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**Title:** *Healing, Conflict, and Religious Transformation in Catholic Charismatic Movements in Uganda*

**Abstract:** My paper compares the healing practices of two “movements of the Spirit” active in a rural Catholic parish in western Uganda: the internationally-linked Charismatic Renewal, and a Ugandan movement called the Bakaiso (“witnesses” in the local language). The healing practices of these Catholic charismatic movements play a double-edged role in the parish. On the one hand, they promise – and often deliver – healing to individuals experiencing physical, social, and spiritual suffering. Moreover, they can contribute to social reconciliation, healing fractured relationships in a community facing economic insecurity, domestic conflict, the AIDS crisis, and civil unrest. On the other hand, charismatic healing engenders conflict: healing is controversial among those who observe the groups at work, and the groups themselves clash over approaches to healing.

I argue that these conflicts arise in part because charismatic healing practices are implicated in broader debates about what kinds of religious transformation are desirable. Lay parishioners, as well as the African and American members of the missionary order that administers the parish, disagree amongst themselves about two fundamental issues. First, in the context of efforts to consolidate Christian identity in a recently evangelized population, charismatic healing raises questions about whether authentic Catholicism can incorporate ideas and practices associated with African traditional religion, or whether genuine religious transformation demands radical distinction from other religious systems. Second, debates about charismatic healing also center on questions about the appropriate relationship of – and most effective ways of pursuing – spiritual and social transformation in evangelization efforts in the parish.