

Wisdom's rebellion: Kingdom politics as a guerrilla drama

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This article aims at exploring kingdom politics in South Africa as a guerrilla drama, not only of a contemporary play of wisdom as human virtue, but specifically in the form of the personified Wisdom's play (cf. Christ's parable of the children on the marketplace; Lk 7). Firstly, it investigates the availability of hermeneutical space for such an enterprise, attending to the concept of rebellion *vis-à-vis* a scripture-based, imaginative, theodramatic articulation of the Wisdom's play of the parable. Secondly, the public space for the enactment of such a 'wisdom's rebellion' is probed. It should not be neutrally indifferent to, but positively advancing of, the nearly universally accepted 'golden rule'. The public space should, in the public imagination, be seen and treated as a kind of public theatre, hospitable to a plurality of worldviews, each freely and imaginatively enacting its own political alternatives before the critical eyes of a democratic voting public. A follow-up article will attempt to outline the difference it might make to the human dignity of the participants (actors) and in their humane political actions (theodramatic roles), if they can imagine themselves as performing (not only theorising about and not only feeling passionately about) wisdom's subversive play of God's kingdom in South Africa.

Hierdie artikel stel ondersoek in na koninkrykspolitek in Suid-Afrika as 'n guerrilladrama wat die vorm van 'n wysheidspel aanneem; nie alleen 'n eietydse spel van wysheid as 'n menslike deug nie, maar veral as spel van die gepersonifieerde Wysheid (vgl. Christus se gelykenis van die kinders wat op die markplein speel; Luk 7). Eerstens word na die beskikbaarheid van 'n hermeneutiese ruimte vir so 'n onderneming gevra. Daarby word aandag geskenk aan die konsep van rebellie in verband met 'n skriftuurlik gefundeerde, verbeeldingryke, teodramatiese uitwerking van Wysheid se spel na aanleiding van die genoemde gelykenis. Tweedens word die publieke ruimte vir 'Wysheid se rebellie' heuristies afgetas. Hierdie ruimte mag nie neutraal-onverskillig wees nie, maar moet positief-bevorderend staan teenoor die feitlik universeel-aanvaarde 'goue reël'. Die publieke ruimte moet in die publieke verbeelding as 'n soort publieke teater gesien en hanteer word, waar 'n pluraliteit van wêreldbeskouings gasvry verwelkom word sodat elkeen vrylik en verbeeldingryk, tussen die ander, sy eie politieke alternatief voor 'n kritiese, demokratiese kieserskorps kan 'uitbeeld'. 'n Opvolg artikel sal probeer aantoon watter verskil dit aan die menslike waardigheid van die deelnemers (akteurs) en aan hulle menswaardige politieke aksies kan maak, wanneer hulle in hulle verbeelding hulleself nie net as denkers oor of passievol-voelendende deelnemers van Wysheid se subversiewe drama van God se koninkryk in Suid-Afrika beskou nie.

God gave us a place, like a theatre, where we should attend, not merely for a short time span of hundred or more years but since the creation of the world till the end, as people who are in the most intimate manner involved in the theatre, ever prepared to learn from it, and to make applications for our edification, and not as dumb spectators (Calvin Sermon 31 on Job, quoted by Van 't Spijker 1977:85):

Early Christianity was more like guerilla theater [*sic*] than social revolution, but it overthrew principalities and powers. (Wilder, quoted by Brueggemann 2002:95)

There are numerous thoughts regarding a theatre, drama or play. Shakespeare (1987) declares: 'The play's the thing wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king' (p. 959, in Hamlet, 2.2);

Or, as Smith (2013) posits:

We are ... imaginative animals ... we act in the world more as characters in a drama than as soldiers dutifully following a command. We are acting out a script, improvising in an unfolding drama. (p. 127)

In Luke (7:31, 35) he says: 'The people of this generation ... are like children sitting in the marketplace ... but wisdom is proved right by all her children.'

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A cri de Coeur

This contribution is motivated by a concern, succinctly expressed in a veritable *cri de coeur*, by the British theologian McGrath (2011):

Many hold that we only achieve our true identity and fulfilment through relating to God. And that vision of human identity has every right to be heard, represented and enacted in the public sphere. (p. 107)

Convinced that a vision of human identity should be regarded as crucial for any kind of political action on the public square (cf. Goosen 2014:288), this article intends to argue for the God-related anthropology that McGrath espouses. This is done by proposing a particular form of 'Wisdom's rebellion' in South Africa, namely an action presenting itself within the framework of a *theodrama*. The metaphor of a theodramatic play, undergirded in an arguably 'good enough' way by second order arguments (Ford 1999:7), might perhaps just be 'the thing' – or at least, one of the 'things' – with which to touch the conscience of political rulers and citizens today (cf. the Shakespeare-epigraph above). In a word, it might become a *guerrilla drama* (cf. Wilder-epigraph above).

As if pre-empting the present investigation, Calvin beautifully merged the redeeming of an opportune time with Christians' calling public to reflect God's light and wisdom – both, however, within the ambience of a theatrical metaphor. In commenting on Ephesians 5:15–17, Calvin (*n.d.*; emphasis added) could write:

What darkness shall conceal those on whom Christ, *the Sun of righteousness*, has arisen? Placed *as it were in a crowded theatre* they ought to live under the eye of God and of angels. Let them stand in awe of these witnesses, though they may be concealed from the view of all mortals ... (Paul) enjoins them to regulate their lives 'circumspectly as wise men', who have been educated by the Lord in the school of *true wisdom* ... Such corruption having infected the age, the devil appears to have obtained tyrannical sway; so that 'time' (*kairos*) cannot be dedicated without being in some way 'redeemed' ... Let us be eager to recover it *in every possible way*.

The limitations of this article only allow us to explore the double space for such an undertaking: *the hermeneutic and the public space*. Discussion of the actors and actions within the enactment of Wisdom's rebellion itself will require a further discourse.

Hermeneutic space

Space for new meanings

According to Gadamer (1977) there is a hermeneutical aspect to all human experiences as such. Into the familiarity of a world, already subjected to interpretation, 'experience steps as something new, upsetting what has led our expectations' (1977:15). In this process our experience itself is transformed. Something pertaining to the strange realm into which we are venturing is lifted up and fused

with the familiar, thus opening up and widening our own horizon of experience. Along these lines we are, in the context of our quest, venturing into the strangeness of concepts like *rebellion*, *politics in God's light*, *theodramatic ramification*, *baptismal consequences* and *Wisdom's play on the marketplace*.

Space for 'rebellion'?

In scanning the hermeneutical horizon for space in which this enterprise could be located, firstly, the way the notion of *rebellion* is to be used, merits attention. This rebellion includes a deep gratitude for our South African *Rainbow Revolution* – at a historical juncture where we are celebrating some two decades of constitutional democracy. This appreciation, however, does not eliminate the urgency for critical assessment of, and appropriate action against those features of a 'failing state' that are becoming increasingly apparent in this democracy (cf. Boraine 2014:141–146). Indeed, as Augustine (2011:101) already in the 5th century famously remarked: 'Justice being taken away, then, what are kingdoms but great robberies?'

In using the idea of rebellion to galvanise resistance against a threatening (or even already existing?) form of 'robber state' in South Africa, the courageous, but also desperate and ill-founded, Afrikaner Rebellion of a century ago (1914–1915), might serve as a foil (cf. Goosen 2014:288). If mirrored in that historical intervention the word *rebellion*, in the present investigation, denotes a totally different kind of action. It was Barth (1981:206, 207, 213) who classically called for the kind of 'specific uprising' intended here: a specific 'revolt or rebellion ... against the disorder ... of the Lordless powers of this age'. It entails that Christians 'in word and deed' proclaim their *No* to this disorder, everywhere – also in themselves. They utter this *No*, however, only on the basis of a deeper, positive affirmation: 'because another possibility stands with such splendor [*sic*] before the eyes of the rebels that they cannot refrain from affirming and grasping it and entering into battle for its actualisation' (1981:207).

If it is true what Boraine (2014:145) observes – and everything seems to affirm it – that 'the ANC has dug itself into a huge hole, socially, morally and politically, and has taken South Africa with it'. The question arises whether the *kairos* for a new *Kairos Document* does not urgently present itself. Against the background of the courageous opposition to the idolatrous system of apartheid emanating especially from the majority of English-speaking religious communities, the nearly total absence of an analogous kind of loyal, but radical criticism against the patent vices of the present regime, is glaring. Whilst white Afrikaans church communities – with some inspiring exceptions in individual cases, and nuancing appropriately – by and large supported, or at least sympathised with a policy of apartheid, it would somehow be rather ironic if Christian resistance to present injustices should be left primarily to them.

Space for wisdom politics 'in thy Light'?

In a characteristically erudite study the literary critic Bloom (2004:273–281) turns to Augustine as 'the Christian sage' *par excellence*. Augustine could even be regarded as the greatest theological exponent of Christian wisdom politics. Bloom judges 'what the commentaries on the Koran are to Islam, *The city of God* is to Christianity'. According to Augustine (2004) such wisdom politics would include the deep realisation that:

living is not at all the same thing as living happily, since that life still lives as it flows into its own darkness. But it remains to be turned to him by whom it was made and to live more and more like 'the fountain of life' and in his light 'to see light', and to be perfected and enlightened and made blessed. (p. 294; referring to Psalm 36:9)

In this light Christian politics could become a form of happy living in God's wisdom (cf. Psalm 1). However, as Ebert (2011:15) warns, wisdom in Scripture 'is always set off against its nemesis – folly. Both voices call to us'. Living happily in this *liminal* space between political folly and political wisdom (cf. Bartholomew & O'Dowd 2011:304), wise Christians could be drawn, as if by a 'sacramental' glow, into the light-giving work of God's two hands: the Word of wisdom and the Spirit of wisdom (Irenaeus of Lyon, 2nd century).

In appropriating any scriptural – or indeed, any other – text for political purposes today it must be remembered that nobody can *trans-late* without the possibility of 'betraying' (Ricoeur 2006:18–28). The profound words 'in thy light we see the light' seems, also in South Africa, sometimes to have fallen prey to a kind of ideological slogan usage. This, of course, is unacceptable – especially at a time when 'it seems as if churches have lost their tongue ... the words they know do not change the world. And the words that change the world they do not know' (cf. De Lange 1995:20).

The quoted words from Psalm 36 speak of the enlightening of human eyes to see God's goodness. Standing *coram Deo* (before the face of God) the primordial light of God streaming from God's face radiates out to give us *the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ* (2 Cor 4:6). What, however, is seen in this light? The amazing answer is: we see *light, as in a sublime round-dance* of Trinitarian light. Moltmann (2000 145–146) comments further that, by the illumination of the Holy Spirit, a person makes an entrance into that eternal light. Eyes of the heart are enlightened by the Spirit of wisdom (cf. Eph1:17). In political practice the light of wisdom 'in dealing with specific situations' (Bartholomew & O'Dowd 2011:305) thus starts breaking through.

Space for theodrama?

Space for improvisation?

In considering the question of how Christian wisdom 'in thy light' might be shaped in a postmodern atmosphere, Vanhoozer (2003:25; emphasis added) concludes that it should be moulded by a narrative that – counter to the

unbearable lightness of being – truly expresses 'the weight of glory' and therefore 'plumbs us into the *dramatic flow of evangelical reality*'. This very theatrical stream might indeed be the most congenial space for the conceptualising of Wisdom's rebellion in our time. The reason for surmising this should be sought in the concept of *theatrical improvisation*. Accepting with Horton (2011:19; emphasis original), that 'the Christian faith is, first and foremost, an unfolding *drama*'... albeit a 'counter drama to all of the mega narratives of this passing age – ancient, medieval, modern, and postmodern', the idea of *improvisation* presents itself as a legitimate form of Christian – including theological – parlance. It can be argued plausibly that Holy Scripture, in all its diversity, is the divine Author's Script in human language for the fourth (penultimate) act of his five act drama (the Script being the *epic* and *lyric* narrative about the first three acts – creation and falling into sin; Israel; and the coming of the kingdom in the New Testament). In the *penultimate act*, however, the act which the church (since postbiblical times) are *now* performing, the theatrical practice of improvisation of the script might provide useful *hermeneutical cues* for *faithfully* – that is, not in a biblicistic, fundamentalist, casuistic or relativistic way – continuing the *performance of Scripture* in *new contexts* (cf. Wells 2004:53–57; 59–70; 214).

Space for a divine comedy?

To be sure, this framework is not intended to evoke the idea of a present-day Greek drama which might inexorably be unfolding into a fateful tragic end to South Africa's cherished democracy. It should rather be approached as a dramatic play of hopeful politics, analogous to the Christian phenomenon of deep comedy or divine comedy so masterfully articulated by the poet Dante in AD 1300. With Leithart (2006:147; emphasis added) we might thus confidently affirm: 'worked out in the joyful life of the Church, *deep comedy* is the chief weapon of our warfare' (and, one might add: of our present quest for political 'rebellion'). With good reason, then, Vanhoozer (2005:50) can speak of theodrama as a '*covenantal comedy*': the drama of how, through God's grace, blessings of the covenant are brought forth within and despite the unfaithful conduct of human covenant partners. The notion of *covenant* or *testament* indeed provides a legitimate summary of the biblical theodrama. In full appreciation of this covenant theme, one might, nevertheless, focus (cf. Snyman 1977:140) on an even more comprehensive theme of Scripture, namely, the kingdom of God and its coming – in promise (Old Testament) and in fulfilment (New Testament). The relation of kingdom to politics is crucial for a Christian approach to democracy (cf. Van Wyk 1999:55–58). Should Moltmann (2012:19, 24) not be given due credit for his conviction that it was exactly 'the Calvinist kingdom of God theology' that enabled 'absolute and total resistance to ... absolute and total deifications of the state, providing the justification for the alternative of modern times: constitutional democracy'? Yet, the rediscovery of this biblical kingdom message for politics should be done not merely in narrative terms, as an *epic, objective* story of what

God accomplishes; nor merely as a lyric, subjective witness of believers to God; but rather as the all-encompassing Triune drama of God's kingdom and its coming. Might it not as such confidently be enacted as a provocative, challenging Wisdom's rebellion?

Space retrieved?

Although buried under layers of dogma the – originally dramatic – politically undermining reminiscence of Jesus Christ as the resurrected Crucified seems to have persisted in church history throughout the ages. Tragically, the dramatic dimension of this memory seems to have gradually faded away. The horrendous and shameful cross as scandal of the gospel was romanticised and transformed into a domesticated symbol of Christian triumphalism in this world. Interestingly, an eastern theologian like Maximus the Confessor (7th century) retained a lively consciousness of the world in its entirety as 'a play of God' (cf. Von Balthasar 1961:309). According to the Dutch theologian Mönlich (cf. Bakker 1973:28), however, this *dramatic-subversive acuity* can again be awakened. Amongst the spiritual progeny of Calvin, at least, such retrieval cannot be unfounded. Calvin's 'ruling metaphor' is, with good reason said to be the image of drama (Durand 2007:156). A quotation from Lane (2011) confirms this bold statement:

Calvin spoke ... of the church as a distinct company of players who have most fully grasped (and been grasped by) the drama enacted on the stage ... The image of the theater [*sic*] became an organizing metaphor in Calvin's thinking ... (p. 59).

One can rightly be amazed that staunch upholders of Calvin's legacy have until the late 20th century – to the real detriment of reformational theology, catechising, preaching and social ethics – neglected to take this fecund metaphor of the Genevan reformer seriously. Of late, however, the metaphor of drama has fortunately been enjoying a resurgence amongst leading reformational theologians (cf. Vanhoozer 2007:43–46, on the 'Turn to drama'), The breakthrough to a new dramatic or theodramatic way of doing theology, however, was spearheaded, in the final instance, by the mammoth *oeuvre* of the great 20th century Roman-Catholic theologian Von Balthasar (cf. Wells 2004:46).

Space through baptism?

The crucial place of baptism in the unfolding of the kingdom drama is suggested by an ancient component of some baptism formularies. The Anglican *Book of common prayer* (cf. also the classical Reformed Rhineland baptism formulary) includes – in one of its Baptism Questions – a somewhat puzzling and evocative phrase: *the vain pomp and glory of the world*. This *pomp* had to be denounced by the person before baptism. In an interesting investigation Trimp (1983:199–205) shows that the word *pomp* is derived from the custom of an ancient Roman theatrical parade, called *pompa circenses*. It had a religious meaning. Images of Roman gods were carried in the parade. The entourage was formed by a motley show of costumed participators like clowns and music-makers,

caverting in the streets. A crowd usually gathered in order to follow this carnivalesque procession to the *Circus Maximus*, where games with gladiators and wild animals were due to commence. Such is the *pompa* of the world that baptised Christians had to leave behind. They were now participants in another procession: the dramatic triumphal parade of thanksgiving, playing and jubilating around the triumphal chariot of the exalted King who triumphed on the cross – the cosmic theodrama (Col 2:15).

Parabolic space?

Space for metaphoric language

Pride of place in this quest is given to metaphoric language, specifically in its 'primacy' for 'imagining the Kingdom' (Smith 2013:110–124). Of course, one has to heed the warning of Nürnberger (2013:40–42) against speculation arising from metaphoric imagination. Undeniably, 'a metaphor can be reified, and taken as if it were an incontestable truth' – although, according to Nürnberger himself, this can also happen to (scientific) abstractions. Vanhoozer (2005:280) rightly argues that 'the insights we get from a good metaphor are often unobtainable by other means'. The present argument is attempting *just that* – by heuristically taking up drama or play as a metaphor to sound out the subversive potential of a peculiar form of sapient kingdom politics in South Africa (cf. next paragraph). Might it be far-fetched, then, to expect that something might thus become visible of what Moltmann (2000) visualises:

as a theology of delight in God ... a theo-fantasy ... thoughts begin to dance and play before God ... participating in the great 'play' of God's Wisdom which Proverbs 8 says is the true Logos of creation and the real secret of the world? (p. 250)

Indeed, metaphorically speaking, religion is 'serious play' (Van de Beek 2004:4). It was rightly said that to employ drama or play as a metaphor renders theology no less serious than other ways of doing theology (Brueggemann 1993:67).

Space for Wisdom's children?

The parable of our Lord Jesus Christ about the children playing in the marketplace (Lk 7:31–35) presents itself as a remarkable canonical signal for our current plea. Of course, it is illegitimate to equate the 'marketplace' of the parable with marketplaces of later times, but the whole metaphorical complex of children playing in public might surely be regarded as an intrinsic component of the parable. These children-at-play are indeed *the likes (homoioi)* to whom the 'people of this generation' are compared. According to the exegetically well-founded view of Ridderbos (1965:219), the expression 'this generation' primarily refers to 'the people of this inner disposition' – who are obviously not limited to a specific century. The timeless image of children-at-play can therefore validly applied also to 'this generation' of the 21st century. The 'sting in the tail' of the parable, according to Luke's version – 'but wisdom is proved right by all her children' (wisdom being *personified*) (cf. Deane-Drummond

2000:46) – then also must be relevant for *personified Wisdom's children of today*. Precisely this insight creates the possibility that we today can be 'once more astonished' (cf. Smit 1987:20) by this parable.

It is unnecessary to enter here into an extended discussion of the exegesis, hermeneutics and background of this text (cf. Smit 1987:11–39; also Veltkamp 1988:53–104; and more recently Blomberg 2004:13–25). The question, namely which group of children should be compared to Jesus and John – and thus also to Wisdom's children – on the one hand, and which group to 'this generation', on the other hand, has led to various answers (cf. Marshall 1978:300–301). It should be admitted, according to Versteeg (1987:12), that the group who glance, refers to Jesus and John. Both Jesus and John, each in his own way, indeed urged the recalcitrant people to enter the kingdom. Nevertheless, and perhaps counter-intuitively, Versteeg (1987:13; cf. also Kistemaker 1980:28) argues compellingly that the people of this generation should rather be likened to the group of children who tried to draw Jesus and John into *their selfish play*. This group therefore complains against Jesus and John, accusing them of being the 'play breakers'. This group wanted Jesus and John to dance or lament 'on the melody that *we play*' (Versteeg 1987:14; emphasis original).

Whatever one's view on these and other questions about this parable might be, the main point to acknowledge, for the purpose of this article, is that parables 'are *mirrors* in which to recognise *ourselves and our time*'. The key to open the parables appears to be not something but *Someone*: Jesus Christ the King himself who told the parables (Van der Walt 2006:182–183; emphasis added).

According to recent interpretation, the Living King himself invites hearers through these parables to participate in the continuation of the story within *today's* life and circumstances. Parables are open-ended stories or 'short dramas' (cf. Ricoeur 1978:245). Veltkamp (1988:183–185) contends that the hearer is prompted to use his imagination and in such a way to continue the same parable as a dramatic enactment in his own, different situation. 'With a wink from the narrator: Are you playing with? Do you accept the invitation to look from a new perspective at your own story?' Kistemaker (1980:27–28) seems to conclude, plausibly, that Wisdom in this parable 'might even be a circumlocution for God himself'.

The 1983-Afrikaans translation of 'children' (*tekna*) as 'works' (*erga*) in Luke 7:35 is probably due to an attempt to bring Luke's version in line with the parallel passage in Matthew – without, however, inculcating that the latter itself is, arguably, based on a faulty decision against *the lectio difficilior* of the original Aramaic (cf. Marshall 1978:304).

The children of Wisdom should be seen as those who have entered the kingdom. They are contrasted with the spoilt children on the marketplace (*i.e.* the people of *this generation*:

Pharisees and other people of all ages who are offended by the kingdom wisdom). Those parabolic characters complain that the others (John the Baptist and Jesus) refuse to dance the dances and sing the songs that they, in their selfish whims, demand. Wisdom's children, however, joyfully and in the 'freedom for which Christ has made us free' (Gl 5:13) share in Wisdom's kingdom game; and thus participate in the shame (cf. Heb 13:13) of their Lord and King – vilified as a 'glutton and drunkard', a 'friend of outcasts, tax-collectors and immoral people'.

Space for this century's 'deepest theological wisdom'?

Ford (2011:103; emphasis added) comes to a near breathtaking conclusion about the significance of the above, briefly discussed parable: 'To belong to wisdom's family is to risk forming *unlikely* friendships. *The deepest theological wisdom of the coming century is likely to be discovered here.*' Are we as complacent Christians under an eclipsing 'rainbow' willing to risk such friendships with the friends of him who was reckoned with the criminals – the Cursed amongst and in place of the cursed? By acknowledging the names his enemies called him ('glutton and drunkard'), he took upon himself the death sentence – for him on the cross; obviously not by stoning – due to be meted out to an unruly son (cf. Dt 21:20–21). Undeniably, the turn to drama that we are experiencing in the theology and philosophy of the 21st century presents an exciting opportunity to bring the peculiar *phronesis* [insight] of being Wisdom's friends into a hermeneutical space oriented to practical political action.

Theology serves the church in its role as an enacted parable of the kingdom. Doctrine is a form of practical wisdom that aims at certain theodramatic goods: the *salus* of the individual; the *shalom* of the community; the glorification of the *shem* or name of God (Vanhoozer 2007:46).

Being Wisdom's friends has indeed undeniable consequences for the political *shalom* of kingdom citizenship. 'If there could really somewhere be talk of a "particular memory" that permanently accompanies the church and the world critically' (Bakker 1973 37), it is to be found in the political kingdom theology of Noordmans (1980). He pictures Jesus, the Wisdom of God incarnated, between Wisdom's chosen friends:

Here, in the street, He is the triumphing general who takes possession of his Kingdom ... Here Jesus is at home and here we see his glory totally. This is the true atmosphere of the Gospel ... The mysteries of the parables have now broken out and manifest themselves before everybody's eyes ... One must pay attention to *who* comes out in public and one will know who God is and what the Gospel is. (p. 299)

Definite echoes of God's preferential love for the 'quartet of the vulnerable' in the Old Testament resound here: widows, orphans, resident aliens and the poor (cf. Wolterstorff 2008:75).

Public space for wisdom's kingdom play

Public space in three metaphors

Cupitt (2010:98) distinguishes three metaphors that have been used for human social relations during the past ca. 3000 years: a body politic, a market and a theatre. The *market* metaphor portrays 'each person putting out her stall, displaying her wares, and trading with others'. Applied to the political reality this metaphor is quite clear. The *theatre* metaphor, though needs more elucidation. This is due to its more complex imaginative character, and above all, obviously to being more vulnerable to a charge of speculation. For the purpose of this article we are bracketing out *body politic* as political metaphor (cf. however the follow-up article).

A post-secular public space?

At a time when the Constantinian settlement between church and state seems – in the West at least – to have crumbled, the political paradigm of the Enlightenment (cf. Küng 1995:xvi–xviii) was seemingly giving way to a return of religion to the marketplace. It is fascinating how Ward (2009:117–158), in a broader inquiry on becoming postmaterial citizens, also concentrates on precisely the question of postsecularity. He analyses postsecularity as an outflow of Postmodernism in its philosophical and poststructural guise, typified by various thinkers of the late 20th century, including Kristeva and Girard. A renewed interest in religion in the marketplace emerged from about 1970. It 'forced religion out of the private retreats of church, mosque and temple and into the streets'. Of course, the phenomenon of the 'strange return' of theology, accompanied by the return of 'repressed' aspects of religion (Cupitt 2010:xiv), meets some opposition – especially from sociological quarters. Bader (2012:5), for example ascribes the construction of 'simplistic dichotomies' between various eras of secularisation (pre, present, and post) as a drastic reduction of a contingent and complex historic and social reality.

Value-dominated, value-free or tension-free public space?

Contrary to such critical voices, however, Boeve (2006:35, emphases added) can plead for a recontextualising of Christianity's narrative within a postmodern framework. He argues persuasively that 'politics as such should never become a narrative in its own right, but should continue to *open the field* on which different discourse and narratives are *striving to cope* with each other'. In the same breath, Boeve, nevertheless also with good reason, denounces the concept of an *empty* public space. A *historically* totally neutral public space, for instance can be detrimental to that *very* neutrality which it seeks to expand. An example could be a political policy that invokes the past 'as though we could make the decision of the past once again' – because we imagine *how it should* have been done. Stoeckl (2011:2) does not conceive of postsecularity as a mere chronological succession to secularity, leading to a new neutral, tension-free marketplace:

'Postsecularity is a condition of permanent tension', she writes. This observation fits neatly into her definition of postsecularity as 'conscious co-existence of religious and secular worldviews' in the political arena. It is not a situation of 'ceasefire – between the religious and the secular, faith and reason, theism and atheism'.

We are here indeed probing something else than a ceasefire. We argue not for a pause in worldview and religious altercations as attempted by a politically correct liberal multiculturalism where every community and culture can maximise its own communal cultural identity within a totally neutral public sphere. Rather, consideration should be given to what Zizek (2010:53) suggests: 'the thing to do is to change the entire field, introducing a totally different Universal, that of an antagonistic struggle'. This struggle, however, should then not take place between certain communities, cultures or religions, but within every culture, community or even religion 'so that the "trans-cultural" link between communities is one of a shared struggle' (2010:53). Thus a marketplace can arise which makes a *coincidentia oppositorum* of worldviews within cultural and communal identity-seeking possible. Legal provision should be made for 'an encounter of Real antagonisms' (i.e. antagonisms about the premises of society itself) – which cannot take place if the marketplace neutrally provides merely for a 'level of imaginary and symbolic identifications' (2010:355). The latter is indeed what the classical liberal view of public space provides for: 'a perfectly *neutral* boxing-ring in which all possible ideas about society and the bases of social life meet and battle it out', as Maritain (quoted by Eccheveria 2001:253) puts it. The views, for example of Mill, in the second chapter of his classic work, *On liberty*, entails that 'there is on the whole a preponderance amongst mankind of rational opinions and rational conduct' and that civility and public truth will, by way of *laissez faire*, emerge from a rational clash of ideas (Mill 1965:383).

The critique levelled by postsecularism has, however, unmasked the *naïveté* of such a rationalistic optimism. The nihilistic alternative posed by Nietzsche where human beings act 'beyond good and evil' – also in the public square – have demonstrated its pernicious fruits in ideologies of the 20th century. In the public theatre marketplace the only cast that should be excluded is the one that enacts doctrines which suffer no rival. Open, interactive political 'dramatic performances' should be welcomed and supported in a spirit of 'positive tolerance', which involves genuine respect and openness towards 'others'. 'Negative tolerance', on the other hand, 'is an expression of indifference: "Let them do their own thing"... "them" being those who believe or practice different things ... (this attitude) has been elevated to a normative principle by the ideology of multiculturalism' (Berger & Zijderfeld 2009:31). In spite of all the good intentions of liberal multiculturalists to accept and celebrate cultural and religious difference on a state-guaranteed neutral public square, it seems that during the past decades such multiculturalists have gravitated towards positions akin

to negative tolerance ('grudgingly putting up' with different worldviews). Ward (2010:116–117) explains this phenomenon as a possible result of liberal Westerners encountering, on their own *neutral* public space, *radically different others* who promote *non-tolerant convictions* (cf. the murder – some years ago in the so-called tolerant Amsterdam – of the liberal cineaste Theo van Gogh). The realisation is apparently dawning that neutrality on the liberal marketplace cannot include *indifference* to freedoms which undermine that very neutrality.

Obviously, it would be foolish to discard the liberal virtue of tolerance in a contemporary, postsecular political public space. 'Wisdom's rebellion', as explored here, should be on the forefront in pleading for tolerance – but then, in a redeemed form. This means proceeding beyond liberalism, in the direction of the novelist Dostoyevski's Christian humanism. It should be a space where there exists freedom to enact 'responsibility for others, while refraining from moralistic judgment of others' (Ward 2010:20, 21, 219).

On the issue of a peaceful global public realm – where a Christian humanism can act, as indicated, responsibly towards others – the productive Catholic ecumenical theologian Küng (cf. especially 1997:59–111), delivers a remarkable contribution to the debate. He gives a powerful and necessary plea for the collaboration of various religions, not only in opposing an ethically value-free marketplace but also in positively creating a peaceful, yet ethically responsible, global environment for the political actions of a plurality of worldviews (including atheism) and of world religions. To this end he analyses the overlapping ethical and human values of the various religions, inasmuch as they might contribute to the common good of a peaceful civil public space. One of the most universally accepted of such concepts proves to be the so-called 'Golden Rule', in its various forms (Küng 1997:97–99).

'Pillarised' public space?

A few remarks are also necessary on the ideal of the so-called *pillarised* political marketplace. This denotes a marketplace where different worldviews are organised as specific political fractions within a democratic constitutional state. The metaphor of pillars (Dutch: *zuilen*) was – at least up to the 1960s – in the Netherlands widely used for this phenomenon. It also had its spillover in a certain form of political striving in South Africa which earnestly and valiantly aimed at a 'Calvinistic *reville*' (frequently indicated with the controversial though not fully incorrect term *Neo-Calvinism* (cf. Scholl 1997:240–242). Kuyper, with his Anti-Revolutionary Party (est. 1879), had the inspiring vision to mobilise the entire Christian *volk* [people] against the spirit of the (French) revolution. Therein he opposed not only the hierarchic structure of a society of which the state forms the apex. He also envisaged a situation where the various pillars stood more or less parallel and on the same level beside each other, not hostile against each other as in a class struggle.

In this endeavour he found his inspiration in the political thinking of Groen van Prinsteren with the motto, 'in our isolation is our strength' (cf. Dingemans 2010:242). However, it was this very isolationist, antithetical stance against the modern paradigm, that eventually led – in Kuyper's epigones – to a rather triumphalist and elitist mind-set of 'We Calvinists'. The social upheaval of the 1960s eventually proved to be the death knell of the Anti-Revolutionary Party in the Netherlands. Dingemans (2010:247) puts it in a nutshell:

The antithesis-model doesn't work anymore, because the Christian tradition has practically no more influence on the development of the culture, and has no inherent political philosophy, no own science-philosophy, no own economic theory or philosophy of art. These all became autonomous spheres with their own development, which one should accept.

This analysis may indeed be accepted. When Dingemans himself, however, pleads for a dialogical model instead of an active or passive antithesis model, I would rather opt for a dramatic model of a play which transcends, but at the same time takes up in itself (perhaps in a Hegelian sense of *aufheben*), the *epic* [dialogical] and the *lyric* [subjective, existential] dimensions. To see *the same differently* (Kuitert 2005:37) could mean seeing the place of Christians in today's marketplace not merely as engaging in dialogue with the others. It can also entail playing – as Wisdom's children on the marketplace – the play for which Christ himself calls the tune, that is 'the kingdom play of peace, justice and joy in the Holy Spirit' (Rm. 14:17). The place for practising kingdom politics is decisively the theatrical company of the King's men and women performing in the marketplace where the King himself is. 'Where I am there my servant also would be', says Christ (Jn 12).

The above criticism of a pillarised marketplace does not mean that there is nothing to be learnt from Kuyper. To the contrary, it would be wise to heed the timely call of Villa-Vicencio (2005:180–181). He calls for a reassessment, precisely now in South Africa, of Kuyper's sense of the importance of social spheres. Difference-blind models of coexistence that suggest we opt for what is common whilst playing down what makes us different does not work in South Africa. Each group needs to be challenged by other groups, whereas individually and collectively they need to challenge and renew the nation. Community, *ubuntu*, and belonging do not exclude conflict. They seek ways to transcend exclusion and enduring hostility.

With good reason Villa-Vicencio (2005:195; emphasis added) asks: 'Can Kuyper, understood in the broad ambit of *ubuntu* and the need for communal living provide a balance between unity and diversity where *liberalism and multiculturalism* have failed?' To follow this line many Calvinists, however, need to re-embrace forgotten, neglected and sometimes repressed accents especially such as found in Bavinck's theology, for example his timely plea for the total embracement of

the 'catholicity of Christianity and church' (cf. Bavinck 1968:29–43). In the same way that he intended his views (cf. Bavinck 1968:v) on catholicity to be 'a medicine' against the tendencies of sectarianism, separatism, small-mindedness and bigotry which he, open-minded as he himself was, noticed amongst Calvinists of his time, it should also function today.

In a true catholic spirit one could thus, with Villa-Vicencio (2005), ponders again the famous last paragraph of Kuyper's *Stone lectures* which refers to the image of the *Aeolian Harp*:

Until the wind blew, the harp remained silent, while, again even though the wind arose, if the harp did not lie in readiness, a rustling of the breeze might be heard, but not a single note of ethereal music delighted the ear. Now, let Calvinism be nothing like such an Aeolian Harp – absolutely powerless, as it is, without the quickening Spirit of God. Still we feel it our God-given duty to keep our harp, its strings tuned aright, ready in the window of God's holy Zion, awaiting the breath of the Spirit. (p. 180)

In optimising the openness of the harp to that unfathomable breeze it seems imperative to render specifically Calvinist social ethics today 'transparent to the Shibboleth of every serious social ethics', namely, the *aequum cuique* (Scholl 1997:251–253). What new harp melodies of social justice might the Breeze still bring forth for Wisdom's play in South Africa today? *Veni Creator Spiritus!*

Conclusion

All in all, one could cautiously concur with Caputo (2013:214) that the love of truth – and, one might add, the love of true wisdom – is still possible in a postmodern context (and that would include the postsecular). This, we argue, might be possible within a deep comedy of kingdom citizens – to be presented, amongst and in peaceful competition with other played-out political options. With Ford (2011:105–106) it can indeed be affirmed that the 'most congenial category' for political action in postsecular democracies is the dramatic one, 'in which the actors are groups and institutions as well as individuals'. How these democratic actions may be imaginatively enacted by theodramatic actors is dealt with later-on.

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