

Editorial

Die hermeneutiese sleutel tot die verstaan van Johan Cilliers as vriend, kollega, akademikus, kunstenaar en skrywer, vind ons myns insiens deur goeie begrip te ontwikkel vir die plek waar hy grootgeword het, die Karoo, ook genoem die Moordenaarskaroo in die distrik van De Aar. Die gedig van PW Buys oor die Karoo lig die sluier vir ons.

Karoo

*Berusting in die leed van eeuwe oordek
Die grys gelaat van hierdie doodstil land;
n silwer riglyn beef oor elke rant
Sover die blinkbruin einder rondom strek;

om vaal verdriet lappe gannastruik,
plek-plek die bakens asblou besembos
en troppies skaap wat luidloos oor die bros
karookalk skuifel-skuifel; die son se luik

laat strale lig uit transparant kringe.
Hier vind n mens opnuut die sekerheid:
Daar is n hemel vol verborge dinge
verby die grense van ons ruimte en tyd,
n land van ver, mistieke fluisteringe
wat ons bereik vanuit die ewigheid.*

Dit is uit hierdie *berusting in die leed van eeuwe oordek* waar Johan vir vyf dekades die inspirasie vir sy nadenke oor die lewe en lyding, oor die teologie en die homiletiek geput het. Die *grys gelaat van hierdie doodstil land* het om hom telkens in stilte gelaat en dan kan jy weet, hy dink diep, hy lees wyd en wat voortkom uit sy woorde en sy pen getuig van 'n *silwer riglyn* vir wie dit lees en oordink. Die *blinkbruin einder* wat rondom hom gestrek het, kon nooit se denke beperk nie.

In die *vaal verdriet lappe gannastruik* en *plek-plek die bakens asblou besembos* het Johan ook die bakens van sy eie lewensreis onder die Afrika son ontdek. 'n Kontinent wat Johan telkens laat verklaar het "ek is 'n Afrikaan" in murg en been. 'n Kontinent wat sy menswees en teologisering ten diepste beïnvloed, gevorm en getransformeer het. Die *troppies skaap*

wat luidloos oor die bros karookalk skuifel-skuifel het hom in die jare wat hy in die bediening was telkens herinner en laat vashou aan die Groot Herder wat elke verlore skaap persoonlik kom haal het.

Johan se teologiese en homiletiese nadenke het tot 'n eie unieke estetiese benadering tot die homiletiel en liturgiek in Suid-Afrika, Afrika en wêreldwyd ontwikkel. 'n Benadering waarin hy die *mistieke fluisteringe wat ons bereik vanuit die ewigheid* telkens met woord, pen, verf en kwas vir ons oopgebreek het en vir ons telkens alternatiewe wêrelde help open het. Hy het male sonder tal ons verbeelding verryk met *strale lig uit transparante kringe* en vir ons aan Gods- en mens-beelde blootgestel wat ons anders en nuut leer kyk het, met sagter oë vol genade.

Johan kon dit nog altyd doen omdat hy geweet het waar *vind 'n mens opnuut sekerheid*. Nie die sekerheid van dogmas en dinge van mense nie maar die sekerheid van *'n hemel vol verborge dinge verby die grens van ruimte en tyd*. Vanuit die beperkte ruimtes van tyd en lokaliteit het hy ons telkens herinner aan die mistieke *fluisteringe wat ons bereik vanuit die ewigheid*, ja die stem van die Ewige wat die ganse heelal in aansyn roep. Hierdie stem het hy gehoorsaam gevolg tot voorbeeld vir ons almal. Dankie Johan, vir dertig jaar se vriendskap en kollegaskap. Mag God jou seën met nog jare vol van kreatiwiteit – *verby die grense van ons ruimte en tyd!* **Ian Nell**

Johan once told me that doing research was like enjoying good chocolate and if you know how much he enjoys chocolate, then it is a very telling and humorous comment on his enjoyment of research! The latter is evident both in the enormous number of articles and books – both popular and academic that he has written over the years and his high ranking as an NRF rated scholar who has been awarded many prizes and research awards over the years and is recognized as one of the foremost scholars in his field internationally. It is not the quantity, however, that defines his work, but rather the quality of his work. In reading Johan's work there is always imagination at play and space is always left for the unexpected – he is always opening up new vistas for the reader to think afresh and challenge the dogmatic rigidity which so much theological thinking is often based upon. In this playful movement, his work is never naive, but rather grounded in the knowledge that while space, time and place are contextual realities which challenge us to act, liminality need not be feared by people of faith.

Johan is also a well-loved teacher and supervisor as countless students can attest. His passion and compassion for students from various backgrounds – in particular the large numbers of students from Korea – has been humbling to observe as a younger colleague who soon discovered how challenging supervision of second language English speakers could be. Many of his students have become prominent homiletics in their own right and have in turn gone on to send the best of their own post graduate students to South Africa to sit at Johan's feet. Surely, there can be no greater testament of his ability as supervisor and scholar than this.

Johan is my office next door neighbour and over the years – and more especially in the last few months – I have become so aware of the need to pop over to his office as much as I can before he retires! When in need of wisdom or reassurance with regards to the world of scholarship I am grateful that this has been no further than a door away. His early morning greetings and our long running “in-house” jokes will be dearly missed too.

Johan, in his quiet way, has promoted me in many forums. I will never forget attending my first South African Society of Practical Theology meeting and being nominated by Johan from the floor (sans my permission!) for the executive. He leaned over and whispered to me “just watch, I know what I’m doing” and within a few minutes I was elected. When I was elected as the chairperson a few years ago, he once again leaned over and retorted: “see I told you I knew what I was doing”. In recent years I have begun to half jokingly refer to him as my elder in Practical Theology, because indeed he is that and more. The respect I have for his scholarship and more especially his person is enduring, and I hope to follow his example of encouraging those who have come behind me as he has done for me. My elder, you will be dearly missed by this madam president. **Nadine Bowers-du Toit**

It has been an enriching experience to journey with an African friend (umhlobo) like Johan Cilliers. As a self-identified and proud African, Cilliers uses ubuntu (African relationality understood as a human being is a human being through others) and aesthetics to introduce, discuss and evaluate the effect of local and global entities and powers of macro and messo ideas, events, and practices (e.g. politics, economy, individualism, materialism, and “Americanisation”) on reality at the empirical level. Notwithstanding some limitations with regards to application like any

idea, Cilliers proposes ubuntu as an alternative and counter sacred (social, religious or spiritual) power and force to the profane superhuman in some modern contexts.

The homiletical thinking of Cilliers connects ubuntu and aesthetics to (re) discover the emergent or underlying life-giving force and power ubuntu exerts inside and outside the liturgical spaces. The philosophical and Christian theological perspectives highlight and insist on the openness and contingency of phenomena related to liturgy and worship. Just as any theological and religious ideas about a superhuman power, Cilliers recognises that African spiritual, religious and cultural phenomena (ideas, practices, and processes) are open and contingent on contexts of African groups and communities. Whether they are observable or unobservable, and known or unknown, as religious, spiritual and social forces of ubuntu affect responses when persons and communities attribute the critical incidents associated with the phenomena to influences of superhuman powers (God, gods, spirits, etc.) and human beings (followers, members, leaders, healers, diviners, etc.) who can assess the powers.

The broad structures, systems and other phenomena do influence but do not determine the nature and outcomes of life-affirming and life-denying elements of theological and religious ideas, including ubuntu. The power of ubuntu is embedded in and emerges from contexts through discourses, rituals and practices of individuals and groups. It emerges continuously in spaces and times, and particularly during transitions, celebrations and lamentations when participants, according to Smith (2017), attribute actual and real cause and effects of observable and unobservable incidents to sacred and profane superhuman powers. Cilliers has provided a philosophical and methodological framework and parameters for a meaningful and deep inculcation and transformation of liturgy and worship in African contexts.

The aesthetic approach to preaching of Cilliers places theological and social dimensions of space and time within an aesthetical framework. The framework and its implicit methodology structures three interrelated human responses to everyday and ultimate reality in and beyond worship and the world: spaces for seeing (observing), hearing (understanding), and (re)discovering the self (deep sense-making and meaning-making) before

others and God. Observing rituals, listening to stories, and participating in appreciative, critical, and constructive conversations or dialogue as reflexive practices in times of transition are ideal to explore the dynamism and complexity of ubuntu. In the homiletical thinking and practice of Cilliers, space and time in the liturgy (in worship) and after the liturgy (in the world) can enable participants, amongst others, to see and hear what the realities of human beings are and ought to be in the presence of a gracious God and others. **Xolile Simon**

It is our privilege to include in this edition of the *Stellenbosch Theological Journal* (STJ) 28 peer-reviewed academic articles. We are especially pleased that these articles are presented in honour of Professor Johan Cilliers from Stellenbosch University, also given the fact that he has published over the years a large number of articles of high quality in *STJ* and *NGTT* (as the journal was previously known). We are sure that his work, and the articles presented here, will continue to enhance South African and international theological discourse on the themes that are central to his research. A special word of thanks also to Ian Nell, Nadine Bowers-du Toit and Xolile Simon for their reflections as part of the editorial foreword and their role as guest co-editors.

Robert Vosloo

Editor: Stellenbosch Theological Journal

Ons gee erkenning aan prof Eugene Cloete, Visie-rektor Navorsing, US, vir die ruim bydrae om hierdie bundel moontlik te maak.