

Similarities and Differences in the Healing Practices of Pentecostal Churches and the African Traditional Religions in Botswana

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Abstract

The essay examines the similarities and differences in the healing practices of Pentecostal churches and the traditional religions in the context of Botswana. The major similarities result from the fact that in both the Pentecostal churches and the traditional religions there is a strong belief in supernatural interventions in times of crisis in order to preserve, prolong and protect life. While certain methods and strategies are similar, the belief in ancestors in the case of traditional religions, and in Jesus and the Holy Spirit, who are the key agents of healing for Pentecostal churches, mark the major points of difference. The term 'healer', is accepted and generally used to describe the traditional healing practitioners, while it is never used to refer to Pentecostals possessing and exercising the gift of healing. For Pentecostals the healer is either Jesus Christ or the Holy Spirit.

Introduction

This essay examines, describes, and compares the strategies and methods used by adherents of the African traditional religions and Pentecostal churches in healing various diseases. The concept of healing generally has different implications, depending on one's belief about existential forces, the nature of diseases, and disease causation. The subject of the essay is religion and healing practices in the context of Pentecostal churches and the traditional religions in Botswana. I will, in particular, focus on the similarities and differences in the healing practices of both the Pentecostal churches and the traditional religions in Botswana.

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In the process of examining the similarities and differences between the Pentecostal and the traditional forms of healing, the essay will also assess whether Pentecostal churches in Botswana have made any efforts to contextualize their beliefs and practices. This is important because it helps us to see how the two religious traditions have impacted or influenced each other. The question of accommodation or tolerance is therefore central to understanding the relationship between the Pentecostal churches and the traditional religions in Botswana.²

Another important point to mention regarding the relationship between the healing practices of the Pentecostal churches and the traditional religions is that the former have tended to claim exclusive ownership over the authenticity of healing. They interpret Christian healing practices to be the norm, while the traditional practices on the contrary are said to be pagan, heathen and evil.³ Right from the inception of Pentecostalism (the Azusa type of churches)⁴ in Botswana, there has never been any deliberate attempt by scholars to interpret Pentecostal healing practices in the context of the traditional religious practices.⁵ The Pentecostal churches therefore do not just speak a different spiritual language from the traditional religions, but also hold different doctrines. They regard those who do not profess Christ as heathens, pagans or idol worshippers. While the belief in ancestors is central to the traditional religious practices of Botswana, Pentecostal churches totally reject healing practices that involve the ancestors.

Religious Demography

Various religious groups are at home in Botswana. The country's constitution allows for freedom of worship and association of various religious and cultural traditions. The traditional religion is not only the oldest religion in Botswana, but has developed within the local contexts and specific experiences of the people.⁶ Christianity especially the mainline churches,⁷ on the other hand, were introduced to Botswana during the last part of the 19th century mainly by the London Missionary Society, Dutch Reformed Mission, the Methodists, which were later on joined by the Anglicans, Seventh Day Adventists and the Roman Catholic Church in the 20th century. The African Independent Churches⁸

² Fako, T.T., "Traditional medicine & organizational issues in Botswana, Working paper No 20, University of Botswana, July 1978, discusses the relationship between traditional medicine & traditional doctors. He also discusses the attitude of government to traditional medicine. Due to the negative attitude people have towards traditional medicine people deal with it secretly.

³ Akiiki & Kealotswe, (1995:9), mention that Africans see a lot of similarities between Christianity and the African view. They however state that Christianity is afraid of the ideas of many deities or divinities, such as ancestors.

⁴ There are some debates as to whether Pentecostalism is linked to African Independent Churches or not. In this essay Pentecostalism refers to churches that believe in the baptism of the Holy Spirit with evidence of speaking in tongues and emphasizing the born again theology. See Cephas Omenyo, *Pentecost outside Pentecostalism*, pages 86 – 90 for further clarification. James Amanze (1994), *Botswana Handbook of Churches* and Fidelis Nkomazana and Lanner (2007), *Aspects of the History of the Church in Botswana* and Amanze (2003) *African traditional Religions and Culture in Botswana* like the rest of the other works on African Traditional Religion and the life of the church in Botswana do not attempt to discuss the healing factor.

⁵ Amanze, (1994), simply provides a survey of churches in Botswana. No effort is made in this volume to discuss the practices and theologies of the different churches in the context of Botswana.

⁶ Nkomazana, "The Botswana Religious Landscape" in Togarasei, et al (2011), *The Faith Sector & HIV/AIDS in Botswana*, pages 2 – 11.

⁷ The phrase Mainline Churches is here used to refer to church that were formed by European Missionaries. See James Amanze's (1994) *Botswana Handbook of Churches*.

⁸ The churches that broke away from the Mainline Churches protecting the failure of the former churches to incorporate the African styles of worship and practices into Christianity. See Amanze (1994)

started to flourish in the 1960s, and immediately after that registered 233 churches out of the 262 total of registered churches in Botswana.⁹ This was a remarkable progress. The figure is obviously much higher today.¹⁰ Pentecostalism was first introduced to Botswana from North America via South Africa from the 1950s to the early 1960s.¹¹ At the beginning of 2003 there were more than 75 registered Pentecostal churches. These churches have not only numerically increased today, but have become the most vibrant and fastest growing group of churches in Botswana.¹²

It must be mentioned therefore that out of a population of approximately 2 million, about half of the country's citizens identify themselves as Christians.¹³ The other 50 percent adhere to the traditional religions or a mixture of religions. There is also a small Muslim, Bahai, Buddhist and Hindu communities, approximately 2 to 3 percent of the population.¹⁴

General Observations About Healing Practices in Pentecostal Churches and Traditional Religions

Let me start with some general observations. First, healing practices among Pentecostal churches and the traditional religions represent the largest available resources of health delivery in Botswana.¹⁵ Second, for many years, traditional medical practices were and continue to be the source of therapy available for the majority of Botswana, especially in rural areas. This is so because traditional healing systems are seen to be deeply rooted in the culture and ecology of the people.¹⁶ Third, while the definition of a disease for Pentecostal and traditional healers¹⁷ widely varies from that of modern medical practitioners, they have striking similarities to one another. Both Pentecostal churches and the traditional religions do not make strict distinction between a disease, such as malaria, headache, tuberculosis, HIV and AIDS and a variety of conditions created by a deficiency in certain food properties, such as iron calcium causing anaemia, a state where the condition has become a disease. In fact, they are more interested in the spiritual causes, as opposed to modern medicine, where some experiments are conducted in order to diagnose the causes of diseases. What is important for them is the supernatural power to heal the disease. They believe that behind their practice is a supernatural power that heals all forms of diseases. Categorizing diseases is seen as lack of faith in the supernatural power. Whether the disease is caused by a deficiency in certain minerals or

⁹ A close examination of the date of the establishment of churches in Botswana demonstrates this fact. Amanze (1994)

¹⁰ Nkomazana, (2011), "The Botswana Religious Landscape, pages 12-13; Amanze, (1994), *Botswana Handbook of Churches*, 166-167.

¹¹ Nkomazana's ongoing study of the History of Pentecostalism in Botswana.

¹² Nkomazana & Tabalaka, "Aspects of healing practices and methods among Pentecostals in Botswana", in *BOLESWA Journal of Theology, Religion & Philosophy*, Vol. 2, No, 3, 2009: 137-159.

¹³ James Amanze, (1994), *Botswana Handbook of Churches*,

¹⁴ Botswana National Atlas.

¹⁵ Togarasei, L et al, An Assessment of the Capacity of Faith – Based Organizations for HIV Prevention in Botswana Report of Theological, University of Botswana, 2008, pages 7-16. This study has confirmed that religious institutions are playing an important role in the health delivery of the majority of Botswana.

¹⁶ Togarasei, L et al, An Assessment of the Capacity of Faith – Based Organizations for HIV Prevention in Botswana Report of Theological, University of Botswana, 2008, p. 13.

¹⁷ The word healers will not be appropriate for Pentecostals, since they do not regard themselves as healers, but simply as channels of healing. The power of the Holy Spirit is believed to be responsible for healing people.

not, is not usually regarded as the major issue. What is important for both the Pentecostal healing practices and traditional healers is an intimate relationship with the supernatural source of the healing power.¹⁸ Fourth, healing is a gift of the “spirit” for both the Pentecostal and the traditional healers. For Pentecostal churches it is the power of the Holy Spirit and the name of Jesus Christ, while for the indigenous healers, it is the power of the ancestors, the supreme deity and other divinities. For Pentecostals, the Holy Spirit and Jesus are believed to be the channel through which the healing power of the Supreme Being is accessed.¹⁹ Individuals such as the prophets, evangelists, pastors and the name of Jesus are the channels through which the healing power reaches the sick person.²⁰ Pentecostal churches make reference to 1 Corinthians 12:7-11 about “the manifestation of the Spirit” as follows:

Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and still to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.

Similarly, for the traditional healers, *badimo* (ancestors) are to be accessed for the healing power of the Supreme Being to be effected. A diviner would, for instance, ask the family of the sick person to make a sacrifice to the ancestors in order to restore any broken relationship. In the process, protection against the source of trouble is provided.

The African Traditional Religions and Pentecostal Churches are associated with a great diversity of skilled health practitioners. While both the African Traditional Religious and Pentecostal healers perform their healing activities within the confines of the African cultural context, Pentecostal Churches claim to be strictly guided by the biblical teachings and strategies. But they are generally both highly respected for their therapeutic skills. Both the African Traditional Religious and Pentecostal church medical traditions may be subdivided into those which are essentially secular and those which involve spiritual models of healing. The former include various kinds of traditional healers with special skills such as midwifery, etc. Their skills are based on personal and family local knowledge transmitted from one generation to the next. Traditional spiritual healers, or intercessionists, like Pentecostal healers, ultimately attribute their healing powers to their privileged access to some supernatural power. This enables them to learn about potent medicine unknown to others and to act as intermediaries on behalf of their patients, approaching the supernatural sources of affliction and of potential relief. The *dingaka tsa bola* (diviners) or sangoma spirit possession is a prime example of a therapy based on intercession with spirits. These are indigenous healers or diviners, who likewise depend upon the guidance of spirits in their medical practice.²¹

¹⁸ Nkomazana & Tabalaka, pages 237 – 159,

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ ABT Byaruhanga-Akiiki & Obed N. Kealotswe, *Healers, protective Medicine in Botswana*, (Department of Theology: University of Botswana, Gaborone, p. 9.

²¹ Amanze, J.N., *African Traditional Religions and Culture in Botswana*, (Gaborone: Pula Press, 2002) pp. 88-114.

Pentecostal church healers practice a type of intercessionist medicine, which is highly antagonistic towards the traditional spiritualists, whose medical practices they regarded as demonic.²² There is, therefore, no intention for co-operation between the Pentecostal churches and the African Traditional Religious healers. There is also no overlap amongst the various types of medicines they use, although their strategies and methods have striking similarities.

Healers and Their Diagnostic Tools

As part of this study I interviewed five traditional healers and five Pentecostal healers in various parts of Botswana regarding their healing practices in order to gain insight into the extent and character of their activities. The healers are a very heterogeneous group of persons with much in common with regard to their gender and educational level. While the traditional practice is usually inherited from the family, Pentecostal healers claim that there has to be a divine calling from God. For Pentecostals, the gift of healing is understood as an office as described in 1 Corinthians chapter 14, which talks about the gifts of prophecy, healing, wisdom, knowledge, faith, discernment of spirits, miracles, speaking in various kinds of tongues and interpretation of tongues.²³ While for Pentecostals, healing is a gift of the Spirit, the reasons frequently given by traditional healers for becoming healers is that a person has been called by the ancestors, through dreams and this usually takes place within a given family line. This requires intense training and mentoring, which could go on for many years.²⁴ The majority of these traditional healers are mainly older males. The older you are, the more knowledgeable, more experienced and skillful. The older people are also believed to be more connected to the ancestors than younger ones.²⁵

Unlike the Pentecostal healers, who conduct their healing practices in public and mainly during their services, traditional healers are more secretive. The diagnosis of their patients, their prophetic utterances and the treatment recommended to patients are strictly confidential, contrary to those of the Pentecostal healers that are mostly performed in public during a church service in the presence of the congregation. In the case of the traditional healers, only the patient and a few selected family members are allowed into the consultation room. The other major difference that exists between the Pentecostal and Traditional healers is that in the case of the latter, patients can come and stay at the residence of the healers for days, weeks and months, while receiving treatment. While patients may attend Pentecostal healing services for many hours, they usually do not take temporary residence with the healers as it happens with traditional healers and in the case of African Independent Churches.²⁶

²² Ibid, Akiiki & Kealotswe (1995:9).

²³ 1Corinthians 14:1-40 therefore outlines the various categories of spiritual gifts. In Akiiki and Kealotswe (1995:11) five categories of traditional healers are given as follows: the ngaka ya ditshotswa (the herbalist); ngaka ya ditaola (the diviner – herbalist); ngaka e dupang (the sucker) and the Sangoma (the spirit – medium). The categories are widely varied from those in the Pentecostal healing practice.

²⁴ The training of Dingaka is elaborate.

²⁵ Mackenzie, J., *Ten Years North of the Orange River*, (Edinburgh: Hodder & Stoughton, 1871) p. 397.

²⁶ Kealotswe, O., "Healing in the African Independent Churches in the Era of AIDS in Botswana", *Missionalia*, Volume 29:2, August 2001, pages 220-231 discusses the concept of *diagelo*, faith clinics. In this essay I make a clear distinction between Pentecostal and AICs. Pentecostal refers to the born again type Christians, who put emphasis on the baptism of the Holy Spirit with evidence of speaking in tongues.

For both the Pentecostal and traditional healers, the diagnosis of the disease is a very important aspect of the healing operations that has to be carried out. For traditional healers, divination is a very common and main method of diagnosis used. Others use divining bones, which they throw on the ground and the pattern they form suggests the nature of the problem.²⁷ Others will use the touching method and then get a revelation of what the problem is. In recent years, others will use a Bible as a diagnostic tool. The patient is asked to open the Bible, after which the healer claims to see the condition of the patient on the pages of the Bible. They say that the revelation and the interpretation of the message is communicated to the healer by ancestors or the spirit. No one is expected to question what the ancestors have communicated.²⁸

For Pentecostal healers, prayer is regarded as their diagnostic tool. Prayer is believed to have the power to reveal the nature of the problem to the healer through the Word or the Holy Spirit. It is sometimes accompanied by prophecy, speaking in tongues and the demonstration of power. At times this is followed by people being prayed for falling to the ground or being “slain in the Spirit” as the Pentecostals would prefer to call it. At times, the process is followed by casting out of demons and laying on of hands on the sick person.²⁹

Some of the Pentecostal and traditional healers reported referring patients to the hospital, when the patient would be better treated at the hospital. The traditional healers did not discourage their patients from seeking for help from the Pentecostal healers, while on the other hand, the latter discouraged their members from participating in activities of the traditional healers. Any member of the Pentecostal churches, who participates or who sought for help from the traditional healers was punished or even banned from the fellowship of other believers.

Methods of Healing Adopted by Pentecostal and Traditional Healers

Signs and Wonders

Signs and wonders are another catch phrase used by Pentecostal healers to describe their healing operations. They quote Acts 2: 22 saying ‘Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, signs and wonders, which God did among you through him ...’ Using the same text, the Pentecostals say that Jesus promised that they will perform greater miracles than he did. Although the traditional healers do not categorically speak of signs and wonders, they claim to perform supernatural works. Like the Pentecostal healers they claim to supernaturally heal diseases and situations such as HIV and AIDS, the lame, the blind, cripples and cast out demons and evil spirits. Some African traditional practitioners have blamed Pentecostal “healers” for their judgmental and negative attitudes towards the traditional healers. Pentecostals on the other hand condemn African traditional healing as evil and therefore unacceptable. Pentecostals are

²⁷ Setiloane, G.M., *The Image of God Among the Sotho – Tswana*, (Rotterdam: AA. Balkema, 1971), pp. 45 - 58.

²⁸ This section has benefited greatly from Patrick M Ramocha's study entitled '*An Analysis of Healing Methods Within Pentecostal churches: Focus on Goodnews Church Fellowship*', Diploma in Pastoral Theology, Theology & Religious Studies Department, University of Botswana, 1998/99.

²⁹ Ibid.

also blamed for adopting manipulative methods of healing, characterized by unrestrained emotionalism and learned responses.³⁰

One of the cases of healing by both the Pentecostal and traditional healers was to do with infertility. Traditional healers claim to possess the knowledge to assist women with problems of barrenness by opening closed wombs and reversing curses. They usually blame the problem on witchcraft, demonic activities, etc. Pentecostal healers likewise claim to deal with the problem of barrenness through deliverance prayers as is evident in the Zoe Worldwide International Ministry, a Pentecostal church that was established in Botswana in 1995 by the Nigerian evangelist, Patrick Anwuzia. There are many examples given. But even in the case of infertility, Pentecostal churches, like the traditional religions, insist that sick believers do not need to remain sick. To support this, they usually quote the following scriptural texts: James 5:14 that reads as follows: “Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him”; Ex. 15:26 that reads: “If you listen carefully to the voice of the Lord your God and do what is right in his eyes, if you pay attention to his commands and keep all his decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the Lord (NAV).”

Pentecostal churches argue that no diseases/illnesses are excluded from this great benefit. Quoting scriptures such as Isaiah 53:5.1 and 1 Peter 2:24 they insist that God has promised to heal all forms of diseases. These serious illnesses that God heals can either be emotionally or physically devastating. The best example usually given is that of HIV and AIDS.³¹

Concerning healing of infertility, I once listened to the preaching of a young AFM Pentecostal pastor (Mmoloki Mogokgwane) prophesying on a young lady saying: ‘As I was preaching the Lord revealed this to me about you that your barren days are over. Put your feet to your faith and buy a room full of nursery furniture and start thanking God for the baby you will conceive and bear in the next 12 months. I have already prayed for many women in your position and the Almighty God has already answered their cries and removed their shame and agony.’³² It was claimed that after 12 months the woman delivered her firstborn son. The Pastor disclosed that the Lord’s healing was so complete that in subsequent years, the woman bore another healthy child. This he said demonstrates that Jehovah is our healer, who is able and willing to heal all the diseases and infirmities of his people. One of the influential leaders of a Pentecostal Church has labeled HIV and AIDS as falling among the Egyptian diseases,³³ which he used to refer

³⁰ This section has benefited greatly from Patrick M Ramocha's study entitled '*An Analysis of Healing Methods Within Pentecostal churches: Focus on Goodnews Church Fellowship*', Diploma in Pastoral Theology, Theology & Religious Studies Department, University of Botswana, 1998/99. Interviewed (25 July 2014) James Amanze, who has paid a close interest on the Pentecostal methods of healing and worship and has described what he has observed with a lot of bias.

³¹ Togarasei, et al (2011), *The Faith Sector & HIV/AIDS in Botswana: Responses and Challenges*, Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishers.

³² Interviewed with Pastor Mogokgwane, Apostolic Faith Mission Youth minister, 27 July, 2008; Mogogi Keakile, Apostolic Faith Mission tent crusade preaching, August 2014.

³³ Making references to Deut. 7: 15 that says ‘The Lord will keep you free from every disease. He will not inflict on you the horrible diseases you knew in Egypt, but he will inflict them on all who hate you.’ Pentecostals have referred to a wide range of illnesses as Egyptian and argued that these diseases should not be found among the children of God. Conversation (30 January 2015, Gaborone) with Rosinah Gabaitse, New Testament scholar at the University of Botswana and a Pentecostal, who refers to flu and other associated diseases as malwetsi a dipeba) diseases that should bother fable animals). Deut. 7: 15 ‘The Lord will keep you free from every disease. He will not inflict on you the horrible diseases you knew in Egypt, but he will inflict them on all who hate you.’

to diseases that brought severe suffering due to the disobedience of the people. He however pointed out that God's heart is towards his people in matters of health and healing. He however pointed out that God has also promised healing saying: 'If my people called by my name will pray and repent from their ways, I will heal their land (Chronicles 7:14). The other scriptures that are commonly used to prove God's supernatural ability to heal are: Ex 23:25-26 'I will take away sickness from among you, and none will miscarry or be barren in your land. I will give you a full life span'; and Acts 10:38 'How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing, all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.'

Both Pentecostal and traditional healers believed that God's healing power extends to all diseases and infirmities. No illnesses are excluded from his great "benefit". They believed that God has promised to heal all the diseases, including serious illnesses, such as HIV and AIDS, which were emotionally devastating. Both traditional and Pentecostal healers have no problem with people's emotional responses during the healing procedure. These emotions are characterized by screaming, shouting, jumping, falling and rolling on the floor, laughing etc. However, the Pentecostals also hold the view that these emotional actions are not necessarily a prerequisite to healing. What it means is that healing has nothing to do with these different emotional responses, but simply shows the impact of the power of the Holy Spirit on the people being prayed for.

Slain in the Spirit or Slaying in the Spirit

The terms "slain in the Spirit" or "Slaying in the Spirit" is used by Pentecostal and charismatic Christians to describe a prostration, whereby an individual falls to the ground under the influence of the Holy Spirit. It is attributed to the power of the Holy Spirit and is sometimes referred to as falling under the power of the Holy Spirit. In her book *The Assemblies of God at the Cross-roads: Charisma and Institutional Dilemmas*, Margaret Poloma (1989: 28, 323-233) defines "Slaying in the Spirit" as "the power of the Holy Spirit so filling a person with a heightened inner awareness that the body energy fades away and the person collapses to the floor". She observes that this can take place in a variety of settings when a person prays in solitude, but can also occur in group settings such as small prayer groups, conferences or retreats, regular church services and in large healing crusades.

On 25 January 2015, Johannes Kgwarapi of the Apostolic Faith Mission, Broadhurst (Gaborone, Botswana) congregation preached on the subject "From Egypt to Canaan: A Journey of Faith". He pointed out that this involved God's divine intervention and that it was a journey of God's deliverance and provision. At the end of this particular service, Kgwarapi invited attendees to the front of the church to receive prayer for various needs. As the elders lay hands on the people, spiritual manifestations began to show up. Some were 'slain in the spirit', staggering from side to side and others fell on the floor facing up and with their eyes closed. When I later spoke to some of these people, they claimed that the experience was great and felt that the hand of God was touching and healing them. Some began to laugh, while others were singing songs of praise and worship and also speaking in tongues.³⁴

³⁴ Personal observation of the Apostolic Faith Mission Church service, 25 January 2015; Johannes Kgwarapi preaching on the topic "From Egypt to Canaan: A Journey of Faith", Broadhurst Congregation, Gaborone.

While the above method has been heavily criticized by non-Pentecostals, it is common in both the healing traditions of the traditional and Pentecostal healers. Among the Basarwa spirit possession, for instance, falling out and some form of slain in the spirit is a very common feature of the traditional healing activities. The recipient of the healing ritual often remains silent and slain in the spirit for many hours with dancers singing and dancing around the fire, as the healers continue to diagnose and prescribe medicine. The healing operations of these healers involve exorcism and deliverance services or exercise, which can go on for a long time.³⁵

The slaying in the spirit or falling out is believed to occur as a sign of victory over the disease or demonic force. It might signify the coming out of a pain from the body or defeat of or destruction of a tormenting spirit or device deliberately put in the body of the victim by witches, sorcerers etc. This spirit or work of witchcraft is exorcised out of the body by using more powerful medicine provided by the traditional healer, and by the power of the Word of God and the Holy Spirit through the Pentecostal healer.

In one of my visits to a Sangoma at Mookane in 1995, I found out that different people suffering from various kinds of diseases such as HIV and AIDS, cancer, tuberculosis, etc. were visiting these traditional healers for help from different parts of the country. Some of the sick people would remain with the healer for many days and weeks. I was told that even people of high social status such as politicians were paying regular visits to the Sangoma.³⁶ Slaying in the spirit is also common among Pentecostal healers. The manifestations that are found in a traditional setting sometimes persist in some Pentecostal churches in Botswana today. Pentecostal healing revival meetings can go on for many hours with people being slain in the spirit as part of the healing process. Some of those attending can also be seen staggering around as if drunk, which is termed as being “drunk with the spirit.”

In 1995, a huge Pentecostal revival meeting was organized by Pastor Patrick Anwuzia (Pastor and Founder of Zoe International Ministries). Anwuzia’s healing prayers included such manifestations as roaring, vomiting, “falling out” or being slain in the spirit for many hours. The services could go on for up to seven hours. As recipients of these prayers of healing regained consciousness, they would receive personal prophetic utterances and some would be told that they were demon–possessed and that unless they were delivered from those demons, they would not be totally healed from the diseases they were suffering from. Some would be given 2, 3, 4, 5, or 7 days of deliverance prayer rituals. The difference with the healing practice of traditional healers is that patients do not move to stay at the healer’s residence. Those attending sessions still return to their homes and come back to see the healer the next session. The period of the deliverance exercise is determined by the seriousness of the problem. Serious or difficult cases are normally given more days. Furthermore, the deliverance practice of Pentecostals greatly differs from that of the African traditional religions owing to the concept of demon possession or exorcism, which was not commonly used among the African traditional healers. What Pentecostals regarded as demons and evil, was described as and partly equated with the spirit of the ancestors in the traditional setting. The traditional healers

³⁵ Interview with Ntema Mazunga, December, 1995, Gweta; Isaac Schapera, (1960), *Livingstone’s Private Journals, 1851-1853*, (London: Chatto & Windus), p. 110; Dinama, 1985: 78.

³⁶ The study took place in Mookane Village in the central district of Botswana in December, 1995. The Sangomas from the Southern African region had congregated at the village for their annual religious practices and were led by a Swati woman.

did not therefore fight against demons or try to deliver their patients from ‘demonic spirits’.³⁷ However, they fight against malevolent spirits, witches, wizards and sorcerers.

Pentecostals such as the Zoe Ministries Worldwide International basically emphasize three fundamental themes: soul winning, deliverance and warfare, and prosperity gospel.

1.) Soul winning: The pastor through God’s power must be able to win members, mainly through preaching the gospel and praying for the sick. Signs and wonders are seen as some of the most powerful means for reaching the lost. Their services always ended with an altar call with miracles becoming a common feature.

2.) Deliverance and warfare prayer: Zoe teaching also focuses on deliverance and warfare. They believed that prayer had the power to liberate people from the bondage of sin, the power of the devil and demons. Zoe also holds the view that all Christians are in principle struggling with various levels of different kinds of demonic bondages.³⁸ Patrick Anwuzia usually asks those who come for deliverance to repeat the following prayer:

I cancel out all demonic working that may have passed on to me from my ancestors...I denounce all satanic assignments that are directed toward me and my family, and I cancel every curse that Satan and his workers have put on me ... I reject all other blood sacrifices whereby Satan may claim ownership on me. I cover myself with the blood of Jesus and call upon the fire of God to burn all the works of the enemy. I plead the blood of Jesus and ask all this in His name. Amen.³⁹

These prayers are for all desiring deliverance. Through faith and prayer it is believed that believers can be delivered from the power of curses and other demonic powers that dominate them and cause them to be sick. The deliverance exercise sometimes involves exorcism, the procedure during which evil spirits are believed to be “driven” or “cast” out of a person. It is sometimes performed when a newly saved Christian undergoes counseling, because it is believed that every demonic spirit must be cast out of him/her before the Spirit of Christ could enter and dwell in his/her heart. However, not only new converts, but also those already among the faithful are to be given pastoral care or go through exorcism if they showed signs of demonisation.⁴⁰

There is always a close connection made between sickness and demons. They assumed that at least some sickness had demonic origins. The casting out of evil spirits is sometimes accompanied by the laying on of hands and anointing with oil for healing. That sickness and sin are linked is supported by such passages as follows:

³⁷ See David Barnnet, *Unearthly powers*, pp. 61, 122-125; John Mbiti, (1990) *Introduction to African Traditional Religions*, p. 119

³⁸ This is sometimes referred to as a generational curse, which is believed to be passed from generation to generation. Patrick Anwuzia’s 1995 preaching at his crusades held at the University of Botswana and Boipuso Hall.

³⁹ 1995 Zoe Crusade – held at the Boipuso Hall and at the University of Botswana.

⁴⁰ Two of the candidates for the deliverance, who were members of the Tlokweng Apostolic Faith Mission, were put into a deliverance programme that was to last for 14 days. One of the women had been prophesied to be under the influence of the spirit of witchcraft. In my interview the woman expressed anger against the whole idea of deliverance and consequently stopped attending the deliverance exercise.

Afterwards Jesus findeth [the healed man] in the temple, and said unto him, Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee (John 5:14).

Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed (James 5:14-16).

And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself ... And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day (Luke 13:11-16)

These texts have encouraged Zoe members to believe that the view they hold is that since Christians still commit sin, and get sick, they perhaps also get demonized as well. Such a testimony as the above, of the woman who was struck down by a demonic illness, are given as an example of how demons cause more than just spiritual trouble. The above scriptural reference makes a strong link between sickness and disease; faith and sickness; sins and healing; Satan, spirit of infirmity and healing.

Methods and Stages of Deliverance Adopted by Zoe

The methods and stages of deliverance adopted by Zoe are many and varied. They strongly believe that they are based on biblical principles as follows⁴¹:

1.) The pure praise and proclamation of the truths of scripture are said to be enough to drive out demonic presence. They insist that every Christian should confidently proclaim the Lordship of Christ, who they say has been made the head over of all principalities and powers. They often sing a song as follows: “In the name of Jesus; In the name of Jesus; we have a victory. In the name of Jesus, Satan will have to flee. In the name of Jesus, Jesus, we have a victory”. Similarly, the traditional healers, on the other hand, also see a link between sickness and sin. The displeasure of the ancestors was believed to result in an epidemic, famine, drought, etc. To normalize the situation, there was need to appease the ancestors by making offerings and sacrifices.

2.) Spiritual warfare - deliverance is characterized by physical operations and manifestations. They term this exercise spiritual warfare. One member of Zoe church said: “The exercise looks stupid but creates fervent and aggressive prayer with astonishing results”.⁴² The stages of deliverance are as follows:

When a person is delivered he/she is held by a Zoeite with a hand. The person is turned round and round in circles, until he/she goes dizzy and falls down, sometimes vomiting. This is accompanied by the chanting of songs or mumbling of words, coupled with speaking in tongues. This includes shouting and warning the devil and his demons to leave the person in Jesus name. As they pray they kick, jump up and down, throw their hands and fists in the air as if they are in a karate training session, claiming to be

⁴¹ Personal witness in 1995, Ditshupo Hall Crusade, (Gaborone) led by Patrick Anwuzia founder of the Zoe Ministry Worldwide International.

⁴² See Ephesians 6:11-20.

crushing and destroying the devil and his demons. Patrick Anwuzia's TV programmes are similarly characterized by this style of prayer. He is sometimes seen and heard shouting: "the devil is in trouble, kick hard, get serious, do it brother, do it sister, do it in the name of Jesus".⁴³

When engaged in warfare prayer Zoe members act as if they are fighting a physical battle. They claim that this practice derives from the Bible which says (Eph. 6:10-20) that Christians are not fighting against flesh and blood, but against the spiritual powers of darkness or wickedness in high places and that their weapons are not carnal but mighty through Christ Jesus. Zoe teaches that Christians have been given power to trample upon devils. This is probably the reason for practically acting it out.

3.) The aspect of prosperity is closely connected to the two mentioned above in that material prosperity is understood to mean getting married, buying a big car, getting a good job, donating large sums of money to the church and living in good health.⁴⁴ The meaning of the name of the church, that is, Zoe, itself, reflects what the church stands for. It means abundant life and power provided by God. Their emphasis are on the here and now life – that is, the practical gospel that is accompanied by God's healing power. They therefore believe and teach that God's children must prosper because their God answers their prayers. They teach that God promised a land full of milk and honey to Abraham and his descendants. The basis of the prosperity and the healing message is positive confession of what God can do for his people. To advocate for prosperity they use Luke 6:38 which encourages generous giving. Great and generous givers are promised prosperity and multiplication of what they have given in faith. Some people therefore end up joining Zoe for these material blessings or benefits. Majority of people end up rallying to join the church for material gain, while some believe that God begins to perform all sorts of miracles in response to their generous giving. They claim that the miraculous will result in the cancellation of their mortgages and debts at the bank. They also teach that those who give to the work of God or to the man of God, will have huge amount of money deposited into their bank accounts. While this becomes the source of attraction of multitudes to these services, many orthodox Christians question the authenticity of these miracles, as they believe that they contradicted the scriptures.⁴⁵

The Role of the Traditional Healers Versus the Pentecostal Healers

No aspect of African culture has received so much criticism from Pentecostals as the practices of traditional medicine. The main objections to the therapy of the traditional healers, or witch-doctors as they are derisively called, are based on the false assumption that African medicine relies exclusively on magic, witchcraft, ancestors etc. Pentecostals made no attempt to verify the relationship between African medicament and disease. They also hold the view that the traditional healer deceives his patient with mysterious incantations and dispenses his medicines. People are called to keep their distance from

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Interview with Zwile Mbulawa, one of the key founding members of Zoe, in 1996.

⁴⁵ Interview with James Amanze, Department of Theology and Religious Studies, University of Botswana, 5 January 2015. He rejects the claim of some of these churches to heal HIV/AIDS.

traditional medicine in their efforts to appear civilized and not to be mistaken for backward savages.

Pentecostals further argue that the functions of the traditional healer are not limited to the diagnosis of diseases and the prescription of drugs. The traditional healer provides the needed answers to the adversities imposed on the community by outside forces that are beyond the comprehension of ordinary people such as curses, charms, evil spirits, witches and aggrieved ancestors. On the other hand the traditional religions see the traditional healer to be very knowledgeable in the medicinal uses of local plants, and do employ such herbs for far more uses than for the treatment of diseases. The traditional healer is the one who provides charms and prescribes the rituals to neutralize the effects of the enemy's charms, ward off evil spirits and intercede between the community and the ancestors. He/she is also consulted for advice on misfortunes and the intractable problems encountered in ordinary life. The traditional healer provides special medicines to protect private property, recites incantations, and offers sacrifices to appease the spirits of the deceased ancestors.

The traditional healer does not only stop at providing medicines for the cure of diseases. He/she also deals with the underlying curses and their causes which he/she must also remove. The concern of a traditional healer is, therefore, not only with diseases and healing strategies, but also with the provision of charms to intervene in almost all aspects of life. It is he/she who advises the people to embark on community purification rituals in order to remove the burden imposed on them for the contravention of the society's norms and taboos. Since there are no written instructions from the ancestors, it is the healer-priest who keeps the channel between the deities and the community open.

Conclusion

This essay has indicated that while the traditional religions and Pentecostal churches are guided and ruled by different religious beliefs, there are striking similarities between their healing practices. Their religious beliefs are responsible for the differences that exist between them. From the beginning both the traditional religions and the Pentecostal churches have laid great emphasis on health and healing. The essay has shown that healing practices in both the traditional religions and the Pentecostal churches have confirmed that African conviction is that spirituality and healing belong together. They both revolve around religious protection and were consulted because they were believed to deal with spiritual forces to reverse misfortunes and heal a wide range of diseases and infirmities. The major attraction for both Pentecostalism and traditional religion is their emphasis on healing. A Pentecostal pastor, like a traditional healer, is accepted as the religious specialist and seen as a man of God anointed by the power of God to heal the sick.

Both the traditional religions and the Pentecostal church practices have shown that there is a strong connection between religion and healing. Religion seeks to alter the way people perceive and process their experiences. This, in turn, can alter the course of a disease because of the significant influence of people's attitudes and physical well-being. In traditional religious systems, as well as in Pentecostalism, it's normal to attribute physical improvement to the supernatural action. Finally, healing practices do not only address personal challenges but also serve to heal the social disorders and problems of the community.

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