

**THEOLOGY OF PISTITHERAPY IN JAMES 5:13-18: AN
INCARNATIONAL COUNSELLING MODEL FOR THE CHURCHES
IN AFRICA**

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ABSTRACT

This study was motivated by the dearth of adequate theological reflections that has taken into consideration the context of the African people as the church in Africa seeks to provide healing for her broken and fractured members. The underlying principle behind the study borders on the question of relevance, therefore, it attempts to think through a model of therapy that can be gracefully integrated into the functioning of the local church. That model of therapy is to be known and called pististherapy. It is a challenge to rethink the motive, method, goals and theological presuppositions of our caring ministry with the view to becoming more relevant. It advocates that whatever theology that may be formulated, it must be relevant to a people and meet their perceived existential needs and take into cognizance an adequate consideration of the people's experience and worldview. The so much commended non-directive Rogerian methods or the so much advocated Freudian principles do not fit into African ways of handling human crisis and therefore have failed to work. The study believes that the Word of God has universal application to human dysfunction and therefore the African's need could be met through the application of the Word. The Bible can apart from being disclosures about God, His Son and His plan, serve as veritable antidotes for sin, sickness, satanic bondage, and oppression of any kind.

The essay therefore is an attempt to order a theology of healing and therapeutic methodology that increases the correlation between the knowledge of God with the knowledge of self, and in direction that facilitates emotional and spiritual wholeness for the African people experiencing brokenness. It looks into the dynamics behind the effects of guilt, the importance of confession of sin, and the power of prayer and their effects on human sufferings and brokenness. The study also attempts to provide answer to the question, "How authentic or relevant is faith in contemporary age of science in Christian counsel?"

In doing pastoral theology for the people with mythical culture as Africa in which the human being participates in the ambient game of the forces, it has become very necessary for the theologian to come to terms with the powers behind the message and ministry of the African pastors and their churches. Thus pististherapy has been evolved as an incarnational paradigm in which the pastoral care is to be viewed as individualised proclamation whereby the pastoral work is to represent in the present, the incarnation of God in the past. Pististherapy as an incarnational model for pastoral care and counselling presupposes the importance of culture in developing an understanding of faith. More than the translation model of psychotherapy, however, it goes beyond seeing culture as human values and ways of behaviour. It asserts that the notion of sin is important above all because it helps identify how the human situation requires not behavioural change but that we be redeemed by an Agent beyond ourselves, through whose activity the character of our situation can be entirely remedy. Since we are sinners enslaved within a disordered situation and incapable of restoring ourselves, we require more than education toward better goals or encouragement to better performance.