



Contextual Analysis of *Θεραπεία* (Healing) of the Demon-Possessed Man in Gerasene (Luke 8:26 – 39): Implication for Christ Apostolic Church, Nigeria

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Abstract. Health is a factor that each and every person longs for. There are other ways of defining health. These include having a healthy body, mind, and spirit. On a similar note, a discourse about health related to the social, mental, spiritual, and bodily aspects of a person is only relevant when viewed from the perspective of Christian salvation. Jesus Christ emphasized healing during his mission to the world as a fulfillment of his command to his disciples to preach the gospel and heal the sick. For the purpose of finding out the level of compliance with Jesus' command regarding healing, the cure of the Demon-possessed Man in the Gerasene in Luke 8:26-39 was studied from the perspective of the Nigerian situation. This study employed exegesis and hermeneutic methods. A descriptive survey technique was also employed. It was found out that the healing process of the Christ Apostolic Church is compliant with the healing doctrines of Jesus Christ. It is therefore suggested that the healing process and doctrines employed by Jesus Christ as described in Luke's Gospel be followed to the letter by the leadership of the Church.

Keywords: *θεραπεία* (Therapeia), Health, Healing Miracles, Luke 8:26-39, Salvation

1. Introduction

The right to health is a basic right for all people, and "health for all" is a concept that is incorporated by the World Health Organisation in connection with the International Conference on Primary Health Care held in Alma-Ata, in what is now Kazakhstan. Health encompasses complete physical, emotional, social, and spiritual wellness. Disease is "some deviation from normal functioning" and has beneficial effects in regard to an individual's state of health or when an individual is distressed (Rao, 2009: 45-50). A healthy person must lack any social (poverty), mental, and physical (objectively identifiable) impairments. Likewise, a person who is free from diseases, illnesses, or sicknesses must not only be in a balanced condition

but also must not be known to be suffering from any ailment that makes him or her feel uneasy or awkward. Notwithstanding its inclusiveness, the notion of health is also fraught with difficulties in making a determination that a person is in "a complete state of health." Restoration of what is broken between people and the universe at large and between people and people can also be a function of the healing process.

Moreover, there exists a relation between people and the environment. The way and manner each person lives as a human is affected by this relation (Akintunde, 2017: 23-28). Imbalance, whether it is internal or external, is usually the root cause of diseases or poor health. Jesus made sure that people who were healed from physical ailments were also restored spiritually. Most healing miracles, whether before or after the healing, resulted in a profession of faith in Jesus. Moreover, a person is made whole or healed if his or her physical, mental, or spiritual well-being is restored. In the Bible, even if one's soul prospers, God's greatest wish is that the person is healthy (III John 2). God, in his supernatural power, heals people either with or without the help of technology. Some of Jesus' healings were done in a faith-healing manner (Oderinde, 2019: 113-115).

There is a very significant relationship between faith and healing. In the relationship between faith and healing, both concepts work in collaboration, and faith is both the basis and the catalyst of the process of healing. It is worth stating that faith heals, and that faith and healing have a very significant relationship in the sense that faith is the key that unlocks the most hopeless of situations. Faith is needed in the process of healing. It's only faith in Jesus and in his name that is able to work the miracle of healing (Oshun, 1981: 119). Since the study is focused on the analysis of the concept of *θεραπεία* in the Gospel of Luke 8:26-39 and its application Republic of Nigeria, the study is thus guided by both the divine and human reaction towards the health challenges or sickness, and diseases

that seriously threaten the very existence of humanity and God's original intention for the life of a human being, which is to live in good health.

2. Exegesis of the Healing of the Demon-Possessed Man in the Gerasene (Luke 8:26 - 39)

The deliberate allusions to the boat journey that begins in verse 22 integrate the story of Jesus and the Gerasene demoniac into its surrounding text. After Jesus and his disciples had sailed across the lake as planned, they found themselves "αντιπέρα τής Γαλιλαίας" or "opposite Galilee" and "έξελι Ότι δέ αύτώ σπι τήγγην", respectively, and "stepping out on the land." They will be embarking on their return journey at the end of this part. Although this story unit can be seen as a part of a series of events that are connected by a series of allusions to a journey, this story unit's midpoint and understanding of the reason for Jesus' planned trip (v. 22) foreshadow its importance in this series of events (Omotoye, 2013: 87). In relation to this importance, Akintunde, (2012) wrote that "the first observation of consequence is the phrase that appears to make up the melody of this paragraph because it is repeated so often and in so many different similar instances."

The salient characteristic of the figure who appears alongside Jesus in this narrative is that he is both bound to and freed from the power of demons (4:18-19). If we can pick out the melody in these variations of the theme, then the counter-melody would be in the indications that this marks the first entry of Jesus in predominantly Gentile territory (Casey, 2017: 2). In this particular scene, the term "αντιπέρα τής Γαλιλαίας" "opposite Galilee" is more than just a geographical point, although it is significant at this level because it marks a border crossing characteristic of this part of the third gospel Jesus is about to undertake. Indeed, Gentiles are coming to him (6:17), but Jesus' first and final journey within the nation of Gentiles is about to occur and will soon become apparent. There are a number of indications which point to Jesus' present whereabouts among the Gentiles, and geography is the most obvious one among them. The economy of the area is heavily affected by its newfound fame because of this unclean, the demon is also called an "unclean spirit" (v. 29), lives among tombs (v. 27), and there are pigs and a swineherd in the area (vv. 32-35).

Furthermore, Josephus thinks that the epithet employed for God in the first words of the possessed is acceptable within the larger Gentile world of the Romans (Akintunde, 2012: 45). Fundamentally

speaking, this narrative revolves around Jesus' mission to overcome obstacles and his particular gift of salvation to the world of Gentiles. This particular focus is quite significant in terms of the broader narrative framework in which this narrative is couched in that Luke shows how the application of what has been learned in terms of the Sower narrative (8:4-21) has been relevant to the world of the Gentiles. This is a man who has been possessed by demons in the past but has been saved subsequently. He acts in a manner consistent with a follower and is the very first-person Jesus commissions to spread his missionary work on the basis of his own experiences in his past. This may not be very surprising in a gospel in which God's purpose is to give everybody a sense of complete salvation. It should not be lost in one's analysis that God's purpose shall not be realized in this third gospel in that his purpose shall instead be realized in his second book, Acts. It is quite significant that Jesus has not been very successful in this particular region known as "opposite Galilee," in that this particular demoniac has been proclaiming in a very overt manner God's presence in Jesus to everybody in this particular region.

God's purpose has to be contrasted with Jesus' immense acceptance in this particular region in terms of its populace, in that they were overwhelmed with a sense of utter terror, in that they asked to be excised from their particular nation, in that they wanted to get away from this particular nation in Luke's rendering of this episode is a testament to his detail-oriented and theatrical narrative style. While the text of verses 26 to 30 seems to be confusingly disjunctive, leaping around in terms of its narrative chronology to emphasize the speed with which Jesus and the possessed man meet, in an attempt to harmonize the man's behavior with the purpose of Jesus' mission, it must be added to the parallels above that the man is a Gentile and, more importantly, at the end of their encounter, begs to go along with Jesus and his disciples on their journey (v 38).

Jesus had momentarily left Galilee and entered a region that had a significant amount of Hellenistic influence. Jesus is described in the gospel of Luke as meeting a guy whose dwelling was among the tombs, which was a region of impurity for the Jews. Jesus is in the company of Gentiles and is in the same space as a herd of pigs. Jesus has gone beyond his own questionable activities in this situation. His previous journeys had led him to significant meetings with individuals who were outside the accepted scope of what was considered proper either due to ritual or behavioral issues. The third gospel writer employs three techniques in order to reach his aim: the rearranging of the sequence of the events that

comprise the story, the use of asides in the story, and the use of graphic details. The third gospel writer also employs the use of social deviance that is specific to his cultural traditions in order to describe the condition of the guy. It is not unusual for storytellers to rearrange the sequence of the events that comprise the story, nor is it unusual that the sequence of the story may have actually happened in a different order; in fact, the use of both is a crucial part of the storyteller's job. Information may be withheld or released when the time is appropriate in the retelling of stories of all kinds in order to shape the story being told in the way that the storyteller wishes the story to be received and understood (Lohmeyer, 2018: 56). Luke allows one flashback in order to explain the nature of the man from the city (v27). He thus allows the audience to take interest in the man immediately. Can you say he is of the city? Why hasn't he come? He has demons, the snappy answer too.

The narrator turns to address his audience in a narrative aside in verse 29. The lack of respect this man received from the city is again emphasized in this situation. Unhinged and mad, he was bound up for protection like a dangerous animal, a menace to society as Luke observes, containment policies have been unsuccessful, and this underlines the strength of evil forces at work inside him even more strongly. There could be no greater example of the destructive power of evil in this man than this: "He lived in tombs and was separated from society; in effect, he was dead." Moreover, the dialogue between the possessed and Jesus was seen as a kind of massive power play since using someone's name was seen as a kind of control over that person. Rather than leaving the man immediately, this particular demon attempts to reason with Jesus and even possess him. The name of the demon, Legion, short for a legion in Latin, which refers to a military unit of about 5,600 men is asked for and obtained by Jesus, the counterspy (Hodgson, 2015:112).

The narrator explains the definition of a counterspy in relation to this co-text immediately, assuming a kind of response by the demons that implies "many" demons were inside the guy. This is the last battle between good and evil, and Jesus is victorious. Not only is Jesus's power and authority expanded to include the Gentiles, but so too is his compassion. The only thing left is to find a way to reconcile what is seen as the strength of this demonic force and what is understood about Jesus's authority in this particular situation (Kato, 2015: 24). The plea made by the demons in Luke 8:31-33 shows that they recognize Jesus' pre-eminent power, supposing that they know Jesus has the ability to cast them into the abyss. They

are now trying to get out of the abyss, that prison of punishment meant for demons, just as they had used their strength to get out from the chains and bands of those who were trying to control their host, the demoniac (v 29). Though it may be almost redundant to their importance to this narrative, the inclusion of the pigs further cements that this event occurs on Gentile soil. Instead, they are introduced through the devils' compromise. Just as it was with the demoniac before him, Jesus allows the devils to enter the pigs, causing them to be "driven" (v. 29) to their own destruction. While the demoniac was sentenced to an after-life through their impact on his life, they are driven to their death (Babajide, 2014: 360).

In verses 34–37, the presence of swineherds meant that eyewitnesses could give testimony regarding the mad behaviour and ultimate death of the pigs. Additional testimony regarding what Jesus had done for this man is offered by their return to the city (from whence this man came, v. 27). Thus, a need arises to understand what is meant by this repeated phrase "what had happened." This reference to this being the man who was demonized but is not anymore is a significant part of this narrative in Luke (vv 35–36). Different methods of stating what this man has undergone in terms of what he has been through in his reversal are offered through descriptive phrases used to describe what these men saw (Elwell, 2016: 140-42). His relation to Jesus demonstrates his composed character, contrary to what he had been like. It also demonstrates his discipleship and submission to Jesus. Luke's description of the ex-demoniac as a disciple and a pupil sitting at the feet of Jesus. His clothing now demonstrates his acceptability; just as his nudity had formerly demonstrated his lowliness and distance from the rest of the population. His crazed life had ended and had been replaced by self-control and respectability. These qualities assist in the search for the complete meaning of the extent of the salvation that he had experienced. All of the above is contained in the explanation of the transformation that had occurred in the life of the ex-demoniac (Baeta, 1997: 19). The transformation they see in the former demon-possessed man is the reaction of the people who have come from the neighboring country.

In the Gospel, the reaction of the people when faced with the supernatural events is expected to be fierce; fear, however, is not a constructive one. They have managed to gather people from the country as well as the city (v. 34); all the people in the area have agreed on one thing. They reject Jesus because of fear. Is it for money, as in the Acts which are similar to it (Acts 16:16,19)? The only reason Luke gives for fear in this co-text, and it does not seem as though the destruction

of the pigs has anything to do with fear (Dairo, 1995:52). Jesus has rejected the good news sales pitch; he departs from the scene. These people do not seem to believe in anything, unlike the men in the boat (8:22-25), in spite of the ample evidence of the divine work in the shape of the transformed friend. (Wright, 2018:339). Luke records this dialogue between Jesus and the man in lines with verses 38-39, when Jesus has already left. Jesus' baptism as recorded by Luke has been noted for its dramatic flair (3:18-22). In including a small anachronism in this narrative, Jesus achieves a setting from which all distractions are removed. "the way in which the final conversation between Jesus and the ex-demoniac was picked up by the camera because of the nature of the extraordinary commission Jesus gives to this man, and because he asks to be 'with him,' he asks for the same status with Jesus that the twelve and the women who comprise Jesus' group have (8:2)." Jesus brings man back to his house and gives him a task to perform for the city (Maxwell, 2016: 78-82). Apart from healing his bodily and psychological aspects, he also heals his vocational or psychosocial aspects as well as his religious aspects. He is given a commission to return to society.

Luke records his commission as follows: "he went and proclaiming how much Jesus had done for him," "return and tell the story of how much God has done for you." Jesus then goes on to give this ex-demoniac "the narration" of the great deeds of God, which is exactly what Luke was doing in writing the Luke-works. Moreover, this "narration" is defined as proclamation through the juxtaposition of these similar words in Luke (4:18; 8:1), which is what Jesus had been doing throughout his public ministry. Moreover, it is crucial to the narrative for this dude to understand the mandate to proclaim God's activity as a mandate to proclaim Jesus' activity. This dude, this Gentile, whose life was defined by many demons and was subhuman in every possible way, recognizes Jesus as the mediator through whom God's salvation intent was being fulfilled, in contrast to the disciples who were consumed by fear in the previous episode in the boat (Luke 8:22-25) (Barth, 2019: 348).

3. Practice of Healing in the Christ Apostolic Church, Nigeria

One of the greatest advantages to the followers of Jesus is "Cura divina," or divine healing. Of course, it would attract a large number of people in West African nations where there are very few hospitals and where expensive care is simply unaffordable to most people. Indeed, "the most common reason why people attend African Indigenous Churches, particularly C.A.C., is because of illness." There are countless accounts of

people testifying to their miraculous healings, their sound health, and their answered prayers. Often times, they claim that they sought care from a hospital or a traditional healer first. After they failed to find relief from the foreign doctors and herbalists, they turned to an indigenous church (Ackroyal, 2012: 84). Within the Christ Apostolic Church, there exist healing days (normally every Wednesday and Friday). There exist healing services daily. The sick were sometimes required to stay in a particular apartment within the pastorium when under treatment in a church; spiritual or faith homes also serve as a clinic and a prenatal for pregnant women. Abogunrin (2018) listed the essential article of faith of the C.A.C under Article (xii) section i. Unlike some other churches, the C.A.C does not support medical treatment within and without the hospital.

Unlike some of the Aladura churches, the C.A.C does not support traditional healing using such items as green water, banana stems, or whatever, as a supplement to healing its ailing members. Crucially, the healing treatment that a sick individual needs is very simple. It is as follows: confessing one's sin, since one believes that sinners or wicked people cause illness; the laying of hands on the sick; anointing the sick with olive oil, if need be, with sanctified water used for both washing and drinking; praying for the sick with faith; confidence and authority thus: "Iwo aisan mo pase fun o, ni oruko Jesu, jade kuro lara re; ko ri bee; ogo ni fun o oluwa nitori pe o ti se" (you sickness in the name of Jesus, I command you, come out of the patient; it shall be so, glory be to you Lord, because you have done it). Besides the use of the "name of Jesus" in healing, C.A.C also heals the sick through the use of the "Power in the Blood of Jesus" that is, "Ni Agbara Eje Jesu." Members of C.A.C also use "sanctified" water in healing as well as driving away evil spirits in their environment, thereby making poison useless.

Oshun (1981) elaborated that some of the opponents of the C.A.C have been opposed to the ways of healing the sick in the church. They argue that in the didactic ways of prayer for the sick, the prayer-man/woman tends to compel God to heal. This position cannot be upheld, as the prayer-man/woman is only exercising the same authority that Jesus Christ had bestowed upon all believers. There is also the position that members of the church should not be coerced into giving up the use of medicines and the services of doctors and paramedical personnel; that the sick should be assisted to regain his health "through every possible and right means". The response is not very difficult. The divine healing is the accomplishment of the Bible's declaration that prayers made in faith

would both heal any believer who is ill and also restore to him his health. What other means do we require aside from faith? Perschbacher (2019) added that one of the significant aspects of the Great Revival of 1930 was the enthusiastic response of the people and the glorious display of the power of God's healing and salvation. The listeners in each centre received the word of revival, trashed their homes, and brought the things that the Lord forbids to the revival on their own.

As a result, the warm reception given to the Great Revival in the town, the miracles performed by Joseph Babalola in the place ultimately far outstripped those performed at Oke-Ooye, three months earlier. At Oke-Bola, a leper was healed; the lame jumped for joy; the deaf heard with their ears open; the blind regained their sight; the dumb could speak; the mental patient were perfectly cured; children were cured of convulsion. The list could go on and on. The healing work performed by Joseph Babalola in the town was so profound that evil spirits, themselves, acknowledged the spiritual supremacy of Joseph Babalola. At Oke-Ooye, Ilesa and Oke-Bola, Ibadan people possessed by witches and wizards had to fall down, rolling on the ground for their evil spirits to submit; in obedience to divine directive, left their victims without much fuss (Barth, 2019: 189-197).

4. Conclusion

One must be cautious in order to avoid a theological problem in case people of this era are to strictly apply the Lucan idea of demon possession to a true scientific definition. Time differences are not only a problem in regards to such ideas, but there remains a large technology gap, and this has yielded some understanding of some feature of the world which was felt in Biblical times as a mystery. The explanation of demonic possession in terms of disassociated psychic states, hysteria, fragmented selves, and multiple personalities, comes from science. There is no doubt that while some of these problems have natural causes, there are causes which come from spiritual beings. One should not discard the whole Lucan idea of Demons as a ruse. This phenomenon, therefore, cannot be fully explained by scientific and psychological terminology. Nobody has sufficient information regarding the world of spirits and the activities of demons to refute the phenomenon of demonic possession. The phenomenon of demonic possession is normally rejected on the basis of science and secularization, but it appears that the description of demons by Luke is a copy of the African tradition.

5. Recommendation

The following recommendations were made:

- a. As Jesus Christ did, the Church must give healing a higher priority, it is a ministry and should be viewed as a part of the gospel message.
- b. To ensure the survival of the mission hospitals, additional funding should be channeled to these institutions. The Church should set a good example by offering some of the basic amenities in the form of the mission hospitals, just like the missionaries did in the past.
- c. The government should come forth to improve the existing health facilities as well as construct new ones to meet the aspirations of the people to have the best health possible.
- d. If the poor majority are to be able to access health facilities, the government must offer a subsidy towards the cost of health care.

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