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AN APPRAISAL OF AFRICAN AND ORTHODOX MEDICINE WITHIN KAFANCHAN TOWN, KADUNA STATE

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Abstract:

The African worldview, which is the sum total of the philosophy and the lens through which Africans view and interpret the world is a neglected theme in African studies. This is not unconnected with the impact of colonial imposition, disregard for African history by the early European writers and the increasing influence of modernization and globalization. This paper is an appraisal of this African heritage before and after colonialism with a reflection on the connection between African worldview and orthodox western medical practice. The study is situated within the context of terminal illness, epidemic, and death and reveals the persistence of the African worldview in modern society even in the face of increasing advancement in medical science and technology. The research discovers that most dwellers of Kafanchan Town would respond to issues of illness, pandemic and death as spiritual occurrence. The paper utilized HIV/AIDS and COVID-19 to assess the outlook and response of the public (Christians and Muslims) in treatment seeking behaviors so as to understand the relationship between the African worldview and orthodox medicine in Nigeria. The result shows a form of unity between adherents of the two religions as they are bonded by their African heritage. The research methodology utilized both primary and secondary sources. The study recommends a renewed interest in the study of African worldview in schools in order to properly understand and interpret changes in attitudes among Nigerians in relations to orthodox medical diagnoses and solutions. Also, government should consider integrating traditional African medicine into the health system as there are still untapped benefits within it.

Keywords: African Worldview, Orthodox Medicine, HIV/AIDS, COVID-19, Death

I. Introduction

Understanding worldview is a very important key to unlocking the hidden lives of any group of people. This is also very significant in exploring the rich and complex (sometimes misunderstood) lives and practices of Africans. Worldview is such a critical element in the life of every society because it determines beliefs and consequently, the day-to-day intra and inter-communal behaviors. Anything short of proper understanding, appreciation and interpretation of the worldview of Africans will undoubtedly lead to distorted analysis of their lives. It does not matter the research tools deployed. No matter how learned anybody is on a subject, without

full grasp of worldview, the end result will be an unbalanced research with illogical conclusions. This is not only relevant for studying African society because all peoples have been shaped by a particular worldview which influences their actions. Without fear of contradiction, it can be stated that it is practically impossible to rightly understand and interpret Africa's past in relation to current happenings without one having a good grasp of this African heritage that holds the key to the deeper part of African society¹

*Kafanchan town is a cosmopolitan settlement in Kaduna State that was established in 1927 by the British Colonialists. It was of economic and political importance to the colonial

Worldview then “is a set of beliefs about the most important issues in life”.² If this is the premise for this discussion, it is not out of place to insist that understanding the history of any people or society is not complete without an understanding of their worldview. It is also “a comprehensive conception or apprehension of the world especially from a specific standpoint—called *Weltanschauung*”.³ The philosopher Immanuel Kant is credited for having coined the term *Weltanschauung*, which spread from Germany to the rest of Europe and the English-speaking world through philosophy, sciences and the social sciences. At its early stage, the term literally meant “intuition of the world”.⁴

This therefore, clearly attests to the fact that every individual or persons have a worldview and most often than not as people think, worldview is what determines our relationship with others and perception of the world outside us. Such a capacity that resides in worldview is sometimes underestimated and downplayed. Incidentally, this is one of the reasons for wars, tensions, even unsolved medical conditions and clashes between persons and groups. By this, it is right to also say that something may not be wrong with the world outside an individual’s standpoints, but if a person’s perception (worldview) is

wrong, everything is then wrong and cannot be corrected in an instant or with force, since it has taken root over a long period of time. As it stands, sadly, the study of worldview has been given attention only in the fields of anthropology and theology.⁵

II. African Worldview and Its Major Elements

Having the above background information, the African worldview is such an important aspect of the lives of Africans. It may not fit in neatly for all societies across the continent, leading to a single strand; because Africa is a geographically, culturally and religiously diverse continent, but it has clear and distinguishable features identified only with people of this continent. What it means is that there is such a thing as African Worldview. However, for penetrative analysis, this research has chosen Kafanchan Town for its assessment. This is because of its cultural and ethnic diversities.

For Africans, worldview is actually a set of complex system of beliefs, basic assumptions, values and allegiances with various interconnected variables built into daily lives and deeper than culture which is on the surface level. When probed deeper, there are specific values that form the bedrock for the system of understanding the world. These values have within them ideas and beliefs which are inseparable, guiding choices and decisions which manifest in a group’s judgment of others, issues and events.

In a broad-based examination, the common understanding of worldview by western scholars only captures an aspect and not the whole sum of what it means for/or to the African. For instance, it takes all the forms of interactions, relationships and engagements working together in unison for a balanced view and interpretation of the African lifestyle. The very moment an observer attempts to separate or tinker with an aspect (values, structures, networks and persons), the whole system is unsettled and the ripple effect is normally very difficult to manage or regulate. This is how the European

government. Because of these factors, along with its central location, it attracted diverse people from different socio-cultural and economic backgrounds. See Godwin Danjuma Kwalbe. “The Evolution and Development of Kafanchan; 1927-1960”, Unpublished B.A. Project, Ahmadu Bello University, 2006.

¹Yusufu Turaki. *Engaging Religions and Worldviews in Africa: A Christian Theological Method*. Jos, ACTS, 2020, p.xvii. Jack Chalk. *Making Disciples in Africa: Engaging syncretism in the African Church Through Philosophical Analysis of Worldviews*. Carlisle, Cumbria, Langham Global Library, 2013, pp.5-6. Wilbur O'Donovan; *Biblical Christianity in African Perspective*. The Paternoster Press, Carlisle, UK, 2000, P.3. See also DumisaniThabede, “The African Worldview as the Basis of Practice in the Helping Professions”. P.13. Retrieved from <https://socialwork.journals.ac.za/> (18-09-2021)

² Ronald H. Nash. *Worldview in conflicts: Choosing Christianity in a world of Ideas*. Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992, P.16

³Merriam Webster Dictionary. Retrieved from <https://www.merriam-webster.com> (9-9-2021)

⁴Jack Chalk. *Making Disciples...* pp.18-19

⁵Jack Chalk. *Making Disciples...* pp.5-6. Roland H. Nash. *Worldview in...* PP.16-19

colonialists, Christian and Islamic Missionaries missed it by disregarding the existence or relevance of African worldview.⁶

Because of this understanding, it is right to say that a greater deal of assessment of cultural practices and belief systems held by Africans often fall short of the standard examination because of a streamlined understanding and interpretation of the African Worldview. Most efforts toward examining some problems with the view to proffering solutions always end up as failed projects due to the fact that African worldview has been misconstrued. Mostly where these mistakes are easily made is in interpreting the religions and religious/cultural practices of a people and also efforts by policy makers and politicians to curb the repeated religious and ethnic clashes across the continent.⁷ The moment any of these is taken in isolation of the whole system, neither a proper diagnosis nor solution can be achieved.

Over the years, some elements have become noticeable markers that can be easily identified while interrogating the African worldview. The ones observed here are not in any way close to being exhaustive but appear to be common across the continent.

The African is a committed member of a community-tribe, clan or village. This sheds light on the value of relationships with other members of the society. This is still visible in Kafanchan Town with the numerous tribal unions and associations. He (the African), abhors individualism and seems not to find fulfillment in being alone. He constantly finds meaning in life within the community. Even when outside the community, he does not cease to see himself as an intricate member of that community. So also with the community, in the other hand sees itself as part of the one member outside the ancestral land. However, this may be changing as many people now live in cities where tribal bonds are very

weak. This current state has led to the collapse of many African values particularly, watching out for the good of one another.

Belief in God the Supreme Being comes naturally to Africans and they worship him even if they have no experience of his personality. Religiosity is therefore synonymous with being African and as such, it can be said in other words that religion envelopes the entire content of the African worldview with its manifestations in the daily living. In this regards, the inhabitants of Kafanchan Town can be adjudged to be highly religious. The weight of the influence of G(g)od hangs so close.⁸ Some Western scholars have erroneously concluded that Africans never believed in the supreme God. This is ignorance, to say the least, because traditional Africans, from childhood grow with the knowledge of this Supreme Being, having different names by different societies. This supreme God was actually worshipped in company of or through other deities. This is because the Supreme Being is transcendent and impersonal. Therefore he is to be approached through lesser and tangible gods. But today, due to increasing rate of urbanization, conversion to Christianity, Islam and new age religions, many Africans appear to have killed their gods, while others have abandoned their religious heritage, choosing to be agnostic or atheistic.

Similarly, along with the belief in a Supreme Being and the worship of several deities, there is high knowledge and awareness of spirits. For the Africans, the whole of nature is saturated with spirits⁹ who are in constant activities around and in collaboration with members of the community. Some of these spirits are agents of evil while some are responsible for good. Certain trees, valleys, forests, mountains, rivers etc. are designated as natural habitats of the spirits. To approach these places, it has to be by permission or through offerings to appease these spirits. This notion of spirit is so widespread in the belief system of Africans. As they move out of their

⁶Bauta D. Motty. *Indigenous Christian Disciple-Making*. Jos: ECWA Production Ltd, 2013, p.72. YusufuTuraki, *Historical Roots of Ethno-Religious Crises and Conflicts in Northern Nigeria*. Jos: Challenge press, 2010, P.xiii

⁷YusufuTuraki, *The Trinity of Sin*. HippoBooks, 2011, P.13

⁸YusufuTuraki, *The Trinity of Sin*. Nairobi: HippoBooks, 2011, P.13. Matthew Hassan Kukah. *Religion, Politics and Power in Northern Nigeria*. Ibadan: Spectrum Books Ltd, 1993, p.ix

⁹YusufuTuraki, *The Trinity of Sin*. HippoBooks, 2011, P.10

ancestral land, they carry with them this belief into the city. They hold on to the idea of spirits hovering everywhere and impacting the lives of people in the community.¹⁰ To the average African, nothing is actually dead or inactive as held in science. The rocks and rivers for instance are not just mere elements in the ecosystem but full members and agents of good and evil whenever they are taken over by the evil or good spirit. A good example is the River Wonderful in Kafanchan which is a tourist site but dreaded by many for playing host to demons that from, time-to-time, kill fun seeker.

Closely linked to this is the belief in witchcraft. Witches are members of societies with supernatural abilities to cause harm or misfortune to others. Every unpleasant occurrence, disaster and tragedy is quietly explained as the result of activities of witches. The law of cause and effect is not given expression among many traditional Africans. It is just the normal thing to do when confronted with pain and sorrow, to point to the activities of witchcraft in the community. Nothing sufficiently explains why bad things happen to good people except that the bad witches are responsible.¹¹ Some also believe in the existence of good witches that do not cause harm or do evil to members of society. They only use their witchcraft to defend their families, bring good to their families and see when evil is being hatched so as to raise the alarm.

The implication of the foregoing mindset is that in the face of tragedy (illness and death), the acceptable thing to do is query the cause in terms of who did it.¹² This can be appreciated whenever issues of terminal illnesses, epidemics and imminent death are battled with in the hospitals. Both medical professionals and relations of patients are caught in the center of this serious puzzle.

Another heavy and real element within the worldview of Africans is the concept of ancestors. These are the spirits of the dead members of a family/clan which one belongs. This belief is an intricate part of the religious life of Africans. Ancestors are highly talked about and venerated through rituals and sacrifices. Through words and actions, no one tolerates disrespect for ancestors and constant fellowship with these relatives is maintained and anticipated.¹³ Ancestors remain part of the community and daily lives of members. They are not forgotten past but constant players in the social and religious lives with huge mediatory roles with the gods.

III. Perception of Death, Epidemics and Terminal Illnesses

Death is an irreversible condition where vital organs of an individual cease to function.¹⁴ Death, to the African is a transition into the world of ancestors. It is not the end of life but the beginning of another phase in a spiritual realm. This explains why aged persons in Africa would literally pray for this experience/transition. News of young people or middle aged members of society dying causes more grieve to those old parents with such lamentations as to why death bypasses them and prefers people who are still relevant and useful here on earth. At funerals, around Kafanchan, it is common to hear people chanting and asking the dead individual to greet their ancestors for them till they come. Joining the league of ancestors is the only relevant thing for those aged members.

Besides the above situation, African worldview does not encourage the contemplation of death. In fact, it is a taboo in some societies to talk about death or discuss one's death casually and openly except for the aged.¹⁵

¹⁰Karl Grebe and Wilfred Fon, *African Traditional Religion and Christian Counselling*. India: Oasis international Limited, 2007, P.9

¹¹ Samuel WajeKunhiyop, *African Christian Theology*. Nairobi:HippoBooks, 2012, PP.212 - 214

¹²Samuel Wajekunhiyop. *Witchcraft Beliefs and Accusations: A biblical and Christian Perspective*. Jos: Challenge Press, 2019, P.11

¹³ Duncan Olumbe, "African Worldview: An introduction", July 2008. Retrieved from <https://watumishiwananenfiles.wordpress.com> (21-09-2021)

¹⁴ Norman L. Geisler. *Christian Ethics: Contemporary Issues and Options* (2nd ed.). Michigan: Baker Academic, 2010, P.176

¹⁵Rabi IlemonaEkore and BolatitoLanre – Abass, "African Cultural Concept of Death and the idea of Advance Care Directives", in *Indian Journal of Palliative Care*. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc> (19-09-2021)

This is always avoided to prevent the passing evil spirits and bad witches from hearing such discussion and taking it as invitation from the discussants. It is serious that youngsters defaulting are not casually rebuked but seriously scolded for opening such closed doors early in life. In other words, there is a moment when death is untimely and when it is timely—at old or ripe age.

Consequently, death is part and parcel of humanity. It is as old as human existence, although always fought, resisted, even sometimes denied and unwelcome or reluctantly welcomed with great sense of apprehension. But being human ultimately means living with death and facing it on daily basis. Different societies have been seen to respond to it differently making it a subtle and fluid issue to grasp. Incidentally, denying the certainty of death has not stopped it from invading the peace of human society but rather, shifts forward grief and unprepared emotional devastations. Reflectively, one hidden issue is that, it is not mostly the question of death itself or the dying process but the constant question of whom or what caused the death. Africans from each generation and every community have not abandoned this troubling question—especially “who”. This is more serious and at the center of the death crisis. It is what gives birth to “what”. Even diagnosed ailment by qualified medical professionals are laughed at as mere scientific jargons but accepted first and foremost as an attack from witches.¹⁶

Terminal illness on the other hand refers to a disease that is not responsive to curative medical treatment and which will usually worsen and eventually lead to death.¹⁷ This is scientific and hardly finds a resting place in the hearts and world of most Africans. It is, as far as they are concerned, a spiritual machination by evil witches with

the purpose of killing an individual and to also cause pain through a process of prolonged suffering physically and emotionally. Like the belief in the power of certain individuals to cause harm, there is also similar belief in other individuals who have power to cure all kinds of ailments. This is to the extent that some diseases (mostly terminal illnesses) are not considered for modern medical attention. Relations have been found taking their sick ones, against medical advice at times, out of admission to be attended to by traditional healers. This is the same with any epidemic. At the outbreak, the explanation is within the concept of spirits, gods or witches. The police station and customary court in town have had to deal with many issues around witchcraft accusations but without solutions.

IV. Impact of the African Worldview on Orthodox Medicine

Medical practice in general, which is an effort at finding remedy to human health challenge in Africa, did not begin with the advent of orthodox/western medicine. Africans have since, for ages developed or sought for medical solution to every outbreak or abnormality and difficulty of the body to function according to design. Kafanchan Town has not been left out in this feat. But no complete written documents exist as in the case of western society where extensive system of writing and documentation was developed. Therefore, oral traditions were valid repositories of medical knowledge, practice and guides before the coming of western medical practice in Africa through Christian missionaries. Among these traditional healers, ethical guidelines existed and were to be adhered to in order to have result. Such self-restraints as sexual abstinence and moderate financial charges were upheld. The bottom line here is that traditional medical practice was not without ethics. It was common place among different branches of medical practices. Those treating bones and those handling mental challenges were not the same and not guided by the same rules of engagement.

Also, very important knowledge for us today is that apart from the traditional African understanding of the cause of

¹⁶ Esther E. Acolatse, “Embracing and Resisting Death: A Theology of Justice and Hope for care at the end of life” in John Swinton and Richard Payne (eds), *Living Well and Dying Faithfully: Christian Practices for End-of-Life care*. Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, See also, Samuel WajeKunhiyop, *Witchcraft beliefs...*P.5

¹⁷ Brenda Moretta Guerrero, “Terminal illness”, In *Encyclopedia of Child Behavior and Development*, 2011 edition Retrieved from <https://link.springer.com> (19-9-2021)

ailment, its peculiar approach to treatment also differs from the orthodox understanding. While orthodox medical approach is to treat a particular biological malfunction in the body, the African traditional approach has been referred to as Wholistic Health Care (WHC).¹⁸ With this perspective, a traditional healer seeks to reach the cause of the particular illness in manifestation by interrogating the non-medical causes such as bewitchment, broken taboos, offending the gods and ancestral spirits, debts and other sundry issues. The baseline is a total scrutiny so as to get total healing with a long term political, social, psychological and biological wellness.

In the event of any epidemic, the public links this, by default to ancestral spirits, the gods or a curse on the land and its inhabitants. The normal way of seeking for solution is to first initiate communication with the spirit world in order to get to the roots of the problem and also receive the right approach to getting solution. The implication here to take note is that diseases and other disasters are not taken as natural occurrence but clearly as repercussions of a broken spiritual/cultural law.¹⁹

For western medical practice, apart from the fact that there is well structured training process, there are also ethical guidelines aimed at moderating the professional conduct of all health personnel. This code of conduct remains a binding document throughout the professional life of a medical personnel and stands as the scale for gauging the compliance of members. To be inducted, the famous Hippocratic Oath has always been used, with

slight modifications for newly trained medical professionals. A search across the wordings of the classical version of the Hippocratic Oath reveals loyalty and allegiance to both gods and man; declaration of accountability, confidentiality and purity. The guide is to preserve the integrity of the profession and save it from being downgraded and being practiced below standard since precious human lives are at stake.²⁰

Looking closely at the medical practice, certain things are not as expected. This paper is not an examination of traditional medicine in relation to western medical practice but rather an assessment of the impact of the African Worldview on the later. Truly, the impact is huge, greater than what people know, in fact, mostly underrated. And until we know this influence and how strong it is, negotiating across the path will be very difficult.²¹

There is within the worldview of Africans an existing relationship between disease, medicine and a spiritual force. This is contrary to the western scientific worldview which does not only reject this but denies such interconnection.²² But as stated above, discarding this trajectory will make understanding some practices within the hospitals very difficult yet these are recurrent decimals in the health sector. Moreover, downplaying the influence of worldview just because of revolution in the field of medical science is equal to undertaking an uphill task.

Surprisingly, even some health professionals still belief that some ailments cannot be properly handled in the hospitals. This is hinged on the belief that these kinds of diseases originate from the spirit realm. Therefore, they should be handled either in conjunction with spiritual

¹⁸ Dennis A. Ityavyar. "African Traditional Medicine with reference to a wholistic view of sickness and health care" in E. Ikenga-Metuh and O. Ojoade Nigerian cultural Heritage. Onitsha: Imico Publishing Compny, 1990, p.233

¹⁹ Dennis A. Hyavyar. "African Traditional Medicine with reference to a wholistic view of sickness and health care"... p.233-236, AbubakarGarbaFada. "The Nexus between cultural Behaviour, Disease Transmission and Health-seeking among Rural communities in Nigeria: A panacea for Healthcare Delivery" in Alexander Kure, Z.K.A. Bonat, Gaius Jatau and TerhembaWuam (eds.) *Interdisciplinary Studies and Perspectives on Ssociety and Development in Nigeria, volume 1, Festschrift in Honour of Prpfessor W.B. Qurix*. Kaduna: Kaduna State University, 2016, p.329

²⁰ Peter Tyson, "The Hippocratic Oath Today", Tuesday, March 27. Retrieved from <https://www.pbs.org/nova/article> (20-09-2021)

²¹ YusufuTuraki, *The Trinity of Sin*. Nairobi:HippoBooks, 2011, P.9s

²² Tama Suleiman Samuel, "African Shrines and Migration" in *African Healing Shrines and Cultural Psychologies*, 1st International Workshop (19th & 20th August, 2019) at Nasarawa State University, Keffi, P.19

healers or strictly spiritual.²³ This makes them comfortable to advice patients' relatives to take their sick ones to prayer houses or traditional medicine men who are highly endowed with the ability to address the situation.

To these medical personnel, believing in spiritual cause and effect or witchcraft does not invalidate their knowledge of empirical research but rather seek to provide explanation to what Samuel WajeKunhiyop refers to as "ultimate cause".²⁴ The understanding is that natural occurrences are not free from external (spiritual) manipulations/influences; they (terminal illnesses) should not only be handled from a limited (scientific) angle.

With this popularized spiritual explanations given to medical challenges, some of these transfers of patients from one medical facility to the other are usually done as spiritual calculations. The idea is to move patients away from the watchful eyes of witches who come to visit or who are operating in that familiar zone to a "secret" location so as to allow for quick recovery. It is a kind of wits played against the evil witches.²⁵

Further inquiry shows that there is apparent game of denial. This is in relation to the topic of death and/or terminal illness. It has not only made the idea of death and discussing it to have an overbearing impact of fear upon members of society, but has equally not allowed people to properly live life and adequately prepare for

death as an eventual and imminent event which is absolutely unavoidable, especially in the long run.²⁶

Since the advent of modern gadgets and other improvements in the field of medical science, it is now possible (to some extent) for health workers to say, based on the patient's condition, type of sickness and the pattern of its development to say how long a patient would live. This can be said to be a new normal and perfect condition in medical practice, especially in western countries. This is seen as a good way to prepare patients and their relatives to make informed decisions about health care choices and allows patients to make key decision with lasting impact in the lives of dependents.²⁷

Although not within the scope of this paper, the inability to frankly talk about death in the face of terminal illness has not helped the condition of widows and orphans. The demise of a man gives his relatives access to every property to the disadvantage of his wife and children. But if this frank talk can be considered, writing of a will which gives the rightful owners of the deceased's properties legal protection will go a long way to reduce the incessant abuse of the rights of widows and orphans in Nigeria and Africa.

As a matter of fact, some health workers are not in the habit of communicating or properly stating the real situation to the patients and or the relatives. The usual thing they resort to is unnecessary appointments and unnecessary surgeries with claims of totally eradicating the disease. The motivating force behind this kind of

²³ Matthew Michael, "Globalisation, Medicine and Sacredscapes: The Ethno-medical significance of African Healing Shrines" in *African Healing Shrines and Cultural Psychologies*, 1st International Workshop (19th & 20th August, 2019) at Nasarawa State University, Keffi, PP 7 - 10

²⁴ Samuel WajeKunhiyop, *African Christian Theology*. Nairobi: HippoBooks, 2008, P.377

²⁵ When the father of the lead author was wheeled out of theatre back to the ward, the nurse in-charge cautioned against allowing just anyone coming to check on him; clearly to avoid witches having access to him still under anaesthesia. The nurse is a Muslim, a clear demonstration of how wide this worldview operates across different divides. This particular incidence became a motivation for embarking on this research.

²⁶ Esther E. Acolatse. "Embracing and Resisting Death. . ." P.251

²⁷ A greater portion of Africans hardly write their wills and when they die, the whole family is thrown into confusion concerning their properties. This comes as a result of linking will to preparing to die and since the worldview shield people continuously from facing the topic of death, writing of will is still very unpopular. See Chijioke Oliver Nwodoh, IjeomaLewechiOkoronkwo, Ada Carol Nwaneri, IfeomaNdubuisi, Goodman John Ani and Ephraim Obadiah Dyages, "Terminally ill patients' perception on health care Providers' communication of prognostic information: A qualitative study from Nigeria, West Africa" in *Journal of Cogent Medicine* Volume 5, 2018 . Retrieved from <https://www.tand/online.com>doi>

action is that deep within African worldview, there exists the understanding that every disease has a cure. The notion of terminal disease or incurable sickness does not have acceptance. In situations where the sickness leads to the death of an individual, it can only be understood as the result of being overpowered by witches or final verdict by the gods, spirits of ancestors due to an unpardonable offence that has been committed. This only excludes the death of aged members of society which is understandably celebrated as passage to the world of the spirits and ancestors.²⁸

Health workers under the heavy influence of African worldview are in the habit of endless referrals to other medical facilities with the only clear motive of avoiding the death of a patient within their facility. One cannot ascertain the numbers of people that die on the way between Kafanchan and Jos towns as a case study. Unless a research is carried out to come up with a valid data; it can only be imagined. This practice that has become a norm is carried out by both private and public hospitals across the town.²⁹

It should be noted here that the culture of frank communication (in the proper professional manner) does not amount to a verdict or a death sentence, because there are records of unexplainable recoveries beyond the interpretation of medical science, but the denial culture does more harm than good. The financial burdens that people are forced to bear is always high and result to indebtedness. Moreover, emotional trauma is always being pushed forward instead of putting in place, early enough the healing process.

²⁸ A senior nurse with the Sir Patrick Ibrahim Yakowa Memorial Hospital, Kafanchan (Kaduna State, Nigeria) revealed to us how she stopped a particular referral to Jos. It was an aged mother who would definitely not survive a surgery or live longer than 24 hours being referred to the city of Jos for surgery. This was not allowed by her and the patient died the next day. She concluded that nothing would have (medically) stopped her death on the road to Jos.

²⁹ This was revealed during a conversation with the senior nurse at the Sir Patrick Ibrahim Yakowa Memorial Hospital, Kafanchan (23-08-2021)

By and large, medical health workers should accept the fact that death is not a stranger to humanity and should not be treated with secrecy thereby heightening the fear around it. The efforts at resisting death have a limit, clearly acknowledged in medical science. Therefore, both patients and health workers should accept their deficiency as far as the issues of pandemic, terminal illness and death are concerned.

V. Hiv/Aids and Covid-19 as Case Studies

The African worldview has a lot to do with how Nigerians respond to orthodox medication, advice or instruction. It is very obvious that responding to critical health issues is to a large extent dependent on the basic perceptions and beliefs surrounding different ailments. For instance it will be responsible for people refusing to report certain disease and also avoid or even reject totally, biomedical safety measures. Among the Hausa of Nigeria, it is widely held that cancer, convulsion, epilepsy, yellow fever etc. are caused by spirits/black demons and therefore people should not waste their time seeking for cure in the hospitals but rather should be attended to traditionally. This can be attested to in various markets days with herbalists making bold claims to having the cure to so many incurable diseases. This confidence is based on the belief that if the root cause (evil spirits) is identified, the remedy is within reach, hence the need for traditional solution as against western treatment.³⁰

HIV/AIDS and COVID-19 were chosen for this paper to illustrate the central argument of the discussion in perspective. They are two global health challenges that have both impacted negatively on the entire world with Kafanchan having a share of the consequences. They are

³⁰ Abubakar Garba Fada. "The Nexus between cultural Behavior, Disease Transmission and Health-seeking among Rural Communities in Nigeria: A Panacea for Healthcare Delivery" in Alexander Kure, Z.K.A. Bonat, Gaius Jatau and Terhemba Wuam (eds.), *Interdisciplinary studies and perspectives on society and Development in Nigeria, volume 1; Festschrift in Honor of Professor W.B.Qurix*, Kaduna: Kaduna State University, 2016, p.417

also both being battled against by government and health professionals. In addition, these pandemics originated outside the shores of Nigeria but have spread to every community as a result of person-to-person infection pushed by migration and general human social and economic interactions. They stand out as interesting examples when interrogating the impact of African worldview on how dwellers of Kafanchan respond to health disasters and orthodox medicine in modern times.

A. HIV/AIDS

HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) is the agent that is responsible for AIDS (Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome); a well-known global disaster for over four decades with countless lives lost to it and economic performance of many societies affected by it. This depletion of economies of many societies is as a result of its prevalence among the younger population who are economically productive and sexually active at the same time. The disease is transmitted through varied means viz: transfusion of unsafe (infected) blood, sexual contact with infected persons, use of unsterilized equipment and also from an infected mother to her baby. This virus takes slow and long time in the human body before manifesting and in the process, weakens the infected person's immune system thereby leaving him/her vulnerable to attack from many opportunistic diseases.³¹

The first case of HIV/AIDS in Nigeria was recorded in Lagos State in 1985 and made public the following year. As usual, with anything new and particularly dangerous, this report caused panic across the country especially that the first victim was a teenage commercial sex worker and also because HIV/AIDS was thought of to be an American disease and only among homosexuals. This kind of assumption also gave great opportunity for the rise and spread of conspiracy theories among many Nigerians. An early invective was sold to the public with a nickname for the disease coined as American Idea to

Discourage Sex (AIDS).³² It was followed by another theory that this disease was biologically engineered specifically to reduce or wipe off African population. The long term effect of this mindset is that it allowed the disease to keep spreading across the different demography of Nigeria causing huge human/health risk for the country. Today, Nigeria has nine percent of the world's population of those living with HIV/AIDS.³³

In the years gone by when the antiretroviral drugs were not common, managing the disease was very difficult especially among poor rural dwellers. But even the available service to help sustain the body system of infected person was sometimes neglected by patients in preference for spiritual solution. Even those whose sexual lifestyles have predisposed them to so many Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) found it convenient to query their conditions in metaphysical terminologies. A mother whose daughter died, obviously from HIV/AIDS believed that she was killed by the family members who are witches. This is not the case of insufficient sex education or lack of sufficient information about STDs but a result of strong African worldview in opposition to orthodox medical interpretation to a condition.³⁴

The moment some are confronted with a difficult challenge to handle, it is easily explained as an offense by wicked relatives. Another, woman even with death certificate reading CAUSE OF DEATH: HIV/AIDS still treated that medical report as untrue and at best orchestrated by witches. This type of mindset is still pervasive around this disease and around very strange and difficult conditions which defy both orthodox and traditional medications. The traditional position to take has always been that the inability of illness to respond to treatment is because of wicked witches who have made up their minds to kill the individual. By implication, the

³²AwoyemiAbayomiAwofala and Olusegun Emmanuel Ogundele."HIV epidemiology in Nigeria".*Saudi Journal of Biological Sciences*. Retrieved from <https://ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc> (9-09-2021)

³³AwoyemiAbayomiAwofala. HIV epidemiology...

³⁴ A discussion with a mother during church a counseling session with the lead author at Good News Power Base Church, Kafanchan

³¹Ugbegillii Sylvester. "Dimensions and Consequences of HIV/AIDS on Nation Building in Post-Independence Nigeria" in OlayyemiAkinwumi, Mamman Musa Adamu and Patrick Ukase (eds.), *Nigeria at 50: The Challenges of Nation Building*. Zaria: Ahmadu Bello University Press Limited, 2021, pp. 542-543

idea of incurable disease or terminal ailment is only a scientific explanation but the real cause lies in the spiritual realm. This has made many to abandon the orthodox medical assistance in order to be healed by a witch doctor or a religious miracle worker.³⁵

B. COVID-19

The term COVID-19 is the code name for Coronavirus Disease, 2019. It is a health challenge which became a threat to all humans worldwide since the year 2019. It is accepted to have erupted in the Chinese city of Wuhan as reported to the World Health Organization (WHO) by the Chinese government on 30th December, 2019. By 30th January, 2020, WHO had declared the outbreak to be a public health emergency of global magnitude having serious concern and threat to humanity. Within a short time, by May 2020, 407,747 confirmed cases of infection and 238,198 deaths had been recorded by the WHO worldwide. Globally speaking, apart from the fatality rates, the pandemic had equally disrupted a lot of economic activities and overwhelmed the resources, health facilities and preparedness of even the most technologically advanced countries.³⁶

Nigeria officially recorded its first COVID-19 case on 27th February, 2020. By May, 2,170 persons were already confirmed to be infected while 38 Nigerians had died from the deadly and highly infectious disease. At that early stage, Nigeria was listed by WHO among the 13 highest-risk African countries in relation to the spread of the infections. In its (Nigeria's) case, it was due to the weak medical and healthcare delivery system.³⁷ As it stands today, confirmed cases of infection has risen to 197,046 and deaths 2578 making Nigeria relatively low in terms of the level of infection when compared to other

African states, Europe, America and Asia.³⁸ But right from the discovery of Nigeria's index case, government swung into action putting modalities in place to ensure that the whole society was prepared for the risk which was ahead. All media outlets, social platforms, NGOs, faith-based organizations, and the National Orientation Agency embarked on concerted efforts to create awareness about COVID-19. The Nigerian Center for Disease Control (NCDC) kept the nation abreast with new developments on regular basis through its website and news updates shared by major radio and television stations. In all, the public information was massive and translated into various languages for wider coverage.³⁹

Unfortunately, in spite of government's efforts and health departments, the public response in Nigeria has shown little progress. The reason is not far from the African worldview of Nigerians that has made many to defy most of the directives issued by government insisting on towing the lines of conspiracy theorists which say that "the disease is a scam", a biological weapon manufactured by Chinese and a globalist agenda to reduce world population especially that of black people. Some religious organizations and their leaders have remained vocal in justifying the outbreak as a fulfillment of biblical prophecy of the end of the world. This is revealing because right from pre-colonial times, most illnesses have been explained in mystical contexts. Consequently, since most Nigerians did not actually transit from traditional beliefs of the universe right from their conversion to either Islam or Christianity but seem to be operating a mixed system, taking the unscientific and mysterious positions has remained pervasive in modern times.⁴⁰

³⁵ From the six years of experience gained by the lead author as a full-time Resident Pastor in a Charismatic Church, this has been the pattern of most people seeking for healing.

³⁷ Tolulope Tokinyori Oladele, Babayemi Oluwaseun Olakunle, Edward Adekola Oladele, Osondu Ogbuoniji and Gavin Yamey. "The impact of COVID-19 on HIV Financing in Nigeria: A call for proactive measures". *BMJ Global Health*, volume 5, issue 5 <https://gh.bmj.com/content> (9-09-2021)

³⁸ NCDC. COVID-19 Nigeria, Thursday 11:44am, 9 September 2021 <https://covid19.ncdc.gov.ng>

³⁹ <https://covid19.ncdc.gov.ng>

⁴⁰ Jimoh Amzat, Kafayat Aminu, Victor I. Kolo, Ayodele A. Akinyele, Janet A. Ogundairo and Maryann C. Danjibo. "Coronavirus Outbreak in Nigeria: Burden and Socio-medical response during the first 100 days" in *International Journal of Infectious Diseases* <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7307993> (21-09-2021)

As it stands today, a number people have rejected the vaccines meant to reduce the risk of the virus by boosting immunity of the human body and other nonclinical measures because of the claims that it has spiritual symbolism. This has a negative impact on official data collected by government agencies and researchers. For instance, the statistic concerning the number of vaccinated Nigerians is at the moment not authentic as members of the public and health workers have avoided taking the jab⁴¹ but rather spilled the content and inject themselves and relatives with paracetamol instead. But so as to avoid being denied certain privileges in public places, the cards (vaccine certificates) are filled with their names.

To understand this position above, a primary health worker in the city of Kafanchan stated that she along with many health personnel in the facility where she works have evaded taking the real vaccine due to their suspicion of the whole outbreak and the compulsory implementation of vaccination exercise. No serious reason was given beyond this. Another laboratory scientist whose line of duty during the outbreak was to collect samples from people to ascertain their COVID-19 status was taken aback by the news for the lead author to take the vaccine. He offered to help talk with the primary health workers who administer the vaccine to spill the content and only make the vaccine certificate available in case possessing it becomes the next evidence for admission into certain places and countries. These underhanded practices may not be reported by the mainstream media, but are being discussed by Nigerians in various circles, groups and societies. This may be the reason for the UK government insisting that travellers from Nigeria must self-isolate on arrival in the UK.⁴²

It is instructive to state here that COVID-19 is not the first global pandemic with a severe threat to human existence or the first kind of influenza viruses manifesting such destructive symptoms. Many records abound in which Nigeria has not been spared. In fact, experts agree that influenza does not always disappear between epidemics. In other words, it always exists but in endemic forms with localized and low cases of person-to-person transfer before sudden resurgence after a period of 10 to 15 years.⁴³

In the face of the Spanish influenza in Nigeria, 1918-1919 in which many (Christians, Muslims and traditionalists) battled for survival by seeking for remedy in healing houses, native doctors and herbal specialists. It was not enough to adhere to advice from orthodox medical personnel particularly in the face of high casualties.⁴⁴

Similarly, when the Federal Government of Nigeria imposed its first lockdown in line with global efforts to contain the spread of the coronavirus, the mystical and spiritual dimension to explaining the cause of the disease was popularized from both Christian and Muslim clerics. The example of Chris Oyakhilome, founder of the Believers Loveworld is sufficient because of his national and global coverage. He claimed in a YouTube broadcast that the lockdown by the Nigerian government was because of 5G trial that commenced in the Federal Capital Territory and followed by Lagos State. By his assertion, the lockdown was not to contain the spread of the virus but to keep people out of the street so that they

⁴³ Jimoh Mufutau Oluwasegun. "Managing Epidemic: The British Approach to 1918-1919 Influenza in Lagos"; in *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, pp.11-12. Retrieved from <https://jas.sagepub.com>, (22-09-2021). Don C. Ohadike. Diffusion and Physical Responses to the Influenza Pandemic of 1918-1919 in Nigeria; in Soc.Sci.Med. Vol.32, No.12. Britain: Pergamon Press Plc, 1991, p.1398

⁴⁴ Jimoh Mufutau Oluwasegun. "Managing Epidemic: The British Approach to 1918-1919 Influenza in Lagos"; in *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, pp.11-12. Retrieved from <https://jas.sagepub.com>, (22-09-2021). Don C. Ohadike. Diffusion and Physical Responses to the Influenza Pandemic of 1918-1919 in Nigeria; in Soc.Sci.Med. Vol.32, No.12. Britain: Pergamon Press Plc, 1991, p.1398

⁴¹ Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN). Kaduna, 9pm News update (21-09-2021), P.O. Olapegba, O. Ayandele, S.O. Kolawole, R. Oguntayo, J.C. Gandi, A.L. Dangiwa, I.F.A. Ottu, S.K. Iorfa. "COVID-19 Knowledge and Perceptions in Nigeria: A Preliminary Assessment of Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Knowledge and perceptions in Nigeria" <https://psyarxiv.com/download> (2-09-2021)

⁴² Channels Television, (23-09-2021)

cannot mobilize to protest against the telecommunication technology that is dangerous to human existence. The cleric maintained his position that the number of deaths recorded in the Chinese city of Wuhan was not caused by any virus but as a result of 5G.⁴⁵ Definitely, this view still does not fit in well with logic because shortly after this broadcast which later earned him fines and sanctions from the UK government due to his unscientific and unempirical position, Iran without a 5G trial suffered greater devastation from the virus.

Pastor Chris was not alone in pursuing this position as some joined his line of argument. Public figures such as Bishop David Oyedepo, Dino Melaye and Femi FaniKayode insisted that the religio-mystic-conspiratorial explanation is the only answer to the cause of the virus. This debate was also taken further by the Christian preacher when he seemed to backtrack from his former position due to contrary scientific positions; he pushed out another position by saying that the virus was well planned and released so as to bring about the full manifestation of the antichrist.⁴⁶

To give credence to this opinion, it was stated that the vaccination program was meant to implant microchips in the body of those that will receive it so that the lives of human beings can be controlled, monitored and manipulated to do the biddings of the antichrist in preparation for the return of Christ and the end of the world. Although there are still scanty research works on the dangers of 5G to human health and the exact origin of COVID-19; however, general consensus from the scientific community points to the cause outside the 5G debate, spiritual realm and the new-world-order interpretation. What is clear is that the position of pastor

Chris falls within the conspiracy theory and fit into the larger African worldview which always claim the ability to answer every difficult question in mysterious postulations and also because central to African worldview is the belief in superstition and witchcraft leading to the wider conceptions of the cause of diseases and illnesses.⁴⁷ Moreover, as already stated, medical care is inseparable from religion within the context of African worldview.⁴⁸

This explains why this kind of position became popular among Nigerians in and the inhabitants of Kafanchan. His position was not the position of the religious (Christian) community as he was still opposed by some Christian opinion leaders during the heat of the controversy like Pastors Sam Adeyemi and Matthew Ashimolowo and recently, key religious leaders and organizations have publicly advised their followers to get vaccinated. But the controversy/debate still remains with some for and others against vaccination.

Conclusion

African worldview is thought by many to be subordinated to and limited in the face of western and scientific revolution. But this is a serious mistake as its impact remains strong and affects decisions that relate to orthodox medicine, science and other aspects of the lives of Africans daily. Although there was in existence a well-developed method of handling diseases before the advent of orthodox medical practice in Nigeria, the Europeans did not see the need to study this civilization nor adopt part of it to their medical services for the benefit of

⁴⁵ Ben-Collins EmekaNdinojuo. "5G, Religion, and Misconceptions in the age of COVID-19 Pandemic in Nigeria." Retrieved from https://journals.usm.ac.id/index.php/the_messenger/article/downloadSuperFile/2282/371 (25-09-2021)

⁴⁶ Ben-Collins EmekaNdinojuo. "5G, Religion, and Misconceptions in the age of COVID-19 Pandemic in Nigeria." Retrieved from https://journals.usm.ac.id/index.php/the_messenger/article/downloadSuperFile/2282/371 (25-09-2021)

⁴⁷ Eric Tenkoran, Stephen O. Gyimah, Eleanor Maticka-Tyndale and James Adjei. "Superstition, Witchcraft and HIV Perception in Sub-Saharan Africa: the case of Ghana." Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/51453344_superstition_witchcraft_andHIV_prevention_in_sub-saharan_Africa_the_case_of_Ghana (25-09-2021)

⁴⁸ Jimoh Mufutau Oluwasegun. "Managing Epidemic: The British Approach to 1918-1919 Influenza in Lagos"; in *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, pp.11-12. Retrieved from <https://jas.sagepub.com> (24-09-2021). Don C. Ohadike. Diffusion and Physical Responses to the Influenza Pandemic of 1918-1919 in Nigeria; in Soc.Sci.Med. Vol.32, No.12. Britain: Pergamon Press Plc, 1991, p.1398

Nigerians. They rather disregarded it in its entirety therefore creating conflict between the two methods, a situation we can conveniently describe as a clash of civilizations.

This study has found that the understanding of how diseases are caused in orthodox medicine by non-visible living elements of creation is totally different from African worldview. Within African worldview, the perception about the cause of diseases and illnesses is understood in terms of the interferences of the macro-cosmos, that is, the actions of ancestors, the overbearing and negative influences of the meso-cosmos (witches and sorcerers) and then the consequences of micro-cosmos which is the everyday life of Nigerians. The natural position held by most Nigerians consciously and unconsciously, is that there exists a natural harmony between the physical/ material world and the metaphysical world which is responsible for a stable and healthy living. But once this state of balance is altered in terms of breaking of taboos, the material world is invaded by the metaphysical world.⁴⁹ Therefore, to resolve this friction or conflict of two worlds, there is a demand that the cause be interrogated metaphysically and the solution reached from the same context-usually by performing restitutions and/or sacrifices of appeasement.

⁴⁹ Esther T. Ogunjimi. "Risk Perception of HIV infection among the Nigerian African", 2017.Retrieved from <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/232518469> (25-09-2021). See Akpomovie, Orhioghene, and Benedict. "The Perception of illness in Traditional Africa and the development of traditional medical practice", in International Journal of Nursing Vol.1, No.1; June 2014. Retrieved from <http://ijnnet.com>ijn>pdf> (25-09-2021)

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