healing experiences differed from one adherent to the other and that these differences in the healing experiences of the patient did not in any way suggest that such experiences were not authentic. They gave instances where patients experienced miraculous healing through the use of blessed items. Other patients got healed through prayers while others were healed through worship and song ministration which is not within the spectrum of the ordinary hence making it difficult to understand. It could be argued from the above assertion that the fact that certain healing experiences do not appeal to one’s logical and empirical senses does not suppose such experiences are untrue,

³⁵⁰ Gabriel Appiah, Field Work, Personal Observation, 31, January, 2020, Efinase-Kumasi.

for healing experiences or an encounter with the numinous is experienced on a pan-human level.

4.2.4 Summary

The Moment of Glory Prayer Army is a non-denominational prayer group headed by Rev. Isaac Osei-Bonsu, who is popularly called Rev OB and affectionately referred to as ‘The Man of Prayer’, ‘Prayer Papa’ and ‘The Servant of God.’ These acronyms are given to him based on his revivalist nature, serving as the petitioner or medium of a numinous power to set people free from the captivity of the ‘enemy’. The enemy in their view comprises Satan, evil spirits and real human beings who were used as a medium by Satan and agents (evil spirits) to cause harm. An example includes human beings regarded as witches or wizards, people who use evil magic or juju to cast spells/curse and misfortunes in the lives of the believer. To deal with these enemies and their related afflictions and infirmities that cause believers to suffer, Mogparians (name derived from MOGPA, to mean members of the group MOGPA) engage in what they referred to as warfare (rigorous prayer sessions) to break themselves loose from the bondages of these enemies and to assess healing to their infirmities and diseases.

It is a common belief among this group that diseases that are caused by these evil spirits cannot be treated or cured through medication. These diseases comprise strange or unexplainable sicknesses or medically known diseases that defy all known scientific treatments or cures. To them, such diseases can only be cured by accessing the divine intervention of God, of which the Prophet OB is the petitioner or medium to such bearer of the numinous power- (if you like God). The healing of such diseases by Rev. OB could

occur during healing service or prayer sessions through the gathering of adherents at a particular meeting place or through radio or TV ministrations. During healing service, a patient could be healed through laying on of hands by the prophet, spoken words which are commonly referred to by prophetic ministries as prayer declarations and the use of healing items which is culturally referred to as *akwankyere* in the Ghanaian traditional prognosis.

The healing ministration of the prophet was backed by fasting and prayer, as well as song ministration. Adherents claimed to engage in fasting and prayer to repel the attacks of the enemy on the movement and the healer. It is claimed that prayer and fasting help access God's divine will to heal sick patients through the Prophet OB. Also, the song ministration is said to bring hope and encouragement to the sufferers whose ill-health condition have rendered them hopeless, for it is through the spiritual encouragement and upliftment of the patient's spirit and state of mind that some patients are healed through worship. It is a common believe among the Mogparians that the God of MOGPA heals completely though it is evident from the above discussions that some healings are a gradual process.

Notwithstanding this evidence, it could be argued that the mere fact that some patients heal within a space of time does not nullify their claim that the 'God of MOGPA heals completely, because to the adherents, healing completely means the disease is totally remedied'.

4.3 Case Three: Daniel Obinim of the International God's Way Ministry

Daniel Obinim, one of the most popular healing prophets in Ghana, is the founder and general overseer of the International God's Way Ministry. The Prophet Obinim in a sermon claimed that his call by God into ministry was confirmed by the late 'Sofu' Amoako of the

Resurrection Power and Living Bread even when he was in the mother's womb.³⁵¹ He further claimed that Amoako prophesied to the mother during pregnancy that she will bore a son who will be a great man of God.³⁵² The church had four main recognised branches in Ghana, until the breakaway and renaming of one of the branches of the Church as the Divine Heaven Gate Church International by an associate Prophet Victor Quarm, who oversaw the then Cape Coast Branch. Currently, there were three main recognised branches in Ghana, which comprise the Kumasi branch (headquarters) located at Kenyase-Bosore, the Accra branch at Madina Ashaley-Botwe and the Tema Branch which is also located at Community 9 street. These three main branches of Obinim's International God's Way Church in Ghana are studied by Isaac Forson Adjei, Thomas Oduro-Kwarteng and Victoria Nana Poku Frimpong in their work: "The rhetoric of commercial prophets in Ghana: A case study of bishop Daniel Obinim and reverend Obofour".³⁵³

The prophet, in a sermon, said growing up was challenging due to financial constraints, and this impeded him from furthering his education after the Junior High School level. He also claimed that though he was a footballer, his interest in the work of God made him to focus more on evangelism later in his life.³⁵⁴ The healer further in his sermon posited that he did not give up on God's work even when life was 'tough and rough', he stated to his adherents that he started his church in a public school classroom with about 10 members.³⁵⁵

³⁵¹ Gabriel Appiah, Field Work, Personal Observation, 14, December, 2021, International God's Way Church, Tema-Community9.

³⁵² Gabriel Appiah, Field Work, Personal Observation, 14, December, 2021, International God's Way Church, Tema-Community9.

³⁵³ Isaac Forson Adjei, Thomas Oduro-kwarteng, and Victoria Nana Poku Frimpong. "The Rhetoric of Commercial Prophets in Ghana: A Case Study of Bishop Daniel Obinim and Reverend Obofour," *Journal of Religious and Theological Studies* 5, no.3 (2019): 94.

³⁵⁴ Gabriel Appiah, Field Work, Personal Observation, 14, December, 2021, International God's Way Church, Tema-Community9.

³⁵⁵ Gabriel Appiah, Field Work, Personal Observation, 14, December, 2021, International God's Way Church, Tema-Community9.

He based on his struggles in his early career as an evangelist to encourage members not to give up in life no matter the situation, for God has a purpose for every person.³⁵⁶

Major healing services were held in these various branches of the International God's Way Ministry on specific days; the Kumasi branch was noted for its Sunday healing service, while the Accra branch was on Thursdays and the Tema healing service was organised on Tuesdays. The prophet claimed to heal all kinds of diseases and it was observed that usually, the prophet in his closing remarks after a healing service challenged the audience and members to bring people who were suffering from specific diseases and could not be cured to his church. Diseases that were observed to have been brought to the prophet for healing included diabetes, stroke, swollen stomach or body, infertility, mental sickness, paralysis, elephantiasis, blindness, and asthma. Apart from such observed diseases that were brought to the church, the healer claimed in a sermon he had the power from Jesus to heal every disease including kidney, heart, HIV-related diseases and any other diseases that could not be cured by medical professionals.³⁵⁷ Popularly acclaimed miraculous healing of HIV positive patients by the prophet were the cases of Rahinatu Ibrahim, Mariama, Iddrius, Elivis Kwarteng and Rose Agbavor who are easily referred to by adherents or the church on their Facebook and 'YouTube' pages as evidence of the healing power that has been bestowed on the prophet by God. It must be emphasised that such individuals had their various medical results showing they were currently HIV negative after being prayed for by the prophet, such medical reports were fronted on the church's Facebook and YouTube pages. I could not independently verify their claim of being healed from such disease in the sense that, I could not access such individuals during the time of my research

³⁵⁶ Gabriel Appiah, Field Work, Personal Observation, 14, December, 2021, International God's Way Church, Tema-Community9.

³⁵⁷ Gabriel Appiah, Field Work, Personal Observation, 28, October, 2021, International God's Way Church, Accra- Ashaley-Botwe, Madina

with the church. Besides, it was only the medical reports that stated that they were HIV negative, which was posted on the church page, without the previous medical results that confirmed such individuals as HIV positive.

According to the prophet such diseases were caused by several factors including personal sins which sometimes manifest as punishment from a particular deity, a curse for wronging someone or engaging in an abominable act. The lifestyle of the individual was also acknowledged to have been a cause for sickness and demonic causation of disease which is a major belief in the church.³⁵⁸ It could be deduced from the above that the perspective of the prophet on the causes of diseases is mostly influenced by his African (Akan) view on the causes of diseases which is elaborated in the words of Peter White in his work: "The Concept of Diseases and Health Care in African Traditional Religion in Ghana," as he stressed that there are several ways the traditional African people explain or understand the causes of diseases.³⁵⁹ The prophet in a sermon further emphasised that demons (evil forces) are the cause of human woes (from health-related problems to daily struggles in life), he asserted that individuals who engage in a sinful act, or live an unworthy lifestyle are all manipulated and influenced by evil spirits in order to cause destruction. Such assertion of the prophet is corroborated by Peter White as he posited that the African Traditional society often points to evil forces or bad spirits as the causes of disease.³⁶⁰ The prophet to buttress his point that human activities are mostly influenced by the spirit world, referred to the original sin (Genesis 3: 1-7) to explain how the devil influenced man to

³⁵⁸Prophet Daniel Obinim, interview, 28, October, 2021, International God's Way Church, Accra- Ashaley-Botwe, Madina.

³⁵⁹ White, "The Concept of Diseases," 1-4.

³⁶⁰ White, "The Concept of Diseases," 3.

disobey God. He also pointed out instances in the Bible such as 1 John 3:8 and John 10:10 to illuminate the influence of demons in the lives of humans.³⁶¹

Healing of the sick by the prophet, as I observed during my stay at the church and throughout the interviews, did not require any specific conditions before the sick could get healed. There was however, the emergency counselling session, this counselling session is a one-on-one consultation with the prophet and individuals who feel their problems need immediate attention of the prophet. The process for such counselling (consultation) involves paying money in support of running the church. The amount of money one offers determines the type of anointing oil they receive, though it is claimed that all the types of oil have the potency of relieving individuals from their problems be it ill-health. However, it was observed that the one-on-one counselling with the prophet was not mandatory, it was done out of the believers' own volition. This is because it was observed that there were other sick people who claimed to have been healed without seeing the prophet on a one-on-one basis.³⁶² The selling of anointing oil is not peculiar to International God's Way Church as this is confirmed in my precious study on neo-propheticism that such act is popular among some Ghanaian neo-prophetic Churches of which the Ebenezer Miracle Worship Centre is an example. The argument used in backing such act is that the money gained from 'selling' is used in taken care of the church.³⁶³ This was confirmed by Prophet Obinim as he explained that the money the church received from the consultation and selling of the

³⁶¹ Gabriel Appiah, Field Work, Personal Observation, 28, October, 2021, International God's Way Church, Accra- Ashaley-Botwe, Madina.

³⁶² Gabriel Appiah, Field Work, Personal Observation, 10, October, 2021, International God's Way Church, Kumasi- Kenyase-Bosore.

³⁶³ Gabriel, Appiah, Healing Practices among the Neo-Prophetic Groups in Ghana," 50-55.

oil was used in paying church bills, especially the television station which cost the church a lot of money³⁶⁴

Healing the sick by the prophet involved the use of items (oil, church stickers with his image imprinted on it, wrist bangle, miracle water, apple, blessed soap, toffees, drinks, sand, sugarcane, etc.) as supposedly directed by the Holy Spirit. Others include exorcism, laying on of hand, spoken word and the popular and acclaimed unverifiable means such as appearing in the dreams of the patients.³⁶⁵ The use of the healing tokens or motifs could collectively be labelled as *Akwankyere* or spiritual direction as referred to by the prophet. Such tokens are prayed over or blessed by the prophet and the patient is directed on how to apply or use them. The use of tokens or motifs is justified by referring to biblical characters such as Moses, Jesus and Paul who used items or motifs as modes of healing the sick. The prophet attested that diseases of patients who were healed through prayer or use of miracle items vanished completely without any trace.³⁶⁶ However, he cautioned that though patients whom he healed were completely cured of their illnesses, there was the need to pray and strive to lead a good life so that they would not be entangled or snared by the enemy again. Obinim backed his assertion by explaining and elaborating Matthew 12: 41-45 to his adherents in a sermon on why they should not relax in prayer when their needs (health problems) were met. He advised patients he claimed to have healed to continue to visit and worship with his church for protection and fortification against their supposed enemies.³⁶⁷ Praying and the fortification of the believer through prayer, fasting, use of

³⁶⁴ Gabriel Appiah, Field Work, Personal Observation, 10, October, 2021, International God's Way Church, Kumasi- Kenyase-Bosore.

³⁶⁵ Gabriel Appiah, Field Work, Personal Observation, 10, October, 2021, International God's Way Church, Kumasi- Kenyase-Bosore.

³⁶⁶ Gabriel Appiah, Field Work, Personal Observation, 14, December, 2021, International God's Way Church, Tema-Community9.

³⁶⁷ Gabriel Appiah, Field Work, Personal Observation, 14, December, 2021, International God's Way Church, Tema-Community9.

tokens, motifs or *akwankyere* were observed to be a common ritual in the church which was fuelled by a perspective and adage that “*se ɔtanfo no a ɔka wodo no mmre ye a, emmre wo mpaebɔ mu*” (if the enemy pursuing you is not weary, do not be weary in prayer). It could be inferred from the above that such a notion of spiritual fortification by the believers of the International God’s Way Church is derived from an amalgamation of the African traditional view of reality and the contextual interpretation of some selected biblical texts. It could be argued that there is to an extent continuity of the African belief and influence on the healing performances of the Prophet Obinim. It is this influence of the African (Akan) worldview that colours the neo-prophetic healers’ notions on what they term as an ‘incurable’ disease.

The church had specific days of worship as discussed above. However, healing miracles could occur at any point in time. There were instances (observed testimonies) that patients claimed were healed during song ministration, watching OB Television and the prophet appearing to them in their dreams to heal them from their sickness.³⁶⁸ It is inferred from the above that though the church had organised and regularised days for healing services, such normalised days for healing did not impede patients from accessing healing from the prophet since they could connect with the prophet for healing through live or recorded TV or radio programmes. Besides, the prophet could even transcendently appear in patients’ meta-physical dreams to perform healing.

³⁶⁸ Gabriel Appiah, Field Work, Personal Observation, 10, October, 2021, International God’s Way Church, Kumasi- Kenyase-Bosore.

4.3.1 Patients and their Relatives

Healing is the process of resorting to a numinous power bearer through petition or as a medium by which the numinous power bearer brings relief to the sufferer, by activating change in the situations of the sufferer mostly through a religious counter that is experienced and ascertained by the sufferer and evident to others. The Numinous Power Bearer (NPB) is petitioned, or one serves as a medium through which certain Numinous Power Bearer operates. Werner argued that the numinous power bearer could be God or even Satan.³⁶⁹ The definition of an evil or good NPB is dependent on the individual who encounters such power bearer and the ramifications of their counter. For instance, if Satan heals then Satan is considered good and compassionate to the individuals he heal.³⁷⁰

In the case of Bishop Daniel Obinim of the International God's Way Ministry as a medium of a specific numinous power bearer - if you like God. Mrs. Asmah claimed to have consulted the healer in times of her desperation for relief from her suffering. Mrs. Asmah said she had been healed of severe pains in the hip bone that caused one of her legs to be paralysed for a year and a half.³⁷¹ According to Mrs. Asmah, prior to her sickness, she had a dream in which she was bitten by a snake. She claimed to have shared her dream with her Christian friends, and one of them interpreted the snake bite in a dream to mean death or serious sickness and charged her to be prayerful. She expressed to me in an interview that exactly two weeks after such a dream she woke up one morning from bed feeling pains in a hip joint. She claimed she could barely walk that day but rather felt she would feel better and thought that the pain might have been because of her sleeping position and only

³⁶⁹ Werner Kahl, "New Testament Miracle Account in New Exegetical and Theological Perspectives, Part 2," *Trinity Journal of Church and Theology* 20, no. 2 (2020):5-18.

³⁷⁰ Kahl, "New Testament Miracle Account," 15.

³⁷¹ Florence Asmah, interview, 14, December, 2021, International God's Way Church, Tema-Community 9.

applied *aboniki* balm (a local ointment in Ghana which is a powerful pain relief) on the affected part.

Mrs. Asmah, further said that with time the pains became unbearable the bone and a burning sensation in that part of her hip which affected the leg and caused her to limp. She resorted to the hospital but after an x-ray examination, she was told that there was nothing wrong with the hip bone and only prescribed her medication to subside her pains. I could attest that Mrs. Asmah had an x-ray result from the Korle-bu Hospital suggesting her hip bone was normal and that there was nothing wrong with her hip bone.³⁷² She claimed to have sought treatment in other private hospitals that were suggested to her by friends. However, those hospitals also confirmed that nothing was wrong with her hipbone, but she continued to feel serious sensations and pains in that part of her hip that caused her to limp and even unable to walk sometimes. She again indicated that her friend who was a nurse suggested that it was a nerve problem and that there was no medication for that, “nerve problem heals on its own” so she resorted to local medications which also did not help her.³⁷³ She claimed upon recommendation by well-wishers who were members of Obinim’s church and by watching some miraculous healing of the Prophet Obinim on OB TV, she decided to resort to the prophet for healing. She articulated to have engaged in various imprecatory prayers, which is popularly known in the Ghanaian religious scene as ‘back to sender’. Florence Asmah claimed that in one instance she used the Obinim miracle water to invoke the wrath of God on every enemy involved in her afflictions, whose aim was to paralyse her completely.³⁷⁴ She attested to have named certain individuals in both

³⁷² Gabriel Appiah, Field Work, Personal Observation, 14, December, 2021, International God’s Way Church, Tema-Community9.

³⁷³ Florence Asmah, interview, 14, December, 2021, International God’s Way Church, Tema-Community9.

³⁷⁴ Florence Asmah, interview, 14, December, 2021.

her family and the husband's family that she suspected to be involved in her affliction invoking the wrath of God on them by pouring the miracle water on the ground.³⁷⁵

When the researcher asked her 'how she came up with those names of family members and whether she knew for sure that those supposed individuals were responsible for paralysing her leg, she answered by referring to a biblical quote Matthew 10:36 that explains that a man's enemy is from his or her own household. Based on such bible passage, Mrs. Asmah again explained further that for a witch or wizard, who was not related to a particular person to hurt such a person, that witch or wizard, would have to seek permission from the witches or wizards in the person's own family before they carry out their evil schemes.³⁷⁶ With such belief, she acclaimed to me that family members are definitely involved in her sickness. It could be deduced from the above that Mrs. Asmah theologised the biblical passage in Matthew 10:36 that says "And a person's enemies will be those of his own household" by referring and re-interpreting the passage to suit her context that her illness was caused by her close relatives. Also, the act of pouring miracle water by invoking the wrath of God on her supposed enemies could be likened to the pouring of libation within the traditional beliefs and practices in Ghana.

From the foregoing, it could be affirmed that the neo-prophet healers and churches had integrated traditional practices and beliefs into Christianity due to the influence of the traditional worldview on the Ghanaian Christian. Besides the invocation done with the miracle water, she claimed to have also resorted to the use of anointing oil which was also accessed from the prophet.³⁷⁷ It was observed during my study that the use of anointing oil was very common in prophet Obinim's church. Though patients or adherents seeking

³⁷⁵ Florence Asmah, interview, 14, December, 2021.

³⁷⁶ Florence Asmah, interview, 14, December, 2021.

³⁷⁷ Florence Asmah, interview, 14, December, 2021, International God's Way Church, Tema-Community9

healing or breakthrough buy such oils, it is commonly not regarded as being sold by the prophets and their associates. A common expression used with regards to the acquisition of a specific oil is that ‘ ‘ *Bebo oil afore or bo afore na gye oil* (support the work of God with an amount in exchange for anointing oil).³⁷⁸ However, each anointing oil had a specific amount of money that one is required to offer in order to access it.³⁷⁹ Such offertory for anointing oil ranges from GHS 50, 100, 200, 400 and above, it was observed that it was a common belief among adherents (both patients and people seeking welfare breakthrough) that the higher amount of money you offer to support the work of God or the church, the higher the potency of the oil given.³⁸⁰ Another common observation was that some patients or adherents offered a higher amount of money to support the church in hope of meeting with the prophet on a one-on-one basis.³⁸¹ It is worth mentioning that sometimes adherents who desired to acquire anointing oil but did not have the means were given for free. In other instances, church adherents were given anointing oil with any amount of money they so desired to support the church with.³⁸²

In the case of Mrs. Asmah, she claimed to have offered the church an amount of Two Hundred Ghana Cedis (GHS 200.00) to receive her anointing oil. The *akwankyere* that accompanied the oil was that she was to apply the anointing oil as her daily body cream, especially at the affected part which were her hip and leg for five days. She expressed during an interview that she was advised not to use any body cream on herself during this

³⁷⁸ Gabriel Appiah, Field Work, Personal Observation, 14, December, 2021, International God’s Way Church, Tema-Community9.

³⁷⁹ Gabriel Appiah, Field Work, Personal Observation, 14, December, 2021, International God’s Way Church, Tema-Community9.

³⁸⁰ Gabriel Appiah, Field Work, Personal Observation, 14, December, 2021, International God’s Way Church, Tema-Community9.

³⁸¹ Gabriel Appiah, Field Work, Personal Observation, 10, October, 2021, International God’s Way Church, Kumasi- Kenyase-Bosore.

³⁸² Gabriel Appiah, Field Work, Personal Observation, 10, October, 2021, International God’s Way Church, Kumasi- Kenyase-Bosore.

five days of the anointing oil *akwankyere* (spiritual direction) of which she religiously obeyed leading to her healing. She attested to have had a serious skin reaction on that part of her body (skin around her hip-bone area) during the application of the oil to the extent that the skin in that part of the area shed off and once she recovered from that her hip-bone with the subsequent leg pains and limping ceased completely.³⁸³ Florence Asmah's healing narration was confirmed by the husband, who expressed to me in an interview that the wife woke up one morning complaining of pains within her hip-bone area which later aggravated to limping of the leg and paralysing her leg.³⁸⁴ The husband claimed that prior to the snake bite dream and the initial pains, the wife had had a quarrel with his auntie who is regarded or suspected by his family to be a witch, to which the auntie told the wife "*twɛn na wo behunu; sɛ wo nim nea ɛba wo so a anka w'ahyɛ dade kyɛ*" (wait and you shall see; if you knew what is about to happen to you, you would seek for protection).³⁸⁵

Atta Kwame posited that the ramification of the imprecatory prayer made the disease that the auntie 'bought' for the wife go back to her (auntie), for he had seen the auntie with a bandage on the leg limping around the compound. He further expressed to me that other family members who later inquired from her about the cause of her swollen leg said she claimed to have fallen and twisted that leg. However, Atta Kwame stated that he did not believe she fell but that it was the angel of God at work punishing her for her evil deeds. Atta Kwame's view was corroborated by Stacy Asmah their daughter as she confirmed that the mother was sick and had been healed by the prophet.³⁸⁶ She expressed that her mother had suffered from serious pains in the hip-bone area which almost caused her (the mother) job and drained them financially, if not for the intervention of the prophet. Stacy posited

³⁸³ Florence Asmah, interview, 14, December, 2021, International God's Way Church, Tema-Community9.

³⁸⁴ Atta Kwame, interview, 14, December, 2021, International God's Way Church, Tema-Community9.

³⁸⁵ Atta Kwame, interview, 14, December, 2021.

³⁸⁶ Stacy Asmah, interview, 14, December, 2021, International God's Way Church, Tema-Community9.

that her mother's condition became worse that she resorted to crutches for a while to help her walk, especially in and around her office.³⁸⁷

In addition to the numerous healing claims of the prophet Daniel Obinim, a mental health disorder patient, Mr. Danso from the Twifo Hemeng in the Twifo Praso district of the Central Region claimed to have been healed by the prophet.³⁸⁸ Mr. Danso claimed to have farmed all his life with his late father when he was alive and had cultivated various cocoa farms with the father which included his own personal property. However, upon the death of the father came serious litigations among him and his half-siblings concerning the cocoa farms.³⁸⁹ Danso narrated how his half-siblings and their mother claimed ownership of all his cocoa farms arguing that he was not recognised by them as a legitimate son of their dad. Fred Danso further explained to me that the father was legally married to and had children with this woman. He expressed that it was on this basis that the half-siblings and their mother claimed ownership of the late father's cocoa farms including his own personal farms.³⁹⁰

To deter him from the farmlands his half-siblings with the support of their mother planted *juju* on the various farms. He reported that at one instance when he had visited his farm to work, he realised that pieces of red garments were tied around some of the cocoa trees. He claimed to have been scared and worried but that was his source of livelihood, so he ignored it and engaged in his farm activities. While he worked on his farm that day, he claimed to have felt so uneasy and unwell then it seemed that he was being followed by some sort of evil spirits leading him to pack and leave the farm. After this encounter at the farm, fear overshadowed him, he started having nightmares and strange dreams which caused him to

³⁸⁷ Stacy Asmah, interview, 14, December, 2021.

³⁸⁸ Fred Danso, interview, 10, October, 2021, International God's Way Church, Kumasi- Kenyase-Bosore.

³⁸⁹ Fred Danso, interview, 10, October, 2021.

³⁹⁰ Fred Danso, interview, 10, October, 2021.

talk and scream in his sleep according to the wife, he could also hear different voices talking to him at the same time.³⁹¹

When enquired whether he was aware of his actions and behaviour during his time of mental disorder, Mr. Danso responded that he was partially aware of some of his behaviours and actions. He posited that sometimes he became aware that something was wrong but could not control them.³⁹² For instance, he could hear voices asking him to undress himself even in public places which he complied to because he had no control over it. He could also spend hours in the washroom, became restless, exhibited a lack of concentration and was constantly yelling, screaming or excessively crying aloud.³⁹³ Danso claimed to have been taken to the Ankaful Psychiatric Hospital where he was attended to and given some medications such as anti-depressants and largactil to calm him down, yet his condition kept worsening until the wife and two of his workers convinced or persuaded him to visit Obinim's church in Kumasi.³⁹⁴ Danso claimed it was at the church that the prophet prophesied that his enemies had bewitched him with a mental illness in order to rob him off his farm property.³⁹⁵ He attested that the prophet prayed for him, by exorcising him from the spirit of mental illness and also offered him anointing oil which he was directed to pray with and use the oil to inscribe the sign of the cross on his forehead at 12 am each day for five days.³⁹⁶ He attested that forcing him to church was a breakthrough for his mental health condition because once he was at the church premises all the voices he had been hearing that compelled him to scream, yell, cry and undress himself ceased. Mr. Danso affirmed that his encounter with Prophet Obinim and the subsequent oil spiritual

³⁹¹ Fred Danso, interview, 10, October, 2021.

³⁹² Fred Danso, interview, 10, October, 2021.

³⁹³ Fred Danso, interview, 10, October, 2021, International God's Way Church, Kumasi.

³⁹⁴ Fred Danso, interview, 10, October, 2021, International God's Way Church, Kumasi.

³⁹⁵ Fred Danso, interview, 10, October, 2021, International God's Way Church, Kumasi.

³⁹⁶ Fred Danso, interview, 10, October, 2021.

direction three months ago had completely restored his mental health, for he was now a normal person with a sound mind and a stable level of concentration.

The wife of Fred Danso interjected my conversation with the husband in order to give a vivid narration of what happened during their stay at the church. She narrated that though Danso was aware of his surroundings and what happened at the church, he could not fully comprehend everything that happened at the church that day due to his state of mind.³⁹⁷ According to Ama Eshun, the prophet also revealed to them that though the hospital said his condition was severe depression, (the psychiatrist had concluded so due to the physical symptoms that Danso exhibited and the story of dispute surrounding his condition) the main purpose of the enemy was to send him to the street with mental illness. Ama Eshun affirmed that after their encounter with the prophet and the application of the oil, the husband was now of a sound mind and going about his daily activities normally.³⁹⁸ She posited that apart from the major oil *akwankyere* which the prophet gave to them, she also got items such as miracle water, wristband, and stickers. She claimed to have poured the Obinim miracle water on her husband's cocoa farm and placed a couple of stickers on the farm and this action of hers has deterred the husband's half-siblings from the farm.³⁹⁹ She attested that even after the husband recovered he decided to share the farm with the half-siblings but they rejected the offer when the family head conveyed the information to them and protracted that they had no interest anymore.⁴⁰⁰

Ama Eshun's narration was corroborated by Tweneboah Richard a worker of Mr. Danso who said that Mr. Danso was bewitched with a mental illness but had been healed by the

³⁹⁷ Ama Eshun, interview, 10, October, 2021.

³⁹⁸ Ama Eshun, interview, 10, October, 2021.

³⁹⁹ Ama Eshun, interview, 10, October, 2021, International God's Way Church, Kumasi- Kenyase-Bosore.

⁴⁰⁰ Ama Eshun, interview, 10, October, 2021, International God's Way Church, Kumasi.

prophet three months ago.⁴⁰¹ He claimed that Danso's mental health condition kept getting worse until the prophet divinely intervened, Tweneboah affirmed that such a healing miracle of the prophet had rekindled his admiration for Obinim's church and he would love to visit the Kumasi branch of the church regularly if he had the means. He further posited that he and Madam Ama Eshun used to attend a branch of Obinim's church in Cape Coast (Pedu) until the pastor there broke away from Obinim.⁴⁰²

Furthermore, Angel Obinim, 'the spirit man' as he was popularly known in Ghana was believed to heal long-term infertility and barrenness that has no cure. Such was the case of Hamdiya Muhammed who claimed to have been blessed with a miracle baby from the Prophet Obinim. She narrated that she had been married for the past 10 years with no child.⁴⁰³ She stated that the other wives of the husband all had children but she as the first and 'senior' wife could not conceive for the husband. She expressed to me in an interview that four years in the marriage with no child made them desperate for a solution, of which after various medical examinations they were both told nothing was wrong with them.⁴⁰⁴ She claimed such medical results in the past were authenticated when the husband later married other women and had children with them.

Hamdiya claimed to have tried all sorts of medications especially traditional ones which were recommended to her by different herbalists with the hope of making her conceive. They all proved futile, until her cousin suggested to her to resort to Obinim. She claimed to have detested the idea initially based on her religious background, however, the cousin

⁴⁰¹ Richard Tweneboah, interview, 10, October, 2021, International God's Way Church, Kumasi- Kenyase-Bosore

⁴⁰² Richard Tweneboah, interview, 10, October, 2021, International God's Way Church

⁴⁰³ Hamdiya Muhammed, interview, 14, December, 2021, International God's Way Church, Tema-Community9.

⁴⁰⁴ Hamdiya Muhammed, interview, 14, December, 2021, International God's Way Church, Tema-Community9.

explained to her how she (also a Muslim) had been healed from demonic-caused rashes on her face and body prior to her marriage ceremony.⁴⁰⁵ Hamdiya articulated how after being motivated by her cousin's experience, resorted to Bishop Obinim's Tema branch of the church. Fortunately for her, during the time of healing bishop Obinim based his sermon on the story of Sarah (Genesis- 21:1-3) and Hannah to reassure them that God's promises are for all his children and proclaimed to all women who were looking for the fruit of the womb that if God did it for Sarah, he will do it for them as well. According to Hamdiya, Obinim blessed toffees for barren women who were present at the service as a form of *akwanyere* (spiritual direction).⁴⁰⁶ In confirmation of Hamdiya's healing narration and the fact that she had resorted to Obinim irrespective of her religious background, I can attest that Hamdiya was not the only Muslim I encountered during my study or stay at the International God's Way Church, both at the Tema and Kumasi branch. I had witnessed several Muslims who worshipped at the church, some sought healing from the healer while others went to the altar to share their healing testimony.⁴⁰⁷

The use of biblical characters such as Sarah and Hannah by the healer to reassure the barren women at his church of God's promises and healing miracles was a process of theologising the Bible passage to suit the situational context and the life experiences of the barren women. Thus, by doing so, the women were made to understand that if God has done so for the Biblical characters having the same situation, then He is capable, will and must do the same for them who are in the same situation. Such processes of interpreting and reflecting on the Bible passage to suit lived experience or a particular situational context is what I referred to as grounded theologising. The process by which the healer compared the

⁴⁰⁵Hamdiya Muhammed, interview, 14, December, 2021.

⁴⁰⁶ Hamdiya Muhammed, interview, 14, December, 2021, International God's Way Church, Tema-Community9.

⁴⁰⁷ Gabriel Appiah, Field Work, Personal Observation, 14, December, 2021, International God's Way Church, Tema-Community9.

situation of the barren women in the narrative to Sarah and Hannah corroborates Haynes's assertion that in grounded theologising Christians exemplify biblical characters in the narratives of the scripture by making an analogy between their situation and the characters of the Bible.⁴⁰⁸

Hamdiya claimed to have conceived two months after eating Obinim's 'miracle toffee' in search of a baby.⁴⁰⁹ When asked whether the eating of the miracle toffee and her pregnancy was somewhat a coincidence, she strongly rejected that there was no way or means by which her experience could have been coincidental.⁴¹⁰ She attested that if it were so, her pregnancy should have rather happened six years ago when she seriously relied on medications in aid of pregnancy.⁴¹¹

She claimed that though she visited the Tema Regional Hospital for antenatal care, she still visited the church from time to time for fortification and to pray against any evil eyes and spirits who are envious of her pregnancy.⁴¹² She expressed that it was the prayers and spiritual fortification that had carried her through to her seventh month of pregnancy and hoped to deliver in peace. I could confirm Hamdiya's pregnancy during my interview with her, however I could not have affirmed the duration of her pregnancy.⁴¹³ Hamdiya's long-term barrenness and subsequent healing by Bishop Obinim, were confirmed by Mariama Alhassan who claimed to be her cousin.⁴¹⁴ She posited that Hamdiya for the past six years had desperately been seeking a cure to her barrenness but such a cure did not come through

⁴⁰⁸ Naomi Haynes, "Theology on the Ground," 271.

⁴⁰⁹ Hamdiya Muhammed, interview, 14, December, 2021, International God's Way Church, Tema-Community 9.

⁴¹⁰ Muhammed, interview, 14, December, 2021.

⁴¹¹ Muhammed, interview, 14, December, 2021.

⁴¹² Muhammed, interview, 14, December, 2021.

⁴¹³ Gabriel Appiah, Field Work, Personal Observation, 14, December, 2021, International God's Way Church, Tema-Community 9.

⁴¹⁴ Mariama Alhassan, interview, 14, December, 2021, International God's Way Church, Tema-Community 9.

via orthodox medicine or traditional medicine, God had used the prophet to heal her cousin.⁴¹⁵ Mariama articulated how the cousin Hamdiya relented to visit the International God's Way Church because of their religious affiliation. She claimed to have persisted for months before Hamdiya followed them (Mariama and the Boss/madam) to the Tema Branch of the Church.⁴¹⁶ Also, Margaret Asamoah a hair and nail stylist at Tema whom both Hamdiya and Mariama worked for, attested that she became aware of Hamdiya's condition four years ago when Hamdiya started working for her. She professed that, "my workers at my salon are not serious, they ridiculed me for attending Obinim's church, but they all seem to believe him (Obinim) now because of the healing experiences of Mariama and Hamdiya".⁴¹⁷ Margaret pointed out to me that it was because of the church service she attended every Tuesdays at the Tema branch that propelled her to schedule Tuesdays as her off days.

Margret mentioned that God's anointing is upon Obinim to heal, however, some Ghanaians out of ignorance speak ill of the prophet's healing power and that it her wish that all these unbelievers experience the healing power of God through his servant, Angel Daniel Obinim for them to testify the power and the grace of God upon the prophet just as Mariama and Hamdiya had witnessed.⁴¹⁸

4.3.2 Prayer and Fasting Group

It is a common observation that most prophetic churches have a prayer and fasting group that comprises associate pastors, dedicated individuals and church members who mobilise

⁴¹⁵ Alhassan, interview, 14, December, 2021.

⁴¹⁶ Alhassan, interview, 14, December, 2021.

⁴¹⁷ Margaret Asamoah, interview, 14, December, 2021, International God's Way Church, Tema-Community9.

⁴¹⁸ Asamoah, interview, 14, December, 2021.

to pray and fast for the improvement of their church as well as engage in congressional prayers and fasting for their spiritual and material needs. Such is the case of the International God's Way Church. There are individual adherents in the International God's Way Church who formed a prayer and fasting group. Madam Claudia Ayansa who claimed to be part of the prayer and fasting group in the church posited that prayer and fasting is an undeniable practice in a Christian's life and for that reason and it was a strong pillar of the church. She gave instances that at the beginning of every year or in the course of special events, the church engaged in fasting and prayer to spiritually break every yoke of the enemy (fight every adversary and to pull down the stronghold of the devil).⁴¹⁹ She further expressed that the church previously used to fast every month until the coronavirus pandemic which led to the subsequent banning of church service by the government. She quoted Matthew 4:2 to validate the need to pray and fast as a Christian, and Isaiah 58:6 to buttress her point that prayer and fasting free one from the yokes of the devil.⁴²⁰

In connection to her contribution to the healing services of the prophet, Claudia exclaimed that the prophet and his ministry had been through a lot of attacks both physical and spiritual but through all these problems, they did not give up on him but rather prayed and fasted. She argued that it is such fasting and prayers that have sustained the healing ministry of the prophet.⁴²¹ Claudia's assertion was corroborated by Michael Osei Owohene, as he posited that the prayer and fasting group sought the anointing of God upon the prophet and another concern was that sick people who visited the church should be delivered from their infirmities.⁴²² Mr. Owohene affirmed that the purpose of the church was to save people who had been kept in bondage by the enemy (Satan and his agents) and lead them to Christ.

⁴¹⁹ Claudia Ayansa, interview, 31, December, 2021, International God's Way Church, Ashaiman Scrap Park.

⁴²⁰ Ayansa, interview, 31, December, 2021.

⁴²¹ Claudia Ayansa, interview, 31, December, 2021, International God's Way Church, Ashaiman Scrap Park.

⁴²² Michael Osei Owohene, interview, 31, December, 2021, International God's Way Church, Ashaiman Scrap Park.

He argued that delivering people especially the sick from the bondage of the enemy has always been an issue of warfare and such battles were only won through fasting and prayer, that is why fasting, and prayer was a foundation and the major pillar of the International God's Way Church. He affirmed that fasting and prayer was the backbone of the prophet's ability to heal the sick.⁴²³

Owohene claimed that people who had not witnessed and experienced the healing of the sick by the prophet mostly consider the actions as gimmicks, hence, they drew conclusions that the healer's claims to heal the sick were untrue and fake. That notwithstanding, he expressed that such unbelievers with time would come to understand the power of God either through experience or some sort of divine encounter.⁴²⁴ He exemplified the authenticity of the healing of the prophet, by narrating that he had stayed in the same 'compound' with a co-tenant, a woman who had a swollen stomach and whose condition could not be helped by a medical professional. Once the sick woman was sent to Obinim, he identified the cause of the woman's sickness as a curse and healed her.⁴²⁵ Owohene attested that this healing of the woman made him change his perspective about Obinim's healing miracles and drew him to the church. He further articulated that if he had not known the sick woman in person and had rather seen her healing on TV, he would have concluded that such healing by Obinim was untrue.⁴²⁶ He argued that based on the healing of the woman with a swollen stomach and all the other healing he had witnessed in the church, it made him believe that the power of God was at work and the healers' healing performances were authentic.⁴²⁷ The assertion of Owohene was supported by Claudia as she posited that

⁴²³ Michael Osei Owohene, interview, 31, December, 2021, International God's Way Church, Ashaiman Scrap Park.

⁴²⁴ Owohene, 31, December, 2021.

⁴²⁵ Michael Osei Owohene, 31, December, 2021.

⁴²⁶ Michael Osei Owohene, 31, December, 2021.

⁴²⁷ Michael Osei Owohene, 31, December, 2021.

patients who have been healed by the Prophet Obinim are healed completely unlike other healers who claim to heal the sick but such illnesses they claimed to heal redevelop later in the lives of the people they claimed to have been healed.⁴²⁸

4.3.3 Song Ministration Group

Praises and worship are an integral part of the healing ministries in Ghana. Amanda Yeboah expressed that song ministration attracts the attention of God and makes His presence be filled and felt in the church.⁴²⁹ She argued that music has been the embodiment of God's existence since the beginning of creation. She supported her claim above by quoting Bible passages such as Ezekiel 28:13, Revelation 7:9 and Luke 2:8-20 which depict angels' song in heaven. Based on her explanation, Amanda attested that her contribution to the healing ministry was to fill the church premise with the presence of the Spirit of God through song ministration.⁴³⁰ She further said that it was the presence of God that brought about hope, healing and deliverance of the sick from their infirmities.⁴³¹ This assertion was substantiated by Nana Ama a member of the song ministration team as she articulated that the song ministration during healing service prepares the body, mind and soul of the patients to activate healing.⁴³² When questioned about how that happens, Nana Ama argued that music is an integral part of a 'spirit God' and that song ministration during healing services fills the minds, hearts and souls of the patients with the spirit of God which in a way makes them get intimate with God and access healing. She affirmed her claim by making reference to 1 Samuel 16:14- 23 passages that show that the cure for Saul's illness

⁴²⁸ Claudia Ayansa, interview, 31, December, 2021, International God's Way Church, Ashaiman Scrap Park.

⁴²⁹ Amanda Yeboah, interview, 31, December, 2021, International God's Way Church, Ashaiman Scrap Park.

⁴³⁰ Amanda Yeboah, interview, 31, December, 2021.

⁴³¹ Amanda Yeboah, interview, 31, December, 2021.

⁴³² Nana Ama, interview, 31, December, 2021, International God's Way Church, Ashaiman Scrap Park.

came through David's music.⁴³³ Nana Ama further claimed that there had been countless instances in the church where patients had been healed through song ministration without necessarily meeting with the prophet or resorting to any form of *akwankyere* from the prophet.⁴³⁴ During my stay at the church, I encountered a few individual patients who claimed to have gotten healed without necessarily meeting with the prophet or through the means of *akwankyere*, nor did they attest to me to have been healed through or during the song ministration. Some of these patients claimed that their present at the church premises alone relief them from their sickness⁴³⁵

However, the unique occurrence that I had witnessed at the healing service during song ministration (especially worship) was that, certain adherents both the sick and those who were not sick seem to be filled with something (call it the Holy Spirit if you like) some wailed, cried, mumbled, fell and rolled on the floor of the church. Usually, adherents in such a state were accompanied to the altar to be prayed for (exorcised) while sometimes others became normal after the worship service.⁴³⁶ The question is: "could such experience justify the assertion by Amanda that song ministration especially during healing services created an atmosphere of intimacy between a numinous power and the worshipers?" In my case, I did not mumble, cry or roll back and forth the church floor, but I felt 'something'- an experience that I cannot explain, some sort of emotions that made me acknowledge the presence of a numinous power capable of restoring hope in the state of hopelessness.⁴³⁷ For instance, local Christian songs like *Awarde Kasa* ('God speak') by Ama Boahemaa, *Kae me Awurade* (remember me Lord), *Mapa me Akyi*, *Okyeso-Nyame* by Florence

⁴³³ Nana Ama, interview, 31, December, 2021, International God's Way Church, Ashaiman Scrap Park

⁴³⁴ Nana Ama, interview, 31, December, 2021.

⁴³⁵ Gabriel Appiah, Field work, Personal Observation, 10, October, 2021, International God's Way Church, Kumasi- Kenyase-Bosore.

⁴³⁶ Gabriel Appiah, Field work, Personal Observation, 31, December, 2021, International God's Way Church, Ashaiman Scrap Park.

⁴³⁷ Appiah, Field work, International God's Way Church.

Obinim which were mostly sung on a low tone during healing ministrations and *Aseda sewo* and *W'agye me*, also by Florence Obinim which were sometimes sung when there was a healing manifestation or testimony, conveyed a deep spiritual connection and values which were African specifically, Ghana related.⁴³⁸ The above observation was affirmed by Rose Mary Amenga-Etego, Abraham Opare Okyere, Ngozi Emeka-Nwobia, Paul Onovoh and Sara Fretheim in their study as they posited that music, praise, and prayers are a facet of the African life, not just for entertainment purposes but also to convey spirituality and values.⁴³⁹

The various healing miracles performed by the prophet are said to be genuine by followers of the healer. Nana Ama in an interview explained that patients who came to the prophet for healing came from all over Ghana and beyond, whom the prophet did not know or had seen ever in his life. She contended that it was ridiculous for unbelievers to assume that all such patients who came from different geographical locations to access healing from the prophet are staged.⁴⁴⁰ She questioned that if such were the case, “why is the healing service always filled with people to an extent of having overflow members?” Nana Ama argued that there are new faces in the church every time and such persons were there mostly based on the recommendations of others who had experienced the (healing) power of God through the prophet.⁴⁴¹ The affirmation of Nana Ama was supported by Amanda who claimed that patients who were healed by God through the prophet were healed completely. She attested that she had not witnessed a healed person (patient) whose sickness returned after being healed by the prophet. Amanda further argued that patients who even were not

⁴³⁸ Appiah, Field work, International God's Way Church.

⁴³⁹Rose Mary Amenga-Etego, Abraham Nana Opare Kwakye, Ngozi Emeka-Nwobia, Paul Onovoh, and Sara Fretheim, "Language, Literature, Prayer, and Music Repertoires as Sources of African Christian Spirituality and Values," *International Bulletin of Mission Research* 45, no. 2 (2021): 113-115.

⁴⁴⁰ Nana Ama, interview, 31, December, 2021, International God's Way Church, Ashaiman Scrap Park

⁴⁴¹ Nana Ama, interview, 31, December, 2021.

touched by the power of God (healed) at a particular moment were eventually healed if they continued to seek the face of God (persistently came to see the prophet).⁴⁴² Amanda's above claim corroborates my view that the inability of a prophet to relieve a patient from his or her illness at a particular time and moment does not always signify the healer or prophet as fake, for God is a sovereign God who chooses to heal as and when he pleases.⁴⁴³

4.3.4 Summary

Prophet Daniel Obinim is the founder and the general overseer of the International God's Way Church who healed all manner of diseases, including 'incurable' disease. 'Incurable' disease to them is a kind of disease that is believed to have a spiritual connotation alongside diseases that have no known cure by medical science. For instance, there were diseases that could be medically cured, however, such diseases were also taken to the prophet to be healed because it is believed to have been caused by spiritual beings and for that matter, there was the need for a spiritual intervention of which the Prophet Obinim was regarded as the petitioner of a benevolent numinous power, who was then capable of sourcing the power of such numinous power (if you like God) to relieve them from their perceived spiritually caused illnesses. Healing of patients by the healer could take place both within and outside the church's normalised days of healing services, such as patients visiting the prophet at the church, listening to, or watching from home the prophet's live or recorded healing service either on the radio or television and transcendently appearing in the dreams of the patients to heal them. In healing the sick, the prophet deployed the use of *akwanyere* which mostly involved items such as anointing oil, miracle water, toffees,

⁴⁴² Amanda Yeboah, interview, 31, December, 2021, International God's Way Church, Ashaiman Scrap Park.

⁴⁴³ Gabriel Appiah, "Healing Practices among the Neo-Prophetic Groups in Ghana," 75.

stickers, apples, candles etc. as directed by the supposed Holy Spirit. Other modes of healing include exorcising the supposed spirit of infirmity out of the patient either by laying on hands or by spoken words.

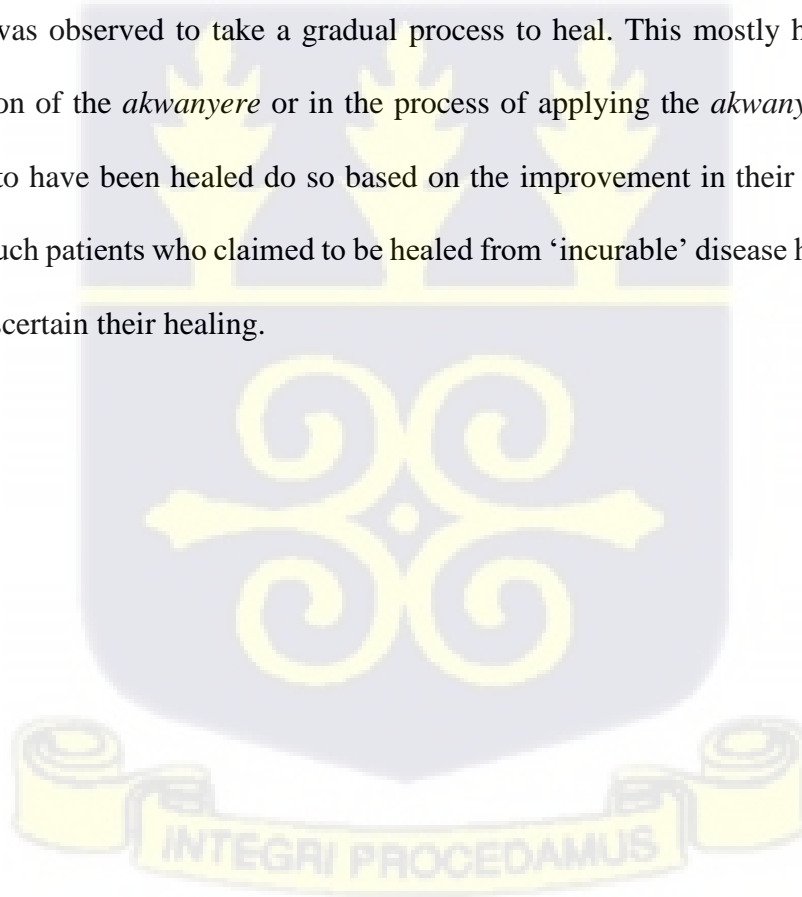
The patients healed by Obinim were believed to be healed completely without the diseases resurfacing. Patients who were healed mostly had their relatives certifying that they were sick and had been healed by the prophet. Obinim's healing miracles are backed by a fasting and prayer group as well as the song ministration group. Such groups play different roles in supporting the healing services organised by the healer.

4.4 Conclusion

It is evident from the chapter above that the various neo-prophetic healers examined above see 'incurable' disease as any form of ailment that cannot be cured without divine intervention. Such diseases were perceived by the neo-prophetics to have been manipulated by supernatural forces that is why they must be remedied through divine intervention. Healers see themselves as prophets who are endowed with the God given power through Jesus Christ to intercede on behalf of patients who need such divine intervention to relieve them of their ill-health. Healers many a times theologise bible passages to support their claim of healing, to reassure patients of the power of God to heal through them and to prove that other bible character of similar situation were divinely healed. As petitioners of numinous power bearers, healers organise various healing services where people with various 'incurable' ill-health related problems resort to them for healing. The healing services of these prophetic healers are supported by prayer and fasting groups, as well as song ministration groups. Adherents including patients who attend the healing services of

these prophetic healers believe that individual healer is unique, and that healers' claim of healing the 'incurable' is authentic.

Healing of 'incurable' diseases among these selected neo-prophetic healers is done through prayer such as imprecatory or declarative prayers, exorcism and the *akwankyere* which mostly involved the use of tokens. Healing tokens that are involved in *akwankyere* included coins, clay, Celtic salt, oil, water, soap, sugar, Coca-Cola, communion wine, sugar, cream, honey, milk, perfume, church sicker, wrist bangle, egg, toffee, sugarcane, sand and many more. It must be noted that these healing items or tokens which are used in the various *akwankyere* vary from one prophetic healer to the other. Healing by these prophetic healers is mostly progressive rather than instants. Most of the healing of patients discussed in this chapter was observed to take a gradual process to heal. This mostly happened after the application of the *akwanyere* or in the process of applying the *akwanyere*. Patients who claimed to have been healed do so based on the improvement in their health conditions. Mostly such patients who claimed to be healed from 'incurable' disease have their relatives to also ascertain their healing.



HEALING THE ‘INCURABLE’

5.0 Introduction

This chapter analyses the justification of healing the ‘incurable’ by Ghanaian neo-prophetic healers, the practice of *akwankyere* (spiritual directive), the certification of healing by patients who claimed to have been healed and their relatives, challenges encountered by the healers and patients, criticisms of healing incurable diseases and prospects of healing ‘incurable’ diseases.

5.1 The Justification of Healing the ‘Incurable’

Most Ghanaian Christians when challenged with ill-health such as chronic diseases, infertility or illnesses with strange and unexplainable symptoms mostly resort to some sort of medication, either orthodox medicine or traditional medicine. However, their health-seeking behaviour changes if their illness persists after such medicines or when they become convinced that such medicines cannot completely restore their health. Some of the things that shape their health-seeking behaviour is the influence of their traditional worldviews which for example explain the world to be in two dimensions, that is the physical and the spiritual worlds. The interpretations and implications of such beliefs provoke and force patients to adhere to spiritual algorithm given to them by neo-prophetic healers such as Bishop Antwi Boasiako, Rev, Isaac Osei-Bonsu, Bishop Obinim and other celebrated neo-prophetic healers in Ghana in aid to relieve patients from their sufferings. Such search for divine intervention by patients from these neo-prophetic healers is popularly based on recommendations by friends, and well-wishers who might have had an

encounter with the healer. Patients may consult these neo-prophetic healers through media advertisement- mostly witnessing the healing miracles of these neo-prophetic healers through their various TV and radio ministrations.⁴⁴⁴

The neo-prophetic healers had established themselves as the mediators of the numinous power bearers in the Ghanaian religious scene. They were believed to be the mouthpiece between the Ghanaian religious seekers and the numinous powers, claiming to have the anointing to intervene and intercede on behalf of patients with 'incurable' diseases. The impressions portrayed by the neo-prophetic healers as medium between specific numinous powers and patients was ascertained by Werner Kahl who distinguished a numinous power bearer from petitioners or a medium of a particular numinous power bearer.⁴⁴⁵ It was observed through my study that the neo-prophetic healers profess the name of the God of Israel (Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit) the triune God as their numinous power bearer from which they acquired their healing grace to heal patients with 'incurable' disease. For instance, the neo-prophetic healers justified their source of power for healing 'incurable' diseases by mentioning the name of Jesus Christ in times of exorcising patients with 'incurable,' as well as claiming to rely on the Holy Ghost for revelational knowledge concerning the cause of the patient disease and the remedy (*akwankyere*- spiritual direction) to which patients were needed to adhere to be healed. The neo-prophetic healers saw themselves as the representatives of Jesus Christ who were endowed with healing powers to replicate the healing miracles of Jesus Christ in their current generation. Owing to the above, the neo-prophetic healers theologised biblical narratives to prove that Jesus Christ is the only true healer capable of healing every disease including the 'incurable.'

⁴⁴⁴ Gabriel Appiah, Field Work, Personal observation 31 December, 2019, Moment of Glory Prayer Army, Anne Boateng Sport Stadium-Abrenkesa, Kumasi.

⁴⁴⁵ Kahl, "New Testament Miracle Account," 13.

Biblical texts such as Psalm 127; 1, 1 Peter 2:24 were interpreted to mean that Christ has the power to heal all diseases. The implication of such an interpretation of the biblical text is that as representatives of Christ, there is no disease that they cannot heal, that is the reason the neo-prophetic healers engage in healing diseases that seem 'incurable' to the world. It is this notion that Christ can heal every disease that underpins the neo-prophetic healers' understanding of healing the 'incurable' diseases in the Ghanaian religious scene.

The interpretation of the Bible narratives by the neo-prophetic healers to rationalise their healing of the 'incurable' affirms the projections of Anum⁴⁴⁶ and Ossom-Batsa⁴⁴⁷ that other ways of reading the scriptures by African Christians help them to interpret or theologise these texts to address existential situations within their cultural milieu. However, based on Ossom-Batsa's categorisation of African theologian and African popular reader⁴⁴⁸, I am attempted to place the neo-prophetic healers under the 'African popular reader' though some might have been educated to some extent as in the cases of Antwi-Boasiako and Isaac Osei-Bonsu. The argument is that though such healers are educated, they were not trained to become theologians, in this sense their reading and interpretation of the scripture could be labelled as ordinary or popular readers who interpret the gospel considering their experiences for the purpose of bridging biblical events to their current occurrences. Reference to this could be drawn from Prophet Obinim as he quoted the story of Sarah (Genesis- 21:1-3) and Hannah (1 Samuel 1:13-20) to reassure the barren women such as Hamdiya Muhammed that if God had done it for such biblical characters, then He would do same for them. It could be inferred from the study that the neo-prophetic healers had a common belief that God and Jesus Christ, the numinous power bearer, have the power and

⁴⁴⁶ Anum, "The Reconstruction of Forms of African Theology," 14-20.

⁴⁴⁷ Ossom-Batsa, "African Interpretation of the Bible in Communicative Perspective," 93.

⁴⁴⁸ Ossom-Batsa, "African Interpretation of the Bible in Communicative Perspective," 93.

the authority to heal every disease, including diseases that are beyond the comprehension of humanity, hence neo-prophetic healers' insistence on being capable of healing 'incurable' disease because such power and authority of their numinous power bearer, Jesus Christ, manifest in them. This belief of the neo-prophetic healers was based on their theological reading, interpretation of the biblical texts and theologising of some biblical passages to address their present experiences or situations.

Besides, the neo-prophetic healers assessed their healing of 'incurable' diseases by examining the condition of the patients before and after healing. This is mainly through the testimonies and affirmation by patients who claimed to have been healed by attesting that their condition was better and well as compared to when they first met the healers, the disappearance of symptoms of illness and sometimes based on medical reports which are rare. It was a common observation through my study that patients who attended the healing services of neo-prophetic healers for healing claimed to have tried other alternative medications be it orthodox medicine or traditional medicine to no avail. Cases of Alex Ababio, Fred Danso, Florence Asmah and many more discussed in the previous chapter affirm the above assertions that patients resorted to other medical care but came to see neo-prophetic healers if their diseases persisted. The examples above affirm Judith Hill's claims as she posited that when all other means of remedy fail patients turn to their creator who is believed to restore good health.⁴⁴⁹ The health-seeking behaviour of the patients to seek divine intervention from the neo-prophetic healers after all other potent medications had failed solidifies the link between religion and health in the Ghanaian Christian religious scenes. Also, the consultation with the neo-prophetic healers by patients after all other natural avenues for healing had failed, affirmed the projection of Musa Dube. She

⁴⁴⁹ Hill, "Health, Sickness and Healing in the New Testament," 151-195.

explained that it is the will of God to bring healing to humanity and that the Church must be responsible for bringing healing and salvation to all humans if they seek to carry out the will of God.⁴⁵⁰ The argument is that should midwifing God's healing will to humanity by the Church (neo-prophetic healers) be necessarily through divine intervention? It was noted throughout my study that patients resorted to neo-prophetic healers because all other approaches to regain their health according to them were futile. Instances such as the cases of Mr. Fred Danso's mental illness and the unexplainable illness that Matthew Opong narrated in the previous chapter serve as an example. It could be deduced from the explanation above that the individual, when at the lowest point in life, resorted to a numinous power bearer or a petitioner of a numinous power bearer for divine intervention and such is the case of patients who approached the neo-prophetic healers when suffering from 'incurable' diseases.

The neo-prophetic healers being aware of the predicament of patients that their diseases could be healed only by supposed divine intervention, cross-examined their miracle performance to justify their healing powers to congregants and unbelievers. They examined their healing of the 'incurable' through attested testimonies, the disappearance of symptoms and medical reports of patients who claimed to have been healed after they were being prayed for, exorcised and given *akwankyere* (spiritual direction) which mainly involved the use of tokens.⁴⁵¹ In the course of sharing testimonies, acclaimed healed patients projected their ill-health conditions before and after healing by emphasising on the disappearance of symptoms and their complete well-being.⁴⁵² Instances could be made of

⁴⁵⁰ Musa W. Dube, "HIV/AIDS Curriculum for Theological Institution in Africa," in Phiri, LA Haddad, B. Masenya, M. (eds) *African Women HIV/AIDS and Faith Communities* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publication, 2003), 157.

⁴⁵¹ Gabriel Appiah, Field Work, Personal Observation 25 December, 2019, Moment of Glory Prayer Army, Cultural Centre-Kumasi.

⁴⁵² Gabriel Appiah, Field Work, Personal Observation, 10, October, 2021, International God's Way Church, Kumasi- Kenyase-Bosore.

Christopher Mante in the previous chapter who based on the disappearance of symptoms such as sore on the left foot, numbness and improvement in his general well-being claimed to have been healed of diabetes.⁴⁵³ The same could be said of Alex Ababio who attested being healed by Atwi-Boasiako based on the disappearance of symptoms of his sickness and tremendous improvement in his health.⁴⁵⁴ The question here is that could the disappearance of symptoms and the subsequent health improvement of patients with ‘incurable’ diseases who consult the neo-prophetic healers for healing mean that the neo-prophetic healers actually heal ‘incurable’ diseases. What is the place of placebo effects in the narrations of these healing of ‘incurable’ diseases? Could it be that such supposed healed ‘incurable’ diseases manifest again over time in the lives of these patients who claimed to have been healed?

The argument is that patients claimed to have resorted to different avenues of health care systems such as the orthodox and the traditional herbal medications without any improvement in their condition of health. Others even said that their health condition worsen with such medications. For example, Mrs. Asmah was told there was nothing wrong with her hip bone after her medical examination even though she continued to feel unwell until she consulted the neo-prophetic healers for prayers and *akwankyere*. Reference could also, be made to Ellinam Ama Tei who experienced frequent seizure throughout her life until she resorted to the neo-prophetic healer. She attested during my interview with her that she had not experienced any seizure for the past eight (8) months

⁴⁵³ Christopher Mante, interview, 31 December, 2020, Moment of Glory Prayer Army, Efinase-Kumasi.

⁴⁵⁴ Alex Ababio, interview, 8 January, 2020, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

after her encounter with Rev. O.B.⁴⁵⁵ Similarly, the healing of Hamdiya Muhammed's long-term infertility (ten years) by Obinim.⁴⁵⁶

Could all these healing experiences be relegated to placebo effects? As much as one may assume that there could be deception or manipulation among the neo-prophetic healing narratives, there is also an undisputable fact about the power of Jesus Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit to heal through prophets. The point here is that if even healers based on the disappearance of symptoms and the medical improvement of their patients' wellbeing to claim their ability to heal the 'incurable' then their claims cannot be disputed in the sense that their patients' symptoms could not disappear, nor health conditions improve (even when patients resorted to the orthodox and herbal medications) prior to their consultation with them (the healers). Again, healing experiences that may seem tangible like the severe pains in the hip-bone area, the limping, and the paralysis of Mrs. Florence Asmah's leg, and the pregnancy of Hamdiya Muhammed after long-term infertility are used to substantiate the healers' claims of healing the 'incurable'.

In addition to testimonies from patients, medical reports of patients were sometimes shown by healers as proof for healing the 'incurable.' However, such medical reports are rare because they were not so mandatory among the neo-prophetic healers and were mostly unsubstantiated or almost academically unverifiable in my view. For example, there were cases where medical reports of the healing of a particular 'incurable' disease were shown or flooded on the church's media handle such as the case of Obinim's claim of healing HIV- positive patients, Rahinatu Ibrahim, Mariama, Iddrius, Elivis Kwarteng and Rose Agbavor as referred to in the previous chapter. It was noted that the medical reports of

⁴⁵⁵ Ellinam Tei, Testimony, 31 January, 2020, Moment of Glory Prayer Army, Efinase-Kumasi.

⁴⁵⁶ Hamdiya Muhammed, interview, 14, December, 2021, International God's Way Church, Tema-Community9.

these supposedly healed patients which were published on the church's Facebook page had only an aspect of the results that claimed such individuals were HIV- negative without really showing the public the initial medical reports that confirmed HIV positive diagnosis in the past.

Also, the verification of such medical reports is next to impossible in the sense that one would have to cross-examine the specific hospital, laboratory officers and the various medical professionals who confirmed such supposed healed patients as being cured. Such difficulties that surrounded medical reports made it difficult to medically verify and authenticate the claims of the neo-prophetic healers to healing 'incurable' disease. Notwithstanding, such difficulties in verifying medical reports exhibited by the neo-prophetic healers cannot necessarily be used to nullify their claims of healing 'incurable' diseases in the sense that the utmost beliefs of the prophetic healers are that 'incurable' diseases are mainly caused by supernatural entities and that once the right divine interventions had been sorted, such patients will be relieved.

It could also be argued based on the discussions in the previous chapter that some illnesses that are healed by the neo-prophetic healers are incurable conditions that medical professionals had no evidence to diagnose – the illness of Alex Abibo and Florence Asham are examples of such incurable conditions. In healing such incurable conditions, the healer will only have to rely on the disappearance of symptoms to ascertain healing since such 'incurable' conditions could not be diagnosed medically. Again, medical conditions such as autism (in the case of Theresa Owusu) was difficult for healers to prove medically that such a disease had been healed since there was currently no medical test for diagnosing autism. Medical professionals diagnose autism by examining the child's developmental history and behaviour. In view of the above disposition of illnesses, it could be argued that

a laboratory test report was not always needed or mandatory to prove the neo-prophetic healing of an ‘incurable’ disease.

5.2 The Neo-Prophetic Practice of *Akwankyere*

Akwankyere is an integral part of the indigenous Akan beliefs and practices, though the practice is found among the other ethnic groups in Ghana. When existentially related, problems such as illnesses and deaths bedevil an individual, family or society, an enquiry is made to the spiritual realm and when the cause of the problem is ascertained, an *akwankyere* is mostly given or directed by an authority who is regarded by society as having spiritual powers. Such directives when followed religiously are believed to solve the problems.⁴⁵⁷

Akwan in the Akan understanding means ‘paths’ while *kyere* means ‘show’; therefore, *kyerekwan* in the Akan language literally means ‘direct or show the path or way’. The meaning of *kyerekwan* among the Akan denotes that *akwankyere* refers to directing a path or showing a way that one must follow to remedy problems such as ill-health and other existential needs.

The concept of *akwankyere* is popular among neo-prophetic groups, especially within their healing practices. The phenomenon is when the prophetic healer gives information concerning the cause of one’s problem or ill-health and identifies the necessary procedures to take in order to remedy the situation.⁴⁵⁸ The phenomenon was observed during my study

⁴⁵⁷Gabriel Appiah, Fieldwork, Personal Observation, 15 December, 2019, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

⁴⁵⁸ Gabriel Appiah, Field Work, Personal Observation, 10, October, 2021, International God’s Way Church, Kumasi- Kenyase-Bosore

and categorised into three types.⁴⁵⁹ There is what could be termed as ‘organised *akwankyere*’. With this form of *akwankyere*, procedures are involved. There are specific days or times that are set aside by prophetic healers for consultation.⁴⁶⁰ Consulting of the prophet individually is referred to as counselling sessions within the neo-prophetic religious space. The procedures that are involved leading to this form of *akwankyere* is that the individual consults the prophetic healer ‘one-on-one’, with the intention to seek ‘one-on-one revelation’ from the prophet concerning their problems.⁴⁶¹ To an extent, this includes the cause of the problem, what entities (both spiritual or evil humans) are involved, and to receive a guideline as to how their problem could be remedied. This form of *akwankyere* often comes with a fee to appreciate the prophet’s service and to support the work of God.⁴⁶² This was observed in the case study of the prophet Obinim.⁴⁶³ The fee paid by patients or individuals with regard to this form of *akwankyere* was done to exchange it with specific tokens or items used based on the directives of the prophets in order to remedy their problems.

The second type of *akwankyere* does not require any sort of procedure. There is no need for a one-on-one consultation with the prophet or scheduled counselling session. Patients or people with related problems freely attend healing or church services with no consultation fee attached.⁴⁶⁴ Individual patients are hand-picked by prophets supposedly based on revelational knowledge. The problem of the individual is then narrated by the

⁴⁵⁹ Appiah, Field Work, International God’s Way Church, Kumasi- Kenyase-Bosore

⁴⁶⁰ Appiah, Field Work, International God’s Way Church, Kumasi- Kenyase-Bosore

⁴⁶¹ Appiah, Field Work, International God’s Way Church, Kumasi- Kenyase-Bosore

⁴⁶² Gabriel Appiah, Field Work, Personal Observation, 14, December, 2021, International God’s Way Church, Tema-Community9.

⁴⁶³ Appiah, Field Work, International God’s Way Church, Tema-Community 9.

⁴⁶⁴ Gabriel Appiah, Field Work, Personal Observation 28 February, 2020, Moment of Glory Prayer Army, Anane Boateng Sport Stadium-Abrenkesa, Kumasi.

prophet for affirmation. The prophetic healers then reveal the problem's cause and gives direction on how such a problem could be remedied.⁴⁶⁵

The third type of *akwankyere* observed from my interactions with the various neo-prophetic healing services is what I termed as the 'general' *akwankyere*.⁴⁶⁶ With this type, the prophets claimed to have been directed by a numinous power bearer (God) to perform a particular *akwankyere* for all his congregants or individuals with health-related problems. The prophets pre-informed the members of the Christian community either at a previous church service or on the radio and television to partake in such a spiritual direction.⁴⁶⁷ The directions given by the prophetic healers could sometimes be that members, both sick people seeking healing and people with related existential issues, came along with items such as 'spray' *akwankyere*, egg *akwankyere*, toffee *akwankyere*, soap *akwanyere*, apple *akwankere*, salt *akwankyere*, *nsu* (water) *akwankyere*, picture *akwankyere* and whatever the prophet so claimed to have been communicated to him by God.⁴⁶⁸ These items were blessed by the prophets mostly after church services, and directions are given on how to use the items. This form of *akwankyere* usually did not address a specific ill-health or related problem. It was acclaimed to be effective in relieving participants of all manners of problems, including ill-health. Also, with this form of general *akwankyere*, the prophets could ask members to attend the healing service or church with any items of their choice. These items were blessed by the prophet, and members were left on their own to engage in their own spiritual directions as it suited them.

⁴⁶⁵ Appiah, Fieldwork, Personal Observation, 17 December, 2019, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

⁴⁶⁶ Appiah, Field Work, Moment of Glory Prayer Army, Anane Boateng Sport Stadium-Abrenkesa, Kumasi.

⁴⁶⁷ Gabriel Appiah, Field Work, Personal Observation 27 September, 2019, Moment of Glory Prayer Army, Independence Square Accra.

⁴⁶⁸ Prophet Edmund Antwi Bosiako, interview, 22 December, 2019, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

5.3 The Certification of Healing by Patients and their Relatives

Patients who sought healing from neo-prophetic healers mostly held the belief that their illnesses were as a result of bewitchment, curse, disobedience (breaking taboo, sin) and the manipulation of some evil supernatural forces. It was based on this premise that they saw their ailments as ‘incurable’ without any form of divine interventions. Instances could be drawn from cases such as Theresa Owusu whose sickness was supposedly believed to have been caused by witches in her maternal family to ruin her future⁴⁶⁹, same could be said of Ellinam Tei whose relatives claimed to have suffered severe pains in the hand of the enemy.⁴⁷⁰ Also, Fred Danso claimed to have been bewitched with mental illness by his step-mother and siblings due to litigation over a cocoa farm⁴⁷¹ and that of Florence Asmah who attested to having dreamed of a snake biting her and the subsequent swollen of the Auntie’s leg after the imprecatory prayer and *akwankyere* as explained by her father.⁴⁷² Such perception by patients is consummated as an African belief that corroborates the assertion that Africans interpret every event in life as having spiritual connotation.⁴⁷³

In view of the above, it could be inferred that most patients attended healing services of the various neo-prophetic healers with the notion that an enemy(Otanfo), including real human beings with a supernatural ability or (real humans who consult evil forces in the form of ‘Juju’) to cause harm as posited by Omenyo and Atiemo⁴⁷⁴ were involved in their ill-health which they sought to embattle them with the power of Christ through prayers,

⁴⁶⁹ Akuwa Stella, interview, 3 January, 2020, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

⁴⁷⁰ Philip Tei, interview, 31, January, 2020, Moment of Glory Prayer Army, Efinase-Kumasi.

⁴⁷¹ Fred Danso, interview, 10, October, 2021, International God’s Way Church, Kumasi- Kenyase-Bosore.

⁴⁷² Florence Asmah, interview, 14, December, 2021, International God’s Way Church, Tema-Community9.

⁴⁷³ John Mbiti, "Main Features of Twenty-First Century Christianity in Africa," *Missio Africanus Journal of African Missiology* 1, no. 2 (2016): 79-80.

⁴⁷⁴ Omenyo and Atiemo, "Claiming religious space," 56.

and the use of *akwankyere*- that mostly included the use of blessed tokens from a supposed powerful spiritual neo-prophetic healer.

The perception that an enemy or evil spiritual agent is involved in their ailments forces patients to look out for signals to certify that they have been healed or visited by the Holy Spirit. In most circumstances such signals are labelled as ‘signs and wonders’ during or after the patient have been prayed for, exorcised or applied *akwankyere*. In times of prayer, there are a series of declarations that are made by the healers for patients repeat, for instance in the case of Rev Isaac Osei Bonsu, declarative prayer statements such as ‘by the speaking blood of Jesus, as I pray and clap my hands any food that I (name of patient or adherents) have eaten in my dream to cause my illness and setbacks receive fire and come out now by fire ‘i-n the na-me of Je-sus’.⁴⁷⁵ After these declarative prayers, most adherents and patients were seen vomiting either saliva or some sort of substance. Such an act of vomiting was considered by the patient as a ‘sign and wonder’ that acknowledged the manifestation of the ‘Holy Ghost’ at work. An example of such a supposed manifestation of the Holy Ghost could be drawn from the case of Oppong Matthew who claimed to have felt he had been soaked with water after a declarative prayer.

Besides, ‘signs and wonders’ in the time of exorcising are seen in the form of contest between ‘evil and good’ where there occurred some form of ‘spiritual fight’ mostly an exchange of words between the healers and the supposed evil agent who is the cause of illness, screaming and shouting repeatedly for a period by patients, spinning around and the falling to the ground by patients. An example of this is found in the healing services of Antwi Boasiako and his subsequent exorcising of Alex Ababio from the spirit of setback

⁴⁷⁵ Gabriel Appiah, Field Work, Personal Observation, 31, January, 2020, Efinase-Kumasi.

and failure that was believed to have caused his sickness to slow his progress in life. Furthermore, patients observe the manifestation of their healing through expected ‘signs and wonders’ as they engage in the *akwankyere* (spiritual direction) which mostly involves the use of specific items. Such ‘signs and wonders’ that occurred during or after the performing of specific *akwankyere* denote the efficacy of the *akwankyere* and promise them (patients) that they have healed.

The narration of George Owusu that indicated that two of the wife’s family members died in an accident after the Celtic salt *akwankyere* by his 14 years old girl with autism is an example of the expected ‘signs and wonders’ that suggested to the patients and their relatives the potency of a particular *akwankyere* and its capacity to heal them. Also, it could be deduced from the narrations of Florence Asmah that she regarded the shedding off of the skin in her hip bone region during the application of the oil *akwankyere* as an indication of being healed for she attested that once the skin in her hip-bone area stopped shedding off during the application of the oil *akwankyere*, she became completely well and was able to walk again.⁴⁷⁶ The husband of Florence Asmah corroborated such expected ‘signs and wonders’ as an indication for certifying healing by claiming that after the prayer and subsequent oil *akwankyere* the wife’s illness was reversed to his auntie for she was seen with a swollen leg limping around the compound.⁴⁷⁷ It could be argued from the above discussion that patients and their relatives who seek healing from the neo-prophetic infuse their traditional worldview into their Christian lives, an influence of their traditional African (Ghanaian) worldview makes them certify their being healed in the context of cause and effect. For them to be healed, they expected that the cause of their illness be dealt with and such causes were mainly attributed to spiritual connotations which they

⁴⁷⁶ Florence Asmah, interview, 14, December, 2021, International God’s Way Church, Tema-Community9.

⁴⁷⁷ Atta Kwame, interview, 14, December, 2021, International God’s Way Church, Tema-Community9.

supposedly included their friends and relatives whom they labelled consciously and unconsciously as *otamfo* (enemy) in the explanation of Omenyo and Atiemo.⁴⁷⁸ The fusion of the African (Ghanaian) traditional worldviews into the Christian belief system influenced patients and their relatives who were Christians to attribute the death or misfortunes of close relatives and friends in periods around their prayers and *akwankyere* as them being the cause of their illness and disease.

The question is how and why should the death or misfortune of an individual relative or friend be attributed to the efficacy of some sort of spiritual concoction, ritual performance or prayer declaration said by another person at church? The argument is that such beliefs and practices of patients seeking healing from neo-prophetic healers is a means of theologically capturing their situational experiences and African viewpoint since the African almost always seek healing in a religious context as posited by Justice Ukpong⁴⁷⁹ A common African (Ghanaian) adage that substantiates such attitudes and blame game of the neo-prophetic healers and patients is “*Se aboa bi beka wo a na efiri wo ntoma mu*” (if an insect will bite you then it is in your clothing. meaning, the enemy is within). Such worldview influences them to be suspicious of everyone around them in times of difficulties, suffering and ultimately illness. Given the above, the patients and their relatives who resorted to the neo-prophetic healers almost always were anxious and are expectant of ‘signs and wonders’ which included the physical manifestation of their prayers, and utilisation of *akwankyere*, on their supposed enemies.

In addition, the patients and their relations examined the conditions before and after they had been prayed for, exorcised, and complied with a given *akwankyere* to certify that they

⁴⁷⁸ Omenyo and Atiemo, "Claiming Religious Space," 56-60.

⁴⁷⁹ Justice Ukpong, *African Theologies Now: A Profile* (Eldoret: Gaba publications, 1984):4-7.

had been healed or their relatives have been healed. This mode of certifying healing is mostly by focusing on the disappearance of sign and symptoms of an illness and the patient's ability to engage in certain activities that they could not do during their supposed time of illness. An example could be said of the case of Alex Ababio who attested that symptoms such as body weakness, heartburns, sleeplessness at night and vomiting of blood all ceased after he had been exorcised and he complied to the given *akwankyere* as directed by the prophet.⁴⁸⁰ Other instances could be drawn from the cases of Oppong Matthew⁴⁸¹ and Ama Tei⁴⁸² who also based on the disappearance of the signs and symptoms of their illness and disease to certify that they had been healed. It is common knowledge that signs and symptoms are means by which to tell that something is wrong with our health; conversely, the disappearance of those signs and symptoms cannot be a means to guarantee good health since symptoms of certain diseases only appear in their initial stages or for a period and disappear for a longer time.

The argument is that if symptoms of diseases can appear and disappear for a period of time, then why do patients and their relatives base their testimonies on the disappearance of symptoms after they are being prayed for, or engaged in specific *akwankyere* to attest that they have been healed? It could be debated that patients and their relatives basing on the disappearance of signs and symptoms of their illnesses and diseases to claim being healed is partly due to the influence of the African traditional worldview on the concept of health that is exerted. For instance, among West Africans, good health is being in harmonious relation with one's deity of worship as well as neighbour, the environment, one's self and all levels of reality⁴⁸³ This suggests that patients in their declarative prayers and

⁴⁸⁰ Alex Ababio, interview, 8 January, 2020, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

⁴⁸¹ Matthew Oppong, interview, 31 January, 2020, Moment of Glory Prayer Army, Efinase-Kumasi.

⁴⁸² Ellinam Tei, Testimony, 31 January, 2020, Moment of Glory Prayer Army, Efinase-Kumasi.

⁴⁸³ Appiah-Kubi, *Man Cures, God Heals*, 1-15.

akwankyere do not only engage in imprecatory prayers but also seek for forgiveness in order to establish a good relationship with their deity of worship since some illnesses and diseases were believed to be caused by personal disobedience. The proceeding argument is that if it is believed among the West Africans of Ghana, that good health is seen as having a harmonious relationship with one's deity, being free from all life-negating facts and general well-being (as referred to by the Akan as *apomuden*) of the individual then indeed the patients' claims of being healed based on the disappearance of sign and symptoms of their illnesses and diseases cannot be nullified. For they had built a good relationship with their deity of worship by asking forgiveness of sins, had been exorcised or undergone *akwankyere* to deal with the supposed enemy that caused their ailment and have *apomuden* (well-being) and *ahuoden* (strength) going about their daily activities as they used to in the past, so they had been healed.

5.4 Challenges Encountered by Healers and Patients

The neo-prophetic healers during healing services commanded huge crowds. The challenge at this given time was that the prophets could not attend to individual patients personally, not even in time of one-on-one consultation or *akwankyere*. In such instances when there were overflowing crowds, healers mostly engaged the services of some members of the prayer and fasting group, especially in time of exorcising a patient during healing, healers also used of healing tokens as a mode of healing (not only because some biblical characters did so) due to the fact that such tokens are easily accessible by patients as I posited in my previous work⁴⁸⁴ Healers could also engage in a general '*akwankyere*' such as honey,

⁴⁸⁴ Appiah, "Healing Practices," 122

apple, or salt *akwankyere* for all adherents and patients at a given healing service in order to avoid wasting time. However, these measures to facilitate a smooth healing service were not appreciated by all patients. Some patients rather preferred the healer himself to lay hands upon them and not members of the prayer group. This is because patients use the opportunity to narrate how they got sick and the nature of their current sickness to the healer. Other patients preferred lengthy prayer or worship sessions to crush down their enemies as well as uplift their spirit and reaffirm their hope in the potent power of Jesus Christ as alluded to by Mercy Owusu.⁴⁸⁵ There were instances of testimony sharing, where adherents who claimed to be healed narrated their healing process either to motivate other sick adherents seeking healing or to reassure congregants of the healing power of the prophet. All these activities during healing services prolonged the service and made it unnecessarily stressful since it is time-consuming and exhausting for both patients and the healers. For instance, some healing services with the above activities included could last for about eight hours and more, such as in the cases of Daniel Obinim and Rev. Isaac Osei Bonsu.

Another challenging issue that healers and patients faced during healing services is the inability of patients to activate healing in some instances. During my stay at the various churches, I observed some patients who claimed they could not activate healing. Therefore, their relatives rushed to see the healer after the healing service so they could have one-on-one encounters with him. Most of these patients and their relatives wore sad faces and seemed worried. Antwi Boasiako of the New Era International asserted that healing the sick is based on the sovereign will of God and that in no circumstance should a prophet or

⁴⁸⁵ Mercy Owusu, interview, 4 February, 2020, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

patients be unnecessarily worried if healing does not occur.⁴⁸⁶ He cautioned patients to acknowledge the sovereign will of God and not give up, for God works with time and season. The above assertion of Antwi Boasiko corroborates my previous work: “Healing Practices among the Neo-Prophetic groups in Ghana: Case study of three selected Neo-Prophetic churches” as I observed that some prophetic healers such as prophet kwarteng and Isaac Boadu rather make patients who could not access healing to blame themselves as result of their lack of faith or sins⁴⁸⁷ It could be inferred from the previous chapter that all the prophetic healers under study believed that sin might in some ways contribute to afflictions (illness) of patients. However, they did not affirm that a patient’s inability to access healing was because of his or her sins. For instance, Rev. OB, cautioned his adherents to live a righteous life because sinful behaviours open the individual up to the attacks of the enemy. Notwithstanding this, he made patients aware that righteous Christians also sometimes suffer from afflictions of the enemy.

5.5 Criticisms of Healing ‘Incurable’

Patients or people who were recommended by friends or well-wishers to resort to the prophetic healers in times of ill-health initially disapproved of such suggestions because they perceived the neo-prophetic healers’ claim of healing the ‘incurable’ as fake. An example could be said of Mr. Okyere who attested that he never believed in the healing of the neo-prophetic healers until he had a personal healing encounter with Antwi Boasiko of New Era Chapel.⁴⁸⁸ Such perceived assumption by people that the neo-prophetic healers’ claim of healing the ‘incurable’ is fake was buttressed by Antwi Bosiako as he articulated

⁴⁸⁶ Prophet Edmund Antwi Bosiako, interview, 22 December, 2019, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

⁴⁸⁷ Appiah, "Healing Practices among the Neo-Prophetic Groups," 96-117.

⁴⁸⁸ Frank Okyere, interview, 24 January, 2020, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

he had had various encounters with patients who were initially hesitant to seek healing from him because of their disbelief in the neo-prophetic healers' ability to heal 'incurable' diseases⁴⁸⁹ Antwi Boasiako's assertion on how the people or some patients perceivably disbelieve the healing of 'incurable' by the neo-prophetic healers corroborates Opong Matthew as he claimed that it was illaudable to him when he was advised by well-wishers to consult Isaac Osei Bonsu of MOGPA with regards to his illness.⁴⁹⁰

It could be inferred from the above that fakery by the neo-prophetic healers was a common assumption of people who had not had any form of healing encounter with these neo-prophetic healers and this assumption was shown through the expression of their disbelief in the healing of the 'incurable' by these prophets. Margaret Asamoah affirmed this in the previous chapter when she posited that her workers (Mariama and Hamdiya) at her salon used to ridicule her for attending Obinim's church. However, they authenticated such healing claims of Obinim through their encounter and experiences with the healer.⁴⁹¹ She argued that people's disbelief in the healing of the 'incurable' by the healers is basically based on their ignorance and that such unbelievers testify and approve of the healing of the 'incurable' by the healers as authentic only when they have had an encounter with these healers.⁴⁹²

Criticising the neo-prophetic healers' healing of the 'incurable' as fake and unauthentic emanated from the use of various unconventional modes such as the healing tokens and the *akwankyere* used by healers for healing the 'incurable.' A common observation throughout

⁴⁸⁹ Prophet Edmund Antwi Bosiako, interview, 15 December, 2019, New Era Chapel International, Feyiase-Kumasi.

⁴⁹⁰ Matthew Opong, interview, 31 January, 2020, Moment of Glory Prayer Army, Efinase-Kumasi

⁴⁹¹ Margaret Asamoah, interview, 14, December, 2021, International God's Way Church, Tema-Community9.

⁴⁹² Margaret Asamoah, interview, 14, December, 2021, International God's Way Church, Tema-Community9.

my study of these healers' claims of healing the 'incurable' was that their choice of items and *akwankyere* for healing the 'incurable' seem strange and out of the ordinary biblical context. Observations and claims such as eating toffee to aid childbirth and to cure long-term infertility are questionable, washing of face with church's fountain water, 'spray' or perfume, salt, oil, apple, honey, or soap *akwankyere* and the selling and buying of some of these tokens by some prophets is beyond the understanding of the outsider, hence considered by unbelievers as misleading and fakery. However, it could be argued that the believer is always right and for this matter, there is the need to anchor on the explanation of Margaret Asamoah that such disbelief is as a result of ignorance and the inexperience of the unbelievers and that once the unbeliever has had an encounter of such healing experience such perceptions fades.⁴⁹³ Another aspect of the healers' claims of healing the 'incurable' that was observed to cause doubts and disbelief was that most of the healings were not instant but rather progressive. Most patients who resort to neo-prophetic healers rely on the *akwankyere* given to them by healers to regain their health and well-being. Such progressive healing instils doubts and breeds criticism of their claims of healing 'incurable' diseases.

Furthermore, the neo-prophetic healers seemed to demonise every disease sent to them for healing. Almost every 'incurable' disease to them has a spiritual connotation. The processes of healing these diseases such as the use of specific items and *akwankyere* were targeted at some evil agents (including humans) suspected to be the cause of their illness. This perception breeds suspicions which leads to disharmony among relatives and families. The cases of patients such as Theresa Owusu, Ama Tei, Oppong Matthew, Alex Ababio, Florence Asmah, etc. were suspected to have been caused by envious human agents

⁴⁹³ Margaret Asamoah, interview, 14, December, 2021, International God's Way Church, Tema-Community9.

(relatives or friends) who are evil possessed. This assertion was also evident in the various declarative prayers of the neo-prophetic healers. The argument is that not every condition (illness) that a medical professional had no evidence to diagnose at a given time should be attributed to evil or because of an evil agent. It is common knowledge that technological advancement in the field of medicine keeps improving, which suggests that medical science is limited though it keeps improving. This infers that conditions that medical professionals have no evidence to diagnose may be due to a lack of technological advancement in a space of time and that with time such conditions could be diagnosed and cared for by medical professionals. However, the above argument does not matter to the neo-prophetic healers and patients in the sense that they projected illness that were unexplainable, with strange symptoms and diseases that nullifies potent medication to have their root cause in the spiritual realm and for that matter seek relief from a numinous power bearer through the prophetic healers. My contention based on the above is that if the neo-prophetic healers and patients through prayer declarations, use of healing items and *akwankyere* can cause relief and regain their health from strange symptoms, unexplainable illness and diseases that defy potent medication within the same space of time then the demonisation of such illnesses and diseases must not be trivialised by the inexperience of the ignorant.

Moreover, it was observed throughout the study that prophetic healers in healing the 'incurable' did not discriminate on days of healing. Healing services were organised during weekdays as well as weekends. This raises a lot of questions one of which is "does organising healing services during weekdays make the individuals who attend such services occupationally unproductive?" This question is posed because being in church (healing service) for over eight hours during weekdays could be argued to make one unproductive because the person would not be at work. However, such criticism could be squashed by objecting that people take sick leave at their various workplaces to see the

doctor and such could also be done by patients who resort to neo-prophetic healers for healing irrespective of the days such healing services are organised.

That apart, the popularisation of the neo-prophetic healers in the Ghanaian religious scene by the print and electronic media (new papers, radio, TV, and YouTube) as well as various social media handles, including FaceBook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and Messenger is not without its fair share of challenges.⁴⁹⁴ Neo-prophetic healers buy air space from various TV and radio stations to telecast and air their healing miracle services, solicit clients or patients, and exhibit their healing prowess. Other neo-prophetic healers have their own TV and radio stations. These include Asade TV and MOGPA Radio, and OB TV, which are owned by Isaac Osei-Bonsu and Daniel Obinim respectively.⁴⁹⁵ Readers, listeners, and viewers of these healing services which are made up of miracles performed by the neo-prophetic healers, and healing testimonies by patients or clients can be found in Ghana and beyond. While some audiences of these media, including social media, become proponents of the neo-prophetic healing miracles, others are opponents. Christopher Mante⁴⁹⁶ and Florence Asmah⁴⁹⁷ are examples of proponents who listened to and watched the neo-prophetic healing miracles on radio and TV.

Despite the benefits the neo-prophetic healer's gain from the media, it is also a major source of criticism against their claim to healing the 'incurable.' Some people criticise them for faking and using imposters, while others criticise them for exploiting and abusing their

⁴⁹⁴ Isaac Forson Adjei, Thomas Oduro-Kwarteng, and Victoria Nana Poku Frimpong, "The Rhetoric of Commercial Prophets in Ghana: A Case Study of Bishop Daniel Obinim and Reverend Obofour," *Journal of Religion and Media* 21, no. 1 (2023): 12-25.

⁴⁹⁵ Eric Manu, "Neo-Prophetic Christianity and Television in Kumasi: A Religious-Impact Assessment," *European Journal of Communication and Media Studies* 2, no. 1 (2023): 1-11.

⁴⁹⁶ Christopher Mante, interview, 31 December, 2020.

⁴⁹⁷ Florence Asmah, interview, 14, December, 2021.

patients or clients.⁴⁹⁸ The neo-prophetic healers are also criticised as being unethical in their ‘so-called’ spiritual directives (*akwankyere*) in healing patients or clients who consult them in times of adversity. For example, Daniel Obinim was criticised by the media for stamping on the stomach of a patient to heal her suffering from fibroid and infertility.⁴⁹⁹

5.6 Prospects of Healing ‘Incurable’ Diseases in Ghana

The neo-prophetic churches were said to have originated in the Ghanaian religious scene in the 1990s; had healing as one of their key characteristics.⁵⁰⁰ The movement, since its emergence in the 1990s, has gained unprecedented proliferation with overflowing members in their healing services. The claim of healing the ‘incurable’ attracts a lot of audiences both the sick and other individuals who are looking for breakthroughs in different aspects of their lives. Over the past three decades since its inception in Ghana, the neo-prophetic healers, and their claims of healing all manner of diseases, including ‘incurable’ diseases continue to receive admiration from people nationwide and beyond the corridors of Ghana.

The question is “what really is making the neo-prophetic healing ministries and their claim of healing ‘incurable’ to strive in the face of much criticism?” It could be deduced from the information gathered on the case studies examined in the previous chapters that these neo-prophetic healers in the process of healing the ‘incurable’ diseases Africanise

⁴⁹⁸ “Bring False Prophets to Order,” Daily Graphic, accessed (June 11, 2024), [https:// www. Graphic.com.gh/daily-graphic-editorials/bring-false-prophets-to-order.html](https://www.Graphic.com.gh/daily-graphic-editorials/bring-false-prophets-to-order.html).

⁴⁹⁹ Ghkwaku Tv, "OBTV Releases Video Which Proves the Woman Obinim Stepped on Was Not Pregnant," video, December 12, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=asMhYBXL4IQ>

⁵⁰⁰ Omenyo and Atiemo, "Claiming Religious Space," 55-56.

Christianity by interpreting and making theological reflections within the context of their African experiences. For instance, though the missionary churches believed in the healing power of Jesus Christ, they did not anticipate healing miracles in modern ministry; they rather preferred God's hand in the normal event rather than the extraordinary.⁵⁰¹ Again, though the Catholic Church believed in the gift of healing, when quizzed on how the sick will be healed the position of the church was through medication⁵⁰² However healing in the neo-prophetic context is embedded within the African ontological view that health and wellbeing is of divine. And so, if the individual is sick and all potent medication fails or is suffering from an unexplainable and strange illness, it is believed to have spiritual connotation hence generating notions that the Jesus power is or should be capable of healing just as it was done for some biblical characters in the bible. In this regard, healers 'offering' recovery and patients seeking healing are not bordered by giving and applying tokens such as soaps and honey *akwankyere* to regain their health which are akin to the traditional practices. The argument from the above is that the healing of the 'incurable' will continue to strive because there is the infusion of the traditional worldview with Christian theology that allows healers who claim to heal 'incurable' diseases as well as patients consult these healers for healing to do so without having the guilt of lowering the gospel standard as introduced by the Europeans or deviating from the Christian practices.

Besides, the claims of healing the 'incurable' by the neo-prophetic healers served as a source of hope for patients in times of hopelessness. Based on a common observation, it could be said that as humans, we turn to the divine for solutions in times of distress and hopelessness. Example could be drawn from the Coronavirus epidemic when most nations

⁵⁰¹ Kailing, "A New solution to the African Christian Problem," 492.

⁵⁰² *The Catholic Response to New Christian Movements*, 66-78.

of the world resorted to the help of the divine through fasting and prayer. It is such hope to witness (within the Christian domain) the healing power of Jesus that the neo-prophetic healers offered to patients with strange, unexplainable diseases that defied medication and their relatives that kept the proliferation and the expansion of these healing services of such healers who claimed to heal ‘incurable’ diseases. Patients resorted to their healing services in the search for relieve for their illness through declarative prayers, motivational sermons and worship songs that uplifted their souls and reassured them of the hope in Christ Jesus. Amanda Yeboah affirmed my above position as she posited that songs sung during healing services bring hope and deliverance to the sick from their infirmities.⁵⁰³ For example, it was observed that songs such as *Awarde Kasa* (‘God speak’) by Ama Boahemaa, *Kae me awurade* (remember me Lord), *Mapa me Akyi*, *Okyeso-Nyame*, *Aseda Sewo* and *W’agye me* by Florence Obinim which were sung during healing manifestation or during testimony period, conveyed a deeply spiritual connection that brought hope to patients.⁵⁰⁴

It could be inferred from the above that the healing of ‘incurable’ diseases by neo-prophetic healers such as Antwi Boasiako, Isaac Osei Bonsu and Daniel Obinim would continue to flourish and gain nationwide fame in the Ghana religious scene and beyond because they served as petitioners of a specific numinous power bearer to which patients with ‘incurable’ disease resorted for divine assistance. Again, the claim of healing the ‘incurable’ by neo-prophetic healers would continue to be given attention by patients since their healing services are regarded as religious gatherings where patients experience and regain their hopes in the healing power of Jesus Christ.

⁵⁰³ Amanda Yeboah, interview, 31, December, 2021, International God’s Way Church, Ashaiman Scrap Park.

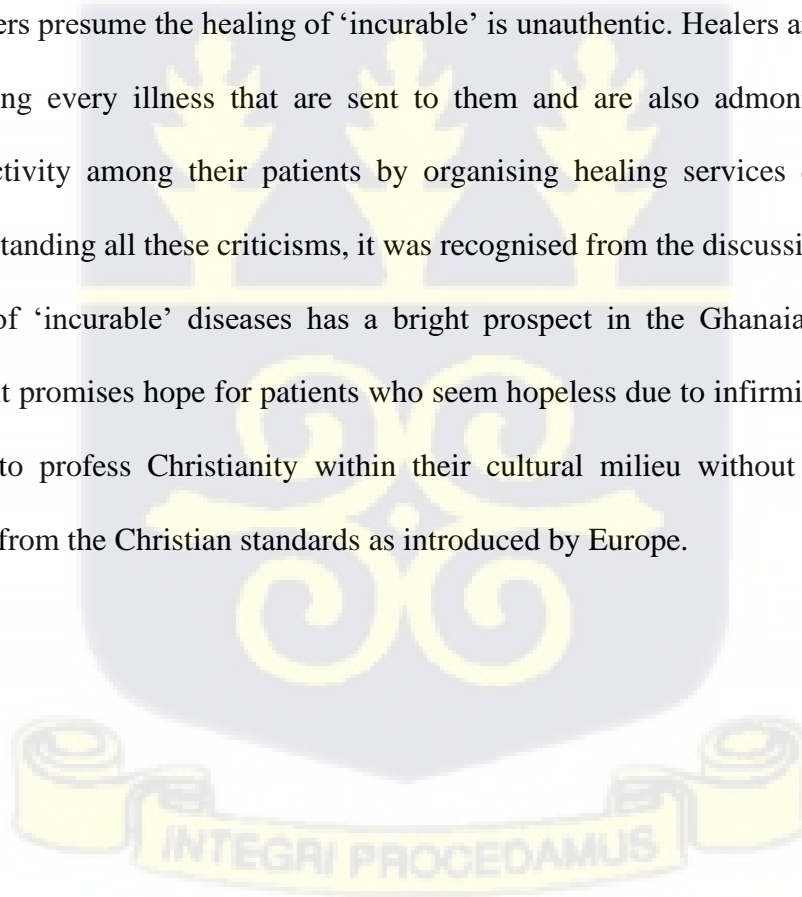
⁵⁰⁴ Gabriel Appiah, Field Work, Personal Observation, 31, December, 2021, International God’s Way Church, Ashaiman Scrap Park.

5.7 Conclusion

The neo-prophetic healers claimed to heal ‘incurable’ diseases by affirming that they were the representatives of Christ Jesus on earth and for that matter, they were endowed to heal the sick based on the power and authority of Christ. Due to this, the healers posed a theological notion that such healing power of Christ which they had been endowed with could heal the ‘incurable’ in our present days just as Christ and the apostles healed other biblical characters during their time. They also justified their healing of ‘incurable’ diseases by basing on the disappearances of patients’ symptoms and general well-being. This is done by examining the patients’ health conditions before and after they have been healed. Though medical reports are used to verify healing, it is not much of a focus to them since they believe most of the illnesses are medical conditions that medical professionals have no evidence to diagnose, or diseases healed by them have spiritual connotations which could only be reversed by divine intervention. Patients and relatives who visited the neo-prophetic healers for healing used the occurrence of what they termed as ‘signs and wonders’ that accompanies their prayers, use of items and *akwankyere* to certify they had been healed. These ‘signs and wonders’ that manifested during and after exorcism, *akwankyere*, use of blessed items, imprecatory prayer were used as an indicator of being healed due to the influence of the traditional worldviews that had it that nothing happened by chance and that every event had a supernatural manipulation; therefore the expected ‘signs and wonders’ after the *akwankyere* or declarative prayer was a proof that the evil spiritual agent which was being an obstacle to their good health is dealt with. Patients also certified their healing by examining their health condition before and after their encounter with the healers, mostly the disappearance of symptoms and their general well-being was used as a guarantee that they had been healed from ‘incurable’ diseases. It was also deduced from the discussion that patients who claimed to have been healed from ‘incurable’

diseases do not much depend on a medical report to validate their healing. This is because of the belief that their illnesses were caused by spiritual forces and that once such evil agents had been divinely dealt with to regain their health there was no need for a medical report.

The healers and patients spent long periods of hours in healing services and such long hours of healing services was exhausting for both the healer and the patients. Another challenge that was evident from the discussion that affected both the healer and patient in the healing of 'incurable' diseases was the inability of the patient to sometimes activate healing, such instances were attributed to the sovereign will of God. It was also seen from the discussion above that claims of healing the 'incurable' is saddled with lots of criticism. Most unbelievers presume the healing of 'incurable' is unauthentic. Healers are also queried for demonising every illness that are sent to them and are also admonished for causing unproductivity among their patients by organising healing services during weekdays. Notwithstanding all these criticisms, it was recognised from the discussions above that the healing of 'incurable' diseases has a bright prospect in the Ghanaian religious scene because it promises hope for patients who seem hopeless due to infirmity. It also allowed patients to profess Christianity within their cultural milieu without any prejudice of swaying from the Christian standards as introduced by Europe.



CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.0 Summary

This study is an investigation into Ghanaian neo-prophetic healers' claim of healing of 'incurable' diseases, using three neo-prophetic healers as case studies. The case studies were conducted on Bishop Antwi Boasiako of the New Era International, Rev. Isaac Osei Bonsu of the Moment of Glory Prayer Army, and Angel Daniel Obinim of International God's Way. Throughout my study, I observed that though there had been studies on the neo-prophetics in Ghana, serious attention had not been given to the aspect of healing 'incurable' diseases and this provided a gap in the literature. Therefore, this study on Ghanaian neo-prophetic healers' claim of healing 'incurable' diseases is a response to the prevailing gap.

To respond to the research gap identified above, the study sought to investigate how Ghanaian neo-prophetic healers healed 'incurable' diseases. To achieve this aim of the healers' claim of healing 'incurable' diseases, two major research questions were posed as a guide. These were: How do Ghanaian neo-prophetic healers' understanding of 'incurable' diseases underpin their healing practices? And which indigenous Ghanaian beliefs and practices are influencing Ghanaian neo-prophetic healers' claim to healing 'incurable' diseases? To help me gather the needed data, two sub-questions were generated, and these were: How can case studies on three Ghanaian neo-prophetic healers provide data for an understanding of their claim and practices of healing 'incurable' diseases? And which

indigenous Ghanaian beliefs and practices underpin the notion and practices of healing ‘incurable’ diseases in Ghana? Ethnographic theology was employed for the field study.

Both primary and secondary data were collected for the study. The primary data which were obtained from fieldwork used participant observations and in-depth interviews. Secondary data, which included published and unpublished literature, were also used. Seven months was used to study the three selected neo-prophetic healers. Two months for Edmund Atwi Boasiako and Daniel Obinim, whereas I used three months in the case study of Isaac Osei Bonsu. In all, a total of forty-one respondents were interviewed in the three cases studies I understudied.

The study made use of grounded theologising by Tienou Tite as a theoretical framework. Grounded theologising is a process of reflecting on a biblical text by an individual or a particular group of people to ascertain their lived experiences within their geo-cultural context. It was used to ascertain Ghanaian neo-prophetic healers’ and their clients’ reflections on biblical narratives of healing ‘incurable’ diseases. The theory has helped me to understand how neo-prophetic healers in Ghana use biblical narratives in their interpretation of lived experiences.

In chapter two, the study examined health and healing in Ghana. This section of the work focused on the conceptualisation of health and the notions of disease, ill-health, and sickness among some selected Ghanaian societies such as the Nankani, Ga, Akan and the Ewe. The chapter helped to comprehend the Ghanaian concept of health as forming harmonious relationships with one’s deity of worship, neighbours, and being free from negating forces in life. The implication of this is that the Ghanaian society does not define

health as the absence of disease only because there are other factors such as peaceful interaction with one's deity, mental peace, and the general well-being of the society. This section of the study also brought to bear that Ghanaian societies, when faced with ill-health resorted to some form of medication, which might be bio-medical or traditional herbs (herbal preparations or healing forms). However, if all known potent medications seemed to fail, then they declared the situation as 'incurable' and sought other forms of spiritual interventions for their ill-health. This then underpins the Ghanaian traditional notion of disease, ill-health, and sickness. Generally referred to as *hunamu yadee* (physical disease) and *sunsum mu yadee* (spiritual disease). Diseases that are believed to have spiritual connotations are referred to by the Ghanaian society as 'incurable'. Therefore, 'incurable' diseases in the Ghanaian society are diseases that have unexplainable occurrences, diseases that have strange symptoms, and diseases that are resistant or do not respond to medications.

Furthermore, I discussed Christianity, health, and healing in Ghana. This area of the study delved into the various Christian denominations in Ghana and their approaches to health and healing. Examples of Christian denominations that were examined included the Historic Missionary Churches, AICs, Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches, and the Neo-prophetic. It was uncovered that these various Christian denominations in Ghana approach health and healing differently. For instance, the Historic Missionary Churches place emphasis on bio-medical care and seek healing through the empirical-scientific approach. According to this group, God can work through medical professionals such as medical doctors, laboratory technicians, nurses and pharmacists to manifest his healing power to humanity. The AICs emphasise a combination of herbs and religious healing, while the

Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches' approach to health and healing is both empirical-rational and religious. With the neo-prophetic, their approach to health and healing is largely religious, and they use blessed items, among other practices, such as *akwankyere* (spiritual directive).

In chapter four, the study examined the neo-prophetic healers and their healing practices in Ghana. This aspect of the study dealt with neo-prophetic healers' claim of healing the 'incurable.' Using the case study method, healing services of the three selected neo-prophetic healers were observed, and the healers as well as their patients who claimed to have been healed and their relatives were interviewed. Other respondents who were also observed and interviewed included the prayer and fasting groups and the song ministration group of the three selected neo-prophetic healers. An interview guide was used to facilitate the interview sessions on the neo-prophetic healers' claim of healing 'incurable' diseases and the data collected helped in the understanding the Ghanaian neo-prophetic healers.

Finally, the study dealt with the phrase 'healing the 'incurable.'" This part of the study discussed the justification of healing the 'incurable' by Ghanaian neo-prophetic healers, the practice of *akwankyere*, the certification of healing by patients who claimed to have been healed and their relatives, challenges encountered by both healers and patients, criticism of healing 'incurable' diseases, and the prospect of healing 'incurable' diseases by the Ghanaian neo-prophetic healers. This aspect of the study helped me come to terms with the Ghanaian neo-prophetic perspective (beliefs and practices) on 'incurable' diseases and why they claimed to heal 'incurable' diseases. It also helped me to comprehend how Ghanaian neo-prophetic healers' understanding of 'incurable' diseases influenced their practices on healing. This aspect of the study helped to expose the extent to which the

indigenous Ghanaian beliefs and practices had influenced neo-prophetic healers' healing of 'incurable' diseases.

6.1 Major Findings

The research findings discussed below are in relation to the investigation of Ghanaian neo-prophetic healers' claim of healing 'incurable' diseases.

First, it was been observed that 'incurable' diseases were considered by these three neo-prophetic healers and their clients as any disease that either defied medical treatment or diseases that did not respond to medications. The study found that it was a common belief among the neo-prophetic healers and clients that an 'incurable' disease could not be cured by scientific medication because the underlying cause was spiritual. So, in this case, all 'incurable' diseases were believed to have spiritual connotations. The study revealed that the neo-prophetic healers and clients were of the view that until such spiritual factors were resolved, or the enemy (*otanfo*) was divinely dealt with, the patient or the one suffering any form of 'incurable' disease could not be relived and might eventually die from such an 'incurable' disease. These beliefs forced patients who had unexplainable diseases, diseases that had strange symptoms and diseases that were persistent and did not respond to medications to adhere to the neo-prophetic healers' claim of healing 'incurable' diseases. It is based on the above premise that the neo-prophetic group linked religion to health.

In addition to the above finding, the study revealed that neo-prophetic healers supported their claims of healing the 'incurable' with a number of factors which included the disappearance of patients' symptoms. Healers certified that a patient had been healed from

an ‘incurable’ disease based on the disappearance of their symptoms. This was assessed by the healer based on the condition of the patients before and after they (patients) had been healed. This is called the ‘before’ and ‘after’ conditions. The ‘before’ and ‘after’ conditions of patients basically referred to the symptoms that were exhibited by the patients against their current health conditions after they had gone through the healing process, which could be the application of one or more of the healing practices such as exorcism, *akwankyere*, and declarative prayers.

Furthermore, healers relied on testimonies and affirmations from patients and their relatives to ascertain that patients had been healed. The testimonies from healed patients were important in the neo-prophetic religious scene in Ghana because it was a means by which healers proved their claim of healing ‘incurable’ diseases. These neo-prophetic healers allocated time during their healing service for testimonies to be shared by patients who had been healed. Testimonies were intentionally allowed and encouraged by the neo-prophetic healers to reassure unbelievers and patients awaiting healing of their (the prophet’s) healing power. During this period of testimonies, patients who claimed to have been healed place emphasis on specific symptoms that they experienced when they were sick and how such symptoms disappeared after their consultation with healers. They exemplified by sharing with the neo-prophetic healers and congregants certain activities they could not do while they were sick and how such activities were currently done by them after getting healed.

The overreliance on the disappearance of symptoms and the improvement in the health of the patients as proof that the neo-prophetic healers healed ‘incurable’ diseases made the use of medical reports, as a means of verifying the healing of ‘incurable’ diseases,

unpopular and optional among the neo-prophetic healers. The reasons why the neo-prophetic healers and patients that were healed from ‘incurable’ diseases made medical reports an option was that some diseases that were healed by the neo-prophetic healers were conditions that medical professionals had no proof of diagnosis. So, the disappearance of symptoms and the general improvement in the health condition of patients were rather relied upon to certify healing the ‘incurable’, thus making medical reports an option.

Besides, because neo-prophetic healers believed ‘incurable’ diseases were spiritual, and for that matter beyond scientific investigation, it was believed that the individual patient was healed only after the supernatural cause (*otanfo*) of their disease was mollified or dealt with. This is why the disappearance of symptoms and the improvement in the health of a patient after the necessary *akwankyere*, exorcism and declarative prayers were considered affirmations of healing ‘incurable’ diseases. For instance, *opomuden* (wellbeing) and *ahuoden* (strength) of patients after an encounter with neo-prophetic healers strengthened their belief that neo-prophetic healers healed ‘incurable’ diseases.

The study also found out that the neo-prophetic healers and their clients were ‘ordinary readers’ or ‘popular readers’ who engaged in grounded theologising. They read and extracted biblical passages that fit their situational experiences in order to solve their existential needs. With regards to healing ‘incurable’ diseases, biblical passages of healing events were quoted and re-interpreted within their cultural context to serve as motivations and proof of their ability to exemplify similar biblical healing occurrences in their generation. Such readings and interpretations of biblical healing to suit their cultural experiences formed the basis of the neo-prophetic healers’ understanding of healing ‘incurable’ diseases. The healers perceived themselves as a presentative of Jesus Christ in

their society. Thus, they had been given the mandate to heal just as Christ did. The notion that Jesus is the only true healer capable of healing every disease underpins the neo-prophetic healers' ability to heal 'incurable' diseases since they are the representatives of Jesus Christ. The neo-prophetic healers in healing 'incurable' diseases engaged in healing services alongside exorcism, fasting and prayer, *akwankyere*, and the use of blessed items.

Another major finding from the research was that, the indigenous Ghanaian beliefs and practices had considerable influence on the neo-prophetic healers' practices of healing 'incurable' diseases. The traditional belief that the universe is made of both the physical and spiritual entities and that the spiritual controls the physical greatly influenced the practices of healing 'incurable' diseases by the neo-prophetic healers. Thus, the term 'incurable' among the neo-prophetic emanates from the above traditional belief. This is because what is term 'incurable' diseases (mysterious diseases with strange symptoms and diseases that are resistant to medications) are all believed to be caused by the manipulation of some kinds of super-natural forces that are beyond the understanding and control of humanity. So, for the neo-prophetic healers to deal with such diseases, they must seek divine interventions, which means from the spirit world and its entities. The above finding corroborates Mbiti's expression that Africans are deeply religious beings who interprets events as having spiritual connotation.⁵⁰⁵ For these neo-prophetic healers, this means God or Jesus is the only one who can remedy such 'incurable' diseases.

⁵⁰⁵ John Mbiti "Main Features of Twenty-First Century Christianity in Africa," *Missio Africanus Journal of African Missiology* 1, no. 2 (2016): 79-80.

The belief in spiritual entities and the use of impersonal mystical powers in the form of objects such as plants, animal parts, amulets, talismans, and charms as practices in the traditional Ghanaian societies had also influenced the neo-prophetic healers' religious practice of healing the 'incurable.' Ghanaian neo-prophetic healers communicated with the spirit world and spiritual entities in order to seek *akwankyere* to patients' ill-health. Some of the neo-prophetic healers' healing practices were similar to the traditional healers. The use of items or objects such as church wristbands, stickers, handkerchiefs, spray, oil, water, apple, clay, sand, toffee, communion wine, Celtic salt, honey, and many more to remedy the 'incurable' diseases of their patients had raised concerns. So critics say the neo-prophetic healers are impersonating traditional healers.

Finally, it is the traditional belief in spiritual and mystical powers such as divinities, witchcraft, magic, and juju that influenced the neo-prophetic healers and their patients to emphasise religious healing. The traditional belief in juju, evil magic, and the impersonation of objects for evil purposes or gains influenced both healers and patients to suspect other human beings, irrespective of whether they are close relatives or not as capable of causing harm and bewitching them with 'incurable' diseases. Such traditional influences intricate what the neo-prophetic healers and clients refer to as imprecatory prayers as they pray to remedy their ill-health through divine interventions with the intention of inflicting harm and reversing their personal situation to their perceived enemies.

6.2 Conclusions

The study focused on three selected neo-prophetic healers' claim of healing 'incurable' diseases in Ghana. At the end, the study revealed that 'incurable' diseases are unexplainable diseases that defy bio-medical care. It is believed by the neo-prophetic healers' and their clients that 'incurable' diseases occur because of sin, bewitchment, curses, and the manipulation of spirit entities. Such diseases are believed to have spiritual connotations that cannot be dealt with naturally except through divine intervention.

The practices of healing 'incurable' diseases by the neo-prophetic healers' is based on theologising selected biblical passages with similar healing occurrences. Healing events in the Bible by Jesus, Paul and prophets are imitated by reinterpreting such healing events consciously or unconsciously within their cultural context. This grounded theologising by Ghanaian neo-prophetic healers differentiates them from other Christian denominations like the Historic Mission and the Classic Pentecostal Churches in terms of their approaches to healing. The neo-prophetic healers in their bid, as ordinary readers, to engage in grounded theologising interpret biblical healing events into their cultural experiences, which has also been interpreted by critics as a clear manifestation of the influence of the traditional beliefs. For instance, Bible characters whose healing miracles are imitated by Ghanaian neo-prophetic healers are Jesus, Peter, and Paul who used saliva, sand, handkerchiefs among others to aid healing. So too are Ghanaian neo-prophetic healers engaged in the use of items for healing. However, the neo-prophetic healers' beliefs and practices such as *akwankyere* and the use of healing tokens (items) are said to be akin to indigenous Ghanaian practices. Besides, as Akan by identity, it is argued that the Akan

conceptualisation of health and ill-health has a tremendous influence on these neo-prophetic healers' healing practices.

The influence of the indigenous Ghanaian beliefs and practices on the neo-prophetic groups in Ghana brings to bear the underlining factors that necessitate the neo-prophetic healers' claim of healing 'incurable' diseases in the Ghana religious scene. This contribution of the study is revealing since it helps to better understand that the neo-prophetic healers are perceived by clients as replicas of powerful indigenous medicine men, and diviners whose spiritual powers are capable of healing 'incurable' diseases within the Ghanaian religious space.

In this investigation of three Ghanaian neo-prophetic healers' claim of healing the 'incurable' diseases, the study has revealed that the neo-prophetic healers provide hope to patients in times of distress. These documented practices of the neo-prophetic claim of healing the 'incurable' in the Ghanaian religious scene serve as a resource material on the contributions of the neo-prophetic healers to the health care system in Ghana. The study has also contributed to the data on neo-prophetism in particular and Christianity in Ghana as a whole.

6.3. Recommendations

The study indicated that the neo-prophetic healers rely mostly on the disappearance of symptoms and the improvement of patients' health condition to certify healing. This way of certifying healing is based on the traditional concepts of health which assumes *apomuden* (well-being) and *ahuoden* (strength) are concomitant to good health. Therefore,

patients who regain strength and wellbeing after being prayed for are considered as being healed without necessarily emphasising on a mandatory medical investigation to prove their claim of healing ‘incurable’ disease. It is therefore, recommended that neo-prophetic healers include post healing medical investigation to authenticate their claims of healing ‘incurable’ diseases.

In addition, the study found out that ‘incurable’ diseases are believed by the neo-prophetic healers to be caused by supernatural forces, that is why they are firmly rooted in their view that these diseases can only be healed through divine intervention. It is recommended that neo-prophetic healers and clients be sensitised to understand that some of these diseases are not spiritual and do not defy bio-medical care but that their persistence could be due to patients’ inability to adhere to the required regulations or treatment regime.

Furthermore, the study found that neo-prophetic healers see themselves as having supernatural powers, capable of healing ‘incurable’ diseases, so clients with ‘incurable’ diseases resort to them for healing. The study also revealed that neo-prophetic healers and clients affirmed healing based on disappearance of symptoms and the general improvement in the client’s wellbeing. There is a need for a longitudinal study on the health of patients who claimed to have been healed by neo-prophetic healers.

More so, all three neo-prophetic healers are Akan and they started their ministries in Akan communities. Therefore, it is recommended that a broader study on the neo-prophetic healers and their claim to healing ‘incurable’ diseases in Ghana is carried out among other ethnic groups and in other parts of the country. Such a broader study will provide enough

data to ascertain the claim of Ghanaian neo-prophetic healers' claim of healing 'incurable' diseases.

Finally, it is recommended that studies be conducted to investigate the relationship between 'incurable' diseases and bio-medical healing in Ghana with respect to those who have not been healed by Ghanaian neo-prophetic healers despite attending various healing services and programmes. Such a study could focus on those in hospitals after seeking healing from neo-prophetic healers.



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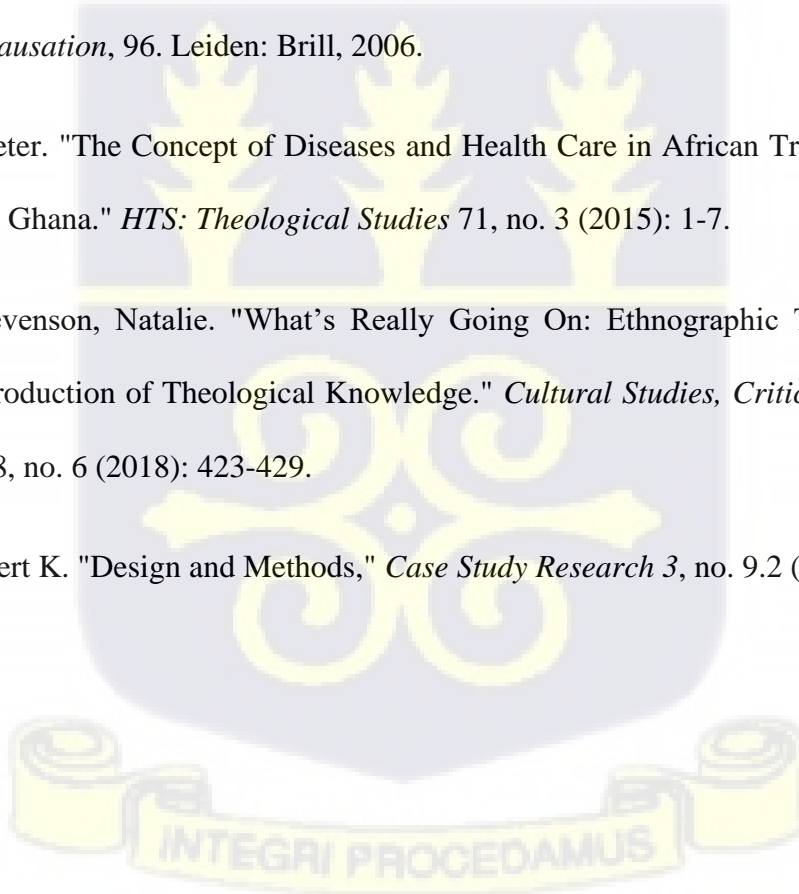
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APPENDIX

INTERVIEW GUIDE

GABRIEL APPIAH: Ph.D. CANDIDATE

DEPARTMENT FOR THE STUDY RELIGIONS, UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

Section A: Background information

1. Gender
2. Age.....
3. Please what is your educational background?
4. Please what church do you attend?
5. Please indicate your position

Section B: Questions for leaders/ Prophetic Healers

6. What type of healing service or types of diseases do you heal?
7. Are there special cases that medical professionals find incurable that you have healed?
 - a. Name such disease
 - b. In your perspective what is the cause of such disease?
 - c. Are there any requirements for you to heal such diseases mentioned above?
 - d. How do you heal such a disease?

8. Have there been cases where the sick fake healing or people who have been healed come back for healing?
 - a. What will be the possible reasons for this?
9. Are there special occasions for healing?

Section C: Respondents, family members/ relatives, members/clients who claim to have received healing from neo-prophetic healers

Either/Or

10. You have been identified as one of the people who have had your healing. Will you be so kind as to tell me more about your healing

Or

Your relation/ kinsmen was identified as one of the people who received healing, could you be so kind to identify who it is and your relationship with the person/ tell me more about that.

11. From what you have said, do you or did you feel completely healed
 - a. How was your disease diagnosed?
 - b. Have you returned to the source of the diagnosis to find out if you are healed?
 - If yes, what is the difference
 - If no, Why?
 - c. How long have you been healed?

Section D: Others

12. What is your ministry in the church and how does it contribute to the healing ministry?
13. What is your perspective or impression about the nature of healing that takes place in this church/ ministry?