



Research article

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## Deliverance in the Religion of Banyarwanda: Perspectives for Contextualizing Salvation in the Presbyterian Church

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### ABSTRACT

This article examines the potential for using the concept of deliverance in Banyarwanda religious beliefs to contextualize the idea of salvation in the Presbyterian Church. Banyarwanda traditional healing practices incorporate deliverance as a crucial aspect of promoting physical and spiritual well-being. By comparing Banyarwanda traditional healing and Presbyterian theology, the article argues that deliverance can provide a unique perspective on the idea of salvation and its relevance to the Banyarwanda context. Incorporating deliverance practices into their understanding of salvation can help the Presbyterian Church engage with Banyarwanda culture and address the spiritual needs of its members. The paper highlights the importance of understanding the cultural context of religious practices and the potential for dialogue between different faith traditions to promote spiritual growth and healing.

**Keywords:**

*Deliverance, Tradition, Banyarwanda religious beliefs, Presbyterian Church, Salvation.*



## Introduction

The Banyarwanda people have a rich history and culture with deep-rooted spiritual beliefs that have been passed down for generations.<sup>1</sup> Deliverance, which refers to the act of being rescued or set free from bondage,<sup>2</sup> is an essential concept in the Banyarwanda religion. The Presbyterian Church, on the other hand, is a Christian denomination with a presence in Rwanda since 1907.<sup>3</sup> As a church, it has its understanding of salvation and deliverance, which may or may not align with the Banyarwanda perspective. This article seeks to explore the concept of deliverance in the Banyarwanda religion and the Presbyterian Church, highlighting their similarities and differences. The aim is to provide a framework for contextualizing salvation in the Presbyterian Church within the Banyarwanda context. Through this exploration, we hope to gain a deeper understanding of the Banyarwanda religion and its impact on the Presbyterian Church in Rwanda. To achieve research goals, the researcher employed qualitative research techniques such as conducting interviews and discussions, as well as reviewing available literature, due to the scarcity of written information on the religion that was being studied.

## The Banyarwanda concepts of God and life

Some Christians claim that before the arrival of the first missionaries, the Banyarwanda had no religion. However, when the first Protestant missionary, Johansen, visited King Musinga's court and spoke of God, Musinga replied that they already knew God and would prefer to be taught German instead.<sup>4</sup>

Before Western missionaries arrived in Rwanda, the Banyarwanda were already a monotheistic community with their own ways of worshipping God (Imana). The missionaries were impressed to find that the Banyarwanda had a deep knowledge and belief in Imana that had existed for a long time.<sup>5</sup> The Banyarwanda Religion is the cultural and spiritual heritage passed down to Rwandan descendants. This exploration delves into the Banyarwanda people's profound faith in God and their perception of life as a precious gift from Him, the author and sustainer.<sup>6</sup> Thus, life is sacred as it has a divine source.<sup>7</sup> In that belief, the Banyarwanda produced an idiom: "*Niyo ibeshaho byose* (God is the creator and sustainer of all things).<sup>8</sup> This shows the monotheistic faith connected to the Nyarwanda concept of life.

The Banyarwanda believe that living means transmitting life,<sup>9</sup> and every community member is responsible for preserving and sharing life.<sup>10</sup> They also believe that balance

<sup>1</sup> André, "Dieu au Pays des Mille Collines", 9.

<sup>2</sup> Asamoah-Gyadu, "African Charismatics", 164-200.

<sup>3</sup> Tharcisse & Laurant, "Histoire du Christianisme au Rwanda", 60.

<sup>4</sup> André, *Literary Function*, 9.

<sup>5</sup> André, A, *Literary Function*, 60.

<sup>6</sup> Wilhelm, "Religious Change and Christology", 29.

<sup>7</sup> Benezit, "African Theology", 19.

<sup>8</sup> Pauwels, "Imana et le Culte des Mânes", 7.

<sup>9</sup> Aylward, "Prayer in the Religious traditions", 22.



between the visible and invisible worlds, harmony and ethical obligations, determine the quality of life. The invisible world includes ancestors, and harmony is maintained through descendants' remembrance and veneration.<sup>11</sup> As a result, some Banyarwanda families observe a yearly day to remember and revere their deceased members.

The Banyarwanda Religion places great importance on health and healing, viewing them as fundamental themes of life. Illness is seen as a threat to life, while healing is considered a way of giving life.<sup>12</sup> Banyarwanda practitioners identify various causes of illness, including bewitchment, ancestors' discontent, attacks from malevolent spirits, and punishment for breaking taboos.<sup>13</sup> These causes are further elaborated upon.

## **Diagnosing causes of illness**

The Banyarwanda view diagnostic means as crucial in healing any illness. Unlike modern healing methods that use laboratory skills, Banyarwanda healing involves reading the book of nature based on cosmological beliefs and worldviews,<sup>14</sup> leading to holistic healing that encompasses the cure of not only the particular body part but also the household, family clan, and environment.<sup>15</sup>

### ***Bewitchment***

Bewitchment could be explained as witchcraft or harmful materials manipulated by witches to harm or kill humans or lives. It involves sorcery, black magic, and other harmful objects to kill someone.<sup>16</sup> For many Banyarwanda, bewitchment is the most dangerous cause of illness. Rwangabo states that bewitchment can act miraculously from a certain distance by invoking words intending to impose destructive force. However, bewitchment as a cause of illness demands seeking remedy in the Banyarwanda traditional treatment known as *kurogora*: removing *uburozi* from the bewitched person or something. It involves *kugangahura* (deliverance) for restoring the victim's life.<sup>17</sup>

### ***Ancestors' Discontent***

Banyarwanda believes that ancestors are not gods but should be venerated and respected.<sup>18</sup> They play an essential role in the lives of descendants by admonishing them to believe, worship, and live a moral life that praises God. Ancestors' discontent can lead to illnesses or

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* 22

<sup>11</sup> Francois-Xavier, "Vivre en Liberté", 176.

<sup>12</sup> Shorter, *Literary Function*, 60.

<sup>13</sup> Pierre Célestin, "La médecine traditionnelle au Rwanda", 42.

<sup>14</sup> Pierre Célestin, *Literary Function*, 24.

<sup>15</sup> Wulforst (ed), "Spirits, Ancestors and Healing", 337-40.

<sup>16</sup> Sempebwa, "African Traditional Moral Norms", 193.

<sup>17</sup> Francois Xavier, *Literary Function*, 42-44.

<sup>18</sup> André, *Literary Function*, 32.



other problems, and to appease them, people consult diviners to find a cure.<sup>19</sup> Repairs to the broken relationship must be made before an individual regains health.<sup>20</sup>

### ***Attacks of malevolent spirits***

While Benevolent denotes good and friendly spirits, Malevolent denotes bad and aggressive spirits.<sup>21</sup> According to Banyarwanda beliefs, illness can be caused by a malevolent spirit entering an individual's life, resulting in abnormal behavior. In such cases, a diviner must be consulted to diagnose the nature and cause of the illness. The diviner then advises on the necessary conditions to cast out the evil spirit to facilitate the patient's recovery.<sup>22</sup> To restore health and cast out evil spirits in Banyarwanda society, diviners use *kugangahura* techniques and the cult of benevolent spirits. A great priest communicates with powerful spirits to confront and cast out malevolent spirits.<sup>23</sup> Communication with spirits is rooted in the belief that death is only the physical death of the body, and not the end of a person's entire being, which comprises the body and soul.<sup>24</sup>

### ***Transgression of taboos***

Taboos are cultural norms or beliefs that guide behavior and conduct, and their violation can have serious consequences.<sup>25</sup> In Banyarwanda culture, taboos are associated with religious or spiritual beliefs, and breaking them challenges the community's values and traditions.<sup>26</sup> The philosophy of taboo aims to safeguard cultural values and maintain harmony and unity within families and clans. Violating taboos can bring bad omens, but traditional specialists can perform deliverance (*kugangahura*) to purify the family and victim and remove negative consequences.<sup>27</sup>

### **Banyarwanda religion and healing perspectives**

The Banyarwanda methods of healing "*Ubuwuzi bwa Gihanga*"<sup>28</sup>, "denotes the reality that Imana (God) is the author of healing"; which is His domain.<sup>29</sup> The appellation derives from the fact that God plays the primary role in Healing. With this conviction, any attempt towards addressing illness or any related physical or spiritual problem starts and ends with invoking

<sup>19</sup> Wulffhorst (ed), *Literary Function*, 31-32.

<sup>20</sup> Wulffhorst, "Spirits, Ancestors and Healing", 37.

<sup>21</sup> Fix, Angels, "Devils, and Evil Spirits", 527-547. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2709796>.

<sup>22</sup> J N K, "African Heritage and Contemporary Christianity", 64.

<sup>23</sup> Emmanuel, *Literary Function*, 232.

<sup>24</sup> Sylvester, "A Haya-African concept of God", 133.

<sup>25</sup> Francois Xavier, *Literary Function*, 40-41.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> Gihanga is a name that signifies the essence of God as the ultimate Creator. It carries the meaning of "He who brings forth" or "The Divine Creator." This name highlights the powerful nature of God's creative abilities and encompasses the notion of God's role in the creation of all things.

<sup>29</sup> Interview with Rutangarwamaboko, 22.06.2021.



*Imana*, which is calling upon Him to intervene in the situation by guiding and monitoring the healing process.<sup>30</sup> It involves the use of a dialogical short prayer by the practitioner whose primary purpose is to invoke and request God to provide victory.

## The Banyarwanda Deliverance Perspectives

The Banyarwanda understanding of healing encompasses being rescued from all forms of life-threatening situations that humans may face. Rooted in their culture, language, and religion, the concept of *kugangahura* in Banyarwanda demands the use of ritual techniques to address various illnesses. The term *kugangahura* carries the same meaning and reflects the Christian "deliverance". It derives from *ubuganga* (illness); hence, the Kinyarwanda idiomatic saying reads, "*Nta buganga butagira ubugangahuzi*" meaning no illness without a cure. *Ubuganga* could be an infection, disease, contamination, damage to someone, or something. Therefore, *Ubuganga* (illness) can attack someone, something, or somewhere of which deliverance (*kugangahura*) can be applied accordingly.<sup>31</sup> Thus, deliverance as a crosscutting phenomenon incorporates healing rituals.<sup>32</sup>

Explaining the use and significance of deliverance for the Banyarwanda, Rutangarwamaboko says that any illness has to be wiped out by undergoing deliverance. In this regard, deliverance denotes a rescue from binding forces against humans or other related social, spiritual, and physical problems like not getting married, sterility, sickness, and the like having root causes in the social and religious backgrounds.<sup>33</sup> It demands applying means of casting out malevolent spirits from the victimized person, thus setting him or her free. Usually, it is done through communication and fighting the malevolent spirit by the priest who has a powerful benevolent spirit to confront and cast out evil spirits from the victim.<sup>34</sup> In most cases, divination (*kuragura*) plays a significant role in deliverance.<sup>35</sup> Divination has been explained as a practice of diagnosing the causes of illness by the Diviner who detects the illness or related problems.<sup>36</sup> It involves using materials with which to seek the cause of illness. It is also done by shaking gourds by the diviner or priest who invokes

<sup>30</sup>Interview with Twagirimana, 16.6.2021.

<sup>31</sup> Interview with Jean Bosco Mubashankwaya, 22.08.2021. Mubashankwaya is a Roman Catholic church member and Traditionalist healer of bone fractures and other wounds. He heals miraculously because he doesn't need to see the victim; he only receives the messenger from him or her and applies his healing rituals. These later are always successful immediately to the extent that the broken bone becomes healed even before the arrival back of the messenger.

<sup>32</sup> Interview with Jean D'Amour Karekezi, 12.02.2021. Even though baptized, Jean D'Amour Karekezi remains engaged in the Nyarwanda Religion.

<sup>33</sup> Interview with Rutangarwamaboko, Kigali, 22.06. 2021. Rutangarwamaboko is the traditionalist Healer and Diviner, very famous in the Rwandan Society. He holds the title of High Priest (*Imandwa nkuru*) in the Nyarwanda Religion. He is at the same time the Director of the Rwandan Cultural Center "Ikigo Nyarwanda cy'Ubuzima bushingiye ku muco" that is based in Kigali-Rwanda.

<sup>34</sup> Interview with Karekezi, 12.02.2021

<sup>35</sup> Interview with Rutangarwamaboko, 22.06.2021.

<sup>36</sup> Interview with Rutangarwamaboko, 22.06.2021.



spirits to amount and speaks through his mouth. He thus becomes their medium. Once the cause of the problem is known, the curing process officially starts.<sup>37</sup> It is important to highlight that *Kuraguza* is carried out by clients who seek the services of a diviner or priest to determine the root cause of their illnesses or related problems. On the other hand, Kuragura is performed by the diviner or priest to help individuals facing different challenges.<sup>38</sup>

## The Presbyterian concept of Salvation

The Presbyterian Church believes that Jesus Christ is the only way to God and that he is the savior of humanity who reconciles people with God and offers them a new kind of life. They believe that Jesus was God in human form and that his life, death, and resurrection made it possible for people to be rescued from their sins and brought into the family of God, which is the Church.<sup>39</sup> Calvin emphasized that humans lost their dignity and value through Adam's fall, but Jesus came as a mediator to restore human dignity and allow people to approach and understand God.<sup>40</sup>

Irenaeus believed that God is understood through Jesus Christ, who accomplished all the work of God.<sup>41</sup> The Cross is the central symbol of Christianity, and Jesus' death on it has opened up a new possibility for living and a new relationship between God and humans, resulting in forgiveness and reconciliation.<sup>42</sup> It implies that for Presbyterians, salvation involves regeneration through the Holy Spirit, conversion through faith and repentance, and living a new life as followers of Jesus Christ by God's grace. Repentance involves a change of direction in mind and life, renouncing sins to live a new life.<sup>43</sup>

- ***Contextualization: What is it and what for?***

Contextualization is the process of understanding and interpreting theology by considering the local context. Rather than trying to apply a pre-existing theology to a new context, it involves seeking to understand the context and use it as a means for contextualizing and understanding theology. This process allows for the development of local or new theology.<sup>44</sup> Moila sees contextualization as a way of getting the gospel message heard in different

<sup>37</sup> Interview with Katakuka, 14.06.2021.

<sup>38</sup> Interview with Mubashankwaya, 22.08.2021.

<sup>39</sup> This statement is taken from the "Book of Confessions" of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), which is a collection of historic creeds and confessions that have been adopted by the church throughout its history. The statement reflects the central beliefs of the Christian faith, including the doctrine of the incarnation, and affirms the Presbyterian Church's commitment to the authority of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

<sup>40</sup> Institutes of the Christian Religion, Book 2, Chapter 1, Section 4.

<sup>41</sup> Gabus, "Parole de Dieu, Paroles d'hommes", 52.

<sup>42</sup> Donald, "A brief Introduction: Presbyterian beliefs", 54-58.

<sup>43</sup> Donald, *Literary Function*, 79-82.

<sup>44</sup> Sylvester, *Literary Function*, 45-46.





societies, enabling it to reach and touch people's hearts in every generation.<sup>45</sup> However, Contextual theology considers the spirit and message of the Gospel, the Christian tradition, the culture, and social changes in that culture.<sup>46</sup> Bevans emphasizes that contextual theology should begin by addressing people's actual problems and concerns rather than imposing questions from other contexts.<sup>47</sup>

Therefore, the goal of Contextualization is to find a meaningful and practical way to apply theological concepts of deliverance and salvation to the Banyarwanda Christians, and the Presbyterian Church as a whole. This involves examining both the past and present and understanding how they connect and support each other.

### **Cultural Components for Hosting Christianity in Africa**

Mbiti emphasizes the importance of contextualizing Christian theology in Africa by taking into consideration the African context, beliefs, and experiences of God.<sup>48</sup> He also emphasizes that Christianity must adapt to the cultures it encounters.<sup>49</sup> Bediako adds to this by saying that African religious heritage could have been a vehicle to convey Gospel truths to Africa. In summary, the Banyarwanda, like other Africans, have a genuine understanding of God and ways of communicating with Him that should be considered when contextualizing Christianity in Africa.<sup>50</sup>

Mbiti<sup>51</sup> and Bediako<sup>52</sup> assert the importance of contextualization in understanding Christianity in Africa, including the need to consider African beliefs and experiences of God. However, Magesa proposes a new method of studying African religions, which emphasizes the link between the African spiritual worldview and Christianity.<sup>53</sup> Hence, the Banyarwanda Religion should be taken seriously as it contains both foundations for abundant life and those that threaten it.

Mbiti emphasizes that African religion values and celebrates life through various rituals, festivals, and ceremonies. He believes that Christianity in Africa should reflect African culture and identity to avoid division within the Christian community. As a result, he encourages African Christians to incorporate traditional African customs into their Christian practices and utilize inherited religious insights to address current societal needs.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Moila, "Challenging issues in African Christianity", 3.

<sup>46</sup> Stephen, "Models of Contextual Theology", 1.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, 53.

<sup>48</sup> John, "The Crisis of Mission in Africa", 430-431.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Bediako, "Christianity in Africa", 60.

<sup>51</sup> John, *Literary Function*, 430-431.

<sup>52</sup> Bediako, *Literary Function*, 60.

<sup>53</sup> Magesa, L. *African Religion: The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life*. Maryknoll, Orbis Books. 1997, p.12.

<sup>54</sup> Mbiti, J. *African Religions and Philosophy*, General Printers Limited. 1975, pp. 185-201).

**Salvation for a holistic life**

In Banyarwanda culture, salvation is seen as a state of being saved from danger or catastrophic situations, whether they are physical or spiritual. This idea is reflected in Banyarwanda sayings and the use of God-bearing names that illustrate the state of being saved. The Banyarwanda view healing and salvation as addressing all dimensions of life: body, soul, spirit, community, politics, economics, and nature.<sup>55</sup>

In contrast, within the Christian context, specifically in the Presbyterian Church, salvation is viewed as being bestowed by God through Jesus Christ. The church upholds the notion of holistic salvation, which encompasses all aspects of human existence, including the physical, mental, and spiritual dimensions. The foundation of the church's belief in holistic salvation stems from Jesus' teachings, wherein he proclaimed that he came to provide abundant life for all of humanity.<sup>56</sup>

The Banyarwanda religion and Presbyterianism differ in their perspectives on the causes of natural phenomena. The former considers many of them to have spiritual root causes, while the latter emphasizes holistic solutions through diaconia, medical treatment, and development projects. However, faith remains a significant motivating factor in both approaches.

The Presbyterian Church has faced difficulties throughout its history, particularly related to the concept of deliverance being only partially, superficially, or not at all addressed. This has caused some members to leave the church and join neo-Pentecostal churches that prioritize more in-depth teaching on salvation, worship, and spirituality. This issue has caused a division within the Presbyterian community, with some traditionalists prioritizing Presbyterian traditions and doctrines and others following neo-Pentecostal teachings. To address this problem, the General Synod recognized a lack of in-depth teaching for church members on the concepts of salvation, worship, spirituality, and contextualization as the main cause.<sup>57</sup>

The synod recognized the issue of poverty among church members and resolved that teaching and preaching should address all aspects of human life, including environmental, economic, and ethical issues.<sup>58</sup> However, Ngendahyo believes that teaching alone may not be enough to address the problems facing church members.<sup>59</sup> One deliverance client stated a preference for a pastor who preaches the Word of God in a way that touches their soul, mind, body, and daily life, indicating that preaching needs to be relevant and meaningful to people's everyday lives.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>55</sup> Interview with Kandema Julie, 02.07.2021.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. The Statutes of the Presbyterian Church in Rwanda, signed in June 2019.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. The report of the EPR Evangelism Commission in the General Synod of 1990, 5.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, 6.

<sup>59</sup> Interview with Ngendahyo Julius, 01.07.2021.

<sup>60</sup> Interview, Anonymous, 07.06.2021.



**Deliverance Ministry, a Challenge to the Presbyterian Church**

The Neo-Pentecostal churches and charismatic movements, with their emphasis on deliverance ministry, have gained popularity among the Banyarwanda, including members of historical mainline churches. These churches teach about the relationship between deliverance and God's salvation and believe that salvation should have a transformative and holistic effect on believers' lives.<sup>61</sup>

The concepts of deliverance and salvation are not contradictory but complementary, as noted in the field study. While salvation is being saved from a deadly situation, deliverance is the means to achieve salvation.<sup>62</sup> The two concepts are inseparable and depend on each other, according to various Christian perspectives. Salvation and deliverance function as fraternal twins that are carried and reared together and both are considered ongoing processes rather than a single event.<sup>63</sup> Deliverance is viewed as a tool or agent of salvation, with Jesus being seen as a deliverer in himself. Church ministers are called to teach that deliverance and salvation are complementary and that deliverance is a means to achieve salvation.<sup>64</sup>

**Contextualizing Salvation for Presbyterian Church Mission Service**

Banyarwanda religion and deliverance perspectives are the means for contextualizing salvation in the Presbyterian Church. It demands an understanding of salvation from the perspectives of Banyarwanda and Christians. For the latter, Salvation generally refers to the deliverance from worldly bondage, threats, danger, illness, or death from whatever endangers the existence or identity of a people, a community, or individuals.<sup>65</sup>

The research found that due to the absence of deeper research or not at all on Banyarwanda culture, its values, and worldviews, most Mission Christianity missionaries not only rejected Banyarwanda cultural concepts but also strongly taught converts to renounce their culture as well as its related religious concepts. It led to either misunderstanding or partial understanding of the Christian message that is the Gospel.<sup>66</sup> Here lies the problem of some Christians quitting mainline churches and joining Pentecostal movements on the claim that they may get the so-called genuine understanding of the Christian Gospel that may address life problems.

According to Imasogie, missionaries upon arriving in Rwanda claimed that the Banyarwanda-African worldview, as well as their ways of dealing with life-threatening evil forces, were not only against the Christian faith but also did not make sense.<sup>67</sup> In this regard,

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<sup>61</sup> Interview Ingabire, 14.06.2021.

<sup>62</sup> Interview with Uwiragiye Assinapol, 10.07.2021.

<sup>63</sup> Interview with Mukamana Jeannette, 16.06.2021. Jeannette is a Parish responsible in the Presbyterian Church in Rwanda.

<sup>64</sup> Interview with Mukamurenzi Beatha, 08.06.2021.

<sup>65</sup> Daniel, "The Cambridge Dictionary of Christianity", 1125-1127.

<sup>66</sup> Holter(ed), "Interpreting Classical Religious Texts", 186.

<sup>67</sup> Osadolor, "Guidelines for Christian Theology in Africa", 65.



mission Christianity missionaries introduced Western cultural values and ways of living along with Christian teachings or doctrines, among them were educational and medical services with which to replace the Banyarwanda informal education and method of treatment and healing. Gatwa contends that missionaries emphasized modern medical treatment in hospitals and therefore demanded that Banyarwanda not use traditional healing methods in favor of modern medicine.<sup>68</sup> Nevertheless, most of Banyarwanda did not accept the missionaries' imperative ideas because some illnesses cannot be healed in modern hospitals as they demand undergoing deliverance, which was already rejected by missionaries. Consequently, they continued to apply traditional healing practices even in hiding.<sup>69</sup> It denotes not only the significance of Banyarwanda cultural religious concepts but also their applicability and impact on Rwandan Society and Christianity at large.

### **The Significance of Banyarwanda Cultural Religious Concepts**

The researcher found that the Banyarwanda cultural components played a major role in incepting and hosting Christianity, thus easily accepted by most Banyarwanda converts. Along with this, some converts implicitly applied their cultural religious knowledge and experience of God for perceiving Missionaries' teachings through their lens and perspectives. It led them to comprehend Christian faith from the framework of indigenous understanding and worshipping God.<sup>70</sup> However, such an attempt was applied to other Banyarwanda cultural concepts like deliverance, salvation, curing, healing, etc.

The Banyarwanda traditional therapeutics as well as some Presbyterian Christians implicitly or explicitly apply diagnostic knowledge and practices, toward preventing, curing, and healing. It involved the use of herbs, animal or mineral substances, and other methods<sup>71</sup> based on socio-cultural and religious knowledge, behavior, and beliefs related to physical, mental, and social well-being<sup>72</sup>. For Omosade and Adelumo, it demonstrated the role of African Religion in healing, by asserting that every religious society should exist not for disruption of people's well-being, but only for the well-being of the community.<sup>73</sup> It entails the applicability and impact of Banyarwanda's cultural and religious concepts.

### **Applicability of Banyarwanda-African cultural concepts**

For Moila, the applicability of any concept implies getting the message heard in a respective people's context.<sup>74</sup> Such an attempt has been identified by African contextual theologians like Mbiti, Bediako, Twesigye, Kato, Mugambi, Magesa, and others, as contextualization of Christian teachings, with emphasis on the Gospel and church doctrines.

<sup>68</sup> Tharcisse & Laurant, "Histoire du Christianisme au Rwanda", p.71.

<sup>69</sup> Boniface (dir), "Sagesse et vie quotidienne en Afrique", 189.

<sup>70</sup> André, *Literary Function*, 63-66.

<sup>71</sup> Pierre Claver, *Literary Function*, p. 16.

<sup>72</sup> Adam (ed), "Religion and Health in Africa", 36.

<sup>73</sup> Omosade & Dopamu, "West African Traditional Religion", 239.

<sup>74</sup> Moila, *Literary Function*, 74-75.



The practice of contextualization in Christianity can help to break down negative attitudes towards traditional worldviews among some Banyarwanda Christians. Incorporating Rwandan culture into Christian beliefs offers hope for the Church in Rwanda and beyond.<sup>75</sup> Ela argues that imitative Christianity cannot solve people's problems, and repeating old doctrines can hinder African creativity.<sup>76</sup> Unfortunately, traditional Churches often fail to provide a better alternative, offering empty sermons that do not bring change.<sup>77</sup> However, genuine contextualization can have positive outcomes for the Church and its members, including a correct understanding of the Gospel, worship, faith, deliverance, salvation, and holistic healing. Some Pentecostal-Charismatic ministers use wrong contextualization to make money, but a well-applied approach can lead to a significant impact.

Deliverance implies reacting to life-threatening forces among the Banyarwanda. Accordingly, it attracts Banyarwanda Christians taking into account some factors. First, it has been revealed that deliverance is part and parcel of the Banyarwanda Religion. It could be applied to understand and contextualize Christian concept of salvation along deliverance perspectives. In other words, the practices of deliverance, such as praying over the sick, blessings, laying on hands, and other healing rituals, are perspectives of deliverance per se.

On the contrary, the mainline churches neglect these cultural practices and therefore are not applied to understand the concept of salvation, deliverance, and healing. Consequently, some converts quit their churches and join charismatic movements that apply deliverance to undertake Christian ministry of healing.

Secondly, it has been found that deliverance, known as *Kugangahura*, has been applied as a crosscutting healing method among the Banyarwanda throughout their history; and it is similar to the Christian notion of deliverance.

Thirdly, in case deliverance practices are used in the Rwandan context, they become more meaningful to the Banyarwanda converts.

Fourthly, the need for deliverance ministry has roots in the fact that missionary work in Rwanda done by mainline churches left untouched some life issues and problems related to the Christian faith, life, and healing. This challenges the Presbyterian Church to undertake more profound research on traditional and biblical models, *kugangahura*, and deliverance. This should be done through contextualization of *kugangahura*, into Banyarwanda cultural context leading to a correct understanding. This complies with the educational statement that "all learning processes start from the known to the unknown."<sup>78</sup> This could be done in two ways: to indigenize the biblical model on the one hand and to Christianize the traditional model *kugangahura* on the other.

<sup>75</sup> Mika and Andrew(eds), "Charismatic Renewal in Africa", 152.

<sup>76</sup> Jean Marc, "My Faith as an African", 143.

<sup>77</sup> Samuel, "Salvation, Deliverance and Well-Being", 30.

<sup>78</sup> Sylvester (in Holter(ed), *Literary Function*, 181.



When *Kugangahura* is contextualized, it could be applied as a missionary approach. Along with this, the Church could be positioned to participate methodologically in the mission of God, which determines the life and existence of the Christian Church.

## Conclusion

The Religion of Banyarwanda provides a unique perspective on contextualizing salvation in the Presbyterian Church through the study of deliverance. This approach recognizes the spiritual root causes of the phenomenon and promotes holistic solutions that address members' spiritual, physical, and emotional needs. It aligns with the Banyarwanda belief in applying spiritual solutions to problems. To successfully contextualize salvation, the Church must prioritize in-depth teaching on the concepts of salvation, worship, and spirituality. A lack of vital and deeper teaching has been identified as the main challenge in retaining members. By educating members, they can develop a deeper understanding and appreciation for Presbyterian traditions and doctrines, reducing the likelihood of division. Contextualizing salvation based on the Banyarwanda perspective can enhance the Church's mission service and address its challenges. By focusing on spiritual root causes, holistic solutions, and in-depth teaching, the Church can promote a deeper understanding and appreciation for its traditions and doctrines while effectively serving the needs of its members.

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