



Technology and Technological Tools in the Old Testament: A Historical-Critical Approach to the Origin of Artificial Intelligence

Ogundeji Abel Leke

Faculty of Art, Religious Studies Department,
University of Lagos, Nigeria.
abelogundeji69@gmail.com
[+2348034741455](tel:+2348034741455), [+2348020233348](tel:+2348020233348)

Samuel Sunday ALAMU

Faculty of Art, Religious Studies Department,
University of Lagos, Nigeria.
ssalamu@unilag.edu.ng, [+2348035390581](tel:+2348035390581)

Abstract

The origin of Artificial Intelligence (AI) cannot but be traced to the Old Testament period with great insights from the advancement of technology and technological tools in the ancient Israelite community, and the Ancient Near Eastern societies such as Mesopotamia and Egypt which were believed to be the cradles of civilisation. Technology during this era was seen in architectural, writing, agricultural, and other mechanical tools, which provides valuable insight on the birth of AI in the religious texts of the Israelites. The paper aims to trace the origins of AI and its implications in the context of divine creation and human ingenuity. Thus, the study explores the creativeness of man in building, art, culture, music, and the divine origination of creative acts. The study adopted a historical-critical approach. It was discovered that the Old Testament not only resonates the consciousness of technological advancement but also foreshadows the development of AI, thus, challenging the status quo on the modern perception of AI as a purely contemporary phenomenon. Therefore, the study recommended that scholars in the field of Biblical Studies, especially the Old Testament scholars should engage in extensive research on the origin of AI from the Old Testament texts.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Divine Creation, Human Ingenuity, Technology and Technological Tools, Old Testament

Introduction

The Old Testament world is like every other world where diverse forms of methods, ideologies, and technologies existed. There is no generation without a form of technology that helps man navigate his challenges and makes his work easier and faster. Technology cuts across everything that a man does



in his society such as building, writing, information, security, economic, and even religious engagements. It is expedient to say that technology is the totality of both the ancient and the modern man. That is, man has been a technological being since time immemorial through his thoughts, actions, and contributions to his society. The Ancient Near Eastern societies such as Mesopotamia and Egypt were known as two major cities of great influence in technology and civilisation, hence they were called cradle of civilisation (Oppenheim, 1997:32). It is no gainsaying that these cities (Mesopotamia and Egypt) called cradle of civilisation became the originators and pioneers to most ancient technological tools in architectural designs, constructions, writing, record keeping, iron and machines in the ancient world which proved beyond reasonable doubt the presence of technology and technological tools in the Old Testament.

The word technology comes from two Greek words, transliterated *techne* and *logos*. *Techne* means art, skill, craft, or the way, manner, or means by which a thing is gained. *Logos* means word, the utterance by which inward thought is expressed, a saying, or an expression (College of Engineering, n.d.). A careful look at this etymological meaning reflects the Old Testament craftsmanship, art and skill which are common with the ancient people. In Genesis 4:22 a word similar to artificial was used “And Zillah, she also bare Tubalcain, an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron....” (King James Version). The word ‘artificer’ is a term adopted in the King James Version (KJV) of the bible and it resonates the term ‘artificial’ which implies what a man ‘makes, devises or contrives’. Thus, the understanding of the term technology and the eventual birth of artificial intelligence is not complete without critically examining its origin from the Old Testament which serves as the book of “The Origins”.



Artificial Intelligence (AI) is an offshoot of technology. This implies that what is being understood as AI can be termed advanced technology. AI continues to demonstrate its innovative capacity in several scenarios: autonomous driving of vehicles; content recommendation; voice recognition; automatic translation; optimized planning and several other branches (Norvig, 2013). The view of Norvig suggested that there is indeed advancement in technology through various areas such as voice recognition, automatic translation, and content recommendation among several others which are categorised as the product of AI.

The thrust of this study is to provide a historical origin for the 21st-century term for technology –Artificial Intelligence (AI) from the Old Testament through appropriate interaction with several materials such as the Old Testament texts, books, articles, and online sources that have delved much on the new phenomenon. It pertinent to state that the study is a relatively new endeavour since it examines the traces of Artificial Intelligence (AI) as modern phenomenon born out of the ancient texts of the Bible. Therefore, is it correct to say that the Old Testament has no record of AI? Some scholars have been able to establish the Old Testament origin of AI using the prophetic literature such as Daniel 2. Therefore, is there no other traces aside prophetic record of Daniel? How do we define the term Artificial Intelligence? These questions are brought into light through the following sub-headings: technology and technological tools in the Old Testament, Artificial Intelligence (AI): a conceptual overview, tracing the origins of AI in Old Testament narratives, AI as a Reflection of Human Ingenuity and Divine Creation (Solomon building expedition and the Cherubim and Wheels Movements in Ezekiel), conclusion and recommendations.



Technology and Technological tools in the Old Testament

Technology and technological innovations have long been recognised as major contributors to the development of social and cultural systems and have tended to be closely related to crucial turning points in human history. For example, the development of food-producing technology during the 'Neolithic Revolution' in the ancient Near East has been called 'the most fundamental of all human technological breakthroughs' (Bernard and Pelto, 1972:317).

The ancient Israelites community was not oblivious of technology. Prior to Israelites settlement in Canaan they had been a wandering people who were familiar with the ancient civilisation of Mesopotamia and their long-term slavery in Egypt for the period of four hundred years characterised with intensive labour in constructions and building of cities, there is no doubt that technology was not in place during this period. However, as the older generation departed, with the newer generation there is advancement in technology. Goswell (2022:7) opined that advanced technology has meant different things at different times in history. He further writes:

For Adam, forced from the Garden of Eden and required to till the earth (Gen 3:23), a wooden plow drawn by a horse would have been advanced technology. Six generations later we have Jubal who made stringed instruments (Gen 4:21) and another generation later we have Tubal-Cain forging metal tools (Gen 4:22). Nine generations from Adam we find Noah building an enormous boat (Gen 6); one large enough to protect two or more of every kind of animal, plus enough food for a year. At Babel, civil engineering had advanced to the stage of creating a massive tower out of man-made bricks (Gen 11:3-5). By the time of Solomon, technology could create an enormous temple in Jerusalem, as well as ships to travel at least part-way around the world (1 Kings 10:22).

The foregoing assertion of Goswell shows the trend of advancement in technology from the Edenic period to the sixth generation and from the Noah's flood to the Babel narrative and to the era of Solomon. All these show a remarkable growth and changes in the way things are done through adopting the available technology and technological tools of that time. Borchardt (n.d.) further



buttressed that “the scroll was a technological innovation of the late third millennium BCE in Egypt. In many ways, it was an improvement upon the use of clay and stone tablets of earlier periods in Egyptian and Mesopotamian literary production”. Technology reconciles between human beings and their world. This interrelationship among human beings, technology, and the environment affects the way we think and thus the way we communicate meaning. Many of the dominant or key symbols in cultures throughout the world are technological symbols (McNutt, 1990:14). For instance among the Israelites, the structure of the Ark of Covenant and the Temple construction which are the work of technology formed a key symbol in Israelites religion. Likewise, among the African (Yoruba) society, *Ogun* is represented with iron such as cutlass, *Bata* drum in the religious music of the *Sango* cult, and the heap of ‘special clothes’ for the Egungun (Masquerade) all of these are the product of technology and it indicates a strong link to African gods. God was interested in the advancement of the Israelites through the use of technology to make life more comfortable for them to live. In Exodus account, God said to Moses:

See, I have called by name Bez’alel the son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah: and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze, in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, for work in every craft (Exodus 31:2-5).

The above bible passage shows an interesting link between God and technology and man and technology, thus, establishing the necessity of technology as God's endowment on mankind. Romig (2020) cited Vanhoozer that “Technology includes all tools, machines, utensils, weapons, instruments, housing, clothing, communicating and transporting devices and the skills by which we produce and use them.” It is pertinent to say man-made these technological tools to serve various purposes such as hoes, cutlass, and baskets to aid the agricultural process, straws, bricks, and irons for building



construction, writing materials (stylus, ink, and papyrus), war tools such as iron armour, sword, bows and arrows, and musical tools such as cymbals, harps, drums, and trumpets among several others showcase man's technological prowess in building and rebuilding his society.

Robert (2024) asserts that the descendants of Cain are responsible for the first great technological innovations in the biblical record: the invention of musical instruments and metalwork. He identified the personality of Nimrod as a great hunter as expressed in Genesis 10:9 and further concludes that Nimrod building enterprise became the emblem of new militarised state societies of the 3rd millennium BC. While commenting on Genesis 11, Robert (2024) affirmed that the Babel builders begin not with a plan to build a city and tower, but with the discovery of a technique for firing bricks. The determination to build the city and tower seemingly arises, at least in part, out of humanity's intoxication with new technological potential.

It is of note to mention the Wall of Jericho as another technological insight into the Old Testament. The biblical city of Jericho and the account of its destruction found in the book of Joshua have frequently been linked to the ancient city of Jericho, which is situated at the archaeological site of Tell es-Sultan, northwest of modern-day Jericho, next to the Ein es-Sultan spring and approximately five miles west of the Jordan River (Kennedy, 2023:1). During the Middle Bronze Age, a strong defense system was built around several settlements in Canaan, including Jericho. Jericho's inhabitants constructed a cyclopean wall around the city at this time, using mudbrick for the upper wall and stone for the retaining wall (Nigro and Taha, 2009:731-744). De Kerckhove (2017:37) stated that the fall of the wall of Jericho was as a result of the combination of three kinds of sounds which are the blast from the ram's horn, the sound of the trumpets, and the people's great shout. This is evidently seen in Joshua 6:5 which states: "And when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, as soon as you hear the sound



of the trumpet, then all the people shall shout with a great shout, and the wall of the city will fall down flat, and the people shall go up every man straight before him” (RSV). Patterson (2018) opined there was a presence of an extra-terrestrial technology placed inside the Ark of the Covenant and had enough power to “amplify Joshua’s horns and make them into a powerful sonic weapon”. He further affirmed that the interesting thing about the Battle of Jericho is that this specific application of the thunderbolt looks to be similar to what we're seeing with particle ray, death ray, and thunderbolt technologies. It becomes quite evident that humans in the 21st century are once again in possession of extra-terrestrial technology that the ancient people could deploy for military battles (Patterson, 2018).

Technology is the application of tools to achieve practical goals that in some way represent intelligent representations in the physical world (Ferré, 1995). It is however expedient to say that technology is an intelligent way of doing things. It cannot be denied that intelligent was not present among the people of the Old Testament, thus, their understanding of nature and scientific materials enabled them to bring about innovation to their society. Gill (2008:870) affirmed that all groups of people regardless their race, cultural background and belief have had such ‘know-how’ and techniques for actualising their needs and desires such as building houses, making clothing, farming and animal husbandry, and preparing food. One major underlining source of technology in the Old Testament since technology is seen as a product of intelligent is God. Israel believed in God to be the giver of wisdom and through this God-given wisdom, Israel was able to travail in her socio-economic, political and religious relationships.

Artificial Intelligence (AI): A Conceptual Overview

There are several assertions and views about the meaning of ‘Artificial Intelligence’ (AI). When we talk about ‘Artificial Intelligence’ in the 21st century, what comes to the minds of many is



sophisticated technology and a revolution in technology, some see the notion to connote something that has never been in existence and, thus, regarded it as a product of the present era. However, let's take it from the literary understanding of the concept. The term 'Artificial Intelligence' is a combination of two independent words, 'Artificial' and 'Intelligence'. The word Artificial means man-made, things that do not occur naturally, man's origination or production. On the other hand, intelligence means to 'acquire and apply' new ideas or knowledge to solve some specific tasks. Hence, the amalgamation of the two words suggests that a particular knowledge-based, product, skill, and action comes from man rather than it happening in the natural sense.

There is no universally acceptable definition for the term AI. However, Sheikh et al (2023:15) writes:

AI is that it is a technology that enables machines to imitate various complex human skills. This, however, does not give us much to go on. In fact, it does no more than render the term 'artificial intelligence' in different words. As long as those 'complex human skills' are not specified, it remains unclear exactly what AI is. The same applies to the definition of AI as the performance by computers of complex tasks in complex environments.

The extract above mentioned that AI is the imitation of human skills or abilities by machines. It further stated that since human skills are not specified, the role of AI remains unclear. However, it must be stated at this point that technology is the mother of all new and advanced technology and the aspect of AI is just a means to an end and not an end in itself. This implies that scholars in the 21st century tend to focus much on a particular aspect of the machine imitating human skills to be named Artificial Intelligence but forgot that the computer was man-made that performs some certain human skills such as storing and process of data, computation and evaluation, searching and researching of which all of these are human attributes too. Manning (2020:1) affirmed that the term AI was coined by John McCarthy in 1955 was defined by him as "the science and engineering of



making intelligent machines”. Much research has humans program machines to behave in a clever way, like playing chess, but, today, we emphasize machines that can learn, at least somewhat like human beings do.

Moumita and Thirugnanam (2021:24) man has created several inventions for the benefit of humanity, ranging from the time he discovered fire until his mission to Mars. One such invention is the computer, which has a major impact on human workload reduction and the solution of numerous intricate mathematical and logical puzzles. For researchers, though, the possibilities for new creations are virtually limitless. Thus, they attempted to build a “man-made *homosapien*” species that could be connected to the computer world through artificial intelligence (AI)—which is the combination of artificial, or man-made, and intelligence, or the capacity for thought.

At this point, the researcher agreed with Moumita and Thirugnanam on artificial intelligence by using the word “man-made *homosapien*” i.e. a human machine. Thus, this concept resonates with the idea of advancement in technology since AI itself is an aspect of the computer and the computer itself has gone through different transformational stages from the 1st to the 5th generations. It is hardly unexpected that defining AI is so challenging (Sheikh et al, 2023:16). The concept has generated different versions of definitions, hence, there is no universally acceptable definition of the concept. However, the study provided a working definition that sees AI as more than computer related programme and went as far as identifying the potentials in ancient technological tools as AI related concept.

AI has been categorised into three. According to Thompson (2020:56) types of AI are Narrow or Weak AI, General or Strong AI, and Super AI.



Thompson (2020:56) cited Joe Carter that “weak AI” or “narrow AI” as a machine’s ability to carry out a smaller set of intellectual tasks than a person can. Examples of narrow artificial intelligence (AI) include Google Assistant, Google Translate, Alexa, Cortona, Siri, facial recognition, speech recognition, and other natural language and image processing tools. They go by the name “Weak.” The problem with AI is that these machines' intelligence is nothing like that of a human.

General artificial intelligence, sometimes known as "strong AI," according to Joe Carter, is the ability of a machine to carry out most, if not all, of the intellectual tasks that a human can perform, including the capacity to comprehend the context and generate conclusions from it (Thompson, 2020:57). In contrast to limited artificial intelligence, a general intelligence machine is capable of making decisions based just on its self-learning and not on any prior instruction. Since the foundation of human consciousness is still unclear, it is hard to predict when or even if a machine will be able to mimic consciousness. Therefore, opinions among scientists regarding our proximity to attaining artificial general intelligence are split (Walsh et al 2019:20).

Superintelligence is any intellect that greatly exceeds the cognitive performance of humans in virtually all domains of interest (Thompson, 2020:57). This kind of AI is meant to outperform human intellect in every way, including creativity, general knowledge, and problem-solving abilities. This is the kind of artificial intelligence (AI) that many fear will wipe out humanity, according to figures like Stephen Hawking and Elon Musk. Although this kind of AI does not yet exist, experts believe it may in the future (Thompson, 2020:58). Walsh et al (2019:21) opined that Superhuman AI, also known as artificial emergent intelligence, is the next step up from generalised AI and describes a hypothetical machine with significantly higher intelligence in all areas, such as creativity, social skills, and general



knowledge. Essentially, this degree of intelligence would be indicative of a machine that has the capacity to continuously learn and advance.

Artificial Intelligence as a Reflection of Human Ingenuity and Divine Creation

To trace the origin of artificial intelligence from the Old Testament narratives is a herculean task since there is no direct allusion to it in the Old Testament. However, tracing the origin of artificial intelligence (AI) in Old Testament narratives involves reading the ancient texts through a contemporary lens, especially in passages focusing on artisans' roles which cut across several periods such as the creation narrative (Genesis 1:26; 2:7), Tower of Babel (Genesis 11), the Golden Calf episode (Exodus 32:1-4), Solomon's building expeditions (1Kings 5-8), and the prophecies of ancient prophets such as Daniel (Daniel 12:4) and Ezekiel (Ezekiel 1:19-21; 10:15-17). These several passages are key indications of the modern perspective on AI.

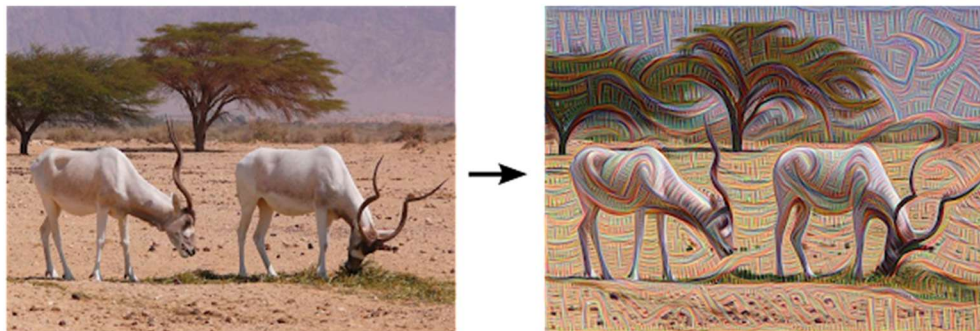
Therefore, artificial intelligence is a reflection of human innovation creativity, and divine creation. A Man is an inquisitive being who tends to ask questions about the origin of the cosmos and the necessary composition of the earth. This made man to be scientifically intoxicated with the sole determination to improve his society with his discoveries and inventions. The study shall aptly discuss the causative of artificial intelligence as a human endeavour and divine origin.

a. Human Ingenuity

Man from the Old Testament narratives to the New Testament, and from the rudimentary algorithms of the mid-20th century by Alan Mathison Turing, to the sophisticated neural networks and machine learning systems of today, AI's evolution underscores the human capacity for problem-solving and creativity (Copeland, 2024). From its origin as a concept in the 1950s to the contemporary era, AI has experienced a profound transformation. Early forerunners such as Alan Mathison and John McCarthy

have envisioned AI as a means to simulate human intelligence, but the passage from symbolic AI to modern machine learning has been marked by advances, setbacks, and relentless innovation (Rayhan et al., 2023:3). AI has permeated man's daily activities and it can be seen in the following areas of human life:``

i. Music and Art: AI-generated art and music demonstrate the blend of algorithmic precision and creative expression. The boundaries between human and machine creativity were blurred in late 2015 when the DeepArt algorithm turned pictures into works of art by well-known painters. This marked the beginning of the current AI artistic canvas. The same year, Google's DeepDream produced ethereal, dreamlike visuals, demonstrating the potential of AI to inspire creative invention as opposed to merely copying (Selimi, 2023).



Left: Original photo by Zachi Evenor. Right: processed with DeepDream by Günther Noack, Software Engineer: (Mordvintsev, 2015).

In the area of music, Martinez (2023) opined that the use of AI in music production began with algorithmic composition attempts in the middle of the 20th century. Iannis Xenakis and Lejaren Hiller are two early proponents of AI music, using computer programs and mathematical algorithms to create musical works. There are numerous instances of AI being used in the creative sectors. Platform firms like Netflix and Spotify, for instance, employ AI to identify gaps in the creation of creative material and provide recommendations for new content (Walsh et al 2019:20). Selimi (2023) observed that

Google’s MusicLM is one prominent example of the recent surge of innovations. With its impressive demonstration of AI’s ability to comprehend and produce music, MusicLM provides a fascinating look into the potential applications of AI-generated music. Similarly, platforms like Jukin and Amper Music are leveraging AI to provide artists with tools for efficient and creative music production (Martinez, 2023).

Martinez (2023) further affirmed that to aid with music creation, a plethora of AI-based solutions have surfaced. Among these resources is Magenta, an open-source initiative by the Google Brain team that investigates how machine learning functions during the creative process for music and art. AI algorithms are used by other programs, such as OpenAI’s MuseNet and Jukin Media’s Jukin Composer, to produce everything from full-fledged compositions to background music for movies. The conventional limits of musical composition are being redefined by these technologies, which open up new creative possibilities.



Fig. 2: *The above diagram shows some AI musical tools which include Magenta, Jukedek, and MuseNet.*

ii. Culture: The aspect of human culture here implies the giving of human attributes to a machine to generate language, texts and even literature as humans would write them down. AI models with human-like text generation capabilities, such as GPT-3, demonstrate the capacity to imitate and improve linguistic originality. Lighthouse (n.d.) writes:

Chat GPT stands for Chat Generative Pre-Trained Transformer and was developed by an AI research company, Open AI. It is an artificial intelligence (AI) chatbot technology that can process our natural human language and generate a response. Simply put – you can ask Chat GPT a question, and it will give you an answer.

In the recent advancement, Open AI (2023) has advertised the new model (GPT-4) as “more creative” particularly “on creative and technical writing tasks” in comparison to previous versions. With ChatGPT, human language can be transmitted and translated into different forms.

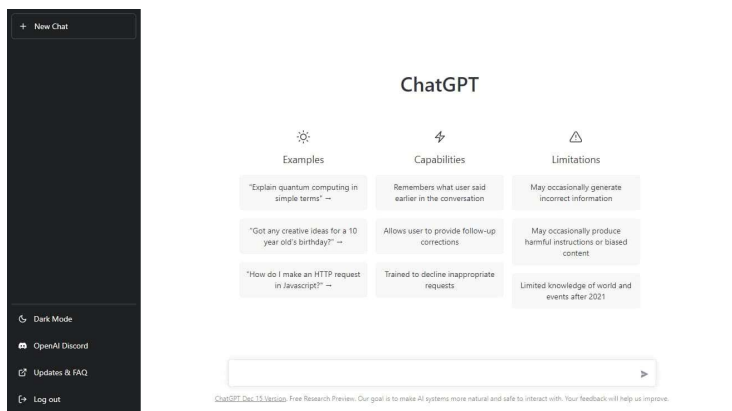


Fig. 3: ChatGPT Interface

Despite this creativeness in providing a replicate for human language and preservation of literature, AI ChatGPT is still not perfect yet and this can be a result that AI is still at its developmental stage, thus, there is still room for improvement.

iii. In Man’s Daily Activities: It is pertinent to state that AI has pervaded the entire human activities with no restrictions to health, education, or social activities such as sports, and religious milieu. AI was first applied to mathematical concepts and games, but it has since expanded. As AI advances in adjacent domains have generated new concepts and theories, the usefulness of AI applications in modern Physical Education is becoming more apparent (Lee & Lee, 2021). The church also uses AI tools by



adopting advanced technologies for the transmission of sermon, evangelising, and security purposes among several others. (La Cruz & Mora, 2024) asserted that “many pastor counsellors have resorted to AI-based solutions to fight pornography addiction, which has been considered a major threat to the survival of Evangelical and Pentecostal churches.”

Sharif (n.d.) opines:

Generative AI, while novel and disruptive, is not a divine intervention bestowed upon us by celestial beings residing in a distant realm. It is, rather, the product of human ingenuity, born of our efforts in crafting the hardware and software that have catalysed the development of the current iteration of generative AI that we now employ. If humans are responsible for the conceptualisation, programming, and implementation of generative AI, then they are undoubtedly equipped to regulate its development.

From the above submission, Sharif strongly affirms that the origin of AI is from human ingenuity, and man’s efforts backed up the desire to improve his status led to the development of generative AI tools that are being used today. On the contrary, (Nyarko, 2023) opines that technology emanates from two perspectives which are “Human ingenuity” resulting from God’s image and likeness in man and “Natural Resources”. All these are God’s gracious gifts at humankind’s disposal of which technology and media are a product.

b. Divine Creation

AI should not be perceived as the sole creativity of human, rather, theological undertone should be also be considered in order to provide a profound origin of the concept. In the Old and the New Testaments, God made use of technology to fulfil His promise to humanity and in some other instances as an analogy, vision and as an instrument of His judgment. It is pertinent to say that the origin of artificial intelligence started with God in the Genesis 1-2 which portrays the intent of God to make man in His own image (Imago Dei). Thompson (2020:40) opines that “when analysing AI and the applications designed with the intent to replicate what humans do, one area of focus should be



relationality. Most robots are designed to look like humans. Companies are trying to make robots that appear and behave like humans. Out of everything created by God, humankind is created differently.” Humanity was made for the glory of God, imitating Him in all aspects. Wayne (2000:442) contends that because people are made in God's image, they are like God and reflect God. The idea behind God's statement in Genesis 1:26, “Let us make humans in our image, after our likeness,” is that He intended to create a being that was like himself. Herzfeld (2000:i) concludes that because of the numerous scientific and technological advances achieved by humanity, an intelligent computer now has an image of itself, an *imago hominis*.

Another important aspect of divine creation and use of technology was the Ezekiel vision (Ezekiel 1:19-21; 10:15-17). It was a long but interesting vision that God brought to the purview of Ezekiel showing an interconnection between Divinity and technology. Ezekiel states:

And when the living creatures went, the wheels went beside them; and when the living creatures rose from the earth, the wheels rose. Wherever the spirit would go, they went, and the wheels rose along with them; for the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels. When those went, these went; and when those stood, these stood; and when those rose from the earth, the wheels rose along with them; for the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels (Ezekiel 1:19-21, RSV).

The vision portrayed two entities in a divine communication with Ezekiel – the living creatures and the wheels while the verse 22-28 stated a glorious description of God seated on the throne which is above the head of the living creatures and His host and his appearance was accompanied with thunder (cf. Psalm 18; Psalm 100:2-4), “indicating divine and royal power” (Shawn, 2015:10). The wheels were like a vehicle through which the living creatures move. The stop of living creatures is the stop of the wheels and vice versa. It ends with a profound remark, “for the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels”, thus, this statement helps to provide an accurate answer to possible questions such as, are the living creatures the drivers of the wheel? How are we so sure that Ezekiel was clear with what

he saw in the vision? Because the unity between a higher being (living creatures) and a metal-like structure can be proven impossible just like clay joined to an iron which cannot be cemented in the ideal sense of it but can be possible if there is an attraction in the clay (magnetic substance) that can make it to be glued to the iron. In the case of the living creatures and the wheels, the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels, in this wise, it makes sense that the wheels move and stop concerning the movement of the living creatures, because both the living creatures and the wheels possess the same spirit.



Fig. 4: Bernard Picart's Ezekiel's Vision (Courtesy rijksmuseum.nl)

Conclusion

The understanding of the origin of artificial intelligence from the Old Testament is not complete when trying to isolate it from technology and technological tools. It is undoubtedly discovered from the study that technology has been in existence since time immemorial such as during the Mesopotamia



and Egyptian civilisations and the societies of the Ancient Near East. The Old Testament passages mention stringed instruments (Gen 4:21), the forging of metal tools (Gen 4:22), Noah's enormous boat (Gen 6), At Babel, civil engineering had advanced to the stage of creating a massive tower out of man-made bricks (Gen 11:3-5). All aforementioned among several others were evidences of the presence of technology and technological tools in the Old Testament. One thing that is clear from these findings is that there is no generation without its level of technology and technological advancement.

AI as an emerging phenomenon of the twenty-first century is as old as man himself. AI which means Artificial Intelligence resonates with man-made intelligence and by this it was discovered that God made man in His image and likeness, thus, man becomes the first Artificial Intelligence. The current use of the term AI is usually narrowed to machine intelligence. However, the concept, scope, and component of the term is more than machine intelligence rather it also entails human or male intelligence. However, the difference between the kinds of usage is that one is a subset of the Original (God) who created man and the other is a sub of the subset. The subset is in a higher version which includes above all emotion, worship, and a sense of responsibility and future. While the sub of the subset is emotionless and limited to what is stored or fashioned with it. The beauty is that man is making an effort to the earth a more improved place that will meet up with the standard of nature and the current situation facing in his society.

Recommendations

The study aptly recommended the following:

1. Scholars in the field of Biblical Studies, especially the Old Testament scholars should engage in extensive research on the origin of AI from the Old Testament texts.
2. Man should make positive use of God's given intelligence to make society a better place.



3. Artificial Intelligence (machine) should not take the place of man since robotics is becoming more in use for several tasks while man's input has been relegated. However, it must be noted that machines are meant to aid man and not to replace him.

References

- Bernard, H. R. & Pertti, J. P. (1972). *Technology and Social Change*. Macmillan.
- Borchardt, F. (n.d.). "Some Thoughts on the Bible and Technology", *A Public lecture first given at Silliman University Divinity School on the ways in which technology has shaped our concept of "the Bible" as a category*. Retrieved 9th June 2024 from https://www.academia.edu/34807685/Some_Thoughts_on_the_Bible_and_Technology
- College of Engineering, Oregon State University, "Technology". Retrieved 17th January 2024, from <https://web.engr.oregonstate.edu/~funkk/Technology/technology.html#:~:text=Ety-mology,a%20saying%2C%20or%20an%20expression>.
- Copeland, B. (2024, June 14). *Artificial intelligence*. *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Retrieved 17th June, 2024, <https://www.britannica.com/technology/artificial-intelligence>
- De Kerckhove, D. (2017). "Babel and Jericho: Architectural Myths for Technological and Psychological Catastrophes". *Icono* 14, volume 15 (1), pp. 35-45. doi:10.7195/ri14.v15i1.1043
- Ferré, F. (1995). *Philosophy of Technology*. University of Georgia.
- Gill, D.W. (2008). "Technology". In William A. Dyrness and Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen (eds.), *Global Dictionary of Theology: A Resource for the Worldwide Church*. IVP Academic, 870-874.
- Goswell, J. (2022). "Technology and the Bible". *Luke's Journal of Christian Medicine and Dentistry*, Vol. 27, No. 2, ISSN 2209-9441.
- Kennedy, T. (2023). "The Bronze Age Destruction of Jericho, Archaeology, and the Book of Joshua" Bloom, J. A. (ed.). *Religions* 14, 1-18.
- La Cruz, A., & Mora, F. (2024). Researching Artificial Intelligence Applications in Evangelical and Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches: Purity, Bible, and Mission as Driving Forces. *Religions*, 15(2), 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15020234>
- Lee, H. S., & Lee, J. (2021). Applying Artificial Intelligence in Physical Education and Future Perspectives. *Sustainability*, 13(1), 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13010351>



- Manning, C. (2020). “Artificial Intelligence Definitions”: Stanford University, Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence. Retrieved 11th June, 2024 from <https://hai.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/2020-09/AI-Definitions-HAI.pdf>.
- McNutt, M. Paula (1990). “The Forging of Israel Iron Technology, Symbolism, and Tradition in Ancient Society”, in Clines, J. A. David and Davies, R. Philips (eds.). *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series*.
- Mordvintsev, A. (2015). “Inceptionism: Going Deeper into Neural Network.” Retrieved 17th June, 2024 from <https://research.google/blog/inceptionism-going-deeper-into-neural-networks/>
- Moumita, G. and Thirugnanam, A. (2021). “Introduction to Artificial Intelligence”. Retrieved 13th June, 2024 from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/351758474_Introduction_to_Artificial_Intelligence
- Nyarko, E. (2023). The Church, Digital Technology and Media: A Biblical Reflection on Romans 8:19-23. *Journal of Education and Learning Technology*, 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.38159/jelt.2023411>
- Nigro, L. & Taha, H. (2009). Renewed Excavations and Restorations at Tell es-Sultan/Ancient Jericho Fifth Season—March–April 2009. *Scienze Dell’Antichita Storia Archaeologia Anthropologia*, 15: 731–744.
- Herzfeld, N. L. (2000). “Imago Dei/imago Hominis: Interacting Images of God and Humanity in Theology and in Artificial Intelligence” (diss., Graduate Theological Union).
- Norvig, P. (2013). *Artificial Intelligence*. 1st ed. Grupo GEN Publishing Company.
- Oppeheim, Leo (1997). *Ancient Mesopotamia Portrait of a Dead Civilization*. University of Chicago Press.
- Patterson, B. (2018). “Alien Technology’ in Ark of Covenant Helped Destroy Wall of Jericho”. Retrieved 11th June 2024 from <https://sputnikglobe.com/20181207/alien-ark-covenant-bible-1070481653.html>
- Rahaman, M. S., Ahsan, M. T., Anjum, N., Terano, H. J. R., & Rahman, M. M. (2023). From ChatGPT-3 to GPT-4: a significant advancement in AI-driven NLP tools. *Journal of Engineering and Emerging Technologies*, 2(1), 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.52631/jjeet.v2i1.188>
- Rayhan, A., Gross, D., & Swajan Rayhan. (2023). Exploring Advancements in AI Algorithms, Deep Learning, Neural Networks, and their Applications in various Fields. <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.18923.31522>
- Robert, A. (2024). “Tech Cities of the Bible”. Retrieved 9th June 2024 from <https://www.plough.com/en/topics/life/technology/tech-cities-of-the-bible>



- Sharif, N. (n.d.). “Navigating the AI Transformation with Human Ingenuity”. Retrieved 18th June 2024. <https://academy.isf.edu.hk/wp-content/uploads/NAVIGATING-THE-AITRANSFORMATION-WITH-HUMAN-INGENUITY.pdf>
- Selimi, S. (2023). “AI in Art, Music and Expressionism”. Retrieved 17th June 2024 from <https://www.skynettoday.com/editorials/ai-expressionism>
- Sheikh, H., Prins, C., & Schrijvers, C. (2023). *Mission AI the New System Technology*. Retrieved 12th June 2024 from <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-031-21448-6>
- Shawn, Z. Aster (2015). “Ezekiel’s Adaptation of Mesopotamian Melammu”. *Die Welt des Orients* 45.1: 10-21.
- Thompson, T. (2020). “Creator God, Humans, and Artificial Intelligence: Framework to Address Theological and Relational Issues.” (Bethel Seminary St. Paul, Minnesota: A Thesis Project For Doctor Of Ministry Degree In Biblical And Theological Engagement).
- Walsh, T., Levy, N., Bell, G., Elliott, A., Maclaurin, J., Mareels, I.M.Y., Wood, F.M., (2019). “The Effective and Ethical Development of Artificial Intelligence: An Opportunity to Improve our Wellbeing”. *Report for the Australian Council of Learned Academies*, (Melbourne Victoria: Australian Council of Learned Academies). www.acola.org.
- Wayne A. Grudem (2000). *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*. Rapids: Zondervan.



RELEVANCE OF MARK 2:1-12 TO HEALING MINISTRY IN THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH, IKOT NTUEN OKU AREA OF AKWA IBOM STATE

By

Iniabasi, Udoh Anedi

MA Student

Department of Religious and Cultural Studies

Akwa Ibom State University

&

Dr. Vincent A. Olusakin

Department of Religious and Cultural Studies

Akwa Ibom State University

vincentolusakin@aksu.edu.ng

+2348074953812

&

Dr. Stella P. Essien

Department of Religious and Cultural Studies

Akwa Ibom State University

stellaessien@aksu.edu.ng

ABSTRACT

Through the ages, the phenomenon of divine healing has been approached with varying attitudes. The first attitude is that divine healing was only for the apostolic age and it ceased after that period. The second is that divine healing belonged only to the early centuries and is no more needed since the Church is well established. The third attitude is that divine healing has ceased in the churches because of the deterioration of Church organization. The fourth attitude is that divine healing has never ceased among true believers; that it occurred in the Apostolic Age and is still in use. The fourth view, being the position of Pentecostals, has been greeted with skepticism by some scholars, particularly the Cessationists, who believe that divine healing ceased after the Apostolic age. This conflict of position makes it imperative to verify claims of divine healing among Christians. The researchers, therefore, set out to examine the phenomenon of divine healing in The Apostolic Church (TAC) which is one of the leading Pentecostal churches in Nigeria, using Ikot Ntuen Oku Area, Uyo Field as a case study. Using historical, descriptive (phenomenological), and hermeneutical methods, the researcher gathered materials from textbooks, interview of certain key players, and participant



observation. It has been discovered that healing ministry is deeply entrenched in the Area, and that the methods used in administering such healings are in line with Jesus' method in the healing in the New Testament. There is hope that the healing ministry will continue unabated, although there is room for more emphasis on the word of God, considering that over-emphasis on healing can make the church to forget about the message of salvation and holiness.

Introduction

Divine healing is the act of evoking divine involvement in physiological healing, particularly in religion. Believers claim that religious faith may heal sickness and incapacity utilizing prayer or other rituals, which can encourage divine presence and power following their faith. Divine healing is an important aspect of Christian religious doctrine (Kinoti, 2021:667). Through the ages, this phenomenon has been greeted with varying attitudes among Christians. John (2021:2) highlights four of such attitudes. The first attitude is that divine healing was only for the Apostolic Age and it ceased after that period. The second is that divine healing belonged only to the early centuries and was no more needed as the church got well established. The third attitude is that divine healing has ceased in the churches because of the deterioration of church organization. Finally, the fourth attitude is that divine healing has never ceased among true Christians; that it occurred in the Apostolic Age and still occurs now. This fourth attitude is mostly characteristic of the Pentecostals (categorized as the continuationists) who believe that all the manifestations of the gifts of the Spirit found in the early Church are for the Church of all ages.

The modern Pentecostal movement embraced the doctrine of divine healing from its very beginning in the early twentieth century. Adherents accepted this position as their legacy from pre-pentecostal holiness and healing movements and the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition. They believed that God gave a remedy for all the effects of sin in the atonement and this included healing of both physical



and spiritual issues. Pentecostals are committed to the “full gospel,” which requires them to proclaim the name of Jesus as savior, healer, Spirit-baptizer, and soon-coming king. Some are also committed to preaching Jesus as sanctifier, but all of them believe that healing is one of the signs that should “follow them that believe” (Mark 16:16). This theological commitment to divine healing has remained a major theme in classical pentecostalism in Nigeria and it is credited for its unmatched growth (Mathew, 2018:305).

This position is true of The Apostolic Church, Nigeria, which is one of the Classical Pentecostal churches in Nigeria. Right from inception, the movement that metamorphosed into what we now have as The Apostolic Church, Nigeria has divine healing as a major emphasis, not just in theology, but in praxis. The doctrine of divine healing is implied in her Tenet No.6, which talks about beliefs in the gifts of the Holy Spirit, part of which is the gift of healing (Fatokun, 2017:385).

However, due to the popularity and criticisms that have greeted the healing ministry in Nigeria, it is important to evaluate this belief and ministry in the Apostolic Church within the domain of practical theology in the light of the healing pericopae in the New Testament. That is the focus of this paper. Using historical, descriptive and evaluative hermeneutical methods, the paper set out to examine the healing ministry of The Apostolic Church, Ikot Ntuen Oku Area in the light of Mark 2:1-12. While the historical method was used to trace the history of the Apostolic Church, the descriptive method was used to present the reality and nature of healing ministry the Apostolic Church, Ikot Ituen Oku Area, the Justin Ukpong’s evaluative model was used to critique the healing ministry in the Church in the light of the chosen text. According to Olusakin (2024:191), the evaluative model, especially the second approach, while recognizing the historical-critical method as its starting point, employs a Biblical text



to critique a particular phenomenon in society or church life. The aim of this paper, therefore, is to investigate the reality of healing ministry in the Apostolic Church, Ikot Ntuen Oku Area; find out how members of The Apostolic Church, Ikot Ntuen Oku Area understand Mark 2:1-12; investigate the attitude of the members of The Apostolic Church, Ikot Ntuen Oku Area towards healing; find out the influence of healing ministry on The Apostolic Church, Ikot Ntuen Oku Area; and suggest ways of improving the healing ministry in The Apostolic Church, Ikot Ntuen Oku Area in relation to Mark 2:1-12.

The Concept of Healing

The word ‘healing’ comes from the Old-English term *haelen*, meaning “wholeness”, and often refers to the process of moving toward a desired wholeness or achievement of cohesion. Healing is an intervention, an outcome, and a process, and at times, all the three. It also describes an ability or power, energy, and cleansing of grief, trouble, or evil. The concept is relevant in a wide range of disciplines, including medicine, nursing, psychology, public health, education, religion, and spirituality. Healing occurs in multiple dimensions—physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, familial, social, communal, and environmental (Firth et al, 2015:46).

In medicine for example, healing involves a basic logic of transformation from sickness to wellness that is enacted through culturally salient metaphorical actions. Kirmayer (2004:34) lists common healing practices to include:

The use of medicines that are drunk, smoked, injected or otherwise taken into the body; methods of getting things out of the body by emetics, cathartics, purgatives, bloodletting or surgery; manipulations of the body through touch and gestures or with specific materials; diagnostic or divinatory practices that establish the nature of the



affliction in terms of its causes, consequences or some other classificatory scheme; and the use of rituals and ceremonies incorporating words, music, costumes and other theatrical devices that may involve the afflicted individual or the healer alone, interaction between patient and healer, or the participation of a whole group or community.

Kirmayer's point is two-fold: Healing is a holistic concept and not limited to few practices geared towards restoring an individual's health. Secondly, the concept of healing predates the use of orthodox medicine. Before the advent of orthodox medicine, many cultures of the world already had long-standing healing practices. Beyond traditional, psychological and scientific approaches to healing, however, religion has been seen as a key factor in the concept of healing.

The relation of Judaism to the themes of healing and curing, and to sickness and health, may be found throughout biblical sources and in later textual and folk interpretations of those sources. Ancient Israel's covenantal relationship affirmed God alone as healer, source of both health and illness, and restorer of body and spirit. Sickness, therefore, was viewed as a divinely ordained form of individual or collective punishment, rather than attributed to independent, demonic forces, as in Mesopotamian, Egyptian, and Canaanite cultures. God's healing, moreover, was linked to individual and communal forgiveness, restoration, renewal, reward, and deliverance from destruction (Praglin, 1999:6).

In the New Testament, there are three principal terms used for the healing work of Jesus in the gospels. The first of these is *iasthai*, which refers to the kind of healing done by a physician (*iatros*). It appears seventeen times in the gospels, especially in Luke. The second term used is *sozo*. As well as



meaning healing, it also means to save, rescue or maintain integrity. It always refers to the healing of the whole person, not individual members of the body. This term appears sixteen times for healing in the gospels and thirty-five times in a less clinical sense, referring to other forms of saving a person. The third term used for healing is *therapeuo*. This is the most common term used. It is used in the gospels in the sense of to heal and always in such a way that the reference is not to medical treatments which might fail but to real healing. It is used thirty-three times for healing in the gospels (Bate, 2012:83).

Surveying the healing accounts of the Gospels, one notices a broad variety in which Jesus brought about healing: sometimes he touched the sick (Mt. 8:14, Lk.14:1) or was touched by them (Mt.9:20-22; Mk. 5:25-34), while at another time he applied some mud or saliva to the affected body part (John 9:1-12; Lk.8:22-25). Jesus also exorcised unclean spirits from sufferers by the power of his word (Mk. 1:39; Mt. 4:23) and healing came about occasionally by Jesus simply assuring supplicants to grant them what they pleaded for (Mt. 15:28; Mt. 8:13; Lk. 17:11-19). Jesus, unlike faith-healers, did not always demand faith by those seeking his help. While there are several incidents in which Jesus alluded to faith, there were also times where his healing was not occasioned by faith at all (Mt. 8:14-15, 12:9-13; see also Lk. 7: 11-17) but rather by his compassion for the suffering (Mt. 9:35-36) (Grundmann, 2015:241).

In the post-Pentecost Church, the apostles did many signs and wonders among the people (the 'signs of a true apostle', 2 Cor. 12:12; cf. Rom. 15:19), and the sick and those afflicted with unclean spirits were healed (cf. Acts 2:43; 3:6-8; 5:12-16; 6:8; 8:6; 8:13; 14:3; 15:12; 19:11; 28:9). Christians are said to minister to Christ himself by 'visiting those who are ill' (Matt. 25:39). Christians prayed for one another 'that you may be in health' (3 Jn. 2). There were recognisable 'gifts of healings' in the early



church (1 Cor. 12:9), and the practice of anointing with oil and prayer for ill people who called for the elders is referred to in James 5:13 (Atkinson, 1993:26-27).

Although the theological lenses through which sickness and healing have been regarded in Christianity have varied across time and among denominations, there are two general views of spiritual causes of illness that consistently run through Christian thought and belief. The first is the idea that sickness and affliction can be caused by forces or spirits opposed to God. The cause of illness, according to this view, is Satan, demons, unclean spirits or other malevolent powers that sicken a hapless individual--often an innocent victim. Healing in these cases involves seeking the intervention of divine powers to face down and defeat the spirits or demons. This is the view that predominates in the Gospels. The second view is that trials, including sickness, are caused by God. God may effect sickness for different purposes--as punishment for sin or as impetus for spiritual growth and development. Sickness and other trials, in this view, are means by which God teaches people or tempers their lives and experiences in order that they may become examples of faith and righteousness for others. Healing in this type of case involves the individual's acceptance that he or she has in some ways deserved the illness or that there is some divine reason for it. The person seeks to understand God's purpose in bringing on him/her the condition, and strives to grow spiritually and/or alter the nature of his or her life. This perspective is more prevalent in the Epistles and is the fundamental orientation around which most Christians have come to regard illness and health. Although these two perspectives seem to be oppositional, the NT contains many examples of both perspectives (D'Atri, 2020:2).

Healing in Mark 2:1-12

Greek Text of Mark 2:1-12

1. Καὶ εἰσελθὼν πάλιν εἰς Καφαρναοὺμ δι' ἡμερῶν καὶ ἠκούσθη ὅτι ἐν οἴκῳ ἐστίν.



2. καὶ εὐθεὸς συνήχθησαν πολλοὶ, ὥστε μηκέτι χωρεῖν μηδὲ τὰ πρὸς τὴν θύραν, καὶ ἐλάλει αὐτοῖς τὸν λόγον.
3. καὶ ἔρχονται φέροντες πρὸς αὐτὸν παραλυτικὸν αἰρόμενον ὑπὸ τεσσάρων.
4. καὶ μὴ δυνάμενοι προσενέγκαι αὐτῷ διὰ τὸν ὄχλον ἀπεστέγασαν τὴν στέγην ὅπου ἦν, καὶ ἐξορύξαντες χαλῶσιν τὸν κράβαττον ὅπου ὁ παραλυτικὸς κατέκειτο.
5. καὶ ἰδὼν ὁ Ἰησοῦς τὴν πίστιν αὐτῶν λέγει τῷ παραλυτικῷ· Τέκνον, ἀφιένται σοὶ αἱ ἁμαρτίαι.
6. ἦσαν δὲ τινες τῶν γραμματέων ἐκεῖ καθήμενοι καὶ διαλογιζόμενοι ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις αὐτῶν
7. Τί οὗτος οὕτως λαλεῖ; βλασφημεῖ· τίς δύναται ἀφιέναι ἁμαρτίας εἰ μὴ εἷς ὁ Θεός;
8. καὶ εὐθὺς ἐπιγνοὺς ὁ Ἰησοῦς τῷ πνεύματι αὐτοῦ ὅτι οὕτως διαλογιζονται ἐν ἑαυτοῖς, λέγει αὐτοῖς Τί ταῦτα διαλογίζεσθε ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν;
9. τί ἐστὶν εὐκοπώτερον, εἰπεῖν τῷ παραλυτικῷ Ἀφιένται σοὶ αἱ ἁμαρτίαι, ἢ εἰπεῖν Ἐγειρε καὶ ἄρον τὸν κράβαττόν σου καὶ περιπάτει;
10. ἵνα δὲ εἰδῆτε ὅτι ἐξουσίαν ἔχει ὁ Υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἀφιέναι ἁμαρτίας ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, — λέγει τῷ παραλυτικῷ
11. Σοὶ λέγω, ἔγειρε ἄρον τὸν κράβαττόν σου καὶ ὕπαγε εἰς τὸν οἶκόν σου.
12. καὶ ἠγέρθη καὶ εὐθὺς ἄρας τὸν κράβαττον ἐξῆλθεν ἔμπροσθεν πάντων, ὥστε ἐξίστασθαι πάντας καὶ δοξάζειν τὸν Θεὸν λέγοντας ὅτι Οὕτως οὐδέποτε εἶδαμεν.

Historical Analysis of Mark 2:1-12

Like the other canonical Gospels, the Gospel of Mark nowhere identifies its author, nor even, as is the case with Luke (1:1-4) and John (20:30-31), the occasion of writing. However, as Cranfield (2000:5) argues, the unanimous tradition of the early Church that the author of the gospel was Mark, the associate of Peter, is not open to serious doubt. The *pericope* under discussion is one of the *pericopae* that have parallels in Matthew 9:1–8 and Luke 5:17–26 and, therefore, a synoptic material (Ayegboyin, 2015:48). It is important to note that the text falls within what scholars have identified as the first half of Mark, which begins after the Prologue (1:1-15) and ends at 8:22 (Mann, 1986:178). Following the healing of the leper in Mark 1:40-44, Jesus sternly charged the man not to tell anybody



about who it was that healed him. However, the man “went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news” (verse 45). As a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places. Yet the people came to him from everywhere. The next time he entered Capernaum is the opening of chapter two, where the account of healing of the paralytic, which is the focus of this paper, is recorded.

A Close Reading of the Text

1. And again He entered Capernaum after *some* days, and it was heard that He was in the house.

“Πάλιν” (“again” or “once more”) is a peculiarity of Mark – the recurrence of scenes and places in his narrative (Abolarin, 2020:36). “After some days” separates the present narrative from Jesus’ preaching tour of 1:21-45. The house where he was (*en oiko estin*) could be a reference to the house of Peter, of Jesus himself or a house in general (Stein,2008:116). According to Wessel (1984:632), “the house” was a kind of base of operations for Jesus in the northern part of the country.

2. Immediately many gathered together, so that there was no longer room to receive *them*, not even near the door. And He preached the word to them.

Though Jesus did not openly enter Capernaum (1:45), his secret visit could not be hidden. His presence in town was soon discovered. Even the place Jesus called home afforded him no privacy. They no doubt flocked to him because they wanted to see him perform more miracles (like the earlier healing of the leper), but Jesus was not working miracles inside the house. He was preaching the gospel to the people.



3. “Then they came to Him, bringing a paralytic who was carried by four *men*. And when they could not come near Him because of the crowd, they uncovered the roof where He was. So when they had broken through, they let down the bed on which the paralytic was lying”.

As Jesus was speaking to the crowd, there was an interruption by the arrival of those who brought the paralytic on a mat, *κραββαττόν*. It was “a rude pallet, merely a thickly padded quilt or mat, held at the corners, and requiring no cords to let it down” (Abolarin, 2020:36-37). When they were unable to get to Jesus through the crowd, they carried the paralytic to the roof by the stairway on the side of the house to the flat roof which then was unroofed. Roofs of Palestinian homes, which were accessible by outside stone staircases, were typically flat, supported by beams resting on the exterior walls of the house. The beams were cross-hatched by smaller poles and sticks, which were covered with thatch, which in turn was covered with a surface of mud (hence the reference to “digging through it,” v. 4).

The mention of the crowd (*ochlos*), a term analogous to ‘*am ha ‘aretz* (people of the land), who in the first century C.E. referred to the lower class, poor, uneducated, ignorant of the law (Mathew, 2018.:50-51), further fosters an understanding of the low situation of the sick man and the kind of people among whom he lived. More than that, it clearly indicates that the people who thronged to Jesus were predominantly poor. The mention of the number of men who brought in the paralytic man is peculiar to Mark, and has signs of being a detail remembered by an eyewitness (Mann, 1986:223).

Verbrusse (2000:437) also notes that the Greek word *παραλυτικὸν* (*paralutikon*) is late, not being found in the classical literature or in *LXX*. *Παραλυτικός* (paralytic) is ‘a disease that begins in one’s legs and proceeds quickly to the arms and neck, generally being fatal within three weeks’. It is a neurological disease, which was very prevalent in Palestine the time of Jesus. In modern medicine, stroke is seen as the cause of paralysis in most cases. *Παραλυτικός* during the era of Jesus began as



paraplegia—paralysis of the lower half of the human body, and graduated into quadriplegia—paralysis of both arms and both legs. In today’s understanding, the situation of the paralytic man is represented by the many crippled people, some with diminished limbs, who are either carried by friends/family members from place to place or manage to trudge themselves along with the aid of a wooden palate that is rolled with small tyres.

5. When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven you.”

In miracle discourses, usually there was an appeal to Jesus for healing, after which he would respond. In this narrative, there was no appeal to Jesus to forgive sin or heal. Probably, the tenacity of the four in digging through the roof and letting down the paralytic person had appealed to Jesus, hence, before he declares the man’s sins forgiven, Jesus is described as *ιδὼν τὴν πίστιν αὐτῶν* (lit. “seeing their faith”).

The author attributed to Jesus that he referred to the paralytic as τέκνον. Τέκνον (child) can be used to refer to a relationship between a child and parents, an elderly son, descendants, the relationship between a disciple and a master, or as an address. In this context, it is used as an address, to show affection (Harrington 2002:602). This is in agreement with the use of οἶκος (house) in the opening and closing of the pericope, because one experiences unconditional affection in οἶκος (Aryeh, 2018:9, 10). “Your sins are forgiven” (Mk. 2:5b) has been interpreted by some as Jesus taking God’s prerogative to forgive sins. Mathew (2018:52) argues that this interpretation overlooks two things. First, there are no known texts in which the messianic figure or Son of Man forgives sins by virtue of his power. Second, Jesus speaks in the passive voice, which means that the man is forgiven not by Jesus but by God. The sense of the passive voice indicates that the issue here is the right to declare sins forgiven,



outside the cult, without repentance and sacrifice as laid down in the Law and enacted by the priest. Thus, the scribe's question is not on the offer of forgiveness in response to the disease, but rather on who declares forgiveness. Through his declaration of forgiveness of sins, Jesus does here what only a priest can do, thereby challenging the mediation of forgiveness of sins through temple cult and priesthood.

6-7. And some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, “Why does this *Man* speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?”

Upon hearing Jesus' pronouncement of forgiveness of sins on the paralytic man, some scribes reasoned that Jesus was arrogating to himself what he did not possess – power to forgive sins, which constituted blasphemy. The focus in 2:1-12 thus shifts from the physical paralysis of the lame man to the spiritual paralysis of the scribes (Edwards, 1994:222).

8. But immediately, when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they reasoned thus within themselves, He said to them, “Why do you reason about these things in your hearts?”

⁹ Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘*Your* sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Arise, take up your bed and walk’?

¹⁰ But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins”—He said to the paralytic,

But immediately, when Jesus perceived in His spirit – “Immediately” (*euthus*) is one of the words that Mark, being an action gospel, uses many times. The word occurs more often in Mark than in the other three gospels put together. Using this word, the rapidity of action is evident in the way his narratives move quickly from one event to another (Ayegboyin, 2015:76). The word translated “perceived” here is ἐπιγινώσκω – *epignous*. Together with the preposition *epi*, meaning on or upon, the verb *epiginosko* means to recognize. However, the “knowing” being referred to here is different from



knowledge acquired through the senses. Without the scribes saying anything, Jesus knew inwardly what was going on in their minds.

Jesus' rhetorical question to the scribes presented healing as harder than forgiveness because healing can be verified through observation. The heart of the answer of Jesus to the scribes' question came in the healing of the Paralytic. He did not answer them directly but asked them to see for themselves the evidence that "the Son of man has authority to forgive sin" (Abolarin, 2020:38).

In Mark and Matthew *exousia* (authority) is reserved specifically for Jesus or the apostles. The term is found nine times in Mark—six with reference to Jesus (1:22, 27; 2:10; 11:28, 29, 33), twice of the apostles (3:15, 6:7), and once in the simile of the man who "gave authority over his house to his servants" (13:34), which doubtless is an allusion to the disciples of Jesus. In the three instances where Jesus is not the subject, *exousia* connotes the conferring of his authority on the disciples. Thus every occurrence of *exousia* in Mark reflects either directly or indirectly the authority of Jesus. The use of *exousia* here contrasts with *dynatai* in v. 7. There the scribes ask: "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" As noted by Edwards (1994:222), the shift from *dynatai* in verse 7 to *exousia* means that the Son of Man not only has the power but the right to forgive sins. Jesus wants the scribes to know (v. 10) the truth of which he speaks (v. 9). His power to forgive, no less effective because of its invisibility, will be proved by the healing of the paralytic. The power to forgive and the power to heal are one.

¹¹ "I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house."

¹² Immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went out in the presence of them all, so that all were amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw *anything* like this!"

The expression of onlookers is the climax of many miracle stories. At the command of Jesus, the paralytic took his mat and began to walk, but he never said anything to Jesus about what



happened. This is proof that the paralytic's sin had been forgiven, because many in 1st century Palestine attributed affliction to one's sin (Aryeh, 2018:12). It is for this same reason that Greenberg (2018:16) avers that implicitly, Jesus had healed the paralytic moments earlier when he told the man his sins were forgiven (thus justifying the attribution of affliction to sin) but nobody, including the paralytic, realized that until Jesus told him to get up.

In conclusion, few insights can be derived from the text. In the context of the pericope, Jesus was teaching the people God's word when the friends of the paralytic broke into the room through the roof. As already pointed out, Mark seems to deliberately portray that the community in which Jesus lived and ministered comprised of very caring people. The pain taken by the paralytic's friends to open the roof in order for their friend to be attended to by Jesus is both didactic and commendable. "When Jesus saw their faith" portrays the fact that, for the Markan Jesus, faith can be seen through one's action. In fact, the perceived faith of the paralytic's friends prompted Jesus' immediate response which eventually led to the man's healing. This therefore shows the importance of faith in eliciting the power to heal from the healer

Although Jesus explained his unexpected absolution of the man as an attempt to show the scribes that he (the Son of Man) had power to forgive sins on earth, the statement on forgiveness has been theologically understood as a pointer to the Jewish belief that sin is at the root of all of man's predicament. Thus, there are two instances where the healing of the man could have taken place: when Jesus pronounced the absolution and when Jesus asked him to take up his mat and go home. Out of the two, the researcher aligns with the first school of thought, specifically because it was Jesus' direct



reaction to the faith of the man's friends. The awe elicited by the miracle of healing was proof that Jesus surpassed the teachers of the law in demonstration of power against forces that keep humanity in bondage, including sickness. It is also noted in this healing narrative that Jesus did not touch the paralytic before the healing took place. The spoken word seemed to do necessitate the healing. This shows that Jesus did not adopt only one method in healing. In what follows, the research explores the history of the Apostolic Church in Nigeria and Ikot Ituen Oku Area and the nature of healing ministry in the Area.

The Apostolic Church Nigeria, Ikot Ntuen Oku Area

What we have today as The Apostolic Church Nigeria existed in its history as Precious Stone Society, Faith Tabernacle and, finally, The Apostolic Church in its different stages of metamorphosis. The final stage came into place when, in 1970, the autonomy of The Apostolic Church Nigeria was ratified and celebrated throughout the then 19 states of Nigeria and Pastor E. E. Okon emerged the first indigenous National President (Fatokun, 2017:197). It is worthy to note that today, The Apostolic Church Nigeria comprises of the following 5 (five) Territories: LAWNA (Lagos, Western and Northern Area) Territory, Cross River Territory, Igboland Territory, Maritime Territory and Akwa Ibom State Territory (Isaiah, 2017:193). At present, Akwa Ibom State Territory is made up of eight fields: Uyo, Eket, Ikot Ekpene, Oron, Ikot Abasi, Etinan, Ikono and Itu (George, 2022:8).

The Apostolic Church, Ikot Ntuen Oku Area is under Uyo Field. Its headquarters is at No. 3 Akpan Essien Lane A, in Ikot Ntuen Oku Village which is about 2.3 kilometers from the University of Uyo Town Campus in the city of Uyo. The Area comprises of four districts namely: Ikot Ntuen Oku District at No. 3 Akpan Essien Lane A, Uyo, Nsit District at No. 30 Udo Eduok Street, Uyo, Peter Uboh District at No. 1 Ibanga Ikpe Close, off Old Ring Road, Uyo and Ebong Essien District at No. 9



Ebong Essien Lane, Uyo. The Area has about three thousand members worshipping in the twelve assemblies that make up the Area.

The Apostolic Church Nigeria, Ikot Ntuen Oku originated from a Prayer Fellowship by a group of tenants at No. 56 Iboko Street, Uyo, the compound of Elder O. S. Udoh of Qua Iboe Church in the year 1986. In 1987, the Fellowship Centre was moved to the present Government Primary School, Ikot Ntuen Oku, popularly known then and identified with the peculiar giant tree called “Afiato” along Ikot Ekpene Road, Uyo. From there, it acquired a land in the present location, No. 3 Akpan Essien Lane, Uyo; built the first Church building and moved in. In 1988, the Prayer House was upgraded to an Assembly with Pastor S. A. Isaiah as the Assembly Pastor and in 1990, Ikot Ntuen Oku Assembly was created and inaugurated as a full District Headquarters under Uyo Area. This went along with the first Assembly Pastor being promoted to the District Pastor under the supervision of the Uyo Area Superintendent, Apostle (Dr.) A. M. Ikpe. In the year 2002, the District was upgraded to the status of an Area with Pastor S. Isaiah as the Area Supervisor. Other Pastors that served in the Area are as follows: Pastor B. U. Inyang (Supervisor) 2002 – 2003, Pastor M.E. Umana (Area superintendent) 2003 – 2007, Pastor U. U. Afia (Area Superintendent) 2007 – 2012, Pastor S. O. Okpoh (Area Superintendent) 2012 – 2015, Pastor J. J. Udoh (Area Superintendent) 2015 – 2017, Pastor P. E. Etim (Area superintendent) 2017 – 2020, Pastor G. E. Akpan (Area Superintendent) 2020 to Date. (George 2022 :240).

Divine Healing and The Apostolic Church Nigeria

Divine healing has always been recognized and practiced in Christianity, but became more emphasized with the emergence of Pentecostalism (Folarin, 2017:17). This position is true of The



Apostolic Church Nigeria. Right from inception, the movement that metamorphosed into The Apostolic Church Nigeria had divine healing as a major emphasis, not just in theology, but in praxis. At least two examples can be pointed out. From the beginning, members of the Precious Stone Society were praying seriously for divine intervention on the deadly epidemic that struck every part of the world, called Asian Flu, killing over ten million people in 1918 (Fatokun, 2017:11; Olusakin, 2014:243, Olusakin, 2024:47). Moreover, in the days of the affiliation of the movement with Faith Tabernacle Congregation (USA), there arose a great healing figure in the person of Joseph Ayodele Babalola, who was entrusted with the message to cure all manners of sickness through prayer and *Omi-iyé* (water of life- that is sanctified water) and to destroy all native medicines. “The attendant effect of the Great 1930 Pentecost episode was so tremendously felt throughout the colonial nation of Nigeria that it gave birth to The Apostolic Church Nigeria” (Fatokun, 2017:16-17).

On affiliation, according to Fatokun (2017:385), there was mutual consensus between The Apostolic Church in Great Britain and the Apostolic Church in Nigeria for the latter to add a twelfth tenet to its tenets, which centers on the doctrine of divine healing, owing to her deep historical and doctrinal roots in her founding days in the Precious Stone Society. However, for the sake of uniformity, the National body of the Church in Nigeria decided to drop the 12th Tenet on her constitution and imply it only with an asterisk on Tenet No.6, which talks about beliefs in the gifts of the Holy Spirit, part of which is the gift of healing (Fatokun, 2017:385).

Healing Ministry in the Apostolic Church, Ikot Ntuen Oku Area

There are various programmes of The Apostolic Church, Ikot Ntuen Oku Area in which healing takes place. They include: Sunday services, midweek prayers, Tuesday morning healing prayers, all



night prayers, fasting and prayer both at Assembly, District, and Area levels. Specifically, healing is administered in the following ways:

i. **Laying on of Hands:** The laying on of hands is a physical act which communicates something of spiritual significance. It falls into the same series of church practices and disciplines as anointing with oil and fasting – outward expressions of a spiritual event or movement (Tipei, 2015:1). According to Ephraim Monday (personal communication on October 7, 2023), members of The Apostolic Church in general and Ikot Ntuen Oku Area in particular believe in the efficacy of laying of hands on individuals who are sick and trusting God for their healing through the transfer of healing virtue from the one who administers the healing in the name of Jesus. Using Luke 4:40: “At sunset, the people brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of sicknesses, and laying hands on each one, he healed them” as the biblical basis for this act of faith, he further submitted that many who testified of being healed within the Area claimed to have been so healed through laying on of hands by a Pastor or an Elder. Such laying of hands takes place during revival services or special mid-week prayer organized for deliverance of the oppressed. Akanimo Essien (personal communication on October 7, 2023) affirmed that many people miss out on the blessedness of this channel of healing because they expect to fall when hands are laid on them. When they do not fall, they do not believe that any change has been wrought in their bodies. Utibe Jumbo (personal communication on October 7, 2023) adds that sometimes, some members refuse to identify with the laying of hands because of over-familiarity with the one who is administering the grace.

Worthy of note is the submission of Uwem Silas (personal communication on October 7, 2023) that not all who trust God for healing actually get healed when hands are laid on them. When asked what could be responsible for that, he replied that the power to heal belongs to God and he dispenses



it as he pleases. He added that, for some who are healed, the healing does not take place immediately. He recounted the testimony of a sister who was trusting God to heal her of ulcer. After hands were laid on her, the pastor assured her that she was healed. However, she was still experiencing severe pain. Two days later, while bathing, she felt a serious rumbling in her stomach and felt like stooling. After using the toilet, she felt a strange but sweet relief in her system. That was the end of that infirmity. Efforts made by the researcher to interview the sister in question in order to verify the claim were not successful, however.

ii. **Prophetic Declarations:** A prophetic declaration is a bold pronouncement based on the word of God. It means to call forth or pronounce upon people or situations a desired result by faith in the name of Jesus Christ. It was revealed that some members of The Apostolic Church, Ikot Ntuen Oku Area received their healings during prophetic declarations by preachers, usually Pastors or Elders. Speaking on this, Effiong Usen (personal communication on October 7, 2023) reports that prophetic declarations from the pulpit are viable tools for healing in the hands of God. He recounted an occasion he witnessed, where a pastor was declaring healing after his sermon on a Sunday morning and suddenly, a boy in the congregation screamed. A force that felt like an electric shock surged through his body. When he got home, he discovered that he had just been healed of a skin infection that had trailed him from birth, concerning which all medical attempts had proven abortive. His healing was verified by a physician.

Such declarations are sometimes laced with words of knowledge, where the Pastor calls out situations of some members through a revelation inspired by the Holy Spirit. Although it rarely happens in this fashion within the Area, there are scanty cases.



iii. Use of Olive Oil: Members of The Apostolic Church, Ikot Ntuen Oku Area interpret literally the imperative in James 5:14-16: “Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he has committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.” For them, the use of olive oil by faith also administers healing to the sick. Thus, this is practiced during prayer sessions in church and at home. Some members even ask their pastor to pray over anointing oil for their private use (Janet Peter, personal communication on October 7, 2023). Commenting on this, Fred Udofia (personal communication on October 7, 2023) asserts that members of The Apostolic Church are taught not to idolize elements that are used for healing such as anointing oil. Rather, they are to see these things as signs that represent the virtue communicated in Jesus’ name. For instance, seeing the olive oil as a sign that represents the blood of Jesus is a common viewpoint. Idara Okon (personal communication on October 7, 2023) submits that this oil is not only used externally; some members drink it while others use it to prepare meals.

iv. Healing Home: In Ikot Ntuen Oku Assembly, there is a place called healing home. According to Ekwere Friday (personal communication on October 7, 2023), the healing home was established in 2001 by the pastor who was serving there at the time, Pastor John Udofia. The healing home is a place where those who are trusting God for healing and other miracles stay for some days or weeks in order to receive constant prayers from the pastor and the prayer band. Ekwere reported that most of the people who stay in the healing home are pregnant women.

The concept of healing home may sound promising, but it is fraught with challenges. For instance, sometimes, issues that require urgent medical attention are approached through prayers until it gets to



a point where the pastor realizes that the issue should have been approached medically from the beginning. In most cases, this realization comes late as the situation would have degenerated beyond repair. By the time such patients are taken to the hospital, it is discovered that the medical personnel cannot help the situation any longer. It is necessary, therefore, for matters that need medical attention to be referred to the appropriate quarters on time while continued prayers are made on behalf of the sick.

Healing in The Apostolic Church Ikot Ntuen Oku Area in the Light of Mark 2:1-12

The following lessons from the text (Mark 2:1-12) can be used to improve upon the already existing healing ministry in The Apostolic Church, Ikot Ntuen Oku Area:

i. Mark seems to deliberately portray that the community in which Jesus lived and ministered comprised of very caring people. The pain taken by the paralytic's friends to open the roof in order for Jesus to attend to their friend is both didactic and commendable. This stands tall as an example to those within the Area who find the sick and weak people as nuisance. In one of the assemblies within the Area, it was reported that some Elders ganged up and drove those in the healing home away, claiming that their assembly was an urban congregation and that they (the sick) were constituting an eye sore especially before visitors (Aniekan Johnson, personal communication on October 13, 2023). Although the healing home is not to harbour people who need medical attention, the action of those Elders is highly condemnable in the light of the text. Such Elders need to learn from the friends of the man in the text that the compassion and empathy of caring friends can facilitate one's miracle.

ii. Jesus' method of healing confirmed what had been said of Him earlier – that He taught as one with authority. He did not do an intercessory prayer; He only gave a command which the sickness obeyed.