

Preface to *festschrift* dedicated to Prof J.J. Venter

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It is a pleasure and honour to be able to commemorate Professor J.J. (Ponti) Venter's life-long contribution to Christian philosophy and scholarship with this special edition of *Koers – Bulletin for Christian Scholarship*. It is certainly not by chance that most of the articles appearing in this issue are written by former students of 'Prof Ponti'. Those of us who had the privilege of attending his classes or of completing theses and dissertations under his supervision are still grateful for his generous support, his lenient attitude and his enthusiasm.

As students, we were often impressed by his detailed knowledge of the history of philosophy and by his infinite willingness to supply new insights. It became a custom, for example, when one was looking for a reference, to simply go to 'Prof Ponti' and ask: 'Do you perhaps remember in which dialogue Plato mentions the idea of a bed and ...?' And then he would complete the sentence: '... and the idea of a hair and of dirt ... yes it should be in this book, in that section ...' The astonished student would then go and find the reference precisely in that book and section. The student would also notice that, in that passage, Plato mentions exactly a bed, hair and dirt!

Professor Venter's competence, however, was not an end in itself: It was channelled to the promotion of Christian-reformational philosophy, in the tradition of Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven. What emerges from the present contributions, written by students and colleagues from several continents, is the moderate, nuanced position that Ponti adopted in many cases and on different topics. This might surprise some, given the fact that 'Prof Ponti' was a representative of a philosophical trend sometimes regarded as 'radical'. In addition, he often did not refrain from voicing his own concerns and opinions in rather straightforward terms! I therefore believe these articles will disclose (at least to some) a new image of 'Prof Ponti'.

This special issue also contains several articles written by Professor Venter himself. It was an idea first suggested by Professor Bennie van der Walt, who felt that there was still a lot that Ponti had not put on paper. So we left 'the last word' to Professor Venter (in the printed edition, his articles conclude the issue). The readers will appreciate his volcanic style in articles that (even after radical re-sizing) exceed by far the standard length and the standard level of emotional involvement. A crowd of reviewers (anonymous but unanimous) recognised the 'erudition' of these contributions but, concerning the style, recommended to 'tone down', to limit, to nuance. In the process, we realised that it is impossible to quench Professor Venter's style without suppressing something peculiar to his personality. So we tried to preserve as much as possible of the original 'verve', confiding in the fact that, as already mentioned, the content is always well-meditated, never one-sided, always balanced.

I am sure the readers will enjoy Professor Venter's contributions and the other articles dedicated to him.

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