

Rapha as a theological category: A biblical-constructive reading of Old Testament healing narratives toward an articulation of healing as a site of God's work

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Abstract: Word studies in Indonesian theology often remain lexically atomistic, so that their findings never rise to the level of theological claims. This study makes the root *rapha* the axis of a biblical-constructive reading of Old Testament healing narratives. The method is a semantic-field analysis of the distribution of the subjects and objects of *rapha* rather than an etymology, guarded against illegitimate totality transfer and followed by canonical synthesis. The findings show that the objects of *rapha* exceed the human body: water (2 Kgs 2:21-22), land (2 Chr 7:14), a ruined altar (1 Kgs 18:30), a nation's apostasy (Hos 14:4), and Egypt (Isa 19:22). Its subject is almost always YHWH; healing may be withheld as judgment (Isa 6:10) and is paired with wounding (Deu 32:39). Isaiah 53:5 inverts the category: healing comes through the wound. *Rapha* is therefore not a medical predicate but a predicate of restored order. Divine healing is articulated as a site of God's work, where his governance over creation and covenant becomes legible. Healing ministry thus widens beyond individual bodies while yielding to divine freedom.

Keywords: divine healing, God's work, healing narratives, Old Testament healing narratives, *rapha*, theological category

Introduction

Divine healing has never lost its hold on Indonesian Christianity. More than a decade ago, Ferry Y. Mamahit described it as an issue that remains relevant and popular, never quite brought to a close, and that divides Christians into several mutually opposed positions.¹ That assessment has not expired. The growth of Pentecostal and charismatic churches, the proliferation of healing services, and the migration of prayer ministry into digital channels have, in fact, increased the volume of this discourse rather than reducing it. The pandemic experience sharpened it further, as the doctrine of healing was tested by the reality of a disease

¹ Ferry Yefta Mamahit, "Menjawab Persoalan Teologis tentang Konsep dan Praktik Kesembuhan Ilahi," *Veritas: Jurnal Teologi dan Pelayanan* 13, no. 2 (2012): 143-157, <https://doi.org/10.36421/veritas.v13i2.268>.

that recognized no boundary of piety.² Healing is, after all, one of the principal pillars of the full-gospel formulation that characterizes global Pentecostal theology.³

The problem does not lie in the conviction that God heals but in the grammar used to speak about it. When healing is proclaimed as a right that may be claimed through sufficient faith or adequate obedience, the logical consequence falls upon those who are not healed: they carry a double burden, the illness itself and the tacit accusation that their faith was deficient. Keith Warrington has shown that a theology of healing that leaves no room for continuing suffering ultimately turns on and wounds the very congregation it means to serve.⁴ Stanley Hauerwas formulates the problem more sharply: the search for an explanation of suffering is often a way to avoid being present beside the one who suffers.⁵

Indonesian scholarship on this subject is already reasonably varied. Mamahit maps three positions (indifferent, supportive, and opposed) and then tests them at the level of presupposition and interpretive method. Togardo Siburian offers a critical reconsideration of the concept of divine healing itself.⁶ Adinia Mendrofa represents the genre of descriptive biblical study devoted to a particular healing pericope.⁷ The most recent step comes from Christo A. D. Siahaan, who reads the synthesis of Frank Macchia and Wolfgang Vondey in order to formulate divine healing as an eschatological, holistic, and Pentecostal reality, while diagnosing a tendency in Indonesian discourse to halt at critique, apologetics, biblical study, and descriptive field research, and rarely to wrestle with the wider systematic *loci*.⁸

Siahaan's diagnosis reveals a more fundamental problem: method. The dominant genre in Indonesian-language studies of divine healing is the word study, and it is precisely that genre that is most vulnerable. Its weakness lies not in its attention to the original languages but in its lexical atomism: each word is dissected on its own, its sense is theologically inflated, and the results are strung together without argumentative bridges. James Barr warned long ago of two fallacies that attend this procedure: the root fallacy and the illegitimate transfer of totality of meaning, in which the entire semantic wealth of a word is injected into a single occurrence.⁹ Moisés Silva insists that usage and syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations, rather than etymology, determine meaning.¹⁰ Work on divine healing often rests on a defective etymological foundation, as though the word *rapha* always carried the same theological freight across periods and texts. This research gap arises because this traditional approach neglects

² Michelle Fortunella Sugianto, "Doktrin Kesembuhan dalam Pelayanan Karismatik di Era Pandemi Covid-19," *Jurnal Teologi Amreta* 4, no. 1 (2021): 23–44.

³ Wolfgang Vondey, *Pentecostal Theology: Living the Full Gospel* (London: T&T Clark, 2017), 21.

⁴ Keith Warrington, *Healing and Suffering: Biblical and Pastoral Reflections* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2005), 201–204.

⁵ Stanley Hauerwas, *Naming the Silences: God, Medicine, and the Problem of Suffering* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 96–99.

⁶ Togardo Siburian, "Tinjauan Ulang terhadap 'Kesembuhan Ilahi,'" *Stulos* 17, no. 1 (2019): 28–53.

⁷ Adinia Mendrofa, "Analisis tentang Kesembuhan Ilahi terhadap Umat Kristen Menurut Lukas 8:40–56," *Haggadah: Jurnal Teologi dan Pendidikan Agama Kristen* 2, no. 1 (2021): 87–94.

⁸ Christo Antusias Davarto Siahaan, "Kesembuhan Ilahi Eskatologis, Holistik, dan Pentakostal: Macchia–Vondey dan Kontribusinya bagi Diskursus Teologi Indonesia," *Sola Gratia: Jurnal Teologi Biblika dan Praktika* 6, no. 1 (2025): 475–495.

⁹ James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 218.

¹⁰ Moisés Silva, *Biblical Words and Their Meaning: An Introduction to Lexical Semantics*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 119–120; Cf. Peter Cotterell and Max Turner, *Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1989), 155–159.

the modern semantic principle that meaning is carried not by a static single word but by the complete sentence unit. Following Silva's insistence, this gap calls for a shift toward a synchronic analysis that maps the semantic field of *rapha* based on its actual usage and its syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations within the Old Testament text. This study aims to fill that gap by re-examining the use of *rapha* and dismantling the theological distortion produced by generalizing an etymological sense.

The consequences are evident in how the root *rapha* (Hebrew: רפא) is handled. The self-designation *YHWH rophe 'ekha* in Exodus 15:26 is almost invariably cited in Indonesian popular and academic writing alike, yet almost as invariably it is reduced to a guarantee of individual physical healing. Michael L. Brown's standard monograph, *Israel's Divine Healer*, has already demonstrated that the field of usage of this root is far broader than the human body.¹¹ That work has scarcely entered Indonesian theological discussion, so its important findings have never been carried into constructive formulation.

This is where the present study addresses the gap. No Indonesian-language study has yet treated the *distribution of the objects* of *rapha* as a constructive finding; that is, it has not read the breadth of its objects as a lexicographical note but as the basis for formulating healing as a theological category. This article advances the thesis that *rapha* in the Old Testament is not a medical predicate but a predicate of restored order, and that divine healing therefore deserves to be articulated as a site of God's work, that is, as the place where God's governance over creation and covenant becomes legible. The article's novelty is twofold: methodologically, it corrects the word-study genre from within, and constructively, it supplies a biblical foundation for the holistic framework that Siahaan introduced through Macchia and Vondey.

This qualitative, library-based study follows biblical-constructive lines and proceeds in two stages. The first stage is descriptive-analytical, namely a semantic-field analysis of the root *rapha* in the Hebrew Bible. The second stage is constructive, namely a canonical synthesis of the findings of the first stage toward the formulation of a theological category. The sharp distinction between the two stages needs to be stated, since the weakness common to word studies lies precisely in fusing them, when grammatical findings are elevated directly into theological claims without an explicit argumentative step.¹²

The discussion proceeds in four steps. First, the distribution of the subjects of *rapha* is examined in order to show that the competence to heal is concentrated in God. Second, the distribution of its objects is mapped in order to show that healing exceeds the body. Third, its negative side is read, healing that is withheld and healing that is paired with wounding, to show that healing lies within the freedom of God. Fourth, these three findings are synthesized into an articulation of healing as a site of God's work and are then drawn out into implications for the practical theology of the church in Indonesia.

The corpus is limited to all verbal occurrences of the root רפא in *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, with the nominal derivatives *marpe'* (מַרְפֵּא) and *refu'ah* (רְפוּאָה) as supporting evidence. The homonym רָפְאִים (*refa'im*, the shades of the dead or an ethnic designation) is excluded because it does not share the same semantic field. Occurrences were verified through

¹¹ Michael L. Brown, *Israel's Divine Healer*, Studies in Old Testament Biblical Theology (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 25-30.

¹² Cf. Douglas Stuart, *Old Testament Exegesis: A Handbook for Students and Pastors*, 4th ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009), 33.

standard lexicra, such as *HALOT*, *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, and *NIDOTTE*, rather than through translation concordances.¹³

The analysis operates at the level of collocation and distribution: what its subject is, what its object is, what construction it appears in, and in what context it is refused, rather than at the level of etymology. Its canonical synthesis follows Brevard S. Childs, who treats the final form of the canon as a legitimate theological context,¹⁴ and uses Walter Brueggemann's framework of testimony and countertestimony to hold the tension between healing given and healing withheld without imposing a premature resolution.¹⁵ Harls Evan R. Siahaan's integration of a historical-philosophical analytical method supplies a firm epistemological basis for connecting Old Testament semantic criticism with a Pentecostal theology of healing.¹⁶ The final section's move into the practical domain follows Richard R. Osmer's four tasks of practical theology: the descriptive-empirical, the interpretive, the normative, and the pragmatic.¹⁷ Osmer supplies a scholarly method for bridging the critique of linguistic theory into practical pastoral action.

The subject of *rapha*: The competence to heal as God's own

An examination of the grammatical subject of the root *rapha* reveals a consistent pattern: in nearly every occurrence that states a restoration genuinely taking place, the subject is YHWH.¹⁸ This pattern is not a statistical accident but a theological statement embedded in the grammar. The Old Testament provides no room for healing as an autonomous skill; it provides room for healing as an act of God.

The densest statement of this is the self-designation in Exodus 15:26, כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה רֹפֵאֶךָ (*ki ani YHWH rophe'ekha*). The form *rophe'ekha* is a masculine singular Qal participle with a second-person pronominal suffix, so what is declared is not a completed action but an inherent attribute. What God gave Israel at Marah was not a technique but a name.¹⁹ Psalm 103:3 repeats the same pattern by pairing the forgiveness of iniquity and the healing of disease as two sides of a single divine act.²⁰ The presence of human mediators does not alter this pattern, for the mediator always appears as petitioner or executor and never as source. When Miriam was struck with disease, Moses did not heal but cried out, אֵל נָא רַפֵּא נָא לָהּ (Nu. 12:13), a petition, not

¹³ Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, trans. M. E. J. Richardson (Leiden: Brill, 1994–2000), s.v. "רפא"; David J. A. Clines, ed., *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993–2011), s.v.; Willem A. VanGemeren, ed., *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), s.v.

¹⁴ Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments: Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 70–71.

¹⁵ Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 400.

¹⁶ Harls Evan R. Siahaan, "Presuposisi Kitab Kisah Para Rasul dalam Rancang Bangun Teologi Pentakosta," *Kurios* 4, no. 1 (2018): 56–73, <https://doi.org/10.30995/kur.v4i1.34>.

¹⁷ Richard R. Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 4. Cf. John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* (London: SCM, 2006), 4.

¹⁸ Brown, *Israel's Divine Healer*, 25.

¹⁹ Nahum M. Sarna, *Exodus*, JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1991), 85; cf. William H. C. Propp, *Exodus 1–18*, Anchor Bible 2 (New York: Doubleday, 1999), 546–547.

²⁰ Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 60–150: A Continental Commentary*, trans. Hilton C. Oswald (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989), 291.

an action. Elisha at Jericho states explicitly that YHWH, not he, heals the water (2 Kings 2:21). Elijah at Carmel repairs the ruined altar, yet the fire that falls is not the product of that repair.

More telling still is the use of this root for human agents, which within the canon carries an ironic or negative tone. Genesis 50:2 names the *roph'im* (רֹפְאִים) of Egypt, literally “the healers,” yet their work is the embalming of Jacob’s corpse. The first healers to appear in the Hebrew canon attend to the dead.²¹ Job 13:4 calls his friends *roph'ei elil* (רֹפְאֵי אֵלִיל), worthless physicians, a verdict passed not upon a medical failure but upon their theological failure to interpret suffering. Jeremiah 8:22 laments in the same register, asking after the absence of balm in Gilead and the absence of a physician there, in the context of a national wound that goes unhealed. The conclusion runs parallel: human competence to heal is limited precisely when it is most needed.

The most emphatic verdict appears in 2 Chronicles 16:12, when King Asa in his illness sought not YHWH but the physicians. The text questions not the act of seeking treatment but a transfer of trust—replacing God with means.²² The Old Testament does not prohibit medicine; it rejects transferring divine competence to any means, religious or otherwise. This concentration culminates in Deuteronomy 32:39, וְאֲנִי אֶרְפָּא (maḥatsti wa-ani erpa), “I wound, and I heal,” which closes with the declaration that no one can deliver out of his hand. Wounding and healing are not distributed between two different agents but united in a single subject.²³

This first finding changes the question worth asking. If the competence to heal rests wholly with God, then “how is healing obtained” is not the primary question, since it presupposes the existence of a procedure. The more appropriate question is “what is God doing”; and it is that question which opens the way toward an examination of the objects of this root.

The object of rapha: A distribution that exceeds the body

The principal finding of this article does not arise from the depth of meaning in a single lexeme but from the breadth of the objects attached to it. If the list of the objects of *rapha* is drawn up without prior theological filtering, what emerges is not a medical category but a far broader category of restored order. The first object to be noted is water. In 2 Kings 2:21–22, Elisha casts salt into the spring of Jericho and declares, רִפְאֵתִי לַמַּיִם הָאֵלֶּה (“I have healed this water”), and the narrative closes by noting that the water was *healed* to this day. What is restored is not an organ but the source of life for a city whose land was barren.²⁴

The second object is land. In 2 Chronicles 7:14, the divine promise reads וְאֶרְפָּא אֶת־אֲרָצָם (“and I will heal their land”), as the conclusion of a sequence of the people’s repentance. This verse is frequently quoted in Indonesian preaching, yet it is almost always understood figuratively, as the restoration of the nation. That reading, in fact, narrows the text: within the

²¹ Brown, *Israel’s Divine Healer*, 30–33.

²² Sara Japhet, *I & II Chronicles: A Commentary*, Old Testament Library (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 23–25.

²³ Walter Brueggemann, *Deuteronomy*, Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries (Nashville: Abingdon, 2001), 304–405.

²⁴ Mordechai Cogan and Hayim Tadmor, *II Kings*, Anchor Bible 11 (New York: Doubleday, 1988), 35–36 ; cf. Marvin A. Sweeney, *I & II Kings: A Commentary*, Old Testament Library (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007), 281–282.

framework of Chronicles, the land is a concrete reality that undergoes the consequences of covenant violation, so that its healing is concrete as well.²⁵

The third object is a cultic structure. In 1 Kings 18:30, Elijah *וַיִּרְפָּא* the ruined altar of YHWH, a *Piel* form of the same root, commonly rendered “repaired” in translation. This lexical choice is not trivial: the composer could have used another word for physical repair, yet chose the same word used for a diseased body and an apostate nation.²⁶

The fourth object, and the one that appears most frequently in the prophetic books, is the nation together with its apostasy. Hosea 14:4 (MT 14:5) reads *אֶרְפָּא מְשִׁיבָתָם* (“I will heal their apostasy”);²⁷ Jeremiah 3:22 employs a similar construction. Here the object of healing is not disease but sin, a damaged relational condition. Jeremiah 30:17 combines the two by promising the restoration of flesh together with the healing of the nation’s wounds.

The fifth object carries a particular polemical weight. Isaiah 19:22 declares that YHWH will strike Egypt, striking and healing, and that Egypt will then turn to him and he will grant their supplication. The object of healing here is the very nation that in Exodus 15:26 functions as the benchmark of the diseases that will not be inflicted upon Israel.²⁸ The canon thus reverses its own usage, and that reversal closes off the possibility of indexing healing to covenant membership. Only the sixth object is the human body, whose instances are indeed numerous yet do not stand alone: Abimelech (Gen. 20:17), Miriam (Num. 12:13), Hezekiah (2 Kgs 20:5). Standing alongside these is an inward object, the broken heart of Psalm 147:3, *קִרְפָּא לִשְׁבוּרֵי לֵב*. Within the same field, this root includes water, land, altar, nation, sin, body, and heart.

Its collocational patterns reinforce that conclusion. The root *rapha* is paired with *חָבַשׁ* (“to bind up,” Is. 30:26; Psalm 147:3) and with *אָרַוְקָה* (“restoration of flesh,” Jer. 30:17)—terms of restoration, not terms of miracle. Comparison with the ancient Near Eastern environment underscores its distinctiveness: in Mesopotamia and Egypt healing was distributed among specialized deities and administered by ritual specialists, whereas Israel concentrated it in a single divine subject.²⁹ *Rapha* is therefore rightly formulated not as a medical predicate but as a predicate of restored order.

The negation of rapha: Healing withheld and the freedom of God

The category constructed in the two preceding sections is not yet complete, and it is precisely that incompleteness which is most often ignored. The Old Testament speaks not only of healing that is given but also of healing that is *withheld*. To ignore this side produces a theology of healing that is one-sidedly optimistic and, in the end, dishonest toward its own text.

The most disturbing text is Isaiah 6:10. The prophetic commission there is to make the heart of that people dull, their ears heavy, and their eyes shut, *וְנָשָׂב וְרָפָא לֹא*, lest they turn and be *healed*. Healing here does not merely fail to occur; it is actively withheld as judgment.

²⁵ Japhet, *I & II Chronicles*, 953.

²⁶ Sweeney, *I & II Kings*, 347-348.

²⁷ Douglas Stuart, *Hosea–Jonah*, Word Biblical Commentary 31 (Waco: Word, 1987), 215.

²⁸ John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1–39*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 367-368.

²⁹ Hector Avalos, *Illness and Health Care in the Ancient Near East: The Role of the Temple in Greece, Mesopotamia, and Israel*, Harvard Semitic Monographs 54 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 286 ; cf. Klaus Seybold and Ulrich B. Mueller, *Sickness and Healing*, trans. Douglas W. Stott (Nashville: Abingdon, 1981), 97-101.

A theology that treats healing as a right always available has no place for this verse.³⁰ Hosea 5:13 moves in the same direction. When Ephraim saw his sickness and Judah his wound, both went to Assyria, yet the king of Assyria could not heal them or remove their wound. The issue is not medical incapacity but a misdirected address: they sought restoration from a power that has no competence to grant it.³¹

Jeremiah goes further still. In Jeremiah 15:18 the prophet complains of his own wound, which *מִצָּנָה הִרְפָּא*, “refuses to be healed,” and in Jeremiah 30:12–13 the wound of the nation is declared incurable, with no one to plead its cause. That complaints of this kind are retained within the canon, side by side with the promise of restoration in the same chapter, shows that the Old Testament makes no attempt to erase the tension. Deuteronomy 32:39 and Hosea 6:1 set that tension in its densest formulation. The one who heals is also the one who wounds; he has torn, and he is likewise the one who will heal. This formulation cannot be softened without damaging its intent. It locates healing not as a right that may be demanded, but as an act arising from God's freedom.

It is here that Brueggemann's framework of core testimony and countertestimony becomes methodologically useful. The Deuteronomic formulation that pairs obedience with well-being constitutes core testimony; Jeremiah's complaints, the withholding of healing in Isaiah 6:10, and Job's struggle constitute countertestimony that refuses to be resolved.³² An honest theological construction does not fuse the two but holds them as a meaningful tension.

The consequence for Exodus 15:26 needs to be stated openly, since this verse is most often used as the basis for claims to healing. Its apodosis reads *לֹא-אָשִׁים עָלֶיךָ*, “I will not bring it upon you”, a promise of prevention within a covenantal framework, not a general guarantee of curative healing. Deuteronomy 7:15 and 28:60 confirm the same framework.³³ Reading it as a claimable right for present-day believers leaps over both its covenantal context and the negative side outlined above.³⁴

The category is finally inverted altogether in Isaiah 53:5, *וּבְחַבְרָתוֹ נִרְפָּא-לָנוּ* (“by his stripes we are healed”). Healing arrives through the wound rather than by evading it, and the mediator is himself wounded. That this verse is subsequently quoted in Matthew 8:16–17 opens a long debate concerning the place of healing within the work of atonement, a debate this article does not undertake to settle, but one that cannot be entered responsibly without first grasping the semantic field of *rapha* as set out above.³⁵

³⁰ Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1–39*.

³¹ Stuart, *Hosea–Jonah*, 94.

³² Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 117–118.

³³ Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary*, Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974), 37 ; cf. Terence E. Fretheim, *Exodus, Interpretation* (Louisville: John Knox, 1991), 179–181.

³⁴ Gordon D. Fee, *The Disease of the Health and Wealth Gospels* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2006), 9–11.

³⁵ Kimberly Ervin Alexander, *Pentecostal Healing: Models in Theology and Practice*, Journal of Pentecostal Theology Supplement Series 29 (Blandford Forum: Deo, 2006), 51; cf. Frederick J. Gaiser, *Healing in the Bible: Theological Insight for Christian Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 240.

Healing as a site of God's work: implications for the practical theology of the church in Indonesia

The three findings above may be summarized in a single formulation: the root *rapha* names God's restorative governance over creation and covenant. Its subject is God, its objects span the body, water, land, cult, and nation, and its application rests within his freedom. Healing accordingly deserves to be treated as a full theological category, a locus, and not merely a topic of ministry.

The term "site" is chosen deliberately because it refuses two reductions at once. The first reduction is physicalist, equating healing with the restoration of bodily function; the second is spiritualist, regarding the body as theologically irrelevant. A site is a place where something happens and becomes visible. The restored body is a place where God's governance becomes legible, just as the water of Jericho, the healed land, and the re-erected altar are.³⁶

At the descriptive-empirical and interpretive levels, the grammar operative in much church practice in Indonesia is in fact transactional. Healing is positioned as the output of certain inputs: sufficient faith, adequate obedience, or attendance at a particular ministry. Sugianto's study of the charismatic doctrine of healing during the pandemic shows how fragile that grammar becomes when confronted with a disease that is not selective,³⁷ while Siburian's critical review demonstrates that the problem lies not in the conviction of God's power but in the interpretive framework that sustains it.³⁸

At the normative level, the category constructed in this article shifts in two opposing directions. The first direction is widening. If land, altar, and a nation's apostasy belong among the objects of *rapha*, then communal reconciliation, ecological restoration, and the repair of the social order constitute healing ministry in the full biblical sense and not a metaphorical extension. The promise to heal the land in 2 Chronicles 7:14 supplies a textual basis for the church's ecological engagement, which hitherto has more often been sought in the creation texts.

This widening connects naturally with the holistic framework that Siahaan has introduced into Indonesian discourse through Macchia and Vondey, which places healing within an eschatological horizon and refuses to reduce it to an individual event.³⁹ This article's contribution to that framework is foundational: what Macchia and Vondey formulate at the systematic level has a lexical and canonical basis in the distribution of the objects of *rapha* themselves.

The second direction is narrowing, and this is most challenging for the practice of the church. Isaiah 6:10 and Deuteronomy 32:39 close the door upon the grammar of claim. Prayer for the sick remains legitimate and is indeed commanded, yet its status is that of petition addressed to the freedom of God rather than the activation of a promise. James 5:14–16 is read most accurately within this framework: as an act of a community that entrusts, not as a procedure that guarantees.

³⁶ Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments*, 70–79.

³⁷ Sugianto, "Doktrin Kesembuhan dalam Pelayanan Karismatik."

³⁸ Siburian, "Tinjauan Ulang terhadap 'Kesembuhan Ilahi'"; cf. Mamahit, "Menjawab Persoalan Teologis," 143–57.

³⁹ Siahaan, "Kesembuhan Ilahi Eskatologis, Holistik, dan Pentakostal," 475–495; cf. Frank D. Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit: A Global Pentecostal Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 42–48; Wolfgang Vondey, *Pentecostal Theology: Living the Full Gospel* (London: T&T Clark, 2017), 111–120.

At the pragmatic level, three concrete corollaries emerge. First, in preaching, Isaiah 53:5 can no longer be used as a guarantee of physical healing without attending to the fact that the verse places healing as the fruit of a wound. Second, in liturgy, prayer for the sick ought to include lament as a legitimate form and not declaration alone. Third, in pastoral accompaniment, presence takes precedence over explanation, a conclusion consonant with Hauerwas's warning.⁴⁰

The most urgent corollary concerns those who are not healed. Within a transactional framework, this group always ends as an anomaly requiring explanation, and that explanation almost always blames them. Within the framework of healing as a site of God's work, they lose nothing of their theological place, since healing is not an index of the quality of faith but God's free act. Disability theology has long demanded a space of this kind, and the framework proposed here supplies it without any need to add it from outside.⁴¹

This study has limitations that need to be stated. Its analysis is library-based and lexical, so that its claims regarding church practice in Indonesia still require empirical testing through field research on preaching, liturgy, and prayer ministry. The most needed further development is a test of whether this semantic field of *rapha* continues, or instead narrows, in the use of *iaomai* and *therapeuō* in the New Testament—a question that determines the extent to which this category may be transferred into church theology.⁴²

Conclusion

A reading of the distribution of the subjects and objects of the root *rapha* in the Old Testament yields one conclusion that changes the way the subject of divine healing ought to be discussed: this root is not a medical predicate but a predicate of restored order. Its subject is concentrated in YHWH, so that healing never becomes a transferable skill; its objects traverse water, land, altar, nation, apostasy, body, and heart, so that healing cannot be reduced to an individual bodily event; and its granting may be withheld as judgment and is paired with wounding, so that healing cannot be demanded as a right. Isaiah 53:5 completes that movement by placing healing as something that arrives through a wound. Divine healing therefore deserves to be articulated as a site of God's work, that is, as the place where God's governance over creation and covenant becomes legible; a formulation that at once widens the church's healing ministry beyond the individual body and narrows the church's claims upon the freedom of God, while providing a theologically dignified place for those who are not healed.

⁴⁰ Hauerwas, *Naming the Silences*, 85-89; cf. Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 89.

⁴¹ Nancy L. Eiesland, *The Disabled God: Toward a Liberatory Theology of Disability* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994), 68-70; Amos Yong, *The Bible, Disability, and the Church: A New Vision of the People of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011) 49-52; cf. Deborah Beth Creamer, *Disability and Christian Theology: Embodied Limits and Constructive Possibilities* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 93-114.

⁴² Craig S. Keener, *Miracles: The Credibility of the New Testament Accounts*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 609-612; cf. John Wilkinson, *The Bible and Healing: A Medical and Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 58-62.

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Credit authorship contribution

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