

Science, Religion and Faith Healing from an African Christian perspective

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ABSTRACT: This paper titled Science, Religion, and Faith Healing from the African Christian Perspective argued that science and religion are two parallel lines that cannot meet. The paper argued further that differences exist between both but the differences are not enough to say Religion and Science cannot combine to find solutions to human problems. The problem this work aims to solve is the gap between Science and Religion. Some scientific scholars believed and submitted that Religion has no contribution to scientific work, especially health issues. Similarly, some religious individuals in the Christian religion believe that science has no contribution to issues of religion, especially health issues. Unfortunately, several have died untimely from ailments that they should not have died if they had allowed Science and Religion to address their ailment. It is also a reality that many are going through pain and difficulty due to their apathy toward Science or Religion or both. Thus, this work is meant to correct the observed abnormality, educate on the need to promote, support, and approve of Science and Religion working together in resolving health-related problems; and ameliorate the adverse effects of the gap identified in Science and Religion concerning health-faith healing. This work was done among Christian religious faithful in South Western Nigeria. The observed population comprised believers having health issues, scientific health workers, and Christian clergies. The work was done theoretically devoid of any scientific–statistical calculation. Therefore, the historical survey method is used for the work. The work finds out that Science and Religion can combine on health matters; and if there is proper synergy between them, many lives will be rescued from dying of health-related problems. The findings in the work prompted the recommendations given among several suggested in the work. It is recommended that orientation, sensitisation, and enlightenment be given perennially to religious faithful on the benefits of approving and submitting to the synergy of Science and Religion concerning health issues. Religious leaders should teach their followers the rationale of Science and Religion collaborating in several spheres of human life. Faith healing as a religious practice is explored in this paper as an example of a religious practice wherein religion and science can collaborate to heal a sick person.

Keywords: Faith healing, Religion, Science, Secularism.

INTRODUCTION

One of the challenges confronting some Christian believers is how to draw a connection between faith in God and human scientific methods. The question that is agitating the mind of many human beings is: Is Science a friend of Biblical faith or not? Some persons are struggling daily in their attempt to answer the question (Jeeves and Berry, 1998, p.13). Scientists have been responsible in

one way or the other, for the cars we drive, the videos we use, the jet planes we fly in, the medical discoveries that alleviate our sickness (es), and the method of education which facilitate learning to all age such as formal, informal, and nonformal methods of learning (Jeeves and Berry, p.149). Science has improved further on the method of learning by introducing technological media of learning

such as electronic and print gadgets that make learning outside formal classrooms or schools possible. Hence, today we talk about onsite and online learning.

Religion unlike science has helped to instil peace and social order in our world. Religion helped to instil discipline in people as well as respect and love for fellow humans. Despite these remarkable contributions, the relationship between science and religion is contradictory and an issue of debate. Before this dispensation, Science and Religion were thought to be in opposition (Lonchamp, 1992, p7); because the history of the human quest to trace the origin of man's existence and his relationship with the supernatural is fraught with hot disputations between Science and Religion (Adeyemi, 2007, p57, p76). This paper aims to establish the interconnectedness of science and religion to faith healing and to debunk the notion that both cannot synergise to find solutions to human health needs. This work is an effort to bridge the gap created by some individuals through their work and teaching that Science and Religion are incompatible.

Faith healing was used to advance the argument in this paper that science and religion are compatible. In addition, the merits and demerits of faith healing are discussed succinctly in the paper to reduce or eliminate if possible, doubt, and rejection some hold concerning faith healing. However, the paper is written from the experiential knowledge, observation, and learning of the writer as a Christian religion adherent. This work's aim of bridging the gap existing between Science and Religion in human health is been achieved because many are now appreciating the synergy of Science and Religion in finding solutions to the health challenge of individuals in many communities of Christian believers and non-believers. The agitation for increased collaboration of Science and Religion especially in respect of faith healing is on the increase in Africa especially Nigeria where the writer lives and work with his family.

MEANING AND EXPLANATION OF SCIENCE

The word Science comes from the Latin word *scientia* which means knowledge (Gould, 1999, pp.3,5). The people involved in scientific work and scientific study are called scientists. Scientists study a wide variety of subjects such as the origin of the universe, the creation of man, human development, plant growth and many more. Scientists used systematic methods of study to make observations and collect facts. Science has an enormous influence on human life. It serves as the source and foundation for modern technology. The tools, materials, techniques and sources of power that make human life easier and pleasurable are attributable to science. Science has greatly affected the way human beings view themselves and the world around them. In ancient times, most people believed that natural events and everything

that happened to them resulted from the actions of the Supreme Being. However, Scientific discoveries have shown that not everything that happens to people and their world is attributable to the Supreme Being (Barbour, 2000).

Scientific study can be divided into four major divisions: (1) mathematics and logic (2) the physical sciences (3) the life sciences, and (4) the social sciences. Scientists use several methods in making discoveries and in developing theories. The methods are (a) observing nature (b) classifying data (c) using logic (d) Conducting experiments (e) forming hypothesis (f) expressing findings mathematically (statistics) (Awoniyi, 2006, p.361).

Science as a concept is used to designate a method of obtaining knowledge that is objective and verifiable (Awoniyi, 2006, p362). Adeoye Adeniyi said science permits inquisitiveness and allows for doubt, errors and expansive thinking (Adeniyi, 2006, p15). The impact of scientific method, scientific discovery, and technological change has been such that some have argued that religious faith has become wholly outdated because of scientific discoveries and technological advancement. Science gives knowledge about the universe we live in and is the best means of knowing thus far devised by human beings. Science depends on seeing and testing facts. Important features of science are its exactness and its universality. Science is a gift of God to humanity. It is not a preserve or property of any particular race, or age (Olajubu, 2003, p. 291).

The aforementioned facts on Science as postulated by scholars cited indicate the significance and value that Science contributes to human life and society. Therefore, no sane person who is knowledgeable and informed on the workings of science at home, school, and worship centres should oppose or reject science because of its significance. However, as believers, science should not be placed above faith in the Supreme Being and we must not also enslave ourselves to science. It is worth stating that science does not have answers to all of God's work in human life. Some works traced to God cannot be subjected to empirical tests because they are uniquely God's work to be accepted only by faith. Doing otherwise may result in offence against God almighty.

MEANING AND EXPLANATION OF RELIGION

Religion has often been said to be as old as humanity (Chepkwony, 2003, p.152). The desire to find answers to human numerous questions about life gave birth to religion. Religion is a difficult subject to handle because of its connotation, origin and definition which cannot be easily given. Scholars differ in their views of religion, especially about definition (Asha citing Mala, 2003). Any good definition of religion must take into consideration the valuative, descriptive and functional aspects of religion.

The etymology of the word “religion” shows that religion is essentially a relationship or a link established between two persons namely a human person and a divine person. The latin word for religion is “religio” meaning among other things ‘united’, ‘union’, ‘bind’, ‘together’, ‘relating’ (Oyedokun, 1999, p.5).

Individuals who attempted to define religion in the past were: Immanuel Kant, Alan Mensias, Richard Cunnighan etc. Immanuel Kant defined religion as “the recognition of all human duties as divine commands”. Alan Mensias defined religion “as the worship of higher power from the sense of need”. Richard Cunnighan defined religion as a personal devotion and commitment to what one considers the ultimate thing in life (Asha, 2003, pp.1,2). Edward Taylor cited by Babs Mala defined religion as simply belief in Spiritual Beings. Thus, religion is an organized system of beliefs, ceremonies, practice (s) and worship that centre on one Supreme Being or deity (Asha citing Mala, 2003, pp.2,3).

There are several reasons why human engages in religion. Many practice religion because it is part of the heritage of their culture, tribe or family. Religion gives many people a feeling of security and the assurance that a divine power watches over them. Numerous persons follow one religion or the other because of the belief that it promises salvation, security, wellness, happiness and the chance of life after death. For some others, religion brings a sense of individual fulfilment and gives meaning to life by its teaching on purpose for living, human destiny in life and hereafter, moral life and human obligations to God, other people and self (Capps, 2023, p.206).

Religion may either be monotheistic (belief in one Supreme Being) or polytheistic (belief in the existence of several gods). Characteristics common to most religions include (a) belief in a deity (b) a doctrine (accepted teaching of salvation) (c) a code of conduct (d) use of sacred stories and (e) religious rituals (acts and ceremonies) (Capps, 2023, p.207). The emergence of the study of religion was motivated by Charles Darwin's scientific theory of evolution. Darwin's theory was directly in contradiction to the religious beliefs of the time and indeed a challenge to biblical teaching and the supremacy of God. Religion is an intrinsic aspect of every human life and it forms the essential bedrock upon which moral and social obligations of persons are based.

Thus, on the strength of what is said above by scholars, religion can be said to be historical, psychological, philosophical, and ethical because it deals with the entire human components and the human desire to live right. The desire for guidance, love and support prompts human beings to form the social or moral conception of God who protects, disposes, rewards, punishes, loves, forgives and heals (Albert Einstein, 2010, p.37). He is also the God of providence, who loves and cherishes human life; and comforter of the sorrowful and the comfortless. Religion is concerned with man's attitude toward nature at large with

the establishing of ideals for the individual and communal life, and with mutual human relationships (Einstein, 2010, p37f).

THE RELATIONSHIP SCIENCE HAS WITH RELIGION

Having explained in a nutshell what Science and Religion are. It beholds this writer to also say a few things about the relationship existing between Science and Religion. Science relies on observable, repeatable experiences while religion relies on revelation. Four levels of relationship have been identified as existing between Science and Religion by scholars. Some of the scholars who attest to the relationship include John William Draper, Stephen Jay Gould, Thomas Berry, Brian Swimme, J.K. Ayantayo and several others. The four levels of relationship identified are:

Conflict level: The conflict thesis holds that religion and science have conflicted continuously throughout history. The conflict thesis was popularized in the 19th century by John William Draper and Andrew Dickson White (Ayantayo, 2023, p.5f). Most contemporary historians of science now reject the conflict thesis, arguing that conflict is superseded by subsequent historical research indicating a more nuanced understanding. Studies have shown that Religion has often nurtured and encouraged scientific endeavour. Several religious groups built many hospitals in Nigeria, trained health personnel and provided scientific equipment and materials to promote scientific work. Nihinlola citing Coulson said Science and Religion need not be at logger head, that each can help the other to an enrichment of human life by continuing to serve humanity (Nihinlola, 2006, p.201).

The second level of the relationship is the independence relationship. It is a modern view which says that science and religion deal with separate aspects of human experience. Hence each should stay within its domain independent of the other. In essence, both Science and Religion should co-exist peacefully as two parallel lines that cannot meet. The reasons for advocating independent relationships are:

1. Scientific language and Religious language differ.
2. Science and Religion represent distinct ways of approaching human experience.
3. Science is descriptive while Religion is prescriptive.
4. Science is concerned with the physical, the measurable, and the repeatable; religion on the other hand is concerned with the spiritual, the immeasurable, and the uniquely individual (Barbour, 1997, p.79).

The third level of relationship suggests that Science and Religion have things to say to each other about phenomena in which their interests overlap. Both Science

and Religion have a common subject which is nature. Both have mutual conflicts in claims and beliefs. The list of the areas of controversies is inexhaustible. There have been controversies about the creation of the universe, the age of the earth, the motion of the earth, where life begins etc. in order to reduce the controversies to the barest minimum, some scholars suggested dialogue between scientists and religious scholars to reach amicable working relationships and understanding. When science and religion are properly understood through constant dialogue and interaction there will be perfect harmony between Science and Religion (Gould, 1999).

The fourth level of relationship identified is integration. The proponents of this level of relationship suggested an integration or unification of both Science and Religion into a single voice or discourse. To them, the methods of Science and Religion have much in common. Coulson and Schilling asserted that Science and Religion have a threefold structure, namely experience, theoretical interpretation and practical application. Science and Religion should be integrated because both described reality and both sought expansion of knowledge of God and humanity (Adeyemi, 2007, pp.57,76).

Faith healing is an act of healing an illness or injury through prayer or religious faith. It is a method of curing disease(s) and physical infirmities by employing prayer, faith, exorcism, fasting, water and Olive Oil (Ayegboyin and Ishola, 1997, p.29). Faith healing is the belief that complete healing from physical and spiritual sicknesses can only come from God through Jesus Christ whom the Bible described as "The Great Physician". Another name for faith healing is divine healing or spiritual healing (Ayegboyin and Ishola, 1997, p.30).

According to Olabisi Olaseinde-Williams, faith healing refers to all forms of activities carried out under the umbrella of religion in religious houses for correcting behavioural disorders as well as curing physical ailments (Williams, 2003, p.561). Faith healing is a cooperative form of mysterious or spiritual healing involving a healer and a sick person. It is believed that the healer and the sick person believe in the healing power of the divine or other mysterious healing mechanisms.

Faith healing can occur at a distance where the faith healer and the sick person may not need to come into contact with each other before the healing occurs. When such occurs, it is called a miracle. For a healing miracle to occur there must be cooperation between the healer and the person seeking healing. Healing is further defined as the restoration of a sick person to health. Health used here implies wholeness, soundness, peace, and blessedness. Health, therefore, stands for the complete well-being of a person – spiritual, physical, mental and social (Nihinlola, 2006).

Christian Science is probably the best-known of the Christian groups that emphasize faith healing. Christian Science contends that illness is an illusion caused by faulty

beliefs whose solution is prayer for the removal of faulty beliefs and replacement with good ones. Other Christian groups emphasizing faith healing include Pentecostal Churches, Apostolic Faith and Faith Tabernacle (Ayegboyin and Ishola, 1997, p.35). These mentioned groups of Christians rely exclusively on faith healing to the point of rejecting immunization and other orthodox medicines. To them healing from diseases is done through counselling and prayers. No medicinal remedies are permitted (Ikorok, nd); to these groups of Christians mentioned above faith healing rests on the absolute power of God to heal.

Roman Catholic Churches and some other Protestant churches especially evangelical churches and Episcopalian churches also believe and practice faith healing. However, their practice of faith healing encompasses the use of orthodox medicines and other scientific medical gadgets. These churches mentioned built many hospitals in Nigeria, trained health personnel and provided scientific equipment for the management of health problems. They encouraged patronage of physicians and also encouraged the use of prescribed medicinal drugs for healing purposes. For these categories of Christians, drugs should be used because God Himself created the material or element used in making the drug(s), especially creation and Christ's redemption. In addition, they believe that medical doctors and other medical workers should be confided in and consulted for healing because God Himself gave them the ability to work as medical personnel (Ikorok, nd).

ACTIVITIES INVOLVE IN FAITH-HEALING

Faith healing refers to ritualistic practices of communal prayer and gesture such as laying of hands that are done to solicit divine healing for a sick person. Faith healing often involved visits to religious houses and a strong belief in a Supreme Being.

Fasting and dietary regulation are also involved in faith healing. They are meant to attract God's divine favour. Faith healing may involve complete abstinence or partial abstinence from food (Ikorok, nd). Confession is provided for in faith healing. It provides an avenue for sharing a problem with another person known as the Counsellor; Confession has been observed further to promote psychological well-being and good physical health. Confession and counselling have been used successfully for the management of personality problems and mental disorders.

Holy Communion sharing with the sick persons is another form of faith-healing wherein the administering clergy/minister prepares and administers it for the sick person(s) on request. The process of restoration to bodily wholeness, emotional well-being, mental functioning and spiritual aliveness is regarded as healing (Graham, 2005,

p.497). Holy Communion (Lord Supper) is believed to carry healing potent to heal all manner of diseases because it involves the eating of the body of Christ Jesus and the drinking of his blood symbolically. The body and the blood of Jesus are believed to be medicinal for the sick persons. Some Christian sects known to believe and practice faith healing do not accept blood transfusion for their sick members because to them blood symbolizes life. And taking another person's blood implies taking the person's life. The Apostolic Faith and Jehovah Witness are two Christian groups that practice the aforementioned practice.

The term faith healing is best known in connection with the Christian religion. The Bible especially the New Testament teaches belief in and practice of faith healing. Advocates of faith healing say that legitimate faith healing occurs today just as it occurred in the early Christian Church era. There have been claims that faith can heal blindness, deafness, cancer, AIDS, developmental disorders, anaemia, arthritis, defective speech, multiple sclerosis, skin rash, total body paralysis, and various diseases/injuries (Copeland, 2015). The terms 'heal', 'healed' and 'healing' occur one hundred and thirty-two times in the King James Version of the Holy Bible. Jehovah Rapha translated "I am the Lord your Physician" or "I am the Lord who heals you," is one of the seven redemptive names for Jehovah –God. Healing in the Bible is often associated with the ministry of specific individuals such as Elijah, Elisha, Peter, Paul and Jesus. The word of God is the basis for holistic health because the scriptures testify to it that God in Jesus Christ is the great physician or healer needed by every human being because he bore our pain and iniquity to guarantee our wholeness (Isa 53:5, 6; Ex. 23:25; Mk 5:25f; Lk.4:38-41; Js 5:14-16, etc); and when attention, reverence, obedience, and faith are given to God's word; healing both physical, emotional, and spiritual are effected (Derek,1999, pp.9,61).

Africans attach great importance to health because virtually every greeting of Africans contains inquiry about health as the primary concern. Good health is believed to come from God. Any deviation from this optimal situation is conceived as an illness caused by any of or a combination of the following:

(a) natural phenomenon e.g. climatic conditioning (b) bad diet (c) wrath of God as punishment for sin (d) demon possession (e) lifestyle (f) malicious spiritual manipulations by enemies.

Good health is a basic need and it is the most paramount concern of humanity. Good health is a need that must be reasonably well maintained before an individual can aspire to achieve other important things in life (Wambutda, 2003, p.392).

The high cost of maintaining good health is what is driving many people, especially in Africa to faith healing clinics in search of healing from various ailments confronting them. In essence, there is no exception to

ailments brought to Faith's healing home or clinic because God is seen as the ultimate healer who heals all diseases brought to Him. Therefore, all manner of diseases or ailments ranging from physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, psychological, pathological, and terminal ailments are taken to faith clinics, especially by all who believe in faith healing.

THE MERITS AND DEMERITS OF FAITH HEALING IN THE CONTEXT OF AFRICAN SECULARISM

Having carefully examined Science and Religion and the relationship existing between them, the writer will now examine the merits and demerits of the Christian Religious practice of faith healing in the context of Science and Religion or better still secularism. Secularism is the relegation or demotion of religion to the background and promotion of scientific reasoning. It also means not giving religion a thought or chance in matters affecting human life ('Secular' Cambridge Advanced Dictionary, 1980, 1288). Secularism is a philosophical term that rejects religion, and religious practices such as faith healing, fasting, praying, etc.

Faith healing has become a healthy health practice in Africa, especially in Nigeria. It has revolutionized health practice in most of Africa. It is accessible to most people and it is easy to afford. It is less costly and less time-consuming when compared with orthodox medical practice. The resources needed as well as the materials needed to give healing are not very sophisticated and scarce to get. Among the things needed are faith, the word of God, water, olive oil, wine and bread. There are biblical bases for faith healing in the Bible. There are evidences of healing both in the Old Testament and the New Testament. Some of the scriptural passages that attest to divine or faith healing are: (Ex23:25-26; Gen20:17-18; 2Kgs20:1-7; 1Kgs3:1ff; Num12:1-15; 2Kgs5:1ff; 1Kgs17:17-24; Mk5:25-34; Act3:1-11; Mk10:46-52; Jn5:2-9; Jn9:1-7; etc).

Healing took place through the ministries of some specific individuals in the Holy Scripture such as Elijah, Elisha, Peter, John and several others. Jesus Christ our Lord also carried out several faith-healing works while on earth physically. While leaving the earth, Jesus instructed His followers to continue with the work of healing through faith. To carry out the assignment successfully he empowered his disciples with the gift of the Holy Spirit and imbued them with power to heal the sick and set the captive free. The resultant effect of the disciples' imbuement with power is the healing of the sick during Apostles Peter, John, Paul and others recorded for Christian believers in the Holy Bible.

Faith healing work does not require formal training to practice. Faith healers need the gift of faith, the gift of healing, and faith in God's word as basic requirements for

engaging in faith healing. The sick person who desires faith healing must have faith in God, faith in God's word, and have the ability to pray for himself/herself to experience faith healing. Research carried out at California Pacific Medical Center on AIDS patients found out that many of the AIDS patients survived the ailment, many who became sick or are sicklers recovered faster when faith healing prayer was conducted on them in addition to the scientific medical healing they were subjected to. Harold Walach and Peter Fenwick medical researchers confirmed the stated fact (Targ, 1998).

In Nigeria, record has it that several of our Pentecostal ministers such as Pastor W.F. Kumuyi (Deeper Life), Pastor E.A. Adeboye (The Redeemed Christian), Bishop David Oyedepo (Living Faith), Pastor Ayo Oritsejafor (World Bible Church), Late Prophet Temitope Joshua (Synagogue Church), Pastor Chris Oyakhilome (Christ Embassy), and several others believe and practice faith healing in their respective churches. They also instruct other ministers working with them to practice Faith healing. Many people have testified both on print and electronic media to receive healing through the divine ministration of some of the ministers whose names were mentioned earlier. Living Faith Ministry (Winners) publicly announced to her members onsite and online that about thirty-six members who constantly participated in the church worship online and on-site were healed of COVID-19 disease through faith-healing prayer (Oyedepo, 2020).

Faith healing no doubt will remain with us until the end of age or when Christ Jesus comes back to take the saints to heaven where he has gone to prepare for the saints or the redeemed of God. In heaven there will not be pain nor sickness; all who make it to heaven will live in good health, joy, and abundance. Thus, faith healing will continue to gain ground as long as religion continues to exist and live. In addition, the high cost of obtaining scientific medical healing is a factor that will continue to make some people fall back to faith healing as the solution to their ailment. The confirmation of healing attributed to faith hinges on these facts: 1. Healing has taken place with evidence of improved health of body, mind and soul supernaturally; 2. that the healing took place without orthodox medical intervention; 3. that the healing is extraordinary and medically unverifiable (Thornton and Malony, 2005).

Despite the benefits inherent in faith healing, it is not without demerits. Some of the known demerits include:

The belief that only faith healing ingredients such as faith, faith in the sacred word of God, prayer anointing oil, water, and fasting are the only necessary ingredients needed for healing is a disservice to faith healing. The view is pro-exclusive and anti-inclusive. Hence, it needs consideration to strengthen faith healing. The blanket condemnation of the scientific medical healing method by some faith healing practitioners is a clog on the wheel of progress of faith healing ministry that needs to be checkmated. The group of Christians holding this

exclusive view about faith healing is the fundamental group, and it is different from the evangelical group. An example of such a fundamental group is The Apostolic Faith Church in Nigeria. This exclusivity view is deficient and should be corrected through constant dialogue and education to accommodate science and religion to ensure holistic faith healing. Dialogue and education will erase ignorance and misunderstanding of Science and Religion in connection to faith healing at local and global levels (Barbour, 1997).

Also, deceit and exploitation are common among some practitioners of faith healing. The desire for popularity, fame, gullible followers, and money have led some faith healers to fake healing in order to enslave their victims, exploit, dupe, extort, and keep such in their camps. They also fake healing to extort money from their unsuspecting clients. This unwholesome attitude has made some people consider faith healing as a ruse, whereas it is not so.

More so, untimely/unneeded deaths: A study carried out by a group of medical officers revealed that four out of every five sick persons United States of America children who died after their parents put their trust in faith-healing could probably have survived if medical treatment had been sought. The study was carried out at the University of California. Many deaths of sick persons including pregnant women have been recorded through faith healing that ignored medical treatment when they were needed. Likewise, incessant fasting that some sick persons were subjected to further complicated their problems and sickness. For instance, some sick persons who have no ulcers have become victims of ulcers due to many days of fasting that are not properly executed. However, in situations where faith healing and medical treatment were combined, the result was successful and encouraging. Faith healing that outlaws medical treatment has resulted in under-nutrition, poor mental ability, low economic productivity and coma for some sick persons (Ikorok).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Faith healing has been examined in relation to Science and Religion. The gap between Science and Religion as well as the relationship between them were discussed. A case for a positive relationship between Science and Religion was advanced in the paper. From all the discussion, it is clear that Religion and Science have a vital role to play in human life. Religion and Science need to collaborate at all times, especially on health issues to be a great blessing to humanity. Health has religious component as well as scientific components. Science tools are needed most time to authenticate the genuineness of faith healing. For example, the person healed of his/her ailment by faith healing may require scientific proof or test to convince critics, doubters, and opposers of faith healing

that it is real and not a fluke. It is also worth saying that the fact that some individuals have abused the process and means of faith healing is not an acceptable reason to condemn faith healing as a fluke.

Scientific input also aids faith healing in the area of health history or information on the health status of someone who submits to faith healing. The scientific medical information provided through x-rays, laboratory tests, scans, etc helps in guiding faith-healing personnel saddled with the duty of administering faith healing to the sick person. Furthermore, the idea of God cannot be ruled out in the affairs of human beings irrespective of whether all humans are religious or not. God is believed to be responsible for human beings and is also believed to be in control of human affairs as ruler and master. Hence, most scientists especially those in the health sector in Africa, Nigeria inclusive, believe that their scientific fit or effort will be futile except God works with them. This stated fact is supported by the motto of one of the renowned medical institutions in Nigeria. The motto reads: 'We care, God heals'.

Therefore, in concluding this paper, I wish to make the following suggestions:

1. There should be constant dialogue between pro-science and religious leaders to stem the misunderstanding and to reduce the gap between science and religion. Educational institutions, medical institutions, religious groups, government agencies, etc should regularly organise seminars and conferences to bridge the gap between science and religion in connection to health.
2. Faith healing practitioners are encouraged to be open, receptive and accommodating of scientific elements in their administration of faith healing work. By doing so, frequent occurrences of unneeded death during faith healing administration will gradually reduce and eventually stop.
3. The issue of faith healing should be made an issue of choice for people to decide on their own whether they want faith healing, orthodox healing, or a combination of both. The issue of imposition should be guided against because it negates the universal law of human freedom to which many countries in Africa ascribe; of importance, children should be protected from medical neglect under the pretence of religious faith healing.
4. Those engaged in giving people information such as journalists, should be allowed to carry out investigative journalism on people practising faith healing and those receiving healing through faith to know, whether it is true or not.
5. Faith healers who used trickery to deceive people by faking healing to extort money and enslave their victims should be persecuted when discovered and appropriate punishment meted out to them to serve as detriments for future abusers of faith healing.
6. Good health and good nutrition, godly living, and the fear of God which are basic necessities of life should be promoted at all times to reduce the pressure for either faith healing or orthodox healing or both; basic teachings on health promotion, disease prevention, and good nutrition based on biblical principles that are contextually aligned should be encouraged and practised at individual and group levels.

These suggestions if given the needed consideration by all concerned will go a long way to strengthen the synergy between science and religion in relation to human health with a focus on faith healing.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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