

**A THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF ΘΕΡΑΠΕΙΑ (HEALING) OF THE
WOMAN WITH ISSUE OF BLOOD IN LUKE 8:43 – 48 IN NIGERIAN
CONTEXT**

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Abstract

Healing and health enable every inhabitant of the world, without distinctions of the country, religion, race or economic status, to live a socially and economically productive life. Holistic health comprises of complete physical, mental, social and spiritual well-being. Disease, on the other hand, is 'some deviation from normal functioning,' which has desirable consequences because it produces personal discomfort or adversely affects individual's health status. A healthy person must be free of all physical (objectively verifiable diseases), social (poverty) and psychological disabilities. Similarly, a person who is free from, disease, illness and sickness should not only be in a state of equilibrium but must also not be known to be suffering from any ailment that brings about personal discomfort. While the concept of health is rich and encompassing, it is still problematic because of the difficulty in reaching a consensus on who enjoys 'a complete state of health. This study therefore, investigated healing of the woman with issue of blood in Luke 8:43 – 48 in Nigerian Context with a view to ascertaining the degree of compliance to Jesus' command to heal the sick and preach the gospel. The study adopted hermeneutical and exegetical methods to analyse the text in order to bring out the essential meaning of healing in the Bible in relation to the practice in Nigerian society. The descriptive method of a survey type was employed. The results of the interview were therefore analysed, which showed the healing is a supernatural act of God. The study concluded that healing is a fundamental aspect of the liturgy and practice which helps in bringing people to salvation. The study then, recommended that the authority of the Church should ensure strict compliance with the principles and techniques of healing adopted by Jesus in Luke's Gospel.

Key Words: *θεραπεία* (Therapeia), Healing, Healing miracle, Salvation, sickness

Introduction

Health is good and universally desired. It is a necessary condition for obtaining goods of life, indeed, in most western cultures; health has become a virtual and cultural obsession, resulting in steadily growing demands on health care systems and in burgeoning industries in wellness and alternative medicine. Importantly, health and healing are central to the message of salvation throughout the Old

and New Testaments, and particularly in the ministry of Jesus. The terms health may be used in various ways, which include healthy body, healthy minds and spirits. Similarly, one can only talk about physical, mental, spiritual, and social health when health is related to salvation for Christians, although it is not likely to be defined that way by a clinician or public institution like the World Health Organization.

In the healing ministry of Jesus Christ, faith was a dominant factor. Normally, faith on the part of the patient was a prerequisite to healing. In ordinary usage, it is applied to be non-medical treatment of disease often spoken of as healing by faith. A good example was the healing of the woman with issue of blood, who received her healing through absolute faith in God by touching the garment of Jesus Christ (Alana, 2008, p. 92). This usage is based on a fragmented view of the human person in which the doctor looks after the body and the Church looks after the soul. Healing includes the whole person and all means of healing, whether medical or non-medical, physical or spiritual. Healing, whether provided through creation or providence, produces limited powers of self-healing and placed healing agents in our environments.¹

Akintunde posited that women in the New Testament appeared in the miracle stories of Jesus and were beneficiaries of various Jesus' healing miracles. The Bible generally and particularly in Lucan narratives referred to the following women; Simon Peter mother - in- law (Luke 4:38-39), the widow of Nain (Luke 7:11-17), the daughter of the Synagogue ruler (Luke 8:40-42, 49-56), the crippled or bent woman (Luke 13:10-17), and the bleeding woman (Luke 8:42-48) (Akintunde, 2012, pp. 45-56). While the miracle of Jesus portrayed him as not only proclaiming the good news of release and liberty through which humankind encountered God's reign, it also reflect the God's participation in the healing of human being. This is manifested in the healing of the woman the issue of blood.²

1. The Text (Luke 8:43 - 48)

43 Καί γυνή οὔσα ἐν ρύσει αἵματος ἀπο ἑτῶν δώδεκα ἦτις [ἰατροῖς προσαναλώσασα ὅλον τὸν βίον] οὐκ ἰσχυσεν ἀπ οὐδενὸς θεραπευθῆναι, 44 προσελθούσα ὀπισθεν ἤψατο τοῦ κρασπέδου τοῦ ἱματίου αὐτοῦ καὶ παρα χρέμα ἔστη ἡ ρύσις τοῦ αἵματος αὐτῆς. 45 καὶ εἶπεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Τίς ὁ ἀψάμενός μου; ἀρνούμενων δὲ πάντων εἶπεν ὁ Πέτρος, Ἐπιστάτα. Οἱ οἰχοὶ σὺνέχουσιν σε καὶ

ἀποθλίβουσιν.**46**ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν Ἦψατο μού τις.Ἐγὼ γὰρ ἐγνων δύναμιν ἐξεληλυθειάν ἀπ’ ἐμοῦ.**47**ἰδούσα δὲ ἡ γυνή ὅτι οὐκ ἔλαθεν, τρέμουσα ἦλθεν καὶ προσπεσοῦσα αὐτῷ δι ἣν αἰτίαν ἤψατο αὐτοῦ ἀπήγγειλεν ἐνώπιον παντος τοῦ λαοῦ καὶ ὡς ἴαθη παραχρήμα.**48** ὁ δὲ εἶπεν αὐτῇ, Θυγάτηρ ἡ πίστις σου σέσωκέν σέ.Πορευου εἰς εἰρήνην.

43 And a woman had had a flow of blood for twelve years and could not be healed by anyone, **44** came up behind him, and touched the fringe of his garment; and immediately her flow of blood ceased. **45** And Jesus said, “Who was it that touched me?” When all denied it, Peter said, Master, the multitudes surround you and press upon you!”**46** But Jesus said, “Someone touched me; for I perceived that power has gone forth from me.” **47** And when the woman saw that she was not hidden, She came trembling, and falling down before him declared in the presence of all the people why she had touched him, and how she had been immediately healed. **48** And he said to her, “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace.” (RSV)

Exegesis of Healing of the Woman with issue of blood in Luke 8:43 - 48

The three synoptic recorded the encounter of the hemorrhaging woman with Jesus and this give credence to the originality of the story. Otherwise it would have been of no significance for the church to have created this story particularly when it has to do with commendation of a woman who demonstrated great faith in Jesus.³ In the three accounts, Jesus called the woman “daughter” (θυγάτηρ). He identified with her and thereby gave the woman a sense of belonging. Rather than seeing her as an outcast, she was esteemed as a part of God’s family (Fuller, 2010, pp. 94-98). Matthew and Luke recorded that the fringe (του κρασπεδου) of Jesus’ garment, Mark omitted that detail and just said she touched his garment (θηρατο του ἱματιου αὐτου). It is possible for someone to know that somebody has touched his garment if the person touched a part that is closed to the body but hardly will someone notice that someone has touched the fringe of the garment particularly when the garment is very loose.⁴ Thus the words του κρασπεδου constitute one of the so-called minor agreements between Matthew and Luke against Mark and suggest that the formers’ account is the original (Wieland, 2005, p. 100).

Though some manuscripts in Mark such as M, f1, 33, 579, 1071, added the phrase, του κραιοπεδου, it is quite clear these words in those manuscripts are a secondary addition from the parallels.⁵ Likewise the omission of the words in some manuscripts in Matthew 1689, it (a, b, c, g, k), vg^{ms} and Luke D, it (a, d, ff², r¹, Marcion) are secondary omissions, possibly omitted as redundant, or accidentally (Wieland, 2002, pp.59-62). No physician could help her and she was desperately committed to her desire to get healed.⁶ By the social norms and conventions, she was unclean and unfit to mix freely with others in the society so that she would not defile others with her uncleanness. "Whoever touches this things shall be unclean, and shall wash his clothes, and bath in water, and be unclean until the evening" (Lev. 15:27 LXX). When this unnamed woman forced her way through the crowd following Jesus to the house of Jairus and dared to touch Jesus' garment, she was breaking every social conventions (Saunders, 1996, p.99).

This passage and its parallels in the gospel have been subjected to great scrutiny in regard to its historical worth but a reasonable case can be made Luke is drawing on Peter's stories ⁷ thus there is a solid core of historical materials in the narrative (Witherington, 1990, p. 72). It should be noted that the woman in this narrative took the initiative of the following after Jesus (οπισθεϊν), to get her healing. (Sabin, 2002, pp. 321-325).⁸ She also consciously reflects "If I touch even his garment. I shall be made well," This reflection was then expressed in her reaction and response to Jesus call. "the woman came in fear and trembling, and fell down before him and told him the whole truth" (Luke 8:47).⁹ This reaction is an expression of awe followed by a gesture of faith (Sabin, 2005, pp. 66-70). The hemorrhaging woman took the initiative of following Jesus, she trusted him and in faith she reached out for the healing power in Jesus for healing. She is a model of faith not only for women but also for male disciples. Jesus, said to her "Daughter, your faith has made you well, go in peace." Jesus did not see her as unclean or a source of uncleanness; rather he treated her as a very important personality having a special relationship with God, "a daughter" in need of help. The woman's faith, commitment and intelligence seem to have triumphed. She was not condemned for daring to touch Jesus.

She was not rejected for breaking social conventions and beliefs, doing what ordinarily a woman (more so a ceremonially unclean woman) should not do – touch a man who is not a relative publicly.¹⁰ Jesus rather commended her and set her free – 'go in peace'(Fuller, 2014) By asking the question 'who touched my garment?' (Luke 8:45) Jesus made the woman to identify herself publicly before

the crowd. He wanted the woman to bear witness to the crowd of her faith and cure through Jesus; he wishes to make a good example of her (Witherington, 1990, pp. 120-123). The expression 'go in peace' is significant in that, not only that this woman no longer to be avoided, but now she was presented as a living example of faith for all to emulate.¹¹

The hemorrhaging woman represents the powerless and the sick. She was left in penury due to the daily struggle for survival. She had paid many healers in her search for healing but the sickness defied medications and the situation became worse because there was no more money to try other physicians.¹² The hemorrhaging woman suddenly believes that bring healed through touching the hem of Jesus garment, was only a hand's stretch away (Dube, 2000, p. 63). Her decision to touch the garments which contained divine power was meant to change the direction of power, and thereby enable the power to flow from the powerful to the powerless.¹³ This touch is a transformative act: it seeks to shake the halls of power and lead the powerful to ask "who touch me?" (Dube, 2001, p. 70).

The woman had sought her healing in secret and silence and apparently would have slipped away from Jesus without anyone ever knowing what had happened, but Jesus found her out. He called her out of obscurity, accepted her responsibility for her healing and blessed her actions. Jesus placed the responsibility for the healing on the woman, "your faith has made you whole." He did not criticise her daring attitude or her violation of purity regulations (Wells, 1993, p. 80). She however needed only some encouragement to come out of hiding. She knew what had happened to her, and she felt awe that always comes over human being when they realize they are in the presence of the divine - η δε γυνη φοβηθητιστα και τρεμουσα. Jesus is described as possessing a remarkable and awesome healing power that operates automatically upon contact with him. According to the following verse, "...your faith has made you well..." shows the importance or the role of the faith of the recipients of miracle or the sick in the healing process.¹⁴

At Jesus call, the woman came forward, fell at his feet, and told him the truth (v.47). She not only showed faith in touching Jesus garment but also in her thoughtfulness, boldness, and willingness to initiate and take risks.¹⁵ The story of the hemorrhage woman and her encounter with Jesus revealed that going against what is believed in the society to be the truth, going against widely held long tradition and being innovative may not mean going against the will of God.

The hemorrhage woman, contrary to the truth of her religion (Judaism), the reality of the law of purity and defilement, uncleanness and contamination, according to the tradition, took some initiative which brought about some innovations – healing, commendation and self empowerment. She was not condemned for going against the tradition of the community or the ‘truth’ of the religion, rather Jesus supported her action and appreciated her initiative and faith (Dube, 2000).

The woman whose behavior redirects the attention of Jesus away from the need of Jairus and his daughter, whom Luke introduces, provides evangelist with yet another opportunity to define “the poor” to whom the good news is brought (4:18-19; 7: 22). The simple fact that she is a woman in Palestinian society already marks her one of the relatively low status. In addition, she was sick, and her sickness, apparently not physically debilitating, was socially devastating.¹⁶ Her hemorrhaging rendered her ritually unclean, so that she lived in a perpetual state of impurity. (Nineham, 1995, p. 116) Thought that her physical condition was not contagious; her ritual condition was, with the consequence that she lived in isolation from her community these twelve years. Her unenviable life situation is only underscored dramatically by this use of the word “twelve,” indication that she has suffered during the whole of life Jairus’ daughter (v 42) (Bloomberg, 2009, p. 55). Her prospects for renewed sexual intercourse had dropped to nil with her lack of help from the physicians. Whether her doctors had been celebrated physicians whose exorbitant fees made them accessible only to the elite or the quacks that exploited members of a naïve and needy public, the outcome is the same. To her otherwise sorry condition is now added a further factor, her material impoverishment.¹⁷

Also, the degraded condition or status vis-à-vis the larger crowd could hardly be more pronounced; the same, of course, could be said of her need, which has been depicted as indeed grave. Just as the Gerasene demoniac had dwelled among the dead (v 27), so this woman exist outside the boundaries of the socially alive in her community. The press of the crowds’ guarantees that she will infect others with her impurity and aim to touch Jesus was premeditated act that will pass her uncleanness on to him.¹⁸ What is it that motivates her to risk the rebuff of the crowds, of the Synagogue ruler (who may be presume is walking with Jesus back to his home), and of Jesus on the account of her social impropriety? This is the story of her resolution to cross the border of legitimate behavior to gain access to divine power (Blunt, 2013, pp. 56-58). Moreover, referred to the effect of touching Jesus’ garment as immediate. Her bleeding stops, and so she experiences a

reversal of her malady. Though, her physical problem may be cured, she is not yet healed.

In Luke 8:45-46, the significance of the woman's action is highlighted by the fourfold appearance of the verb "ἅψαμένους" "to touch" in verses 44 - 47. Why did this unclean, disgraceful woman presume to touch one to whom even a synagogue ruler had bowed (v 41)? Even when interpreted in the most obvious (and negative) way available within the narrative, the damage she has done is not irreversible; the law contained a remedy: rites of purification for Jesus, a reprimand for the woman.¹⁹ But Jesus does not adopt this reading; instead, he recognizes that her touch instigated a transfer of "power" (Ryle, 1995, p. 77).

The real test of this woman begins, for Jesus calls her to acknowledge her actions to the whole crowds. In fact, at this point Luke's account is largely concerned with the movement of this woman from the seclusion, the isolation first of ritual impurity and now a denial of public proclamation²⁰. The crowd are pressing in, ready to choke faith as it spouts (vv 13-14); will she give in her fear or respond in faith (v 25)? Here the narrative is emphatic: All (including this woman) denied having touched Jesus (Fuller, 2016, pp. 39-41).

In spite of what the disciples have seen, through Peter's response to Jesus it was gathered that they are yet any closer to enlightenment. This is signaled by the nature of Peter's question, based on the lack of understanding. It is also indicated by the title with which he addresses Jesus, "Master," With this epithet Peter acknowledges Jesus' leadership, but little else regarding his identity or purpose. Jesus' reply to Peter concerns his "power." His usage is the reminiscent of Luke's characterization of Jesus in 5:17-19 as one in whom and through whose ministry the Spirit (or power) of God was manifest²¹. Although his words may suggest the presence of magical power, and instead read this expression within the larger scheme provided by Luke's portrait of Jesus as bearer of the Spirit of God (Boobyer, 1994, pp. 227-230).

In Luke 8:46-47, indeed, in his statement, " Ἐγὼ γὰρ ἔγνων δύναμιν ἐξεληλυθειάν ἀπ' ἐμοῦ" "I noticed that power has gone out from me," Jesus presents two unspoken premises concerning himself - namely, that he is the bearer of divine power and that he is able to discern when it is conveyed to others.²² The significance of Jesus self disclosure, the woman recognizes that hiding is useless. Why does she in the first place; and why, when she realizes that hiding is futile, does she let herself be known in "τρέμουσα" "trembling"? It is important to remember that her touching Jesus was irregular and thus open to an

interpretation (Geldenhuys, 2007, p. 73). How would the stifling crowds respond? How would the Synagogue ruler? How would Jesus? Crossing the boundaries from non human world of socio-religious quarantine into the human world and excluding beyond the human world so as to access divine power is, on the other hand, an act of faith, or so it is interpreted by Jesus.²³ In order for that faith to express itself fully, however, it must traverse the perimeter of the holiness code and overcome the stranglehold of the crowds, the disgrace of social banishment. In actuality, giving her social position, her hiding and trembling are expected behaviours. So it is her falling down before Jesus, a token of her humility (Geisler, 2012, p. 89).

Moreover, what is unprecedented and unanticipated is her touching Jesus in the first place, and more so, her public announcement (Geisler, 2007, p. 67).²⁴ The manner in which Luke spares her no potential embarrassment.²⁵ Her proclamation is before all of the people, note that the content of her declaration. She is concerned with why she touched him; that is, she is presented as a hermeneutic and not simply as one who chronicles what had happened. She also declares the immediacy of her cure (Bruce, 2007,).

Only now, in response to her public testimony, does Jesus commend the woman and pronounce that she is whole. Her cure was realised in the privacy and anonymity afforded by the crowds, yet her real problem was a public one. Hence, he has made public declaration of her actions and her understanding of what she had done. Then, he confirms her story and verifies her healing, ruling out all possible interpretations of her unconventional behavior except one – namely, his view that it was an expression of her faith. Jesus actions are calculated to signal, first, that her faith, tested by the boundaries of ritual purity legitimated by community sanctions is genuine. Its authenticity is the manifest in her willingness to cross the barriers of acceptable behavior in order to obtain salvation. Second, he signals that she did not content to have her cured according to biomedical definitions only.²⁶ He embraces her in the family of God by referring to her as “daughter,” thus extending kinship to her and restoring her to the larger community – not on the basis of her ancestry (3:7-9), but as a consequence of her active faith. Now she is not the only one who knows what God has done for her; so do the crowds that gathered around Jesus, because he has pronounced her whole, they are to receive her as one restored to her community (Cadoux, 2005, pp. 150-156).

Conclusion

Miracle is a supernatural acts of God, healing miracle by Jesus Christ, disciple and contemporary miracle workers are not limited to any group of people or sect but its for all and sundry. In both the biblical times and contemporary Nigeria society, miracles led to conversion, growth and development of the church. While no one is against the miracles as means of evangelization and conversion, it should not be the sole aim of organizing revivals. What should be paramount is the healing of the soul, which lead to inner peace, and being at one with the 'Author of miracles'. The miracles of Christ, like all miracles, are manifestation of divine power; and are not attributed to individuals. Situations where people throng an assembly, seeking for miracle will be tantamount to hero worship. Contemporary Christians and religious leaders are therefore enjoined to seek first the kingdom of God.

Recommendation

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Healing should be an essential part of the proclamation of the Gospel message and the Church should place more emphasis on healing ministry following the example of Jesus Christ.
2. More funds should be invested in Mission hospitals to make them viable and functional, the Church must not only be a good example, but take the leadership in providing some of these needed facilities as the early missionaries did and make it available to people at affordable prices.
3. Government should rise to give urgent attention to the improvement of the existing health facilities and the creation of new ones where people's yearnings and aspiration for good health can be met.

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