

A Reformed pneumatological matrix: an exploration

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Abstract

This contribution addresses the novel development of contemporary pneumatologies to explore the efficacies of the Spirit in relation to themes that move beyond the traditional pneumatological loci of (the subjective side of) salvation and ecclesiology. The work of the Spirit is more and more related to tangible and contextual issues of human life. The article recognizes the importance of new constructive, contextual proposals on Spirit and human life by offering a perspective that might serve as a fruitful avenue to encourage the open and complex nature of Reformed thought about the Spirit in human life. This perspective is the development of a Reformed pneumatological matrix. The relevance of such a pneumatological matrix for Reformed theology is exemplified in the theme of Spirit and healing in Southern Africa.

1. Introduction

The novelty of contemporary pneumatologies is the attempt to give the Spirit of God a more integral and central role in our theological understanding (Kärkkäinen, 2012:103f). The attention has moved beyond the traditional pneumatological loci of salvation and ecclesiology, and the work of the Holy Spirit is now also identified with issues that touch human life in a tangible, physical way. The significance of this novel discernment can be found in new and fascinating approaches: ecology, science, religious pluralism, cul-

ture, consumerism, society and empire, for example, have become important themes in understanding the role of the Holy Spirit in human life.

The focus of this article is the Reformed understanding of the Holy Spirit in light of the broadened pneumatological interpretation. The aim here is to explore a fruitful avenue to new, constructive, contextual proposals on Spirit and human life from a Reformed perspective. The hypothesis is that intimating a *Reformed pneumatological matrix* is such a fruitful avenue. The exploration of a Reformed pneumatological matrix will start with the complicatedness of defining 'Reformed'. Yet, as will be shown, the various voices of Reformed scholars can offer a particular frame of reference that might be understood as a Reformed pneumatological matrix. In the second part, the significance of exploring a Reformed pneumatological matrix as a source of novel, contextual and constructive articulations about God's Spirit in this reality, will be illustrated by the theme of Spirit and healing.

2. Dilemma of a reformed pneumatological matrix

In this contribution, the word matrix is used to describe a kind of grid or structure that presents data and particulars. In the case of a Reformed pneumatological matrix, it is about a collection of features of Reformed pneumatological thought. The term 'matrix' suggests some kind of general or overall perspective representing the Reformed perspective on the Holy Spirit, but it should be emphasized here that there is no such thing as 'the' Reformed pneumatological perspective. It is notoriously difficult to describe the typical nature of Reformed theology because of the nature of the tradition itself: it is plural, diverse, self-critical and sensitive to the cultural context in which it witnesses the truth of God's word (see Smit, 2011:313-326).

However, various Reformed scholars have taken up the challenge to characterize the Reformed identity. Gerrit Hartvelt (1991:18-34), for example, speaks of a Reformed frame of reference that is heavily determined by ecumenical relationships and dialogue. Dirkie Smit (1992:88-110; 2004:208-235; 2008:263-283; 2011:313-326) understands the Reformed story as a story of many stories. It is a complex tale, revealing that Reformed identity consists of diverse and ambiguous stories with their varying accents on confession,

doctrine and cultural context. Smit points out that it is impossible to simplify these internal differences and contradictions into one Reformed narrative. Within the worldwide Reformed family, there will always be different positions regarding Scripture, confessions, traditions and spirituality.

Smit's approach to Reformed identity as a complex tale of multiple stories transpires in the methodology of this article. The exploration of the contours of Reformed pneumatology is defined by the fact that there are many Reformed pneumatologies, and that they all represent a Reformed profile. In the following part some prominent Reformed pneumatologies will be considered. They differ in scope and content, but what they have in common is that they have been developed by Reformed theologians who had an impact on Reformed theology, including Reformed theological discourse in Africa.

3. Reformed scholarly voices

The following is a brief overview of pneumatological approaches by various Reformed scholars. The scope of this article does not allow for an extensive treatment of the many Reformed proposals on the work of the Spirit. The criterion of selection is whether a novel and transformative component can be detected in that particular pneumatology. The purpose of presenting these Reformed scholarly voices on the work of the Holy Spirit is not to offer a comprehensive discussion, but to highlight the breadth and the depth of Reformed pneumatologies in order to intimate a pattern of cohesion and controversy.

3.1 John Calvin

Calvin has been identified as 'the theologian of the Holy Spirit', because his theology is permeated with ideas about the Holy Spirit (Hesselink, 2008:337). His references to the Spirit are not always explicit, but Calvin's understanding of the Spirit is that the Spirit plays a central role on the topic of creation, revelation, faith, justification, sanctification and glorification. The work of the Spirit is the necessary link between God and the believer. The most extensive discussions on the work of the Holy Spirit are to be found in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book 3 and Book 4. These books cover two-thirds of the complete work, which gives reason to think

that the work of the Spirit occupies an important place in Calvin's theology (cf. Rogers, 2003:245).

Calvin's indirect pneumatology is a Trinitarian approach to the work of the Spirit, whereby the *multiplicity of the Spirit's work* can be identified. The Holy Spirit is present in the cosmos (Spiritus creator), in human life in general, and in the spiritual life of the believer (Spiritus redemptor). The relation between Spirit and creation is multidimensional, but it should be noted that Calvin does not isolate the work of the Spirit in creation in general, and the work of the Spirit in the regenerate (Höhne, 2009:173). The activities of the Spirit are understood as secret, providential and salvific, whereby the relationship between the Spirit and creation is based on a positive understanding of creation as the theatre of God's glory, which is the purpose of creation.

Calvin's pneumatology is linked to his understanding that God reveals Himself in his Word. Over against the ideas of the *Schwärmer* and other fanatics who claimed to have knowledge about God on the basis of visions, Calvin emphasized the correlation of the Spirit and the Word: revelations by the Spirit of God can never be in contradiction to the Word of God. The role of the Spirit in relation to the Word is that the Spirit is a witness to the Word, confirming that God reveals Himself in Scripture (Van 't Spijker, 2009:133).

3.2 Abraham Kuyper

Just like John Calvin, the Dutch neo-Calvinist Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920) has been called 'the theologian of the Holy Spirit' among Dutch theologians (Velema, 1957:7, who refers to Rullmann, 1928:244). This reference is based on Kuyper's broad focus on the Spirit in his theology, to which his publication *The Work of the Holy Spirit* is witness. In general terms, his ideas about the Holy Spirit were awakened by two concerns. The first of these concerns was about what the church needed, according to him, in order to be a healthy church: correct knowledge of the work of the Holy Spirit (Kuyper, 1873:35). His second concern was related to the notion of God's sovereignty: the doctrine of God's sovereignty and election is supported by the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, because the Spirit warrants the direct link between God and human being; there is no form of mediation between God and the believer other than God himself through his Spirit (Kuyper, 1899:40f).

Kuyper's pneumatology is framed by Trinitarian theology, and holds a very positive view on creation. Just like in Calvin's pneumatology, creation is purposed and destined to bring glory to God. Creation is good, because it is called into existence by God, but creation needs to develop towards the final purpose. The Holy Spirit is the One who is involved in the sustenance and re-creation or perfection of creation. The Spirit is *the Perfecter who elevates creation* towards another level; this does not imply a form of realized eschatology, even though the consummation has suddenly been brought closer through the salvific work of the Spirit. Kuyper makes a clear distinction between the cosmic Spirit and the redemptive Spirit, but he also emphasizes that the Spirit is the same One who is involved in creation and re-creation.

3.3 Karl Barth

Karl Barth's crucial meaning for Reformed theology is undisputed. He was the leading Protestant theologian in the twentieth century, and all theologians who came after him had to relate to his theology in one way or the other (Webster, 2000:1; Grenz, 2004:34; Hardy, 2005:39). One of Barth's major contributions is the retrieval of a Trinitarian focus in Protestant theology: the doctrine of the Trinity is not a separate doctrine within his systematic approach, but the doctrine of the Trinity permeates and defines the whole of his theology.¹

Barth's retrieval of the doctrine of the Trinity implies that his thought about the Holy Spirit is fully determined by the Trinitarian frame of his theology. The work of the Spirit firstly concerns the relation between the Father and the Son. Trinitarian relationships can be denoted as 'in communion' through the Spirit, whom Barth considers to be the One who bears the relationship, *and* who is the relationship itself. Here Barth follows Augustine, when he regards the Spirit as the reciprocal connection between the Father and the Son. The inner-Trinitarian relationship of the Father and the Son

1 With the rediscovery and thorough development of the Trinitarian perspective, Barth placed the doctrine of the Trinity on the (ecumenical) agenda again (Jenson, 1989:47). Since then, there have been many publications in relation to Barth's Trinitarian theology (see for example Habets & Tolliday, 2011).

consists of the presence of the Spirit, who is the warranty of the communion (*koinonia*) with God.

The work of the Spirit also establishes a relationship between Christ and the believer, because the Spirit represents Christ in the life of the believer: the Spirit's work is the believer's communion with Christ. Here Barth follows Calvin, who let the work of the Spirit coincide with the presence of Christ as well (Krusche, 1957:146-151; Hunsinger, 2000:181). If the Spirit is not present, it is not possible for Christ to reveal himself as the crucified and risen Lord, and it is not possible for man to accept Christ. It is only through the power of the Spirit that Christ can be present and impart himself to the believer: "the Spirit mediates the self-impartation of Jesus himself, through which believers are drawn into union with him in order to receive and return his love" (Hunsinger, 2000:182).

In his description of Barth's pneumatology, Hunsinger (2000:179) explains that Barth's perspective on the saving work of the Spirit can be characterized as Trinitarian in ground, Christocentric in focus, miraculous in operation, communal in content, eschatological in form, diversified in application, and universal in scope. These dimensions of the Spirit's work indicate that Barth perceived the Spirit as the *mediator of communion*.

3.4 Arnold van Ruler

Arnold van Ruler (1908-1970) is a Reformed theologian who has been praised for his eccentric pneumatology. His theological contributions did not only influence Dutch church and theology, they also eventually gained an international character (Van Keulen, Harinck & Van den Brink, 2009:7). His approach of radicalizing sixteenth century Reformed motifs in order to make them relevant to twentieth century church and theology resulted in Van Ruler's theology still being significant up to this very day (cf. Lombard, 2009:24, who refers to Van Ruler's relevance in various contexts like South Africa, the USA, Japan and Australia). Van Ruler's relatively independent pneumatological approach is a clear and distinct voice in Reformed pneumatology, even though it should be mentioned that Van Ruler's theological contributions do not form a comprehensive or systematically developed approach; he mainly offers suggestions and intriguing theological ideas (Van de Beek, 2009:21; Van den Brom, 2009:37).

Van Ruler's pneumatology clearly differs from other Reformed approaches to the work of the Spirit. Refusing to go along with Barth's Christocentric focus, Van Ruler identifies distinctive features of the Spirit's efficacies. The significance of Van Ruler's approach to a relatively independent pneumatology is two-fold. In the first place, Van Ruler's pneumatology contributes to a Trinitarian balance. God is Trinitarian, because God reveals God's self in Christ and in the Spirit in such a way that the work of the Spirit is not 'absorbed' by Christology. Secondly, the clear distinction between the Spirit and Christ emphasizes the importance of creation in Van Ruler's theology. The work of the Spirit is to contribute to full creatureliness, that is the purpose of creation, whereby the Spirit enables the human to be human before God (Janssen, 2005:77). Van Ruler contends that everything that the Spirit does, is aimed at the restoration of creation, so that creation will be even more beautiful than it was before. The final purpose of creation is theocracy, the indwelling of God in creation. This inhabitation is coming closer through the work of the Spirit, who approaches creation from this eschatological perspective. Van Ruler's pneumatology implies that creation is an open, non-dualistic reality.

3.5 Jürgen Moltmann

The Reformed theologian Jürgen Moltmann (1926) is widely characterized as one of the most productive and creative contemporary theologians of the twentieth century (Meeks, 1974:xiii; Bauckham, 1987:1; Lorenzen, 1996:304; Müller-Fahrenholz, 2000:12; Wood, 2000:5; Kärkkäinen, 2002:125; Grenz, 2004:73). Moltmann's theology has guided many people into a new way of thinking, and he can be considered a key representative of modern Reformed theology in the second half of the twentieth century. His pneumatology permeates his overall theology, but is also specifically addressed in *God in Creation* (1985) and *The Spirit of Life* (1992).

Moltmann's pneumatology reveals a high appreciation of creation and the ecological environment. Creation is destined to become God's dwelling place. The eschatological hope defines the condition of creation: any form of creaturely life is to be affirmed as holy in the light of God's love and grace and redemptive work in the cross and resurrection. The Holy Spirit is the One who communicates God's presence in creation. The Spirit is also the One who joins Christ in

the cross event, affirming the relationship between Father and Son, and between Trinitarian God and creation. Moltmann's Trinitarian pneumatology entails a revaluing of creation in the light of Trinitarian life, and a retrieval of the broad scope of the Spirit's relatively independent work by his rejection of the *filioque* clause of the Western church.

3.6 Michael Welker

Michael Welker (1947) is another German Reformed theologian with an international influence. His contributions address, among others, themes such as the work of the Holy Spirit, creation, and the relation between theology and natural sciences. In his publication *God the Spirit* (1994), Welker presents a very distinct and intriguing approach to the work of the Holy Spirit. As opposed to other pneumatological models, he prefers a *postmodern* frame of reference in order to rediscover the powerful dynamics of the Spirit's presence in this world (1994:40). His distinctive approach is also reflected in some other contributions on pneumatology (see for example Welker, 1989:5-20; 2006:221-232; 2007:236-248).

Identifying God's Spirit as the Spirit of justice is one of the major contributions of Welker's pneumatology. He bases his approach on various messianic texts (Isa. 11:1ff; Isa. 42:1ff; Isa. 61:1ff), and shows how these texts reveal the socio-political dimension of the Spirit's action. The Spirit of God, who in comparison with the earlier testimonies now *rests* on persons and endows them (1994:109), involves people in the spread of justice, mercy and knowledge of God. These three notions are always *interconnected* in the action of the Spirit. Welker emphasizes that there is a very direct link between *the founding of mercy, the routinization of mercy, and the cultivation of the public, universally accessible relation with God* (1994:111, italics original). In other words, the relationship with God is built upon the realization of justice and mercy. And when mercy, as the act of going to meet those who are weaker, the suffering, and the disadvantaged (1994:115), is absent, then justice is also undermined and an accessible relation to God is obstructed. The triad of justice, mercy and knowledge of God forms the core of the establishing of righteousness, which is the fulfillment of God's law. Put differently, the bearer of the Spirit fulfills God's law by establishing justice and mercy, and by glorifying God.

Welker's pneumatology does not start explicitly from within a Trinitarian frame, but focuses on the diverse testimonies of the experiences of God's Spirit. Welker does not offer a systematic metaphysical treatment of the person of the Spirit, because he views theological articulations about God's nature as speculative and unrealistic. The key words of Welker's pneumatology are postmodern, realistic, plurality and diversity. God's Spirit moves in creation as a field of force that generates a domain of resonance in which people are liberated and transformed to new empowerment and renewal.

3.7 Jan Veenhof

Jan Veenhof (1934) is a Dutch Reformed theologian who is considered internationally an authority in the field of Reformed systematic theology and pneumatology (Roozenboom, 2007:126). The publication *Vrij Gereformeerd* (2005), a collection of his articles and lectures, testifies to this. Veenhof also revealed his appreciation for the charismatic renewal movement, which challenges traditional Reformed approaches to the work of the Holy Spirit and the charismata. According to Veenhof, the meaning of the charismatic movement for Reformed church and theology is that the Reformed tradition is confronted with the question of whether the Holy Spirit has more to offer than is assumed by Reformed believers.

Veenhof's pneumatology is developed on the understanding of the Spirit as communicator of relationships. The Spirit as *Pontifex Maximus* also implies a close and positive relationship between God and creation. Notions as continuity and holistic life play an important role in Veenhof's approach to the work of the Holy Spirit. The aim of the work of the Spirit is to restore the covenantal relationship, in which all dimensions of creaturely life are included. Veenhof emphasizes the direct effectiveness of the Spirit's presence in creaturely life: through the work of the Spirit, God's grace materializes in this present tense. God's salvific work can be experienced already in the here and now. The charismata of the Spirit are concrete references to God's salvation and the restoration of covenantal life with God.

3.8 Abraham van de Beek

Abraham van de Beek (1946) is a Dutch Reformed systematic theologian, who voices a fairly provocative approach towards the

Holy Spirit. He counters the tendency in contemporary (Reformed) pneumatologies to interpret the Spirit as the creative divine power, who gives life, comfort, dynamics, justice, freedom and new opportunities. Van de Beek used to share this understanding of God's Spirit (see Van de Beek, 1987), but now he proposes to retrieve the ideas of the early (pre-Nicean) church fathers, since they represent the authentic form of Christianity.² This preference for the church fathers has led Van de Beek to a very particular understanding of the Holy Spirit.

Van de Beek's pneumatology is inextricably linked with the church as body of Christ, as reflected in his latest publication *Lichaam en Geest van Christus* (2012). Van de Beek abandons any form of autonomous pneumatology. Instead, he discusses the work of the Spirit after his treatment of the church, aiming at a revaluation of the intrinsic relation between church and Spirit (392). The strong emphasis on the unity of church and Spirit leads to an exclusivist pneumatology in the sense that the church only is the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. The church is where the Word and the sacraments are celebrated, it is where God himself is present by way of the Spirit (421). This means that the work of the Spirit is defined by the church as the locus of salvation. Van de Beek's radical approach to pneumatology has to do with his view on the Eucharist, which he labels as 'medicine of eternal life' (434), and with his *pneumatologia crucis* (435), which deals with the identification of the Spirit as the Spirit of the crucified Christ. The death of Christ always points to salvation, and the Spirit is the One who confronts the world with the crucified Christ. Thus, according to Van de Beek, the work of the Spirit is to preach Christ's life and death, and to create the church, the body of Christ, as the eschatological reality in this reality (463-473).

2 Van de Beek's exploration of orthodox Christianity is reflected in his systematic-theological series "Spreken over God": *Jezus Kurios: de Christologie als hart van de theologie*, 1998, Kampen: Kok; *De kring om de Messias: Israël als volk van de lijdende Heer*, 2002, Zoetermeer: Meinema; *God doet recht: eschatologie als christologie*, 2008, Zoetermeer: Meinema; *Lichaam en Geest van Christus. De theologie van de kerk en de Heilige Geest*, 2012, Zoetermeer: Meinema.

4. Intimating a reformed pneumatological matrix

The main issue now is to approach this multifaceted unity of Reformed pneumatological perspectives and to carefully identify some contours of the Reformed understanding of the Holy Spirit, whereby any suggestion of a singular, conclusive Reformed pneumatology is to be avoided. It must be emphasized that the contours of Reformed conceptualization of the Spirit are not exclusively Reformed. Yet they are approached as Reformed, because they are developed by Reformed theologians, all of whom in their time and context have responded to developments in church and society.

This section follows the methodology of Dirkie Smit (2009:57-76), who in his treatment of Reformed Trinitarian theology looks for particular motifs that appear regularly in Reformed thought (see also Sauter, 2004:1-7, who speaks of particular marks of Reformed theology). Which motifs appear regularly in the theological and confessional perspectives on the work of the Spirit? Which contours can be discerned in the gathering of the different strands of Reformed pneumatologies?

Amongst the variety of Reformed pneumatologies, some distinctive motifs can be discerned. The *first motif* that characterizes Reformed pneumatologies is the Trinitarian perspective on the Holy Spirit. The use of Trinitarian language witnesses to the divine nature of the Spirit, affirming that the Spirit is God, and that in the person of the Spirit, the Trinitarian God is involved in creation. Within Reformed pneumatologies the Spirit is identified in different ways: as the Spirit of Christ (that is, as the Spirit who supports the redemptive work of Christ, and who renews creation), as the Spirit of the Father (that is, as the cosmic Spirit who is intimately related to the Creator, and who sustains creation), and as the Spirit who is the bond of love between the Father and the Son. Pertaining to the doctrine of the Trinity, Protestant theology often accentuates the unity of the Trinity, but since the second part of the twentieth century a shift in emphasis can be noted: the attention has turned to the threeness being fundamental to God's unity (see Webster, 1983:4-7). Moltmann's pneumatology, for example, has its starting point in the threeness of the Trinity. This emphasis on the pluralist identity of God leads to the understanding of the Spirit as a distinct person of the Trinity, in which the Spirit's identity is usually found in the relational being of the Spirit.

This is the *second motif* of Reformed pneumatologies: the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is articulated in terms of relations. The Spirit is the One who creates relationships and life-giving bonds, both in the inner-Trinitarian communion and ad extra. In her ecstatic communication between God and man, as well as in her movement between people themselves, between individual and environment, between person and the self (as body, soul and spirit), the Spirit places human life in a new perspective, and shows how relationships define one's (transformed) being. F. LeRon Schults (2004:333) indicates that for the early Reformers relationality was already an important concept for articulating, for example, a doctrine of the whole person as the image of God. Only under the influence of philosophy, neurobiology and other sciences did the turn to relationality become more manifest in theology, and also in pneumatological discourse (Schults, 2008:271-287). The understanding of personhood is no longer determined by thinking about personhood as substance with various faculties or power to influence material reality, but by perceiving personhood as being in relation. There has been a shift, in which substance is no longer seen as something absolute, but as something consisting of relationships and connections. This conceptual shift has implications for the doctrine of the Holy Spirit: the Spirit is a distinct person of the Trinity, associated with *koinonia*, fellowship and transforming relationships. The attention to the Spirit's relational personhood is already reflected in Augustine's theology, and explicitly in the approaches of Calvin and Kuyper. Barth's pneumatology is also relational, as is Moltmann's understanding of the person and the work of the Spirit.

A *third motif* within the field of Reformed pneumatologies is the broad approach to the beneficial work of the Spirit. As Sauter (2004:6) indicates, Reformed theology is familiar with an 'unusually far-reaching' doctrine of the Holy Spirit: the work of the Spirit is not only associated with the revealed Word of God, nor is it only linked with the church and its sphere of influence (as can be said of pneumatologies in other Christian traditions), but it is both cosmological and soteriological. The cosmic Spirit represents God's commitment to creation. The Spirit creates and sustains life, and draws attention to the meaning of society, culture and physicality as well. The redemptive Spirit communicates God's grace to human

life in general, and to the individual believer in particular. For the Spirit is the One who creates faith, forgives sins, establishes the believer's union with Christ, and sanctifies the believer. Reformed pneumatologies, thus, embrace a very broad approach to the work of the Spirit in relation to creation. Welker's approach to the diversity of experiences of the Spirit is a clear example of Reformed openness to the Spirit's various ways in creation. The broad Reformed understanding of the work of the Spirit can be seen in how the charismata of the Spirit are viewed: they are not only associated with the strengthening of the faith community, but they are also related to the body of Christ beyond ecclesial structures. The gifts of the Spirit can be categorized in different ways (ordinary and extraordinary, active and inactive, or general and particular), indicating the variety of means used by the Holy Spirit in order to bring creation into a closer relationship with God.

A *fourth motif* in Reformed pneumatologies is closely linked with the former one. It is the very positive qualification of creation, which in a sense explains the Reformed appreciation for the cosmic Spirit. Creation is valued so positively, because its quality is derived from its Creator. Despite the presence of sin and destruction in creation, this reality can be characterized as good, because God is still committed to creation through the Holy Spirit. The Spirit represents God's providence and sustenance, and aims to draw creation closer to its destiny, which can be perceived as God's indwelling in creation, or as creation becoming part of Trinitarian communion; both perspectives are reflected in the Reformed pneumatologies. The qualification of creation as good creation sometimes entails anti-dualistic perspectives, like in Van Ruler's pneumatology, but most Reformed pneumatologies hold on to a dualistic understanding of God's reality and creaturely existence, in which creation needs to be transformed, elevated, or developed in order to reach its purpose and destiny. Another implication of the qualification of creation as good creation is that the Spirit renews life in all its dimensions, using the means that are present in creation and society; there is no absolute boundary between what is sacred and what is profane, so that culture and science can also be perceived as belonging to the realm of the Spirit.

A *fifth motif* is the correlation of the Spirit and the Word of God. The Holy Scripture is God's revelation, and the Spirit is perceived as the

inspiration and the affirmation of the Word. The Spirit can never be separated from the Word, because the Spirit is the One who authenticates God's revelation and produces the believer's faith on the basis of the Word.

A *sixth motif* is the eschatological dimension of the work of the Spirit. Reformed pneumatologies identify the presence of the Holy Spirit in creation as living in the tension between the already realized redemption in Christ and the not yet fulfilled salvation. The Spirit is God who is with us in bridging the present and the eschaton, in the sense that the work of the Spirit is the promise of what is yet to come in the perfection of life. The pneumatologies of Kuyper and Van Ruler portray the work of the Spirit as directly related to God's full reign that comes closer to us in this life. Yet other pneumatologies maintain a clear dualism, and the tension between creation and re-creation, that is, between continuity and discontinuity. The Spirit is perceived as down payment or the first fruit, which is the promise that there is more to come of that which is already given, but this will only be fully realized in the consummation of all things.

A *seventh motif* is the cessationist perspective when it comes to the agency of the Spirit. Veenhof's pneumatology is an exception to the rule of Reformed rejection of the Spirit's (miraculous) intervention in human life. Van Ruler's pneumatology embraces an open reality, which means there is space for the disruptive and extraordinary work of the Spirit, yet Van Ruler does not relate this interventional work of the Spirit to the gift of healing. The fact that the majority of Reformed approaches holds on to cessationism can be related to the way the agency of the Spirit is perceived. The work of the Spirit is sometimes so closely linked to the ministry of Christ that there is little space left for understanding the Spirit as independently active in human life (that is, independent from Christ's salvation-historical work). In addition to the Christ-centered efficacies of the Spirit, the agency of the Spirit is also strongly associated with the focus on the believer's soul. The Spirit is active in the inner life of the believer, bestowing faith in the heart. Calvin in particular was very clear on this matter: any expectation of the Spirit's efficacies in relation to the exterior was a distraction that led believers away from true worship. His cessationist position had a major impact on Reformed thought.

Christelijke dogmatiek (2012), the outstanding contribution to Christian dogmatics by Van den Brink and Van der Kooi, offers a

Reformed³ pneumatology that seems to affirm the above mentioned motifs. The Spirit draws us closer to Christ, and both the Spirit and Christ are the two hands of God in this world (446). There is thus a firm Trinitarian perspective on the work of the Spirit. Other motifs, such as life giving relationality (464-467), Word and Spirit (456-459), and the Spirit in culture and history (467-474). The overview also includes a systematic-theological approach of three pneumatological notions as reflected in the Scriptures: the Holy Spirit is fully involved in the story of creation, salvation and consummation of this reality.

5. Spirit and healing

In general, it can be said that Reformed theology has neglected the theme of Spirit and healing (see Van den Bosch-Heij, 2012). Yet the Reformed pneumatological matrix also shows that the Spirit's work is understood as having a wide scope in terms of soteriology and cosmos. This ambiguity makes the theme of Spirit and healing an interesting case for considering whether it would be possible to articulate the efficacies of the Spirit in this world in terms of health, healing and wholeness?

In this section it is demonstrated how a Reformed pneumatological matrix can be a source of constructive and contextual approaches to Spirit and healing. This example is narrowed to health and healing in southern Africa.

5.1 *Multi-layered understandings of healing in Africa*

The assumption here is that health is a multi-dimensional concept. This means that how one perceives health is influenced by factors like one's experiences, tradition, gender, age, income and religion. One's understanding of health never develops in a vacuum, but is actually created by one's social frame of reference. It means that ideas about health are by definition contextual, subjective, dynamic and hybrid, because people are always trying to make sense of illness and healing on the basis of their experience, knowledge and accessible resources.

3 See *Christelijke dogmatiek. Een inleiding*. 2012. Zoetermeer: Uitgeverij Boekencentrum, p. 11.

When considering the context of southern Africa, the evolution of health ideas takes place within the scope of different but interrelated frames of references or discourses. It is generally accepted to identify four different health discourses (cf. Cochrane, 2006:13; Rasmussen, 2008:12). These four health paradigms can be briefly described as follows:

The *African traditional healing discourse* is inextricably linked with African religious beliefs and codes. These religious traditions center around the idea that reality is an open domain in which various realms interact with each other. This holistic worldview generates and sustains ideas about spiritual beings with whom human beings need to develop and preserve effective relationships in order to achieve health and well-being. When observing the ideational framework and the institutional Ngoma practices, one can easily discern an underlying notion that transpires through this healing discourse. It seems that nearly every strand of African traditional healing is interwoven with the aspect of *relationality*. Being part of a community, partaking in community rituals and cultivating balanced relationships are important elements of health and healing.

The *HIV/Aids discourse* is mainly based on concepts of health and healing produced by the paradigm of allopathic medicine. But, as Rasmussen (2008:11) states, “the explanatory models of biomedicine have for the most part not been transposed to the informal sector”. This implies that the biomedical discourse in Africa comprises complicated (under)currents of opinions and actions. The discourse on HIV/Aids in Africa reveals an immense array of perspectives on the various aspects of HIV. This discourse is not only about clinical treatment by biomedical staff and projects developed by Western-based agencies informed by epidemiology, it also includes alternative histories that have emerged in the recent past. These tend to focus on the social and cultural notions of HIV/Aids in Africa in order to provide a more balanced frame of reference (see for example Kalipeni, Craddock, Oppong & Ghosh, 2004; Lwanda, 2005; Denis, 2006). When one studies the full discourse on HIV/Aids in Africa, and when one observes the various

4 For an extensive discussion of these four African health discourses, see Van den Bosch-Heij, D 2012. *Spirit and Healing in Africa. A Reformed pneumatological perspective*. Bloemfontein: SUN MeDIA.

ways in which individuals, social groups and institutions try to make sense of HIV/Aids, it is possible to discern '*quality of life*' as a key notion that permeates the whole discourse. Even though this might not be obvious at first, the many different constructions of HIV/Aids do have a common denominator in the sense that they all search for quality of life for HIV-infected people.

Spiritual or church-based healing is a discourse that has largely been developed by African Independent (or Indigenous) churches and by African representatives of the Pentecostal tradition. Although the nomenclature of these traditions is not always clear and consistent, their healing practices generally share the same features based on beliefs derived from African indigenous traditions and from Christian ways of thinking. These blends have transformed into a relatively autonomous discourse on healing, whereby exorcism can be seen as the central feature of church-based healing (Jenkins, 2006:103-107, 111-113; Kalu, 2008:263). The frame of reference is that the believer is facing spiritual enemies (evil spirits, ancestors, demons) who generate the spiritual, mental or physical complaints. The only way to overcome the suppressing power of these spiritual enemies is by countering them in the powerful name of Jesus Christ. One could state that the concept of power determines the character of the church-based healing discourse in the African context: healing and well-being are understood as the gaining or maintaining of life-giving power, while religion is seen as the function of healing and well-being. In other words, essentially everything in the church-based healing discourse is focused on, and being nurtured by the concept of power.

In addition to the three above-mentioned dominant health discourses in southern Africa, there is the *discourse of missionary medicine*. Although the health concepts and practices of medical missionaries were generated from and determined by the developments of Western biomedicine, missionary medicine can be regarded as a discourse on its own. In contrast to secular colonial medicine, missionary medicine incorporates the extra dimension of belief and ideology in relation to health and healing. The presence of medical missionaries has (had) profound influence in southern Africa.⁵ The beliefs, thoughts and

5 The actual impact of missionary medicine is articulated in various ways: some contributions tend to evaluate the missionaries' contributions in a negative way

actions of medical missionaries and their supporting organizations were heavily influenced by a strong desire to make a contribution to the physical, spiritual, moral, social and economic transformation of Africans. This permeation with the concept of *transformation* leads to the proposition that transformation can be seen as fundamental to the missionary medicine discourse.

5.2 Gathering fragments

After mapping African multi-layered understandings of health, one may see how the Reformed pneumatological matrix can offer a new way of articulating the link between Spirit and healing. The motifs of relationality, transformation, and quality of life are strongly present in the matrix of Reformed pneumatology. These motifs provide support for the link of Spirit and healing, because the same motifs are also present in the African health discourses. This congruency forms the foundation for the engagement of African health perceptions with pneumatological discourse.

The engagement of African multi-layered understandings of health with Reformed pneumatological discourse can be understood as a process of gathering pneumatological fragments of healing, that is, as new ways of articulating the link between Spirit and healing.

Fragment 1 Spirit and relationality

New articulations of the link between Spirit and healing can be developed on the basis of relationality. In the African health discourse, relationships are synonymous with health and well-being; in Reformed pneumatological discourse, there is a close link between the Spirit and relationships (union with Christ, communion of be-

because they caused the decline of African indigenous healing practices (cf. Chepkwony, 2006:42), some focus on the manipulating forces of missionaries' ideas and healing activities constructing their own images of 'the African' and therefore justifying their own presence in Africa (cf. Vaughan, 1991:74; Butchart, 1998:75), while others highlight the introduction of modern technology, science, education, healthcare and other (in)direct influences of the missionary period (cf. Good, 2004:7). The different assessments of missionary medicine in southern Africa make it abundantly clear that missionary medicine cannot simply be categorized under Western biomedicine, but that its multiple components constitute a separate discourse.

lievers), but there is no direct connection between relationships and health. However, new articulations of the link between Spirit and healing can be developed when the identification of relationships and health in the work of the Spirit is emphasized: the Holy Spirit places humans in relationship with God and with one another, and thus the Spirit gives life, healing and well-being. The existence of relationships and the restoration of bonds can be seen as the efficacies of the Spirit, who aims at the well-being of creation. When one is brought into relationships that produce vitality, forgiveness and restoration of one's identity, then that can be identified as healing. It is the work of the Holy Spirit.

Fragment 2 Spirit and transformation

New articulations of the link between Spirit and healing can be developed on the basis of transformation. In the African health discourse, there is a direct link between transformation, healing, soul and body; in the Reformed pneumatological discourse, the spiritual transformation of the believer is centralized, but the physical dimension is neglected under the influence of a strong use of metaphorical language. However, new articulations of the link between Spirit and healing can be developed when the link between grace, transformation and body is recognized in the work of the Spirit. Reformed pneumatological discourse does not allow for viewing the body as the site where God's grace is reflected directly (in the sense that physical restoration is synonymous to being saved), but that does not mean that literal transformation is to be excluded from Reformed pneumatological discourse. The revaluing of the meaning of physicality and materiality in relation to the Spirit, in combination with the awareness that metaphorical language refers to the elusive nature of transformation but does not necessarily exclude literal transformation, produces new articulations of the link between Spirit and healing with God's grace, disorientation, counter-cultural charismata as key words.

Fragment 3 Spirit and quality of life

New articulations of the link between Spirit and healing can be developed on the basis of quality of life. In the African health discourse, healing is living positively with HIV/AIDS, and it means the retrieval of quality of life amidst vulnerability; in Reformed pneu-

matological discourse, creation and human life is generally valued highly, but the quality of creaturely life is not directly related to the vulnerability of creation. However, new articulations of the link between Spirit and healing can be developed when the notions of quality of life, vulnerability and beauty are attributed to the work of the Spirit in creation. A focus on the cosmic Spirit leads to an understanding of creaturely life as vulnerable life by definition. The vulnerability of creation belongs to the realm of the Holy Spirit, who redefines vulnerability as quality of God-given life. Accepting one's vulnerability as life that belongs to a vulnerable God means retrieving the quality of life that is given with creation. From a pneumatological perspective, this is a process of healing. One of the implications is the Spirit's invitation to be involved in the beautification of life, which is about reclaiming the holiness and the beauty of the vulnerable body for the glory of God. Retrieving the quality of one's life amidst suffering, threats and damage, is synonymous for healing that is not qualified by the presence of disease and wounds, but by the love and the beauty of God.

Fragment 4 Spirit and power

The prominent emphasis on power in the church-based healing discourse triggers the question about the kind of power that belongs to God in relation to healing. A pneumatological focus leads to the paradoxical nature of God's power: the Spirit of Christ holds together the ultimate dialectics of cross and resurrection, and makes us share in Christ's new life by leading us *through* the discontinuity of life, which is non-survival. Only this kind of paradoxical power, that speaks of defenselessness, death, faithfulness, and love, is the power that brings healing. Healing by the dialectical power of the Spirit is the annihilation of death in life after non-survival. New articulations of the link between Spirit and healing can be developed on the basis of power. In the African health discourse, power is synonymous with vitality, healing and blessing coming from God. In Reformed pneumatological discourse, power is not a well-developed theme, and certainly not in relation to healing. However, the link between Spirit and healing could be explored further by emphasizing the dialectics of the cross and resurrection in the work of the Spirit. The focus on the Spirit entails a redefinition of power, and opens productive avenues for articulating healing as embodying resurrection life.

6. Conclusion

Traditionally, Reformed theology limited the agency of the Spirit to the field of ecclesiology and (the subjective side of) salvation. Recently, however, there is a strong tendency in contemporary pneumatologies to come to a broader interpretation of the efficacies of the Spirit. In this light the suggestion is made to explore a pneumatological matrix that might advance Reformed understandings of the Spirit. Considering the complex and diverse nature of Reformed identity, this essay develops a Reformed pneumatological matrix. It must be emphasized that one cannot speak of a singular, conclusive pneumatological approach. Rather, such a matrix functions as a mechanism that encourages the pluriform, open, complex nature of Reformed thought about the Holy Spirit. In other words, a Reformed pneumatological matrix could function as a key to new constructive, contextual proposals on Spirit and human life.

The first part of this essay focused on intimating such a Reformed pneumatological matrix on the basis of pneumatological proposals by various Reformed scholars. These different pneumatologies presented seven dominant motifs that might be seen as characteristic of the Reformed understanding of the efficacies of the Holy Spirit. The second part instantiated the meaning and relevance of a Reformed pneumatological matrix by addressing the relationship of Spirit and healing in southern Africa. The matrix revealed how fundamental motifs of African multi-layered understandings of healing can be engaged with Reformed pneumatology. As it turned out, there are particular motifs that are congruent with the pneumatological matrix, and that can be retrieved to find productive avenues for Reformed theology in southern Africa. In other words, the hypothesis that intimating a Reformed pneumatological matrix will be relevant to new constructive, contextual proposals on Spirit and human life can be confirmed.

On the basis of the proposed Reformed pneumatological matrix, one could consider the exploration of other themes in relation to the Holy Spirit. The motifs or the contours of the matrix supply plenty of domains that are yet to be related to Reformed thought about God's Spirit. The motif of relationality, for example, is a rich domain to reflect on Spirit, (trans)gender, sexuality and queer theory. The motif of the very positive qualification of creation does not only provide an

obvious link with ecology, but it also opens the door to Reformed ideas about Spirit and body, Spirit and disability, Spirit and food, Spirit and animal, to mention but a few areas that are still underdeveloped. The motif of the eschatological dimension of the Spirit's work might introduce and expand, for example, particular ideas about Spirit and beauty, Spirit and vulnerability, Spirit and death. These are just a few examples to highlight the rich potential of Reformed pneumatology, whereby a pneumatological matrix may be seen as a fruitful avenue to new, constructive, contextual proposals on Spirit and human life from a Reformed perspective.

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