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Editorial: Science, Religion and Postmodernism

Kurien Kunnumpuram SJ

Abstract: We are undoubtedly living at a time of rapid change. According to some keen observers, we are at present witnessing the death throes of the old era and the birth-pangs of the new. Perhaps the phenomenon of postmodernism is a pointer to this. That is why we have chosen to discuss postmodernism in this issue of *Jnanadeepa* and its relation to science and religion. It is difficult to say specifically what postmodernism is. One can perhaps describe it as a trend, a movement, which has an all-pervasive influence on human life and activity today. It affects all areas of human existence - the social, the economic, the political, the religious and the cultural. This is the reason why we need to understand the phenomenon of postmodernism if we wish to gain an insight into the changes that are taking place in the world today.

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**Science, Religion
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Editorial

We are undoubtedly living at a time of rapid change. According to some keen observers, we are at present witnessing the death throes of the old era and the birth-pangs of the new. Perhaps the phenomenon of postmodernism is a pointer to this. That is why we have chosen to discuss postmodernism in this issue of *Jnanadeepa* and its relation to science and religion.

It is difficult to say specifically what postmodernism is. One can perhaps describe it as a trend, a movement, which has an all-pervasive influence on human life and activity today. It affects all areas of human existence – the social, the economic, the political, the religious and the cultural. This is the reason why we need to understand the phenomenon of postmodernism if we wish to gain an insight into the changes that are taking place in the world today.

There are three articles in this issue that directly deals with postmodernism. The first one discusses the origin and development of postmodernism and points out how it is a reaction to modernism. It also explores the interrelationship that exists between postmodernism on the one hand and religion and science on the other. The second one investigates the scientific roots of postmodernism and comes to the conclusion that postmodernism is the result of the transition from the Newtonian to the Relativistic-Quantum paradigm. The third one critically examines postmodernism and its implications for human life today. It calls our attention to the ‘destructive tendencies’ in this movement, but hopes that it will play a positive role in finding new paradigms of knowledge for our age.

Three articles deal with the impact of postmodernism on philosophy. The first one critically examines the philosophy of religion of John Caputo, a postmodernist thinker. The second explores the postmodern evaluation of traditional theistic systems, focussing predominantly on the writings of Jean-Luc Marion, a leading Catholic Philosopher. The third one deals with postmodernism and ethics. While it admits that postmodernism has undermined the foundations of traditional ethics, it maintains that some of the postmodernist thinkers have paved the way for the emergence of a new ethics.

There are two articles in this issue that deal with theology. One discusses the impact of postmodernism and Christology. While it criticises some of the negative elements of postmodernism, it is quite sure that its insight into the significance of language, can be positively contribute to the understanding of the implications of various Christologies and to enable us to judge if they are liberative or oppressive. The other one points out how postmodernism

and its insight can help us to develop a relevant theology in the pluralistic context.

Two articles discuss areas which are closely connected to postmodernism. The first one drawing inspiration from the postmodernist stress on pluralism explodes the myth of the multiculturalism of science and religion. In fact, a person's idea of 'science' and 'religion' as well as the relationship between the two are embedded in the ideas and concepts of his/her particular history and culture. The second one is an attempt to show that Ambedkar shares the postmodern concern for the oppressed and the marginalised and can, therefore, be an inspiration for us in our efforts to liberate the poor and the down-trodden.

There are three additional features in this issue. The first one is a brief history of Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth which is celebrating its Platinum Jubilee. The second is a statement of the Asian Theology Seminar held at JDV on the occasion of its Jubilee. The third is an "Action Statement" made by the Assembly of the South Asian Jesuits held in Mumbai in October 2001. This statement which spells out concrete ways of living and sharing the Good News in Asia will probably have an impact beyond the confines of the Society of Jesus.

It is our fond hope that the discussion on postmodernism as well as the other features included in this issue of *Jnanadeepa* will stimulate further reflection among our readers.

Kurien Kunumpuram SJ
Editor