


Religious hydro-healing and medical hydrotherapy: Links, benefits, contrasts and challenges

**Author:**Daniel O. Orogun¹ **Affiliation:**

¹Department of Religion Studies, Faculty of Theology and Religion, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa

Corresponding author:

Daniel Orogun,
arcorogun2@gmail.com

Dates:

Received: 18 June 2024

Accepted: 27 July 2024

Published: 06 Nov. 2024

How to cite this article:

Orogun, D.O., 2024, 'Religious hydro-healing and medical hydrotherapy: Links, benefits, contrasts and challenges', *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 80(2), a9983. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v80i2.9983>

Copyright:

© 2024. The Author.
Licensee: AOSIS. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution License.

There seems to be some recognition of the relevance of dihydrogen oxide (water) in many spheres. Among others, literature in poetry, religious texts and medical science, address the value of water in emotional, physical and psychological healings. To understudy how religion, spirituality and medical science connect and contrast in domesticating water for healing purposes, this article undertook literary research on religious and medical hydro-healings in Christianity, African and Native American traditional religions, and medical science. It presented links, benefits, challenges and contrasts between spiritual healing and medical water therapy as well as inter-religious connections. Based on the literature, the article discovered that spiritual hydro-healing is spiritual, instantaneous and non-scientific, but medical hydrotherapy is organic, naturopathic, gradual and scientific or logical. On the positive side, the article found that indigenous spiritual knowledge is a key motivating factor in the popularity of hydro-healing practices. Whereas, on the negative, it observed the danger of the grey areas of spiritual hydro-healings which include, but are not limited to, unethical practices, commercialisation of healing waters, addiction, river baptism mortality and the quest for instantaneous hydro-healing leading to health hazards and death.

Contribution: The article concluded with an urgent call to stakeholders to pay attention to the hydro-healing practices that can compromise public health and safety.

Keywords: Africa; Christianity; hydro-healing; hydrotherapy; medical; Native America; traditional religions.

Introduction

Water is one of our most important spiritual medicines (Miller 2018). In animism, water connects people and builds relationships. In Hinduism, water holds cleansing powers for purification. The Buddhists practise water offerings at their shrines. In Islam, it represents wisdom and is used for ablutions before prayers (Stelzle 2022; Zipwater 2017). In Bailey's (2012:1) historical record:

There are documented uses of water in medicine dating as far back at 1500 B.C., when it was used to combat fever. Prior to becoming President, Franklin D. Roosevelt helped popularize hydrotherapy in America when he claimed pool exercises helped combat the leg paralysis brought on by polio. Physical therapists began training in the use of water exercise during the following decades, with its popularity as a treatment rising and ebbing periodically.

Given Bailey's claim and reviewed literature, this article discusses the use of water in spiritual healing and its connection with medical therapy. First of all, concepts are clarified. Following the clarifications are discussions on hydro-healing in selected religious traditions and medical therapy. Subsequently, links, benefits, contrasts and challenges are delineated before the conclusion.

Conceptual clarification

Three nomenclatures are adopted, namely, hydro, spiritual-hydro-healing and medical-hydrotherapy. Hydro is from the word hydrogen; one of the chemical elements of water or dihydrogen oxide (hydrogen and oxygen). Healing and therapy are interchanged as they both speak of healing in this article's context. Among the three, hydrotherapy is the denominator which underscores the role of water in different kinds of healing. Thus, the background and clarification of hydrotherapy take centre stage.

Note: Special Collection: Interreligious Dialogue, sub-edited by Jaco Beyers (University of Pretoria, South Africa).

Read online:

Scan this QR code with your smart phone or mobile device to read online.

Hydrotherapy

'Hydrotherapy, or water therapy, is a complementary therapy that uses water for health purposes. Depending on the industry and use, the treatments can be referred to as aquatic therapy or hydrotherapy' (Sullivan 2020; Tripathy 2015:64). Hydrotherapy is the use of water to treat a disease or to maintain health and 'It was part of a health movement that led to the development of naturopathic medicine' (Healthwise 2023). Additionally, Fleming & Gutknecht (2010:1–2) submits that it was used widely in ancient cultures, including Egypt, Persia, China, India and Israel before its establishment as a traditional cure in Europe. According to O'Young et al. (2009), hydrotherapy involves using water externally or internally for medical dysfunction treatments. According to Lin et al. (2014):

Father Sebastian Kneipp, a nineteenth-century Bavarian monk, is said to be the father of hydrotherapy. Kneipp believed that disease could be cured by using water to eliminate waste from the body. Hydrotherapy is popular in Europe and Asia, where people 'take the waters' at hot springs and mineral springs. In North America, it is often recommended as self-care by naturopathic doctors.

Fritz, Chaitow and Hymel (2008:432–443) delineate hydrotherapy as a distinct form of exercise that combines well with massage. Water is a near-perfect natural body balancer and is necessary for life. It accounts for the largest percentage of human body weight (Fritz et al. 2008:432–443). Given these clarifications, the spiritual aspect of healing in this article will be referred to as spiritual hydro-healing, while the medical will be called medical hydrotherapy.

Spirituality of water in poems

Is water spiritual? Answering this question with poems is a good precursor to religious hydro-healing discussions.

The poem of T.S. Eliot, titled *The Dry Salvages*, offers meditations on water. He describes water as the connector of God, humans and nature. He claims 'The sea is *all about us*. The river is a "god", but the sea has "many gods" and "many voices": a polytheistic force of nature' (Eliot n.d.). Furthermore, in his poem titled *Water*, in the 1964 volume called *The Whitsun Weddings*, Philip Larkin describes water as 'A fitting subject for a religion: after all, we rely on water and our lives revolve around it as we drink it and wash and bathe in it' (Larkin n.d.). Thus, his religious thought hypothetically places water at the centre of many things. Another important poem is *The Beauty of Water* by Ryan Moon (2016:1) with the following lines:

Whenever I hear water and am outside, it instantly calms me ...
The still water and the serenity of lakes' surroundings make it a very special place of pure happiness. Whenever I'm near a lake or mountain I feel like I'm in a higher state of consciousness. I believe that this is because it is a place of peace, profoundness and beauty in its truest sense. I feel as though I'm in the presence of something truly great, majestic and benevolent. Like a feeling of overwhelming love, knowledge and power. This is our creator, our lord ... I feel that water is like a trinity; a trinity of flowingness, calmness and purity.

These three poems reveal the popularity and spirituality of water.

Hydro-healing in religious traditions

Water has many functions in religions. It is claimed in some traditions that lakes, rivers and springs have the power to heal the sick and overcome death. Some are even regarded as divinities (Rydving, 2021; cf. Armstrong & Armstrong 2006:367–384). In religious rituals, it is used for bathing, washing, drinking and sacrificing. Therefore, it is no surprise that the largest religious ritual in the world, which is the Hindu Kumbha Mela, is a water ritual (Rydving, 2021:1–6). Without any intent to denigrate others, this section discusses the spirituality of water and its hydro-healing essence in Christianity, African and Native American religious traditions.

Hydro-healing in Christian literature

Solomon's allegorical use of water to describe love and a woman as sweet water implies the value of water (Pr 5:15–23 1–8). Song of Solomon 8:7 also describes water as 'mighty' in the Berean Bible. With the hindsight that water and love have spiritual status, Wamplerp (2015a) interprets the scenario as human love often 'swept away' by rivers of distraction via earthly pain and pleasures. While God's love is greater than the power of water, it does not diminish the fact that water can challenge the power of love. Thus, Solomon's songs resonate with the spirituality of water in poems presented earlier and show how powerful water is in religious ecosystems.

Song of Solomon 5:2–8 continues the description of the connections of water, love, God and humans. In the text, the male figure arrives in the early morning, drenched with dew (water) and waiting naked outside the door of his lover, the female figure. Unfortunately, he disappears while his lover, in eager anticipation, opens the door (Wamplerp 2015b). In chapter 4 verses 4:9–15, Wamplerp (2015c) claims that physical love is more implied by Solomon with the first reference, 'You are a garden locked up, my sister, my bride; you are a spring enclosed, a sealed fountain' (v. 12). In the words of Wamplerp (2015c):

If we take this passage to be an allegory the man would be God or Christ, and the woman is either the Israelites or the Church or modern-day Christ followers. The bridegroom (God or Christ) seems to be telling the Israelites and the Church that they have 'enclosed the spring'.

This may equally speak of an intimate relationship between a husband and wife. With metaphorical hindsight, God and humans are connected in the space of two spiritual elements: water and love.

In Psalm 84 and Deuteronomy 32, Baab (2020) calls water something cool, clear and refreshing. It cleanses, heals and energises. It heals a hurting city, country and the world. In verse 84:5–7, Baab asserts that water is linked to happiness and strength. She subscribes to the wonders of spiritual force in converting the valley of Baca (a dry place) into a spring

that refreshes and renews the human and aquatic spaces. Additionally, Baab (2020) presents the songs of Moses in Deuteronomy 32:1–4, as an intriguing passage about water that refreshes and provides support for the broken-hearted. Likewise, John 4:14 and 7:37–39 are verses connecting water to the Holy Spirit (Baab 2020).

Bible case studies of hydro-healing

History has shown that water symbolises hope and healing (Lima 2024). For example, many pilgrims dip themselves in the Jordan River believing it has extraordinary powers to bless and heal. Christian leaders distribute the Jordan River water to the sick and the needy, hoping it will bring healing and hope. The story of Naaman's skin disease healed in Jordan River is a perfect scenario (2 Kings 5:1–19). It can be described as a hydro-healing miracle. Lima (2024) opines that such spiritual powers of the Jordan River may be connected to Jesus' baptism in the river; an act which symbolises the beginning of his ministry (Mt 3:13–17). Thus, the river is perceived to possess the divine healing power of Jesus the Healer. Furthermore, from people's testimonies, Lima (2024) delineates the healing benefits of water as: (1) being able to create peace and calmness, (2) engaging emotional and physical healing and (3) improving recovery from stress, anxiety, and depression.

A second scenario is the healing of the man at the pool at Bethesda. With emphasis on verse 4, John 5:1–16 describes the spiritual engagement which led to a miraculous hydro-healing following an annual performance of spiritual rituals (steering the water) to activate healing. Concomitantly, God's assurance to bless bread and water in Exodus 23:25 and heal sicknesses further confirms the spiritual pattern of domesticating water for spiritual healing.

The third scenario is the healing of a man born blind. Mixing clay and saliva to heal the blind man in John chapter 9:1–8 represents another spiritual hydro-healing. Water use here may not be contestable as it is medically considered that saliva is 99% water and 1% protein and salts (Iorgulescu 2009:303).

The last scenario is about Jesus in Matthew 3:13–17. When he was baptised, heaven was opened, the spirit of God descended upon him, and a voice came from heaven. Although there was no record of healing, these three events signify a supernatural consequence of water immersion. Overall, these scenarios are evidence of spiritual hydro-healing in Christian literature.

A brief example of spiritual hydro-healing in the African Church

As far back the twentieth century, using water for spiritual healing was maximised by Joseph Ayo Babalola who popularised *Omi iyè* [water of life] in the African church – a practice that at no time had official approval nor disapproval (Folarin 2018:18). According to Ogunrinade, Babalola began spiritual hydro-healing practices after a spiritual encounter in 1928 when Christ in a revelation gave him a bottle of water to drink. On one occasion, he blessed water and served it to a pregnant woman with a four-day delayed delivery in Omu-

Aran. It was believed then that the spiritual force in the water pushed the baby out. Such testimony, among others, motivated other Christ Apostolic Church (CAC) clergies to adopt spiritual hydro-healing practices (Folarin 2018:19–20). For example, Prophet Timothy Oluwole Obadare used water and anointing oil for healing in his crusades and related ministry activities. He claims God instructed him to dig a well for healing in 1969 (Owoeye 2000:174).

Hydro-healing in native American religion

For thousands of years, Native Americans across the Great Plains learned from their transgenerational religious ideas in the form of oral traditions. On the sacredness of water, the Blackfeet Nation of Native Americans (Indian reservation) believed in three separate realms of existence: earth, sky and water. They viewed all three worlds as sacred because within them lived the divine (LaPier 2017). They also believed in spiritual ceremonies to reaffirm their connections with these realms (Weber 2019a).

In the Northeast Creek of Canada, the indigenous First Nations believed that sacralising water is imperative because of its spiritual usefulness regardless of Western scientific bias. Referencing some of the articles of Bas Verschuuren written for the United Nations, and as a global plea to value water beyond scientific phenomena, Chaika (2022) emphasises the spiritual significance of wetlands in oral traditions because of the totemic creatures in the water worshipped and used for traditional healing. Bas Verschuuren in Chaika (2022) claims that the wetlands are sacred, and the aquatic creatures are personified deities with magical and healing properties. These features, he claims, qualify the Northeast Creek wetlands as sacred to the indigenous people. Consequently, the communal religious tradition of the First Nations of Canada venerates wetlands as places full of spirits and they have deep emotional and spiritual connections with rivers, creeks and wetlands. Although ways of reverencing the water are being re-envisioned, the veneration of the spiritual value of water has been irreversibly lost through the destruction of indigenous lands and waters by capitalism, industrialisation, global warming, and related neo-liberalism.

The resistance by the Native Americans is another evidence of a spiritual connection with water. In the United States of America (US), the Lakota phrase '*Mní wíchóni*', interpreted as 'Water is life', was a national protest anthem chanted by 5000 native demonstrators from April 2016 to February 2017, against the government's decision to build the Dakota Access Pipeline under the Missouri River in North Dakota. They felt the water had spiritual powers and remained a point of connection between them and nature. The native Americans believed that water does not only sustain life but is also a sacred element (LaPier 2017).

Additionally, the Haudenosaunee of the Iroquois Confederacy in northeastern America conducts water-honouring rituals alongside singing and prayers. During the ceremony, the creek's water is poured into a special vessel alongside a blessed

healing stone to carry out a spiritual walk while singing throughout the waterways. The *Algonquin Water Song* is chanted like a lullaby. The song means 'water is the life's blood of our mother the earth. Water is the life's blood of our bodies' (Chaika, 2022). The water ritual purpose is for the ritualists to enter spiritual zones as intermediaries and pray to the spirits to cleanse those praying and the aquatic creatures like the mussel fauna (a worshipped aquatic creature), hoping the healing prayers will engender sustainability and longevity of the aquatic deities and the human environment under attacks by industrialisation, urbanisation and related climate hazards (Chaika 2022; cf. Weber 2019a). This suggests the role of indigenous spiritual knowledge in environmental sustainability.

Hydro-healing in African tradition

Water in African culture can be associated with two environments: the physical and the spiritual. Often, both environments overlap in 'water worship' attributed to certain divinities (Erfurt-Cooper & Cooper 2009). Panyin (n.d.), on the Akan people of Ghana, claims water is next to the value of life. Therefore, it remains an 'ever-present element in the religious and social celebration of life via festivals and rites of individual and community transitions' (Panyin n.d.:18). In Benin, Togo and Nigeria, water is used in the voodoo ceremonies – a spiritual practice attributed to springs, rivers and waterfalls. This is why water is poured upon altars of traditional worship during rituals, to summon the spirits of the gods (Talkeu & Brook 2003:283).

In the Yoruba traditional healing, *Àgbó* (herbal mixture) is prepared with water for bathing and spreading on the skin during healing rituals. *Àgbó* is believed to protect from diseases of natural causes and misfortunes initiated by evil spirits (Pearce 1989:152). Simpson (1994:103) notes that *Àgbó*, prepared with water like other traditional medicines, neutralises poisons (like snake bites). Simpson (1994:9–11) further explains that in *Òrúnmìlà* ceremonies, 16 leaves of different plants are soaked in water used in *Ifá* divination for healing rituals. In his words:

Usually, the *Ifá* priest will bathe in that water before starting the rites. In another ceremony, the water from a snail and the blood of a pigeon are poured into water with some herbal leaves in it. Palm oil and shea butter are added and the *Ifá* emblem is washed in this water. The water is not thrown away, but is used for curing illnesses. (Simpson 1994:11)

Delineating the above practice further, Rinnie claims 'It is very common to use flowing rivers for such healing baths. While bathing, the person washes off the misfortune into the flowing stream and is released from it' (Rinne 2001:47).

Hydrotherapy in medical practice and the benefits

While its conceptual clarification has been discussed earlier, hydrotherapy in this article covers naturopathy and allopathic healing. Some of the benefits are discussed next.

Firstly, hydrotherapy reduces musculoskeletal and connective tissue pains. It relaxes the muscles and increases

blood flow. Buoyancy (suspension in water) as an aquatic physical therapy also addresses musculoskeletal problems. In Bailey's words, 'I have had patients with the degenerative back condition known as spinal stenosis experience strong positive responses upon being fully suspended in the water with flotation devices' (Bailey 2012).

Secondly, hydrotherapy improves mental health. Those suffering from fibromyalgia, anxiety and depression can use hydrotherapy like swimming to improve moods and release tension. Thirdly, people with osteoarthritis who swim can improve markers of pain and knee function after 8 weeks. Similar health benefits are also reported for those suffering from rheumatoid arthritis and hard work-out impacts (cf. Fleming & Gutknecht 2010). The therapy is organic, with low-risk impact assurance because exercising in water puts less stress on the joints and related areas of pain. Other types of baths recommended by general practitioners or physiotherapists include warm water baths in soaked salts and minerals, and essential oils; sitz bath for cramps or haemorrhoid relief, wraps, compresses and fomentation; saunas water circuit therapy which is about alternating between warm and cold water to boost circulation and ease symptoms; and finally immersion therapies for relief (cf. Fritz et al. 2008:432–443; Tripathy 2015:63).

Linking the spiritual, traditional and medical hydro-healings

Cleansing and skin-related treatments

Medically, Sullivan (2020) submits that hydro-healing applies to skin-related diseases. Likewise, in Naaman's story presented earlier under Bible case studies, skin spiritual hydrotherapy was a case in point. Correspondingly, under hydro-healing in African traditional religion, bathing with *Àgbó* (herbal and spiritual mixture) mixed with water is for skin cure. Equally, as hydrotherapy is medically used to perform colon irrigation, African traditional herbs are used for stomach cleansing. More so, in medical, Christian and traditional practices 'cleansing' has popped up repeatedly in this article. It then means domesticating hydro-healing for cleansing is a common ground for the trio.

Hydro-healing links among the religions and the case of water baptism

Connecting the North Americans' native experience with the Bible, LaPier (2017:1) stated that:

The Blackfeet viewed water as a distinct place – a sacred place ... It can, in fact, be compared to Mount Sinai of the Old Testament, which was viewed as 'holy ground' and where God gave Moses the Ten Commandments.

According to Ibrahim (2021), as water in African religion is used for decontamination, salvation, self-care and survival, the same applies to Abrahamic religions like Christianity. For example, baptism among black congregations of traditional Baptist sects, in the American South, is not just perceived as a Christian religious activity, but a spiritual cleansing. Black

people who took their traditional spiritual hydro-healing to America as a by-product of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade easily accepted the call by the Baptist church to water baptism. Since African spirituality was exported by African descendants, who later became Ifá and black American Hoodoo practitioners, their experience finds expressions in Abrahamic religions; thus, they easily accepted to be baptised, not only as a function of good preaching and evangelism but also their worldview. They saw it as a means to be cleansed given their indigenous spiritual knowledge. Thus, hydro-healing experiences were on the frontline in the missional expansion of the Baptist churches in the American South (Ibrahim 2021). Subsequently, many prophetic healers lead sick members to lakes, ponds, rivers and oceans for spiritual cleansing and healing (Ibrahim 2021). So did the Aladura churches in Nigeria (Rinne 2001:47). Folarin (2018:19) notes that hydro-healing in the indigenous spiritual knowledge of the Yorubas in Nigeria resonates with Christianity and every attempt to discourage the practice of hydro-healing in Christ Apostolic Church failed (Folarin 2018:19). Thus, there is religious hybridity in hydro-healing practices in African and American traditional religions and Christianity.

More links and contrasts

Physical and psychological healings are prevalent in medical and spiritual practices. This is evident from the hydrotherapy in the medical practice section, the four Bible scenarios, and lastly the assertions of Baab (2020) on Psalm 84:5–7 which speaks to emotional and psychological healing. However, the contrasts of the healing experiences are noteworthy. Pieces of literature discussed in this article show that religious hydro-healings are *spiritual, supernatural and instantaneous* with no scientific evidence. The illogical or non-scientific undertone is understandable because spirituality cannot be measured. Whereas most medical hydrotherapies are *organic, naturopathic and gradual*, with likely scientific and logical understanding of healing possibilities. Moreover, proof of medical hydrotherapy has been demonstrated scientifically (O'Brien & Backman 2010).

Challenges of hydro-healing

Medical

Although the therapy may be organic, people suffering from aquaphobia and unstable respiratory conditions are likely exempted. They are advised to avoid the pool. Similarly, those with uncontrolled diabetes are exempted (Keegan 2003:323). According to Adams and Arminio (2008:410–11), psychologic sedative effects may occur with warm hydrotherapy. Others may have headaches, pains, sleep problems, nausea, chilliness and faintness in the process (Healthwise 2023).

Spiritual

The limited number of words requirement hinders a robust discussion here; however, the major challenge in religions is the abuse of hydro-healing miracles via practices outside the parameters of religious texts and ethics. A classic example is a

viral video on social media showing a pastor in Zambia, carrying out spiritual cleansing by shaving and washing women's genital organs during an open church service (House of Brides 2020). Also, hydro-healing opens grey areas of commercialisation like sales of healing waters which can easily lead to extortions (see Kgatle & Qiki, 2023:1–6). Another danger and abuse of commercialisation is the possibility of serving poison to congregants in the name of holy water. A case in point is the poisoning of about 50000 Ugandans by an American pastor who claimed he was serving them miracle water to cure cancer, malaria and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). By the time the poison started reacting in the victims' bodies including children, the pastor was nowhere to be found (Weber 2019b). This level of abuse of hydro-healing can lead to death and epidemic outbreaks. Lastly, congregants and related holy water subscribers can also become addicted to the experience. This can have dire consequences. For example, the late Prophet T.B. Joshua, one of the foremost sellers of healing water, sold the water for so long that the members became addicted. During a particular service, he announced a free distribution of the healing water. While rushing to grab the water, many were stampeded to death while others were severely injured (Hirsh 2013). Members seeking help then became victims of their supposed helper. This idea of being addicted to seeking instant solutions can lead to many challenges hazardous to the subscribers' well-being.

The last challenge of hydro practices under discussion here is the hazards of water baptism. In Tanzania, the British Broadcasting Network (2017) reports that two people became victims at the River Ungwasi. In South Africa, evidence shows mortality caused by flood disaster during river baptism in Jukskei River in Johannesburg. This disaster claimed the lives of over 14 people. On this account, local authorities have called for caution in hydro-religious practices in the rivers (Houghtaling 2022). Additionally, Simango notes that this is not the first river baptism tragedy in South Africa. In December 2021, floods swept away two people: a 21-year-old priest and a 41-year-old woman being baptised in the Free State, South Africa. Also, on 31 December 2022, three people drowned during a river baptism in Soweto (Simango 2023). These reports show the dangers of wrongly carrying out baptism at the expense of public health and safety. It is then the opinion of this paper that open-river baptism as a religious ritual, especially among African Churches needs serious public health and safety attention.

Conclusion

This article revealed the popularity of hydro-healing in medical and religious practices. It shows links, benefits, contrasts, challenges and how hydro-spiritual practices like baptism may have impacted missional expansion. It held that the two hydro-healing practices came from two different perspectives. The religious is spiritual, instantaneous and supernatural while the medical is gradual, naturopathic, organic and scientific. Though there are convergences in inter-religious practices and the religious-medical hydro-healings, indigenous spiritual knowledge remains the motivation for

the acceptance and popularity of hydro-healing among subscribers. Finally, it is the opinion of this article that while water is good for healing in both spiritual and medical instances, the abuse from a religious perspective raises serious concerns that require urgent response from religious and community leaders, religion studies scholars and theologians, government agencies in charge of public health and safety.

Acknowledgements

Competing interests

The author declares that they have no financial or personal relationship(s) that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

Author's contributions

D.O.O. declares that they are the sole author of this research article.

Ethical considerations

Ethical approval to conduct this study was received from the Research Ethical Committee of University of Pretoria with ethical clearance number T087/23.

Funding information

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

Data availability

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and are the product of professional research. The article does not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated institution, funder, agency, or that of the publisher. The author is responsible for this article's results, findings, and content.

References

- Adams, M.L. & Arminio, G.J., 2008, 'Non-pharmacologic pain management intervention', *Clinics in Podiatric Medicine and Surgery* 25(3), 409–429. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpm.2008.02.003>
- Armstrong, A. & Armstrong, M., 2006, 'A Christian perspective on water and water rights', in T. Tvedt & T. Oestigaard (eds.), *The History of Water*, The World of Water, vol. 3, pp. 367–384, I. B. Tauris, London.
- Baab, L., 2020, *Psalm 84 and Deuteronomy 32: Water*, viewed 18 April 2024, from <https://www.lynnbaab.com/blog/psalm-84-and-deuteronomy-32-water>.
- Bailey, C., 2012, *Aquatic therapy gives some patients a leg up in Rehab*, viewed 11 June 2024, from <https://www.bmhvt.org/aquatic-therapy-gives-patients-leg-rehab/#:~:text=Even%20beyond%20those%20people%20who>.
- British Broadcasting Network, 2017, *Tanzania worshippers swept away in river baptism*, viewed 26 July 2024, from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-40635042>.
- Chaika, B.L., 2022, 'New hope: Water blessing ceremonies', *EarthSanctuaries*, viewed 01 June 2024, from <https://earthsanctuaries.net/new-hope-water-blessing-ceremonies/>.
- Eliot, T.S., n.d., *Four quartets – 3 The dry salvages*, viewed 13 February 2023, from <http://www.davidgorman.com/4quartets/3-salvages.htm>.
- Erfurt-Cooper, P. & Cooper, M., 2009, 'Chapter 4. Cultural and religious use of water', in *Health and wellness tourism: Spas and hot springs*, pp. 110–129, Blue Ridge Summit: Channel View Publications, Bristol.
- Fleming, S.A. & Gutknecht, N.C., 2010, 'Naturopathy and the primary care practice', *Primary Care: Clinics in Office Practice* 37(1), 119–136. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pop.2009.09.002>
- Folarin, G.O., 2018, 'The theology and practice of Christ Apostolic Church on divine healing in the context of Pentecostal theology', *Ilorin Journal of Religious Studies* 7(1), 15–36. <https://doi.org/10.4314/ijrs.v7i1.2>
- Fritz, S., Chaitow, L. & Hymel, G.M., 2008, *Unique circumstances and adjunct therapies*, Elsevier eBooks, pp. 432–443, Mosby, Maryland.
- Healthwise, 2023, *Hydrotherapy*, viewed 09 April 2024, from <https://myhealth.alberta.ca/Health/pages/conditions.aspx?hwid=tr3554spec#:~:text=Most%20hydrotherapy%20is%20generally%20safe>.
- Hirsh, A., 2013, 'Celebrity pastor under fire after worshippers die in rush for "holy water"', *The Guardian*, viewed 30 November 2021, from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/may/23/ghana-pastor-stampede-tbjoshua>.
- Houghtaling, E.Q., 2022, 'River Baptism Ceremony ends in tragedy after flash flood kills 14', *The Daily Beast*, viewed 26 July 2024, from <https://www.thedailybeast.com/river-baptism-ceremony-ends-in-disaster-after-flash-flood-kills-14-in-south-africa#>.
- House of Brides, 2020, *End times: Pastor shaves and washes private parts of all his female church members*, viewed 17 June 2024, from <https://www.facebook.com/100080360808995/videos/end-times-pastor-shave-and-washes-private-parts-of-all-his-female-church-members/720692822125781/>.
- Ibrahim, S., 2021, 'What spiritual baths mean for Black Wellness', *Allure*, 17 September, viewed 20 September 2021, from <https://www.allure.com/story/spiritual-bathing-black-community>.
- Iorgulescu, G., 2009, 'Saliva between normal and pathological. Important factors in determining systemic and oral health', *Journal of Medicine and Life* 2(3), 303–307, viewed 06 June 2024, from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5052503/pdf/JMedLife-02-303.pdf>.
- Keegan, L., 2003, 'Therapies to reduce stress and anxiety', *Critical Care Nursing Clinics of North America* 15(3), 321–327. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0899-5885\(02\)00103-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0899-5885(02)00103-X)
- Kgatle, M.S. & Qiki, V., 2023, 'The commercialisation of anointed water in two ministries: An African theological perspective', *In die Skriflig/In Luce Verbi* 57(1), 6. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ids.v57i1.2937>
- LaPier, R.R., 2017, 'Why is water sacred to Native Americans?', *Open Rivers Journal*, viewed 25 May 2024, from <https://openrivers.lib.umn.edu/article/why-is-water-sacred-to-native-americans/>.
- Larkin, P., n.d., *Water – Poem by Philip Larkin*, viewed 11 November 2021, from http://famouspoetsandpoems.com/poets/philip_larkin/poems/14545.
- Lima, F., 2024, *The power of Holy Water: Why Jordan River Water is so special*, viewed 11 May 2023, from <https://holylandmarket.com/blogs/news/the-power-of-holy-water-why-jordan-river-water-is-so-special>.
- Lin, Y.-F., Lin, D.-H., Jan, M.-H., Lin, C.-H.J. & Cheng, C.-K., 2014, 'Orthopedic physical therapy', *Comprehensive Biomedical Physics* 10, 379–400. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-444-53632-7.01024-8>
- Miller, K., 2018, 'Water', in *Native infusion rethink your drink a toolkit on traditional beverages Valerie Segrest and Elise Krohn*, viewed 15 June 2024, from <https://www.firstnations.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/NativeInfusion.pdf>.
- Moon, R., 2016, *The beauty of water*, viewed 11 June 2024, from https://www.poetrysoup.com/poem/the_beauty_of_water_747020.
- O'Brien, A. & Backman, C., 2010, 'Rheumatology Evidence-Based Practice for Physiotherapists and Occupational Therapists', in K. Dziedzic & A. Hammond (eds.), *Inflammatory arthritis*, pp. 211–233, Churchill Livingstone, London.
- O'Young, B.J., Young, M.A., Meyers, J.S. & Stiens, S.A., 2009, *Physical Modalities*, Elsevier eBooks, pp. 342–350, San Diego, CA.
- Owoeye, S., 2000, 'African-healer prophets in selected Independent Churches in Yorubaland, 1963–1998', Unpublished PhD Thesis submitted, Department of Religion studies, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile ife, Nigeria.
- Panyin Hagan, G., n.d., *Water and spirituality in some African cultures and traditions*, viewed 01 June 2024, from <https://www.humandevlopment.va/content/dam/sviluppoumano/water-resources/33.pdf>.
- Pearce, T.O., 1989, 'The assessment of diviners and their knowledge by civil servants in South-western Nigeria', *Social Science Medicine* 28(9), 917–924. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0277-9536\(89\)90316-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/0277-9536(89)90316-X)
- Rinne, E.-M., 2001, 'Water and healing – Experiences from the traditional healers in Ile-ife, Nigeria', *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 10(1), 25–25.
- Rydving, H., 2021, *Religions around the Arctic: Source Criticism and Comparisons*, H. Rydving & K. Kaikkonen (eds.), pp. 1–6, Stockholm University Press, Stockholm.
- Simango, A., 2023, *As climate changes, South Africa's river baptisms spell danger*, Baptist News Global, viewed 26 July 2024, from <https://baptistnews.com/article/as-climate-changes-south-africas-river-baptisms-spell-danger/>.
- Simpson, G.E., 1994, *Yoruba religion and medicine in Ibadan*, Ibadan University Press, Ibadan.
- Stelzle, H., 2022, 'The Sacredness of Water', *ohiostate.pressbooks.pub*, viewed 12 June 2024, from <https://ohiostate.pressbooks.pub/enr3470studentbook/chapter/the-sacredness-of-water-2/>.
- Sullivan, D., 2020, *Hydrotherapy: Definition, benefits, and uses*, viewed 01 June 2024, from <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com>.

- Talkeu, T.C. & Brock, O., 2003, 'The symbolic function of water in Sub-Saharan Africa: A cultural approach', *Leonardo* 36(4), 283–283. <https://doi.org/10.1162/002409403322258664>
- Tripathy, J.P., 2015, 'Can naturopathy provide answers to the escalating healthcare costs in India?', *Journal of Traditional and Complementary Medicine* 5(2), 63–65. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jtcme.2014.11.006>
- Wamplerp, 2015a, 'Fiery love than cannot be dowsed', *Walking on Water*, viewed 11 June 2024, from <https://peterwampler.blog/2015/08/24/fiery-love-than-cannot-be-dowsed/>.
- Wamplerp, 2015b, 'When to wait and when to wander', *Walking on Water*, viewed 11 June 2024, from <https://peterwampler.blog/2015/08/20/when-to-wait-and-when-to-wander/>.
- Wamplerp, 2015c, 'An enclosed spring', *Walking on Water*, viewed 11 June 2024, from <https://peterwampler.blog/2015/08/19/an-enclosed-spring/>.
- Weber, S., 2019a, 'The Blackfeet Nation is opening its own national park', *High Country News*, viewed 22 May 2024, from <https://www.hcn.org/articles/tribal-affairs-the-blackfeet-nation-is-trying-to-open-its-own-national-park/>.
- Weber, L., 2019b, 'An American pastor reportedly gave 'miracle water' to Ugandans. It was bleach', *WashingtonPost*, viewed 07 February 2023, from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/religion/2019/05/21/pastor-reportedly-gave-miracle-water-ugandans-it-was-bleach/>.
- Zipwater, 2017, 'The importance of water in different cultures', *Zip Water Australia*, *Zip Water*, viewed 01 June 2024, from <https://www.zipwater.com/zip-effect/the-importance-of-water-in-different-cultures>.