

## RESENSIES

B. DUVENAGE : DIE PU VIR CHO SE AFRIKAANSE KARAKTER EN DIE VERVULLING VAN SY CHRISTELIKE ROEPING. Potchefstroom, 1985.

Die skrywer probeer in hierdie geskrif om die verhouding tussen die Christelike en die Afrikaanse "karakters" van die PU vir CHO opnuut uit te werk.

Aanvanklik word perspektiewe op die verhouding tussen Christenskap en volksgebondenheid bespreek. Standpunte wat prioriteit aan een van die twee bo die ander gee, of hulle onverbonde naas mekaar stel, word spesifiek afgewys.

Die skrywer self gaan uit van die reformatoriese beginsel dat die heerskappy van God oor alle lewensterreine, ook die volk, geld. Dit sou impliseer dat ons ons Christenskap, as die rigting van ons lewe, in ooreenstemming met God se liefdeswet, moet uitleef binne die volk as God-gegewe struktuur. Strukture, as Gods wet-woorde, is vry van die sonde, wat alleen die rigting van ons lewe aantast.

Vervolgens word 'n paar intrinsieke kontekste, waarbinne die PU vir CHO funksioneer, geanaliseer. Hiertoë behoort die opvoedkundige, taalkundige, etniese, historiese en psigiese kontekste. Die skrywer argumenteer basies dat die PU vir sy daaglikse werk 'n kulturele konteks, naamlik 'n volkskultuur, veronderstel (histories dié van die Afrikaner) en dat die intrek van nie-Afrikaners binne hierdie opset emosionele spanning sal veroorsaak.

Voorts word enkele ekstrinsieke kontekste van die PU onderskei, waaronder die staatkundige, die Afrika- en die mondiale. Die skrywer gee toe dat die PU 'n roeping in hierdie wyer verband het, maar meen nogtans dat die fokuspunt die opleiding van Christenwetenskaplikes in Afrikanerkonteks moet bly.

Die skrywer se argumentasie bevat myns insiens 'n paar springende punte.

Die onderskeiding tussen struktuur en rigting word (eerstens) op 'n problematiese wyse gebruik. As samelewingstrukture sonder meer wet-woorde van God self sou wees, dan moes ons inderdaad saam met die skrywer al diegene wat kwaad in die strukture opmerk, as rewolusiedenkens aanmerk. Maar dan is ook die presbiteriale gesagstruktuur van die reformatoriese kerke 'n rewolusionêre vertrapping van die God-gegewe hiërargiese gesagstruktuur van die Roomse Kerk. Dan sal ons seker nie mag sê dat die Afrikaners, toe hulle probeer het om 'n hele samelewing, van rugby deur die bedryfslewe heen tot in die kerk totalitaristies op basis van etniese skeiding, met behulp van veral staatsmag, te struktureer, sonde gedoen het nie, want volgens die skrywer was hulle besig om aan God se wet gestalte te gee. Maar wat word dan van die feit dat die staatsmag telkens op nie-staatlike terrein gebruik is, en die reformatoriese, strukturele beginsel van soewereiniteit in eie kring oortree is?

Ons moet goed onderskei tussen die strukture wat mense daarstel (die bouplanne wat hulle gebruik om die samelewing in te rig), en die norme wat God ons gee om ons planne aan te meet. Ons harte kies soms rigting weg van God se norme af (ons eie gewin, selfbehoud, gemak, ens.) en dan struktureer ons die samelewing om by ons sondige harte te pas. Sulke strukture is nie onbesmet nie.

Reformasie kan nie beteken dat ons die strukture maar moet aanvaar en net konsentreer op die verandering in rigting nie - dit mag 'n reformatoriese neo-piëtisme word, waarin ons net die harte bekeer en strukturele kwaad soos diskriminasie en onderdrukking ignoreer.

Tweedens meen die skrywer dat diegene wat Christenskap bo volksgebondenheid stel, fouteer deurdat hulle onvergelykbare ('n rigting en 'n struktuur) met mekaar vergelyk. Maar die skrywer se eie onderskeiding tussen Christenskap as rigting en volksgebondenheid as struktuur berus tog ook op vergelyking (d.w.s. die uitsoek van ooreenkomste en verskille). Waarom sou dit verkeerd wees vir andere om dié twee te vergelyk, maar nie vir die skrywer self nie?

In die derde plek gaan ook die skrywer se verbinding van universiteitsopvoeding met 'n volkskulturele konteks nie op nie. Hy veronderstel sonder meer dat die kulturele konteks waarin 'n universiteit opereer, 'n volkskultuur is; die alternatief hierop is vir hom 'n kulturele vakuum. Daarom sy klem op die etniese konteks en die moedertaalstryd in die CNO-tradisie van die PU, asook etno-psigiese spanningsmoontlikhede in 'n gemengde studentekorps. Daarom is dit vir hom ondenkbaar dat pan-Afrika of die wêreld ooit deel van die PU se sentrale fokus kan word.

Die veronderstelling waarvan die skrywer uitgaan, is egter in verskeie opsigte problematies:

Daar is niks in die Christelike geloof wat ons dwing om ons totale kulturele uitlewing binne voksverband te kanaliseer nie. Dit was tog nie sonde vir die Engelssprekende Hobsonbroers om hulle pragtige diereverhale in Afrikaans te skryf nie. Dis ook nie sonde vir 'n Afrikaner-Christen om aan 'n Engelstalige universiteit te doseer of vir Engelssprekende studente om aan die Puk te kom studeer nie. Afrikaanse kerke sit ook nie hulle immigrante-lidmate onder tug omdat hulle hulle geboorteland en -volk verlaat en hiernatoe gekom het nie. Dis ook nie ongelowig om oor die taalgrens heen te trou en 'n tweetalige gesinslewe te he nie.

Bowendien het die universiteit by sy ontstaan in die Middeleeue feitlik geen etnokulturele bande gehad nie: dit het die ontwikkelde, internasionale wetenskapstaal van dié tyd (Latyn) gebruik terwyl studente- en dosentekorps oor etniese en geografiese grense heen byeengekom het. Dit was toe nie sonde nie en dit sal sekerlik ook nou nog nie as sondig of onchristelik aangemerkt kan word as 'n Christelike universiteit, om sy roeping beter te vervul, sou gebruik maak van 'n nie-volkstaal (bv. Fanaghalô of Esperanto) in plaas van 'n volkstaal nie.

Die skrywer het gelyk dat die Christelike geloof, by individu sowel as universiteit, nie in 'n kulturele lugleegte uitgeleef kan word nie. Maar hierdie stelling vertel ons nie watter soort kulturele kleed die Christen of Christelike organisasie moet omhang nie: met eweveel reg kan dit 'n stedelike, provinsiale, volkse, veelvolkige of 'n internasionale een wees!

Die Christelike universiteit beoefen 'n eie kultuur, naamlik dié van kennisvakleerlingskap, en kan daarvoor vrylik 'n eie medium maak of kies, soos wat die beste uitvoering van kenniskweelingskap mag vereis. Die historiese verbondenheid van die PU met die Afrikanervolk kan hiervoor geen norm wees nie - die vraag bly: hoe kan 'n Christelike kenniskultuur die beste oorgedra word? As die geskiedenis die norme moet bied, dan was die Reformasie die grootste stuk ongehoorsaamheid in die Christelike tradisie.

In 'n tydperk van versnelde verandering en polarisasie, het dit dringend noodsaaklik geword dat die reformatoriese lewensvisie, soos wetenskaplik verwerk deur die PU, se trefkrag so wyd as moontlik gemaak word. Waarom sou die PU vir CHO nie op verbeeldingryke wyse nou 'n veeltalige universiteit kon word nie? Daar is nie net Tswana's en Zoeloes en Xhosas in ons land wat dalk 'n behoefte het aan Christelike studiegeleenthede nie, maar ook talle Portugese en Grieke. Portugese het my meegedeel dat hulle lewensuitkyk nader verwant is aan dié van die Afrikaner as aan die Engelssprekende, en dat hulle daarom graag hulle kinders na Afrikaanstalige universiteite sou wou stuur, maar die onderrigmedium bly 'n probleem. Maar met die tegniese hulpmiddele tot ons beskikking: Waarom sou lesings nie in 'n verskeidenheid tale vertaal kon word en (selfs op videoband) aan die anderstalige studente beskikbaar gestel word nie? (Hoewel dit nie die doel mag wees nie.) Wie weet, dalk slaan Afrikaans aan die PU hiermee sy grootste slag.

J.J. Venter (Departement Filosofie, PU vir CHO)

GERMAINE GREER. 1986 SHAKESPEARE. Oxford : Oxford University Press (Past Masters Series). Price R15,25 (136 p.).

The Past Masters Series published by the Oxford University Press covers authors and philosophers from Aquinas to Wyclif, including on the one hand Cervantes, Dante and Confucius and ranging to Machiavelli, Marx and Muhammad, with one volume starkly devoted to Jesus. Among those volumes still projected are Copernicus (Galileo has been covered), Descartes, Newton and Spinoza.

The format is inviting - the volumes are slim and compact, written by experts in the field, and provide an interesting and provocative (in many instances) access to the author in question, his ideas and his main works.

The choice of writer to deal with Shakespeare is an intriguing one. Apart from Plato and Aristotle, there cannot be a writer in Western civilization who(se work) has been so often discussed in print. Germaine Greer is much better known for her stance as an indomitable feminist than as a Shakespeare critic. Her best-known publications include *The Female Eunuch* and *Sex and Destiny*. Yet six years as a lecturer in English at Warwick University has clearly fitted her admirably for the task.

Ms. Greer has faced what must have been a daunting task with verve and an impeccable academic integrity. She covers every aspect of importance scrupulously but concisely, implicitly accounting for both inclusions and omissions. For example, there is a whole chapter on Shakespeare's life ("The notices of the life and career of England's greatest poet are not only sparse and brief, but unusually cryptic", p. 1), and following a careful sifting of relevant facts she provides the rationale: "The purpose of recounting the bald and cryptic facts of Shakespeare's life shorn of the accretions of speculation which have busied throngs of scholars is simply to provide a fixed base for the discussion of Shakespeare's thought"(p. 16).

She then launches into the main body of work, dividing the book into chapters called Poetics, Ethics, Politics, Teleology and Sociology.

Koers 51(2) 1986  
ISSN 0023-270X

In the chapter on Poetics she touches on the struggle between playwrights and religious reformers, and the fact that the Players at best had a precarious existence, but enormous importance, as expressed in Hamlet's words that the players are the "abstract and brief chronicles of the time" (p. 21). She proceeds to illustrate how *The Tempest* represents a fusion of medium and message, and makes the very important remark that "It is not easy for us now to grasp how central the image of theatre was to the Elizabethan Weltanschauung. Obviously an illiterate population has to absorb information through representation; all holders of rank, all professions, all trades, were designated by their attributes and acted in accordance with the expectations of their social rank. Shakespeare took this numinous reality and orchestrated its 'many modes ... (refraining from coming) to conclusions, but (leaving) that to those who complete his utterance, the audience and the actors in the theatre" (p. 40). This idea is explored further in the final chapter.

In the chapter on Ethics she explores Shakespeare's concept of personality, and makes the provocative observation that "his personages are not involved in a 'search for identity', but search for ways to transcend that identity, which is transitory, and free the spirit, which is made in God's likeness, eternal and immutable (replacing) the fleshly mask with another, the mask of art, which more faithfully portrays the soul beneath" (p. 42). She proceeds absorbingly to examine the nature of evil as exemplified in Iago (*Othello*), and comes to the conclusion that "the ethical notion of evil as defective, absurd, and inconsistent is Aristotelian, but the embodiment of these characteristics in an agent, which makes possible the dynamic representation of evil as an active force, is Christian" (p. 48). This is followed by a discussion of "the capacity for change", in which redemption is inherent, for in the view of English Christians at the time, "human potential was delimited by grace" (p. 51). A most important insight is offered in the following: "Shakespeare uses all the mechanisms of alienation - self-conscious reference to the theatrical situation, etc. and schematic or symbolic representation of abstract ideas. The audience's own set of values is always relevant; the suspension of disbelief is never total. It is this aspect of Shakespeare's art which scholars have had the most difficulty in understanding and applying" (p.52). She applies this dynamic to Hamlet, saying that "the play is a guided tour through a lying world, the foun-

datations of which slip and slide, so that we doubt not only what we see and hear, but our own powers of judgment and action" (p.53), and soberly concludes that after all the mayhem "Hamlet goes towards his death in a Christian spirit of resignation" (p. 58).

The chapter on Politics is fascinating in the way it traces the options open to the writer of political drama in Elizabethan England. In a nation obsessed by history this was most important, but the way was fraught with danger, not the least of the hazards being royal approval of the final product. Shakespeare was able to navigate these stormy waters with some dexterity.

Greer makes the observation that "there is nothing innovative in Shakespeare's idea of history, no ideology or philosophy which he imposed on the material that he organized. Rather he took the mass of mutually conflicting notions which he found expressed in the Bible as interpreted by his contemporaries ... and made of it something remarkably exciting and alive ... Keats called Shakespeare's faculty for allowing mutually conflicting notions full imaginative development 'negative capability'" (p. 85). She goes on to liken Shakespeare's thought to others': "By a similar process, secular Renaissance philosophers like Pierre de la Ramée and even Bacon and Montaigne sought to open the mind to all kinds of protean possibility rather than to mechanize its operations in the development of a system. A modern parallel could be sought in the Wittgenstein of the Investigations" (p. 85).

Her style and acuity of insight are nowhere illustrated so well as in the chapter on Teleology, where she argues most tellingly of King Lear that "there is a strange reluctance in scholars to admit that King Lear is about senility, perhaps because they feel that to admit that Lear's brain is ageing is to diminish his heroic stature.... The play has two strands: one is the strand of optimism, the belief that there is a providence in the fall of a great man as in the fall of a sparrow; the other, the strand of rage against the dying of the light" (p. 88). In speaking of the fool's pivotal role she refers to the "frame of reference within which Shakespeare's wise fools moved, a frame of reference which is profoundly sceptical and profoundly Christian" (p. 91).

In dealing with Sociology, Ms. Greer makes the centrally important statement with regard to the comedies that "at the core of a coherent social structure as he viewed it lay marriage, which for Shakespeare is no mere comic convention but a crucial and complex ideal" (p. 109). Within the whole convention of comedy the importance of this statement can hardly be overstressed, for in the comedies the movement is always towards redemption, reconciliation, and the symbolic enactment of this reconciliation in marriage(s). This view culminates in her statement that "it must be remembered that while Shakespeare's concept of virtue tends to the active rather than the contemplative, his view of redemptive action is Christian ... he (thought) of constancy ... as an earthly manifestation of divine love, which is beyond gender" (pp. 112-113). She goes on to provide an intriguing examination of Romeo and Juliet, seeing the sick society of Verona in a new light. "Juliet's youth, and the general distortion of mores in a society which married children to old men (vide Juliet's own parents) is an important aspect of the tragedy. In devoting herself to Romeo, Juliet takes an irrevocably tragic step" (p. 120). She explores the concepts of Protestant marriage in England further, ending with a tribute to Shakespeare: "We have become so used to marriage as a central theme for serious literature that it is not easy for us to estimate Shakespeare's originality in developing the idea of the complementary couple as the linchpin of the social structure" (p. 123).

The book ends with the observation that we have, in reading/viewing Shakespeare, to discover the intrinsic ordering principle in apparent disorder: "The missing middle term in the Shakespearian proposition is our response" (p. 126). This book is an important aid to the sharpening of our response. It is a book fascinating to the Shakespeare scholar by virtue of provocative and intriguing new interpretations; it is a book indispensable to the reader of Shakespeare for the illuminating "ways into the plays" that she provides. It is highly recommended, both for the scholarly and impeccable content and the very readable and refreshing style. In a time of impossibly priced books the price in itself is a commendation.

Annette Combrink (Dept. of English, PU for CHE)