Interculturality and Wholeness in African Spiritualities and Cosmologies: The Need for Communality (*Ubuntu*-Philosophy) and Compassionate Co-humanity (*Ũtugi*-Hospitality) in the Realm of Pastoral Caregiving

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Summary

Writing from South Africa, Louw proposes that African spiritualities, because of their deep commitment to communality and hospitality, have much to contribute to interculturality in pastoral caregiving.

Culture has deeply influenced the construct of caregiving. Within Western culture, with its emphasis on individuality and human rights, caregiving in the twentieth century specifically in the Northern hemisphere, has become a variant of the psychology of the independent and autonomous human self. Healing and 'wholeness' have become closely associated with the notions of self-fulfillment and self-realization as defined by theoretical models in psychology.

The Enlightenment's focus on human dignity, independence, and the ability for self-actualization through reason also made concepts like sin, penance, and remorse unpopular in many pastoral circles. The influence of the Enlightenment on pastoral care can be seen in its increased emphasis on the human mind and self—the individualistic self-culture with the emphasis on me-identity. The general counselling goal in psychology, namely that people should be led to be assertive so that they may reach self-actualization

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and personal need-fulfilment became the focal area in many pastoral care and counselling models.

Spirituality became a mode of 'self-fixation' with the danger of reducing spirituality to merely psychological constructs. "Psychological reductionism is an over-reliance on, and uncritical adoption of, psychological constructs, such as self-fulfilment and self-realization. Intentionally or unintentionally, such theories may actually promote and reinforce individualism and spiritual narcissism."[1]

But, and this is the core focus of the article, what if this culture of self-maintenance and the 'inner potentials' of the living human document the only model for caregiving in a global culture? What might be the contribution of other cultures to the realm of spirituality, especially cultures that are embedded in a more communal and systemic understanding of being human? Within the awareness and understanding of the complexity of life problems within the dynamic networking of human relationships, what could be the contribution of African spiritualities to wholeness and healing in pastoral caregiving? In this regard, I propose that the *Ubuntu* principle of communality and the *Ūtugi* principle of hospitality can help caregiving to establish a kind of *hospitium publicum*, that is an inclusive public space for doing pastoral care as a mode of hospitable outreach to all human beings irrespective of race, gender, and cultural diversity. The challenge then to the traditional understanding of *cura animarum* is that the human 'soul' should be interpreted less in terms of substantial categories and more in terms of relational categories; less in terms of individualistic personhood and more in terms of inter-relational networking and systemic interaction.

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WHOLENESS IN SPIRITUAL HEALING:
THE SYSTEMIC DYNAMICS OF INTERRELATEDNESS

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There is already a shift taking place in modern soul care away from a pietistic, individualistic, and private endeavour. The emphasis nowadays is much more on a psycho-systemic approach. "The nature of the human personality is understood in contextual rather than individualistic terms."[2] H. R. Botman calls such an emphasis a "socio-theological constructionist approach."

In his *Pensées*, the philosopher Pascal connected wholeness to the fact that life is constituted by an interrelated system of mutual relationships. "To understand man therefore one must know why he needs air to live, and to understand air one must know how it comes to be thus related to the life of

man, etc." He was convinced that the parts of the world were all related and linked together "that I think it is impossible to know one without the other and without the whole."[3] Wholeness is about the interrelatedness of a systemic dynamics. Pascal continues his argument in this way:

> Thus, since all things are both caused or causing, assisted and assisting, mediate and immediate, providing mutual support in a chain linking together naturally and imperceptibly the most distant and different things, I consider it as impossible to know the parts without knowing the whole as to know the whole without knowing the individual parts.[4]

What Pascal was actually promoting is what we nowadays call systemic networking.

A systems approach understands being human from within a dynamic networking of relationships. This dynamic refers to the importance of attitude, space, value, meaning, and experience. Problems are not necessarily located in the symptomatic patient but, often, in the structure of the system.

To 'see' a functional whole helps people to work with more than one possible hypothesis. It opens up a kaleidoscope of possible options and choices that create an awakening of hope so that everything is not necessarily hopeless and void. Truth is embedded in a network of relationships. In order to proceed with life one needs to discover that as humans, we live in a complex web of relationships with ourselves, others, our natural and social context, and the spiritual dimension of life. A relational approach in processes of healing helps one therefore to understand that healing and therapy, like all of life, is a problem-solving process wrapped in probabilities.

Systemic considerations also allow people to escape linear-type thinking: it opens up the possibility of horizon-thinking. Systemic thinking enables us to see beyond events and develop a more expansive view or horizon of hope. In systemic thinking, and therefore within the horizon of hope as a web of interconnected probabilities, we start to see the larger picture of life. The advantage of a systems approach is that it promotes the concept of a *wholistic model* in care and counselling. It brings about an understanding of interrelatedness within an interdisciplinary approach. Wholeness refers to health as a total integration between mind, body, and spirit; between the individual and others, and between the individual, nature, and God. It refers to a maximum quality of life, integrity, and integration.

Wholeness implies more than sanctification and holiness. It is about the integration of faith and life, body and soul, salvation and healing, creation and affirmation, divinity and humanity. From a Christian perspec-

tive, wholeness is regarded as a spiritual endeavour and life journey. "Far too easily we settle for holiness rather than authenticity, becoming spiritual rather than deeply human, fulfilment rather than transformation, and a journey towards perfection rather than union with God. Far too often we confuse our own spiritual self-improvement tinkering with the much more radical agenda of the Spirit of God."[5]

This brings me to the following questions: What is meant by wholeness within the context of a more African perspective on the meaning and destiny of life? How can African spiritualities contribute to the healing of life as a whole?

African Spiritualities and the Quest for Wholeness: Towards a Holistic Approach

When researchers start to face the realities in Africa, the plea for 'wholeness' and a holistic approach surface time and again. In his book *Health, Healing and God's Kingdom*, Long makes the following observation: "Like the Hebrews, the African perspective on health is experiential and holistic."[6] Health thus depends upon maintaining a balance of power within a network of relationships. It is linked to a sense of belonging within the tribe or family. Poverty and the existential realities in Africa force one to opt for a systemic approach to helping and healing. In order to deal with life as a whole, one must take relationships and the interconnectedness of the problematic issues seriously. In the African context, the restoration to wholeness is a central element of healing.

In his book, *Pastoral Care to the Sick in Africa*, A. A. Berinyuu states:

> In Africa, there is no division and/or differentiation between the animate and inanimate, between the spirit and matter, between living and non-living, dead and living, physical and metaphysical, secular and sacred, the body and the spirit, etc. Most Africans generally believe that everything (human beings included) is in constant relationship with one another and with the invisible world, and that people are in a state of complete dependence upon those invisible powers and beings. Hence, Africans are convinced that in the activities of life, harmony, balance or tranquillity must constantly be sought and maintained. Society is not segmented into, for example, medicine, sociology, law, politics and religion. Life is a liturgy of celebration for the victories and/or sacrifices of others."[7]

This quotation underscores the fact that life, for the African, is an integral whole of cosmic and social events. In the illness-health continuum this

implies that, when one breaks the moral codes of society, the cosmic ties between oneself and the community are broken. This factor then could be the main issue in a patient's experience of illness. Recovery and cure thus acquire a new dimension: it is not the person who must be cured in the first place, but the broken ties and relationships.

This throws more light on Africans' non-analytical approach to life. They do not necessarily analyze life. Life with its pain and problems is lived despite there being no final solution. This approach to life demands much patience and adaptability. It is clear that such an approach to life differs vastly from a Western model, where (clock) time and the manipulation of life are important.

Because a human being is a societal being within the totality of transcendental and religious powers, the spiritual dimension of the African view of life plays a decisive role in the evaluation of health and illness. Africans are fundamentally and deeply spiritual. Life revolves around worship of the Supreme Being—God—and messengers in the form of gods and goddesses. Beyond the natural, there are forces that dominate and influence life events. This spiritual and "religious dimension is vital for an African understanding of a person and should consequently be given serious attention in health, in sickness, and more importantly, in the treatment of illness."[8] This spiritual dimension must be understood corporately: a human being is part of a societal order within which living energy is linked to cosmic and religious powers which give meaning to everyday existence.

Spirituality in Africa is concerned with life as a whole. "It is not a pious behaviour but rather a commitment and involvement in a manner that gives meaning to life. Spirituality means that which influences a person to live in a mode that is truly fulfilling."[9] It becomes clear that, if pastoral care seeks to apply the David Augsburger's notion of "interpathy" within an African context, its first task is to understand and interpret African spirituality.

Spirituality, even in pastoral care, that does not relate to the struggles of humanity for a better life, for justice, for the greater oneness of all peoples, cannot attract Africans, who have an innate sense of life and of sharing, will become inappropriate in terms of contextual issues and the African philosophical framework of life. If we accept that 'spirit' in an African spirituality means *spiritus*, a force concerned with day-to-day human activity, the following proposition formulated by S. Mtetwa sums up our position very aptly:

> One of the most remarkable and tangible dimensions of African Spirituality relates to the unique notion of communality and collective

solidarity that the African society exhibits in all spheres of life. There is a profound sense of interdependence, from the extended family to the entire community. In a very real sense, everybody is interrelated; including relations between the living and those who have departed.[10]

Life in itself must be healed in order to establish a sense of 'wholeness'. African spirituality is structured, not along the lines of a pyramid, but of a circle—community and communality as the centre of religious life.

Intercultural Pastoral Care: Towards a Socio-systemic Approach

At the end of the twentieth century, the concept of interculturality emerged to indicate a new paradigm more appropriate than the existing paradigm of inculturality. Bellagamba 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."[11]

The use of the concept of inculturality was an attempt to describe and portray the Christian faith being enfleshed and embodied within the paradigm of a specific local culture, without losing the awareness of multicultural pluralism—i.e., the reality of different cultures (identities)—within a system of dynamic interaction and inter-dialogue. However, due to the danger that in the long run one culture became so dominant that the other is experienced as inferior, the notion of interculturality emerged.

The difference between inculturality and interculturality is important in a socio-systemic approach. The first emphasises interpenetration in order to change the other culture, while the second emphasises mutuality and constructive exchange. With interculturation is meant the attempt to create a kind of mutual exchange between two different cultures in order to enrich and empower one another without rendering the one culture as superior to the other.

In his book *Inculturation and Healing*,[12] S. C. Bate 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 re-appropriation 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 interculturation is already implied. Furthermore, Bate also suggests that culture represents the human locus of a people's context. "It is the site of the humanisation of the *oikos*, 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."[13]

Within Christian spirituality, 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 with the focus on cultural assimilation). This model projects a Christian homogenised culture that marginalises (often alienates) those cultures that are excluded from the dominant religious point of departure.

For a long time in the missionary history in Africa, African culture was viewed as intrinsically wrong from a colonial Christian perspective. D. L. Daneel points out that, as far as the colonisers were concerned, non-Christian religion was profoundly influenced by human sin and imperfection. "Bavinck's term *possessio* is apt, since the gospel cannot be arbitrarily slotted into heathen customs, but must instead take possession of and transform them."[14] Because nothing could be assimilated into the church, the buzzword was total transformation (transformation as engulfing and extinction) of indigenous culture without the possibility of any form of accommodation.

Within an African perspective the human being cannot be understood separate from cultural issues and values. Humans are embedded in culture. Culture is, in itself, an expression of the creative and imaginative human spirit. In itself, it can be viewed as a sacred endeavour. If it is true that "culture" 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 any discussion on culture must indeed include the aesthetic, spiritual, and sacred dimensions. As D. N. Hopkins 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."[15] In this regard cultural can be called a structured strategy for survival; a sense of belonging to a social group; a system of expressed ideas or concepts; an indication of general behaviour; and patterns for daily living.

Core Issues in Intercultural Theory Formation: A Challenge to Pastoral Care

The core question in intercultural care is the following: How to deal with difference, diversity, strangers (strangeness), the outsider in a multi-cultural context and the quest for contextualisation? The aim of intercultural care is to create/foster a shared space for meaningful life and co-existence, co-understanding. The basis for such a shared space for inter-living is the notion of co-humanity (inter-active human dignity), mutual acknowledgement, and a creative experience of interconnectedness.

Interculturality in pastoral care is less about the technique of counselling (counselling and communication skills) and more about the quality of the interaction and encounter with an Other. The core question is this: How can I encounter people coming from a different cultural background without prejudice and stigmatisation and xenophobia toward the Other?

Interculturality is in fact a creative response to the diversity, difference, and pluralism which is a fact in present-day society and the post-modern culture of globalisation. According to Emanuel Lartey, calls for the affirmation of three basic principles: contextuality (the framework of surrounding beliefs and world-views); multiple perspectives (the listening to and dialogue within different perspectives); and authentic participation (mutual concern for the integrity of the other).[16]

The core issues and challenges facing intercultural care are the following:

- A paradigm switch: from the autonomy of the individual with the emphasis on the self-culture (the myth and preoccupation with individual and personal self-maintenance) to the dynamics of eco-systemic networking (shared interconnectedness, ubuntu). Interculturality is about systemic thinking and care. Within the intercultural encounter, one encounters the healthy tension between difference blindness (justice to the stranger) and difference awareness (sensitivity for difference and diversity). For the recognition of this paradox one needs a sense of aesthetic awareness in order to use differences as a means to enrichment.

- The emphasis in intercultural care is less on therapeutic talking and more on therapeutic being-with (the therapeutic encounter). It is less focused on self-expansion and more on perspective building or the widening of horizons. In a hermeneutic encounter the focus is horizon-expansion.

- The pastoral endeavour in intercultural care is less focused on psychoanalyses (introspection in terms of personal past-events) and more on the making of a socio-cultural analysis. In this regard, pastoral care probes into the realm

of different schemata of interpretation by means of transspection, thus the need for philosophical counselling and conceptual analysis. In this regard, there is a need for a careful conceptual analysis of a culture's values and practices.

- Interculturality implies more than the traditional quest for empathy in counselling. Ridley and Lingle[17] describe the need for what they call cultural empathy—i.e., empathy based on uniqueness and differences—which is similar to what David Augsburger has identified as interpathy. Cultural empathy does not depend on cultural neutrality. On the contrary, it requires an awareness of cultural values and assumptions of each conversation partner. Interpathy or cultural empathy is aware of the different mind-set of the other as determined by philosophical frameworks and normative life issues.

- Intercultural counselling is less focused on an emotional striptease through talk-therapy (me-exposure) and more aware of the need for we-understanding through story-telling, thus the need for narrative sharing. Intercultural encounters flourish on narration.

- The challenge in intercultural care is how to merge the traditional understanding of "soul care" (*cura animarum*) with life care (*cura vitae*). In this regard care is more focused on doing than on merely feeling, thus the need for the emphasis on diaconic care—pastoral care as pastoral action. The challenge is on the building of helping relationships, i.e., faith care as life care.

- The theoretical principal for intercultural care is systemic networking. In order to apply the principle of systemic networking, the making of a socio-cultural analysis become paramount in intercultural care. The presupposition is that culture, according to Clifford Geertz, is in itself is a systemic network of meaning.

- In intercultural care, it is necessary to acknowledge transcendence. To recognise a transcendent dimension to life is to take people's spiritual needs into account when assessing the network of meaning. It helps intercultural care to develop a holistic understanding of human experience.

My argument is that in order to return to the Christian tradition of *cura animarum*, and to revisit the pastoral roots of caregiving, we need to undergo a paradigm switch in theory formation: from an individualistic approach to a systemic, networking and dynamic relational approach. Which leads us to the following question: What is the contribution of African spiritualities in this regard taking into consideration the global plea for interculturality in pastoral caregiving?

In order to explore the possible contribution of African spiritualities, I will concentrate on two very influential cultures in Southern and Eastern Africa, namely the *Nguni*-culture in South Africa and the *Agĩkũyũ*-culture in Kenya.

The Culture of *Ubuntu*-Philosophy

It was the former president of Zambia, Kenneth Kaunda, who wrote a book in the 1960s entitled *A Humanist in Africa.* He advocated a humanist approach to life because of the communal spirit within different African spiritualities. For Africa the aesthetic rhythm of life, the singing and dancing, was more fundamental than the awareness of evil forces in determining the value of human relationships. Hence the following challenging remark by Kenneth Kaunda: "Let the West have its Technology and Asia its Mysticism! Africa's gift to world culture must be in the realm of Human Relationships."[18]

In defining *ubuntu*, Gathogo points out that it is critical to underline that it is described differently among the various African communities. "For instance it is called *Uhu* among the Shona of Zimbabwe; *Ubuntu* among the Ngunie speakers of Southern Africa; *Utu* among the Swahili speakers of East Africa; and *Umundu* among the Kikuyu of Kenya, among others."[19]

The spirit of *ubuntu*—that profound African sense that we are human only through the humanity of other human beings—is not a parochial phenomenon, but has added a global perspective to our common search for a better world.[20] And to improve the world is intrinsically an aesthetic endeavour, not merely a moral issue.

In an African approach to anthropology, *ubuntu* thinking and the notion of *homo aestheticus* (the human being as the enjoyer of life) are more fundamental than the aggressive approach of *homo faber* (the human being as the maker of things). What is envisaged in an African spirituality is harmony (the beautification of life) within interpersonal relationships: *Umuntu ungumuntu ngabantu/motho ke motho ka batho*—approximately translated as: "A person is a person through other people."

One of the most remarkable and tangible dimensions of African spirituality relates to the unique notion of communality and collective solidarity that African societies exhibit in all spheres of life. There is a profound sense of interdependence, from the extended family to the entire community. In a very real sense, everybody is interrelated; this includes relations between the living and those who have departed. African spirituality is structured, not along the lines of a pyramid, but of a circle—community and communality as the centre of religious life.

The culture of *Ũtugi*-philosophy

Josiah Murage, in his research on *The Concept of Ũtugi within the HIV & AIDS Pandemic,* advocated for the connection between pastoral caregiving and the Christian tradition of hospitality within the cultural context of Kenya. The concept of *ũtigi* is related to the language of the *Agĩkũyũ* community in Kenya. It can be translated as hospitality and refers to what one can call the freedom of the guest. "It means the creation of a free space where the vulnerable people in the society are welcomed, not only as guests, but also as part of that community."[21] *Ũtugi* is an exposition of the cultural custom in African spirituality, namely to share love and affection to others and to put the idea of sharing into practice. The saying in Kenya-culture and *Agĩkũyũ*-tradition is that to live with others is to share and to have mercy on one another, since only witchdoctors are allowed to live and eat alone.

Pastoral caregiving is thus closely connected to sharing and socializing. According to Mutugi "African hospitality is expressed in a loving way... when a visitor comes, you welcome him or her by ushering him or her to a seat, and then you give him or her something to eat or drink. Then you share or socialise, seek to know, politely the problems or issues or news that brought him or her."[22] The *Agĩkũyũ* community refers to a hospitable person as *Mũtugi*, which simply means a hospitable person who is also a gracious person. The opposite of *ũtigi* (hospitality) is *ũkarĩ* (selfishness). Care, charity, hospitality, communal sharing, all of them help to shape caregiving within the *Agĩkũyũ*-culture, so that the pastoral ministry in the church is forced to connect the Christian understanding of *diakonia* to the cultural understanding of *ũtigi*, namely solidarity, collective participating, and communal sharing as the creation of a space wherein one can start to care for and comfort people, especially for the stranger.

Respect is another important feature that is highly emphasised in the practice of *ũtigi* in the *Agĩkũyũ*-tradition. This is in line with the Swahili saying, *Heshima si Utumwa*, which means, respect is not slavery, nor is it a burden, it is simply a costly undertaking. Respect presupposes honesty and integrity. "Due to the emphasis on sincerity and honesty, the hungry visitor or stranger would obey the above principle of *ũtigi*, for failure to do so would not only affect his or her conscience and annoy the living, but it would also annoy the ancestors, who, are believed to be exemplary beings, hence are sincere and honest."[23] *Ũtugi* thus operates even as a religious principle. "Among the ancient *Agĩkũyũ*, the people perceived *Ngai* (God) as

unique and *Ūtugi* was extended to this *Ngai* and *Ngoma*; i.e., spirits (cf. the-oxenic hospitality)."[24] This is affirmed by Kenyatta: "In the *Agĩkũyũ* custom of "give and take" (*Ūtugi*)...when *Mwene-Nyaga* (God) has given the rain to people...he is entitled to be rewarded by a gift of the first crops of season. For it is said that without his aid the people could not have any crops. Thus for a man (sic) to fail to pay tributes to his benefactor would be contrary to the established custom and would be regarded as shameful and greedy."[25]

As in the Kenya culture, the *ūtigi*-principle of the *Agĩkũyũ*-tradition demonstrates how an existing social structure can become a vehicle of hope-giving and should be incorporated in the pastoral ministry of the church. The caregiver is then not a nuisance or stumbling block, but a beacon of hope.

The sense of belonging as an expression of the communal principle: "I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am,"[26] illustrates how the principle of communality, as connected to the notion of hospitality, can be viewed as the cornerstone of caregiving. *Ubuntu*-philosophy and *ūtigi*-hospitality are indeed pointers for a rediscovery of the very roots of the Christian tradition of *cura animarum*

Hospitium publicum as Place and Space for Wholeness: Moving Beyond the Barriers of Xenophobia

Hospitality and how one deals with the stranger or outsider could be viewed as one of the cornerstones of a praxis of caregiving in the Christian tradition of comfort and compassion. The communal space of hospitality creates a healing place for becoming whole again. In this regard *Ubuntu*-philosophy emphasises the importance of communality and a sense of belongingness, while *ūtigi*-philosophy highlights the dimension of sincerity and compassionate sharing. With regard to the quest for spirituality and wholeness in healing, both emphasise the fact that a human being is more than the sum total of its different parts. 'Whole' is a systemic concept and determined by the value of human beings within the dynamics of relationships. In this regard the notion of communality, a sense of belongingness, and compassionate sharing, help to expand the meaning of the traditional, Christian concept of hospitality.

In his book *Reaching Out*, Henry Nouwen identified the shift from hostility to hospitality as one of the most important shifts or movements of the human soul in order to foster spiritual growth. Hospitality exceeds the threat of xenophobia (the fear of strangers) and racial or cultural discrimina-

tion. The basis for hospitality is the conviction in Israel that the encounter between God and his people is based on the principle of God's hospitality. It is closely connected to what Fitchett and Grossoehme refer to as a basic tenet of *tikkun odam* (to repair the world) in Judaism. "Efforts to repair the world are *mitzvot* (acts of human kindness rooted in commandments)."[27]

The practice of hospitality is not exclusively connected to the Christian and Jewish tradition of grace. The Hadith Accounts encourage the gracious hospitality once displayed by men and women in early community toward the stranger or the pauper who arrived at the door to share a meal or to find a place to rest. Hospitality was fundamental to the culture of the Babylonians and the Canaanites. They were so concerned with the principle of hospitality that they would call local gods to protect strangers in their midst.

The metaphor of hospitality includes the following several positive, vital elements: openness in the encounter between the host and the guest (the stranger); obliging invitation; embracement and whole-hearted welcoming; the principle of sharing; the giving of protection; the opening of a new and promising future; and altruistic generosity.

Hospitality introduces true friendship. To abuse strangers or for strangers to take advantage of the host was interpreted as an improper act that totally breached the treaty of guest friendship. That was even the case in ancient Greek and Roman culture, wherein hospitality became a public virtue: *hospitium publicum*.

In the parable of the Great Banquet (Luke 14: 7-24), Jesus confirmed that he is the inauguration of God's inclusive hospitality. Jesus is the *eschaton*, he reconfigured the existing Jewish and Greco-Roman model of hospitality; in his coming the walls of prejudice and xenophobia were destroyed so that all human beings became the guests of a hospitable God. Thus Jesus emphasised the importance of the metaphor of the host in pastoral caregiving. The therapeutic value of the host-metaphor resides in the fact that it transforms all human beings into guests within the diversity of God's *hospitium*: the church. "The host does not simply give a gift (the real meal), nor does he identify or show solidarity with the poor and outcast in some notional or distant manner, rather, the host parties with them."[28] (Hospitality establishes an inclusive communality; a *Banquet Community* based on the principle of *agápe*-love, and thus embodies a non-discriminatory, destigmatised praxis of hope.

Conclusion

Instead of *xenophobia*, the metaphors of host and hospitality in pastoral care-giving exchange fear of the stranger into *philoxenia*: the mutuality of 'brotherly' love. The hospitality of God transcends even the limitations of categories stemming from different cultural contexts and spiritualities. Christian hospitality counteracts the social stratification of the larger society by providing an alternative based on the principle of equality; everyone is welcome regardless of background, status, gender, or race. Thus the challenge for pastoral ministry is to provide 'hospitals' (*xenodochia*), safe havens (monasteries of hope, places of refuge), where threatened people can become whole again. "To be moral is to be hospitable to the stranger."[29]

One should acknowledge that it is difficult to translate Christian hospitality into the terminology of our contemporary society in which hospitality is identified with the civic services and domestic spheres. Hospitality is often robbed of its sacramental character of *caritas* and has become diminished to, mostly, an ordinary secularised expression of human welfare. However, Derrida asserts: "Hospitality is culture itself and not simply one ethic among others. Insofar as it has to do with the *ethos*; that is, the residence, one's at home, the familiar place of dwelling; as much as the manner of being there, the manner in which we relate to ourselves and to others, to others as our own or as foreigners, ethics is hospitality; ethics is entirely coextensive with the experience of hospitality, whichever way one expands or limits that."[30] To a certain extent, hospitality reintroduces a kind of social paradox: unconditional loves becomes conditional; it focuses conditionally on the outsider in order to make outsiders insiders even beyond the categories of juridical equality; it functions outside of right, above what is juridical.

NOTES

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