

The role of tradition in moral decision-making and moral consensus

ABSTRACT

This article investigates the role of tradition in the processes of moral decision-making and moral consensus in a pluralistic society. This question is addressed by focusing on the work of two scholars with opposing views on this theme. Harry Kuitert represents the so-called liberal approach which argues in favour of a tradition-independent understanding of morality, moral decision-making and moral consensus. Stanley Hauerwas is a representative of the so-called postliberal approach to morality. According to him morality, moral decision-making and the quest for moral consensus take place in dependence on notions like virtues, narratives and community. After the outline of these positions suggestions are made with regard to lessons that can be learned from both approaches for the ongoing moral discourse in pluralistic societies like South Africa.

1. INTRODUCTION

As a young pastor in the 1980's I participated in protest marches against the apartheid regime. In these marches Christian pastors who were dressed in our official cloaks were flanked by religious leaders of other traditions in their official dresses – and also by people of nonreligious traditions. As people from various religious and non-religious traditions we had consensus that we wanted apartheid to be abolished. We were also united in our quest for a new society where values like peace, justice, dignity, equality, non-racism, non-sexism and non-classism reign supreme. We broadly adhered to the vision of a new society spelled out in documents like the Freedom Charter that was formulated by the ANC in Kliptown in 1955.

With the arrival of democracy the broad moral consensus of this pluralistic compilation of protestors against apartheid as well as those people who in the past supported apartheid is articulated in the Bill of Rights of the 1996 South African Constitution. The Bill of Rights, to a high extent, constitutes the agreement that the pluralistic South African population has about the moral basis of our new society. In these first years of democracy our society transformed rapidly. Part of this transformation is the transforming of our laws to be compatible with the foundational law as articulated in the Constitution, and more specifically in the Bill of Rights. This process of bringing laws in correspondence with the Bill of Rights implied the concretization and precision of these rights. Where agreement on the broader rights and underlying values were relatively easy to achieve, consensus in the sphere of more specific decisions, choices and acts proved more difficult to be found. In this regard one can just refer to the moral disagreement amongst people of various religious and non-religious traditions – and even amongst people in the same tradition – on medical and sexual issues like abortion, euthanasia, in vitro fertilization, same-sex marriages

1 It will become clear that tradition is used in this article to refer to the various institutions, practices, disciplines, narratives, communities, role models and convictions that are (a) based in religion and (b) those that are not based in religion but in secular overarching life views and paradigms. The impact of

and the call for so-called safe sex measures, and political and economic issues like amnesty to violators of human rights during apartheid, reparation to victims of apartheid, economic justice and affirmative action.

These disagreements prompt us to ask what we can do to ensure higher levels of agreement in the public moral debates with participants from a plurality of traditions. This question is not unique to the South African democracy. In other democracies questions on moral decision-making and the quest for consensus with regard to concrete, specific decisions and policy formulations have been debated for very long and is still not exhausted. One way of accessing this debate is to investigate the approaches of the so-called liberal² and post-liberal³ thinkers to this question. Specifically the role that these approaches allocate to tradition in moral decision-making and the proposals that they make regarding moral consensus will be investigated.

This article henceforth investigates the role of tradition in moral decision-making and the quest for moral consensus in the pluralistic public sphere of democratic societies⁴. The investigation is specifically done from a Christian perspective and the focus is on the young South African democracy. In a first round the so-called liberal position of the Dutch ethicist, Harry Kuitert, is outlined. Thereafter the post-liberal view of the US ethicist, Stanley Hauerwas, is investigated. These authors are widely recognized as good representatives of these two approaches. In a last round some proposals are made regarding the role of religious tradition in the public moral discourse in South African society. This is done in the light of lessons that can be learned from mentioned liberal-post liberal debate about this question.

2. A TRADITION-INDEPENDENT APPROACH TO MORAL DECISION-MAKING AND MORAL CONSENSUS

Kuitert focused much of his ethical reflections on questions regarding moral decision-making and moral consensus-seeking in the pluralistic public debate in democratic societies. In a nutshell his position entails that moral decisions can be made and moral consensus can be reached independently from religious traditions. This view is based in his understanding of religion, morality and the relationship between religion and morality.

a. For Kuitert (1988a:42) religion is a universal and indispensable anthropological phenomenon. He (1977a:74) identifies three related dimensions of religion. He (1988a:50) firstly refers to the implicit, spontaneous fundamental, original faith (oergeloof) that serves as a meaning-giving framework for human beings. It encourages us to intervene in reality and to put trust in our own endeavours (1974a:22). This fundamental faith enables us to create culture (1974a:17-

these religious and nonreligious traditions on people and on the moral life, specifically on moral decision-making and moral consensus, is investigated.

- 2 The liberal approach to morality developed under the influence of Enlightenment thinking. It broadly teaches that morality is independent from religious traditions. This autonomous morality is developed by free individuals on the basis of rational considerations. Morality, in the liberal understanding, enjoys universal acceptance.
- 3 In post-liberal thinking morality is tradition-dependent. Morality is not autonomous, but is influenced by communities which we belong to as well as by considerations other than merely an almost objective form of rationality. In a forthcoming article titled *Modernism and postmodernism. On naming the present in contemporary South Africa*, I elaborate on my understanding of these categories.
- 4 Dutch theologian Gerrit Manenschijn argues that moral consensus is both essential and possible in democratic societies. For peaceful co-existence in a pluralistic context it is crucial to seek for minimum moral consensus. Because all humans share rational capacities it is possible to achieve consensus.

18;1988a:51). Many people make this implicit unarticulated faith explicit in religious traditions in the form of rituals, myths, rites, stories, doctrines, commandments and ceremonies (1974a:18, 22-23). This explication of faith occurs especially when people face crises (1988a:49-51). The second dimension of religion is therefore religion in the form of religious traditions and religious movements that develop historically (1988a:54). The third form of religion for Kuitert is the institutionalized form thereof – in the case of Christianity the church with all its offices, practices and procedures. He outlines his understanding of the church as the institutionalized form of religion in various of his more recent works (1993; 1994; 1998).

Of importance for this study is the fact that Kuitert views religion as an anthropological phenomenon with historical origins and development. According to Kuitert (1988a:64-65), religious convictions, as anthropological, human “search designs” of an alternative reality, have cognitive pretensions. They therefore are open to human assessment. These convictions do not pass the test for truth in the same way as natural science, but they pass the test for truth when the reality that the research design refers to is confirmed by human experience. Kuitert’s scepticism against religion, however, is the fact that many religious thinkers are not sympathetic to this anthropological understanding of religion and the consequent quest for verification. Kuitert’s anthropological understanding of religion coincides with his anthropological approach to morality that is investigated in the next paragraph.

b. His definition of morality is illuminated by a distinction that Dutch ethicist, Bert Musschenga (1989:166-173) uses with regard to morality. He distinguishes between the so-called narrow and broad moralities. In correspondence with Musschenga, Kuitert (1988b:31) states that broad morality includes the personal ideal that people want to realize through their behaviour and actions. It means that people are more interested to live virtuous lives than to obey specific rules. Narrow or social morality, according to Musschenga (1989:169ff) and Kuitert (1988b:31-32), refers to the moral directives that are crucial for the peaceful co-existence of human beings with different ideals and interests. According to Musschenga (1989:166), the narrow morality, unlike the broad morality, has universal pretensions. It is not based in particular communities, religions and traditions, but in something which humans have in common, namely rational capacities and a focus on own interests.

Kuitert (1988b:31-32) views narrow or social morality as a minimum and indispensable morality. It has to do only with that minimum principles and guidelines without which a society cannot exist peacefully. These principles can be justified rationally - which means that understandable and convincing reasons can be offered for them. Because of this limited feature of narrow morality and because of its rational accessibility, this type of morality, according to Kuitert, paves the way for moral consensus in a pluralistic context.

For Kuitert (1988c:135), morality should not focus on the personal ideals of the good life. It should only focus on the questions about what is good and bad, right and wrong, what ought to be done and what not. Good and bad is determined only in terms of what is enhancing the lives and wellbeing and harmony of a plurality of people. Kuitert’s preference for morality as narrow or social morality already betrays his understanding of the relationship between morality and religion. This theme is investigated in the next paragraph.

c. According to Kuitert (1974a:76-75; 1988a:107), morality functions independently from religion. Religion is not the mother of morality, but the protector, feeder and facilitator thereof.⁵ Morality

5 Kuitert (1974b:195) opposes Dorothee Sölle who states that moral values like peace, freedom and justice are demands of the gospel. He reckons humans have rationally agreed on these values. Only after

was not brought into being by religion. Morality came into existence through rational human processes.⁶ In a rational way humans work out means of living together in harmony.⁷ We formulate both broad moral principles and specific moral guidelines that serve our quest for peaceful co-existence. In changing circumstances we formulate new moral guidelines on the basis of the universally accepted broader moral principles. Religion did not bring morality into being. Neither does it contribute something unique to the contents of morality. It is not the mother of morality. However, as protector of morality, religion has something to do with morality.

Kuitert (1984:216-218) demonstrates how religions fulfil its role as protector, facilitator and feeder of morality. Religion merely intensifies the motive that people have developed rationally for a specific choice. Religion lends more of a personal involvement to our choice and also a clear vision that encourages that choice and behaviour, for example in the case of Christians the vision of the coming kingdom of God.

According to Kuitert, religion gives a unique framework of understanding or comprehension to morality. In the case of Christianity the doctrine of humans as beings created in the image of God helps to illuminate the concept of human worth and dignity (1981a:258). Christ's commandment of love for the enemy does not offer something new to the contents of morality, but merely indicates that something more than the usual should be strived for (1985a:149). Religion also helps to prioritise moral issues.⁸ Love, for instance, is in moral affairs a more important norm than order.

Although the task of moral formation, as in virtue and character formation, is not an important part of the ethics agenda of Kuitert, he nevertheless thinks that religion plays an essential role in this regard (1981a:257; 1988c:144).

Some important conclusions about Kuitert's understanding of the relationship between religion and morality can be drawn. Morality does not really need religion. Religion contributes nothing to the contents of morality. Religious tradition mainly has a motivational and meaning-giving function with regard to morality. Moreover, this motivation is further limited to the level of doing the good and of being equipped to do the good. Religion does not even give indispensable motivation for the actual moral decision. Decisions are made in terms of rational motives.

d. On basis of these theoretical understandings of religion, morality and of the relationship between morality and religion, Kuitert suggests concrete steps for moral decision-making and moral consensus.

- Kuitert (1988b:37-40) argues that the constituent elements of a moral decision demonstrate why people make different decisions on the same issue.
- Information is required for a sound decision. Because people do not have the same information they make different decisions.
- People mostly make moral decisions intuitively without intentional reflection on moral rules, norms and principles. Intuitions can lead to different decisions.

this prior agreement is religious motivation added to it in order to give them the status of unconditionality. Religion renders to moral values divine authority that people are willing to accept.

6 According to Kuitert (1988a:108), morality is autonomous and secular. You need not be a Christian to write an ethics that describes what ought and what ought not to be. Consequently an appeal to God's will (1975) or to the Bible (1974b; 1981b) is not essential for making moral decisions.

7 Kuitert would admit that it is God who grants humans rational capacities to work out moral principles and guidelines. God gives us this insight in terms of the creation redemption (skeppingsheil) which is to be distinguished from the eternal salvation in Jesus Christ (1985a:141-153).

8 In his doctoral dissertation on the unique nature of Christian morality Etienne de Villiers (1978) emphasises this role of prioritisation that Christianity offers.

- Our different aims and purposes lead to different decisions.
- Different interests can also lead to different decisions.
- The experiences of people also evoke different decisions. Somebody whose family member was involved in a divorce will think differently about this issue than somebody who has not been involved personally in a divorce.
- Different moral directives that lead to different decisions can be inferred from different religious and nonreligious world views.
- The different ways in which people select and combine the various elements of a moral decision lead to different decisions.

Despite this high probability of different decisions, Kuitert is of opinion that moral consensus is not only crucial – otherwise violence and bloodshed might occur (1981a:30-31) - but it is also possible (1988b:37-40)⁹. In terms of his view of an autonomous, tradition-independent morality he spells out the following path towards such a consensus¹⁰.

According to Kuitert (1988b:37-40), moral consensus can be achieved by using the following guidelines:

Participants in the pluralistic moral discourse firstly have to table their views. At this stage they do not offer the arguments in favour of it, but only mentions the intuitions that influenced the decisions.

In a second round the arguments in favour of a moral position have to be outlined¹¹.

After thorough attention to the views and motivations of participants an analysis may be made of where the ways go apart, for instance are there different descriptions of the problem or is there difference about the validity of a moral rule?

In a next round all the building blocks of the different decisions have to be investigated. Kuitert pleads that the religious arguments only be drawn into the discussion right at the end of the debate because they are not rationally accessible to all participants and therefore have the potential to hinder consensus. In some instances, he reckons that this late entrance of the tradition-dependent element may enhance the debate in terms of aspects like understanding the subjective involvement, additional motives, broader vision, meaning-giving framework and priorities of participants.

e. At the end of this section it can be concluded that Kuitert does not allow much room for religious traditions in moral decision-making and moral consensus. The role of religion is limited to that of motivation, inspiration and the providing of a meaning-giving framework. He reckons that a religious and nonreligious tradition-independent approach to morality offers the only way to moral consensus, justice and peaceful living in pluralistic societies.

9 Dutch theologian Gerrit Manenschijn argues in favour of both the indispensability and possibility of moral consensus (1994).

10 At this point we need to note that, according to Kuitert (1981a:32; 1988b:29), an almost universal consensus already exists about the broad moral principles such as respect for life, for the property of others (including their bodies) and for the truth. This consensus exists because it is rationally, and thus almost universally, accepted that no peace can exist where people do not adhere to these principles. Different interpretations and dissensus, however, enter the scene where more concrete moral decisions are to be made on basis of the broad moral principles.

11 Kuitert states that participants in the moral debate intentionally should strive to convince each other of their views. Whilst each one is open to be convinced by the other and to revise their views, they enter the debate with the conviction that his or her position might be the better one and that they have something important to offer to the debate (1988b:38-39).

In the last section of this article the potential of Kuitert's approach for the pluralistic public debate in South Africa will be explored. Here it is worth noting some of the objections to his approach. Some of his former students such as Hans Reinders (1993:153), his successor at the Free University of Amsterdam, expresses appreciation for Kuitert's ethical approach. He reckons that pleas such as that of Kuitert for moral discussion and for participation in the pluralistic debate can help to prevent bloodsheds like those in Ireland and the former Yugoslavia. However, this reductionist view of the role of religion in morality leads to an under-estimation of the important positive contributions that religious traditions can make to the moral life and to public moral debates.¹²

3. A TRADITION-DEPENDENT APPROACH TO MORAL DECISION-MAKING AND MORAL CONSENSUS

Stanley Hauerwas' approach differs significantly from that of Kuitert. For Hauerwas, morality is not independent and autonomous. He bases the dependency of morality in three important categories of his ethical project, namely the moral agent, narrative and community.

a. In his earliest works Hauerwas states that the moral agent makes decisions and behaves in specific ways in dependency on important notions like convictions¹³, vision¹⁴, virtue¹⁵ and character¹⁶.

A second central feature in Hauerwas' theological and ethical development is his emphasis on the importance of narrative¹⁷ for moral decision-making and moral consensus. "Metaphors and

12 Another student of Kuitert, Albert Musschenga, is also critical about the neglect of tradition in Kuitert's approach (refers to the inadequacies in Kuitert's work (1994:107). He states, for instance, that Kuitert does not sufficiently define rationality in terms of tradition.

13 According to Hauerwas (1974:19-24) moral reflection does not occur in a vacuum, but within the wealth of human experience that is embodied in our convictions. This experience refers to the way people deal with needs and desires, to how they understand, order and form reality. Not only moral rules and broad moral principles influence moral decisions, but also – if not more so – our convictions.

14 With an appeal to the writings of Iris Murdoch, he (1974:30-47) states that the idea of moral independency is an illusion. Humans are not creators but artists. As artists humans are freed from the anxiety about their contingent and finite existence. The contingency of their existence cause artists to develop vision, to see reality as it really is. This vision is informed by the experiences, fables and internal monologues of people. He (1997b:155) mentions that he has made a career out of, i.e. build his ethical project, on this sentence of Murdoch that he quotes and that summarises the importance of vision for moral decision-making: "I can only choose in a world that I can see, in the moral sense of 'see' which implies that clear vision is a result of moral imagination and moral effort".

15 Hauerwas (1981:111) mentions that although the ancient thinkers did not have consensus on what constitutes a virtue or which virtues should be considered primary, they agreed that the consideration of the moral life begins with descriptions of the virtuous life. "Ethics grew from questions of what individuals should be; armed with answers, the ancients than turned to prescriptive modes" (1981:111).

16 Hauerwas (1975:9-10) agrees with US theologian James Gustafson that in the moral life we need to explore questions like what forms the conscience, what bring life to wholeness and integrity, what brings lasting dispositions into being that give order and direction to gesture, word and deed. We indeed need to focus on questions on character. Hauerwas (1975:6-7) argues that a focus on character can serve a complementary role to the so-called situation ethics as well as the ethics of responsibility. According to Hauerwas character involves the embodiment of commitments that enables us to face hard decisions and that show that the moral life and specifically moral decision-making has to do with more than the justification of choices and the adherence to minimal conditions for moral argument (1974:61).

17 In post-liberal ethical thinking the concept story or narrative is used in a variety of ways. Firstly it refers to the tradition-dependent approach to morality. It secondly refers to the narrative nature of the lives of individuals and groups. Stories lend coherence and insight to our lives with its ups and downs, joys and

stories suggest how we should see and describe the world – that is how we should ‘look-on’ our selves, others, and the world – in ways that rules taken in themselves do not. Stories and metaphors do this by providing the narrative accounts that give our lives coherence” (1974:71). In this sense stories help with the description and interpretation of the moral situation as well as with the responses to it. Morality, according to Hauerwas, is therefore not autonomous, but it is dependent upon the stories that form our lives – in the case of Christians these are the stories of God’s work in Israel, Jesus Christ and the church. Hauerwas (1974:72-73) states that these stories enable people to do more than what the rules ask for. Christians would, for example, not only work for justice amongst people. They work for the acceptance of all people as brothers and sisters.

Thirdly, Hauerwas reckons that morality is dependent upon communities. Convictions, vision, virtue and character are formed by participating in life within the community. Together with US theologian, William Williamson, he states “Ethics can never take the place of community anymore than rules of grammar can replace the act of speaking the language. Ethics is always a secondary enterprise and is parasitic to the way people live together in community ... In fact, our ethical reflection, at its best, is usually nothing more than reflection on significant examples” (1989:103). In terms of Musschenga’s distinction we can conclude that Hauerwas understands morality as broad morality. The particularistic and personal ideals of the good life are, in addition to the elements of the narrow morality, central features of his definition of morality.

b. On the basis of his view that morality is dependent on convictions, vision, virtue, character, narrative and community, Hauerwas continues to spell out his views on moral decision-making and moral consensus.

Hauerwas (1974:12) does not deny the importance of ethical reflection and moral decision making. “I am not denying the tremendous importance of the fact that ultimately it is by decision that the ethical life lives; or that without decision and choice it is not possible to speak about a moral act at all”. He also is convinced that decisions should be rationally justified. “Quandary’ ethics may have overlooked the significance of character and virtue for the moral life, but emphasis on the latter cannot relieve us from the need to justify our moral decisions in a consistent and nonarbitrary manner” (1983:122).

Hauerwas (1983:108) argues that the deontological and teleological approaches to moral decision-making can be enriched by the acknowledgement of the dependent nature of morality. In defining what is just in a situation, deontologists will not just state the moral principle of justice, but will also ask questions on the kind of justice and by whom and how it is done. Deontologists would not merely appeal to and apply the rule that the truth be told but would also ask what truth is and how it is told in love. Hauerwas (1983:108) reckons that notions such as the greatest good and the lesser evil that teleologists apply are abstract because they almost passively accept the limitations and contingencies of our existence and our sinful natures as givens. Recognition of what we can learn from formative narratives in communities offers imaginative power that offers new and concrete possibilities.

The rejection of an autonomous morality also has implications for Hauerwas’ views on moral consensus. He (1974:217-220) supports the search for consensus on the common good in society. This consensus, according to Hauerwas (1974:236), should not just be a minimum consensus on a

contingencies, aporias and ambiguities. Stories thirdly refer to the variety of stories that form our identity, vision and character. For Christians the stories of God’s work in the life of Israel, Jesus Christ, the church through the ages and in their own personal lives fulfill this function. Hauerwas’s approach to ethics is a narrative approach and he uses story in both ways described here.

morality that merely manages the conflicting self-interests of groups as Kuitert suggests. It should not be just a morality that strives to prevent conflict, but a morality that enhances good life for the whole community. Not only is Hauerwas' aim for the morality that should be achieved broader than that of Kuitert. He also differs with Kuitert's path towards consensus. Kuitert suggests that only tradition-independent reasons are to be offered for moral positions. Only rational arguments that are accessible to people of all traditions are to be offered. Hauerwas (1998:183-187) opposes this view. According to him, the so-called pure rational approach to morality, namely the liberal approach to morality, is but one of the traditions amongst many traditions. He rejects the pretension of a tradition-free understanding of rationality. Rationality is not tradition-free. One's understanding of rationality is determined by one's convictions, vision, narratives and the communities that one belongs to. Liberal rationalists who defy the tradition-dependency of rationality in fact reckon that their approach is the superior one that serves as judge over the other traditions. Consequently Hauerwas suggests that in the quest for moral consensus the role of tradition should be recognized from the start of the debate, because tradition, with its elements of vision, narrative and community, informed the decisions that each participant in the debate has taken. It even informs the rationality of each participant. It is therefore crucial that these tradition-dependent arguments be tabled from the commencement of the debate.

A word on Hauerwas' understanding of the relationship between narrative and rationality is perhaps appropriate. According to Hauerwas (1977:27-28), narrative broadens our understanding of rationality. We no longer view rationality just as the formulation of propositions that are based on other propositions from which conclusions can be drawn that serve as reasons or motivation for our choices. Stories pave the way for the development of practical wisdom. That means that they enable us to formulate practical propositions that do not merely end up in another proposition, but that prompt concrete and appropriate action. According to Hauerwas (1977:73-74), besides this focus on action, the rationality of the story is also reflected in the type of persons and world that it forms. Truth is not measured in terms of correspondence with reality, but also in terms of the formation of truthful people who help to transform society. Hauerwas (1977:37-38) explains that the rationality of stories is also perceived in the way in which they help us to deal with tragedy and contingency. They encourage us not to develop anthropodicees, that is the quest to create, on basis of our rational capacities, a humanity free from suffering, but to accept tragedy and contingency and to live morally well in a broken and finite world.

c. The potential of Hauerwas' approach for addressing the challenge of moral decision making and moral consensus will be explored in the last section of this article. At this point important criticism against his approach needs to be noted. US scholar James Gustafson (1985:93) reckons that Hauerwas overemphasizes the unique and particular contribution of religious traditions, specifically the Christian tradition, to such an extent that he does not contribute to the quest for decision-making and especially consensus in the pluralistic public sphere. He accuses Hauerwas of sociological sectarianism. His focus on particularity and identity frees people from uncertainty and ambiguity, but it limits the involvement of Christians in public discussions that deal with the ambiguities of the moral and social life.

Feminist theologian, Gloria Albrecht (1992:108-114), reckons that Hauerwas' emphasis on notions such as character and virtue leads to a situation where he views humanity in an a-historic, a-contextual, universal way. This neglect of the historical reality leads to a neglect of the historical struggles of oppressed groups like women, some economic groups and races. Hauerwas functions with an a-historic understanding of sin as well. This prevents him from seeing the contextual and social dimensions of sin. Moreover, although Hauerwas pretends to emphasise the historical dimension of Christian character, he does not recognize the oppressive dimensions thereof.

In the last section of this article the potential of Kuitert's and Hauerwas' approaches for moral decision-making and moral consensus in the young South African democracy is investigated.

4. LESSONS FROM THIS DEBATE

Various lesson can be learned from this liberal-postliberal debate on moral decision-making and moral consensus.

a. Kuitert opens our eyes for the anthropological dimensions of religious traditions and challenges religious people to make their faith claims intellectually accessible to outsiders. In a country where so many people confess allegiance to religion, specifically to Christian churches, this challenge should not be neglected. Churches might do well not to neglect the growing number of voices who plead for increased rational justification of religious positions.

Kuitert also portrays the important role that religion can play with regard to moral decision-making. Religions need to provide a meaning-giving framework within which moral decision-making can occur. His view that religious traditions should help moral insight and morally good behaviour to flourish should not be underestimated. Moreover, his anthropological understanding of religion as well as of morality encourages religious traditions to pay more attention to the anthropological side of moral formation. In this regard Protestants churches can learn a lot from the Roman Catholic tradition who traditionally does a lot of work on the anthropological dimension of sanctification and moral formation. Kuitert's emphasis on disciplined rational reflection contributes to sound moral decisions on very complex moral issues. It also strengthens the quest for moral decision-making.

b. Hauerwas' views complements that of Kuitert. Where Kuitert limits the role of religion with regard to moral decision-making to that of motivation and the offering of a meaning-giving framework, Hauerwas argues that both religious and nonreligious traditions contribute to the contents of moral decision-making and moral consensus. In apartheid South Africa the tradition-dependent description of the moral situation enabled us to unmask the nature and effects of apartheid in an imaginative way. Apartheid was not merely a doubtful political policy or ideology. The biggest problem with apartheid was the fact that it attempted to make black people doubt whether we are fully human, fully created in God's image, fully his children. In the same vein we can propose, for instance, not only acts of compassion or even the quest for economic justice as ways to address the poverty crisis in post-apartheid South Africa, but the Christian practice of sacrifice that is embedded in the story of God's sacrifice in Jesus Christ. Such tradition-dependent descriptions will help us to describe the immense moral challenges that we are dealing with more adequately and to respond more faithfully. Christians owe these descriptions to the broader society.

Hauerwas' view that the liberal tradition is one of many traditions and his view that religious tradition-dependent arguments should also be tabled in the public debate are also of importance. The 2003 Act on religion education and religious observance in public schools in South Africa, for instance, has affirmed the point that South Africa is not a secular society but one that officially recognizes all religious and nonreligious traditions. This implies that the secular world view is recognized as one amongst many religious and nonreligious traditions in South African society. South African learners in public school will in future be educated with regard to various religious and nonreligious traditions. Simultaneously, room will be provided for religious observance in appropriate ways.

His notion that the consensus that is being searched for should not just entail the prevention of evil by harmonizing conflicting group interests, but the positive quest for the good of the whole

society, paves the way for various traditions to cooperate in various ways in this endeavour. Hauerwas' ideas help in this regard although such direct participation in society is not his own primary intention.

Lastly it should be mentioned that Hauerwas' emphasis on participation in the disciplines and practices of religious communities opens the door for religious communities to contribute towards the process of moral formation. People of virtue, character and integrity are in the end people who develop the skills to make sound moral decisions and who constructively serve the quest for moral consensus, peace and justice.

On a continent like Africa with its lively religious traditions Hauerwas' appreciation for traditions in the moral life paves the way for a constructive role of religion in all facets of public life. That this conclusion can be made from Hauerwas' work is somewhat ironic since Hauerwas, especially in his later works, does not spell out an explicit public theological agenda.

Both Kuitert and Hauerwas, despite their limitations, help South Africans in our quest for just moral decisions, for moral consensus and thereby for just, peaceful and good societies.

The theme addressed in this article pays appropriate tribute to the ethics of Danie du Toit. His work affirms that he had learned lessons from both these approaches. He borrowed from the liberal emphasis on technical analysis, sound arguments for ethical positions and the quest to make religious convictions as far as possible intellectually accessible. His publications in the fields of human rights and medical ethics verify this claim (1988;1991;1992).

It is also remarkable that throughout his ethical work he emphasised the importance of the Christian tradition. This tradition did not merely serve to provide motivation or a meaning-giving framework for the moral life, as Kuitert reckons, but it impacts on the contents of morality as well. Moreover, in some of his older works Du Toit already pleads, in the same vein as Hauerwas, for attention to narrative and community in the moral life. With regard to the so-called moral crisis in the modern world he writes: "The real crisis is not a morality crisis, but an anthropological crisis. The 'what should I do?' is secondary to the 'who am I?' ... The loss of identity, meaning and moral direction is the direct result of the loss of relationships" (1984:98 – translation from Afrikaans NK). The relationships to God, other human and the environment help to define identity and to restore moral orientation. "The 'I' who finds himself in restored relations to himself, the neighbour, creation and God, is the I who joyfully finds the way to a moral lifestyle ..." (1984:99 – translation from Afrikaans NK).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Albrecht, G H 1992. Myself and Other Characters: A feminist Liberationist Critique of Hauerwas' Ethics of Christian Character, in: *The Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics*, p97-114.
- De Villiers, D E 1978. *Die eiesoortigheid van die Christelike Moraal*. Amsterdam:Rodopi.
- Du Toit, D A 1992. Genetic engineering and theological ethics, in: Hattingh, J (ed.) *Genetic engineering in ethical perspective*. Stellenbosch:University of Stellenbosch,Unit for Bioethics, p75-92.
- Du Toit, D A 1991. Again: 'When does life begin?', in: Van Niekerk, A (red.) *The status of prenatal life*. Cape Town: Lux Verbi.
- Du Toit, D A 1988. *Die mens en sy regte. Geloof in praktyk*. Kaapstad:Zebra.
- Du Toit, D A 1984. Jeug, norm en gesag teen die einde van die twintigste eeu, in: De Villiers, J L en Prins, J M G (reds.) *Die kerk en sy jeug op weg. 'n Huldigingsbundel opgedra aan prof D W de Villiers*. Kaapstad:NG Kerk- Uitgewers, p88-100.
- Gustafson, J M 1985. The Sectarian Temptation: Reflections on Theology, the Church and the University, in: *Catholic Theological Society* 40, p83-94.
- Hauerwas, S 1974. *Vision and Virtue : Essays in Christian Ethical Reflection*. Notre Dame: Fides Press.
- Hauerwas, S 1986a (1975). *Character and the Christian Life: A Study in Theological Ethics*. San Antonio:Trinity University Press

- Hauerwas, S 1977. *Truthfulness and Tragedy: Further Investigations in Christian Ethics*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Hauerwas, S 1981. *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethic*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Hauerwas, S 1983. *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Hauerwas, S. 1997. *Wilderness Wanderings. Probing 20th century Theology and Philosophy*. USA:Westview Press.
- Hauerwas, S 1998. *Sanctify them in the truth. Holiness exemplified*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.
- Hauerwas, S & Willimon, W 1989. *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.
- Kuitert, H M 1974a. *Zonder geloof vaart niemand wel. Een plaatsbepaling van Christendom en Kerk*. Baarn: Ten Have.
- Kuitert, H M 1977a. *Wat heet geloven? Structuur en herkomst van de christelijke geloofsuitspraken*. Baarn: Ten Have.
- Kuitert, H M 1985a. *Alles is politiek, maar politiek is niet alles. Een theologisch perspectief op geloof en politiek*. Baarn: Ten Have.
- Kuitert, H M 1974b. Het Schriftberoep in de ethiek, in: Kuitert, H M *Anders gezegd. Een verzameling van opstellen voor de welwillende lezer*. p63-87 Kampen: Kok.
- Kuitert, H M 1975. De wil van God doen, in: Baarda, T e.a. (reds.), *Ad Interim. Opstellen over Eschatologie, Apocalyptiek en Ethiek, aangeboden aan prof. dr. R. Schippers*, p180-195 Kampen: Kok.
- Kuitert, H M 1981. De rol van de bijbel in de protestante theologische ethiek, in: *Gereformeerd Theologisch Tijdschrift* 81, p65-82.
- Kuitert, H M 1984. Spelen godsdienstige overtuigingen een rol bij de morele oordeelsvorming?, in: Musschenga, A W (red), *Onderwijs in natuurwetenschappen en morele vorming. Opstellen over wetenschaps-filosofie, theologie, antropologie en ethiek voor het natuurwetenschappelijk onderwijs*. p.206-219 Amsterdam.
- Kuitert, H M 1988a. *Filosofie van de theologie*. Serie Wetenschaps-filosofie. Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff.
- Kuitert, H M 1988b. Morele consensus: mogelijkheden en grenzen, in: De Beaufort, I G en Dupuis, H M (reds), *Handboek Gezondheids-ethiek*, p.29-40 Assen/Maastricht.
- Kuitert, H M 1988c. Secularisatie en moraal, in: Dekker, G en Gäbler, U (reds.), *Secularisatie in theologisch perspectief* p131-148 Kampen: Kok.
- Kuitert, H M 1993a. *Het Algemeen Betwijfeld Christelijk geloof. Een herziening* Baarn: Ten Have.
- Kuitert, H M 1994a. *Zeker Weten. Voor wie geen grond meer onder de voeten voelt*. Baarn: Ten Have.
- Kuitert, H M 1998. *Jezus: nalatenschap van het christendom. Schets voor een christologie*. Baarn: Ten Have.
- Manenschijn, G 1994. Consensus en dissensus in de ethiek, in: Van Leeuwen, E (red.) *Ethiek tussen hemel en aarde. Essays over de theologie en ethiek van H.M. Kuitert*, p118-139 Baarn: Ten Have.
- Musschenga, A W 1989. De universele moraal als opdracht, in: Gäbler et.al.(reds.) *Geloof dat te denken geeft. Opstellen aangeboden aan prof.dr.H.M.Kuitert*, p159-178. Baarn: Ten Have.
- Reinders, J S 1993. *De bescherming van het ongeboren leven. Morele en godsdienstige overwegingen bij het experimenteren met menselijke embryo's*. Baarn: Ten Have.