

# THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL STUDIES

## Televangelism, Self-Styling and Medical Care among the Moghamo People of the North West Region of Cameroon

**Dr. AFU Isaiah Kunock**

Lecturer, Department of Anthropology, Faculty of Arts, Letters and Social Sciences  
University of Yaoundé I, Cameroon, Central Africa

### **Abstract:**

*Africa in general is experiencing a permanent change at the level of socio-cultural, economic and political plan. But this change is very reluctant in the domain of therapeutic trajectory. The different therapeutic trajectories or places where people seek treatment include the hospital, spiritualists, herbalists, diviners and churches. Initially the television was not part of this and only acted as a tool of communication, entertainment, education and information. Consequently, it became a strong competitor to story tellers, historians, entertainers and holders of moral values and repositories of religious knowledge.*

*Today, "men of God" present themselves in diverse ways using their various TV programmes to pull the audience to their respective assemblies or TV stations. They create their own language, their personal appearance, with specific symbols, signs, styles and highlighting prominence on selected programmes. TV has become a medium through which audiences seek healings, deliverance, prophecy, testimony breakthroughs, blessings, edification, prayers, praise and worship. This will be illustrated at the example of Moghamo ways of watching television in North West Cameroon such as touching the television screen, repeating prayers, laying of hands, singing and dancing in response to strategies laid down by men of God in television. This kind of faith healing is increasing as there is a proliferation of televangelists and Gospel television channels. The choice for this medium as a therapeutic trajectory may be due to the fact that there are still a number of diseases for which science has either been unable to provide a solution to, or on its attempt to do so, has resulted in a failure.*

*This work is part of an analytic study of gospel television channels on the people of Moghamo in the North West Region of Cameroon in Central Africa. By using the case study, interviews, observation, and survey, this work seeks to show how television is an instrument of social change and a tool of health seeking behaviour of a people. It also tries to explain the major kinds of sicknesses that are handled by this medium as well as self-styling of televangelists.*

**Keywords:** *Televangelism, self-styling, faith healing, healthcare*

### **1. Introduction**

While media in recent decades has had a profound impact on various spheres of socio-political mobilisation, development, communication, information and entertainment, the effects of this process on religious traditions have been particularly striking. Regarding such traditions especially evangelism, the television has evolved to become an important vehicle conveying Christian doctrine and beliefs through messages and images with the intention of winning souls and connecting them to God, a fundamental part of Christianity. An outstanding development in televangelism is the progression from classical soul-winning repentance messages to its use in therapeutic processes and practices conveyed through healing and deliverance messages distance notwithstanding. Most African televangelists especially Pentecostals have adopted healings and miracles as an alternative strategy for soul winning. This new approach of televangelism appears to be appealing to many people considering that there are still a number of diseases for which science has been incapable to provide solutions to, or that its attempt to do so has resulted in failure. In order to attract, maintain, boost or win gospel TV audience, televangelists present themselves in diverse ways with self-acclaimed titles such as prophets, apostles, evangelists and 'men of God' on charismatic healing programmes.

A number of scholars have recently argued, religious deployment of media has often been guided by a quest for transcendence, religious sensations that make spiritual forces appear as immediate and real (De Vries 2001, Elsenlohr 2009, Meyer 2009). The ability of these forces not only to heal but to do so instantly is a motivation for viewers. This confidence or feelings of reality is seen in the desire of sick persons and their relatives to seek healings from televangelists, even of terminal and medically incurable diseases. Among Nigerian televangelists, Ayegboyin (2005) identifies three categories televangelism which are 'Holiness movements', 'Prosperity organisations' and 'Deliverance or healing ministries'. Among these three however, deliverance or healing ministries are gaining more grounds as many sick people in desperate situations tend to seek for healings. To Meyer (2011), the role of media and religion are intrinsic rather than opposite, linking humans to the spiritual particularly in the domain of healings. Shane (2011) argued that the faith-healing televangelist's invitation to touch the TV screen is an invitation to confront modernity and undergo not just a test

of faith but to submit oneself to a technological ordeal in which a new form of faith may emerge that is tuned to and inseparable from the technological conditions of modernity. Gelfgren (2013) remarked that some televangelists' moral standards, their theology and their alleged healings have been debated for several decades. On one hand, these televangelists are perceived as fake men of God, scammers and cheats. On the other hand, some of them are viewed as true ministers and servants, anointed and sent by God. (Meyer, 2007) opined that many people are drawn to these healing programmes as televangelists promise showers of blessings that materialise in health, wealth and visas. Thus, the television in the spiritual domain goes beyond the limits of human knowledge, experience or reason on health.

It is this stimulating perspective that helps us to grasp the new relationship between television, belief and health care. The study seeks to analyse the impact of televangelists and religious TV channels on the health-seeking behaviours of the Moghamo people in the North West region of Cameroon in Central Africa. The following question therefore arises. What is the relation between televangelism, belief and health care?

Research on scholarly literature was carried out in Yaoundé, Bamenda and Moghamo, while field work was done in Moghamo and data collected using tape-recorders and field diaries. Twenty-five homes with television sets were studied over a period of two years where viewers' watching behaviour like singing, praying and touching the television screen were observed. The researcher equally observed televangelists' dressing style gestures and listened to their biblical messages on healings and deliverances as well as comments made by the audience as they watched gospel television channels. In addition, 151 questionnaires were administered to viewers and non viewers of gospel television channels.

I will begin with an overview of literature, then proceed to religious healing regains ground, self-styling in the presentation of televangelists, religious television channels and healing practices then move to viewers watching behaviour, manifestation and practices, representation of televangelist, and finally to gospel television channels and social transformation.

Interviews and observations revealed that today, television is not just limited to *communication*, entertainment, education and information functions as "men of God" present themselves in various ways using their various TV programmes to pull the audience to their respective assemblies or TV stations. They create their own language, their personal appearance, with specific symbols, signs, styles and highlighting prominence on selected programmes. TV now goes beyond entertainment and communication tool to act as a medium through which audience seeks healings, deliverance, prophecy, testimony breakthroughs, blessings, edification, prayers, praise and worship. It seems that people actually do not like to rely only to one type of healing but try several ones all during the same period of time, until they find a solution, that means people's strategies are complex.

## 2. An Overview of Literature

Televangelism is growing across Africa, but especially in Cameroon where religious programmes are led by charismatic pastors and other men of God, who preach unconventional ideas, like miracle cures for diseases such as HIV/AIDS. Televangelism in simple words is the use of television to communicate the Christian faith. Televangelism as a term was first used by Hadden and Swann as pointed out by Land (1993). According to them, it was used to describe a new form of religious broadcasting combining television and evangelism. Wilson and Wilson (1998) pointed to the process of televangelism as the electric church, as explained by (Okon, 2011) making reference to preachers whose pulpits have become the television. Gifford (1988) notes in his "Analysis of Religious Media Use in Southern Africa" that in contrast to the Pentecostal churches, the historical, mainline churches like the Catholic do not bother to compete in televangelism. They spend their money in other areas like medicine, education and development not on the mass media. In like manner, (Okon, 2011) remarked that in places like Nigeria, televangelism has become to a large extent synonymous with "Pentecostalism" bearing in mind that many orthodox churches sparingly make appearances on television.

Televangelists have most certainly become a force to reckon with. The overriding imputation is its corresponding influence on followership and membership. Therefore, there is no gain saying that churches like the Synagogue church of all nations, Christ Embassy, Winners Chapel, the Redeemed Christian Church of God, etc. are rated as mega churches because of their domineering presence on air via television. According to Shane (2011) televangelism is an inherently present-day form of religious practice, one tied inextricably to the modern electronic media that enable its production, distribution, and consumption. To others, televangelism is not only a healing tool but also a political weapon.

Hadden (1993) presented televangelism as a political weapon used by many politicians to gain power. This was the case when televangelists forged a coalition that provided critical electoral support for Reagan and George Bush while also playing a significant role in defining the social agenda of the decade. In a similar situation, Ole (1994) opined that several televangelists in America are very active in national and international political arenas and often espouse conservative politics on their programmes.

Meyer (2002) notes that in Ghana the massive presence of the Pentecostal churches in the mass media has impacted so much on the social structure leading to the creation of *pentecostallite culture*. DeWitte (2005) refers to this culture as the "pentecostalisation of the public sphere". Ihejirika (2006) notes that by projecting themselves as a major religious force Pentecostals have acquired a big bargaining chip in the national public arena. According to him, they can now influence media and social policies and even make important inputs in the ongoing efforts towards creating a new Nigeria. Ihejirika (2006) further observes that televangelists have become suppliers of symbols that people could use to define their own personal identities in this new socio-cultural context. Egunyoyi and Olatumile (2010) have illustrated that working more intensively through such institutions as traditional and religious leaders can provide veritable means of socio-political mobilization.

Mega churches as orchestrated by televangelism and the socio-political mobilization of the faithful have become a veritable way to sustainable and embracing development. In the United States of America, it is not in doubt that televangelism has provided a platform for forays into national politics. It should be recalled that televangelists in America were credited to have mobilized Christian

conservative vote in 1980 and 1984 which helped facilitate Ronald Reagan's victories. According to Becker and Churchill (2008) televangelist, Jerry Falwell, formed the 'Moral Majority' and mobilized the evangelical vote to a degree previously unseen in American politics. In 1988, Pat Robertson utilized his base and network to make credible effort to capture the presidential nomination of the Republican Party. By inference, therefore, some televangelists in America have used their television generated popularity to influence their social and political milieu while others have been socio-politically reticent. Hank Hanegraaff (2009) observed that such practices included being dishonest, greedy, materialistic, wasteful and scandalous. According to him, the sight of televangelists wearing overly expensive clothing and jewellery, living in ridiculously expensive homes and driving the most luxurious of cars have caused many people to turn away from the faith. One of the core objectives of Christianity has always been to preach the Gospel to the whole world. The advent of new media only came to enhance this long-lasting objective and ease its implementation. The beginning of televangelism stems from this key objective of preaching to the whole world and reaching a wider audience. The relationship between Christianity and broadcasting can be traced as early as the 1920s when radio was experiencing a rapid growth and provided a better tool than movement from door to door for evangelism. It is however worth noting that "televangelism" typically started as an American phenomenon before gradually spreading to the entire world. One of those early evangelists to use radio extensively for the purpose of evangelism is Parkes Cadman in early 1923 on National Broadcasting (NBC). Many other gospel ministers followed Cadman's footsteps. The advent of television in the 1930s did not however influence the prominence of radio evangelism until after World War II. One of the early gospel ministers to use television was the Roman Catholic archbishop Fulton J. Sheen whose television programme started in 1951 knew a great success and was run until the late 1960s (Hadden and Swann 1981).

In the 1960s and early 1970s television was not only seen to have replaced the radio as the primary home entertainment medium, but also corresponded with a further rise in evangelical Protestant Christianity, particularly through the international television and radio ministry of Billy Graham. Many well-known televangelists began during this period, most notably Jimmy Swaggart, Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker, Jerry Falwell as well as Pat Robertson. Most of them developed their own media networks, news exposure, and political influence. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, religious broadcasting experienced a tremendous development and more TV programmes were created. Televangelism that began as a typically American phenomenon has grown universal. Among prominent American televangelists today are Benny Hinn, T.D. Jakes, Creflo Dollar, Joel Osteen, just to name a few. Televangelism has extended to Africa where most pastors or ministers have a growing interest to build mega churches through fund raising and increased membership.

In Africa, among prominent televangelists are T.B. Joshua with his Synagogue Church of All Nations and his television channel "Emmanuel TV" created in 2006 and Chris Oyakhilomme with his Love world TV channel created in 2004, both of whom are of Nigerian nationality. These channels make popular their ministries and increase membership in their churches as well. This is a recurrent phenomenon in Nigeria where most preachers have turned into televangelists using their own TV channels. Televangelism is not as widespread in Cameroon as in Nigeria where very few ministers of the gospel own and run their own TV channel. However, there has been an increasing interest for televangelism in Cameroon. This can be confirmed by the fact that there are a number of Cameroonian Christian television channels like Trompette TV, Christ television, Divine TV, Canal Vie, El Shadai, Gloire à Dieu TV, Gospel TV and Kanodi TV broadcasting in the country, some of which are operating illegally by using the technical means of some TV cable distributors (Cameroon Tribune, Feb 13 2013, Yufeh B.N.).

Beyond the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ, there is televangelism for soul winning, breakthroughs, political votes and healings. Most African televangelists especially Pentecostals have adopted miracles and healings as another important strategy for soul winning. Most programmes on Christian TV channels are either dedicated to healing and deliverance services or testimonies of people who have been healed from a disease after prayers. This new approach of televangelism has gradually been attracting people's interest for religious TV programmes, especially people with desperate health cases. People watching miracles, healings and deliverances on TV channels tend to give preference to what they watch over the television or believe in the man of God (pastor, prophet, apostle, etc.) who promises them miraculous healings. It is this general but recurring observation that served as starter for this study.

### 3. Religious Healing Regains Ground

Science, especially in the area of medicine, has known tremendous developments over the years and has been able to provide a number of medical or biomedical solutions to a large variety of diseases suffered by mankind. The core issue in medical healing is providing cure to a given disease through a therapy based on drugs and other biomedical solutions. However, in spite of all the advances in medicine, there are still a number of diseases for which science has either been unable to provide a solution, or whose attempt to do so has resulted in failure. This has probably led more people to question the "power" of medicine and lose faith in some of its promises. As noted by Clerc:

- ... medicine enjoys today an astonishing degree of undeserved credit that is out of all proportion to its actual results or promises. Real health keeps regressing, while the great "miracles" such as vaccines and antibiotics, are now showing their limitations, which some had foreseen and warned of right from the start. Many people now question the effectiveness of the power of medicine (Clerc 1999: 8-9).

When one looks at diseases such as cancer, HIV/AIDS, hepatitis and other viral diseases, one could be tempted to believe that science and medicine might have failed, since these diseases are old without treatment. However, most people still resort to medical healing for their treatment and cure, though there is today an increasing push for religious healing.

Religious/faith healing in Christianity is based on faith, that is, faith in the ultimate power of God through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Healing is thus believed to be possible through prayer and absolute faith in God both by the person praying and the patient. It is believed here that God, who is the creator of mankind, has the solution for any ailment or disease they may suffer. Nowadays, with the

advent of the new media and the rise of televangelists, the hope and focus of people sick of medically incurable diseases is gradually shifting from medical healing to religious healing. Most of such diseases tend to be those for which science has failed to provide a solution, and even doctors have described them as desperate or incurable cases. Religious healing through television preachers is the ultimate solution looked for when science has failed to provide a solution. However, it should equally be emphasized here that the aim of this study is not to advocate for either of the healing methods, but to show how televangelists through self-styling have used religious healing to change people's perception of medical healing and change their care-seeking behaviours.

#### 4. Self-Styling in the Presentation of Televangelists

In order to attract, maintain, increase or win gospel TV audience to a particular channel or church, televangelists present themselves in diverse ways with various self-acclaimed titles. They introduce themselves to the audience as God sent, God's messengers, man of God, servant of God, God's vessel, bishop, prophet, pastor, apostle, evangelist, anointed men of God, God's mouth piece, God's oracle and true man of God to convince their audience of the power they carry and the authority they have over sickness and evil spirits. This self-styling is not limited to titling alone but equally extends to the naming of their different ministries, churches and television channels with the objective of attracting or winning the audience. Some of these self-styled names of ministries and television channels include the Synagogue, Church of All Nations with their Emanuel TV, Christ Embassy with their Love world SAT, Winners' Chapel International, Omega Fire Ministries, Holy Ghost Clinic, Harvest Broadcasting Network, Divine TV, Gospel TV, Jesus TV, Divine Restoration chapel, and Solution Centre Assembly. These appellations have a profound impact on how the audience perceives the different ministries, the preferred channels to always watch or which assembly/church to attend.

Other aspects of self-styling are portrayed through dressing in good-looking well-fitting suits or other types of dresses with unique designs usually of an expensive fabric to show the riches, power and abundance of the Almighty God they represent, others prefer white-coloured dresses to symbolise purity, holiness and godliness. 'Oral structures' are a common feature which include greetings and repetition of slogans like 'amen', 'hallelujah', 'better is not good enough, the best is yet to come', 'you don't serve a dead God, you serve a living God', 'God is good all the time, and all the time, God is good', 'arise and shine', and 'you are blest for life'. This greetings and repetition of slogans explains why Burgess (2008) notes of Pentecostal churches that, the opinion of the pastor is rarely challenged publicly, presumably in recognition of their status and role as power brokers. This self-styling is reflected in the choruses of "amen and hallelujahs" that follow their declarations from the platform during church services and conferences. Worthy of note are well decorated alters to portray the glory of God among his people and his goodness to them, use of powerful resounding speakers to symbolise the authority of God's word, and uniforms for ushers and other church workers to symbolise order. Gestures such as laying of hands, shouting, jumping and other body movements and slogans cannot be underestimated as the form part of the healing and deliverance processes. These captivating names of the various preachers and ministries, and their mannerisms have different impacts on the audience. Such mannerisms are important for conditioning the audience on the core message of their preaching.

Televangelists preach God's word with much emphasis on healing and prosperity, most especially financial success. This claim comes from the fact that God's word is alive and active, and has the ability to transform bad situations into good ones such restoring good health to a sick person, and breaking of the yoke of poverty thus enabling people who believe to become rich. Their TV shows include "testimonies" of viewers who reportedly received miracles as a result of believing and praying along with 'man of God' in the course of the church service or watching their programmes. Their messages are carefully designed with the aim of captivating the audience. Some of these messages include; healing of the sick, how to receive and maintain your healing, the power to create wealth, God's laws of success, how to pay your bills supernaturally, how to be rich and have everything you ever wanted, strike it rich, Oh lord I pray send now prosperity, how to kick the devil out of your life, God's millionaires, you shall be the head and not the tail, defeating satanic networks, multiply breakthroughs, victory over financial handicap, rapid manifestation of miracles, power to prosper, success in competition, and wealth must change hands. Emphasis on "demon blasting" exorcism practices involve commanding demons out of people's lives as these demons supposedly possessing people are believed to be the cause of sickness, misery, poverty, broken relationships and other social problems.

Most televangelists, especially the Pentecostals, spend much of their time praying for the sick or the possessed. Most programmes on Christian TV channels are either dedicated to healing and deliverance services or testimonies of people who have been healed from a disease after prayers. This new approach of televangelism has gradually been attracting people's interest for religious TV programmes, especially people with desperate health cases.

#### 5. Religious TV Channels and Healing Practices

The objective of this section is to present key Gospel TV channels, the programmes they broadcast, audience turnout and the major type of diseases that are presented during such programmes for healing. It should be noted that this study cannot be extensive to study all the channels of the Christian faith. However, it will limit itself to the African context, notably Cameroon, Nigeria, Ghana and South Africa with the aim of examining key religious channels which have an undisputable impact on Moghamo people.

##### 5.1. Key Gospel TV Channels

There are many gospel TV channels broadcasting in Cameroon, some of which broadcast from Cameroon while others are foreign channels. Most of the foreign religious TV stations broadcasting in Cameroon are from the USA (God TV, TBN, Daystar ...), Nigeria (Emmanuel TV, Chosen TV...), Côte d'Ivoire (LMTV) and South Africa (Love world). Cameroonian based religious TV channels are Divine TV, Gospel TV 1 and 2, Gloire de Dieu Television, Christ Television, Synagogue Radio and Television, El-shaddai and Jesus Television. It should be noted that most of the Cameroonian gospel TV channels are not officially recognised channels. Most of them

are run by men of God who partner with cable TV distributors who only attribute them a channel in their channel package. Though these channels may not be officially recognised, they cannot be undermined by this study given their impact on their audiences, who are mostly believers. Given the bilingual nature of Cameroon most of the messages broadcast within the country are in English and French. But moghamo which is predominantly English speaking population view most of the English channels notable the Emmanuel TV in Nigeria and Love world TV in South Africa.

It is difficult to give an exhaustive list of all channels broadcasting from Cameroon (Cameroonian channels) and channels that are received in Cameroon, since more people nowadays can receive a wide range of Gospel TV channels through the satellite. However, among these channels, Emmanuel TV appears to be the most watched religious channel in the Moghamo community, and its impact on the religious community has been growing over time. This Gospel channel was created in 2006 to help project the religious activities of the Synagogue, Church of All Nations created 15 years earlier by T.B. Joshua. The assumption that Emmanuel TV is the most watched Gospel TV channel was confirmed by observation and the survey that was carried out among 40 respondents, 33 reported to have been watching Emmanuel TV most, that is, 82.5 % of the sampled population of Moghamo. This high rate could be due to the numerous miracles and healings that are broadcasted by Emmanuel TV and which eventually attract more viewers. Another channel which draws people's attention is Love world SAT, a South African based gospel channel belonging to the Christ Embassy church run by Chris Oyakhilome a Nigerian born evangelist. On the basis of observation these channels are currently the most watched TV channels

### 5.2. Key Programmes of Gospel Television Channels

As mentioned earlier, the global objective of religious TV channels is to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the world. In a study conducted by Stephen Winzenburg in 2004 on Christian ministries' use of airtime in the USA, it emerged that most Christian TV channels spent up to 81% of their airtime on spiritual issues (2005: 8). By spiritual issues, Winzenburg means such religious activities as sermons, prayers and music. Religious TV channels broadcasting in Cameroon seem to follow the same trend as their American brothers. Broadcasting contents are almost the same and may vary only when the channel is either denominational or interdenominational. The following are key programmes broadcasted by key Gospel channels currently broadcasting in Cameroon:

- Sermons: They can be pre-recorded or live sermons. The man of God takes time to explain some spiritual truths to his listeners. Sermons are common to all channels; however, when a channel serves the purpose of a given church or ministry, sermons which are broadcasted on it are mostly those of the founder of the ministry or his close assistants. This is the case for Emmanuel TV with T.B. Joshua; Love world SAT with Chris Oyakhilome.
- Live service: This is a normal Sunday church service which is broadcasted live and may be rebroadcasted during the week. The channel which actually broadcast a live service every Sunday is Emmanuel TV.
- Healing and deliverance service: They are often associated with sermons during live services. However, some channels do have special time slots for healing and deliverance services. Live healing and deliverance services usually attract a large audience for many reasons. On Emmanuel TV, live healing and deliverance services are known as "*The Prayer Line*", a live church service devoted for prayers, especially for the sick, the possessed and people presenting crosscutting desperate cases. On Love world, the programme is known as "*The Healing School*" and "*Atmosphere of Miracles*", on Divine television it is known as "*Délivrance*" and on the Synagogue Radio and Television, it is known as "*The prayer line*".
- Prophecy: This is a situation whereby God uses the 'men of God' to speak to individuals, families and the church. He might equally speak to a region, nation, continent or the world at large. God might promise the people breakthroughs such as financial, marital, healings as well as warn them of eminent problems or destructions that await them. He equally might ask them to turn away from their sinful ways.
- Praise and worship: this is a moment in a Christian meeting which permit believers to sing and dance to the glory of their God. This programme has often enabled the Moghamo audience to join in the singing and dancing as viewers. Some of these songs come up during healing and deliverance services. Here most audience have become versed with almost all the songs that they take part in singing.
- Testimonies: This is an essential part of most TV channels, especially the key channels we mentioned above. During testimonies, people share their miraculous experiences during healing and deliverance services or prophecy time. Most of them are people who attend the live service, while others are viewers who testify of having experienced healing or deliverance by watching healing and deliverance services live from their TV sets or computers. Testimonies often revolve around the same topics such as miraculous healing, deliverance from demon possession, family curses or spiritual attacks. Sometimes, it is about supernatural breakthroughs in business, studies or social life through prayers.

### 5.3. Audience Turnout

It is no doubt that more and more people are interested in watching Gospel TV channels which have become a source of hope for many. In Cameroon there are more than a dozen Gospel TV channels broadcasting and these have varying audience turnout. To measure the audience turnout for key Gospel channels identified in Moghamo a low scale survey was conducted as earlier indicated. Out of a population of 151 respondents - Women (55 %) and men (45%), the following audience turnout was identified as per key Gospel TV channels:

Emmanuel TV had 121 respondents (80%), Love world SAT had 20 respondents (13%), and other Gospel TV channels like God TV, El-Shadai and Gospel TV scored 7% with only one viewer within the sampled population. The survey also illustrates that the more a channel broadcasts healing and deliverance services with their accompanying testimonies, the more people are inclined to watch these

channels. This could be the reason why more people watch Emmanuel TV which seems to have a greater number of healing and deliverance cases compared with other channels.

#### 5.4. Major Types of Diseases Presented

As earlier indicated, most cases presented on these channels are desperate cases for which patients or relatives have unsuccessfully searched for a solution through modern medicine. During testimony time on the television, most people testify to have experienced healing or deliverance after long periods of suffering and pains in hospitals or clinics. They even go further to say that some medical doctors had given them just a few days or months to live. One of such diseases is HIV/AIDS for which science is yet to provide a cure. It is common on Emmanuel TV to see "former" AIDS patients presenting two AIDS screening reports, a positive report before prayers and a negative one after they were prayed for. Other diseases include various types of cancers, hepatitis, paralysis, stroke, viral diseases, and other diseases for which science is yet to provide a solution. Beside these diseases, there are equally mental problems which are often presented during healing and deliverance services. Such are the cases of people presenting signs of insanity or madness. Another problem which is commonly presented during such healing and deliverance sessions is the issue of demonic possession - people believed to have evil spirits living within them. Diseases which are often broadcasted on Gospel TV channels for healing are those that are difficult to treat medically or have no medical solution at all. This explains why in a focus group discussion conducted at Mbengok, an informant testified:

- The hospitals and clinics around have failed. The people to whom they refused treatment or suggested that they can no longer live are still alive. Some are looking good and stronger as they watch healing and deliverance services especially that of Emmanuel TV. Some of them received their healings instantly while others migrate to Nigeria (Moghamo 15<sup>th</sup> February 2011).

The main reason for going to Nigeria is to meet the man of God himself during live healing and deliverance service. Unlike just viewing healings and deliverance services on the television, some informants felt that going to Nigeria to meet the man of God has a greater impact on their desperate health situation or that of their family members. Sick people are often desperate for healing and will go extra miles just to get healed. In fact this is an indication that diseases which cannot be treated by biomedicine can be taken care of by men of God through gospel TV channels. Therefore there is a relationship between gospel television channels and healing procedures and practices of its viewers.

## 6. Audience and Gospel TV Channels

This section will explore factors that motivate people to watch Gospel channels, viewers' watching behaviour and eventually, representation of televangelists and the relationship between God, man and television.

### 6.1. Viewer Motivation for Watching Gospel Television Channels

Viewers tend to watch Gospel TV channels for diverse reasons ranging from the need of prayers, for healing and deliverance to the desire to grow in faith. However, one reason tends to overshadow other reasons: this is the need for healing and deliverance. The survey conducted within the framework of this study provided the following statistics regarding factors that motivate viewers to watch Gospel TV channels:

- Healing and deliverance services: 75 respondents indicated that what motivated them to watch these channels was the healing and deliverance services;
- Prayer: 46 respondents said that what motivated them to watch Gospel TV channels was the need for prayers;
- Testimonies: 40 respondents said they watched these channels to see others testify of their healing and deliverance.
- Edification: 32 respondents indicated that they watched for the need of spiritual growth and edification;
- Also in a focus group discussion conducted in Batibo, informants testified that friends and relatives also motivated them to watch Gospel TV channels.

As we can see, these statistics confirm the assumption that, the main motivating factor for viewers is healing and/or miracles, although the need for spiritual edification may be one of their preoccupations. This assumption of healing being the key motivating factor is confirmed as 75 respondents indicated that they mostly watched Gospel TV channels when they are in need of healing or have a desperate case in their family, against 32 who said they mostly watch when they need spiritual edification. Sex wise, women in Moghamo watch more of religious programmes than men. This goes in line with what Horsefield (1984) assumes that in America, the number of women viewer per household for all religious programmes is more. In Moghamo this disparity could be because most often, the women are the main care-givers for sick persons in the family.

### 6.2. Viewers Watching Behaviour, Manifestations and Practices

As the Moghamo people watch Gospel TV channels, viewers adopt varying attitudes depending on what they see or what the man of God says. For instance, during live broadcasts on Emmanuel TV, it is common to hear Prophet T.B. Joshua tell his viewers that *distance is not a barrier*, assuring them that they can receive their miracles, healing or deliverance from their homes by just watching the television. The following watching behaviours were identified and confirmed through the survey and testimonies from people testifying on some of these channels.



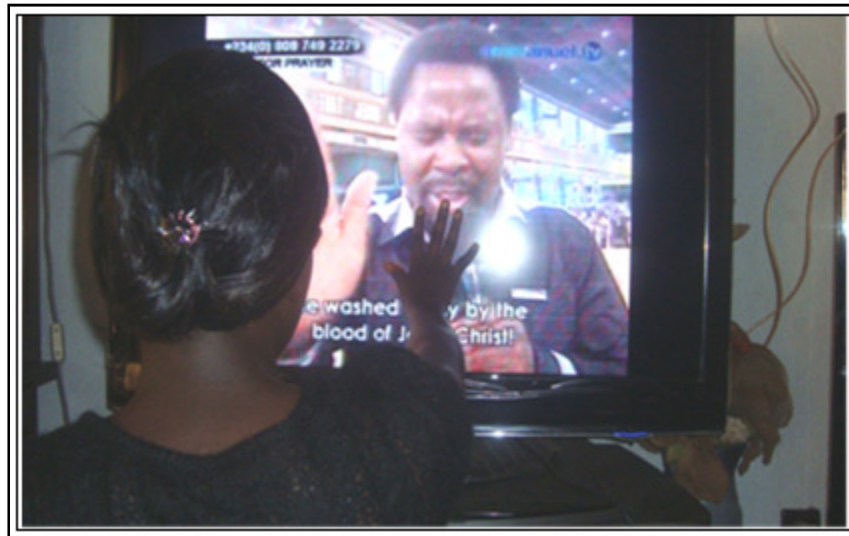


Figure 1: touching of the television screen (photograph by researcher, Moghamo, December 2012)

Touching the television screen is one of the most common watching behaviours observed among Gospel TV channels viewers. This usually occurs when the Man of God indirectly or directly prays for viewers. Their faith makes them to believe that touching the screen will directly connect them to the man of God. Shane (2011) remarked that the faith-healing televangelist's invitation to touch the TV screen is an invitation to confront modernity and undergo not just a test of faith but to submit oneself to a modern technological ordeal. It is the case of an informant who testified of having been healed from arthritis after stretching her hand and touching the screen of her television during a live service as the man of God prayed. Such behaviour was confirmed by most of the informants during a focus group discussion conducted in Batibo. They indicated that they usually touch the screen when watching a healing or deliverance service. One of the informants testified to us that; *touching the screen has always been part of what I do every Sunday and Monday during life service over Emmanuel TV. I have been healed twice from a pain in the leg and cough (Batibo 20<sup>th</sup> November 2011).*

Touching the screen usually goes alongside prayers, in the process of seeking healings. Viewers equally repeat prayers after the man of God for their healing or deliverance. This is the case an informant who testified of how he was healed from a strange abscess after repeating the prayers of the man of God and touching the screen of his television. A total of 46 respondents indicated that they usually repeat prayers while they watch TV.

In addition to touching the television screen and repeating the prayers, the sick person or a relative places his or her hand on the affected part of the body. This watching behaviour may be supplemented by the two previous ones. It could be done either by the sick person himself or one of his/her relatives. In the first case, the sick patient will lay his/her hand on the area where he/she feels pains as he touches the screen and repeats the prayers of the man of God. In the second case, the sick person might be very weak or unable to move; a relative will then play the role of the man of God as he/she touches the screen, repeats prayers and lays his/her hand on the sick person. This is one of the watching behaviours mostly used in this community as one of my Moghamo informants explained:

- Most people often place their hands where they are feeling pains and repeat the prayer as said by the man of God. Distance is not a barrier as said by the man God encourages the audience to believe that their healings or break through are on the way. Family members even lay hands on the children and other family members that for one reason or the other cannot do it (interview, Moghamo 10 September 2012).

The television has become a great tool used by "spiritual healers" to display their faith healing successes. In fact, it is common to see healing and deliverance programmes being repeated or rebroadcasted several times. These programmes are always supplemented by testimonies shared by people who claim to have been healed by just watching the TV or praying with the man of God. These testimonies, coupled with the miracles and healings on the screen, entice people to increase their faith and sometimes abandon biomedicine. This suggests why weekly newspaper L' effort Camerounais (2012: 1) pointed out that: *many people are sometimes attracted to miracle promising churches through spectacular television broadcasts... and what they watch on the television is taken for gospel truth.* In some cases, people are motivated to visit these churches and the men of God as they are overtaken by what they watch over these channels. This explains why Conrad Kottak noted for the USA:

- These centres of visitations [churches] owe their success not just to the amusement they offer but to years of pre-programming that have influenced Americans for well over half a century. Disney's creations - movies, television programmes, Cable TV channels, Broadway musicals, Cartoons, cosmic, toys, stores, and theme parks - are important forces in American enculturation (Kottak 2002: 507).

Therefore from the above one might equally say that television pushes audience to visit certain places or attend certain ceremonies that they watched. Many people from Moghamo and elsewhere in Cameroon have reportedly left Cameroon for Nigeria to seek healings, deliverance and other breakthroughs. This explains why in an interview, Abdoulaye Bio Tchané remarked:

- Partout en Afrique, dans les villages, dans les zones rurales les plus reculées, des antennes paraboliques sont installées par des paysans, leur permettant de capter les images de ce qui se passe à Paris, à New York, à Berlin, à Tokyo et dans les pays développés. Leur première réaction est de se dire : allons dans la capitale au Bénin, allons à Cotonou pour voir si ce que nous avons vu à la télévision est bien réel ; puis, déçus, certains partent, à leurs risques et à leur frais, pour l'Europe ou les États-Unis (Malard et al. 2010 :43).

Indeed, many Moghamo people travel about 200 km from their homeland across the border to Nigeria, where they believed to have an encounter with T.B Joshua whose healings and deliverance power is greater as compared to other televangelists. Sick people and other people visit some of these churches to see whether what they view on the television is real or not. Also, as a result of what they see over the television many people from Moghamo have taken the risk to travel by sea or by road to Nigeria, regardless of the dangers they could face.

Some have gone beyond the risk of not travelling, but have refused to take their medications or cancelled their appointments with doctors as they watched live healing and deliverances over TV gospel channels. In a focus group discussion, an informant confirmed for the purpose of this study the following observations:

- I am not the only one who had missed or stopped taking drugs before or after watching a healing and deliverance service. Some people have cancelled the appointments with the doctor because they wanted to watch or had watched a healing and deliverance service (Moghamo, 04<sup>th</sup> February 2012).

Informants also testified that they have missed appointments with important persons because they were watching these healing and deliverance services. An informant told us that:

- I only discovered I had forgotten the rendez-vous I had with my doctor on several occasions. I only realised this after the end of the healing and deliverance service on Sunday. I then called her and asked for forgiveness and had to reschedule another rendez-vous (Moghamo, 06<sup>th</sup> September 2012).

As it can be seen, most of the respondents strongly believe that faith healing is the most appropriate form of healing for them. This explains why they are so much inclined to watching healing and deliverance programmes on Gospel TV channels.

### 6.3. Consequences on the Health of the People

The following informants affirmed of being healed, delivered and found solutions to other social problems: Four women testified that they were healed of hepatitis, waste pain, cough and received financial breakthroughs after praying alongside with the man of God and touching the television screen. Four men pointed out that they were healed from paralysis, demonic spirit, waste pain and cough. Three women testified that they have four of their family members who received healings. Two men confirmed that their uncles were healed of blindness. Two women also testified that their children were healed from severe malaria and typhoid. Four women and two men said that they have not yet received healings but were hoping for God's time which they believed was still to come. Some explained that they believed the faith healing which they received by watching Gospel TV channel will last while medical healing could be temporal.

### 6.4. Representations of Televangelists or Men of God

Not all of my informants, however, blindly followed the televangelists. On the one hand, one group of informants who watched religious TV programmes more regularly perceived these men of God as God's servants whom he has sent to deliver his people from all sorts of problems in the physical and in the spiritual world. Most of them also acknowledged that God has endowed these men of God with different degrees of power and abilities, some being able to perform more miracles than others. On the other hand, some informants rejected them and questioned their being called men of God and also doubted the sources of their powers of healing, deliverance and prophecy. They referred to their activity as a money making issue. In other words it is considered as a way to raise money for themselves, their families and community. To confirm this, an informant pointed out that: *I believe that faith healers just exploit people and take their money with false promises.* According to the preacher John MacArthur (2009) someone needs to say it plainly: the faith healers and health and wealth preachers who dominate religious TV channels are shameless frauds. Their message is not the true Gospel of Jesus Christ. There is nothing spiritual or miraculous about their on-stage chicanery. It is all a devious ruse designed to take advantage of desperate people. They are not God's ministers but greedy imposters who corrupt the word of God for money sake. They are not real pastors who shepherd the flocks of God but hirelings whose only design is to fleece the sheep. Their love of money is glaringly obvious in what they say and how they live. They claim to possess great spiritual power, but in reality, they are rank materialists and enemies of everything holy. Gelfgren (2013) remarked that these televangelists are perceived as scammers and as true ministers of God.

Most of those who believe in miracles, are perceived as "born again" (people who have experienced the power of God) or those who are desperate in one way or the other and have nowhere to go to. This is because faith healing as advocated by some informants is a scam that plays on the desperate. Some other informants reject these miracles and point out that even if they occur, they are temporal and that these are the signs of the end times where the Bible says false prophets shall rise up. Therefore, some of these men of God are referred to as false prophets. An informant looking at this kind of men of God remarked: *they are all manipulators, brainwashers, master minders, tricksters, hypnotisers and magicians.* Contrarily, an informant recounted that: *many people's lives have been changed. This is through testimonies that other people give us. The power of God when joined to television produces magnificent results.*



By analogy one may say that television makes people to be popular. There exist other men of God who are also performing miracles and because they have not yet had a television channel of their own, they are not well known and thus cannot pull the crowd like others do. This might suggest why today, many Gospel TV channels are emerging as a strategy to reach many audiences.

#### *6.5. Gospel TV Channels and Social Transformation*

Many songs that are sung in the gospel television channels have become popular songs in Christian homes and families in Moghomo. Actions such as laying of hands on the position where patients feel pains and raising of hands for prayers have become common action in many homes and families in Moghomo. Some dancing and singing styles are gradually penetrating in many families. Words and slogans like “Amen”, “better is not good enough, the best is yet to come”, “I am delivered”, “I am healed”, “I am saved”, “I am a candidate for miracles” and “am born to win” have become part and parcel of the audience’ parlance in this community even among the young. Other Programmes that are of practical relevance such as appointments with the doctors, tribal meetings, going to the farm, and visits for example have had to be altered and sometimes rescheduled because they clash with gospel TV programmes. Attendance in some local churches has been observed to drop especially on days of live service as viewers prefer to stay back and watch. The coming of the televangelists seems to have restored hope to desperate and hopeless patients whose health problems could not be solved by modern medicine. People who watch these gospel television channels tend to identify themselves as belonging to the same faith and God, and have become more intimate and friendly. They spend most of their time together discussing what they had watched - the power of God working through the men of God and what Christian life is all about.

### **7. Conclusion**

Television through diverse gospel TV channels acts as a carrier and transporter of Christian content, images and beliefs across different cultures with the intension of winning them over to Christianity. Most striking is the growing use of gospel TV channels as therapeutic processes and practices with the aim of healing the sick. Televangelists emphasize it is possible for the sick persons to receive their healings instantly when watching healing programs if they belief and have faith in God notwithstanding the physical distance separating them. Physical distance no longer becomes a barrier as the sick people are enjoined to participate during such programs by exercising in faith and believing that they will be healed instead of watching passively which might not produce the desired result. Therefore, in the relationship between televangelism, belief and health care, sick people through their belief and faith can obtain their healing from a supernatural God through the medium of the television by praying along with televangelists during healing programs. The quest for religious healing through men of God seems to be powered by the fact that there are still a variety of diseases for which modern science cannot provide a cure.

Furthermore, testimonies of supposed healings from formerly sick people on these gospel TV channels serve to motivate those in similar conditions in need of healing. It is worth noting that people, especially the sick are variously drawn to these televangelists through their mannerisms and the way they brand themselves through a self-styling. This branding portrays the televangelists as powerful instruments in the hand of God used to meet the needs of ordinary mortal men like healing them from sicknesses. In the same light, gospel TV channels devote much time praying for the sick and possessed accompanied with sermons and songs that also serve to attract audience. Concerning audience turnout, most viewers are drawn to the more popular and well established ministries like Emmanuel TV and Love World SAT, probably because of the very numerous faith healings performed. The most common type of diseases presented are AIDS, various cancers, infertility, mental problems and demonic possession. Healings and miracles stood out as the most important factor that motivated viewers to watch such channels. Common attitudes adopted while watching gospel TV channels were touching the screen of the television, laying of hands on affected parts the body, and repeating prayers after the televangelists. As to the authenticity of the televangelists and the healings and miracles performed, some people perceived them to be true and real from God, while others considered them to be scammers. Undoubtedly, healings occurred and were confirmed among those who believed and perceived the televangelists to be true and God sent. Thus televangelists and gospel TV channels influenced people’s health seeking behaviours by providing them with alternatives beyond the limits modern science and medicine.

Television as a modern technology has created a religious community through which people share ideas, beliefs, and practices especially on health related issues. Songs, actions and testimonies watched over the television have become part and parcel of the daily lifestyle of the people. This dynamism becomes possible because there are occasions of contacts and television play this major role between people. Besides television becoming a weapon used for political votes, breakthroughs, evangelism and miracles, it has been used especially by Pentecostals for therapeutic processes and practices. It seems that sick people actually do not like to rely only on one type of therapeutic practice and procedure but try several ones; modern medicine, local specialists, medical doctors etc., all during the same period of time, until they find a solution. That means people’s strategies of seeking healings are complex and television through the activities of televangelists is part of this complexity in the healing processes and healing practices of individuals or groups of people.

### **8. References**

- i. Ayegboyin Deji (2005). But deliver us from evil, Orita; Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies, vol. (37) June- December, Ibadan33-64
- ii. Becker Samuel and Churchill Roberts (2008). Discovering mass communication, Harper &
- iii. Collins Publishers Inc, New York
- iv. Burgess Richard (2008). Nigerian Pentecostal theology in global perspectives, Penteco Studies, Vol. 7(2),.

- v. Clerc, Olivier (1999). *Modern medicine, the new world religion: the hidden influence of Beliefs on medical dogmas and practices*: personhood press
- vi. De Vries H. (2001). In media res. *Global religion, public spheres and the task of contemporary comparative religious studies*, in H. de Vries and S. Webber (eds.) *religion and media*, 3-42, Standford: Standford University Press
- vii. De Witte Marleen (2005) *The holy spirit on air in Ghana*, Media Development, Vol.2, pp. 22-26
- viii. Eisenlohr, P., (2009) *Technologies of the spirit. Devotional Islam, sound reproduction and the dialectics of mediation and immediacy in Mauritius* Anthropological theory 9:273-96
- ix. Egunyomi Adeola and Olatumile Adegunle (2010). *Mobilization strategies for effective community relations between bitumen companies and stakeholders in Nigeria*, Ibadan,
- x. *Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol. 23(2), , pp 105-110.
- xi. Gelfgren Stefan, (2013). *Healer and Televangelist preaching out to the secular Swedish Public Sphere. The Finnish society for the study of religion. Telmenos* Vol.49No.1 83-110
- xii. Gifford Paul (1988) *the religious right in Southern Africa*, Baobab books, Harare,
- xiii. Hadden Jeffrey and Swann Charles, (1981). *Prime time preachers: the rising power of televangelism*, Addison – Wesley, Massachusetts,
- xiv. Hadden Jeffrey, (1993). *The rise and fall of American televangelism*, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 527,
- xv. Hanegraaff Hank (2009) *televangelismscandals.html*.accessed13.01.11 <http://www.gotquestions.org/>
- xvi. Hollenweger, W.J. (1972). *The Pentecostals*. London: SCM.
- xvii. Horsefield Peter (1984). *Religion and television: American experience* Longman New York
- xxviii. Ihejirika Walter, (2006). *From Catholicism to Pentecostalism: Role of Nigerian televangelists in religious conversion*, University of Port Harcourt Press, Port Harcourt,
- xix. Kottak, C.P. (2002). *Anthropology: the exploration of Human Diversity* (9<sup>th</sup> ed ): McGraw-Hill INC
- xx. Land Steven, (1993). *Pentecostal spirituality: a passion for the kingdom*, Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield, L'effort Camerounais (2012). *Are miracles linked to Denominations?* No 527 (154) 068 NECC
- xxi. Malard C.et al. (2010). *L'émergence de l'Afrique; Regards croises de Paul Biya, Abdoulaye Bio Tchane Youssou N' Dour;Cherche- midi*, 75006 Paris
- xxii. Meyer Birgit, (2002). *Commodities and the power of prayer: Pentecostalist attitudes towards Consumption in contemporary Ghana*, in J.Xavier Inda and R. Rosaldo (eds), *The Anthropology of Globalization*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, pp. 121-144.
- xxiii. Meyer Birgit (2009a). *Aesthetic Formations: Media, Religion, and the Senses*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
- xxiv. Meyer Birgit (2009b). "Pentecostalism and Modern Audiovisual Media." In K. Njogu and J. Middleton, eds., *Media and Identity in Africa*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: University of Indiana Press, pp. 114–123.
- xxv. Meyer Birgit (2011). *Media and immediacy: sensational forms, semiotic ideologies and the question of the medium*. European Association of Social Anthropologists
- xxvi. Okon Godwin (2011). *Televangelism and the socio political mobilization of Pentecostals in Port Harcourt metropolis: A Kap Survey* Port Harcourt Nigeria
- xxvii. Shane Denson (2011). *Faith in technology: televangelism and the Mediation of Immediate Experience* .*American Studies*, Leibniz Universität Hannover Volume 5 No. 2, pp. 93-119.
- xxviii. Wilson James and Wilson Roy (1988). *Mass media/mass culture: an introduction*, McGraw-Hills, Inc., London
- xxix. Winkelman, M., and P.M. Peek, (eds.). (2004). *Divination and Healing: Potent Vision*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.
- xxx. *Cameroon Tribune* (2013). *Some television channels broadcasting illegally in the country*. Feb 13 Yufeh B.N.