

Toetrede

Liturgie van die Lig

Aanstek van die kerse

Woorddiens

Tema: Het God gesag oor jou of is dit opsioneel?

Skriflesing: Eksodus 20:1-9 (1953)

Broodjies vir die pad

Tibetaanse selfdood by wyse van protes

Louis Esterhuizen

“Die Boeddhisme is ‘n geloof en ‘n filosofie; bowenal is dit egter ‘n leefwyse”, skryf Rob Nairn in sy boek ‘n Stil gemoed – ‘n Inleiding tot die Boeddhisme en meditasie (1993: Kairon Press). Verdermeer is dit na alle waarskynlikheid die enigste godsdiens ter wêreld wat nog nooit by ‘n oorlog of enige vorm van militêre handeling betrokke was nie, ten spyte daarvan dat bykans elke godsdiens vrede en verdraagsame mededeelsaamheid propageer.

En tog is daar weinig godsdienste wat groter vervolging as juis die Tibetaanse Boeddhiste ervaar; grootliks vanweë die Chinese besetting van hul grondgebied. ‘n Mens sou wel kon dink dat die warboel in die Midde-Ooste tans verantwoordelik is vir die feit dat die wêreld se aandag elders gefokus is as op China se jarelange en entoesiastiese vergrype aan mensregte en verdrukking van ‘n weerlose volk, maar helaas. Ons weet uit ervaring dat geen wêreldmoontheid bereid is om China teë te gaan nie. Hiervan getuig ons eie regering se onlangse weiering van ‘n reispermit aan die Dalai Lama, byvoorbeeld.

Watter opsie by wyse van protes bly daar dan oor vir die Tibetane? Die mees afgryslike denkbaar ...

Selfimmolasië of – verbranding.

En oor dié afgryse swyg die media soos oor bloedskaande in die familie. Op ‘n webtuiste genaamd International Campaign for Tibet vind ek die volgende: “The Chinese authorities in Tibet have intensified measures to prevent information reaching the outside world about the self-immolations. This has been combined with a more aggressive and formalized response to the self-immolations, involving harsh sentencing and torture for those suspected of involvement, even if that is simply bearing witness. Due to this climate, it is impossible for this list to be fully comprehensive, and it is indicated on the list where circumstances of the self-immolations are not fully known.”

Dié betrokke webtuiste verskaf nie net ‘n lys van die 132 selfimmoleerders met hul biografiese besonderhede daarby nie, maar ook skakels na ander verbandhoudende webtuistes.

Nietemin, die volgende statistiek is van belang:

- 131 van die 132 selfimmolasië het sedert 16 Maart 2011 plaasgevind.
- Hiervan was 111 mans en 21 vroue.
- 24 van dié selfimmoleerders was jonger as 18 jaar.

- 13 van die 132 was monikke van die klooster te Kirti in Ngaba.
- Twee van die 132 was nonne van die Mame Dechen Chokorling klooster in Ngaba.

[...]

<http://versindaba.co.za/2014/09/30/louis-esterhuizen-tibetaanse-selfdood-by-wyse-van-protes>



Biblical narratives operate in three environments– God, us and the gap between.

When speaking about God or reporting God’s direct speech, the words used include true, trustworthy, rock, steadfast perfect, pure. The first four Commandments are meant to protect the respect due God’s name. The psalmist (19) knows God’s commandments only as pure and wholly trustworthy. In the story from the Book of Isaiah and the story Jesus tells in Matthew’s gospel, God nurtures and protects and also demands a precise response. As Walter Brueggemann notes, “Yahweh is a God who commands (swh). The foremost mode by which Yahweh communicates to Israel is by commandment (miswah) and Israel’s crucial mode of engagement is by obedience (sm) He calls chapter 20 of the Book of Exodus God’s “primal command.” (Theology of the Old Testament, p. 181 ff) And when God speaks in biblical narratives, the occasion is frequently accentuated with lightning, fire, earthquake, violent wind.

When speaking of us, the biblical narratives are blunt, honest, probing. They describe human folly and failure in precise, knowing detail. In his seminal study of the Western imagination in Mimesis, Erich Auerbach contrasts classical treatment of human nature with the emerging Christian perspective [which is, of course, rooted in the Hebrew scriptures] this way, “the deep subsurface of layers [of how human beings understand themselves] which were static for the observers of classical antiquity, began to move” (p.45) Later he notes that St. Augustine is “outside the style of his age” because “he feels and directly presents human life and it lives before our eyes.” (p. 70) Later still, Auerbach finds in the writings of the Sixth Century Bishop of Tours, Gregory, further realism:

“this brutal life becomes a sensible object; to him who would describe it, it presents itself as devoid of order and difficult to order, but tangible, earthy, alive. Gregory was a Bishop—it was his duty to develop Christian ethical attitudes; his office was a practical and demanding one, in which the cure of souls might at any moment be combined with political and economic questions.” “Nothing human is foreign to Gregory.” (p. 91)

Auerbach’s observations led him to conclude: “Christianization is directly concerned with and concerns the individual person and the individual event.” (p. 92)

What of the third environment in which the biblical texts operate– the gap between God and us? If God is pure and perfect and steadfast but we are unsteady and fickle and “unwitting sinners,” to borrow from the psalmist again, how do we respond to this gap? The biblical narratives describe three basic responses: indifference, active rejection and desire. Either the gap overwhelms and we give up, or it instills a passion to at least struggle and try to come as close as we can to God’s expectations. (In today’s readings and gospel, Isaiah describes indifference, the gospel depicts rejection, and the psalmist and Paul show passion.) God repeatedly reaches out to us across the gap and each person responds for himself or herself.

John Caputo finds in several postmodern writers, but in Derrida above all, a recapitulation of this environment of passion in which the biblical texts live and work. Calling Derrida a “Jewish Augustinian,” Caputo discovers in his work “a desire beyond desire, as a desire for God... a restless heart that desires we do not know [fully] quite what, where the name of God is the name of our desire even as it is the best name we have for what we do not know.” (Kevin Hart, ed, Counter-Experience, p. 74) (Review today’s reading from Exodus.) We are, Caputo writes, left then with

“a justice to come that denounces the injustice in what at present calls itself just or democratic.” We do not know [fully] what this justice is, but we do know “that nothing present can lay claim to it. Thus the effect of the call to come is not to predict anything coming but to intensify our desire.” (Ibid)

Unsteady and fickle and “unwitting” sinners that we are, we can still find some life-giving, life-restoring response, “Our best words,” Caputo writes, “are empty intentions, promises that have not and cannot be kept, words that we cherish because they make but do not quite keep.” (p. 76)

The gap between God and us is staggering and tempestuous. In the biblical narratives God commands absolute justice but then pleads, cajoles, woos over and over when we do not love and do justice. We are preoccupied with ‘more important’ concerns or we outright reject God’s commands and God’s repeated reaching out to us. The biblical narratives describe in excruciating detail our flawed, inadequate responses. We can feign resignation to this gap, or it can become the source of passion for the impossible.

Just after considering the event described in today’s reading from the Hebrew scriptures, Kevin Hart considers the ‘gap’ we have been discussing this way:

“For God opens the space wherein love can be ventured, and the first step is always his (sic). As absolute subject, God never presents himself (sic) as object in any sense, and he (sic) comes to us not as experience: not as that which we can appropriate, render proper to consciousness, but rather as a mystery that passes through our lives, a disturbance that opens our ways of being, doing, and thinking...” (The Experience of God: A Postmodern Response, pp 80-81)

<http://www.sacraconversazione.org/?p=1039>

Brood vir die pad

’n Eie ritueel met die afsterf van my pa

Réney Warrington

In 2013 beland my pa in ’n tehuis. Sy niere het ingegee, so ook sy moed. Hy weier om te eet. Hy het agt jaar vantevore ’n beroerte gehad en dit het sy lyf en mond by hom gesteel en my kans om met hom te kan vrede maak by my gesteel. Ons het erg kop gestamp oor verskeie goed. Die uiteinde van die saak was ’n totale verborkeling.

Terwyl hy in die tehuis lê, word ek ’n paar dae gegun om twee dinge te doen. Een: ek kan vir hom sê, No hard feelings. Daar is seker ’n meer poëtiese manier van dit sê, maar No hard feelings sê tog wat dit moet en dit is al waaraan ek kon dink op daardie oomblik. Ek sê dit wel terwyl hy vas slaap. Die verpleegsters kry hom nie wakker nie.

Twee: die meer belangrike van die twee punte – ek kan vir hom sê ek is lief vir hom, en vir daardie woorde, ‘Ek is lief vir jou, pa’, maak hy wel sy oë oop toe ek my hand op sy bors sit. Op die vraag, ‘Verstaan jy?’, antwoord hy selfs: ‘Ja’.

Die laaste dag wat ek soontoe ry, staan die R59 stil as gevolg van padwerke en mis ek sy dood met vyf minute.

Ek baklei teen my instink om in my dop te kruip en die wêreld agter te laat, deur langs sy sterfbed my vriende al te laat weet. My pa is weg.

Daar word ’n besluit geneem om nie begrafnis te hou nie. Daar is nie ’n dominee in die prentjie nie, al sy vriende het opgedroog, die familie is ver ... dít is net ’n paar redes vir die besluit. Dit voel tog vreemd dat hy net so in die niet verdwyn.

My kopdokter-vriendin, Joanne, sê om begrafnis te hou is ’n ritueel wat jou help groet. Sy stel voor ek kry my eie ritueel.

Dit is in ’n plaaslike drankwinkel voor die whiskey-rak waar ek onbeskryflik bewoë raak. My pa het gehou van ’n goeie whiskey op ’n Sondag, of hy nou snoek of steak braai. Vir die plonkers het hy die Chivas geskink. Ek koop dus die duurste bottel whiskey wat my begroting sal toelaat. Ek het my ritueel gekry.

“Daar word ’n besluit geneem om nie begrafnis te hou nie. Daar is nie ’n dominee in die prentjie nie, al sy vriende het opgedroog, die familie is ver ... dít is net ’n paar redes vir die besluit. Dit voel tog vreemd dat hy net so in die niet verdwyn.”

My vriende Kimon en Tilla stel hul huis oop vir die eerste heildronk. Kimon spreek selfs ’n paar geveleude woorde. My vrou en naaste vriende staan almal om my, met ’n glas whiskey in die hand. Ek lig my glas, en kry dit net-net reg om te sê, ‘Op Richard Bell Warrington’.

Ons kom die aand agter dat tussen die agt van ons teenwoordig, vier van ons pa’s in die laaste twee jaar verloor het. Die ander drie begin ook hul gedagtes deel en die herdenking gaan gelukkig oor meer as my pa en my hartseer.

Ek werk pligsgetrou deur die groep vriende in Johannesburg en ontwikkel ’n voorkeur vir ’n goeie whiskey.

Een van die beste whiskeys drink ek dan in ’n plaaskombuis 30 km anderkant Magalies. Dit is Ed en Laura se kombuis en ons het al menige aande die wêreld se probleme om hul kombuistafel opgelos.

Ed het my ook geleer van espresso, rooi- en witwyn en die misterie van ’n sipping gin. Hy het ’n diep dubbeldeurkas waarvoor mens ’n plaasgrootte Maglite-flitslig nodig het om tot agter te kan sien. Die dubbeldeurkas staan vol plaaslike en ingevoerde whiskey, Cognac, appelbrandewyn, grappa en jenewer, alles van die hoogste kwaliteit.

In die begin was ek en die vrou ook maar plonkers. Soos ons kennis uitgebrei het, so het Ed die meer spesiale bottels begin uithaal en deel. Met elke nuwe besoek het hy dieper en dieper in die dubbeldeurkas gaan graawe en het die laataand-proetjies in die kombuis al hoe beter en beter geraak.

Toe dit Ed se beurt is om saam met my ’n whiskey te drink, gaan graawe hy lank in die dubbeldeurkas. Hy sit ’n bottel whiskey op die tafel, en sê: “Nou het ek niks meer oor om jou mee te verras nie”.

Hy laat ons almal regop staan.

Ek sê: ‘Op Richard Bell Warrington’.

Ed sê: ‘May the road rise up to him. May the wind be always at his back. May the sun shine warm upon his face, the rains fall softly upon his fields. Until you meet again.’

<http://www.netwerk24.com/stemme/2014-10-02-n-eie-ritueel-met-die-afsterf-van-my-pa>