

# A theological model for pastoral anthropology within the dynamics of interculturality: *Cura animarum* and the quest for *wholeness* in a *colo*-spirituality

**Author:**  
Daniël J. Louw<sup>1</sup>

**Affiliation:**  
<sup>1</sup>Department of Practical Theology and Missiology, University of Stellenbosch, South Africa

**Correspondence to:**  
Daniël Louw

**Email:**  
djl@sun.ac.za

**Postal address:**  
171 Dorp Street,  
Stellenbosch 7600, South Africa

**Dates:**  
Received: 12 Aug. 2010  
Accepted: 14 Jan. 2011  
Published: 28 Nov. 2012

**How to cite this article:**  
Louw, D.J., 2012, 'A theological model for pastoral anthropology within the dynamics of interculturality: *Cura animarum* and the quest for *wholeness* in a *colo*-spirituality, *In die Skriflig/In Luce Verbi* 46(2), Art. #57, 9 pages. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/ids.v46i2.57>

© 2012. The Authors.  
Licensee: AOSIS  
OpenJournals. This work  
is licensed under the  
Creative Commons  
Attribution License.

Healing is embedded in relational and systemic networks. In order to heal life (*cura vitae*) human relationships as determined by paradigms (patterns of thinking and conceptualisation) emanating from cultural settings, should be healed. In order to apply a holistic approach to healing in pastoral therapy, a systemic, relational and qualitative interpretation of *soul* in *cura animarum* [cure and care of human souls] was proposed. The notion of a *colo*-spirituality [spiritual culture] was developed in order to link interculturality to the trans-cultural notion of grace (the eschatological paradigm). The latter is the prerequisite for an intimate space of unconditional love in order to heal the quality of our human identity and attitude or *habitus* [being functions] within the existential realities of life (i.e. anxiety, guilt or shame, despair, helplessness or vulnerability, anger).

'n Teologiese model vir 'n pastorale antropologie binne die dinamika van interkulturaliteit: *Colo*-spiritualiteit as integrale pastorale terapie binne *cura animarum*. Die konsep van heling is ingebed binne relasionele en sistemiese netwerke. Ten einde die lewe self te genees (*cura vitae*) moet menslike verhoudinge soos wat dit bepaal word deur paradigmas (patrone van rasonale denkkonstrukte) en kulturele kontekste genees word. Ten einde 'n omvattende en integrale benadering tot pastorale terapie te volg, word 'n sistemiese, relasionele en kwalitatiewe verstaan van die *menslike siel* in 'n pastorale model vir *cura animarum* voorgestel. Ten einde 'n interkulturele benadering in pastorale terapie te volg en heling te verbind met die *trans-kulturele* konsep van genade (die eskatologiese paradigma) word die konsep van 'n *colo*-spiritualiteit ontwikkel. Die verstaan van genade as 'n transkulturele konsep is nodig met die oog op die vestiging van 'n ruimte van onvoorwaardelike liefde wat die kwaliteit van menswees en houdinge (*habitus*) binne verskillende eksistensiële realiteite (d.w.s. angs, skuld en skaamte, wanhoop, hulpeloosheid en weerloosheid, woede) deurslaggewend bepaal.

## Introduction

More and more churches and religions within our South African context are challenged to reflect on the interplay between processes of democratisation and the spiritual realm of life (the human quest for meaning and dignity). Without any doubt, the new dispensation in South Africa is very sensitive to issues related to violence, discrimination, gender inequality and stigmatisation (see the HIV and AIDS debate). Without elaborating, the most fundamental question at stake in this debate is the question of anthropology and how a holistic approach to healing can infiltrate the realm of human decision-making as determined by attitudes, the quality of human relationships and the meaning dimension of life within the realm of different cultural contexts.

In her book, *AIDS, Sexuality, and Gender: Experiences of Women in Kenyan Universities*, Kamau (2009:viii–ix) refers to the fact that the cultural concept of patriarchy is ever-present. It is rooted in the cultural context of the Kenyan tradition. Patriarchal power structures and practices project men as superior and dominant over women. In order to heal the culture and to address processes of destigmatisation, human attitudes towards gender and sexuality should be changed. This change implies that relationships and life views should be changed. The HIV and AIDS discourse, therefore, is in need of a new approach to human identity (the anthropological question) and the transformation of attitudes (the transformation of *habitus* [being functions]).

At the opening of the International Conference on HIV and AIDS in Vienna, Sunday 18 July 2010, the importance of merging prevention strategies and treatment (universal access) with decision-making was mentioned. It became clear that accountability and human attitudes should be the

drivers. However, despite a few references to human identity and risky sexual behaviour, the conference was mainly dominated by the more activist and functionalist slogan *Rights Here, Right Now*.<sup>1</sup>

The spiritual dimension (paradigmatic issues concerning the quest for meaning, philosophies of life, and norms and values) was virtually absent in the main conference. It was not directly debated as such. More appropriately, the burning question within a prevention strategy with its focus on healing should be the following: Are human beings equipped for strategic action and responsible decision-making in the fight against HIV and AIDS? Do they have the ability and coping mechanisms to deal with the pandemic on the level of attitude (*habitus*)? How are prevention strategies and medical models linked and related to the fundamental question of human identity and dignity within an anthropological approach? We can claim and demand *Rights Here, Right Now*, but are human beings *functionalities* (i.e. the pragmatic, doing approach which lays claim to our rights) or spiritual beings (i.e. the *telic*<sup>2</sup> and spiritually-oriented approach which creates a meaningful and normative framework for life where we take responsibility for our own suffering and that of others)?

Research models and prevention strategies should not bypass whether the cure should be sought mainly in medical science, activism and processes of democratisation and decriminalisation, but what about the human factor and the anthropological question regarding the quality and responsibility of human beings? These considerations form the core question of this article: What is meant by anthropology in a pastoral approach and to what extent can a Christian spiritual approach to healing contribute to the healing of life (i.e. to the healing of human relationships, their attitudes, paradigms and life views [the spiritual question])? Furthermore, it will be argued that in order to respond to these questions, the healing of life from a *wholistic approach* cannot bypass the healing of cultural settings. In this regard, the notion of *colo-spiritual* healing will be introduced in order to apply a wholistic approach to a pastoral hermeneutics of life care (*cura vitae*).

The basic presupposition is that the manner in which we view human beings will determine how we treat human beings. One can argue that anthropology provides the paradigms (conceptualised patterns of thinking, perceptions, containers of life views and rational convictions) that determine the attitudes of people (*habitus*) and their position within the realm of human relationships. The question at stake here is how a Christian spiritual approach to anthropology can play a decisive role in a hermeneutics of life care. This leads us to ask: How can we change paradigms regarding our being human, our spiritual quest for meaning and our search for human dignity and identity within a social and intercultural context through pastoral therapy? To a certain extent, paradigms are imbedded in cultural contexts. In themselves they are rational constructs emanating from *cultural forms*. One of the basic *cultural forms* in life is the understanding of our being human (anthropology).

1. See in this regard the special edition of Outlook (2010) published for the conference.

2. *Telic* refers to the notion of meaningful decision-making within processes of goal setting and the purposeful direction of life issues.

Within the tradition of pastoral care, anthropology was determined by the notion of *cura animarum* [cure and care of human souls]. In other words, the *human soul* was mainly interpreted within the paradigmatic framework of a *substantial hermeneutics*. How should a pastoral anthropology respond to the quest for a more qualitative and relational approach to the identity of human beings in order to meet the demands of an intercultural approach?

## From *soul* as substance to *soul* as a relational system and *habitus* in a pastoral anthropology

The use of the term *soul* in Scripture refers to human *wholeness* and not to a different substance, as in the case of Hellenism. Plato, for example, provides us with the idea that a soul can be deprived of its body, that it does not come fully into its own until it has been separated from the body and that it is immortal. The body is, therefore, merely clothing for the soul, a kind of prison from which it should escape and be liberated.

Arising from such Platonic notions, many people have a deep-seated conviction that soul refers to the inner world or the inward part of our being. It is seen as representing merely consciousness and sub-consciousness, and referring to a spiritual realm within the body. However, it will be argued that the concept of *soul* encompasses more than an *internal substance*.

In the Bible different concepts are used to denote *soul*. The word for *psyche* is derived from a root word that means breath or to breathe. The Hebrew word for soul, *nephesh*, (Gn 2:7) means breath, exhalation, the principle of life (Seidl 1999:751; Brown 1978:679–680). *Nephesh* denotes a principle of life that transforms a body, whether human or beast, into a living being. When *nephesh* is translated as *psyche*,<sup>3</sup> it signifies that which is vital in a human being in the broader sense. In combination with heart (*kardia*) and mind (*nous*), soul in the New Testament describes the seat of life or even life itself. It represents the person in the broadest sense and indicates the quality of life experiences. Soul, therefore, does not refer in the first place to a different anthropological category, but to a different mode of being (Harder in Brown 1978:684).

Our interpretation of both *nephesh* and *psyche* should take account the fact that the worldview of the Old and the New Testament functioned within totally different contexts and paradigms to ours. When we read Scripture we are bound to our own cultural context. It is, therefore, obvious that different schemata of interpretation will play a role in our findings. For our discussion, it is important to mention that both *nephesh* and *psyche* in Scripture refer to life and its quality (Seidl 1999:751; see Mt 16:25; Jn 15:13).

3. For the meaning of *psyche* and the connection with life see Dunn (1998:76): 'For both terms (*psyche/nephesh* and *pneuma/ruach*) express an original identification of "breath" as the life "force".'

In some places in the New Testament soul is connected to spirit (*pneuma*). According to Paul, there is inter-connectedness between soul and spirit. In some texts the meaning of these terms is relatively the same. When Paul refers to spirit his intention is to describe a unique relationship between God and human beings. Soul then becomes an indication and expression of a very specific state of being resulting from justification (salvation). One can say that *pneuma* indicates the new person in Christ over against the old person who is captured by death and sin.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:23 Paul speaks about the trichotomy of spirit, soul and body. The implication is not a threefold division, however, but different perspectives within a unity. The text should not be exploited and misused for philosophical or psychological speculation about three different entities and anthropological categories. Soul, therefore, does not refer to an inward substance but to the totality of life within the presence of God (*coram Deo*). Soul reveals attitude and aptitude because of the notion of human beings created in the image of God. It represents subjectivity, responsibility and *respond-ability*. Soul is more than a psychological entity within us, because we are its stewards.

It is nearly impossible to capture the meaning of soul in a theory of personhood or personality type. Soul implies more than knowledge (knowing functions) or deeds (doing functions). Soul is an indication of the quality of our being functions. Our being functions should not be assessed as neutral in relation to morality and ethics. Norms and values determine the quality of soul. The human person reflects soulfulness, because we are moral and ethical beings and directed towards the ultimate. Furthermore, soul cannot be separated from spirit and the notion of virtues. In the New Testament these virtues are described as the fruit of the Spirit (*charisma*) (Gl 5:22).

Our argument for soul as embodiment, and as an indication of our being functions does not deny the notion of the uniqueness of the individual, nor the experience of autonomy as a unique way of being human (i.e. the experience of mine) (Meininger 2001:17). The Christian belief that humans are made in the image of God implies that our individuality is a representation of the character of God, which is love or grace. The further implication is that we are geared towards the future, posing the question of meaning in life.

In a pastoral anthropology one cannot totally ignore a *substantial* approach. *Substantial*, here, refers to authenticity and the stance of the individual before God. On the one hand, substantiality depicts a state of being and a qualitative condition as determined by grace. On the other hand, a relational approach helps one to understand authenticity within the dynamics of networking. One should, therefore, opt for an inclusive anthropology, which operates with both the mutuality of relationships (*relatio*) as well as the identity of being qualities (*substantia*), rather than an anthropology in which *substantia* predominates (see Meininger 2001:20).

The outcome of my argument is an inclusive and normative anthropology. Anthropology determines healing, because the

questions, 'How do I see myself?', 'Who is the other?' and 'How do you understand and perceive God?' determine our approach to life. Our care and support for one another are interpretative activities and are influenced by perceptions and prejudice. That is why a pastoral, hermeneutical competence can be seen as the basic skill of caregivers (see Meininger 2001:24).

A hermeneutical and systemic understanding of soul implies the following anthropological perspectives:

- Soul should be viewed as a systemic entity.
- It should be assessed and interpreted within the dynamics of interactive relationships (networking).
- Soul is a qualitative concept.
- It indicates a mode of being (attitude, aptitude, *habitus*, position) and should be interpreted within the processes of meaning giving and meaning receiving.
- Soul and the soulfulness of life manifest within the happenstances of life.
- Soul describes a specific stance in life, a disposition within life events. It connects with choices (the ethical dimension) and reveals character (*epitedeumata*). It also connects with acts which express intention, and motivation or driving forces (*praxeis*). The human soul, therefore, also represents an appropriate ethical stance in life and is expressed in virtues. Virtue (*arête*) means 'the specific quality appropriate to an object or a person' (Link & Ringwald 1978:925).<sup>4</sup> Virtue denotes a permanent pattern of behaviour (*hexis*), determined by being qualities and decision-making. Virtues are described as manifestations of the power of God in 2 Peter 1:3. They lead to devotion (*eusebeia*), self-discipline, passion and mutual love. Galatians 5:22 mentions the fruit of the Spirit which can be viewed as the Christian equivalent of the general human virtues. Virtues are 'actions of God's new creation' (Link & Ringwald 1978:927).
- Soul designates a systemic network of functional positions, which describe the mode of being of the human person.

Within these positions, soul signifies vocation and a sense of directedness and significance (teleological dimension). In relationship with God it signifies our understanding of God (God-images) as enfolded in behaviour and social interaction (spirituality).

Due to the importance of attitude<sup>5</sup> (*phronesis*) in the revelation of God to human beings, a close relationship between attitude or disposition and soul is presupposed. According to Philippians 2:5, wisdom or attitude plays a decisive role within the being functions of Christians:

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus, Who, being in the very nature of God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking

4. According to Plato, the four basic virtues are wisdom (*sophia*), courage (*andreia*), prudence (*sophrosyne*) and justice (*diakalosyne*).

5. In this regard it is useful to mention that even in the Classical outlook on our being human, the concept of *sophrosyne*, was used as an indication of one's self-understanding in relationship to the immortal gods who punished undue pride (*hybris*). 'In tragedy the moral lesson was to cultivate *sophrosyne*, a proper balance and awareness of one's true position' (Starr 1981:65).

the very nature of a servant being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man He humbled himself and became obedient to the death – even the death on a cross.

In the light of the centrality of Philippians 2:5 and its understanding of God's intention with salvation (the 'soul' of God) *phronesis* seems to be a very appropriate choice. It refers both to an eschatological understanding of the quality of our being human as well as to the existential consequences for our Christian identity.

The word for attitude (*phronesis*) is related to the Old Testament's understanding of wisdom (Goetzman 1976:616). The Hebrew equivalents are *hakom* and *bîn* with their respective derivations. It is significant that *phronesis* is related to God's position. It denotes a creative understanding of God in which wisdom (*sophia*), together with the notion of Christ's incarnation, plays a fundamental role. Moore (1992:ix) can be quoted in this regard: 'Soul is revealed in attachment, love and community, as well as in retreat on behalf of inner communing and intimacy.'

For soul one needs aesthetics which is the creative imagination of visioning the divine within the realm of relationships. Aesthetics as the soulfulness of soul is wisdom enacted as the beauty of love, reconciliation and justice. Soul strives for growth and wholeness. This is why Moore (1992:4) does not view the care of the soul as primarily a method for problem solving; its goal is not to make life problem-free, but to give ordinary life the depth and value that comes with soulfulness (1992:4).

The notion of soulfulness corresponds with *phronema* [mind set] in Romans 8. It expresses commitment and vocation; it reflects *spirit*. As an existential and ontological category, *phronesis* indicates a schema of interpretation and a paradigm, which takes account of the will of God in decision-making. *Phronesis* also indicates substance, that is, the quality of being functions as determined by the incarnation of Christ. God's salvific will has been revealed in the position of Christ so that *phronesis* should basically be interpreted theologically as an eschatological category. Both *phronesis* and *nephesh* are connected to life as a spiritual entity. Life lived according to the principle of spirit (*hoi de kata pneuma ontes*) (Rm 8:5) is life as an embodiment of God's salvation and reconciliation in Christ (Rm 8:6).

Such an eschatological interpretation of soul creates a space for reconciliation, grace and peace. This space is demarcated by the *koinonia*, the fellowship within the body of Christ (see Phlp 4:2; Rm 15:5). The pattern of Christ's *phronesis* should therefore determine our being functions and positions.

Our position can be summed up in the following quotation:

'Soul' is not a thing, but a quality or a systemic dimension of experiencing life and ourselves within the realm of different relationships. It has to do with depth, values, relatedness, heart and personal identity. (Moore 1992:5)<sup>6</sup>

6. See in this regard the argument in Nauer (2005:471) for *cura animarum* and its connectedness to *nephesh*. Humans do not have *nephesh*, they are *nephesh* (p. 472). We are in our totality soul in all relations.

If one can accept the previous outline as a basic framework for a Christian spiritual approach to anthropology, the next question surfaces: In what way can pastoral care operate as a healing factor within fundamental life issues and contribute to healing of paradigmatic issues as embedded in cultural contexts?<sup>7</sup>

## Functions<sup>8</sup> of pastoral care and counselling: Towards a hermeneutical approach

Through the ages, the notion of shepherding has become a classic representation of pastoral care as a theological endeavour (*cura animarum* as related to the notion of salvation). Seward Hiltner (1958:55) discusses this idea in his theological theory on pastoral care. Hiltner argues that all the actions of the caregiver should be understood from the shepherding perspective which is one of solicitous care. The unique feature in pastoral care, distinct from all the other disciplines within the field of health and care, is the fact that pastoral care implies more than empathy. It embodies the identification of the suffering Christ with our human predicament. In pastoral care the pastor doesn't wait for the people to make an appointment. Instead, the shepherd seeks out the sheep to care for them. Pastoral care meets people where they are; the space of life is our office, not primarily the counselling room of a clinical professional in an official building. Pastoral care entails being with people where they are and meeting them in their being functions with deep concern and sincere empathy.

Within the tradition of *cura animarum* the following functions have been identified in different models of care and counselling:

- **Healing:** the act of healing implies the restoration of a loss and the search for integration and identity; to regain what has been lost or to attain new coping skills, coping mechanisms or the reframing of existing concepts and ideas. A holistic and comprehensive approach to healing includes physical, psychological, relational, contextual and spiritual healing. Spiritual healing within a Christian context is closely related to the notion of salvation.<sup>9</sup>
- **Sustaining:** the art of sustaining is linked to the capacity to accept what cannot be changed and to adopt a realistic stance in life. In this regard one needs a support system in order to survive or to take courage to proceed with life. Sustaining is not about passive resignation, but about realistic acceptance and the art of drawing strength and support from existing resources.
- **Guiding:** healing is linked to direction. Often, difficult decisions need to be taken. In order to do this, one needs a moral framework, a philosophy in life or a soul friend

7. This question relates to the need for the healing of concepts as previously mentioned in the gender debate and its connectedness to the HIV and AIDS debate.

8. For a more detail exposition of the different functions in pastoral care and counselling see Lartey (1997:37–41).

9. Ellens (1987:24–27) points out in his psycho-theology that a theology of illness needs to link with the Hebrew worldview. Healing is about growth and life in every aspect of human life. 'Likewise, that growth which constitutes healing in our life experience may also be called salvation and salvation, healing.'

who can guide one through the difficult trajectories of life. Guiding is not about prescription, but about the empowerment and enabling of people. The guide acts as a co-interpreter of life.

- **Reconciling:** reconciling is about the overcoming of estrangement, isolation and hatred through forgiveness and unconditional love (grace). It is about bringing people together and overcoming the gap of unforgiveness. Enmity should be exchanged and overcome by the peace of salvation.
- **Nurturing:** this is the art of how to grow into maturity and how to use human potential and spiritual potential in order to foster and facilitate growth through different stages of life. It can be linked to a developmental model in pastoral care. Its aim is maturity and identity.
- **Liberating:** people need to be helped to be emancipated from *slavery*, addiction and situations of victimhood. This implies a movement from bondage, through transformation and change, to overcoming situations, structures and circumstances that dominate people and rob them of their human dignity and freedom. At stake are issues of social justice and the notion of equality and human dignity. Liberating actions often go hand in hand with processes of democratisation.
- **Empowering:** with regard to the notion of empowering, pastoral care needs to deal with issues related to power and the abuse of power. The aim here is to confront powerful institutions and to reveal the abuse of power. Another aspect of empowering is to equip people with the necessary skills and knowledge to prepare them for the various crises we face in life. The main emphasis in empowerment is prevention care, for example, helping people to die before they reach a terminal stage, and enabling couples to understand the nature of love before entering into relationships and marriage.
- **Interpreting:** pastoral care has a hermeneutical task, that is, to link the stories or narratives of people's life with the Story or Narrative of the gospel. In this regard a pastoral hermeneutics is about the attempt to understand and interpret the fundamental issues in our being functions in the light of our understanding and experience of God. One can call them existential issues as they are related to our struggle to come to terms with life and our search for meaning in life. In a pastoral hermeneutics the pastor functions as an interpreter or hermeneutist of God-images (people's perceptions and noetic concepts of God).

These pastoral functions are therapeutic in themselves. Their intention is to foster change and to promote human and spiritual health and maturity. Their main and fundamental role is to display God's comfort. In terms of the human quest for identity and dignity one can say that comfort (the *parakalein* of pastoral care and counselling) displays the presence of God within the realm of life. Pastoral comfort implies more than the psychotherapeutic notion of Rogerian empathy. Comfort establishes a space of intimacy wherein people are exposed to unconditional love, that is, the reality that one is accepted unconditionally for whom you are without the fear of rejection).

The space of intimacy demands from pastoral hermeneutics to see the basic function of pastoral care as the assessment and critical analysis of dominating paradigms which determine the quality of life and the understanding of the meaning and purposefulness of our being human. The question, therefore, should be now: How does one apply this hermeneutical function of pastoral care to life events as determined by paradigms emanating from specific cultural backgrounds and traditions?

## Colo-spirituality and the quest for interculturalisation in pastoral care

At the end of the 20th century the concept of interculturality emerged to indicate that an intercultural paradigm could be more appropriate than the existing paradigm of inculturality.<sup>10</sup>

Inculturation refers to the gospel being enfolded and embodied within the paradigm of a specific local culture, without losing the awareness of multicultural pluralism, that is, the reality of different cultures (identities) within a system of dynamic interaction and inter-dialogue.

In his book, *Inculturation and Healing*, Bate (1995:19) advocates a connection between inculturation and healing. His basic argument is that an analysis of culture is the key to understanding the sickness-healing process. Thus the importance of what he calls the appropriation of inculturation as the *theological key* to a hermeneutics of sickness and healing within defined contexts. According to Bate, inculturation implies a reappropriation of contextual culture; it addresses the issue of unity and plurality within the church, and it situates the contextual manifestations within a historical framework. It can be assumed that when Bate describes culture as a way of life for a given time and place, replete with values, symbols and meaning, the notion of interculturality is already implied. Furthermore, Bate (1995:241) also suggests that culture represents the human locus of a people's context.<sup>11</sup> It is the site of the humanisation of the *oikos* [habitat], and thus the site where the meeting occurs between the church as the human community of faith and the world as the human community in life.

Niebuhr's work *Christ and Culture* (1952) on the relationship between the Christian faith and culture has become a classic. Although he worked with the so-called object-subject split in a polar model, that is, the substantial difference between Christ and culture, he is convinced that the relationship should be redefined. Niebuhr believes that, although Christ is above culture (different), he operates through it to transform (convert) it.

10. The difference between inculturality and interculturality is not great. The first emphasises interpenetration whilst the second emphasises exchange. Bellagamba (1987:99) refers to inculturation as the attempt to create a spirituality which is rooted in the basic experience of life. The theological justification for inculturation is sought in incarnational theology. 'An incarnated spirituality would be a great gift to Africans' (Bellagamba 1987:104).

11. When we use the concepts of inculturation and interculturality we must guard against the tendency to use the concept of culture as exclusive in terms of race, ethnicity and gender. Hence the argument to move 'beyond multi-culturalism' in order to combat the affirmation of cultural particularism (see Villa-Vicencio 1994:115).

With reference to the notion of inculturation, most approaches to the issue of culture tended to be no more than the *Christianisation* of the so-called heathen culture. Such an approach implied more than accommodation. It was actually an engulfing missionary model<sup>12</sup> with the focus on cultural assimilation (Villa-Vicencio 1994:116). This model projects a Christian homogenised culture that marginalises (often alienates) those cultures that are excluded from the dominant religious point of departure.

If it is true that *culture*<sup>13</sup> in a comprehensive sense encompasses the entire life of a people, their morals, religious beliefs, social structures, political, economic and educational systems, forms of music and dance, rituals, and all other products of their creative spirit, then a discussion on culture must indeed include the aesthetic, spiritual and sacred dimensions.

Culture,<sup>14</sup> from the Latin word *colo*, means to nurse (take care of) or to transform the earth through a plough (an instrument) in order to live. Culture, therefore, refers to human achievement and endeavour which tries to *cultivate* creation and the cosmos into a humane space for living through symbols, metaphors, language and instruments (*techne*). Culture is the human attempt to *recreate* creation through spiritual-religious articulation (transcendence); ethically driven actions (norms, values, taboos); aesthetic imagination (art), technical intervention (technology); dialogical verbalisation (language and speech); and social or politico-juridical restructuring into a humane environment. What is important is that religion, faith and spirituality cannot be understood without an understanding of culture.

In an intercultural hermeneutical model, we no longer work with the split between Christ and culture (cf. Niebuhr 1952), but with the interconnectedness between Christ and culture. Interculturality<sup>15</sup> is about the meaning of Christian spirituality within culture, as well as the mutual influence and exchange of paradigms between the two. Although one cannot ignore the tendencies of repudiation, assimilation, accommodation, paradox and transformation, the tension between exclusiveness and inclusiveness, between continuity and discontinuity (which will always exist and cannot be resolved by rational categories), interculturality describes mutuality in terms of a hermeneutical process of understanding or interpretation, enrichment and critical exchange, without the sacrifice of uniqueness. This is what Villa-Vicencio (1994:122–124) calls the encounter of the ultimate within and through the particular.

12. For the impact of the colonial period and the connection with the foreign missionaries see Bujo 1992:37–49.

13. As Hopkins (2005:83) puts it: Culture is where the sacred reveals itself. As a result, one only knows what she, or he is created to be and called to do through the human created realm of culture.'

14. For the background to the concept of 'culture' see Van Binsbergen (2003:465–469). He refers to Taylor's definition: 'that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society'. In this regard, Van Binsbergen (2003:476) prefers the concept 'cultural orientation' rather than merely 'culture'.

15. Villa-Vicencio (1994:120) connects interculturality to the necessity of an interreligious dialogue. With the forging of a common sense of belonging, South Africa is in need of a cultural openness, which involves a co-mingling of cultures, with a presumption of equal worth.

The prerequisite for such a dynamic, intercultural approach is a risky, critical openness without losing the tension between continuity and discontinuity or the identity of the ultimate (the eschatological truth of the Christian faith) within and through the particular we encounter in culture.

## Working definition of *culture* within interculturality

By culture is meant the powerful (the quest to gain control over) human endeavour to:

- rename or reinterpret (hermeneutics)
- reshape (civilisation)
- reconstruct (technique, instrumentalisation)
- recreate (art and the aesthetic dimension) the cosmos into a significant humane space for living by means of signs, symbols and metaphors through structures, language, rituals, customs, principles and norms, ideas (belief systems, politics, religious paradigms) and institutions (church, education, government, publics).

A *colo*-spirituality should take seriously all the different life issues which determine the quality of human relationships and fundamental processes of the interpretation of the meaning of life (a hermeneutics of life). In order to deal with culture in a pastoral spiritual approach it is important to take the following different attitudinal life categories into consideration. Life categories in this regard refer to existential realities and different *types of culture*; different existential issues portraying and determining human spiritual acts.

## Towards a *Christian spiritual culture*: The 'trans-culturality' of grace

With reference to the dimension of a spiritual culture, that is, the quest for *Heimat* [home], the need for a safe space for humane living (a place in life where human beings can rediscover their human dignity, that is, their unique identity) and its emphasis on values or norms within an intimate network of relationships, I want to argue that Christian spirituality within an eschatological perspective can play a pivotal role in our current society. It can contribute to change and the transformation of paradigmatic perceptions regarding the character of our being human (anthropology). With reference to a Christian understanding of a *spiritual culture* (*colo*-spirituality), my basic argument is that the notion of eschatology, that is, who we are in Christ (the

**TABLE 1:** Existential life categories within a *colo*-spirituality.

Type	Issue	Act
Guilt culture	Transgression of norms or values (Prescriptive)	Confession (Sacrificial acts)
Shame culture	Failure (social expectations and role functions) (Status and position)	Manipulation (Acts of self-protection)
Ubuntu culture	Interconnectedness. Sense of belonging (Communality)	Sharing (Relate to the other)
Success culture	Achievement (Gain)	Self-development and exploitation (Maintain yourself)
Grace and spiritual culture	Significance (Meaning)	Affirmation by grace or unconditional love (Courage to be) (Devotion or worship) (Self-transcendence)

indicative of our new being in Christ), creates a process of trans-culturalism wherein our identity is not anymore defined by merely cultural paradigms, roles or identities, not even by gender issues (masculinities or femininities), but by our new status in Christ as established by the indwelling presence of the Spirit. Human identity is then determined by grace and unconditional love. This is what I want to call an eschatological understanding of health and healing.

The reason for this is that health in a biblical sense points to life and salvation (from the verb *sozo* [to save]). In a comprehensive approach to health<sup>16</sup> the use of the term *spiritual healing* could be too narrow. One might even speak of *faith healing*, *Divine healing*, *miraculous healing* or *charismatic healing*. However, the reference to spiritual healing refers to *wholeness*<sup>17</sup> and a comprehensive understanding of the concept of the soul, *nephesh*, which includes embodied life as experienced within the presence of God, as well as within a cultural system and network of relationships. As a result of the predominantly synthetic thinking of the Old Testament *basar* [flesh], the bodily function, is not conceived as something separate from the *nephesh*. Embodiment and soulfulness are complementary categories.

Healthy people in the Old Testament were people who expressed the quality of the fullness and wellbeing of life as represented by the notion of *shalom* [peace]. It refers to complete fulfilment and is connected to moral activity, spiritual achievement, righteousness (*sedeq*), faithful fulfilment of the covenant and the torah (holiness), obedience to God and the law, blessing, fertility and longevity (see also Wilkinson 1998:11–16.) These concepts, within a comprehensive understanding of health as wholeness and wellbeing, refer to a positive state of complete fulfilment and a sense of destiny as it emanates from God and his will for a humane life with dignity and righteousness. Health includes right relationships.

This comprehensive understanding dovetails with the New Testament's understanding of health and healing. Several concepts are relevant in this regard. Wilkinson (1998:22–29) discusses the use of the concept *hugies* which means having the quality of soundness derived from a proper balance of the whole being. The significant point is that both *shalom* and *hugies* coincide in expressing the idea of soundness or wholeness of a person's being, which is the essence of health. Furthermore, in the New Testament the word *eirene* describes a state of peace or tranquillity as opposed to war or disturbance. *Zoe* refers to health as a constructive way of living or the quality of life, whilst *bios* and *psyche* generally

16. For a holistic approach to health see Collins and Culbertson (2003:1–7). It is important to note that modern psychiatry came to the realisation that the spiritual aspect is just as important a component of the total person as are the mind and the body.

17. The notion of wholeness is very popular in the literature on healing but it is a very vague and slippery notion. Lamb (2001:60–69) discuss the two meanings of wholeness: comprehensiveness and integration. Wholeness also implies coherence and intactness, continuity and adequacy. Self-knowledge and *loving knowledge* also play a role. Whilst wholeness refers to the healing dimension of interconnectedness, the concept *hole* in a holistic approach refers to different parts as related and connected to the entire picture and network; to the whole unit in all of its dimensions and functions. Due to the fact that Christian healing implies the transformation of the whole being and the integration between spirituality (the meaning dimension of life and the destiny of human beings within an eschatological understanding of life), the concept of 'wholeness' is most appropriate within an intercultural approach wherein the healing of relationships and attitudes are paramount.

refer to our common human life lived under the conditions of time and sense, which begins with birth and ends with death. When transferred to God, life points to eternal life and trust in the faithfulness of God. Additionally, the word *Soteria* indicates a condition of redemption as the outcome of justification (being saved and sound) and deliverance (freedom from evil and sin).

From a theological point of view one can conclude that, as a comprehensive category, health refers to a state of being that can be described as *shalom* [peace] (Long 2000). According to Long, in *shalom* [health] our relationships with God, one another and the environment are at peace. He concludes:

*Shalom* is experienced in a right relationship to God; it is experienced communally; it is experienced in a very special way within the family system and should be expanded to the whole of creation. *Shalom* denotes fullness of life. (p. 14)

According to Pilch (2000:4–15), the healing stories in the New Testament and the notion of *shalom* should be interpreted in their cultural context. When one compares the notion of healing in an ancient narrative with the notion of healing in, for example a Westernised and Americanised global context, different perspectives surface. When applied to the American context, healing is more about doing, individuals need satisfaction, future success and achievements, the attempt to master and control, and the pursuit of happiness (what is good). In the New Testament being is more primary than doing. Collateral relationships constitute the primary value orientation. Group goals are therefore preferable to individual goals. Both the past (tradition) and the focus on everyday life in the present are important. Life should be lived, not managed.

The discussion of the different concepts of health in both the Old and New Testament helps one to understand that a spiritual approach to healing in pastoral care is paramount. Within a *colo*-spirituality, healing focuses on human's basic *being qualities*. With reference to the eschatological dimension of Christian spiritual healing, healing (becoming whole) implies the category of hope (hope as a new stance in life as determined by the events of the cross and resurrection of Christ) as determined by grace and unconditional love.

## Conclusion

I have advocated for a theological interpretation of healing which takes a comprehensive approach to human wholeness from the perspective of Christian *colo*-spirituality. In this regard the following theological perspectives are relevant:

- Spiritual healing as a new state of being: healing represents the fact that 'if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation' (2 Cor 5:17). This is a shift from sin into the eschatological realm of redemption and salvation.
- Spiritual healing as a new state of mind, which is characterised by peace: *shalom* describes a contentedness with God and life. 'For He himself is our peace' (Eph 2:14).
- Spiritual healing as a new attitude and way of doing and living.

- 'Live by the Spirit ... the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control' (Gl 5:16; 22–23).
- Spiritual healing as wholeness, purposefulness and direction: 'For in this hope we were saved' (Rm 8:24).

*Colo*-spiritual healing with its dimensions of peace (*shalom*), healing (*habitus*) and wholeness (*telos*) should take place within the realm of existential, life issues which include, *inter alia*, anxiety, guilt or shame, despair, helplessness and anger, hence the emphasis on an existential life approach.<sup>18</sup>

*Colo*-spiritual healing occurs when the content of the Christian faith is related to existential issues in such a way that meaning is discovered and people change their attitudes and prejudices towards one another. Healing does not imply that all the problems of life are solved, but rather that one understands God and relates one's God-image to life in order to live the problems in an appropriate and responsible way.

The paradigm of wholeness within a Christian spiritual understanding of our being human (anthropology) is closely connected to the significance and meaning of the lives of people as determined by eschatology (the trans-culturality of grace and unconditional love). The discovery of meaning<sup>19</sup> implies that, through the content of the Christian faith, appropriate God images (e.g. God as a Soul Friend and Empowering Life Force) are related to fear or anxiety in such a way that intimacy is experienced; that guilt, guilt feelings and shame are related to freedom; that despair is addressed by eschatology and hope; that helplessness and vulnerability are connected to the concreteness of *diakonia* [service/charity] and *koinonia* [fellowship]; and that frustration and anger are met by the fulfilled promises of God and ethical actions of structural and contextual transformation.

In his book on religion as an expression of meaning in life, Wilhelm Gräb (2006:52) argues for an understanding of religion as the search for meaning and meaningful self-expression (*Selbstdeutung*) and self-understanding. The authentic experience of meaningful self-expression leads to an experience and feeling of being grounded and cared for (*Gegründet- und Gehaltseins; Geborgenheit*).<sup>20</sup> This experience of being accepted within the very essence of your being, or, in the terms of the famous practical theologian Schleiermacher, 'das Gefühl der schlechthinnigen Abhängigkeit' [feeling of dependence] (see Landmesser 2005:127–128), can be described as an experience of transcendence and therefore as the moment of the birth of religion (Landmesser 2005:128).<sup>21</sup>

18. The concept *existential* refers *inter alia* to the existential threat of anxiety, that is, the fear of being rejected and isolated within the dynamics of human relationships; the existential threat of guilt; the existential threat of despair; the existential threat of helplessness and vulnerability; the existential threat of disillusionment, frustration, anger and unfulfilled life needs.

19. What Victor Frankl calls *logos* in his logotherapy (Frankl 1968:151–214).

20. Religion has to do with a fundamental experience of trust (*Grundvertrauen ins Dasein*), and a conception of transcendence that engenders gestures or symbolic expressions of meaning and an understanding of coherence, belonging and networking in our journey as human beings through history (see Gräb 2006:53).

21. For a discussion on the connection between spirituality, an experience of transcendence, and meaning and religion (see Drehsen & Roessler 2005).

Religion functions as a spiritual experience through which we exceed and transcend our human limitations and existential boundaries in time and space.<sup>22</sup> The experience of *Geborgenheit* is the deepest expression of meaning and describes what is meant by an experience and understanding of intimacy within *colo*-spirituality.

The real and most fundamental healing of the human *soul* within a Christian *colo*-spirituality occurs:

- When a person experiences intimacy, that is, unconditional acceptance for who they are without fear of being rejected. In this regard the argument in holistic, spiritual healing is that the unconditional love of God provides the healing dimension and therapy of intimacy.
- When rejection and isolation are addressed through unconditional love and grace, change within the essence of our very being and human identity occurs.
- When our guilt is totally deleted (as in a theology of the cross) and we are forgiven. When our shame is removed through our sense of restored self-value before a reconciling God, then spiritual development takes place. When doubt and despair are connected to the eschatological hope founded in the resurrection of Christ (and we are transformed from victim to victor as in a theology of the resurrection), then we start to anticipate the presence of God and the coming of his kingdom.
- When our helplessness and vulnerability encounter the fellowship of the body of God, (i.e. the church) then all humans (despite gender, race and religious differences) are exposed to a support system that cares and comforts.
- When unfulfilled life needs are satisfied by the transforming impact of the gospel through the notion of justice and the fulfilled promises of God as revealed in the biblical text, Baptism and the Eucharist, then anger can be transformed and healed by the experience of gratitude and joy. This is especially the case when obstacles and dehumanising structures are removed, overcome, transformed or addressed.

Within cross-cultural communication the contribution of a *colo*-spirituality is the notion of trans-culturalisation, in other words to assess human beings in terms of the eschatological notion of grace and unconditional love and not merely in terms of the cultural understanding of human beings as merely determined by social functions and positions in society (status). Role functions and need-satisfaction do not determine in the last place our being functions but our new stratus in Christ.

In terms of the fundamental existential life issues which impact on the quality of daily living (anxiety, guilt, despair, helplessness, anger) trans-culturalisation links our need for intimacy to grace; our need for freedom to salvation or reconciliation or forgiveness; our need for hope to the resurrection power of the Spirit; our need for support to *diakonia* and *koinonia*, and our need for life-fulfilment to gratitude and thanksgiving. *Cura animarum* can then be reinterpreted as *cura vitae* (Louw 2008), the healing of life .....  
22. 'Überwindung unser Begrenztheit' (Landmesser 2005:133).

which creates an intimate space wherein human beings can claim a dignity determined by unconditional love. In a *colo-spirituality*, the whole of life is nurtured due to the reality of the new creation in Christ (eschatological reality).

## Acknowledgements

### Competing interests

The author declares that he has no financial or personal relationship(s) which may have inappropriately influenced him in writing this article.

## References

- Bate, S.C., 1995, *Inculturation and Healing: Coping-healing in South African Christianity*, Cluster Publications, Pietermaritzburg.
- Bellagamba, A., 1987, 'New Attitudes towards Spirituality', in A. Shorter (ed.), *Towards African Christian Maturity*, pp. 95–109, St Paul, Kampala.
- Brown, C., 1978, 'Soul', in C. Brown (ed.), *Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, vol. 3, pp. 686–687, Paternoster Press, Exeter.
- Bujo, B., 1992, *African Theology in its Social Context: Faith and Cultural Series*, Maryknoll, New York, NY.
- Collins, G.B. & Culbertson, T., 2003, *Mental Illness and Psychiatric Treatment: A Guide for Pastoral Counsellors*, The Hayworth Press, New York, NY.
- Drehesen, V. & Roessler, D.R.C., 2005, *Kompendium Religionstheorie*, Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, Göttingen.
- Dunn, D.G., 1998, *The Theology of ul the Apostle*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids.
- Ellens, J.H., 1987, *Psychotheology: Key Issues*, University of South Africa, Pretoria.
- Frankl, V., 1968, *Man's Search for Meaning: An Introduction to Logotherapy*, Washington Square Press, New York, NY.
- Goetzman, J., 1976, 'Mind' (*phronēsis*) in C. Brown (ed.), *Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, vol. 2, pp. 616–6 E, Paternoster Press, Exeter.
- Gräb, W., 2006, *Religion als Deutung des Lebens: Perspektiven einer Praktischen Theologie gelebter Religion*, Gütersloher Verlagshaus, Gütersloh.
- Harder, G., 1978, 'Soul', in C. Brown (ed.), *Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, vol. 3, pp. 686–687, Paternoster Press, Exeter.
- Hiltner, S., 1958, *Preface to Pastoral Theology*, Abingdon, Nashville, TN.
- Hopkins, D.N., 2005, 'Black Theology: The Notion of Culture Revisited', in *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 124, 74–83.
- Kamau, N., 2009, *AIDS, Sexuality, and Gender: Experiences of Women in Kenyan Universities*, Zapf Chancery, Eldoret.
- Lamb, W.W.H., 2001, 'Wholeness, Dignity and the Ageing Self: A Conversation between Philosophy and Theology', in E. Mackinley, J. Ellor & S. Pickard (eds.), *Aging, Spirituality and Pastoral Care: A Multi-National Perspective*, pp. 75–76, The Haworth Pastoral Press, New York, NY.
- Landmesser, C., 2005, 'Rudolf Bultmann: Religion, Kultur und Existence', quoted in V. Drehesen (eds.) et al. *Kompendium Religionstheorie*, pp. 120–134, Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, Göttingen.
- Lartey, E.Y., 1997, *In Living Colour: An Intercultural Approach to Pastoral Care and Counselling*, Cassell, London.
- Link, H.G. & Ringwald, A., 1978, 'Virtue (*aretē*)', in C. Brown (ed.), *Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, vol. II., pp. 925–931, Paternoster Press, Exeter.
- Long, W.M., 2000, *Health, Healing and God's Kingdom, New Pathways to Christian Health Ministry in Africa*, Regnum Books, Carlisle.
- Louw, D.J., 2008, *Cura Vitae: Illness and the Healing of Life*, Lux Verbi, Wellington.
- Meininger, H.P., 2001, 'Authenticity and Practice of an Inclusive Anthropology in Care for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities', in W.C. Gaventa & D.L. Coulter (eds.), *Spirituality and Intellectual Disability: International Perspectives on the Effect of Culture and Religion on Healing Body, Mind and Soul*, pp. 13–28, The Haworth Pastoral Press, New York / London / Oxford.
- Moore, T., 1992, *Care of the Soul: How to Add Depth and Meaning to your Everyday Life*, Piatkus, London.
- Niebuhr, H.R., 1952, *Christ and Culture*, Faber and Faber, London.
- Nauer, D., 2005, 'Pleidooi voor zielzorgn', *Praktische Theologie* 4, 465–483.
- Nouwen, H.J.M., 2000, *Show Me the Way*, Darton, Longman and Todd, London.
- Outlook., 2010, 'Let's Play Safe', Special Edition (2), 82–83.
- Pilch, J.J., 2000, *Healing in the New Testament: Insights from Medical and Mediterranean Anthropology*, Fortress Press, MN.
- Seidl, H., 1999, 'Seele: Kirchen und Philosophie geschichtlich', in J. Muller (hrsg.), *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, bd 30, 748–759, Walter de Gruyter, Berlin.
- Starr, G., 1981, *The Ancient Greeks*, Oxford University Press, London.
- Van Binsbergen, W., 2003, *Intercultural Encounters: African and Anthropological Lessons towards a Philosophy of Interculturality*, Lit Verlag, Münster.
- Villa-Vicencio, C., 1994, 'Theology and Culture in South Africa: Beyond Multi-Culturalism', *Theology Today* 51/52, 115–126. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/004057369405100110>
- Wilkinson, J., 1998, *The Bible and Healing: A Medical and Theological Commentary*, The Handsel Press, Edinburgh.