

INTRODUCTION

These two volumes represent the efforts of many years of intense struggle with Wholistic Health Care (WHC). The Christian Health Association of Nigeria (CHAN) and the staff of its Wholistic Health Care Project (WHCP) are therefore very proud to introduce you to the world of WHC as we are developing it in our country.

This book is a collection of speeches that have been given at a series of workshops throughout Nigeria over a period of some years. Most of the speakers have never met each other even now. They represent different Nigerian cultures, different denominations and different professions. Here speak a variety of medical doctors, including psychiatrists and practitioners of so-called “faith healing.” Here you will meet Christian and Muslim theologians as well as clergymen and practicing “native healers.”

This collection does not represent a coherent vision. The various speakers are independent from each other and even largely from the insights the staff of WHCP have gained over the years or from the official policies of CHAN as a whole. Every one speaks for himself. This means that there are many contradictions and disagreements within these pages. If the speakers had had the opportunity to discuss with each other, greater inner consistency would have been achieved. There is also considerable repetition, but it has been allowed to stand so as to preserve the uniqueness of each contributor.

In some cases speakers clearly contradict each other. While many express a cautious and selective approach to African Traditional Medicine, some want nothing to do with it. While the major emphasis in these pages is on a multi-faceted approach to health and sickness, one or two speakers still recognize only the dualistic scheme of body and spirit. And while it is a general Christian consensus that all Christians have access to the Bible and, what is more, to God, one speaker suggests that the major difference between medic and clergy is the latter’s access to God. Also, there is still too much of a feeling that while God works through non-medical healing, medical healing, medical work involves neither faith nor God.

However, there is an overarching unity with respect to the main issues in WHC as it is developing in Nigeria. All speakers appreciate biomedicine as a gift from God, but everyone also recognizes its limitations. Throughout these pages there is openness to other means of healing – the clinical pastoral approach, the prayer-and-faith approach, while the approach of Traditional African Medicine is carefully examined and partially recommended for further investigation. And, of course, we have our indefatigable Dr. Dennis Ityavyar, lecturer in medical sociology, rightly emphasizing the need to incorporate political concerns in any viable approach to WHC.

These pages also include discussions on other religions and by a representative of Islam. This should not be taken as a sign that CHAN views all religions as equal and rejects the uniqueness of Christ, the Son of God, the Lord and Saviour of the world. Nevertheless, CHAN feels that it is valuable to have representatives of other religions present their

views first hand. In understanding others better, we understand ourselves better. Understanding other religions also helps us in knowing how to treat their adherents who come to our institutions as patients.

There is one rather serious problem with these papers that could be rectified only at the expense of much time. The footnotes and bibliographies are irregular and often incomplete. Communications in Nigeria are difficult. Getting the correct information from the authors would have required an additional nine months. We were faced with a hard choice. We apologize for this serious defect.

1993 already has and 1994 is promising to be a great year for the programme of WHCP. In addition to the publication of these volumes, the programme on AIDS has gotten a good start under the energetic leadership of Dr. Booth. The WHC Pilot Clinic, after ten years of discussion and planning, has finally opened its doors in the midst of the people, so that the project can now move from idea to practical reality.

It is appropriate to acknowledge publicly the cooperation of various Nigerian governments in this project. Several speeches from governors and commissioners are included in this bundle. We have also received encouragement from the Federal Ministry of Health. It is equally appropriate to acknowledge the involvement of international donor agencies, especially:

- ICCO – Interchurch Organization for Development Cooperation (The Netherlands)
- EZE – Protestant Association for Cooperation in Development (Germany)
- CEBEMO – Catholic Organization for Development Cooperation (The Netherlands)
- MEMISA – Medical Mission Action (The Netherlands)
- MISEREOR – Episcopal Organization for Development Cooperation (Germany)

CHAN, Nigeria, and indeed the entire world owe them a debt of gratitude for having financially supported the development of these ideas and needs, even during the initial stages when it looked as if WHC were a mere private idiosyncrasy. We all know better now – and so do they.

We offer these pages to the world in the hope they will contribute to a more helpful, realistic and wholistic approach to healthcare everywhere. Here you have food for corrective thought, action and policy for all concerned with healthcare, whether biomedical, traditional African or charismatic. May it never be said again that Christian healthcare is limited to certain diseases, while the patient is forced to resort to the soothsayer for the real truth of the matter. May the final praise and glory go to Him whom we acknowledge as the Great Healer of ALL diseases.