

Theological University of Kampen/Utrecht

Programme: Master of Intercultural Reformed Theology

Master Thesis

**Biblical and Theological Response on the Practice of Visiting Diviners and Churches to  
Seek Healing among Christians in Rwanda**

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Kampen, August 2024

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## Chapter 1

### 1.1 Introduction

People in Africa including Rwanda seek healing in various ways according to their particular sickness. Nakuzola Mndede, a South African, theologian and cultural activist, stated that sickness refers to an imbalance within the human being, beliefs, clan, and community that needs healing.<sup>1</sup> In principle, the Ministry of Health in Rwanda recommends all citizens to visit medical services for any health problem or body malfunction to detect the sickness and heal it properly.

Still “most people would rather consult traditional healers than any other care or treatment option.”<sup>2</sup> Traditional healers helped people for many years in Rwanda and people trust them to the extent that there are medical facilities where people may visit traditional diviners to seek healing. The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS approved that both herbal and spiritual traditional practitioners have alleviated the ills of millions of Africans caused by what Western medicine classifies as acute or chronic, diseases, infections, traumas, and psychological illnesses.<sup>3</sup> Even though Western medicine, introduced by colonial governments and missionaries denigrated African traditional healing practices as an effective

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<sup>1</sup> Nakuzola Mndede, “Ancestors and Healing in African Religion: A South African Context” in Ingo Wulfhorst, ed., *Ancestors, Spirits and Healing in Africa and Asia: A Challenge to the Church*, (Geneva: Lutheran World Federation, 2005), 15.

<sup>2</sup> Temba Rugwiji, “Faith-based healing and African traditional medicine in Zimbabwe: A postcolonial perspective,” *Biblical and Ancient Studies*, Faculty of Theology, University of South Africa, 13 December, 2019, 2.

<sup>3</sup> Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, “Collaborating with Traditional Healers for HIV Prevention and Care in Sub-Saharan African: Suggestions for Programme Managers and Field Workers”, *UNAIDS Best Practice Collection*, November 2006, 9.

way of curing many African illnesses people still have much interest and trust in them.<sup>4</sup>

Many people, including Christian believers in Rwanda, are used to visiting traditional diviner healers to seek healing. Bosch-Heij, a Dutch theologian pastor who worked for five years as a lecturer at Theological University College (Lusaka) and as a minister of the Reformed Church of Zambia indicated that African traditional religion has a major impact on the health-seeking behaviour of Africans whether they are Christians or not.<sup>5</sup> Traditional healing from diviner healers has always been a part of the cultural healthcare treatment of sickness among Rwandans until today. Julius O. Adegunle, a Nigerian historian and anthropologist scholar, pointed out that Rwandans visit diviner healers for health problems, disease, sickness, and healing.<sup>6</sup> Geoffrey Parrinder, an English Methodist theologian, minister, and a pioneering researcher on West African indigenous religions affirmed that the diviner is an important figure in the village, consulted on many occasions in life. He is a medicine man.<sup>7</sup> In short, healthcare and healing were, and still are a part of African traditional religious systems. Thus “the religious system of beliefs and practices covers all areas of life in such a way that one can say that African Traditional religion is about one’s well-being”.<sup>8</sup> Generally speaking, “the African religion practices holistic healing.”<sup>9</sup> Later I will discuss, what this means on the Rwandan context.

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<sup>4</sup> Temba Rugwiji, “Faith-based healing and African traditional medicine in Zimbabwe: A postcolonial perspective,” *Theologia Viatorum*, (13 Dec. 2019): 1-10, 7

<sup>5</sup> Deborah van den Bosch-Heij, *Spirit and Healing in Africa: A Reformed Pneumatological Perspective* (Bloemfontein, 2014), 25.

<sup>6</sup> Julius O. Adegunle, *Culture and Customs of Rwanda*, (London: Greenwood Press, 2007), 15.

<sup>7</sup> Geoffrey Parrinder, *African Traditional Religion* (London: Hutchison House, 1954), 104.

<sup>8</sup> Van den Bosch-Heij, 2014, 25

<sup>9</sup> Peter White, “The concept of diseases and health care in African traditional religion in Ghana,” *Department of Science of Religion and Missiology, Faculty of Theology, University of Pretoria*, 22 July 2015, 6.

## 1.2 Research Problem

Healing creates a conflict between the Presbyterian Church in Rwanda pastors (PCR) and church members. The Government of Rwanda and some churches -(such as PCR) contributed a lot to introducing medical services - recommend that all related illnesses must be treated through biomedical systems to diagnose and cure them. People, however, persist in using traditional methods even where modern medical facilities are available, which is probably an indication that these modern facilities do not fully meet what the people discern as their medical needs.<sup>10</sup> The United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS pointed out that the vast majority of Africans continue to use traditional healing systems that cover healing the entire person's illness.<sup>11</sup> So, why do the PCR parishes still question traditional healers' practices and doubt the faith of someone who goes to seek healing?

The missionaries disregarded the cultures and traditions of indigenous people.<sup>12</sup> This impact on African traditional cultural practices of healing is still problematic with the Presbyterian Church in Rwanda today. Firstly, the church condemns and rejects it as an unfaithful, evil, and sinful practice while many of its members still show their interest in visiting traditional healer diviners to seek healing. Bosch-Heij indicates that daily newspapers are filled with advertisements of African traditional healers, promising healing for all kinds of illnesses and problems, while Christian ministers vehemently warn their congregants not to

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<sup>10</sup> Willem Berends, "African Traditional Healing Practices and the Christian Community," *Missiology: An International Review* (1993): 276. <http://mis.sagepub.com/content/21/3/275>

<sup>11</sup> Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, 2006, 9).

<sup>12</sup> Temba Rugwiji, "Faith-based healing and African traditional medicine in Zimbabwe: A postcolonial perspective," *Biblical and Ancient Studies*, Faculty of Theology, University of South Africa, 13 December, 2019, 1.



visit traditional healers with their evil practices.<sup>13</sup>

Secondly, the council of the Presbyterian Church in Rwanda parishes puts the members who visit diviners to seek healing under church discipline. They are not allowed to participate in any church activities. Because of this, some may quit the church for other new churches or lose their membership. The PCR may investigate how to incorporate and apply the rejected culture of traditional healing to be recognized in the church and try to analyse what Neil, a researcher in health indicated in his statement:

“Once rejected (African traditional healing) by Western missionaries as a fetish, the use of traditional healing has received new interest in the church, making meaningful the lordship of Christ over all creation and closing the gap between biblical/church and Indigenous practices to express the faith in the way that is sensible in the context on top itself and her members who seek healing to have a better understanding of traditional healing.”<sup>14</sup>

The question would be how the pastors from PCR and Pentecostal church perceive this healing, the biblical perspective and Christian tradition about healing.

### **1.3 Aim of the research**

The study aims to:

- Describe, analyse and evaluate the spiritual, social and practical aspects of traditional healing

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<sup>13</sup> Deborah van den Bosch-Heij, *Spirit and Healing in Africa: A Reformed Pneumatological Perspective* (Bloemfontein, 2014), 25.

<sup>14</sup> Daniel William O’ Neill, “Toward a fuller view: The Effect of Globalized Theology on Understanding of Health and Healing”, *Christian Journal for Global Health*, Vol. 45 (2017): 204-214

practices in the ATR context (with the help of the BBBE-model).

- Describe, analyse and evaluate the reasons of people for using traditional practices (or preferring it to 'Western', 'modern' practices)
- Describe, analyse and evaluate the theological and practical reaction of the PRC to visiting traditional healers
- Describe Reformed biblical-theological reflections on the different positions

#### **1.4 Significance of the research**

The research will help the churches and Christians in Rwanda to have a better understanding of the ATR practices of healing from traditional diviner healers and help the church identify how she can help their members who seek healing.

#### **1.5 Motivation**

Even though Christianity is the predominant religion in Rwanda, African traditional beliefs and practices still have much influence on people's lives including Christians. Many Christians are still interested in *Idini gakondo* practices (ATR practices) and beliefs. It is significant for the Christian church to investigate much more about African traditional religion, specifically its practice of healing by diviners. This will help the church, church leaders, and Christians to know much more about ATR's practice specifically if and how she can accommodate some of ATR's healing practices, which she is now only rejecting and denouncing. Therefore, the goal for this research is to describe, analyze and evaluate the ATR-healing beliefs and practices in Rwanda and to give spiritual guidance to Rwandan Christians who seek healing.

## 1.6 Research question

What can the Presbyterian Church in Rwanda and its members who visit traditional diviner healers learn from Reformed theological and biblical perspectives on healing?

## 1.7 Sub questions

1. What is the practice of traditional healers and their function in the Rwandan ATR context?
2. How do traditional believers and Christians who visit and do not visit traditional diviner healers relate to healing by traditional diviner healers and healing in the church?
3. How do Reformed-Presbyterian churches and Pentecostal churches in Rwanda react to traditional healing practices and what is their alternative?
4. What are the Biblical and theological reformed perspectives on healing? (with special attention to Van den Bosch-Heij)

## 1.8 Research Methodology

The study will adopt the concept of social constructivism. "It is a sociological theory of knowledge in which human development is socially situated, and knowledge is constructed through interaction with others."<sup>15</sup> Social Constructionism focuses on the making of social reality.<sup>16</sup> The significance of social constructivism to this "study is that it offers new

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<sup>15</sup> Jim J. McKinley, "Critical Argument and Writer Identity: Social Constructivism as a Theoretical Framework for EFL Academic Writing", *Critical Inquiry in Language Studies* 12, no 3, (2015):184-207. <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Critical-Argument-and-Writer-Identity%3A-Social-as-a-McKinley/b1c964bcc3c5ea5c4ef82f98130e90cfec8dfb5e>. (accessed 13/05/2024)

<sup>16</sup> Thomas A. Schwandt "Constructivist, Interpretivist Approaches to Human Inquiry." in *The*

opportunities for reformed theology to reflect on healing because it starts with contextual understandings of healing. As such, the major benefit of social constructivism is the broadening of the scope of healing for theology.”<sup>17</sup> Van den Bosch-Heij argued that the social constructivism approach seeks the recognition of the social-cultural elements of healing rooted in interpersonal relationships, religious practices, spiritual matters, environmental circumstances, and societal situations.<sup>18</sup> The present study will also use both primary and secondary source/library research and empirical approaches. A qualitative approach through interviews will be used to be empirically informed and have a deeper understanding of the research question. Thus Sensing: “The main purpose of the interview is to obtain a special kind of information, it may help a researcher to find out what is in and on someone else’s mind and allows the researcher to enter into the other person's perspective.”<sup>19</sup>

The first sub-question in this research asks for the practice of traditional healers and their role in the Rwandan ATR context will be answered by analyzing secondary resources and collecting interviews to define diviner, their practices and their function in the community. Two people will be interviewed, a medical doctor and traditional diviner healer and a lecturer of the history of religions at the Protestant Institute of Arts and Social Studies in Rwanda. ‘The interviews will be conducted and analysed with the help of the BBBE model’.<sup>20</sup> This model is used as a pragmatic and heuristic tool for a systematizing, analyzing and comparing the

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*landscape of qualitative research: theories and issues*. Denzin, eds. Norman K.; Lincoln, Yvonna S. (London and New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1998)

<sup>17</sup> Deborah van den Bosch-Heij, *Spirit and Healing in Africa: A Reformed Pneumatological Perspective*, (Bloemfontein: Rapid access publisher, 2014), 10.

<sup>18</sup> Van den Bosch-Heij 2014, 10

<sup>19</sup> Tim Sensing, “Qualitative Research”, *Tools for Trade*, p. 93-113: 105

<sup>20</sup> J.J.A. Colijn, ‘Testing the Waters. Infant Baptism as a Case Study for Doing Reformed Theology Interculturally’. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Protestantse Theologische Universiteit, 2023, 18-24.

empirical data from various beliefs while remaining open for variations in the use and understanding of each of the aspects in the contexts so that the empirical grounding of the research remains transparent”<sup>21</sup>

The second sub-question, “*How do traditional believers and Christians who visit and who do not visit traditional diviners healers relate to healing by traditional diviner healers and healing in the church?*” will be answered by using the BBBE model to identify how traditional believers, and Christians who visit or do not visit the traditional diviners relate to these practices and healings in the church. “The appropriation model helps to analyze how the concept (of traditional healing from diviners) is perceived in the Rwandan context, comparing it to biblical concepts-healing, pointing to the connection between traditional and biblical or church healing and then developing contextual sensitivity about the concept of healing.”<sup>22</sup> The researcher will use both literature and six interviews (two traditional believers, two ordinary Christians who visit diviners and two ordinary believers who do not visit) to collect the data from ordinary believers.

The third sub-question will be answered by analyzing secondary resources to describe the Reformed-Presbyterian and Pentecostal church's reaction to healing by diviners and their alternatives. Also four interviews were conducted with four pastors: two from the Presbyterian Church and two from the Pentecostal Church in Rwanda. “The interviews will be conducted and analyzed with the help of the BBBE model.”<sup>23</sup> The goal of the interviews

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<sup>21</sup> J.J.A. Colijn, ‘*Testing the Waters. Infant Baptism as a Case Study for Doing Reformed Theology Interculturally*’. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Protestantse Theologische Universiteit, 2023, 18-24.

<sup>22</sup> Colijn J.J.A. Class lecture [Discussions] Doing intercultural Reformed Theology, September 2023 Kampen Theological University.

<sup>23</sup> Colijn, ‘*Testing the Waters*’, 18-24.

is to understand the position of ordinary believers and pastors on this topic.

The last question about Reformed biblical and theological perspectives will be answered by collecting and analyzing secondary resources data, especially Deborah van den Bosch-Heij in her publication *Spirit and Healing in Africa: A Reformed Pneumatological Perspective*. So, “literature analysis includes several research techniques used to describe and systematically analyze the content of written, spoken, pictorial communication such as newspapers, television programs, transcripts or books to understand reformed perspectives on healing.”<sup>24</sup>

### **1.9 Position of the Researcher**

As a researcher, I think that it is not good to categorically reject all traditional healing. Therefore, I want to consider a more holistic approach to healing. This implies, that I want to consider, if elements of traditional medicine and healing practices might be used by Christians, as elements which belong to God’s creation and therefore can be ‘Christianized.’ The researcher might have ethical norms of principles, such as integrity, “honesty, transparency, scrupulousness, responsibility, independence,”<sup>25</sup> but not be independent of God so that the study can come out with helpful material for the context.

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<sup>24</sup> Chad Nelson and Robert H. Woods, Jr, “Content and Analysis” in *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in The Study of Religion*, eds. Michael Stausberg and Steven Engler, (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 110.

<sup>25</sup> Netherlands Code of Conduct for Research Integrity, (2018): 13.  
[file:///E:/New%20folder/Downloads/Nederlandse%20gedragscode%20wetenschappelijke%20integriteit%202018\\_NL.pdf](file:///E:/New%20folder/Downloads/Nederlandse%20gedragscode%20wetenschappelijke%20integriteit%202018_NL.pdf)

## **CHAPTER 2: The practice of traditional diviner healers and their function in the**

### **Rwandan ATR context**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

Africa is diverse and rich in its cultural and religious heritage. Mbiti indicated that Africans are notoriously religious, and each has its religious system with a set of beliefs and practices. Religion infuses all the departments of life so fully that it is not easy or possible to isolate it.<sup>26</sup>

One notorious aspect is healing practices and medicinal knowledge, which is deeply rooted in African cultures. “The continent has a long history of holistic remedies and therapeutic techniques that have been passed down through generations.”<sup>27</sup> This chapter answers the question “What is the practice of traditional diviner healers and their function in the Rwandan ATR context?”

To answer this question, I did literature research and focused especially on the work of Rwandan and African theologians. I also conducted some interviews. The purpose of conducting interviews is to have a deeper understanding of African traditional religion in the Rwandan context and to have specific details about the diviner healing practices of diviners in the Rwandan context among Christian believers. The interviews were conducted via a WhatsApp call on the computer with recording audio by cell phone. There were two

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<sup>26</sup> John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (London: Heinemann, 1969), 39, 42.

<sup>27</sup> Henri Mbaya and Ntozakhe Cezula, “Contribution of John S Mbiti to the study of African religions and African theology and philosophy,” *Stellenbosch Theological Journal* Vol 5, No 3, (2019): 421–442;

interviewees, one diviner healer in Rwanda because he knows the traditional religion, he can explain and is open to sharing diviner healing practice. The second interviewee was a pastor at the Presbyterian Church in Rwanda (PCR) and a lecturer of religious history at the Protestant Institute of Arts and Social Sciences (PIASS) in Rwanda. He has much information about Rwandan traditional religion, its practices, and its function in the entire society. The research protocol was semi-structured with three sub-points, general ATR practices, healing practices and diviner healer function in ATR in order to have better and more detailed information on the main research question.

### 2.1.1 Health Facilities in Rwanda

The health services in Rwanda are distributed into national referral hospitals, district hospitals in thirty districts, health centers which are distributed in four hundred and sixteen sectors, health posts which the health ministry started to distribute in over two thousand cells, and *abajyanama b'ubuzima* (Assistants in Health) in each of the (approx.) fifteen thousand villages (see table 1)

**Table 1 - Public health facilities in Rwanda**

National referral hospitals	District hospitals	Cancer treatment centers hospitals	Health centers	Health post	Abajyanama b'ubuzima
4	42	5	499	680	4 for each village



Health systems collaborate to facilitate the people.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, private clinics and hospitals in different corners of the country also play a part. In 2008 the government of Rwanda initiated an *Ubwisungane mu kwifuzza/Mutuel de Sante* (MUSA health insurance) policy. It became mandatory for each citizen to pay three thousand Rwandan Francs for one year to access health facilities. Above all, the government covers insurance for poor and low-income families or individuals to get health services.

### 2.1.2 Christianity in Rwanda

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, missionaries brought the gospel of Christ to all parts of Africa, planted churches, proclaimed the Gospel of Christ, and established hospitals and health centers to give health facility services. It is alleged that African traditional religions started to lose their adherents to Christianity and their practices began to be disapproved of in the Rwandan community. John Mbiti, a Kenyan theologian, philosopher, and writer, pointed out that by 1900, there were 1.1 per cent Christians in most African countries, whereas in Rwanda the number was almost zero. Still, later the number of Christians in Rwanda was increasing daily.<sup>29</sup> Rutinduka, a Rwanda catholic priest-theologian argued that the Rwandan population had traditional religious conception beliefs before 1900.<sup>30</sup>

White fathers of the Roman Catholic Church started to bring the gospel to various parts

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Tina Rosenberg, "In Rwanda, Health Care Coverage That Eludes the U.S.," July 3, 2012 [https://archive.nytimes.com/opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/07/03/rwandas-health-care-miracle/?\\_r=0](https://archive.nytimes.com/opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/07/03/rwandas-health-care-miracle/?_r=0) (Accessed 21 May 2024)

<sup>29</sup> John Mbiti, *Bible and Theology in African Christianity* (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1986), 3, 5

<sup>30</sup> Laurent Rutinduka, "Eglise Catholique au Rwanda," in Laurent Rutinduka, *Histoire du Christianisme au Rwanda « Des Origines à nos Jours*, eds. (Yaoundé: CLÉ, 2014), 14.

of the country. Rutinduka indicated that Joseph Hirth, France's first Catholic missionary, arrived at Nyanza on 1 February 1900 to meet the king, and they installed six stations (Save, Zaza, Nyundo, Rwaza, Mibirizi, and Kabgayi) in all corners of the country until 1906. The idea was to create a presence in the whole country before the arrival of protestant missionaries and Islam.<sup>31</sup>

After seven years of catholic installation, the first protestant missionaries of the Presbyterian Church joined the White Fathers to spread the Gospel in all regions of Rwanda. Gatwa, a Rwandan theologian and director of Research in the Protestant institute of Arts and Social Sciences (PIASS) and Karamaga, a former PCR president and theologian showed that from 1907, Protestant missionaries of various denominations began arriving in Rwanda. Presbyterian Church in Rwanda (EPR) started in 1907, the Seventh Day Adventist Church in Rwanda in 1919, the Anglican Church in Rwanda in 1922, the Association of Baptist Churches in Rwanda in 1927, the Union Baptist Church in Rwanda in 1939, the Pentecost Church in Rwanda in 1940, and the Free Methodist Church in Rwanda in 1942.<sup>32</sup> Rutinduka, a Rwandan Catholic priest theologian further argued that the conversion was slow between 1900 and 1917 because the king and his chiefs were strongly attached to their traditional religion and culture and did not like missionary activities, but later after the king's baptism, the church experienced a massive conversion of *Irivuze Umwami* (what has been said by the king) between 1928 and 1950.<sup>33</sup>

The Presbyterian Church was started by German Lutheran missionaries from Bethel via

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<sup>31</sup> Rutinduka, "Eglise Catholique au Rwanda," 15-16

<sup>32</sup> Tharisse Gatwa and Andrew Karamaga, *La Présence Protestante, les Autres Chrétiens*, (Kigali: Urwego, 1990), 38-66.

<sup>33</sup> Rutinduka, 2014, 16

Tanzania with different stations of Zinga, Rukira, Kirinda, Rubengera, Nyanza, Giteme (on Ijwi Island), Remera-Rukoma, and Cyangugu. The first protestant Sunday service in Rwanda took place at Zinga on August 4, 1907.<sup>34</sup> However, after the First World War, German missionaries left the church. In 1921, the Belgian Society of Protestant Missions in Congo (BSPMC) took over the church with a new name *Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Rwanda*. BSPMC kept only three stations; Kirinda, Rubengera, and Remera Rukoma until its independence in 1959 and adopted the name of Eglise Presbytérienne au Rwanda (EPR) or Presbyterian Church in Rwanda (PCR).<sup>35</sup>

The latest statistics show that Christians in Rwanda are more than 94% of the population in 2023. Religious Demography in Rwanda 2021 (table 2) proved the following data:

**Table 2 - Rwandan Population by Religion**

No	Denomination affiliation	Percentages
1	Catholic	44
2	Protestant(Presbyterian, Anglican, Pentecostal, Baptist, Methodist, Episcopalian, and evangelical Christian churches)	38.6
3	Seventh-day Adventist	12
	Jehovah's Witnesses	0.7

<sup>34</sup> Elise Musemakweli and W. Willems, *L'Eglise Presbytérienne au Rwanda: Sa Mission et Son Témoignages 1907-2007* (Brussels: PRODOC, 2004), 26-29

<sup>35</sup> Michel Twagirayesu & J. V. Butselaar, *L'histoire de l'Eglise Presbytérienne au Rwanda Ce Don que nous avons Reçu* (Bruxelles: Jonges.SA, 1982), 77.

4	Muslim	2.2
5	Traditional religion and no religious beliefs	2.5
<b>Total</b>		<b>100</b>

Christianity is about 94.7% and ATR is about 2.5 percent.<sup>36</sup>

ATR became a minority religion in Rwanda, and its beliefs and practices have seemingly become invisible in society. The practices of healing lost their accreditation because of western medical approach and health facilities which were established by colonies and churches. “Their approach is to focus on physical healing and leave out spiritual healing”.<sup>37</sup> Churches proclaimed the Gospel responded to community needs of education and established biomedical health services in hospitals and health centers. Health Minister Rwanda pointed out that church-based organizations own and operate 30% of Rwanda's health facilities and their health facilities serve mostly local communities in rural areas.<sup>38</sup> The Presbyterian Church in Rwanda established two district hospitals, six health centers, and five health posts that give health services, especially in Western and Southern provinces in Rwanda. The church and its health facilities services exclude traditional healing medicine and healthcare practices of diviners.

Sylvester Kahakwa a Tanzanian theologian, indicated that most missionaries and

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<sup>36</sup> United States Department of State Office of International Religious Freedom, “Rwanda International Religious Freedom Report,” 2021, 2, <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/RWANDA-2021-INTERNATIONAL-RELIGIOUS-FREEDOM-REPORT.pdf> (Accessed on 25 March 2024)

<sup>37</sup> Sylvester B. Kahakwa, “Ancestors, Spirits and Healing in African Religion: Challenges to the Lutheran Ministry” in *Ancestors, Spirits and Healing in Africa and Asia: A Challenge to the Church*, Ingo Wulfhorst, ed. (Geneva: Lutheran World Federation, 2005), 180.

<sup>38</sup> John Maurice, “Faith-based organizations bolster health care in Rwanda: Collaboration between the health ministry and religious organizations played a substantial part in the recovery of Rwanda’s health system after the 1994 genocide.” *World Report*, Vol 386 (July 11, 2015): 123-124. <https://www.thelancet.com/action/showPdf?pii=S0140-6736%2815%2961213-2> (accessed on 17/06/2024).

churches rejected African traditional healing and applied biblical healing systems, prayer, singing, and dancing which were more in line with African healing systems.<sup>39</sup> While this is happening, Nkwame Bediako, a Ghanaian Christian theologian stated that what was observed in Africa, was understood and interpreted not in terms of African culture, but in terms of Europe. Bediako calls this the “European value-setting” for the faith. In this setting, history and culture are negated or simply left out of the discourse.<sup>40</sup> Yet, Bediako reminds us, that while ATR and its traditions about healing are being rejected by the church today, “it was the most fertile soil for Christianity and had played a significant role in spreading it in Africa.”<sup>41</sup>

### 2.1.3 Church and Genocide

During the 1994 genocide perpetrated against the Tutsi in Rwanda, Christianity was more than ninety per cent of the population, and approximately, all social-economic including healthcare facilities and services were down. “Genocide came with death, maiming, gender-based violence, displacement, catastrophic effects on mental and physical health, depletion of social resources, destruction of infrastructure, and debilitating loss of human capital. This leads to immediate health disparities with long-term consequences. This was the scenario Rwanda faced and it reflected poor health outcomes. The advent of political stability and socio-

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<sup>39</sup> Sylvester B. Kahakwa, “Ancestors, Spirits and Healing in African Religion: Challenges to the Lutheran Ministry” in *Ancestors, Spirits and Healing in Africa and Asia: A Challenge to the Church*, Ingo Wulforth, ed. (Geneva: Lutheran World Federation, 2005), 180.

<sup>40</sup> Nkwame Bediako, *Theology and Identity: Impact of Culture upon Christian Thought in the Second Century and Modern Africa*, (Oxford: Regnum Books, 1992), 235.

<sup>41</sup> Nkwame Bediako, *Jesus in Africa. The Christian Gospel in Africa History and Experience*, (Yahounde: Cle and Regnum Africa, 2000), 21

economic growth has led to a marked improvement in the same outcomes”<sup>42</sup> According to Gatwa, genocide resulted from the church’s failure to accommodate traditional cultural and religious values into Christianity. <sup>43</sup>

Furthermore, Christians killed other Christians, neighbours killed other neighbours. Emmanuel Katongole argued that Christians killed other Christians often in the same churches where they had worshipped together in one church. It happened in the body of Christ!<sup>44</sup> This became a challenging moment for the church in Rwanda. According to Gatwa and Rutinduka, the question to the Roman Catholic Church and mainline protestant churches in Rwanda was how a Christian nation of more than 90% of the population in 1994 failed to integrate Christian values of loving the neighbours, fraternity, justice, and peace. Rather it experienced the tragedy of genocide against the Tutsi.<sup>45</sup> However, the Health minister in Rwanda stated that Church-based organizations operated around 40% of Rwanda’s health facilities after the genocide. They were essential to the recovery of the health system and the healing process.<sup>46</sup>

Reasonably, the Christian faith and values seemed to be superficial. And Christianity could not be well appropriate in Rwandan culture which the missionaries uprooted. In a personal interview, Ndayizeye, a Rwandan Presbyterian pastor-theologian and lecturer at

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<sup>42</sup> Alexander Muacevic and John R Adler, “The Rwandan Healthcare System: Can a Shifting Burden of Disease Threaten a Post-war Success Story?” *Journal article*, (2013):1-4

<sup>43</sup> Tharcisse Gatwa, *The Churches and Ethnic Ideology in the Rwandan Crises 1900-1994*, (Great Britain, UK. Regnum books international in association with Paternoster, 2005), 174

<sup>44</sup> Emmanuel Katongole and Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, *Mirror to the Church: Resurrection of Faith after the Genocide in Rwanda* (Zondervan: Grand Rapids and Michigan, 2009), 6-7.

<sup>45</sup> Tharcisse Gatwa and Laurent Rutinduka, *Histoire du Christianisme au Rwanda: Des Origines a nos Jours*, (Yaounde: CLE, 2014), 11.

<sup>46</sup> John Maurice, “Faith-based organizations bolster health care in Rwanda: Collaboration between the health ministry and religious organizations played a substantial part in the recovery of Rwanda’s health system after the 1994 genocide.” *World Report*, Vol 386 (July 11, 2015): 123-124. <https://www.thelancet.com/action/showPdf?pii=S0140-6736%2815%2961213-2> (accessed on 17/06/2024).

PIASS pointed out that culture is traditional religion and traditional religion is culture. He further argued that Christian churches in Rwanda cannot reach their mission effectively while all Rwandan traditional religious culture is still pushed away in place of relating (or ‘Christianizing’) traditional religious values with Christian values<sup>47</sup> in order to have stronger Christian believers

Rwandan historical churches (Roman Catholic and mainline protestant churches) appeared to lose their credibility because they failed to save lives and raise the voices of the victims and because of the church leaders, pastors, and priests' active role in the genocide. Carol pointed out that Rwandan bishops failed to condemn genocide, live up to their Christian conviction, and give moral leadership in times of evil.<sup>48</sup> Additionally, the number of Christians, priests, and pastors who played an active role in the genocide against the Tutsi cannot be known by precision.<sup>49</sup> While this was happening and facing poor health outcomes because of Genocide, the traditional healing system was still helping the people and covering the gap.

#### **2.1.4 The Presbyterian Church in Rwanda and Diviner’s Healing**

The post-genocide period was remarked by experiencing new Christian movements across the country, especially Charismatic and Neo-Pentecost movements”<sup>50</sup> which later created new council offices after the Protestant Councils in Rwanda, (CPR) of protestant

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<sup>47</sup> Dr Olivier Ndayizeye Munyensanga, The practices of African traditional religion, interview 03/06/2024

<sup>48</sup> Carol Rittner, John K. Roth and Wendy Whitworth, *Genocide in Rwanda: Complicity of the Churches*, (Michigan: Paragon House, 2004), 138.

<sup>49</sup> Philippe, Denis, *The Genocide Against the Tutsi, and the Rwandan Churches: Between a grief and Denial*, (Kigali and Kampala Fauntain Publisher Ltd, 2022), 82.

<sup>50</sup> Protestant Institute Of Art And Social Science (PIASS) (2011), “Public Reforms in Rwanda,” *PIASS Scientific Week* (2011):60

mission churches. Gatwa and Rutinduka indicated that Alliance Evangelique au Rwanda (AER) and Federation des Eglises Née de Nouveau (FOBACOR) were the new councils in Rwanda.<sup>51</sup> The number of new initiative churches has kept on increasing until today with much emphasis on performing miracles, speaking in tongues including healing and praying for the sick.

In 2008, the church started a decentralization process to give responsibility to the parishes and encouraged them to be autonomous in self-financing, self-governing and self-evangelizing. Currently, the PCR is decentralized as follows.<sup>52</sup>

**Table 3 PCR background**

Autonomous Presbyteries	Parishes	Communities	Membership
7	231	3573	1,625,823

The vision of EPR is to be a strong church; whose members are spiritually mature in the social environment that is fully blossomed and able to testify of God's Kingdom in the world. To reach that vision of PCR is doing evangelization through the proclamation of the love and the salvation offered by God in Jesus Christ, and to manifest the love of God through concrete actions of social and human development.<sup>53</sup> On the surface, the mission and vision are holistically structured. The church, however, denies some Rwanda cultural practices especially, African traditional healing from diviners. According to the church councils (of parishes), a church member cannot testify to God's Kingdom while visiting the diviners to seek healing,

<sup>51</sup> Tharcisse and Rutinduka, 2014, 12

<sup>52</sup> "Background of Presbyterian Church in Rwanda," <https://epr.rw/> (accessed 31 may 2024)

<sup>53</sup> Celestin Nsengimana, "Peacebuilding initiative of the Presbyterian Church in Rwanda: "Assessing Achievements, Challenges and the way forward", a thesis submitted for the degree of Master of Art in Peace Studies and Conflict Transformation at the University of Rwanda, Huye, Rwanda.(2014):44



better to visit the church to be prayed in the case of sickness. To them, “the Triune God is their only healer. It is emphasized and accepted that God is the healer of his people”.<sup>54</sup>

Kahakwa showed that many churches’ approach to healing is conservative and limited and still does not accommodate alternative forms of healing, yet some Christians would go on their own alternative healing without asking permission from their churches.<sup>55</sup> This shows that the Christians visit diviner healers secretly in other words they do not want the church leader or other fellow members to know that they visit diviner healers so the church leaders church punish them and being mocked.

The church in Rwanda needs to seek how it can reconcile with the ATR traditional healing practices to help members who seek healing. But the question should be, what are the criteria for accepting, or rejecting or ‘Christianizing’ existing cultural-religious practices and concepts?

Meanwhile, many Christians go to church to seek healing and this has triggered the Presbyterian Church in Rwanda’s parishes to “accommodate healing ministry in their service.”<sup>56</sup> The question is, what the PCR and church members can learn from reformed biblical and theological perspectives about healing to properly understand the concept of holistic healing for traditional healers related to church ministry healing? “The major reason that many Africans join the AICs and indeed all the Pentecostal churches is the search for divine holistic healing.”<sup>57</sup> However, according to traditional churches, “in order to be cured

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<sup>54</sup> David T. Adamo, “I Am the LORD your Healer’ Exodus 15:26: Healing in the Old Testament and the African context”, *In die Skriflig / In Luce Verbi*, (27 May 2021):1-8

<sup>55</sup> Sylvester Kahakwa, “Ancestors, Spirits and Healing in African Religion: Challenges to the Lutheran Ministry,” 180

<sup>56</sup> Ibid. 180

<sup>57</sup> Cephas N. Omenyo, “New Wine in an Old Wine Bottle? Charismatic Healing in the

of any illness, people needed to undergo a medical process.”<sup>58</sup>

## 2.2 The Practices of Traditional Diviner Healers

The quest to understand traditional healing within African culture requires one to closely look at African religion, culture and beliefs on such concepts as health, disease, and illness causation is not possible to reflect on healing within African culture without looking first at the worldview of the African people and their culture. <sup>59</sup>

Culture is ATR and ATR is the culture which includes everything about diviner healing practices. ATR is an indigenous religion of African people. To Mbiti, ATR is about attitudes of mind and beliefs that have evolved in the many societies of Africa and affect the way of life of most African people.<sup>60</sup> Again, “when we speak of African traditional religion, we mean the indigenous religious beliefs and practices of the Africans. It is the religion which resulted from the sustaining faith held by the forebears of the present Africans.”<sup>61</sup> In this research, ATR is used in various set beliefs which infuse into all the departments of life, social, political, and economic, especially in health and holistic healing beliefs and practices. “To ignore these traditional beliefs, attitudes and practices can only lead to a lack of understanding African

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Mainline Churches in Ghana,” in *Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Healing*, Brown, Candy Gunther, ed. (Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 2011.), 239.

<sup>58</sup> Stuart C. Bate OMI, “A Theological Model of Healing to Inform an Authentic Healing Ministry”, *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 144 (November 2012): 69-91

<sup>59</sup> Thinandavha D. Mashau, Moving to different streams of healing praxis: A reformed missionary approach of healing in the African context,” *Verbum et Ecclesia*, (2016):1-8

<sup>60</sup> John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, (New York & Washington: Praeger Publishers, 1967), 7.

<sup>61</sup> Nana Osei Bonsu, “African Traditional Religion: An Examination of Terminologies Used for Describing the Indigenous Faith of African People, Using an Afrocentric Paradigm.” *Africology: The Journal of Pan African Studies*, vol.9, no.9, (2016): 108-121.

behaviour and problems.”<sup>62</sup>

### 2.2.1 General ATR Practices

As with other Africans, Rwandans are religious people. Their lives are attributed to religion from birth to death. For Mbiti, religion is to the Africans an ontological phenomenon that pertains to the question of existence or being.<sup>63</sup> Adekule stated that religion has always occupied an important place in the culture and customs of the Rwandan people, and the indigenous religion reflects the Rwandans' unique ideas and belief systems.<sup>64</sup>

There is a strong connection between African religious belief and the concepts of health and healing. Van Den Bosch, pointed out that traditional religious practices cover all areas of life in such a way that one can say that ATR is about one's well-being and that needs religious involvement: disease and misfortune are religious experiences and it requires a religious approach to deal with them.<sup>65</sup>

There are different deities in ATR: Supreme Being, the Creator, worshipping ancestors, spirits and deities, various practices are included in rituals and ceremonies of healing, divination and healing with the ancestor spirit.

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<sup>62</sup> John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, (New York & Washington: Praeger Publishers, 1967), 1.

<sup>63</sup> Mbaya Henri, and Cezula, Ntozakhe, “Contribution of John S Mbiti to the study of African Religions and African Theology and Philosophy,” *Stellenbosch Theological Journal* Vol 5, No 3, (2019):421–442.

<sup>64</sup> Julius O. Adekunle, *Culture and Customs of Rwanda*, (London: Greenwood Press, 2007), 1

<sup>65</sup> Deborah van den Bosch-Heij, *Spirit and Healing in Africa: A Reformed Pneumatological Perspective* (Bloemfontein: Rapid access publisher, 2014), 25.

God was commonly known in the ATR Rwandan context before the advent of missionaries. Muzungu, a Rwandan catholic theologian argued that Rwandans knew God as a Supreme Being, the Creator whose common name is *Imana* (God). They recognized *Imana* as being attached to the ancestors invisible and intangible, ancestors are regarded as a mediator between human beings and God.”<sup>66</sup> The Supreme Being is known by his attribute names, *Habyarimana*, (Giver of birth) *Ndikumana* (all depend on God), *Hakizimana* (Healer) *Bizimana* (Knower) etc.

ATR beliefs and diviners' healing practices include ancestors' activities. “Ancestors refers to individuals from whom a person is descended. Ancestors include a person’s lineage related by blood of parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, and so on, going back to history or not just those related by blood.”<sup>67</sup> Again, Ancestors are believed to be living in a spiritual world but still taking a lively interest in the affairs of their families.<sup>68</sup> In the African context, ancestors are the ‘living dead’ considered beings who can hear, receive gifts, intervene in the life course of their relatives and accomplish the role of mediation between the living and Supreme Being.<sup>69</sup> In this research, ancestors play a role in the whole healing process by diviner’s means.

In the Rwandan ATR context, ancestral worship is an important ceremony. Adekunle highlighted that a strong belief in ancestral worship is the hallmark of the traditional religions

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<sup>66</sup> Bernardin Muzungu, *Le Dieu de nos Pères*, Volume 2 (Burundi: Presses Lavigerie, 1974), 7-8.

<sup>67</sup> The Pocket Oxford English Dictionary, 9<sup>th</sup> ed. (Oxford, and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 29.

<sup>68</sup> Geoffrey Parrinder, *African Traditional Religion* (London: Hutchison House, 1954), 45.

<sup>69</sup> Célestin Nsengimana. “Genocide Commemoration and Reconciliation in Rwanda from a Liturgical Ritual Perspective” (A Paper presented for doctorate promotion at Free University at Amsterdam; 2023).

in Rwandan families and society. *Ryangombe* and *Nyabingi* are the most powerful and celebrated ancestral spirits who were communicated through *Umupfumu* (Diviner).<sup>70</sup>

Rutangarwamaboko indicated that there is also *Kubandwa* ceremony which was interpreted as baptism practice for children in ATR.<sup>71</sup> It seems to be a ceremony of recognizing new family members of newborn and married brides so that ancestors can consider them while they are looking for healing from them.

ATR includes belief in various spirits and deities associated with natural elements like rivers, mountains, forests, and animals.<sup>72</sup> In the Rwandan context, there are spirits of the forests and mountains which have bad ancestral spirits that cause spiritual sickness.

African traditional healing is diverse among regional, cultural and ethnic groups. It sometimes becomes difficult to differentiate between African traditional healers and their practices. De Kok a Dutch scholar in the Anthropology of health, care and body indicated that most traditional healers can be subdivided into herbalists-pharmacists and diviners; healers mainly provide herbs to their clients and use supernatural powers in their healing practices which help them to diagnose and cure the spiritual illness.<sup>73</sup> They are both specialists in the virtues of their specialized office, knowledge and skill in religious matters, sacred personage,

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<sup>70</sup> Julius O. Adekunle, *Culture and Customs of Rwanda*, (London: Greenwood Press, 2007), 29, 30.

<sup>71</sup> Pastor Ezra Mpyisi and Diviner Rutangarwamaboko, "Lives based on Rwandan Culture", *Healing based on the culture*, (Kigali, Ikigo Nyarwanda Gishingiye Ku Muco, 2014) <https://youtu.be/w0vwDe2zP6Q?si=mAnDfItBUmH6-8dk> (accessed on 18 May 2024)

<sup>72</sup> Nana Osei Bonsu, "African Traditional Religion: An Examination of Terminologies Used for Describing the Indigenous Faith of African People, Using an Afrocentric Paradigm." *Africology: The Journal of Pan African Studies*, vol.9, no.9, (2016): 108-121.

<sup>73</sup> Bregje de Kok, *Christianity and African Traditional Religion Two Realities of a Different Kind: A cultural psychological study of the way Christian Malawians account for their involvement in African Traditional Religion*, (Zomba, Malawi: Kachere, 2005), 25.

special men, sacred men or sacred specialists.<sup>74</sup> The study will explore diviner healers' practice in the Rwandan context.

So, ATR refers to the indigenous religious African people with practices and beliefs in a Supreme Being, who may not be involved in the day-to-day affairs of humans, belief in deities and ancestral spirits that are often invoked for guidance, protection, and blessings and healing. They are watching over their families' health-healing day by day. Ceremonies and Sacrificial rituals have to be given to them at regular times or according to the diviner's indication.

#### **2.2.1.1 Some Voices from Rwanda on Traditional Healing**

After describing the answers to the question of diviner's practices in ATR Rwandan Context from the literature, the same question was asked to two respondents by interview, what is about ATR diviners healers' practices and functions? Respondent A, theologian pastor in PCR and lecturer of religious studies at Protestant Institute of Arts and Social Studies in Rwanda confirmed that diviner and ATR are inseparable in the Rwandan context. Idini Gakondo (traditional religion) is a religion of great ancestors, it is life for many Rwandans. It has been there serving people for more than eight hundred years ago."<sup>75</sup> Its role in the society is crucial. Respondent B, a diviner healer of the western part of Rwanda argued that ATR is the religion of their grandfathers. It is a religion inherited by their ancestors to support people in their entire life. He additionally argued that the traditional religion is helping the community to live in harmony and peace.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, (New York & Washington: Praeger Publishers, 1967), 166.

<sup>75</sup> Respondent A,

<sup>76</sup> Respondent B,

In the question about the diviner's practices in *Idini gakondo*, one of the respondents indicated that *Idini gakondo* covers every sphere of life; keeping the womb, naming born kids, looking for a partner and keeping the marriage, protecting the family and their properties, curing the sick, helping for success in daily life, advising the king and people etc.<sup>77</sup> The other respondent argued in these words: A diviner in ATR teaches people taboos and different cultural values. It is a way and system of life."<sup>78</sup>

Ancestors are essential in people's daily lives, we live on their land and we have their blood. "Denying them (ancestors) and their role is ignorance. *Idini gakondo* is in the people's blood."<sup>79</sup> ATR Rwandan context has two main divination practices and they are related to diviner healing; there is *guterekera* (ancestral worship) and *kubandwa* (grabbing). The interviewed diviner pointed out the practice was *Kubandwa* (grabbing) is deeply rooted in the cultural and spiritual heritage. The ceremony involves the invocation of ancestral spirits. The purposes, including, protection, guidance and healing, of physical and mental ailments include spiritual healing.<sup>80</sup> He further pointed out that the children have to attend the *kubandwa* ceremony to be known by their ancestors and share meals with them.<sup>81</sup>

Regarding the *guterekera* practice, respondents argued that this practice encompasses a variety of rituals (especially sharing beer and meat with their ancestors), customs, and beliefs centered on honouring and communicating with deceased ancestors, who are believed to continue influencing the lives of members in their daily life. Ancestors have to be honoured and respected (through regular sacrificial rituals) otherwise they can cause disaster, diseases,

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<sup>77</sup> Respondent B  
<sup>78</sup> Respondent A,  
<sup>79</sup> Respondent A  
<sup>80</sup> Respondent B  
<sup>81</sup> Respondent A&B

sicknesses or misfortunes.<sup>82</sup> *Guterekera* involves dances, drumming, and the invocation of ancestors' spirits to seek guidance, blessings and healing of the sick, particularly spiritual sicknesses.<sup>83</sup> “*Guterekera* and *Kubandwa* ceremonies have to be officiated by diviner priest healer. While seer diviner healers play the role of healing natural sickness without involving divination rituals.” However, Respondent A indicated that diviners' practices in *guterekera* and *kubandwa* are too confused to the extent that there can be some secret practices that cannot easily be understood in practical life.<sup>84</sup>

## **2.2.2 Diviner Healer Practices**

### **2.2.2.1 Being a Diviner**

A diviner is a specialist who seeks to diagnose sicknesses or discover the solution to problems, through inspiration or manipulation of objects through various techniques.<sup>85</sup> In this research, a diviner is a traditional healer who is known for communicating and healing with ancestors' guidance to diagnose clients' illnesses by reading different signs (natural and supernatural). And as a healer who can intervene in holistic healing by identifying and providing medication for different diseases and sicknesses.

In some communities, the diviner does not choose to become a diviner but is chosen by her ancestors, who bestow upon her clairvoyant powers. Ancestral calling usually takes the form of powerful ancestral dreams.<sup>86</sup> There are some important practices that the diviner has

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<sup>82</sup> Respondent A&B

<sup>83</sup> Respondent B

<sup>84</sup> Respondent A

<sup>85</sup> Geoffrey Parrinder, *African Traditional Religion* (London: Hutchison House, 1954), 103.

<sup>86</sup> Steve Edwards et al., eds. “Indigenous African Healing Practices: The Role of the Ancestors in Healing,” *Indilinga African Journal of Indigenous Knowledge Systems* (2009):1-11.



to practice himself to strengthen all his healing practices. “He uses medicines to cleanse his body and to strengthen his inward vision. He makes great efforts at concentration so that he becomes abstracted and sees things far away and he comes to interpret the visions that cloud his eyes.”<sup>87</sup> Various healing and strengthening methods including repeated confessional, training, dances and sexual abstinence are necessary to achieve the unpolluted sacred status of the diviner as a medium with the ancestral studies.<sup>88</sup> In the Rwandan context, the ancestor has to indicate the next diviner within the family through divination.

Divination is an attempt to form, and possess, an understanding of reality in the present to predict events and the reality of the future.<sup>89</sup> Again, divination is the practice of determining the hidden significance or cause of events by various natural, supernatural, psychological, and other techniques in order to ask a more-than-human intelligence for guidance.<sup>90</sup> In this research, divination is a practice to gain insight into the sickness, its causes, and the one who causes the sickness and sometimes to indicate medicine for the patient by way of supernatural rituals or practices. The diviner is the priest who officiates the divination ritual and interprets the signs given by divinities (God, ancestors etc.).

#### **2.2.2.2 Some voices from Rwanda on Diviner Healer Practices**

After describing the literature about how to become a diviner, the respondent diviner

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<sup>87</sup> Julius O. Adekunle, *Culture and Customs of Rwanda*, (London: Greenwood Press, 2007), 104.

<sup>88</sup> Edwards 2009, 4

<sup>89</sup> Jacqueline Cassandra Woodfork, *Culture and Customs of the Central African Republic*, (Bloomsbury Academic, 2006), 31. [https://books.google.nl/books?id=7SEWjJ0\\_w2oC&redir\\_esc=y](https://books.google.nl/books?id=7SEWjJ0_w2oC&redir_esc=y) (Accessed 04/07/2024).

<sup>90</sup> Philip M. Peek. “Twinning and perfect Knowledge in African Systems of Divination,” in *Divination Perspectives for New Millennium*, ed. (Britain: ASHGATE, 2010), 29.

in the interview said that being a diviner, “there must be a divination ritual intended to invite ancestors to indicate the next family diviner healer, to be given the power for healing.”<sup>91</sup> He classified diviner healers into three categories, normal diviners who use their own medicines given by ancestors (priest and seer diviner), *Abanyabihembe* (sorceries) and *Abanyabitega* (*Witches*) who use magic spirit power to cure or cause misfortunes. He further revealed that indicated that Christians fear visiting *Abanyabihembe* and *Abanyabitega* because they use other power but diviner healers can collaborate between themselves in the healing process.<sup>92</sup>

### **2.2.2.3 The General Diviner’s Role in Society**

A diviner is a multi-functioning person within the community. “Diviner is a religious consultant, a legal and political advisor”.<sup>93</sup> Diviners possess the supernatural powers to talk to ancestors and know how to interpret their wishes for living relatives including health issues.<sup>94</sup> A diviner plays the role of counsellor, judge, able to draw correct conclusions comforter, supplier of assurance and confidence during people’s crises, adviser, pastor and priest, seer, fortune teller and solver of problems and revealer of secrets like thefts, imminent danger or coming events.<sup>95</sup>

According to Adekunle, diviners have their specialism. Some are rainmakers, and others engage in divination healing or preventing diseases, interpreting dreams, and foretelling the future or revealing the past. In times of war, diviners provide protective medicines for

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<sup>91</sup> Respondent B

<sup>92</sup> Respondent B

<sup>93</sup> Temba Rugwiji, “Faith-based healing and African traditional medicine in Zimbabwe: A postcolonial perspective,” *Theologia Viatorum* (2019): 1-10.

<sup>94</sup> Adekunle, *Culture and Customs of Rwanda*, 31.

<sup>95</sup> Mbiti 1969, 177

soldiers and for winning the enemies.<sup>96</sup> He further argued that the diviner might be called to discover the appropriate name for a child, to find the right spouse, and at death, to discover who/what caused the death.<sup>97</sup>

#### 2.2.2.4 Diviner Healer practices

People in Africa believe that illness is not solely physical but also involves spiritual and emotional imbalance. Diviner healers relate their healing with ancestors' spirits for guidance to reveal the disease and its cause and indicate the medicine. Mndede, a South African, theologian and cultural activist argued that health, sickness and healing from traditional healing are vital and sensitive fields associated with ancestors and spirit.<sup>98</sup> "Traditional healing practices of diviners often include rituals, ceremonies, and spiritual interventions to address the root causes of a person's ailment;"<sup>99</sup> cross-culturally, people find healing in religion and spirituality, especially from diviner healers.<sup>100</sup>

Ingredients obtained from animals, plants and other objects are used to restore a person to holistic well-being and reinstate what had been lost.<sup>101</sup> It is noted that many Africans consult

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<sup>96</sup> Julius O. Adekunle, *Culture and Customs of Rwanda*, (London: Greenwood Press, 2007), 32.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 121

<sup>98</sup> Nakuzola Mndede, "Ancestors and Healing in African Religion: A South African Context," in *Ancestors, Spirits and Healing in Africa and Asia: A Challenge to the Church*, Ingo Wulfhorst, ed. (Geneva: Lutheran World Federation, 2005), 15.

<sup>99</sup> Henri Mbaya and Ntozakhe Cezula, "Contribution of John S Mbiti to the study of African religions and African theology and philosophy," *Stellenbosch Theological Journal* Vol 5, No 3, (2019):421–442.

<sup>100</sup> Steve Edwards et al., eds. "Indigenous African Healing Practices: The Role of the Ancestors in Healing," *Indilinga African Journal of Indigenous Knowledge Systems* (2009): 1-11.

<sup>101</sup> Rajendra Kale, "Traditional Healers in South Africa: a Parallel Health care System," *British Medical Journal*, (1995): 1182-1185. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2549561/pdf/bmj00591-0038.pdf> (accessed on 24/06/2024)

with diviner healers before exploring other avenues of treatment<sup>102</sup> because they believe that diviner healers are able to offer explanations for the causes of illnesses and pinpoint why the illness occurred at that particular time and affected that particular person. Without such explanations, holistic healing cannot be achieved.<sup>103</sup> The question would be if the given explanation is true or false.

Furthermore, the vast majority of African people still consult traditional healers because the Western healthcare system does not address the typical African problems of evil, witchcraft and misfortune.<sup>104</sup> “Africans have their own culturally grounded way of responding to illness and it is believed that these practices improve the human condition and provide relief from pain and misfortune.<sup>105</sup> In traditional healing practices, the diagnostic process is therapeutic in itself as it names and helps to determine the cause and the appropriate treatment.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Tanya A. Crawford and Maurice, Lipsedge, “Seeking Help for Psychological dDistress: the Interface of Zulu Traditional Healing and Western Bomedicine,” *Mental Health, Religiona ndan Culture* Volume 7, issue 2, (2004): 131-140 <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13674670310001602463?scroll=top&needAccess=true> (accessed on 24/06/2024)

<sup>103</sup> Lefatshe Moagi, “Transformation of the South African Health Care System with Regard to African Traditional Healers: The Social Effects of Inclusion and Regulation,” *International NGO Journal*, Vol 4(4), (2009): 116-126. [https://academicjournals.org/article/article1380899554\\_Moagi.pdf](https://academicjournals.org/article/article1380899554_Moagi.pdf). (accessed 21/06/2024)

<sup>104</sup> Thinandavha D. Mashau, “Moving to Different Streams of Healing Praxis: A Reformed Missionary Approach of Healing in the African Context,” *Verbum et Ecclesia*, (30 June 2016):1-8

<sup>105</sup> Juduth Lindelwa Mpono, “Traditional Healing Among the Nguni People”. Unpublished Masters Thesis. University of KwaZulu-Natal (2007), 7. <https://researchspace.ukzn.ac.za/server/api/core/bitstreams/4d41de96-dfa3-4bda-ba1e-74606f219f09/content> (accessed on 22/06/2024)

<sup>106</sup> Lefatshe Moagi, “Transformation of the South African Health Care System with Regard to African Traditional Healers: The social Effects of Inclusion and Regulation,” *International NGO Journal*, Vol 4(4), (2009): 116-126. [https://academicjournals.org/article/article1380899554\\_Moagi.pdf](https://academicjournals.org/article/article1380899554_Moagi.pdf). (accessed 21/06/2024)

### 2.2.2.5 Prayer and ATR Healing Practices

Prayer is a part of the diviner's healing practices. Mbiti argued that many prayers in ATR are aimed at healing the sick and maintaining health, they are sometimes emergency prayers calling upon God to protect and give life.<sup>107</sup> Occasionally there was no sharp distinction drawn between God and the living dead, the purpose of the prayers is for the sick to be healed and man appeals to the spiritual realm for such healing. God should affect healing through herbs, roots and rituals.<sup>108</sup> Many prayers frequently accompany sacrifices, especially when the prayers are petitions for help healing or protection.<sup>109</sup>

The addresses of the prayers are numerous, less than ten per cent of ATR were addressed to divinities, spirits, living dead, and personifications of nature (trees, rivers and earth) but most of the prayers are addressed directly and specifically to God by his attributes names as Supreme over all divinities.<sup>110</sup> African cosmology situates spirits between God and humans: (1) God; (2) spirits; (3) humans (the living); (4) animals and plants; and (5) phenomena or objects without biological life. Subdivide spiritual beings into three hierarchical categories: divinities, spirits, and ancestors/the living-dead.<sup>111</sup>

Mbiti further argued that 90% per cent of the prayers are addressed to God and even the remaining ten per cent assume God is nearby in the background.<sup>112</sup> God is the final recourse in two senses. First, people may only petition a god when they have exhausted their own

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<sup>107</sup> John S Mbiti, *The Prayers of African Religion*, (London: SPCK, 1975), 36.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 38

<sup>109</sup> Denise Lardner Carmody and John, Tully Carmony, *Prayer in World Religions*, (Maryknoll and New York: Orbis Books, 1990), 135.

<sup>110</sup> Mbiti, *The Prayers*, 3

<sup>111</sup> Hans Moscicke, "Reconciling the Supernatural Worldviews of the Bible, African Traditional Religion, and African Christianity," *Reconciling the Supernatural Worldviews*, (*Missionalia*) 45-2 (1969):127–143.

<sup>112</sup> John S. Mbiti, *Bible and Theology in African Christianity*, (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1986), 73.

ingenuity and other sources of help, second and more significantly, ‘God’ functions as the one to whom nothing is impossible, the one who can overturn the misfortunes allowed by all lesser forces.<sup>113</sup>

Furthermore, Muzungu Bernardin a theologian Catholic priest in Rwanda indicated that traditional religion in Rwanda uses the name Imana according to his attributes, Imana-the providence which indicates that Imana reigns all the world events, is infallible and provides liberty. The author of life, He gives life till death, Imana-the Supreme Being, to indicate that He lives in heaven and nothing exists before Him. Imana-Omni power, to indicate that He dominates everything and is not limited to anything, Imana-the first cause, Imana-the Judger, Imana-the Creator, He created heaven and earth, Imana-the good One (misericordieu par excellence), Imana-the internal One, the invisible One and Omniscient to indicate that He knows everything.<sup>114</sup> This is confirmed by Rutangarwamaboko, a diviner Rwandan healer that there is no god for Rwandans only but there is God for the whole world.<sup>115</sup>

Who shall pray and to whom the prayers shall be addressed? What is the content of the prayer? The diviner is an important figure in ATR. The diviner addresses the prayer for the patient and the medicine. “The medicine man offers a prayer as he treats the sick indicating that God is ultimately the healer. Some diviners do not wield final power for healing, God is the healer, and prayer is one part of their medical practices and some make offerings and

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<sup>113</sup> Denise Lardner Carmody and John Tully Carmony, *Prayer in World Religions*, (Maryknoll and New York: Orbis Books, 1990), 134.

<sup>114</sup> Bernardin Muzungu, *Le Dieu de nos Peres: Les source de la Religion Traditionelle du Rwanda et du Burundi*, (Bujumbura: Pesses Lavigerie, 1974), 38-39.

<sup>115</sup> Rutangarwamaboko, “The True Rwandan Religion,” *Lives based on the culture*, (17/01/2019): <https://youtu.be/l2fJwoSiGos?si=UGTrAggg3-JCL-QC> (accessed on 06/06/2024)

sacrifices or perform other religious rituals in connection with their work.”<sup>116</sup>

The diviner prayed and asked for God’s healing. “Diviner’s prayer in healing ‘he invites God, who alone is great, who begat him and asks God to stand with him so that he might be able to cure the patient’. In the prayer he calls God the Father ‘Jouk (God) my Father, help us to heal this and presents himself as a sinless man.’”<sup>117</sup> This affirms that the diviner could be the healer at the same time, a prayerful person in his healing practices, “*God help this man that he may be well, that he may recover tomorrow; and may you want to help this man to be well and as overcoming you overcome. Overcome all these troubles. And have mercy on me, because we do not know how to pray to God differently from what we say now.*”<sup>118</sup>

#### **2.2.2.6 Some Voices from Rwanda on Prayer and ATR Healing Practices**

However, during the interview with respondent B, a diviner healer of the West of Rwanda, he pointed out that the god of traditional religion is Ryangombe (the great ancestor).<sup>119</sup> However, when I asked him later, which God do you address your prayer during the medication? He responded in these words: “God of heaven.”<sup>120</sup> The use of the name Imana in ATR prayers of diviner healers is controvertible. Diviner healing practices includes different practices and methods. This healing is basically based on divination and the role of ancestors.

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<sup>116</sup> John S Mbiti, *The Prayers of African Religion*, (London: SPCK, 1975), 38.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid, 72

<sup>118</sup> Ibid, 46

<sup>119</sup> Respondent B

<sup>120</sup> Respondent B

### 2.3 Diviner healers' function in healing

Mbiti has indicated diviner functions as “testing by divination, treatment, and prevention, protection against agents of evil, purification, ensuring success, retribution, exorcism, and eradication of witchcraft.”<sup>121</sup> The healing function has several phases but the study will focus on three main steps, diagnosing, curative, and preventive functions so that PRC members and leaders have improved knowledge of the diviner healer’s function and practices.

Traditional religious healer diviners serve two main general functions: they provide (1) guidance in a quest for blessing, and (2) help in response to suffering from sickness.<sup>122</sup> A primary occasion when divination is used is when a family member is ill. Illness should be not only attributed to an individual but to the entire family. To know the cause (antisocial and unseen power) and enemy of the family is important to Christians and non-Christians. “The causality leads many to divination to determine the source of suffering either sorcery, witchcraft, or an offended ghost or ancestor, or other people around,<sup>123</sup> this surrounds the patient just as important as the disease or diagnosis.<sup>124</sup>

The accessibility of diviner healing, unity of the body and the socioeconomic situation of the patient might be significant points to Christians to visit diviners to seek healing. “Diviner healing has some advantages as being holistic, addressing issues of the soul, spirit and body, it is easily accessible and mostly cheap.”<sup>125</sup> Further answers would be described in the diviner

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<sup>121</sup> John S. Mbiti, "African Traditional Medicine and Its Relevance for Christian Work," In Otto Waack, et al., eds. *So sende ich euch* (Stuttgart, Germany: Evangelische Missionsverlag: 1973): 310-319

<sup>122</sup> Alan Howell, “Turning it Beautiful: Divination, Discernment and a Theology of Suffering,” *International Journal of Frontier Missiology*, (2012):129-137.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*,131

<sup>124</sup> Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, “Collaborating with Traditional Healers for HIV Prevention and Care in Sub-Saharan African: Suggestions for Programme Managers and Field Workers”, *UNAIDS Best Practice Collection*, November 2006, 13.

<sup>125</sup> Peter White, *The Concept of Diseases and Health Care in African Traditional Religion in*



healer's functions that are related to the diviner's holistic healing which may influence some Christians to visit diviner healers to seek healing.

### 2.3.1 Diagnosing function

In diviner's profession, he deals with the living dead and spirits whereas herbalists do not. He is known to be the father of mysteries.<sup>126</sup> In the diagnostic function, the diviner diagnoses what causes the sickness and who causes it.<sup>127</sup>

Mbiti pointed out that diviners are consulted for the causes of sickness and some sicknesses are identified as being caused by spirits who may be using such illnesses or other misfortunes to make their wishes known.<sup>128</sup> So, to think about suffering there is a cause for everything. Van den Bosch-Heij indicated that in the African context, nothing sorrowful happens by accident or chance there must be a cause either human or spirit.<sup>129</sup>

Some causes of sickness in the African worldview: are natural, national calamity, angry ancestors who might not be happy about one's behaviour, failure to adhere to certain taboos (system of things to avoid, things that regulate human conduct to ensure a healthy living – physically, spiritually and morally), impurity or uncleanness associated with childbirth, initiation rites, miscarriage, and ceremonial cleansing after death, witchcraft, using evil power.<sup>130</sup>

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Ghana, Department of Science of Religion and Missiology, (2015): 1-7

<sup>126</sup> John S. Mbiti, *African Religion and Philosophy*, (Ney York and Washington: Praeger Publishers, 1969), 177.

<sup>127</sup> Willem Berends, *African Traditional Healing Practices*

<sup>128</sup> John S Mbiti, *The Prayers of African Religion*, (London: SPCK, 1975), 38.

<sup>129</sup> Van den Bosch-Heij, *Spirit and Healing in Africa*, 30.

<sup>130</sup> Thinandavha D. Mashau, "Moving to different streams of healing praxis: A reformed missionary approach of healing in the African context," *Verbum et Ecclesia*, (2006):1-8, 3

Diviners diagnose sickness by the power of the ancestors whose spirits transcend God to heal the afflicted. Diviners may use oxtail-sacrificed to diagnose.<sup>131</sup> Edwards revealed that a diviner uses different aids and techniques, to communicate with ancestors to know the sickness and how he/she can cure the afflicted according to their advice which is typical of a religious and ritual nature.<sup>132</sup> Each family had to consult a diviner regularly to contact their ancestors otherwise they could be angry and cause sickness to the living members which made the diviner the only way to communicate with them.<sup>133</sup>

To diagnose the cause and the one who causes the sickness or misfortune there should be divination rituals. “The purpose of divination is to bring into the open what is hidden or unknown, thus revealing the reasons of spirits to bring affliction. A diviner assists in describing the meaning of the illness and suffering based on its rational character, affliction conveys its meaning.”<sup>134</sup> Diviner is looking not only for physical illness but also for all kinds of calamities. Divination is not for all misfortunes but only when such misfortunes are unusually severe or numerous that the help of a diviner is called in, as a seer diviner assists for usual and natural diagnoses or remedies, a priest diviner assists for supernatural diagnoses and remedies of evil spirits and witches.<sup>135</sup> The causes could be either natural or supernatural as well.

The causality of illness among the African people is classified into two main categories;

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<sup>131</sup> Nakuzola Mndede, “Ancestors and Healing in African Religion: A South African Context” in Ingo Wulforth, ed., *Ancestors, Spirits and Healing in Africa and Asia: A Challenge to the Church*, (Geneva: Lutheran World Federation, 2005), 7.

<sup>132</sup> Stiven Edwards et al. “The Role of the Ancestors in Healing: Indigenous African Healing Practices, *Indilinga – African Journal Of Indigenous Knowledge Systems* Vol 8 (1) (2009): 1-11

<sup>133</sup> Julius O. Adekunle, *Culture and Customs of Rwanda*, (London: Greenwood Press, 2007), 16.

<sup>134</sup> Van den Bosch-Heij, *Spirit and Healing in Africa*, 31,

<sup>135</sup> Berends, *African Traditional Healing Practices*, 276-287.

namely, natural and supernatural.<sup>136</sup> Natural biological causes of illness and diseases happen<sup>137</sup> and result from biological imbalances or genetic predispositions. This category is treated by both traditional healers and modern medical science.<sup>138</sup>

Supernatural causes are important to non-Christians and Christians, they are limited in the diviner healing practices arena, and a diviner healer's approaches are the only ones that can address those supernatural causes. "There are three categories of supernatural illness in the African culture, namely, magical, mystical and animistic."<sup>139</sup>

Magical illnesses assume that people become ill as a result of sorcerers or witches.<sup>140</sup> Sorcery uses medicine or magical substances to cause harm or kill like poisoning (food poisoning, crossed or spiritual poison), while witchcraft is used to manipulate psychic powers usually through mystical powers.

There is a belief that mystical sicknesses are related to walking over dangerous places, or a polluted milieu by evil spirits. Animism is the belief that everything is alive, animate, and conscious possesses a soul and is endowed with spirit or life energy. Apart from plants and animals, clouds, rocks water and other natural features are believed to have life (like ancestors),

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<sup>136</sup> George Peter Murdock, *Theories of illness: A world Survey*, (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1980), 45.

<sup>137</sup> Hammond-Tooke, W.D. "Selective borrowing? The possibility of San shamanic influence on Southern Bantu divination and healing practices," *South African Archaeological Bulletin* 53, (1998):9-15

<sup>138</sup> Lindelwa Judith Mpono, *Traditional Healing among the Nguni People*, (unpublished resource, Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Masters of Education in Educational Psychology, in the Department of Education University of KwaZulu Natal Edgewood Campus, 2007, 20.

<sup>139</sup> Hammond-Tooke, W.D. "Selective borrowing? The possibility of San shamanic influence on Southern Bantu divination and healing practices," *South African Archaeological Bulletin* 53, (1998):9-15

<sup>140</sup> Mpono, *Traditional Healing*, 20.

but they can cause sickness.<sup>141</sup> Failure to appease these spirits leads to mental, spiritual and physical problems, which disturb the maintenance of equilibrium.<sup>142</sup>

### **2.3.1.1 Some Voices from Rwanda on Diagnosing Function**

After describing the topic, ‘diviner healers’ function as diagnosing, with the help of literature I also asked several respondents.’ Respondent A confirmed that a diviner healer can diagnose illness and prescribe medicine, such as eaten poisons, spiritual poison, crossed poison, and mental sickness caused by *ibitega* (sorceries) and *Nyabingi* (witchcraft) that the Western medical approach cannot address, especially spiritual problems”<sup>143</sup> The respondent pastor argued that poisons are still a challenge even in the church. The church leader has to choose a team of people in the church so that while they pray none can poison a child (eaten poison). They have to be always awake even during the prayer.<sup>144</sup>

Many patients have to check the diviner healer before going to medical doctors so that they may know first that they have to be treated through the biomedical approach or traditional healing approach to the extent that “Kirinda Hospital (one of the PCR hospitals) calls a diviner healer to diagnose or check if the pregnant woman has not been poisoned because if she has to be operated on while she was already poisoned she dies immediately.<sup>145</sup> This shows the relevance and power of the traditional diviner healers in African as well as Rwandan societies.

Additionally, supernatural means have to be applied to diagnose spiritual causes. The

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<sup>141</sup> John S. Mbiti, *African Religion and Philosophy*, (Ney York and Washington: Praeger Publishers, 1969), 7.

<sup>142</sup> Mbiti, 1967, 8

<sup>143</sup> Respondent B

<sup>144</sup> Respondent A

<sup>145</sup> Respondent B

respondent indicated that Rwandan diviner healers diagnose by spitting on money, gargling the water, and regurgitating cultural grain, *amasaka* (sorghum), *Imbuto z'ibihaza* (pumpkin grain), Uburo (millet), and Isogi (Cleome gynandra) on *Imbehe* (traditional plate made in a special tree), with the diviner's skills and techniques he might be able to discover the cause.<sup>146</sup> Whereas others use spitting on straws or firing the fats of animals to diagnose the sickness and the cause.<sup>147</sup> According to him, Whatever happens, there is someone who does it, and people need to know their enemies, so if the smoke of the fired fats or grain indicates the North or East, the cause or the one who sent the bad spirit should be your North or Eastern neighbour or from far away. After diagnosing, a diviner goes to the next stage of curing, whether by traditional healing or by medical healing; especially, in the case of high blood pressure, cancer or diabetes.<sup>148</sup> However, respondent A rejected traditional diviner healing in these words: "Diviner healing is old and no more accurate today."<sup>149</sup>

### 2.3.2. Treatment function

The diagnosis process has to indicate if the sickness is either physical, natural, psychological, mental, spiritual, or supernatural so that the curative process can be effective and holistic. Holistic healing is classified into four important treatment steps that are available only to diviner healers that influence traditional believers as well as Christian believers. The treatment includes physical, mental, psychological, spiritual and social relations.

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<sup>146</sup> Respondent B  
<sup>147</sup> Respondent A  
<sup>148</sup> Respondent B  
<sup>149</sup> Respondent A

### 2.3.2.1 Physical remedial

This part is crucial for people who seek healing, it attracts most of the people including Christians who visit diviners to seek healing particularly when the sickness stays there for a long time and the medical doctors fail to approach the sickness. Here there is one interesting testimony.

“One evening his friend went to bed but fell sick, in the morning he was unable to walk. He remained paralyzed for six months. All Western means of healing failed. He knew Jada, a certain man who possessed a gift, he was a diviner and medicine man. He identified the cause of the illness, and he gave the medicine, and herbs to drink and to bathe, a few weeks later his friend started to feel better and to walk again.”<sup>150</sup>

In curative functions, diviners tend to be more symbolic, involving such divination rituals as purification ceremonies and sacrifices by the blood of animals.”<sup>151</sup> Certain health problems, like sexually transmitted diseases and infertility, are considered especially curable by traditional healers.<sup>152</sup>

### 2.3.2.2 Spiritual remedial

Spiritual healing is much more important in the diviner’s healing function in the African worldview. According to van den Bosch-Heij, the spirit’s authority over life can become a

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<sup>150</sup> Pukumah H. Yakobu, “The Challenge of Healing Ministry: The Lutheran Church in Nigeria in *Ancestors, Spirits and Healing in Africa and Asia: A Challenge to the Church*, Ingo Wulfhorst, ed. (Geneva: Lutheran World Federation, 2005), 128.

<sup>151</sup> Berends, *African Traditional Healing Practices*, 276-287.

<sup>152</sup> Bregje De Kok, *Christianity and African Traditional Religion Two Realities of a Different Kind: A cultural psychological study of the way Christian Malawians account for their involvement in African Traditional Religion*. (Zomba, Malawi: Kachere Series, 2005), 25.

source of suffering such as illness, unemployment, financial setback, spirit possession, and misfortune for the living human being.<sup>153</sup> The ancestors play a noteworthy role in discovering medicine. Diviner deals in drugs, most of which however have magical rather than pharmaceutical values. He cures it with spiritual powers and does not consider it as purely physical.<sup>154</sup> Diviner healing reattributes by turning back the misfortunes of the competitors and exorcises the possessed by replacing evil spirits with familiar spirits in the family circle. He eradicates by smelling the witches and enemies of the community to banish them or kill them.<sup>155</sup>

Damascene, a Rwandan diviner healer, argued that diviners may use the ‘power of spirit C of ancestors to cure the inflicted evil spirits from magic power, and sorceries. Spirit C tells the medicine what to use in healing.<sup>156</sup> Ancestors have extraordinary powers that can bring good luck and healing if they are well pleased.<sup>157</sup>

Mndende argued that if the sickness is caused by ancestors, healing has to be achieved through performing the ritual sacrifice.<sup>158</sup> Through eating sacrificed meat and drinking a sipping beer as a sign to share and reconcile with ancestors after some sacred words pronounced by the diviner.”<sup>159</sup> Nzayisenga indicated that rituals often involve invoking ancestral spirits

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<sup>153</sup> Deborah, van den Bosch-Heij, *Spirit and Healing in Africa: A Reformed Pneumatological Perspective* (Bloemfontein, 2014), 29.

<sup>154</sup> Geoffrey Parrinder, *African Traditional Religion* (London: Hutchison House, 1954), 104.

<sup>155</sup> Thinandavha D. Mashau, “Moving to different streams of healing praxis: A reformed missionary approach of healing in the African context,” *Verbum et Ecclesia*, (30 June 2016):1-8

<sup>156</sup> Jean, Damascene, “Difference between traditional diviner healer and Herbalist”, 2023

<sup>157</sup> Steve Edwards, Nomahluhi Makunga, Jabulani Thwala and Buyi Mbele, “The Role of the Ancestors in Healing: Indigenous African Healing Practices, *Indilinga – African Journal Of Indigenous Knowledge Systems* Vol 8 (1) (2009): 1-11

<sup>158</sup> Nakuzola Mndede, “Ancestors and Healing in African Religion: A South African Context” in Ingo Wulforth, ed., *Ancestors, Spirits and Healing in Africa and Asia: A Challenge to the Church*, (Geneva: Lutheran World Federation, 2005), 16.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid. 19

and are accompanied by specific actions and powerful words that carry symbolic meanings. The rituals performed during the healing process are believed to enhance the efficacy of the treatment.<sup>160</sup> Performing rituals for the ancestors' spirits is important to the living, for health, well-being and healing because of most illnesses and suffering from the point to the spiritual realm.<sup>161</sup>

Sometimes healing the spirits' sickness diviner uses light for the spirits, the diviner lights a fire at the spirit's shrine. Diviner offers meat, drink and other food and convincing spirits that after healing the patient and his or her relatives will respect their wishes.<sup>162</sup> Psychological and mental healing are related to spiritual healing in ATR. A diviner applies physical, spiritual and psychological treatment which assures the sufferer that all is and will be well, he gives much time and personal attention to the patient, which enables him to penetrate deep into the psychological state of the patient to heal the cause of suffering.<sup>163</sup>

### **2.3.2.2 Some Voices from Rwanda on the Treatment Function**

Respondent B that the ancestors revealed the sickness and the medicines to help the patient. Medicines from plants, roots, water mixed with other plants, and oil from strong animals can be applied after diviners' imitongero (stronger words) and pray to God for effective of medicines.<sup>164</sup> For spiritual healing, divination sacrificial rituals of chicken,

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<sup>160</sup> Nzayisenga, "Comparative Study of Tanzanian and Rwandan Traditional Medicine Practices Across Different Tribes," 1-3

<sup>161</sup> Deborah van den Bosch-Heij, *Spirit and Healing in Africa: A Reformed Pneumatological Perspective* (Bloemfontein: Rapid access publisher, 2014), 30.

<sup>162</sup> Mbiti 1969, 38

<sup>163</sup> John S Mbiti, *The Prayers of African Religion*, (London: SPCK, 1975), 169.

<sup>164</sup> Respondent B



goats or sheep of one colour have to be performed.<sup>165</sup> The respondent advises the people who seek healing from traditional healers that they have drawn attention to diviner healers because there are traditional healers that give the patient some conditions in order to get healed that he has built shrines of their gods.

#### **2.3.2.4 Social relationship remedial**

African traditional thinking and beliefs about health and illness include three cultural metaphors, Firstly, purity refers to the absence of contamination. People are considered healthy if they are pure and cool. Secondly, balance in the African Worldview means the ability to maintain harmonious relations with nature and the spirits of the world. Lastly, social harmony refers to maintaining good relationships with one's social world, which includes family and others with whom the person interacts. Disharmony leads to anger, stress, jealousy depression and other illnesses.<sup>166</sup>

In African collective societies, as well as Rwandan communities bad social relations and enmity between people can cause sickness and misfortune, and the diviner has to participate and discover the cause of disharmony, “Anything that brings intrapsychic, interpersonal or social disharmony, be it with the environment or others can be perceived as potentially disease/illness-causing.<sup>167</sup> So there is a need for re-establishing broken relationships and for maintaining the balance of existing relationships with other people, spiritual beings and the

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<sup>165</sup> Respondent B

<sup>166</sup> Mbiti, 1969, 157.

<sup>167</sup> Steve Edwards, Nomahlabi Makunga, Jabulani Thwala and Buyi Mbele, “The Role of the Ancestors in Healing: Indigenous African Healing Practices, *Indilinga – African Journal Of Indigenous Knowledge Systems* Vol 8 (1) (2009): 1-11, 5.

natural environment.<sup>168</sup> Diviner has to play the role of mediating people in such negative tension. Diviner invites all men of the village to come together to tell them that jealousies and enmities are identified as being at the root of the sickness. Failure to attend the diviner gathering may also be an indication of guilt, especially where witchcraft is concerned.<sup>169</sup> Diviner is important to cure social relations even by mediating people who are in a bad relationship situation by advising them. “Diviner’s healing practices aim to restore harmony between the individual, their community, and the spiritual realm.”<sup>170</sup>

### 2.3.3 The Preventive Function

Diviners use separate techniques to protect the patient after healing. Adekunle stated that the *Umupfumu* may use leaves, plants, and roots to make defensive charms for their clients.<sup>171</sup> The preventative medicines are aimed at the spirit world, protecting against witches, evil spirits, magic spirits and other supernatural agents of misfortune.<sup>172</sup>

Diviners took preventive measures against often magic, witchcraft, sorcery, evil eyes, or bad words in the form of charms, performing rituals at the homes (for ancestors' protection) or fields, and applying medicine that was swallowed or rubbed into the body.<sup>173</sup> Diviner prevents sickness with purification by vomiting, emetics streaming and washing by

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<sup>168</sup> van den Bosch-Heij, 2012, 31

<sup>169</sup> Berends, *African Traditional Healing Practices*, 279.

<sup>170</sup> Mary Bourke, “The Fascinating Traditions of Healing and Medicine in African Cultures” (September 14, 2023). <https://www.medlifemovement.org/medlife-stories/global-topics/the-fascinating-traditions-of-healing-and-medicine-in-african-cultures/>. (accessed on 04 May 2024)

<sup>171</sup> Julius O. Adekunle, *Culture and Customs of Rwanda*, (London: Greenwood Press, 2007), 29, 32)

<sup>172</sup> Berends, *African Traditional Healing Practices* 279.

<sup>173</sup> Mbiti, 1969, 170

water.<sup>174</sup> Briefly, the diviner healer function is concerned with sickness, diseases, and misfortunes, he diagnoses the nature of the diseases, applies the right treatment, and supplies a means of preventing the misfortune from occurring again.<sup>175</sup>

### **2.3.3.1 Some Voices from Rwanda on the Treatment Function**

Respondent B indicated that after treating and healing the patient, the diviner healer has to give protective medicine so that no one can inflict him again either spirits or witches. For, the ancestors the person has to respect the diviner's wishes and guidance,<sup>176</sup> Medicine can be plants mixed with water to drink and sprinkle it in the house and medicine to apply as lotion or by cutting the body and putting medicine inside of it.<sup>177</sup>

## **2.4 Summary**

This chapter has discussed the diviner healer's practices and his function as holistic healing in the ATR Rwandan context in order to describe what the diviner healers are doing for the people who are seeking from them so that the PCR church members and church leaders can have a proper understanding on diviner healer's healing practices with ancestral spirits and power so how the traditional believers and Christians relate diviner healing practices and healing in the church?

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<sup>174</sup> Thinandavha D. Mashau, "Moving to different streams of healing praxis: A reformed missionary approach of healing in the African context," *Verbum et Ecclesia*, (30 June 2016):1-8

<sup>175</sup> John S. Mbiti, *African Religion and Philosophy*, (Ney York and Washington: Praeger Publishers, 1969), 169

<sup>176</sup> Respondent B

<sup>177</sup> Respondent B

His function of diagnosis by divination to bring out the causality of sickness raised the question of how the theologians and church leaders react to it.

The chapter discussed the diviner healer's function of remedial, physical, and spiritual through sacrificial rituals and psychological healing, but one more question is raised on how these healing sacrifices are related to Christ's sacrifice. Lastly, the study discussed the diviner healer's function of preventing sickness and the cause through grabbing or cutting the body in order to put protective medicine inside the body, does the body not suffer more? The diviner healer intends not only to stop the client's sickness, pain and misfortune it also envisions bringing harmony and peace to their clients.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Relating Traditional Diviner Healing and Healing in the Church**

#### **Introduction**

Africans relate to health and healing in distinct realms and approaches of traditional diviner healing, biomedical healing, and healing in the church. These approaches can be used sensitively by either Christians or non-Christians. The purpose of those approaches is to cure, heal, and protect or save life from the danger of sicknesses and misfortunes. This chapter aims to answer the question of how traditional believers and Christians who visit or do not visit traditional diviner healers relate to the healing of traditional diviner healers and healing in the church. The respondents of the interviews are two traditional believers, two Christians who visit diviners, and two Christians who do not visit diviner healers. Respondents TBV 04 (female) and TBV05 (male) are traditional religious believers. Respondents CCMV06 (female) and CCMV07 (male) are Christian church members who visit diviner healers. Respondents PCRM08 (female) and PCRM07 (male) are Christian church members who do not visit diviner healers.

The analysis adapted the Believing, Behaving, and Belonging and Experiencing-BBBE model to appropriate healing in the church and diviner healing. Jos Colijn, a pastor and reformed Dutch theologian, argued that the BBBE model is used as a pragmatic and heuristic tool for systematizing, analyzing, and comparing the empirical data from various belief contexts while remaining open for variations in the use and understanding of each of the aspects

in the contexts so that the empirical grounding of the research remains transparent.<sup>178</sup>

### **3.1 Believing**

With regards to the aspect of believing, the researcher aims to understand what diviner healing and healing in the church refer to, their effect on patients and caregivers, and evaluate if the two types of healing have any connection with the Christian theological concepts of grace and salvation. It is important to understand how diviner healing and healing in the church is perceived, interpreted, and considered, particularly by traditional and Christian believers.

#### **3.1.1 Diviner Healing**

Diviner healing is perceived as appropriate healing for many Rwandans according to their cosmological cause of sickness. It has been used from generation to generation and inherited by their grandfathers. Traditional healing is related to ATR belief where people's wishes of holistic treatment are respected.

##### **3.1.1.1 Trust in Ancestors**

Diviner healing is regarded as a trustful one because of the ancestors' role and participation. According to the respondent who is a traditional religious believer, ancestors are important in their healing. Ancestors are 'God's angels' in their lives. They are created by

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<sup>178</sup> Colijn J.J.A. 'Testing the Waters. Infant Baptism as a Case Study for Doing Reformed Theology Interculturally'. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Protestantse Theologische Universiteit, 2023, 18-24.

God.”<sup>179</sup> The respondent also indicated that “diviner’s healing is trusted to the extent that the patient gets medicine given accordingly, the cause indicated by ancestors and the instructions given by them.” Ancestors have to be honored since they are always looking after people’s lives.”<sup>180</sup> Diviner healing is trusted to the extent that the respondent said: “If a person lacks knowledge and not being wise for his or her life, God throws him/her away. Moreover, if diviners and their healing practices did not exist, I could not survive.”<sup>181</sup> This indicates a high reputation of diviner healing in the Rwandan context.

### **3.1.1.2 Trusting in *Imitongero* (strong meaningful words)**

*Imitongero* are important in diviner healing. A Christian respondent claimed to have a lot of information on diviner healing to share for a full day and said the importance is not plants and other medicines the diviner gives because everyone can find them by himself. Rather the importance is the words he applies for the medicine and to have faith in those words.<sup>182</sup> The Christian respondent argued that diviner healing uses *imitongero* (strong meaningful words). For example, the diviner has to say: “You inflict and I heal, my medicine is powerful, the ancestors are powerful, our spirits are more powerful than your sickness and spirit” to enhance the effectiveness of the medicine and to underline the point, evoking emotions, creating imagery, and making medicine more attractive or useful and notable. The patient has to trust in those words.<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> TBV04 interview on 7 June 20204,

<sup>180</sup> TBV05 Interview on 07/06/2024

<sup>181</sup> TBV04 Interview on 07/06/2024

<sup>182</sup> CCMV07 interview on 11/06/2024

<sup>183</sup> CCMV06 interview on 09/06/2024

### **3.1.1.3 Trusting in the gift**

A female traditional believer stated that divine healing is perceived as a gift from the ancestor to the community. Diviner can use his gift to help people.<sup>184</sup> Moreover, divine healing is perceived as God's gift. According to the respondent who is a male traditional believer, God created a diviner and gifted him to treat sickness. With his gift, he can see and know what others cannot. With his gift and wisdom, he can understand the problem, the cause, and medicine.<sup>185</sup> This was confirmed by the respondent CCMV07, a Christian church member who visits diviner healers in these words: "I seek healing to diviners because I know that he has a high gift for healing our local sicknesses. Diviner has a gift to save lives in danger."<sup>186</sup> However, a Christian who visited the diviner healer rejected the argument that diviner healing is God's gift saying: "Even though we get medicines and healing words and practices they could not be God's gift. It is from somewhere else I do not know."<sup>187</sup>

### **3.1.1.4 Believing in enmity or evil power?**

Diviner healing is a part of the solution to contextual problems, two of my respondents said, "In our village people are not good, they can send their poison and evil power to bring misfortune and cause death to our children, and we cannot sleep well without knowing what is happening around us. If sickness, pain, or misfortune occurs, we will visit the diviner directly.

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<sup>184</sup> TBV04 Interview on 07/06/2024

<sup>185</sup> TBV05 Interview on 07/06/2024

<sup>186</sup> TBV04/TBV05 Interviews on 07/06/2024/CCMV06 interview on 09/06/2024/CCMV07 Interview on 11/06/2024.

<sup>187</sup> CCMV06 Interview on 09/06/2024



If there is a doubt we have to ask before doing another thing.”<sup>188</sup> An interviewed female Christian who visited a diviner to seek healing for her son, the diviner revealed that the sickness was the bad spirits that were coming from her husband’s family, this happened because she refused to praise their god and build a shrine at her own house.<sup>189</sup> It is crucial to know what is happening around us.

### **3.1.1.5 Sinful and satanic healing?**

However, the diviner’s healing has been accused of satanic healing. Respondents PCRM08 and PCRM07 (Christian believers, elders, and choir members who have never visited a diviner) said, “Diviner healing is sinful healing, diviners use devil power. We cannot send their friend or relative to diviner healing, though, we cannot give a client to Satan.”<sup>190</sup> To us, diviners are messengers of satan and ancestors are evil spirits.<sup>191</sup> The Christian respondent who visits diviners likely said: “Their spirits may be bad and aggressive to the patient. My father and brother lost their lives because the spirits were angry and not satisfied with the offerings given.”<sup>192</sup>

### **3.1.2 Aspect of Believing on Healing in the Church**

With regards to the aspect of believing, I wanted to understand what ordinary Christian believers and traditional religious believers believe in healing in the church, who is the agent

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<sup>188</sup> TBV05/TBV06 Interview on 07/06/2024  
<sup>189</sup> CCMV07 interview on 11/06/2024  
<sup>190</sup> PCRM08/PCRM07 interview on 10/06/2024  
<sup>191</sup> PCRM08/PCRM07 interview on 10/06/2024  
<sup>192</sup> CCMV07 interview on 11/06/2024

of healing, and its effect on the patients and people around and to understand the relation of this healing and how it is related to Salvation, God's love and the Holy Spirit.

### **3.1.2.1 As Biblical Healing**

To ordinary Christian believers, healing in the church is perceived as Biblical healing. One of the Christian respondents said, "Praying to the sick is Jesus' command, we know it from the Bible and we believe it, and she referred to Jesus' recommendation to his disciples to cast out demons and to lay hands on the sick and they will be recovered' as the sign of Christ's believer (Mark 16:17-18), the minister, elders, and individual gifted people have to read the scripture about healing before doing anything to the patient."<sup>193</sup> According to one of the respondents, a Christian who does not visit diviners, "healing in the church is God's healing. God is the healer of his people suffering from any kind of sickness. God promised his people that he would heal them from any pain from sickness, she might be indirectly referring to Ex 15:26.<sup>194</sup> The respondent, a Christian who does not visit the diviner, further argued that as Jesus Christ went around to heal the sick. He is always visiting the church members to heal them and anyone who believes in Him, got healing. 'Christ heals the stomach, demons, pain of the back, HIV, *amahumane* (crossed poisons), and Jesus heals each one, men, women and children.' To her, the church is a place of Christ and God's healing, no one comes into the church with sickness and goes back with it. It always depends on personal faith.<sup>195</sup>

According to some of the participants, healing in the church is believed to be divine

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<sup>193</sup> PCRM08/PCRM09 interview on 10/06/2024

<sup>194</sup> PCRM09 interview on 10/06/2024

<sup>195</sup> PCRM08 interview on 10/06/2024

healing as salvation for the entire life of Christians, God’s salvation encompasses the healing of the whole personal body, spirit, soul, and flesh. God gives us Christ to save us from sin and any spiritual, physical, and mental sickness. To them, God’s salvation is the full package for our lives and everything in our daily lives whether healing, good luck, success, blessing, peace, or prosperity.<sup>196</sup>

### **3.1.2.2 As Divine Healing**

Two of the Christian respondents said: “Faith is important in healing, if a person is looking for healing in the church, he must have faith in God and Christ. And, the person who prays for the sick must also have faith in the divine and God’s power, otherwise, healing cannot happen.”<sup>197</sup> Furthermore, my Christian respondent indicated that healing in the church is God’s grace, love, and mercy because we cannot force Him, God does it in his time, and we are not righteous people, we always wait for his miracle.<sup>198</sup>

However, according to interviewed traditional believers, “healing in the church is for simple sicknesses and sometimes fake healing, because people may come in the church while they are having medicine (traditional medicine or biomedical ones), the time of praying for the sick each one will declare he or she got healing. Healing in the church cannot happen without applying medicine”<sup>199</sup> Again, Christian respondents supported this argument by saying that some patients may accept that they got healing from the pastor's prayer whereas the sickness

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<sup>196</sup> PCRM08/PCRM09 interview on 10/06/2024  
<sup>197</sup> PCRM09/ PCRM08 interview on 10/06/2024  
<sup>198</sup> PCRM09 interview on 10/06/2024  
<sup>199</sup> TBV05/TBV06 Interview on 07/06/2024

and pain are still on the sick so the pastors cannot tell the patient that he lacks faith.<sup>200</sup>

To the question related to some weakness of healing in the church, the four respondents indicated that healing in the church is for cheating and not respectful to the people. The pastors call patients to give sacrifices like money, goats, or other things to experience full healing, and some pastors and other prayerful people pray for the sick in an open place and shout at the patient.<sup>201</sup>

### **3.2. Belonging**

Belonging will be applied to understand the belongingness of traditional believers, Christians who visit, and Christians who do not visit diviner healers. What does traditional healing or healing in the church mean to the respondents in terms of belonging to deities, ancestors, God, and Christ, to the community of the church, and to traditional religious members or community?

#### **3.2.1 Belonging to Making a Pact**

The traditional beliefs about sickness and healing still have had much influence on many people's lives insofar as they need to be always faithful to their deities. The three respondents of traditional believers reveal that they have made *igihango* (a pact) with their ancestors, so they cannot separate from their diviner healing. Otherwise, life could be in danger

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<sup>200</sup> CCMV07 interview on 11/06/2024

<sup>201</sup> CCMV07/interview on 11/06/2024/CCMV06 interviews on 09/06/2024/PCRM08/PCRM09 interviews on 10/06/2024.

until losing life or experiencing mental problems for the rest of time in our lives. And because we do not trust each other, diviner healer gives us a certain protection against our enemies around us.<sup>202</sup>

Furthermore, the traditional believer said: “I am born in the hands of diviner doctors, and my name was given by diviners. My heart and life are dedicated to the diviner healers, ‘there is nothing to accuse them,’ I have to be ingenious in their healing and religious values, I will die in their healing.”<sup>203</sup> The researcher asked the respondent if she visited only one diviner, and she responded, “No, I visited many diviners, I do not even remember the number, ‘why’ because diviners have different capacities in healing.”<sup>204</sup>

Even though some Christians are the eye-witnesses of healing in the church, one of the respondents (a Christian who visits the diviner) indicated that he never goes or brings his wife, children, or relatives to the church to seek healing, it is better to seek healing in diviner, they are quick to respond to the sickness and problems. To him, healing is not the task of the church.<sup>205</sup>

### **3.2.2 Belonging to the double side?**

Many believers have a double identity as traditional religious members and church members. The respondents indicated that even though they are traditional religious believers, they have been baptized and their marriages were officiated in the catholic church but they

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<sup>202</sup> TBV05/TBV04 Interviews on 07/06/2024/ CCMV07 interview on 11/06/2024

<sup>203</sup> TBV04 Interviews on 07/06/2024

<sup>204</sup> TBV04 Interviews on 07/06/2024

<sup>205</sup> CCMV07 Interview on 11/06/2023

rarely/ nil participated in church activities and attended worship services and after the worship service, they had to go back to apply their religious rites of *guterekera*.<sup>206</sup> Furthermore, the other two respondents indicated that they have been baptized and are full church members but on the other hand visiting a diviner to seek healing could not be a problem for their membership as Christians, ‘when a pastor calls the sick to stand up and pray for them we also stand up.’<sup>207</sup>

The Christian respondent additionally said: “I cannot visit again diviner healer anymore but I can help someone who seeks healing as I did three months ago for my father-in-law who was paralyzed for more than one year and even though I visit diviner healers, I respect God and I always attend worship service at my parish.”<sup>208</sup>

### **3.2.3 Belonging to God’s Promise**

However, the respondents Christians said: “We are the children of the church, God called us to be his church and to heal us, and any time that healing happens we experience God’s grace and mercy. Healing is a sign of God’s protection from demons and other evil spirits. To belong to the church is to be under God’s hand and guidance.”<sup>209</sup> One of the respondents argued that a true Christian dedicates her/her life to God and Jesus.<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>206</sup> TBV04/ TBV05 Interviews on 07/06/2024

<sup>207</sup> CCMV07/interview on 11/06/2024/CCMV06 interviews on 09/06/2024

<sup>208</sup> CCMV06 interviews on 09/06/2024

<sup>209</sup> CCMV07 Interview on 11/06/2023

<sup>210</sup> PCRM09 Interview on 10/06/2024

### **3.2.4 Social Belongings**

Either Christians or traditional believers relate to one another according to their religious affiliation. The four respondents said that Christians share/relate with other fellow church or choir members in social economic life and vice versa to traditional believers share and relate between themselves as traditional believers. They invite and help each other according to their religious membership.<sup>211</sup> The respondent Christians stated Christians cannot share with an unbeliever, or with someone who works devils, light, and darkness and not live together, they indirectly quoted Corinthians 6:14-17.”<sup>212</sup> However, an interviewed Christian man who visits a diviner healer indicated he is free to belong either to his fellow Christians or traditional believers.<sup>213</sup>

## **3.3 Behaving**

Behaving is one of the aspects of appropriation of diviner healing and healing in the church, this aspect will focus on the practices and rites of diviner’s healing and healing in the church and the impact of those practices and rituals on the patients and other people around.

### **3.3.1 Aspect of behaving for diviner healing**

Christians and traditional believers live in the same context and may face the same challenges, but their alternatives may vary according to individual beliefs. Moreover, sickness

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<sup>211</sup> TBV04/TBV05 Interviews on 07/06/2024/ CCMV06 Interview on 09/06/2024/CCMV07 Interview on 11/06/2023

<sup>212</sup> PCRM08/PCRM09 interview on 10/06/2024

<sup>213</sup> CCMV07 Interview on 11/06/2024

is normal but to some, it might be abnormal. The four respondents stated that an unusual sickness makes many Christians and non-Christians first check the diviner before visiting medical doctors.<sup>214</sup> In addition, healing depends on a person's faith, whether in the church or diviner healer."<sup>215</sup>

Diagnosing by throwing grain, using straw, and invoking the ancestor's spirit by dancing and beating drums were confirmed by four respondents. Again, the diviner uses *Igikondo* (no translation) and it is dangerous when the diviner commits a mistake while he is using *igikondo* in his healing practices and *umurinzi* leaves (this tree held Ryangombe while the buffalo attacked him in the northern part of Rwanda).

Application of medicine differs according to diviner rules and sickness, the three respondents indicated that there are medicines to keep under the pillow, medicine to use as a belt, medicine to put into clothes, especially for protection medicine, and others to apply in the crossing paths during night, the first person who will cross the area will take sickness with him. To fail or forget the application is a problem.<sup>216</sup>

Moreover, four respondents of the interview indicated that diviner healing is regarded as natural healing, a diviner may use natural medicines from plants, roots, and leaves mixed with water to drink or sprinkle in the house. He may also apply a mixture of cow burry and plants to use as a lotion on the body. They further indicated that diviner healers grow their own medicine near their houses.<sup>217</sup> Again, one of my respondents, a Christian who visits diviners

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<sup>214</sup> TBV04/TBV05 Interviews on 07/06/2024/ CCMV06 Interview on 09/06/2024/CCMV07 Interview on 11/06/2023

<sup>215</sup> CCMV06 Interview on 09/06/2024

<sup>216</sup> TBV04/TBV05 Interviews on 07/06/2024/ CCMV06 interview on 09/06/2024

<sup>217</sup> CCMV06 interview on 09/06/2024/CCMV07 Interview on 11/06/2024



“affirmed that there is no doubt for diviners healing because they helped me several times, with my own sickness, my daughter who was not getting a husband to marry her because of *uruzingo* (a state of being unloved or lack of chance to marry or do other thing like business) and husband’s mental problem, diviner asked me to apply *Guterekera* (worshiping ancestor) but because I do not know *Guterekera*, I asked my husband’s sister to help me, we used sheep during the ritual ceremony in the night in order to ask ancestors of our family to heal my husband and tell them that we respected, next two days the husband was good.”<sup>218</sup>

Why did you do that as a Christian? To take her husband into diviner healer, she responded, “My husband’s family are traditional religious believers, their whole life is in diviner healers, they influence me, if I couldn't respect them they could do it themselves but later, they can also chase me out of my house.”<sup>219</sup> Again, the other respondent said, “Diviner healing is near to me, and not expensive, and I can sometimes pay them later, they are flexible.”<sup>220</sup>

Additionally, traditional healing has a strong influence on the person who has used it. The two respondents, Christian and traditional believer, said that if someone visits traditional diviner healers and uses their medicine once and does it the second time, the person will always look after them, will trust in them, and do everything they ask him to do.<sup>221</sup> Moreover, respondents indicated that they have to visit the diviner in the early morning, “so why” because they do not want to meet anybody on their way to the diviner healer in order to limit roams

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218 CCMV06 interview on 09/06/2024

219 CCMV06 Interview on 09/06/2024

220 CCMV06 Interview on 09/June 2024

221 TBV05 Interviews on 07/06/2024/CCMV07 Interview on 11/06/2024

from outside and being flown.<sup>222</sup>

### **3.3.2 Aspect of behaving to healing in the church according to ordinary believers**

The four Christian respondents stated healing in the church includes two main practices apart from prayer for the sick and laying hands on the sick, they indicated rituals of purifying and anointing. “The pastor takes the water, prays for it, and gives water to the sick to drink it in order to exorcise evil threats from the internal parts or wash the face, hands, and feet for external sickness or to cast out demons inside and out. It is believed that whoever (sick person) drinks it gets cured. Patients took water to their houses to share it with their relatives and sprinkled it in their houses up to their cowsheds.”<sup>223</sup> In addition, the pastor may say a word of prayer to the sick and apply the oil to anoint the patient by crossing at the front head.”<sup>224</sup>

Prayer for the sick, especially for the possessed ones involves special practices, two Christian respondents who do not visit diviners said: “The Bible has to be used through lay it on the patient in order to fire demons and cast them out. Demons fear the word of God. They also stated that people use some chorus about Christ’s victory and use musical instruments to make demons fear, if the demons do not release the patient, people take more time for fasting, praying, and asking God’s power of the Holy Spirit until the patient becomes better.”<sup>225</sup>

The respondents finally highlighted that after experiencing healing, they take the

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<sup>222</sup> TBV04/TBV05 Interviews on 07/06/2024/CCMV06 interview on 09/06/2024/CCMV07 Interview on 11/06/2024

<sup>223</sup> CCMV06 interview on 09/06/2024/ PCRM08/PCRM09 interviews on 10/06/2024CCMV07 Interview on 11/06/2024

<sup>224</sup> CCMV06 interview on 09/06/2024/ PCRM08/PCRM09 interviews on 10/06/2024CCMV07 Interview on 11/06/2024

<sup>225</sup> PCRM08/PCRM09/ Interview on 10/06/2024

healed person to his/ her family or house to pray for the house and the family members so that no one in the family can possess demons again. They further indicated that if the patient's family members were not church members or Christian believers, many of them might join the church until being baptized and recognized as new church members.<sup>226</sup>

### **3.4 Experiencing**

After discussing believing, belonging, and behaving as aspects of appropriating healing in the church and diviner healing, the last aspect is experiencing. Healing touches people's spiritual aspects. During the process and after healing people might experience diverse inner feelings and emotions (fear, love, happiness, sorrow, gratefulness, sinfulness) concerning God, evil spirits, or diviners and their communities either Christians or non-Christians. Healing has to keep the unity of the body.

#### **3.4.1 Experiencing Aspect in Diviner Dealing**

African traditional priests deal with natural and supernatural problems in their office of healing. Divination rituals and other techniques for healing and restoration to the wholeness of the person in a secret way. The respondents indicated that privacy is important in healing because diviner healing is applied in a secret place. And apart from the diviner, no one else can know what happened to the patient. This made patients comfortable with traditional diviner healing.<sup>227</sup> They also indicated that after diviner healing, all the family and friends have to

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<sup>226</sup> PCRM08/PCRM09/ Interview on 10/06/2024

<sup>227</sup> TBV04/TBV05 Interviews on 07/06/2024

come together to celebrate healing and recovery. It happens that some families give sacrifice thanksgiving to their ancestors or diviners. And after healing, we have peaceful hearts and peaceful sleep.<sup>228</sup>

In contrast, the interviewed Christian who visits diviner healers to look for healing, experiences different emotions and feelings. The Christian respondent said: “Even though I got medicine and healing there is a heart of judgment, and I sometimes do not sleep well because of terrible news/information I heard from the diviner.”<sup>229</sup> The interviewed Christian man argued that diviner healing is a mess to him, there are many conditions, repeating some words before applying for the medicine, especially recalling the names of people who died, and he always has a fear of making mistakes with the medical application. Additionally, the use of medicine belts to go with it everywhere, even in the church, made some Christians who visit diviners feel guilty and sinful.<sup>230</sup> However, people cannot stop visiting diviner healers, they fear that their lives could be in danger.

However, according to interviewed traditional believer women, diviner's healing gives hope for long-term recovery and environmental security through his protection medicines, if diviner healers could not exist, people could not survive, and if visiting is not for revenge, only for a matter of health there is no heart being guilty or sinful.”<sup>231</sup>

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228 TBV04/TBV05 Interviews on 07/06/2024

229 CCMV06 Interview on 06

230 CCMV06 Interview on 06

231 TBV04 interview on 07/06/2024/

### **3.4.2 Experiencing Aspect on Healing in the Church**

The two respondents ordinary Christian who did not visit the diviner pointed out that after healing, people are grateful to God and openly give testimonies about their healing, God's mercy and love to them. To them, healing in the church is a holy healing. It is undoubtful and unquestionable God's salvation to his child. People experience restoration, shalom, and happiness in their lives. And hear some words exhortation words from their brothers and sisters.<sup>232</sup>

However healing in the church has been criticized as unfaithful and unresentful, according to the respondent, healing in the church (specifically for someone who is possessed by demons) is mostly performed in an open space, it does not respect the patient's dignity; whatever happens to the patient, everybody will be an eye-witness; if the patient is crying, or talking with without control, at the end of the day people will be mocking at him, so this made patient to feel shame. Again, some patients experience strong pain after healing because of being beaten during the prayer.<sup>233</sup>

### **3.5 Summary**

This chapter discussed diviner healing and healing in the church. The Believing, Belonging, Behaving, and Experiencing model was used to describe and appropriation those healing. In the believing aspect, diviner healing is perceived as ancestral healing and diviners are messengers of God and ancestors while healing in the church is perceived as divine healing by faith where God and his Son are the agents of healing. It is also salvation healing which

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<sup>232</sup> PCRM08/PCRM09 Interview on 10/06/2024

<sup>233</sup> CCMV06 Interview on 09/06/2024

includes the entire life's spiritual and physical aspects. However, none of this healing is perfect. What is the reaction of pastors to these healings? This question well answered in the next chapter.

Everyone belongs to someone who will provide supernatural protection either to the ancestors of diviner healers or to God of the church who gives healing or finds double belonging, to God and his church at the same time ancestors and diviner healers' pact. Behaving depends on family background, personal faith, and trust, in God's power or *imitongero* power of diviners.

However, people experience different emotions and feelings, happiness, peaceful and grateful hearts but on the other hand, Diviner Healing keeps some of its customers in fear, and if someone fails to apply the medicine, has to restart.

## **Chapter 4: The reaction of Reformed-Presbyterian and Pentecostal churches in Rwanda to Traditional Diviner Healing Practices and their Healing Alternative.**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter explores the reactions of the Presbyterian Church in Rwanda (PCR) and Pentecostal-ADEPR (*Association Des Eglises Pentecoste au Rwanda*) on traditional diviner healing and their healing alternatives. Four pastors were interviewed to support my literature findings, two of those pastors belong to Pentecostal and the other two pastors belong to PCR, at the end of this chapter people will know the position of those churches regarding the issue of health and healing. The Churches in Rwanda play a significant role in healthcare facilities. Binagwaho, Health minister in Rwanda pointed out that church-based organizations own and operate 30% of Rwanda's health facilities and their health facilities serve mostly local communities in rural areas.<sup>234</sup>

### **4.2 The similar reactions of the PCR and ADEPR-Church about diviner healing**

PCR and ADEPR-church are important in this research because they might have some similarities and differences in theologies of healing. The two churches are also operating in most parts of the country, in rural and urban areas churches. It is good to see how they react on diviner healing and how they help their members who seek healing. Their position is important

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<sup>234</sup> John Maurice, "Faith-based organizations bolster health care in Rwanda: Collaboration between the health ministry and religious organizations played a substantial part in the recovery of Rwanda's health system after the 1994 genocide." *World Report*, Vol 386 (July 11, 2015): 123-124. <https://www.thelancet.com/action/showPdf?pii=S0140-6736%2815%2961213-2> (accessed on 17/06/2024).

in this research.

Traditional healing especially of diviner healers has covered health care for many centuries in Africa as well as Rwanda. It has played a major role in saving lives from many sicknesses (natural and supernatural) and diseases in the absence of other healing approaches installed by Western missionaries and colonizers. Though, “long before Christianity arrived, there was a profound religious faith woven into the ordinary activities of the people. This faith has sustained them through wars, famine, sickness, and death for thousands of years.”<sup>235</sup>

#### **4.2.1 Diviner Divination Healing**

Various reactions to diviner healing have been given by different theologians and pastors. Diviner healing has been blamed strikethrough because it does not rely on accurate diagnosis, sometimes neglects the importance of dosage, is often prepared in unhygienic conditions, the knowledge of the medicine is not easily disseminated but kept by those who have it, and above all, diviner healer practices depend on divination which makes it difficult for Christians to access their services.<sup>236</sup> Divination is the hallmark of diviner healing. To bring out the causality of sickness, divination has to be performed for guidance. (2.3.1).

PCR and ADEPR are against diviner healing as it exercises divination, it creates enmity between people. “In divination, participants don’t expect to see that they are at fault. People will travel a long distance to see a neutral diviner. Their preference is not to use a diviner

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<sup>235</sup> Michael C. Kirwen, *The Missionaries and Diviners, Contending Theologies of Christian and African Religions*, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Book, 1987), 3

<sup>236</sup> Peter White, *The concept of diseases and health care in African traditional religion in Ghana*, (1 University of Pretoria, South Africa: Department of Science of Religion and Missiology, Faculty of Theology, 22 July 2015) 6.



from their village whose interpretation might be corrupted by his familiarity with their situation and knowledge of their family dynamics. Divination is always about finding someone to blame.”<sup>237</sup> In Diviner healing spoils social-economic lives, “people are rarely healed and what relief they receive comes at a cost (both economic and relational). They must live in fear and risk being increasingly isolated from neighbours and family who may be out to get them.”<sup>238</sup>

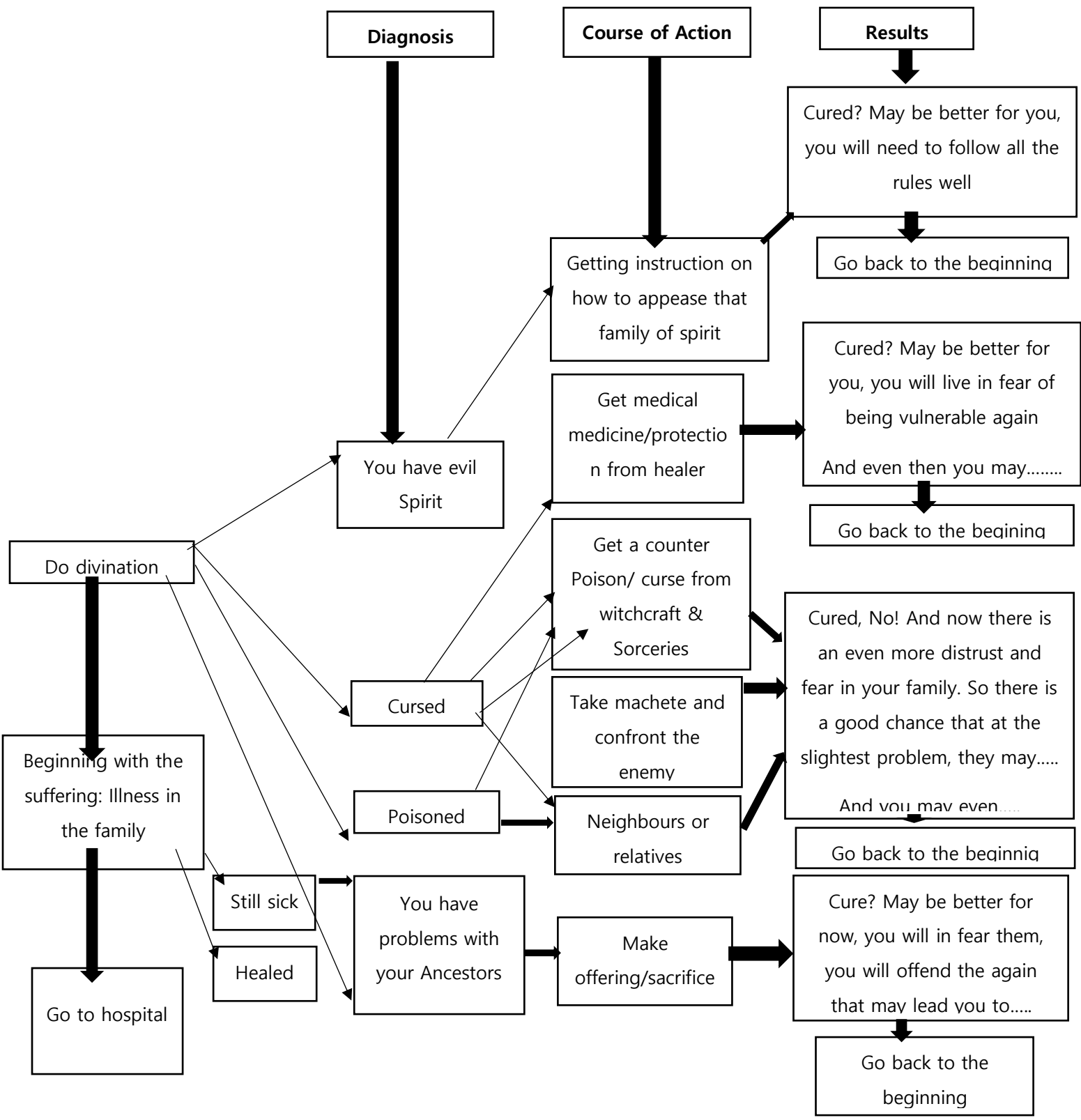
Diviner healing keeps the patient in fear and does not treat the sickness fully but they keep patients for a cycle of being sick for revisiting diviner healers as it is being described in the following tree of divination.<sup>239</sup>

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<sup>237</sup> Alan Howell, “Turning it Beautiful: Divination, Discernment and a Theology of Suffering,” *International Journal of Frontier Missiology*, (2012):129-137.

<sup>238</sup> (Howell, 2012, 138)

<sup>239</sup> (Howell 2012, 140)



To PCR and ADEPR-church, “no one who is blessed goes and does divination, so divination

is exposed as an act of desperation.”<sup>240</sup>

#### 4.2.2 Dark healing

Church leaders reject diviner healing and practices insofar as these involve evil healing practised in dark areas. “As people enter this satanic house they are shuffled into the dark and depressing rooms of spirit possession, curses, and sacrifices.”<sup>241</sup> According to different denominations old religions and diviner healings are evil.<sup>242</sup> Furthermore, African Christians and pastors pointed out that diviner healers are identified as emissaries of Satan.”<sup>243</sup>

Again why do Rwandan Christians still visit diviner healers when it is still considered as evil healing? The interviewed respondents PRP11 and PRP12 are PCR pastors and interviewed respondents PEP10 and PEP13 are pastors in ADEPR-church pointed out many reasons, being influenced by false testimonies from other people, lack of faith in God, and living together among unbelievers, both biomedical approaches and Christianity did not respond properly to the question of health, poverty and healing and longtime of sickness and suffering. Some people converted to Christianity, but at the same time, they still held/kept the traditional beliefs of ATR.<sup>244</sup>

What is the reaction of pastors to this behaviour of their church members? The questions related to their reactions to diviner healing and what they appreciate in that healing,

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<sup>240</sup> Hans Moscicke, “Reconciling the Supernatural Worldviews of the Bible, African Traditional Religion, and African Christianity,” *Reconciling the Supernatural Worldviews, (Missionalia)* 45-2, (2019):127–143, 132

<sup>241</sup> Alan Howell, “Turning it Beautiful: Divination, Discernment and a Theology of Suffering,” *International Journal of Frontier Missiology*, (2012):129-137. 132

<sup>242</sup> Moscicke 2019,133

<sup>243</sup> Moscicke 2019, 131

<sup>244</sup> PRP11, PEP10, PEP13 and PRP12 Interview on13/15/07/2023

three of my interviewees one pastor from PCR and two from ADEPR indicated that they do not recognise anything good and positive in diviner healing because these diviners use other supernatural powers of evil and magic to treat the sickness, and their medicines are given under the guidance of those evil power spirits.<sup>245</sup> ‘To them being a diviner healer is being given such power of healing.’ Moreover, one of the respondents ADEPR stated that diviner healing is demonic healing which is done through the divination of evil spirits of ancestors and imitongero. It is a healing of the dark world and dark power; a Christian who is looking for this healing under the dark power of dark leaders (diviner healers). Dark and night cannot live together. He indirectly referred to 2 Corinthians 6:14.<sup>246</sup> Furthermore, diviner healing is a healing that is used and connected with other special powers, the practitioner must have this power before practising healing.<sup>247</sup> Without the power of healing cannot be done.

#### **4.2.3 False Healing**

The two respondent pastors argued that diviners may lie to patients who have unusual behaviour or mental or psychological problems that they are poisoned or spirits over him or her while the sickness is malaria which is at a high level and spread into the brain, this made many people lose their lives in diviner’s houses.<sup>248</sup> According to three respondent pastors diviner healing is false healing, diviner healers don’t give proper treatment, and they keep their patients always coming back to them and diviners transfer the patient between themselves. People are always and fear, insofar as losing their money, properties (goats, chicken, sheep etc.)

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<sup>245</sup> PRP11, PEP10, PEP13 Interview on 13/07/2024

<sup>246</sup> PEP13 Interview on 15/07/2024

<sup>247</sup> PEP10 interview on 13/07/2024

<sup>248</sup> PEP10 and PEP13 Interview on 13/15/07/2023

and time to diviner healers. Diviner healing spoils people's love and relationships to the extent of creating division, conflict and mistrust among relatives and neighbours by pointing out that the one who 'sends evil spirit or give poisons it is your north or south neighbour while there is your parents or brothers.'<sup>249</sup> Respondent pastors further argued that diviner healing is sinful healing to the extent of raping women who visit them.<sup>250</sup>

Additionally, the respondent interviewed pastor in PCR said" There is no reason to visit diviner, it is false beliefs, heresy and a poor mindset because most of the complications of loss of sight, loss of blood, persistent headaches, stomach aches and diarrhoea, paralysis, etc. were usually believed to be caused by witchcraft, sorceries or being poisoned, medical service treat them; if it is spiritual problem church is there to help.<sup>251</sup> However, according to the interviewed respondent pastor in PCR, pointed out that he cannot condemn diviner healers, diviner healing was a part of self-reliant to find solutions for the sicknesses and diseases of people of their time but today many sicknesses can be detected by medical doctors, like epilepsy which was considered an evil spirit sickness and *Urushwima* (cancer of the liver; Hepatic C) now can be cured by medical doctors.<sup>252</sup>

To the question related to church leaders' reaction to their members who visit diviners, firstly, the church members who visit diviners should be under church discipline until repentance and confirmation that the person is no longer visiting diviners.<sup>253</sup> However, the respondent PCR pastor indicated that the only thing to do with the church member who visited diviner healers is to take enough time for different moments so that pastor can understand well

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<sup>249</sup> PRP11, PEP10, PEP13 and PRP12 Interview on 13/15/07/2023

<sup>250</sup> PEP10, PRP11 and PEP13 Interviews on 13/15/07/2023

<sup>251</sup> PRP11 Interview on 04/07/2024

<sup>252</sup> PRP12 Interview on 13 and 15/07/2023

<sup>253</sup> PEP10, PRP11 and PEP13 Interviews on 13/15/07/2023

his or her reasons for visiting diviners and know how he can help the person to discern his sickness properly.<sup>254</sup>

#### **4.4 Healing alternatives of PCR and ADEPR-church**

Anywhere when there is a call for healing in Africa, an uncountable number of people will respond positively to the call either biomedical healing, traditional healing or church announcement about healing. These are the alternatives of healing for PCR and ADEPR-church, healing in the church, pastoral care healing, herbalist and biomedical healing approach.

##### **4.4.1 Healing in the church**

Healing in the church was before regarded as proselytism. Rugwiji, a South African theologian indicated that healing in the Pentecostal and AICs churches designate in its broadest sense plays a pivotal role, informing doctrine, pastoral practice and the recruitment of members.<sup>255</sup> He further argued that the alleged failure of the missionary churches to provide therapeutic solutions to ailments affecting their congregants, believers from other denominations and non-believers, most of them would be seeking prophetic annunciation and healing in Pentecostal churches.”<sup>256</sup>

When Jesus commissioned the disciples to the works of the kingdom, healing and deliverance were part of the package. “He told them to proclaim the Kingdom, heal the sick and cast out demons. These were the foundation stones of the church that had to move the

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<sup>254</sup> PRP12 Interview on 13 and 15/07/2023

<sup>255</sup> Temba Rugwiji, “Faith-based healing and African traditional medicine in Zimbabwe: A postcolonial perspective,” *Theologia Viatorum*, (13 Dec. 2019): 1-10.

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.*, 9

whole building. God intended the practice of healing and deliverance to be the foundational for the whole of the church for the whole of time.”<sup>257</sup>

Healing in the PCR and ADEPR is believed to be freedom from any sickness and misfortune. “Healing in the church is understood as liberation from conditions that inhibit people’s attainment of full humanity and the restoration of life. Furthermore, Africans view health as wholeness, the unity of the natural and the supernatural.<sup>258</sup> ‘Healing from illness is an essential part of human existence’ and it is ‘experienced quite naturally as God’s deed.’<sup>259</sup> However, being healed does not mean not being saved.

It is emphasized and accepted that God is the healer of his people according to the bible.<sup>260</sup> Here the name of Jesus is being used without some magical tones to cast out demons, heal the sick protect the endangered and prosper the needy....Healings, exorcisms and protections demonstrate the efficacy of prayer and the efficacy gives credibility to the Gospel. The name of JESUS is healing, caring and comforting as well.<sup>261</sup> Prayer for the sick has become a remarkable request and an important point in each worship service in PCR and Pentecostal church today, it also happens that an individual patient visits the pastor’s office for the matter of prayer or invites him to his house for healing prayer. “Faith healing is the quest

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<sup>257</sup> Peter Horrobin, *Healing Through Deliverance: The Foundation and the Practice of Deliverance Ministry*, (Grand Rapids and Michigan: Chosen, 2008), 29.

<sup>258</sup> Cephas N. Omenyo, “New Wine in an Old Wine Bottle? Charismatic Healing in the Mainline Churches in Ghana,” in *Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Healing*, Brown, Candy Gunther, ed. (Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 2011.)

238, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/tukampen/detail.action?docID=3053985>. (accessed on 2024-06-18).

<sup>259</sup> David T. Adamo, “I Am the LORD your Healer’ Exodus 15:26: Healing in the Old Testament and the African context”, *In die Skriflig / In Luce Verbi*, (27 May 2021):1-8

<sup>260</sup> Ibid., 3

<sup>261</sup> John s. Mbiti, *Bible and Theology in African Christianity*, (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1986), 76.

for health and well-being.<sup>262</sup> According to Adrio Konig, healing faith is divine healing.<sup>263</sup> Moreover, Divine healing is a sign that God is “shedding forth” the power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>264</sup>

The three interviewed pastors confirmed that people come to the church to seek healing, it is important to their health, and their spiritual life. The prayer for the sick gives hope and comfort. Through the words in prayer, the pastor provides spiritual and psychological security.<sup>265</sup> The two respondent pastors indicate that there is a special prayer for someone who is possessed-demons that speak in the patient.<sup>266</sup>

Occasionally, it becomes controvertible to discern whether the problem is demon-possession, trauma, mental problem or depression because those patients have similar signs of abnormal behaviour, and lack of control of the patient.<sup>267</sup> We can ask the patient’s relatives or neighbours about his historical background in those confusions.<sup>268</sup> Again, the interviewed respondent pastor in PCR stated that the church should work hand in hand with other medical practitioners or counsellors to give effective support.<sup>269</sup>

In addition, two of the respondents indicated that there is also another special prayer for someone who applied for medical medicine but did not get remedial of the pain and sickness. The respondent pastor said: “Before helping, I have to ask the patient if he visited medical

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<sup>262</sup> Ezra Chitando and Nontando Hadebe, eds. *In the Name of Jesus!: Healing in the Age of HIV*, (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2009), 5.

<sup>263</sup> Adrio Konig, “Healing as an intergral Part of Salvation,” in *Healing in the Name of God*, Peter Gr de Villier, ed. (Pritoria: C. B Powell Bible Center, 1986), 79.

<sup>264</sup> Heather D. Curtis, “The Global Character of Nineteenth-Century Divine Healing,” in *Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Healing*, Brown, Candy Gunther, ed. (Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 2011.) 31.

<sup>265</sup> PEP10, PRP11, PRP12 and PEP13 Interviews 13/15on /07/2023

<sup>266</sup> PEP10, PEP13 Interviews on 13/15/07/2023

<sup>267</sup> PRP12 interview on 13,15/07/2024

<sup>268</sup> PEP10 interview on 13/15/07/2023

<sup>269</sup> PRP12 interview on 13,15/07/2024



doctors and applied properly medicines, if he did I can advise him or her to visit a reference hospital, if they do not also help the patient then I take time to pray for him or her until getting well. We prayed for the man who was sick for a long time, and he got and brought a thanksgiving of a cow in the church.”<sup>270</sup> The other respondent argued in this words: “The director of the school brought, a young lady student, who was sick for a long time, visited different hospitals but sickness and strong pain is still, we prayed for the girl until she got better and went back home safely and happily.”<sup>271</sup>

However, the question related to some weaknesses in healing in the church, the respondent pastors indicated that in Pentecostal healing rooms, patients might suffer more at the church, and some may die because of staying there long time, without eating or drinking anything. Because of lacking skills and knowledge (gifted groups) to discern whether the sickness is for prayer or biomedical treatment, the patient loses energy and time for his or her treatment.<sup>272</sup> Moreover, some prayerful (the group of gifted) men and women sometimes torture (by beating and scratching) the sick while they believe that they are torturing demons; this makes the patient suffer more.<sup>273</sup> Furthermore, some so-called gifted healers rape sick women and girls while they are praying for them. Additionally, pastors, gifted healers and pastors transformed healing ministry into a business which results in false and fake healing.<sup>274</sup> The pastors/church leaders should be always around those who are gifted spiritual leaders for guidance, and the churches should conduct workshops and training about healing in the

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<sup>270</sup> PRP11 interview on 04/07/2024

<sup>271</sup> PEP10 interview on 13/07/2024

<sup>272</sup> PEP10/PRP11 interview on 04,13/07/2024

<sup>273</sup> PEP11 interview on 04/07/2024

<sup>274</sup> PEP13 interview on 15/07/2024

church.<sup>275</sup> Healing in the church should respect a person's dignity and identity.

#### 4.4.2 Pastoral Care Healing Alternative According to PCR and ADEPR

In the line of Magezi and others, I believe there is a need to construct an applicable theological theory that is relevant and addresses Rwandan Christians' life challenges of health, sickness, and healing according to the Rwandan context. "Pastoral care healing, a theological scientific tool which addresses God's presence in believers' suffering through the Holy Spirit has to be presented as an encouraging and comforting reality that should enable Christians to cope with their suffering and sicknesses."<sup>276</sup>

Pastoral care refers to the spiritual care perspective in the field of helping and healing professions, pastoral care (*cura animarum*) should stick to the notion of 'soul care to avoid superfluous.<sup>277</sup> The Greek word *therapeia* with the verb *therapeuo*, translated as to heal, cure or restore to health, also refers to service rendered by one to another.<sup>278</sup> In addition, the combination of 'soul' (Hebrew *nēphēsh*; Septuagint: *psuchē*; Latin: *anima*), care and cure captures the core identity of caregiving and can be rendered as the basic proposition for a Christian approach to caregiving, which keeps Christian identity clear.<sup>279</sup> Theologically, healing refers to the event of being transformed from a condition of death into a condition of

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<sup>275</sup> PEP13 interview on 15/07/2024

<sup>276</sup> Vhumani Magezi, and Christopher Magezi, "Pastoral Care and Healing in Africa: Towards an Adamic Christological Practical Theology Imagination for Pastoral Healing," *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies*, (2016):1-12.

<sup>277</sup> Vhumani Magezi, "Positioning care as 'Being with the Other' within a Cross-cultural Context: Opportunities and Challenges of Pastoral Care Provision Amongst People from Diverse Cultures," *Verbum et Ecclesia*, (2020): 1-9

<sup>278</sup> Vhumani Magezi, "Community healing and the role of pastoral care of the ill and suffering in Africa," *In die Skriflig* 40(3) (2006): 505-521, 507

<sup>279</sup> Magezi, 2020, 4

life. “This new condition is an indication of a new state of being: being accepted unconditionally by grace and being restored into a new relationship with God, a relationship of peace, reconciliation and forgiveness.”<sup>280</sup> Pastoral care healing is a holistic movement from suffering and illness to a state of well-being and meaning that includes both physical and spiritual restoration in the sense of soul care.<sup>281</sup>

Soul care, within the Christian tradition, is linked to the notion of shepherding. The term ‘pastoral’ is derived from the Latin term *pascere* which means ‘to feed’. Because of this Latin root, the adjective ‘pastoral’ suggests the art and skill of feeding or caring for the wellness of others, especially those who need help most.<sup>282</sup> Soul healing in pastoral care thus refers to pastoral acts and intentions that emanate from salvation. Healing therefore is that which enables us to be fully human in relation to our society, our environment and ourselves.<sup>283</sup>

It is important to design teachings on the natural causes of illness, for example washing hands could limit the popular tendency to blame illnesses on others. “Christians need to be taught scientific explanations to help them understand the nature of diseases, but these explanations must be included in a broader biblical understanding of the ways God works in his creation. Misfortunes are opportunities for open dialogue, and for helping people to deal with their problems in Christian ways.”<sup>284</sup>

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<sup>280</sup> Vhumani Magezi, “Community Healing and the Role of Pastoral Care of the ill and Suffering in Africa,” In *die Skriflig* 40(3) (2006): 505-521,

<sup>281</sup> John S. Klaasen, “African Christianity and healing: Implications for pastoral care,” *In die Skriflig / In Luce Verbi*, (20 Apr. 2023): 1-7, 5

<sup>282</sup> Vhumani Magezi, “Positioning care as ‘being with the other’ within a cross-cultural context: Opportunities and challenges of pastoral care provision amongst people from diverse cultures,” *Verbum et Ecclesia*, (2020): 1-9

<sup>283</sup> Magezi 2006, 508

<sup>284</sup> Alan Howell, “Turning it Beautiful: Divination, Discernment and a Theology of Suffering,” *International Journal of Frontier Missiology*,

Briefly; in pastoral care, the pastor can assist a patient in making the connection with the person and her memories, pain and anxiety at times with unspeakable suffering and without taking over the suffering.<sup>285</sup> The interviewed respondent pastor argued that conversation, giving attention and listening to the patient can help to understand himself and the sickness. Again, even though sometimes prayer, conversation and listening cannot remove physical sickness and pain but they can help in the patient's mindset and belief to build up his faith and trust in spiritual way.<sup>286</sup>

#### **4.4.3 Herbalist healing: PCR and ADEPR Alternative**

Pastors in Rwanda appreciate and prefer herbalists' healing as one of the alternatives to healthcare. Herbalists' healing is one of traditional healing in Rwanda which is not associated with any power or divination practices. Parrinder argued that herbalists are the men of trees with a wide knowledge of the curative properties of herbs, plants, bark, leaves and roots. They are only the pharmacists.<sup>287</sup> "An herbalist is a harmless man and everyone praises his medicine, he cures the sick and warns of impending danger,"<sup>288</sup> There is so much trust in these medicines in the Rwandan community. Herbalists are well known and recognizable by the government, people including Christians feel free to visit them in case of sickness. It seems to sound better when an herbalist is a Christian. He is trusted by many people in Rwanda.

Traditional medicine (herbal medicine) is widely used in Rwanda. Sick people are as likely to consult traditional practitioners as their modern healthcare providers, depending on

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<sup>285</sup> Gijsbert van den Brink, *Pastoral Care in Cooperation with Professionals in the Trauma-Coping Process*, (Pasadena: Mokolo University Press, 2023), 7.

<sup>286</sup> RPR11/PRP12 Interview on 13,15/07/2024

<sup>287</sup> Parrinder 1954, 105

<sup>288</sup> Mbiti 1969, 168

the nature of the problem, are trying to organize traditional medical practitioners into associations.<sup>289</sup> Mbiti further indicated that an herbalist is a friend of the community with knowledge of the medical values, and quality in the use of different herbs, leaves, roots fruits, barks, grasses, and various objects like minerals, dead insects, bones, feathers, powders, smoke from different objects, such as the excreta of animals and insects, shell eggs, etc.<sup>290</sup>

During a personal interview discussion, a pastor at a Presbyterian Church in Rwanda said that herbalist healing is natural healing from plants, he further indicated that he has already planted different medicine trees near the church when there is a need for someone who is sick, he takes some leaves or roots to give to the patient otherwise he can take him to medical doctors to help him.<sup>291</sup> The interviewed pastors at the Pentecostal Church in Rwanda also confirmed that *ubuvuzi gakondo* (herbalist healing) is commonly helpful and used freely by everybody, either Christian or non-Christian, there is no secrecy in herbalist healing, he sometimes recommends many people to apply it.<sup>292</sup> Two respondents stated that *Ubuwuzi gakondo* was being applied before Western medical services and is being applied till today. It is registered and recognized in the government health systems.<sup>293</sup> In the Rwandan context, people can learn to apply herbal medicines from their relatives or friends. This make herbalist healing be regarded as natural healing based on natural knowledge. Though, it does no invoke any other spiritual power.

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<sup>289</sup> Republic of Rwanda. "Overview of the Health System in Rwanda," *Chapter 2* (2001):9-16. 11 <https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/SPA3/02Chapter2.pdf> (Accessed 20/05/2024)

<sup>290</sup> (Mbiti, 1969, 167)

<sup>291</sup> PRP09 personal interview on 14/05/2023

<sup>292</sup> PEP10 Interview on 13/07/2023

<sup>293</sup> PEP12 Interview on 13,15/07/2023/PEP13 Interview on 13/07/2023

#### 4.4.4 Medical Approach as PCR and ADEPR alternative

Biomedical services might cover most of the healthcare services in Rwanda. All Rwandans either Christians or non-Christians are supposed to use medical facilities. “Offering medical care for those who are ill turned out to be one of the avenues to successful evangelism and medical practices always had an impact on the lives of those whom they encountered.”<sup>294</sup> Biomedical medicine brought to Africa as well as Rwanda major technological advances and innovations that have changed the health status and Survival prospects of the continent's inhabitants.<sup>295</sup>

The medical approach plays its role, especially in physical, psychological and mental health problems. “The medical profession will generally define someone as being sick when there is a bodily malfunction. It seeks either to control or cure the symptoms by treating what is believed to be the cause through prescribing medication or surgical operation.”<sup>296</sup> Each citizen, Christian and non-Christian must have either government or private insurance for health facilities in Rwanda.

Apart from evangelizing the Gospel of salvation offered by God in Jesus Christ, the Presbyterian mission includes contributing to the well-being of Rwandans through testimonial social work and health facilities, ADEPR-Church’s mission includes promoting social welfare and focus on health services. The PCR established two district hospitals and six health centers<sup>297</sup> while ADEPR-Church owns one district hospital and two health centers for

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<sup>294</sup> Van den Bosch-Heij, *Spirit and Healing in Africa*, 53

<sup>295</sup> Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, “Collaborating with Traditional Healers for HIV Prevention and Care in Sub-Saharan Africa: Suggestions for Programme Managers and Field Workers”, *UNAIDS Best Practice Collection*, (November 2006)13

<sup>296</sup> Peter Horrobin, *Healing Through Deliverance: The Foundation and the Practice of Deliverance Ministry*, (Grand Rapids and Michigan: Chosen, 2008), 29.

<sup>297</sup> Presbyterian Church in Rwanda, “La Carte des Oeuvre de l’ EPR” November 2022

biomedical health facilities for Christians and non-Christians. PCR and ADEPR-Church contribute much financially for public insurance for poor families of their church members or non-members. This indicates their position on healthcare and healing.

For emotional and mental health, “there is a condition that produces emotional, behavioral or mental symptoms for which a medical practitioner would generally prefer people to a psychologist or a psychiatrist for further diagnosis and treatment.”<sup>298</sup> In this case, there is nothing wrong with the physical body but a dislocation between physical and emotional or mental health. When physical sickness and mental or psychological health have been treated with prescribed medication for such conditions, patients are able to receive healing at the deepest level of their being to the extent of experiencing full restoration in the spirit, soul and body is the result.<sup>299</sup> Additionally, churches’ hospitals have pastors to bring their psychological or spiritual contribution to patients and co-workers.

According to one of the respondents the church should cooperate with medical doctors to address natural sickness, malfunction of the body caused by bacteria, viruses whereas pastors should address spiritual aspect etc.”<sup>300</sup> Medical service is very crucial to the patient as the respondents affirmed in these words, “I have to ask the patient if he/she has visited medical doctors, if not, I advise and help him/her to check first the medical without delaying.”<sup>301</sup>

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<https://epr.rw/about-us/> (accessed on 13/07/2024)

<sup>298</sup> Peter Horrobin, *Healing Through Deliverance: The Foundation and the Practice of Deliverance Ministry*, (Grand Rapids and Michigan: Chosen, 2008), 30.

<sup>299</sup> Ibid. 32

<sup>300</sup> PEP10 interview on 13/07/2024/PRP12 interviews on 13,15/07/2024

<sup>301</sup> PRP12 interview on 04/07/2024

#### **4.5 Differences and Particularities of Healing Alternatives of PCR and ADEPER**

While there are many common healing alternatives of PCR and ADEPR, there are also particularities which are going to be described as follows.

##### **4.5.1 Particular Healing Alternativeness of PCR and His Ethical Approach to Healing**

PCR is one of the protestant Rwandan churches and a member church of the United Evangelical Mission organization which encloses Asian, African and European churches, especially German churches.<sup>302</sup> The PCR hosted a UEM workshop about healing from, 5<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> March 2020 at Kibuye/Rwanda in Bethany Hotel of PCR. Nine articles have been stated to indicate the positions and alternatives for healing of the UEM members especially PCR who hosted the meeting.

The PCR advises people as well as its members to visit medical doctors to help them in case of sickness. The church declared firstly that “Each member is responsible for his/her life. The right remedial approach should be done by medical doctors. While we pray for people’s healing and deliverance, we also maintain and teach that each one is responsible for working for one’s living, maintaining a healthy lifestyle, and seeking medical care when ill.”<sup>303</sup>

##### **4.5.1.2 Scriptural Healing According to PCR**

According to PCR, healing practices should be based on the word of God. “The parishes’ practices on healing must be based on Scripture. The preaching and the teaching of

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<sup>302</sup> <https://www.vemission.org/en/>

<sup>303</sup> United Evangelical Mission (UEM), “The Ministry of Healing and Deliverance in the Context of UEM. *Closing Document of a Workshop Held in Kibuye/Rwanda, (5-9 March 2020)* 1-7.



the Word are central, even if we take people's need for prayer very seriously."<sup>304</sup> The word of God and bible teachings must have a central place in the church as well as healing practices, "the Scripture must occupy a central place in the liturgy and in every practice of the Presbyterian Church in Rwanda,"<sup>305</sup> The Presbyterian Church in Rwanda gives the Scripture a high-value place in most of all activities and worship services where Christ is at the center. Moreover, the interpretations of Scripture which do not find their center in Jesus as Savior, or as Destroyer of evil, are wrong applications of Scripture.<sup>306</sup>

To PCR through the proclamation of the word of God, healing is by faith and God's grace. Christ alone, grace alone, faith alone: "The healing and deliverance ministry of PCR is rooted in the example, the calling and authority of Jesus Christ which we have received, and not in our own spiritual power. We have a responsibility to maintain our spiritual lives, to pray, to fast, to be connected to God, and to live according to God's will, but at the end of the day, whatever happens in terms of healing and deliverance is the grace of God."<sup>307</sup> Whether healing happens or not it is God's grace, there should not be much individual influence.

According to PCR in "Sunday sermons and congregational groups we teach about the power of faith and prayer, answers to prayer, gifts of the Spirit, and the practice of healing and deliverance. We stress that our Sunday sermons must take up people's concrete questions and needs."<sup>308</sup> Sunday services, the problems of illness and the need for healing should be taken

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<sup>304</sup> United Evangelical Mission (UEM), "The Ministry of Healing and Deliverance in the Context of UEM. *Closing Document of a Workshop Held in Kibuye/Rwanda*, (5-9 March 2020) 1-7.

<sup>305</sup> Presbyterian Church in Rwanda, *Worship Services Liturgy*, (Kigali: Reclapthe Ltd, 2014), 19.

<sup>306</sup> Louis F. Were, *The Moral Purpose of Prophecy*, (Victoria, Australia: Melbourne press, 1949) 72.

<sup>307</sup> United Evangelical Mission (UEM), "The Ministry of Healing and Deliverance in the Context of UEM. *Closing Document of a Workshop Held in Kibuye/Rwanda*, (5-9 March 2020) 1-7.

<sup>308</sup> United Evangelical Mission (UEM), "The Ministry of Healing and Deliverance in the

into account during church prayers.

#### **4.5.1.2 Priesthood of all Believers in Healing**

While the Pentecostal church focuses on the gifted group, the PCR emphasizes the priesthood healing which involves the whole congregation. “The priesthood of all believers is central to our understanding and practice of the healing and deliverance ministry. All members have been called into and empowered by the Holy Spirit for this ministry, even if the gifts are different. This ministry does not only belong to pastors, lay leaders, special groups or especially gifted individuals. It is a ministry of and for the whole congregation.”<sup>309</sup>

While healing ministry is crucial/the foremost to ADEPR- Church, to the PCR is one part of evangelism. “The main aim of evangelism in PCR is to call people to become faithful followers of Christ. The ministry of healing and deliverance is part and parcel of this mission, but the ultimate aim is discipleship, not only healing and deliverance. Discipleship includes, among others, covenants and practices.”<sup>310</sup> To PCR, healing is necessary but discipleship is the crucial mission of the church. So in discipleship church can practice healing. However, On the other hand, there is a strong belief in the possibilities of healing in the church. “In the spiritual theology of possibilities, the Christians were promised and prophesized to get everything including healing from Christ simply by praying and fasting without doing any other thing.”<sup>311</sup>

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Context of UEM. *Closing Document of a Workshop Held in Kibuye/Rwanda*, (5-9 March 2020) 1-7.

<sup>309</sup> United Evangelical Mission (UEM), “The Ministry of Healing and Deliverance in the Context of UEM Closing Document of a Workshop Held in Kibuye/Rwanda, 5-9 March 2020.” (2020) 1-7

<sup>310</sup> United Evangelical Mission (UEM), “The Ministry of Healing and Deliverance in the Context of UEM. *Closing Document of a Workshop Held in Kibuye/Rwanda*, (5-9 March 2020) 1-7.

<sup>311</sup> Tharcisse Gatwa, *God in Public Domain: Life Giver, Protector or Indifferent Sleeper During the Rwandan Tragedies*. (In Exchange Journal of Missiological and Ecumenical Research. N 0 43,

#### 4.5.2 Particular Healing Alternativeness of ADEPR-Church

The phenomena of healing are considered as the driving force behind the Pentecostal growth worldwide especially where there is a lack of medical alternatives. “Healing manifests as deliverance from disease, physical ailments and demonic influence but is also radically transforming communities away from social disorders like unemployment, alcoholism, domestic strife, hatred and racism. Healing is seen as a gift of love from God to then be paid forward in acts of love.”<sup>312</sup> It can be said that Pentecostalism emphasizes the experience of the Holy Spirit as the power which helps the believer to overcome evil forces and indicates their new birth or born-again status. The born-again person is expected to exercise strict morality, which includes avoiding adultery, drinking alcohol, and smoking cigarettes, among other things.<sup>313</sup>

The Pentecostals refer to prophet-healing churches or spiritual churches that emphasize spiritual power and the working of gifts of the Holy Spirit in the church.<sup>314</sup> Pentecostals view the Christian life as a power encounter and a spiritual battle, they caution their members to be wary and test the spirits.<sup>315</sup> They focus on personal encounters with God through the Spirit and claim to be healing the sick and delivering them from the powers of the

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2014).

<sup>312</sup> Christopher Cat, “Four Pentecostal Views on Healing.” *Journal of Contemporary Ministry*, No 3(2017): 106-118.

<sup>313</sup> Ogbukalu U. “African Christianity,” *An African Story, Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa* Volume 13, No.2, (2005) 369-392. [https://jsd-africa.com/Jsda/V13No2\\_Spring2011\\_B/PDF/BOOK%20REVIEW%20-%20African%20Christianity%20Kalu\\_.pdf](https://jsd-africa.com/Jsda/V13No2_Spring2011_B/PDF/BOOK%20REVIEW%20-%20African%20Christianity%20Kalu_.pdf)

<sup>314</sup> Allan H. Anderson, *African Reformation, African Initiative Christianity in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, (Asmara: Africa World Press, Inc, 2001), 17, 18.

<sup>315</sup> Wilhelmina J. Kalu, Nimi Wariboko, and Toyin Falola, eds., *African Pentecostalism: Global Discourses, Migrations, Exchanges and Connections*, (Eritrea: Africa World Press, 2010), 41.

devil or evil spirits. Each believer is empowered through the Holy Spirit's baptism to overcome life's ills.”<sup>316</sup>

The seventh article of the ADEPR-Church Statute is about doctrine says: “the church believes in the baptism of the Holy Spirit, as a member of the Holy Trinity; believes in all gifts of the Holy Spirit, His leadership in the works of the Church as outlined in the New Testament and believes that God miraculously can heal sickness, that is to say, healing through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross.”<sup>317</sup> Additionally, article twelve indicates that he or she ceases to comply with the doctrine, values, Statutes and regulations of the ADEPR Church and consequently is dismissed by the competent authority of the ADEPR Church.<sup>318</sup>

#### **4.5.2.1 Healing Methods in Pentecost**

Many Pentecostal churches have special places for prayer variously referred to as “Mercy-land,” ‘place of refuge,’ ‘Garden,’ etc. which they have to apply different methods.<sup>319</sup> There are three methods in Pentecostal healing practices, firstly for the unbeliever's healing is to preach the Gospel of Christ to them and convince them that God is a God of love (Mark 16:15-20), secondly, healing for the church member is done through prayers of elders and the anointing with the oil. If there is a sin, it has to be confessed. (James 5:14-18), the last is healing by the gifted one of the Holy Spirit, this gift of healing is given by the Lord to one of His

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<sup>316</sup> Anderson, *African Reformation*, 171,172.

<sup>317</sup> ADEPR Church, “Statutes of the Pentecostal Church of Rwanda – ADEPR Church”, *Official Gazette n° Special of 03/03/2022*, 32. <https://archive.gazettes.africa/archive/rw/2022/rw-government-gazette-dated-2022-03-03-no-special.pdf> (accessed on 21/07/2024)

<sup>318</sup> ADEPR Church, “Statutes of the Pentecostal Church of Rwanda – ADEPR Church,” *Official Gazette n° Special of 03/03/2022*, 25. <https://archive.gazettes.africa/archive/rw/2022/rw-government-gazette-dated-2022-03-03-no-special.pdf> (accessed on 21/07/2024)

<sup>319</sup> Wilhelmina J. Kalu, Nimi Wariboko, and Toyin Falola, eds., *African Pentecostalism: Global Discourses, Migrations, Exchanges and Connections* (Eritrea: Africa World Press, 2010), 20.

servants to hand on to anyone who He may desire to heal for some purpose of his own.<sup>320</sup> In the Rwandan context, the gifted ones are much more important when there is unusual or supernatural sickness for the person who is possessed by demons or other evil spirits.

#### 4.5.2.2 Operation of Healing Gifts

To ADEPR-Church, the laying hand on the sick is a gift and an act of faith for the people's patient (Mark 2:5), faith of the sick alone (Matt. 9:22), faith for the minister or the gifted alone in special cases of coma or unconsciousness, and the combined faith of the sufferer and the minister (Matt 9:28, 29).<sup>321</sup> Faith is a double side of the coin in Pentecostal healing. "There is a double act of faith in the operation of these particular gifts. The one has to receive the gift from God and the sick person has to receive it from the one sent to hand it on."<sup>322</sup>

The Gifts of the Holy Spirit are for supernatural healing of diseases and infirmities without natural means of any sort. It is divine healing. It is a miraculous manifestation of the Spirit for the banishment of all human ills whether organic functional or nervous, acute or chronic.<sup>323</sup> However, the Gifts of healing should not be confused with medical or surgical manipulative or scientific ability. Scientific Medicine and surgery are the world's scientific way, God's way, the only revealed in the word, Scripture. These two ways are entirely opposed God has no second best but it is entirely of the educated world.<sup>324</sup>

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<sup>320</sup> C.L Park, "The Gifts of Healing," in *Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies*, William K. Kay and Anne E. Dyer, eds. (London: SCM Press, 2004), 69.

<sup>321</sup> H. Horton, "The Gifts of the Spirits," in *Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies*, William K. Kay and Anne E. Dyer, eds. (London: SCM Press, 2004), 62, 63.

<sup>322</sup> C.L Park, "The Gifts of Healing," 70

<sup>323</sup> Horton The Gifts of the Spirits, 60.

<sup>324</sup> Ibid., 62

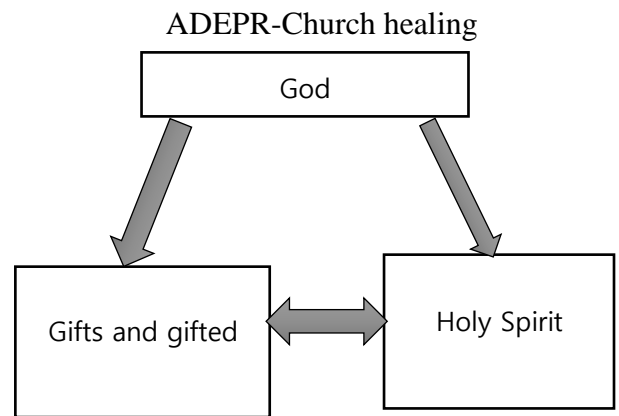
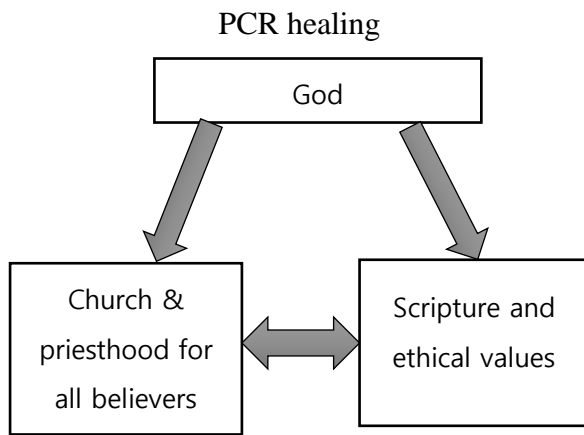
However, one of the interviewed respondents in ADEPR-church indicated that the church is not a hospital and pastors are not medical doctors, patients have to go to hospitals to get effective healthcare for their sickness.<sup>325</sup>

#### **4.6. Summary**

This chapter has discussed much more about PRC and ADEPR-Churches' reactions to traditional diviner healing and their healing alternatives. Diviner healing has been criticized for being built on divination to find someone to blame or to attribute the sickness. This indicates a lack of faith, love and trust even among Christians. However, what are the biblical perspectives about love and trust among believers? If Christianity did not respond properly to health and sicknesses, how can pastors in Rwanda exercise pastoral ministry-healing effectively in the Rwandan context to help the church community? It has been indicated that diviner healing keeps their customers on the cycle of going and coming, with some fear in their clients. How can the church create stability within the Christian life? However, divine healing has contributed much to saving people's lives but today it is not accurate since biomedical services have appropriate systems to treat sickness and prescribe medicines for the sickness while with psychological and spiritual problems church is always to help within those crises, but Christians still visit diviners. What can Rwandan church leaders and Christians learn from a Reformed perspective about healing?

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<sup>325</sup> PEP10 Interview on 13/07/2024



## CHAPTER 5

### **Biblical and theological reformed perspectives on healing**

#### **5.0 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter discussed biblical and theological Reformed perspectives on healing. The aim is to answer some questions related to healing which is a controversial subject among Rwandans, especially Christians. Jean Patrick Nkolo Fanga, a theologian pastor in Cameroon said that in case of illness, African Christians can have recourse at the same time to the hospital, traditional rituals and Christian rites. In distressing situations, they tend to point to the sorcerer as guilty, even if they are Christians engaged in a Church ministry.<sup>326</sup>

As we have seen in the last chapter diviner healing creates misunderstanding among the church leaders and Christians who seek healing from traditional diviner healers. It also raises the question of how pastors can do pastoral ministry and respond effectively to the contextual matter of Christians who seek therapy.

Diviner healing always applies holistic healing but is accused of using divination which may sometimes needed to point out someone to blame or attribute the sickness which creates hatred and mistrust among the relatives and neighbours, what is the biblical and theological response to these problems of hostility and mistrust between Christians? It is indicated that diviner healing was a part of traditional cultural healing, but what can be Christianized within conventional therapeutic healing based on Rwandan culture? Once more,

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<sup>326</sup> Jean Patrick Nkolo Fanga, "L'Exercice du Ministère Pastoral dans les Églises d'Afrique Nouveaux Défis et Perspectives." *Études Théologiques Et Religieuses* 94e année, (2019) 565-580.



what is holistic healing according to the Christian faith? These questions will be taken into account within this chapter.

## 5.1 Reformed Theological Perspectives on Healing

Healing plays a major role in African Christianity. All the different strands of African Christianity accord space to healing.<sup>327</sup> Van den Bosch-Heij indicated that the accepted way to speak about health and healing in the mission of the church should be related to God and Christ as the healer according to the Bible.<sup>328</sup> Christian soteriologies presents a “full gospel” of the salvific gifts wrought by Jesus the Savior.<sup>329</sup> The salvation that is offered to us in Christ is "full salvation". Thus it covers every aspect of our life, from sin, the power of freshness, the power of Satan and different afflictions.<sup>330</sup>

De Vries-Schot a Dutch female who did medicine and theology and specialized in psychiatry and psychiatry for children and youth pointed out that life needs to be balanced, physically, and we need to do something to maintain and sustain the body, mentally and psychologically, we have to look for freedom and give shape to life, socially, no life in loneliness and isolation, and spiritually, we get the essence of the clear meaning of life, it

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<sup>327</sup> Ezra Chitando and Nontando Hadebe, eds. *In the Name of Jesus!: Healing in the Age of HIV*, (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2009), 7.

<sup>328</sup> Deborah van den Bosch-Heij, *Spirit and Healing in Africa: A Reformed Pneumatological Perspective* (Bloemfontein: Rapid access publisher, 2014), 147.

<sup>329</sup> Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Christ and reconciliation*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2013), 367.

<sup>330</sup> David Cartledge, “Study of Salvation Soteriology,” *Principles of Interpretation*, (2005): 1-41. <http://www.wpo-gregor.org/files/bible-college-studies-b-cartledge/Study-of-Salvation-Cartledge.pdf> (accessed on 13/08/2024).

provides stability and purpose over a long time. It indicates the purity of life.<sup>331</sup>

### **5.1.1 Healing in four dimensions as four legs of the chair according to Margeet De Vries-Schot**

This section would discuss in different contexts, of diviner healers, healing in the church and healing by biomedical approach and see what De Vries-Schot can contribute regarding health balance. Healing is important to Christians and non-Christians. Diviner healers intervene in the holistic physical which is applying the herb to drink and to bath Spiritual healing encloses psychological, mental and spiritual. For spirit possession, the diviner replaces stranger spirits with family spirits, for the ancestor's illnesses sacrifice has to be given in Guterkera and protection with divination rituals and social healing to re-establish the broken relationship through inviting all men of the village to come together (2.3.). It appears that social relationship healing does not include divination practices or other spiritual power.

Good health condition should always be on a good balance, physical, psychological mental, social and spiritual way. Ordinary believers (Christians and non-Christians) indicated that it is important for them to visit medical doctors more health facilities (3.1). Moreover, church leaders advise their members to be responsible for their health by visiting medical services to help with advanced checkups and find appropriate medication which is related to their sickness (4.3.3, 4.4), then for the church, the pastors spiritually give their help through prayers, conversation, giving attention to the patient to build his or her faith and trust in God,

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<sup>331</sup> Margreet de Vries-Schot, *Living Fulfilled=Learning to Love, A Christian View on(Self) Care and Society in the Algorithm era* (2022), 48.

sometimes without removing the pain or sickness (4.3.1 & 4.3.2).

The four dimensions are important in healing, biological, mental and psychological, social and spiritual dimension. According to De Vries-Schot, the biological dimension plays a key role in somatic medicine. When there is a disturbance in the body and experience pain and illness. The doctor gives advice and/or writes a prescription, and it is often assumed that no further care is needed with medical specialists. They examine disease, sicknesses, past surgery, type of medication, smoking or drugs or family disorders and prescribe the ‘medicine based on evidence.’<sup>332</sup> Generally speaking, biomedical facilities are now effectively and faithfully covering most sicknesses that diviner healers were treating (4.2). In the psychological dimension of healing, psychologists help examine and deal with setbacks, personal backgrounds (positive or negative way), and life events and experienced-critical events. This goes with psychiatric examination-mental health which deals with mental disorders through self-introduction as an older or young person, well groomed, how a person is making contact, tasting consciousness oriented in time and place whether he or she stays focused, personal thoughts and the content, evaluation of mood and changes of emotions, to understand if the patient is aware of the level of his or her sickness and suffering. Social dimension healing deals with life in broad terms, how the patient fits into his or her hobbies, personal performance at work, volunteering or school, and interaction with colleagues, friends, family members and neighbours.<sup>333</sup>

The last which is spiritual dimension healing, is important to know whether the person belongs to a religion or other philosophical beliefs and know how this affects his or her life,

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<sup>332</sup> De Vries-Schot, *Living Fulfilled*, 55.

<sup>333</sup> *Ibid.*, 56

problem and solution. If he or she is a religious person, it is about God, who is God to him, if he or she is afraid of God's punishment, you encourage him/her to have faith and to trust in God as the loving. The spiritual dimension is most important, thus it positively affects the other dimensions and gives purpose and stability in life.<sup>334</sup> The perception of healing is holistic: He addresses the physicality and spirituality of health as well as its social aspect.<sup>335</sup> The Spiritual Well-Being is a specific indicator of a person's well-being. It provides a self-assessment of one's relationship with God; I believe that God loves me and cares about me.<sup>336</sup>

Therefore healing is closely linked with the message of the kingdom of God and Jesus's ministry of healing is an important testimony of the dawning Kingdom of God. Through this healing people can already experience the restored fellowship with God by the power of the Holy Spirit in the suffering of Christ.<sup>337</sup> As far as I am concerned, when the four legs-dimension of healing are all well balanced, life also get balanced. This indicates a positive holistic healing.

### **5.1.2 Theology of Love, Trust and Discernment: a Pastoral Response to Healing**

To achieve to holistic healing from diviner healers, it is important to point out why such illness occurred for a certain time and to know someone who did that; holistic healing cannot be achieved without those explanations. In ATR divination is always needed to find out those

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<sup>334</sup> De Vries-Schot, *Living Fulfilled*, 48.

<sup>335</sup> Van Bosch-Heij *Spirit and Healing in Africa*, 168

<sup>336</sup> Margreet R. de Vries-Schot, Joseph Z.T. Pieper and Marinus H.F. van Uden, "MATURE Religiosity Scale Validity of a New Questionnaire," *European Journal of Mental Health* 7 (2012): 57–71.

<sup>337</sup> Bosch-Heij 2014, 178

informations and appropriate medicines (2.3). The ordinary believers revealed the problem, that in ATR the question is always, that there are enemies around, who may poison their children (3.1.1.4). However, pastors should try to focus on the love of Christ and not on the divisive search for enemies and witches. They should show Christ in such a way that people follow Him daily in their reality. It is a question of a permanent double hermeneutic of the Bible, in the details of the reality of people who have confessed Christ: interpreting the biblical text for everyday realities and evaluating cultural uses through the biblical text.<sup>338</sup> The message of love and trust is important. Divination is always about finding someone to blame, it spoils community relationships also creates enmity and division. In this way people become isolated from their neighbours or their relatives (4.2.1). It is significant find a theological solution to this challenge.

De Vries-Schot pointed out, as we already saw, that loving devotion is the hallmark of a Christian attitude to life. Love as the core of Christian life can be traced directly to Jesus Himself.<sup>339</sup> (Mark 12:29-31) First, love God and the second commandment is like the first, it asks us to love our neighbours as we love ourselves. Apart from that it is a lie. “If someone does not love his fellow man cannot love God he does not know” (1 John 4:19-21), this the definition relationship of love between people is clearly explained.

Love changes people’s negative attitudes to discernment and creates mutual trust between neighbours or relatives in such a way as staying around those who are suffering to comfort and to pray for them. “The church should also be a community of love that encourages

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<sup>338</sup> Jean Patrick Nkolo Fanga, “L’exercice du Ministère Pastoral dans les Églises d’Afrique Nouveaux Défis et Perspectives,” *Études Théologiques et Religieuses* 94e année (2019):565-580, 570

<sup>339</sup> Margreet de Vries-Schot, *Living Fulfilled=Learning to Love, A Christian View on (Self) Care and Society in the Algorithm era* (2022), 44.

its members to find wellness, but through discernment being around those who are suffering.”<sup>340</sup> When Job was suffering his friends went to see him. Brink indicated that Job’s friends reacted suitably by sitting silently by his side for seven days because they saw how great his suffering was (Job 2:13).<sup>341</sup> The aim is to connect the sick and his possibility to connect with his suffering to break isolation and reduce loneliness.<sup>342</sup> To love means being there for the other person, hopefully, expecting that others will be there for you.

Love keeps faith and trust: an important element to overcoming enmity and building trust among Rwandan Christians. Love hopes everything, Love has always had good expectations, and love persists, so love never ceases (1 Corinthians 13). The dimensions of the love of Christ can only be comprehended when all believers come together and Christ’s love defeats all evil.<sup>343</sup> A community of love is a community of life. Love means granting others good things and being committed

### **5.1.3 Theological Perspectives on the Origin of Sicknesses**

It is crucial to discuss theologically the origin of sickness to help Rwandan Christians and non-Christians to have a better understanding and discernment. Chapters, 2, 3 and 4 indicate that there is a belief among Christians and non-Christians who seek healing in diviner healers that nothing happens by accident, there is a cause of sickness natural or supernatural, by someone, enemies, witchcraft and sorceries and especially ancestors or other spirits. (2.2,

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<sup>340</sup> Alan Howell, “Turning it Beautiful: Divination, Discernment and a Theology of Suffering.” *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* (2012): 129-137.

<sup>341</sup> Egbert Brink, *Connecting Horizons with Job, Pastoral Care in Cooperation with Professionals in the Trauma-Coping Process*, (Pasadena: Library of Congress, 2023), 8.

<sup>342</sup> Brink, *Connecting Horizons*, 7

<sup>343</sup> Margreet de Vries-Schot, *Living Fulfilled=Learning to Love, A Christian View on (Self) Care and Society in the Algorithm Era* (2022), 76.

3.1) but “discernment helps people interpret their suffering in instructive and constructive ways.”<sup>344</sup>

The Bible records different sources of illnesses. There are illnesses as having demonic origins (Luke 13:10-17). Demon can cause body pain, stomach sickness, etc.<sup>345</sup> A second source of illness is God himself. God use illness to test faith and deeper faith (Job 42:5-6). Disease is a specific way through which God approaches him and wants to make him think of himself.<sup>346</sup> The third cause of illness is human sin. In both the Old and New Testaments, repentance and healing are linked. The pain experienced through illness because of sin leads to introspection, which then should lead to confession and forgiveness.<sup>347</sup> The fourth cause has to do with an illness caused by another person's sin. The people who have AIDS virus because of the infidelity of the spouses. This may make even children to suffer. A fifth group are those illnesses that have natural or neutral causes.<sup>348</sup> Many people are sick because of climate change, the use of drugs, injustice and oppression from political systems etc. The pastors have to design teachings on the natural causes of illness.

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<sup>344</sup> Howell, *Turning it Beautiful*, 136

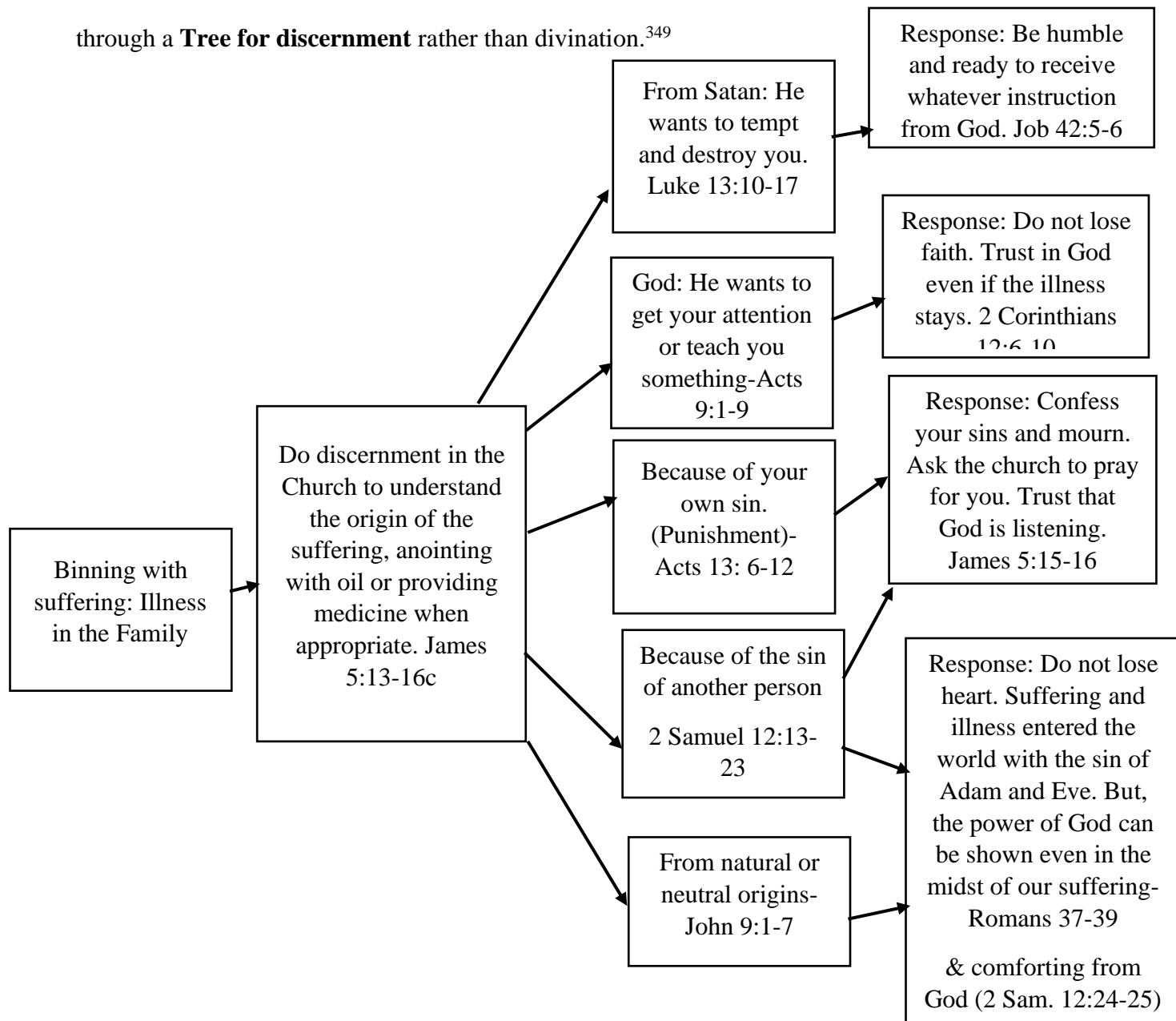
<sup>345</sup> Peter Horrobin, *Healing Through Deliverance*, (Grand Rapid and Michigan: Chosen, 2008), 480.

<sup>346</sup> Jana Hradová, “The Nature of Disease as a Pastoral Key. A Theological Reflection,” *EJT* 28:2, (2019): 154–160. [https://www.aup-online.com/docserver/fulltext/09602720/28/2/07\\_EJT2019.2.HRAD.pdf?expires=1722788126&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=69E3A3A852643A954A05E8C49DBEB499](https://www.aup-online.com/docserver/fulltext/09602720/28/2/07_EJT2019.2.HRAD.pdf?expires=1722788126&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=69E3A3A852643A954A05E8C49DBEB499) (Accessed on 03/08/2024)

<sup>347</sup> John Sherret, “Illness and God’s Will Sickness and Healing in the Life of a Believer,” unpublished A Senior Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation in the Honors Program Liberty University, 2015, 5-6. <https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1557&context=honors> (Accessed on 03/08/2024)

<sup>348</sup> Howell 2012, 134

The church can use a process of discernment to help those who are suffering from illnesses through a **Tree for discernment** rather than divination.<sup>349</sup>



This interpretation may help the pastor to close the doors of divination among Christians. Nkolo Fanga further argued that he calls pastors of the Churches of Africa to exercise their ministry concerning a predominantly discursive model of ministry which also includes social or

<sup>349</sup> Howell 2012, 135



diaconal actions.<sup>350</sup> Theologically trained pastors whose faith in the divine power of the Holy Spirit is important to respond to the people's daily realities. Pastors have to intervene with the means of faith in Christ in order to strengthen it in the members of this family.<sup>351</sup>

I agree that evil spiritual powers from witchcraft and sorceries may inflicted people (3.1.1.4). To this, the pastors revealed that Christians have to test or experience the power of the Holy Spirit to overcome the power of evils and Satan, this requires a Christian to be reborn again through abstaining from sins (4.5). To Bediako term 'Our saviour' refers also to God and the Holy Spirit as universal Saviour. Thus, he is able to do all this, to save in all situations, to protect against all enemies and is available whenever those who believe may call upon him. Jesus is the Lord and the Saviour to the spiritual realities of our context.<sup>352</sup> That's absolutely right, a true Christian can get sick but not believe in being under the power of evils but under the power of Christ the Saviour and the protector. Christ has to be understood as the Son of God over the spiritual powers of African cosmology. Bediako further argued that understanding of Jesus in Africa is seen above all else as the *Christus victor* (Christ supreme over every spiritual rule and authority. Jesus is victorious over the spiritual realm, particularly over evil forces and so meets the need for power protection.<sup>353</sup> To believe in the power of Christ is the refuge, he is the rock. *The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; My God, my strength, in whom I will trust. My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold* (Psalm 18:2). This removes all the fears of supernatural powers. Christ's blood delivers a person from

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<sup>350</sup> Jean Patrick Nkolo Fanga, "L'exercice du Ministère Pastoral dans les Églises d'Afrique Nouveaux Défis et Perspectives," *Études Théologiques et Religieuses* 94e année (2019):565-580. 567

<sup>351</sup> Nkolo Fanga 2019, 574

<sup>352</sup> Nkwame Bediako, *Jesus in Africa. The Christian Gospel in Africa History and Experience*, (Yahounde: Cle and Regnum Africa, 2000), 22.

<sup>353</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

the pact of fear of ancestors (3.2). “African prayer is power and the Gospel which focuses on Christ’s uniqueness whose power over all natural and supernatural beings is a force that liberates us, we would not have all the mixtures that we see today, without practising syncretism.”<sup>354</sup>

#### **5.1.4 Reflection on Ancestral Healing and Veneration Ancestors (Guterekera)**

Being a Diviner healer is firstly to be under the call of ancestors, through the rituals of divination. The clairvoyant power has to be bestowed upon her or him, being able to communicate with ancestors and being able to interpret their wishes (2.2.2.1). Moreover, Ordinary traditional believers indicated that ancestors are God’s angels while diviner healers are gifted Wiseman (3.1.1.1). However, Ordinary Christians (who do not visit) indicated that ancestors are evil spirits. (3.1.1.5).

Moreover, the Pastors pointed out that by becoming a diviner healer he or she should be given the spiritual power for healing, which is the power of dark and evil (4.2). The traditional believer (3.2) indicated that is trustful healing given under the guidance of ancestors and their power. “The diviners are connected to spiritual power ranked in hierarchies and approached according to need.”<sup>355</sup> The root problem is that being a diviner itself is related to having such power of healing. Additionally, the pastors pointed out diviners are emissaries of Satan, and prescribe medicine with the guidance of those evil spirits' power, from divination practices (4.2.2). I agree with them to some extent but ancestors are not evil spirits, they are

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<sup>354</sup> Howell 2012, 135

<sup>355</sup> Geoffrey Parrinder, *African Traditional Religion* (London: Hutchison House, 1954), 26.

our departed grandparents who never still have any spiritual influence to the living people or mediating the human beings with God. However, it seems obvious to me that diviner healing is founded on the spiritual power of divination rituals. According to the diviners, the ancestors play the role of mediating between people and God which has influenced many African theologians to contextualize Christ as the Great Ancestor.

Bediako indicated that understanding Jesus Christ in the African world involves a certain view of the realm of spirit-power and its effects upon the physical and supernatural dimension of human existence, the needs of the African world require a view of Christ that meets those needs, so Jesus has to relate to the importance and function of the spirits fathers or ancestors is crucial.<sup>356</sup> Bediako further indicated that if African Christians failed to relate Christ as an ancestor, many African Christians would continue to be men and women living at two levels half African and half European but never belonging properly to either, so African Christians have to look on Jesus Christ as the Great and Greatest Ancestor in order to be African and full Christians.<sup>357</sup> Moreover, the Christological approach delivered from these healing practices includes the view of Jesus as a Proto-Ancestor and Proto-Initiator who gives life force to the sick and brings every level of fullness of life at every level of existence to those who participate in the new clan and tribunal community of faith.<sup>358</sup>

However, describing Christ as a Great Ancestor, and relating him with African ancestors will keep African Christians from considering their ancestors as their mediators to God in need of healing. “This undermines Christ’s unique identity of his incarnation since it

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<sup>356</sup> Nkwame Bediako, *Jesus in Africa: The Christian Gospel in African History and Experience*, (Yaounde: Edition Cle, 2000), 22.

<sup>357</sup> Ibid., 23

<sup>358</sup> Benno van den Toren. ‘Kwame Bediako’s Christology in Its African Evangelical Context’. *Exchange* 26, no. 3 (1 January 1997): 218–32.

cannot retain the being of Christ as God himself. The presentation of Jesus Christ under the ancestral category (in African Christianity) ‘might only serve to further an existing practice by providing some sort of validation for an existing culturally relevant but non-Biblical practice.’<sup>359</sup> All cultures must be treated with dignity and respect in a theological process in the sense that Scripture should be the mirror of the culture.<sup>360</sup>

## 5.2 Biblical Perspective on Healing

Chapters 3.1 and 4.2 described healing in the church which is based on biblical testimonies but ordinary traditional believers pointed out that it is not true healing, and cannot happen without traditional medicines (3.1.2.2). Additionally, some healing practices did not respect patients' dignity. However, any practice of healing should reflect the Bible. “Healing should respect the patient’s dignity. We strive for high professional standards in the healing and deliverance ministry: This encompasses the aspects of confidentiality, safeguards against abuse, creating a safe environment for the practice of the ministry, proper organization, training and supervision of prayer groups and all practitioners, and avoidance of ‘strong man/woman theology.’”<sup>361</sup>

God is ultimately the healer in the Bible, Ex. 15:26, Deut. 32:39 and Yahweh healed Israel (2 Chr 30:20). Van den Bosch-Heij pointed out that the Bible was highlighted as a part of church-based healing discourse. “All thoughts and concepts are shaped by the fundamental biblical issues that God is the origin of life, health and healing. Both testaments express explicitly that the God of the Bible is the God who desires healing and restoration for his people and all the creation.”<sup>362</sup> The scope of God’s healing power is not to be underestimated because

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<sup>359</sup> Vhumani Magezi and Christopher Magezi, “Pastoral care and healing in Africa: Towards an Adamic Christological practical theology imagination for pastoral healing,” *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies*, (2016):1-12.

<sup>360</sup> Magezi and Magezi 2016

<sup>361</sup> United Evangelical Mission (UEM), “The Ministry of Healing and Deliverance in the Context of UEM Closing Document of a Workshop Held in Kibuye/Rwanda, 5-9 March 2020.” (2020) 1-7. PCR hosted this workshop as United Evangelical Mission (UEM) member church

<sup>362</sup> Van den Bosch-Heij, *Spirit and Healing in Africa*, 200.

God encompasses the entire creation and every dimension of it. The relationships, body and mind, soul and the scripture testify that anything or anyone broken can be restored and healed by God. To become healed and complete is to experience God's fullness and shalom (Jer.29:11, John 10:10)."<sup>363</sup>

### 5.2.1 Healing Rituals in the Bible

Diviner healers indicated that their practices involve different rituals including oil mixed with powder from plants and bathing medicines with some powerful words (3.2). Furthermore, ordinary Christians and pastors also indicated that healing in the church includes water to drink and sprinkle in the patient's house and anointing the sick (3.1.2; 4.2). What does the Bible say about these practices? The Bible records some ritual practices for healing. "Some scriptural passages can support the use of water in healing/ curative dimensions purification of the lepers (Leviticus 14:8ff), and cleansing the houses, (Leviticus 14:51ff). The practice of ritual cleansing or healing ritual was also performed during OT times."<sup>364</sup>

Additionally, sometimes Jesus used rituals to heal patients, healing man born blind, Jesus spat on the ground and made a clay spittle and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay and commanded him to go for washing in the Siloam pool, the man back seeing (John 9:6-7).<sup>365</sup> Mbiti indicated that water is a ritual used in the context of healing that covers the fields of washing and sprinkling the sick, drinking it, injecting enemas and blessing the homes of the sick with it to drive away the devils.<sup>366</sup> Anointing of the sick is very important to the Healing

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<sup>363</sup> Van den Bosch-Heij, *Spirit and Healing in Africa*, 201.

<sup>364</sup> Temba Rugwiji, "Faith-based healing and African traditional medicine in Zimbabwe: A postcolonial perspective," *Theologia Viatorum*, (13 Dec. 2019): 1-10, 3.

<sup>365</sup> Rugweji 2019, 6

<sup>366</sup> John S. Mbiti, *Bible and Theology in African Christianity*, (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1986), 147.

Ministry in Africa.”<sup>367</sup> This anointing service marked the midpoint of Divine Healing and True Holiness.<sup>368</sup>

### 5.2.2 Healing as Atonement Sacrifice

The spiritual healing especially from the sickness caused by ancestors because of offending and mistrusting them, to experience healing, sacrifice has to be given (2.3.2) but the pastor indicated that this results in fear and spoils people's properties through giving offerings several times (4.2.1); furthermore, ordinary Christians who visit diviners indicated that they always experience fear to God, the heart of judgments (sinful) and being guilty (3.4) How is sin related to sickness? Sickness and disease are the remarkable results of sin, Sickness and disease can be related to the sinful behaviour or fallen condition of humanity. On the positive side. *“If you listen carefully to the LORD your God.... I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the LORD, who heals you.”* (Exodus 15:16 NIV). On the negative side, *“if you do not obey the LORD your God and do not carefully follow all his commands and decrees..... The LORD will plague you with diseases until he has destroyed you from the land you are entering to possess. The LORD will strike you with wasting disease, with fever and inflammation, with scorching heat and drought, with blight and mildew, which will plague you until you perish* (Deut.28:15,20,21, NIV).<sup>369</sup> To this, obedience to the word of God is always

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<sup>367</sup> Ezra Chitando and Nontando Hadebe, eds. *In the Name of Jesus!: Healing in the Age of HIV*, (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2009), 7

<sup>368</sup> Heather D. Curtis, “The Global Character of Nineteenth-Century Divine Healing,” in *Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Healing*, Brown, Candy Gunther, ed. (Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 2011.) 30 <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/tukampen/detail.action?docID=3053985>. (accessed on 2024-06-18).

<sup>369</sup> Peter H Davids et.al, A Biblical View of the Relationship of sin and the Fruits of Sin: Sickness, Demonization, Death and Natural Calamity,” in *The Kingdom and the Power*, Gary S. Greig, and Kavin N. Springer, eds. (California: Regal Books, 1993), 114.

important in Christian lives.

In John 5:15 Jesus meets the man he has healed at the pool and tells him, “Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you,” something worse might be an illness. After Jesus healed the man, “Your sin has been forgiven”, maybe the reason for forgiving the sin was that sin was the root problem of a man and only with sin taken care of could sickness be healed, “Confess your sin to one another and pray for each other so that you may be healed (James 5:16).<sup>370</sup> However, regarding the question of healed blind man (John 9:1-3), Jesus responds that neither the sins of the man nor his parents have caused the sickness. Though, healing, forgiveness and salvation are not (and cannot be) separated in Scripture.”<sup>371</sup>

Thus, the notion of healing and saving (redeeming) are closely related to Jesus’s ministry, some include physical healing but exclude redemptive work (Mark 1:30-31; 6:5) while another passage is vice-versa, yet other biblical testimonies bring healing and redeeming together (Isa.57:18, Mal. 4:2; Luke 7:50).<sup>372</sup> He has carried our sickness and pain, (Isaiah 54:4) Christ’s power heals bodily ailments. Jesus went to the cross to redeem man’s spirit soul and body. The cross is the centre of the plan of salvation of man’s spirit, soul and body.<sup>373</sup>

Christ’s redemption, thus, consists mainly of reconciliation between God and humanity,<sup>374</sup> Christ is a gift that brings both healing and reconciliation as well as forgiveness of sin in the joy of knowing God and being known by Him.<sup>375</sup> God himself reconciles the

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<sup>370</sup> Davids 1993, 117

<sup>371</sup> Temba Rugwiji, “Faith-based healing and African traditional medicine in Zimbabwe: A postcolonial perspective,” *Theologia Viatorum*, (13 Dec. 2019): 1-10, 4.

<sup>372</sup> Van den Bosch-Heij, *Spirit and Healing in Africa*, 20.

<sup>373</sup> F.F Bosworth, “Christ the Healer,” in *Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies*, William K. Kay and Anne E. Dyer, eds. (London: SCM Press, 2004), 65.

<sup>374</sup> Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatic vol. 3: Sin and Salvation in Christ*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 1854-1921), 425.

<sup>375</sup> Célestin Nsengimana. *Genocide commemoration and reconciliation in Rwanda from a*

world to Himself through the atonement of Christ. Christ represents us as the substitution, indeed, because Christ takes our place, it makes it possible for us to take His! It is important to see Christ's representation both as solidarity and as substitution.<sup>376</sup> Therefore, the connection between healing, Christ and the Kingdom of God is that the crucified God embraces every sick and makes it his life, so that he can communicate his own eternal life, for that reason the crucified one is both the source of healing and consolation in suffering.<sup>377</sup> However, it is important to note that all sicknesses and suffering that people experience, happen not because of sins, Job is a good example (Job 1:22).

Jesus proclaimed the imminence of the Kingdom of God as the gospel's good news to the suffering (Mt. 5:3-11) and releasing sinners from the sufferings brought by their sins and restoring to them shalom with God and with their neighbours (Mk. 2:1-12) by driving out demons.<sup>378</sup> The reality of human suffering has been demonstrated throughout biblical history, and it continues even to this day for Christians. Scripture provides deliverance and salvation from this common human experience and it continues even to this day for Christians.<sup>379</sup> Jesus exhorted his disciples to bear the sufferings and persevere to the end in their commitment to his lordship, assuring them of the consummation of their salvation at his parousia as 'the "Son of Man" Mk. 13:9-13, 26) and promising them the help of the Holy Spirit (Mk. 13:11).<sup>380</sup> So,

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*liturgical ritual perspective*. (Amsterdam; Groningen: Institute for Ritual and Liturgical Studies, 2023), 171

<sup>376</sup> Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Christ and Reconciliation*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2013), 299, 304, 313.

<sup>377</sup> Van den Bosch-Heij 2014, 178

<sup>378</sup> Seyoon Kim, "Salvation and Suffering according to Jesus," *The Evangelical Quarterly* 68:3 (1996): 195-207, 205. [https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/eq/1996-3\\_kim.pdf](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/eq/1996-3_kim.pdf). (accessed on 04/08/2024)

<sup>379</sup> Kelvin Onongha, "Suffering, Salvation, and the Sovereignty of God: Towards a Theology of Suffering," *Journal of Mission Studies*, Vol. 9 (2013): 126-136.

<https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1243&context=jams>. (accessed on 04/08/2024)

<sup>380</sup> Seyoon Kim, *Salvation and Suffering according to Jesus*



the Christians' life in obedience to Jesus' double command as the people of the Kingdom of God realizes in a proleptic way the salvation of the Kingdom from which all, including themselves, benefit; yet, at the same time, for themselves, it also involves sacrifice and suffering.”<sup>381</sup>

Therefore, the story of salvation, soteriology, and Christ's suffering should be linked to the story of parishioners' struggle, agony and suffering.”<sup>382</sup> Moreover, linking Christ's sacrifice and victory over supernatural power can bridge the gap between people's needs and suffering.

### **5.3 Culture and traditional healing**

It is widely known that diviner healing uses plants, leaves, and roots (2.3). It is natural healing according to traditional believers (3.3.1) but the ordinary Christian believer indicated that it is not a matter of plants because each one can find them and apply them, the most important to their medicines are imitongero, the spiritual forces of the ancestors (3.1.1.2). Moreover, the pastor pointed out that that imitongero are connected to other spiritual power from other gods and spirits to invoke them to affect medicine. (4.2). The indicated problem of poison-3.1.1.4 (eating or crossed poisons), I take the view that they are right, but on the other hand, herbalists can also approach this sickness faithfully, based on their natural knowledge, without the need for divination or other spiritual power. Church leaders pointed out herbalist healing is natural healing which is commonly used by Christians and none Christians (4.3.3).

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<sup>381</sup> Ibid.

<sup>382</sup> Magezi 2007, 757.

Herbalist healing is commonly known in Africa as well as in Rwanda as traditional and cultural healing, it is much under God's creation.

God's healing is pluriform and multi-dimensional healing. "The biblical stories of healing are not to be seen as witnesses in a vacuum, they are not separated from the other parts of life, and they are fully related to realities such as culture community, prayer, medicine, human wisdom, demons, sin, the cross, the covenant and the Kingdom<sup>383</sup> Furthermore, in Kuyper's view, the world is a Divine creation, with a particular grace which works Salvation, and also a common grace by which God, maintaining the life of the world, relaxes the curse which rests upon it, arrests its process of corruption and thus allows our life to glorify Himself as Creator".<sup>384</sup> This means that traditional herbalist healing cultural healing based on natural knowledge share by parents or through formal and informal education whereas traditional diviner healing is basically applied with supernatural spiritual power, to this Christians might not visit diviner, the pastors and church should commit themselves to help their fellow Christians who cannot discern their sicknesses.

### **5.3.1 Dialogical discernment**

Traditional healers claim their profession is a gift from God that cannot be doubted. There is a need to design Christian teaching to help those whose gifts to used, but there are some who join secret societies to get power to perform in their own way, their power is attached to devils.<sup>385</sup> There is a need for a dialogical theocentric perspective, we have to apply the scope

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<sup>383</sup> Van den Bosch-Heij, *Spirit and Healing in Africa*, 201.

<sup>384</sup> Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism*, (Grand Rapids Michigan: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1931), 30.

<sup>385</sup> Pukumuh H. Yakubu, "The Challenges of Healing Ministry: The Lutheran Church in

of dialogue within the church to define its boundaries about health, sickness and healing and the Bible as one basic, should call our attention.<sup>386</sup>

The call to participate in a dialogic community in which people, even people who disagree on important matters, work together to achieve consensus responds to a profound human need as portrayed in the Bible. Human beings are fashioned for covenant partnership with God and with each other; dialogue is a crucial means for facilitating these partnerships.<sup>387</sup>

The church should seek an alliance with the traditional healing (herbalist) fraternity. It would be to ally with traditional healing and healers. The African theologians are convinced that the church should work its way into the cultural fibre of African society. By forming a close alliance with traditional culture of healing, one could deal with typical African health problems in a holistic and culturally acceptable in Christian way.<sup>388</sup>

## 5.4 Summary

This chapter described reformed theological and biblical perspectives on healing. Theological reformed perspective was discussed in terms of the four legs of the chair which gives lives a balance, such as biological-therapy, psychological, social and spiritual dimensions which is the spiral of other healing dimensions. To care for it properly affects others positively.

Love and trust are compulsory for Christians to respond to divination issues which

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Nigeria” in [Ingo Wulfhorst](#). *Ancestors, Spirits and Healing in Africa and Asia: A Challenge to the Church*. (Geneva: Lutheran World Federation, 2005), 125.

<sup>386</sup> R. Mouw and Griffioen, S. *Pluralisms and Horizons. An Essay in Christian Public Philosophy*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 106.

<sup>387</sup> *Ibid.*, 105

<sup>388</sup> Thinandavha D. Mashau, “Moving to different streams of healing praxis: A reformed missionary approach of healing in the African context,” *Verbum et Ecclesia*, (30 June 2016):1-8

creates division and conflict among Christian communities. Pastoral ministry should be able to apply the biblical text to people's daily lives, day-to-day including healing. Moreover, it crucial to discern theological teaching on the origin of sickness and suffering.

The uniqueness of Christ rejects other theological thoughts of mediation of humanity with God this reflects Christ's atonement/sacrifice which brings reconciliation with God at the same time includes healing of sickness caused by sin and it brings salvation which encompasses holistic healing. Therefore, Christ's power and victory over the suffering and satan should be also understood as a victory over other spiritual powers.

This chapter confirmed herbalist healing as a cultural and traditional healing based on natural knowledge, so Christians and non-Christians can use it when it well appropriate to their sickness. However, the chapter described that apart from social relationship healing, diviner healing could be based on the spiritual powers to diagnose, treat sickness, protect their customer and prescribe medication whether natural or supernatural medicine.

## **Chapter 6. Conclusion and Recommendations**

This part will bring out the harvest from this whole research and give some recommendations based on the results of the research.

### **6.1 Conclusion**

This study described the beliefs and practice of visiting diviners and churches to seek healing among Christians in Rwanda, as well as to the responses to these practices by (pastors of) two Christian churches.

The Christians in Rwanda of PCR are used to visiting diviner healers as Christian church members' even where medical facilities or church are available to them. They say traditional diviner healing is a part of the culture and covers the entire therapy. The quality of medicines of diviner healers and their healing practices are questionable to the extent of being perceived as evil and unfaithful healing. The research aimed to describe, analyse and evaluate the spiritual, social and practical aspects of traditional healing practices in the ATR context and know the reasons people use traditional practices and medicines

The church leaders vehemently warn their church members not to visit diviner healers but rather come to the church to seek healing. The theological and practical reactions of the PRC and ADEPR-Church to traditional healers. Some Reformed biblical-theological reflections on the different positions were given. The church leaders doubt the faith of those who visit diviners as a result, a church member who visits a diviner has to be under church discipline, lose his or her membership or be excommunicated in the church.

Deeper theological reflection on the problem of health, sickness and healing is lacking.

Therefore we reflected theologically on the topic with the help of the work of Deborah van den Bosch-Heij and Margreet de Vries-Schot.

The research has revealed that the practices and functions of diviner healers, covered health and healing for several centuries in Africa before the arrival of western medical facilities. Divine healer's practices of healing were not meant to harm people but to save them and protect them from the danger of sicknesses, and diseases. However, today many different sicknesses and diseases medical services treat them appropriately and effectively.

Traditional herbalist healing is a part of cultural healing that can be used by Christians and non-Christians as cultural healing. This healing approach has been applied for many centuries before the Western biomedical facilities and church services in Rwanda, it should not be mixed up and confused with traditional diviner healing. Herbalist healing applies plants, leaves, roots, and cowberries based on natural knowledge of medicines.

However, diviner healing is problematic according to the bible and theological arguments because it applies divination, imitongero, other spiritual evil and dark power. Becoming a diviner healer, divination practices have to be performed for the selection and for receiving the power of healing. Their medicines and healing practices depend on those spiritual powers. Diagnosis, treatment and prevention practices apply divination with spiritual powers. Treating the spiritual spirits of ancestors or other spirits involves divination rituals of sacrifice which keeps fear in people and spoils their properties.

Additionally, diviners and ATR healing create more conflict and destroy social relations in the community. It is mostly focused on the cause and someone who causes the sickness. There is no natural cause of sickness or natural death. There is someone who caused those problems either a neighbour or a relative. This healing creates mostly negative tension

within the community, people become enemies because of this, to the extent of revenge because of the false information got from diviners.

Instead of seeking the ‘enemy’ the Christian answer is, that we should seek the other in love. Love always creates room for trust, it never fails. The pastor needs to respond to this situation biblically, to make love a life which brings hope and good motives to do well to others and expect that others will do well for you.

Instead of attributing causes to neighbours and relatives, it is crucial to realize natural causes and biblical causes of illnesses. This gives pastors a responsibility to connect the Bible and the daily realities of the Christians. It also gives them more duties to help Christians to discern the cause of illnesses constructively. This will help them to find proper health facilities.

Pastors and the Christian community's presence to the sick or the suffering can be regarded as God's presence and regarded as healing without removing the sickness or the pain. This helps many to change their mindset and traditional beliefs about health and healing. Therefore, the church should involve the members to be together with those who are facing usual and unusual situations in their lives.

Pastors and Christian communities need to be spiritually empowered with the Holy Spirit to be able to respond biblically to those evil spirits. The Gospel of Christ should respond to daily realities and cultural beliefs. To invite Christian believers to believe in Christ's victory and power over the spiritual powers of witchcraft, sorceries and ancestors. It is also important to help Christians to discern scientifically and theologically the source or the origin of sicknesses and diseases. This will help many to change their beliefs and mindset about the source of misfortunes. According to Paul, “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, the old has passed away; behold, the new has come. -All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation” (1 Cor. 5:17-18). This gives

meaning to the Pentecostal theology of personal experience of the Holy Spirit.

The salvation in Christ Jesus brings forgiveness including holistic healing till to parousia, the time Christ will defeat Satan, death and suffering. This encourages Christians to regard suffering as a part of life which they have to participate in. To Christians, healing without *sozo* is meaningless. Healing in the Christian tradition involves an eschatological perspective.

Therefore, holistic healing is regarded as a good balance of the chair's legs, biological or physical healing which involves general practitioners or specialist medical doctors, psychological or mental healing with psychologists and mental professionals, and social relations which includes social workers, pastors etc. and spiritual healing that involves pastors. Moreover, when the spiritual dimension is well-balanced affect positively the other health aspects. A good relationship with God and others (neighbours) gives life stability and suitability.

## **6.2 Recommendation**

The study recommends an ecumenical body of churches in Rwanda to engage themselves in dialogue about health and healing.

The study recommends pastors to dialogue with Christians who visit diviners to comprehend their reason and to help them rather than punishing them or putting them under church discipline.

The PCR and ADEPR parishes have to train groups which can support theological discernment for healing and suffering interpretation.



The PCR has to conduct further research for vital daily social realities of challenges to help its pastors respond to them biblically.

The PCR and ADEPR should engage their members-priesthood for all believers in an open discussion to relate or to set boundaries about culture, healing and Christian tradition based on the Scripture.

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