jnanadeepa

Pune Journal of Religious Studies

Science, Religion and Postmodernism

Volume 5 No. 1 January 2002

Jnanadeepa:
Pune Journal of Religious Studies

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Jnanadeepa (="Light of Wisdom" pronounced as *Jñānadīpa*) is a biannual interdisciplinary journal of religious studies from an Indian Christian perspective. It is closely associated with Jnana Deepa Vidyapeeth: Pontifical Institute of Philosophy and Religion, Pune 411014, India.

Jnanadeepa is published biannually, in January and July. Views expressed by the writers are not necessarily those of the editors. Manuscripts submitted for publication should be original and cannot be returned (writers' style sheet is available on request); they could be sent (preferrably as a text or RTF file) in a computer diskette or through E-mail as file attachment.

All **correspondence** (requests for subscription, manuscripts, books for review – two copies, please – exchange copies of journals, advertisements, etc.) to:

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Homepage: http://home.nagar.com/pjrs/

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Printer: CreatiVEntures, Pune
Typeset: JDV Computer Centre
Publisher: Kurien Kunnumpuram for Jnana Deepa Publications.
ISSN: 0972-3331

Subscription Rates

Country	*One year*	*Three years*
India	Ind. Rs. 80	Ind. Rs. 200
SAARC Countries	Ind. Rs.140	Ind. Rs. 400
Other Countries (Surface Mail)	US $ 16	US $ 45
Other Countries (Air Mail)	US $ 20	US $ 55
Institutional Rate	US $ 40	US $ 110
Personal Life Subscription	Rs 3,000(India)	US $ 350(Foreign)

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 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 multiculurality 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 sow 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 downtrodden.

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

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Science, Religion and Postmodernism

An Exploration of their Inter-Relationships

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1. Introduction

This article is meant to be an introductory one. It attempts to discuss the phenomenon of postmodernism and its impact on science and religion. A brief, schematic and at times disorganised presentation of what postmodernism is and its relation to science and religion is attempted in this article. That this article remains tentative belongs to the very nature of postmodernism itself. We look for the main ideas of postmodernism, without trying to offer a systematic exposition. In the process we hope to discuss how postmodernism is related to the two pillars of modern (or postmodern) society: science and religion.

The term 'postmodernism' seems to have been first used in 1917 by the German philosopher Rudolf Pannwitz to describe the nihilism of the 20th century (Puthenpurackal 2000: 97). As the term indicates, the phenomenon of postmodernism[1] cannot be understood apart from modernism. It is a critique of all that has been associated with modernism (Clifford 1994: 62). It may be regarded as a (positive) response to modernism or a (negative) reaction to it. Hence, we begin with a discussion of the origin and development of modernism. Then we go on to study the origin, development and characteristics of postmodernism. We shall also point out the interdependence between postmodernism, science and religion.

Obviously we make no attempt to give an exhaustive account of postmodernism. What we try to do is to trace the emergence of this phenomenon and its relation to scientific growth and religious development in our (post)modern culture. We hope to show that in the origin and development of postmodernism both science and religion have played significant roles. Conversely, postmodernism has contributed a lot to today's understanding of science and religion. Though the distinction between constructive postmodernism and nihilistic postmodernism as proposed by some Christian authors may be helpful, I have not found it necessary to use it here. In this article I have tried to take a neutral stance towards postmodernism.

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2. Origin, Development and Characteristics of Modernism

Sociologists have made serious efforts to study the way traditional societies evolved into modern ones. The process of modernisation is regarded as a complex, global, systematic, phased, lengthy, homogenising, irreversible and progressive one. Today's society understands a "modern man"[2] as "an informed participant citizen; he has a marked sense of personal efficacy; he is highly independent and autonomous in his relation to the traditional sources of influence, especially when he is making basic decisions about how to conduct his personal affairs; and he is ready for new experiences and ideas; that is, he is relatively open-minded and cognitively flexible" (Inkeles and Smith 1974: 290).

Briefly, we may see the following predominant aspects in modern societies.

3. 1. Rationality and Research (Enlightenment)

The basic ideas of the Enlightenment with regard to rationality may be summed up in terms of the following theses. (1) There is a stable, coherent, knowable self. This self is conscious, rational and autonomous – no physical conditions or differences substantially affect how this self operates. (2) This self knows itself and the world through reason. Rationality is posited as the highest form of mental functioning, and the only objective form. (3) The mode of knowing produced by the objective rational self is "science," which can provide universal truths about the world, regardless of the individual status of the knower. (4) The knowledge produced by science is "truth," and is everlasting. (5) The knowledge/truth produced by science (by the rational objective knowing self) will always lead towards progress and perfection. All human institutions and practices can objectively be analysed by reason and improved. (6) Reason is the ultimate judge of what is true, and therefore of what is right, and what is good (what is legal and what is ethical). Freedom consists in obedience to the laws that conform to the knowledge discovered by reason. (7) In a world governed by reason, the true will always be the same as the good and the right; there can be no conflict between what is true and what is right. (8) Science thus stands as the paradigm for any and all socially useful forms of knowledge. Science is neutral and objective; scientists, those who produce scientific knowledge through their unbiased rational capacities, must be free to follow the laws of reason, and not be motivated by other concerns (such as money or power). (9) Language or the mode of expression used in producing and disseminating knowledge, must also be rational. To be rational, language must be transparent; it must function only to represent the real world which the rational mind observes. There must be a firm and objective connection between the objects of perception and the words used to name them.

These fundamental premises of modernism serve to justify and explain virtually all of our social structures and institutions, including democracy, law, science, ethics, and aesthetics.

Modernism is fundamentally about order: about rationality and rationalisation, creating regularity out of chaos. The assumption is that creating more rationality is conducive to creating more order, and that the more ordered a society is, the better it will function (the more rationally it will function). Because modernism is about the pursuit of ever-increasing levels of order, modern societies constantly are on guard against anything and everything labelled as "disorder," which might disrupt order. Thus modern societies rely on continually establishing a binary opposition between "order" and "disorder," so that they can assert the superiority of "order." To achieve this, they have to invent things that represent "disorder." In western culture, this disorder becomes "the other" – defined in relation to other binary oppositions. Thus anything non-white, non-male, non-heterosexual, non-hygienic, non-rational (etc.) becomes part of "disorder," and has to be eliminated from the organised, rational modern society. This "dualism," I believe, has been sufficiently exposed by postmodernism.

3.2. Differentiation of Sciences and Classical Physics

Another vivid feature associated with modernism is the emergence of the disciplines of science and particularly the emergence of physics as the queen of sciences. The classical Newtonian physics has been regarded as the paradigm of scientific progress during the last few centuries. In fact, it epitomises modernism. So we can summarise the basic assumptions of classical Newtonian mechanics so as to see the philosophy of modernism.

(1) Nature can be described as a huge machine. (2) In contrast to the static medieval world-view, change is given greater scope; but change is basically the rearrangement of unchanging components, the fundamental particles of nature. These particles are still thought to be fixed, with no genuine novelty or historical development allowed. (3) Nature is deterministic rather than (as in the medieval conception) teleological. Mechanical causes, not purposes, determine all natural events, and explanation consists in the specification of such causes. Assuming a complete knowledge of current states (or initial conditions), the future could be precisely predicted. (4) The basic reality of nature consists in the separate fundamental atoms or particles. The theory of knowledge is classical realism: the object can be known as it is in itself apart from the observer. Atomism (the theory holding the universe being composed of atoms) was paralleled by an individualistic view of society (developed, for example, in ideas of economic competition and social contract theories of government). (5) The approach to nature was reductionistic and mechanistic rather than hierarchical. The physical mechanisms and laws were thought to determine all events (except, perhaps, those in the human mind). (6) Newton accepted the Cartesian dualism of mind and body; God, the self-grounding, self-present subject (Tracy 2000: 240), and human minds constituted the great exception in a mechanistic world. Even though the earth was no longer the centre of the cosmic system, human ratio-

nalism was seen as the mark of our uniqueness. But the leaders of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment believed that humanity was also a part of the all-encompassing world machine, whose operation could be explained without reference to God. This materialistic world held no place for consciousness or inwardness except as subjective illusions. Since nature is a machine, it is an object that can be exploited for the good of humans.

Undoubtedly, classical mechanics has been tremendously successful. Still, there is a fundamental problem: life in its richness, diversity and unpredictability, is not comprehended by it. In short, as Michel Serres holds:

> Classical physics is a science of dead things and a strategy of the kill.... The world is in order according to this mathematical physics. The laws are the same everywhere... there is nothing to be learned, to be discovered, to be invented, in this repetitive world, which falls in parallel lines of identity. There is nothing new under the sun of identity. It is information-free, complete redundance ... there is death forever. Nature is put to death or is not allowed to be born. And the science of all this is nothing, can be summed up as nothing. Stable, unchanging, redundant, it recopies the same writing in the same atomic letters (cited in Toolan 2000: 54).[3]

3.3 Modernism and Religion: Secularisation

The process of secularisation which has led to the privatisation or even elimination of religion has been a significant hallmark of modernism.

At the basic level of analysis, modernisation leads to what Max Weber called "the disenchantment of the world." It eliminates all the superhuman and supernatural forces, the gods and spirits, with which non-industrial, traditional cultures populate the universe and to which they attribute responsibility for the phenomena of the natural and social worlds. It proposes as the solely valued cosmology the modern scientific interpretation of nature. Only the laws and regularities discovered by the scientific method are admitted as valid explanations of phenomena. If it rains, or does not rain, it is not because the gods are angry but because of atmospheric conditions, as measured by the barometer and photographed by satellites.

Specifically, such a "disenchantment of the world" leads to process of secularisation. It systematically displaces religious institutions, beliefs, and practices, substituting for them those of reason and science. This process was first observed in Christian Europe towards the end of the 17th century.[4] At any rate, once it emerged in Europe, especially Protestant Europe, secularisation was considered as part of the "package" of industrialism that was exported to the non-European world. Wherever modern European cultures have impinged, they have diffused secularising currents into traditional religions and non-rational ideologies.

Although secularisation is a general tendency or principle of development in modern societies, this does not imply that religion is driven out altogether from society. Against a tradi-

tional background, it inevitably leaves many religious practices in place and may even stimulate new ones. Religious rituals, such as Christian baptism and Church weddings, persist in all industrial societies; the Church may, as in England and Italy, continue to play an important moral and social role. The majority of the population may hold, however insecurely, traditional religious beliefs alongside more scientific ones. There may even be, as in the United States, waves of religious revivalism, involving large sections of the population.

It is nonetheless true that all such religious phenomena, real as they may be in the lives of believers, lose their centrality in the life of the society as a whole. As compared with their place in traditional society, they increasingly take on the character of marginal, even leisure-time, activities. They no longer embody that crucial legitimating power that religious activities have in all non-industrial societies. The religious establishment is aware that to confront the modern state too openly is to risk disestablishment, as in France, or even dissolution, as in communist societies. Baptisms and Church weddings persist as much for social reasons as from belief in their religious significance (Britannica 2001).[5]

3. Origin, Development and Characteristics of Postmodernism

Postmodernism has become the "in" thing today. No branch of science or religion today can ignore the emergence of the phenomenon (or attitude) of postmodernism which remains elusive, vague and hazy and casts a spell on so many cultures, movements and societies. Postmodernism is a movement away from the modern presuppositions. Its emergence may be seen in the following philosophical, religious and scientific processes.

3.1 From Structuralism to Poststructuralism: Deconstructing the Base[6]

What began with Marx, Darwin, Freud and Levi-Strauss continues in the twentieth century intellectual history, as new disciplines and sub-disciplines assert their own foundational causative categories from which all else ensues. The way to deconstruct (Pathanmackel 2000: 141) someone else's theoretical framework is to replace the foundational categories of analysis with a new base.

Philosophers and social scientists began to challenge the very possibility of such a base-superstructure metaphor for knowledge after some decades of dancing in circles. In Marxist theory, for instance, it was clear that elements of the superstructure could and must have causative influences on the economic base of a society. Further, Marxism's critique of false ideology and its claim to be a true science of history could easily be re/presented as an ideology in need of critique. To disprove a social scientific theory, one "deconstructs" the "base" by showing that the presumed "foundation" is really a product of some other causative phenomena. Thus, Max Weber's famous study, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* seeks to reverse the materialist categories of Marxism and argue that the ideology of

Protestantism changed the economic structure of society, though as an unintended consequence. Weber's inversion of Marx's base and superstructure can be reversed again in an ideological critique of Weber. This philosophical circularity has become a major problem in the social sciences, linguistic theory and hermeneutics in recent times.

Poststructuralism, which is really synonymous with postmodernism, begins to challenge the possibility of such simplistic, unidirectional causative analysis, while continuing to argue that reality is in some significant sense hidden from direct observation and common-sense. Poststructuralism removes all foundational categories by reexamining them as the causative products of some other factors. There is no available a priori, no Archimedean point of reference, on which to ground human reason. What is "reasonable" in this neo-Kantian formulation is somehow an intersubjective projection onto phenomena. There is no direct experience of reality without interpretation; and all interpretation is in some sense constituted by the cultural and personal prejudices of the interpreter.

Associated with poststructuralism is the movement from metaphysical realism to metaphoric realism at the linguistic level. The linguistic move in postmodernism is also characterised by a linguistic movement in philosophy. Ludwig Wittgenstein came to reject his own earlier positivist theory of language, which provides an important transition in charting the move from modernism to postmodernism. Wittgenstein recognised that all languages, from the mathematical to our mother tongues, are internally self-referential. Language is understood as a kind of game theory, in which the rules are specific to each particular user-group. What we can talk about are language games within the boundaries of rational, irrational, and other-rational. Human reason is a polyglot. Cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural translation are possible. Within the rules of their respective language games, an Orthodox Jew can be every bit as rational as a particle physicist; indeed, they can be one and the same person. There is, however, no master language of Truth, as the scientific positivists and religious fundamentalists had believed.

3.2 From Newtonian Mechanics to the Theory of Chaos: Through Quantum Mechanics

The overthrow of classical mechanics through quantum mechanics and the origin of the theory of chaos usher in a path towards postmodernism.

Quantum mechanics is the science dealing with the behaviour of matter and light at the atomic and subatomic levels. It attempts to describe and account for the properties of molecules and atoms and their constituents – electrons, protons, neutrons, and other more esoteric particles such as quarks and gluons. These properties include the interactions of the particles with one another and with electromagnetic radiation (i.e., light, X rays, and gamma rays).

The behaviour of matter and radiation on the atomic scale often seems peculiar, and the consequences of quantum theory are accordingly difficult to

understand and to believe. Its concepts frequently conflict with common-sense notions derived from observations of the everyday world. There is no reason, however, why the behaviour of the atomic world should conform to that of the familiar, large-scale world. It is important to realise that quantum mechanics is a branch of physics and that the business of physics is to describe and account for the way the world – on both the large and the small scale – actually is and not how one imagines it or would like it to be. Quantum mechanics has attracted some of the ablest scientists of the 20th century, and they have erected what is perhaps the finest intellectual edifice of the period. Still, there are inherent conceptual problems associated with it, that even Einstein could not accept (Britannica 2001).

Like quantum mechanics, another theory that leads to postmodernism is theory of chaos. Generally in mechanics and mathematics, apparently random or unpredictable behaviour in systems is governed by deterministic laws. A more accurate term, "deterministic chaos," suggests a paradox because it connects two notions that are familiar and commonly regarded as incompatible. The first is that of randomness or unpredictability, as in the trajectory of a molecule in a gas or in the voting choice of a particular individual in a given population. In conventional analyses, randomness was considered more apparent than real, arising from ignorance of the many causes at work. In other words, it was commonly believed that the world is unpredictable because it is complicated. The second notion is that of deterministic motion, as that of a pendulum or a planet, which has been accepted since the time of Isaac Newton as exemplifying the success of science in rendering predictable that which is initially complex.

In recent decades, however, diverse systems have been studied that behave unpredictably despite their seeming simplicity and the fact that the forces involved are governed by well-understood physical laws. The common element in these systems is a very high degree of sensitivity to initial conditions and the way in which they are set in motion. For example, the meteorologist Edward Lorenz discovered that a simple model of heat convection possesses intrinsic unpredictability, a circumstance he called the "butterfly effect," suggesting that the mere flapping of a butterfly's wing can change the weather on the other side of the planet after few decades! A more homely example is the pinball machine: the ball's movements are precisely governed by laws of gravitational rolling and elastic collisions – both fully understood – yet the final outcome is unpredictable.

In classical mechanics, the behaviour of a dynamic system can be described geometrically as motion on an "attractor." The mathematics of classical mechanics effectively recognised three types of attractor: single points (characterising steady states), closed loops (periodic cycles), and tori (combinations of several cycles). In the 1960s a new class of "strange attractors" was discovered. On strange attractors the dynamics is chaotic. Later it was recognised that strange attractors have a detailed structure on all scales of mag-

nification; a direct result of this recognition was the development of the concept of the fractal (a class of complex geometric shapes that commonly exhibit the property of self-similarity), which led in turn to remarkable developments in computer graphics.

Applications of the mathematics of chaos are highly diverse, including the study of turbulent flow of fluids, irregularities in heartbeat, population dynamics, chemical reactions, plasma physics and the motion of groups and clusters of stars (Britannica 2001; Pandikattu 2001).

3.3 From Monolithic Religions to Primeval Spiritualities

Modernism had recognised (and privatised) the traditional, established religions. The major religions were classified and studied scientifically. Secularisation did not prevent religions being studied objectively. Still, the movement to the animistic religions and esoteric areas could not have been visualised by modernism.

In spite of the promised secularism to be brought about by modernism what is an astounding religious phenomenon is the emergence of fundamentalism and thousands of divergent religious sects. Some of them seem to be crazy, others like the numerous New Age movements have become respectable. But the undeniable fact is that the religion simply refuses to wither away. To some extent, institutionalised religions have lost their hold. But the non-institutional and sectarian ones flourish (Pandikattu 2001a).

As a typical case, we can speak of the doomsday cults. Waco, Heaven's Gate, Solar Temple, Aum Shinrikyo ("Supreme Truth"), and The People's Temple, or Jonestown, are shorthand terms often used to recall places, movements and events associated with groups known as doomsday cults. Hearing predictions that there are likely to be more such cults every other year, many who do not belong to them are trying to make sense of these movements, which they find both strange and threatening (Britannica 2001).

All the above phenomena point to a direction totally different from that taken by modernism. It may be argued that they are not conclusive proofs for the emergence of postmodernism. But taken together, there are so many features in these movements which are closely similar to postmodernism, that a close relationship may be reasonably inferred.

3.4. Features of Postmodernism[7]

As already indicated, postmodernism involves a shift away from modernism. It may be perceived as a critical response or reaction to modernism. It seems to be rooted, at least to a certain extent in the scientific and religious trends of our time. It challenges seriously the metaphysical, epistemological and linguistic "foundations" of our culture.

Postmodernism is being talked and written about everywhere in contemporary western society. The term postmodern is being used in many artistic, intellectual, and academic fields. The figures associated with post-mod-

ernism include: Rauschenberg, Baseliz, Schnabel, Kniefer, warhol and perhaps Bacon in art; Jencks and Venturi in architecture, Artaud in drama, Barth, Barthelme and Pychon in fiction, Lynch in film (*Blue Velvet*), Sherman in photography, Derrida, Lyotard, Baudrillard in philosophy. There are, of course, other subjects that ought to be mentioned: anthropology, geography, sociology ..... the list is endless, and the names of those included lead to vigorous and bitter controversies. But one thing is clear: postmodernism is of great interest to a wide range of people because it directs our attention to the a major transformation, taking place in contemporary society and culture. The term is at once fashionable and elusive (Sarup 1993: 123).

In our own country we can find some postmodern tendencies in the Bollywood movies. Two recent movies *Bombay Boys* and *Pyar Mein Kabhi Kabhi,* seem to have postmodernist tendencies. The first one militates against the stereo-typed formula of the hero's eventual triumph over the villain. It presents a director who in pursuit of a flop movie allows the hero to flee away from the villain. The second one recognises the important contribution of every individual behind the screen by flashing their photos on the screen. It also had many interruptions that appeared to disrupt the continuity of the story with witty reflections and questions thus demonstrating that some postmodern traces are to be found in our cinema.

But postmodernism has its 'minus' points. It tends to lose clarity and precise meaning in the face of multiple viewpoints. This is brought home by Paul Lakeland when he writes: "there are probably a thousand different self-appointed commentators of the postmodern phenomenon and bewildering discrepancies between the ways many of these authors understand the term postmodern and its cognates" (Lakeland 1997: ix-x).

3.4.1 Moving beyond the Systemic Boundaries

Modernism was a long march to the prison of 'order' and 'structure'. It looked for 'order' and 'structure' in everything. (Puthenpurackal 2000: 4-5) Postmodernism moves beyond this enframement of 'order' and 'structure'. For instance, authors, like Edward W. Soja combines the preface and the postscript in his book, *The Postmodern Geographies*, thus doing away the separation between the forewords and the afterwords (Soja 1997: 1-9). This does not mean that it ends up in confusion or chaos. In fact, it looks to be systematic without being systemic. It is an attempt to move to the margins of history. We can see this process of moving beyond the systemic boundaries, if we look at postmodernism as an attitude of mind, and if we realise that postmodernism gives primary to 'play,' to the project of deconstruction and the ideal of differentiation.

A Matter of Attitudes: Postmodernism is not an 'ism' like other 'isms' such as Vaishnavism or Marxism. Normally an 'ism' refers to a clear set of 'ideas,' a system-like arrangement of thought. That is why John Deely says, "postmodernism is a concept in search

of definitions" (cited in Ciapalo1997: 79). Frankly speaking, we cannot refer to it even as a 'concept' because conceptualisation itself means enframing or setting within boundaries. Hence, it is said to be a 'movement.' Some scholors like Max Charlesworth hesitate even to call it a movement. He says, "Postmodernism is more a diffused mood than a unified movement, more a climate of thought than a philosophical system" (Charlesworth 1996: 188) it is best seen as a 'trend,' an 'attitude,' or a 'mood'. This is the reason, why postmodernist thinkers like to call it postmodernity and not postmodernism (Gregorious 1997: 84). It is not a doctrine but a perspective, and hence a matter of attitude.

The Primacy of 'Play': The notion of play is central to post-modern thought. We have seen that postmodernism itself is constituted by the interplay of the 'given' and the 'novel'. Think of children playing or your own playful moments, and you will agree that the word 'play' suggests freedom, innocence, spontaneity, flexibility, fluidity, slippage spillage etc. In short, it implies freedom from the enslavement of the ordered or the structured. That is why a postmodernist thinker Lyotard has titled one of his works as *"Just Gaming"* and Derrida talks of reality as a kind of 'free play' *difference* (Sweetman 1999: 6-9.)

The Project of Deconstruction: Another attempt to break free of the shackles of the structure is Derrida's project of deconstruction. John D. Caputo metaphorically characterises this when says, "Cracking the nutshell is what deconstruction is, in a nutshell" (Caputo 1999: 306). Deconstruction can be broadly seen as a method of reading a text. Actually, it is not even a 'method,' for 'method' implies a set of explicit rules to be followed so as to arrive at a certain positive result ("the truth") (Madison 1992: 10). In fact, Derrida uses this process of deconstruction to demonstrate that we cannot objectively encapsulate or enframe truth and meaning, for all knowledge is contextual, and is influenced by culture, tradition, language, prejudices, background beliefs etc. Thus, deconstruction challenges and calls into question the exclusivist imprisoning or fixation of truth or meaning and demonstrates the possibility of other possible meanings.

From Realism to Surrealism: We live in an age dominated by the media. The media entertains, educates and perverts us continuously. Today it has become increasingly difficult to maintain the gulf between the real and the imaginary. The gap between the real and the imaginary has narrowed to such an extent that we can say that we are somehow living in a world of magic-realism. No wonder children and even adults remain glued to the idiot box for hours together. Hence, we may call the idiot box the new opium of the poor. This blurring of the boundaries between the imaginary and the real is referred to as surrealism or hyperrealism in academic circles.

3.4.2 Reversal of the Centre and the Periphery

Charles Lemart says "one of the most enduring features of the classic system was that it was always one, mostly unrivalled, imperial centre"

(quoted in Mannath 1999: 7). The elevation of an unrivalled centre results in the degeneration of the periphery. Hence, postmodernism attempts to decentre the imperial centre. They try to show that the centre is an artificial construct that relies on the marginalization of others for its existence, thereby exposing the slipperiness of the dichotomy between the centre and the periphery (Taylor and Winquist 2001: 48-49). This results in the *de-rigidification* of the petrified centre, allowing the centring of the periphery. I shall point to this centring of the periphery while considering themes like the incredulity of metanarratives, the constitutive otherness, the celebration of the surface and anti-foundationalism.

Incredulity of Metanarratives: Metanarratives are philosophical, social, religious, scientific etc. views that claim to explain all and everything under the sun, a "Theory of Everything (ToE)." They are referred to as metanarratives because of their universal, exclusivist, totalising and absolute status. Sarup teaches that "the *grands recits* are master narratives of mastery, of man seeking his telos in the conquest of nature" (Sarup 1993: 145). Postmodernism draws our attention to the fact that human conditions differ from place to place, and hence, the clever "grand theory" that would claim to explain all human problems is only a fad. Sarup believes that "philosophy with a capital 'P' is no longer a viable and credible enterprise" (Sarup 1993: 156). That is why Lyotard says, "I define postmodernity as incredulity towards metanarratives" (Sarup 1993: 4). Postmodernism wages a war against all forms of totalisation. Thus, meaning systems like Christianity, Islam and Marxism are all seen as just one of the many available ideologies in the shopping mall. The playing down of the entire tradition of western philosophy by Nietzsche and Heidegger is an important milestone in the emergence of the trend that brought about incredulity of metanarratives. Richard Rorty signals this tendency when he says, "Philosophical metanarratives are out and mini narratives are in" (Madison 1992: 5). We witness a Derrida who attempts to pull down the logocentrism of entire western philosophy or a Lyotard alleging that the characteristic of modernism was its reliance on metanarratives for legitimisation of both science and state. This shows that the prophetic words of Marx, 'all that is solid melts in the air' are being fulfilled today.

Constitutive Otherness: Western thought can be characterised as the philosophy of 'either/or' or of 'polar opposites'. The binary opposites like good or evil, true or false, sacred or profane, beautiful or ugly, one or many etc., which are so central to it, describe its fragmentary approach. This fragmentary approach gives precision to a notion by placing it within a boundary. Hence, that which is placed outside is seen as 'the other'. In such thinking, 'the other' is discarded for fear of it threatening us.

Postmodern thinking does not see 'the other' as *contrasting* but as *constitutive*. In this context we cannot overlook the contribution of Emmanuel Levinas who emphatically taught that only through responsibility for the other person could human existence could

gain significance. Puthenpurackal makes this point clear when he writes, "Postmodernists see presence as constituted by absence, the real by appearance, the ideal by the mundane, truth by untruth, beauty by ugliness: a philosophy of difference" (Puthenpurackal 2000: 5). Hence, the margins, the periphery, the 'little narrative' are not to be marginalized but are to be seen as the 'constitutive other'. Metaphorically we can say that it is the margins that constitute the text. Thus, postmodernism blurs the rigid boundaries in the conceptual framework, i.e., it transcends the either-or structure and breaks open the boundary of precision. This is the clarion call given by Puthenpurackal (2000):

> The new millennium calls for a philosophy of complementarity, a philosophy of the meeting paths, ideologies, thought patterns, cultures, value system etc. No philosophical tradition is so rich that it needs no enrichment from any other tradition, and no philosophical tradition is so poor that it cannot enrich any other. Hence a merging of the apparently irreconcilable opposite poles is both possible and necessary; the principle of non-contradiction, the either/or structure, can be transcended. The movement has already begun; it has to be accelerated still more, so that the new millennium does not witness stagnation, but fecundation and creativity in philosophy.

The Celebration of the 'Surface': The traditional philosophy could be characterised as the philosophy of the substratum. Such a philosophy is built on the concepts of substance and essence. Substance refers to the 'lasting' element in the mutation of all phenomena. Substance thus refers to the basic, foundational aspect in reality as against the flitting accidental element. Postmodernism plays down this substratum philosophy that reached its zenith in modernism. The accidental elements that were pushed aside to the periphery now acquire centrality. This celebration of the surface had its beginnings already in Martin Heidegger's attempt to avoid the error of reification of being, which led him to launch the project of fundamental philosophy.

The Attack on Foundationalism: Postmodernism teaches that the epistemological enterprise began by Descartes and continued by Locke, Kant and various other philosophers in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries was a grave error. Postmodernists are anti-foundationalists to the core. They hold that the question of fact, truth, correctness, validity and clarity cannot be posed nor answered in reference to some extra-contextual, ahistorical, non-situational reality. All these matters are intelligible and debatable only within the framework of a context or a situation or a paradigm or a community that gives them their local shape. Thus, truth or fact is local, there is no absolute or universal truth (Charlesworth 1996: 193). That is why some scholars even describe postmodernism as post-foundationalism.

3.4.3 The Return to the Authentic Self

Modernism with its anthropological turn had placed a crown on "man." But postmodernism puts him back in his place. This "death of man" is beautifully pictured by Schnadelbach:

> Farewell to man means the end of the notion that man is the centre of the world, the author of his history and the foundation of all knowledge, including the knowledge of himself. This modern anti-humanism says that man should no longer make himself into a principle but should realise he is merely an ephiphenomen of subhuman and superhuman powers and processes" (cited in Puthenpurackal 1999a: 33).

The "death of man" is also seen in the transrational/suprarational approach, and decentring of the subject in postmodernism.

The Transrational Approach: The rationality that was enthroned by modernism is pulled down by postmodernism. Now one must take note that postmodernist thinkers are not pushing irrationality as an alternative to rationality. Rather, the alternative is a post-metaphysical concept of rationality, i.e., they take rationality into a transcendental realm. This is clarified by James L. Marsh, when he says: "the alternative is post-metaphysical concept of rationality, play, questioning, pre-conceptual, critical, asystematic, respectful of mystery. The debate then is not between rationality and irrationality but between two different accounts of rationality" (Marsh 1998: 340).

4. Impact on Religion and Science

Postmodernism invites us to make a radical shift in our thinking pattern. By drawing our attention to the multiplicity, diversity, contingency etc., of reality, postmodernism has achieved a paradigm shift, which has influenced all dimensions of our existence (Singh 2001: 317). In the context of this paper, I focus mainly on its impact on epistemology, metaphysics, and theology and its confirmation by both science and religion.

Epistemological Non-certainty: With reason at the centre, the correspondence view, which sees truth as absolute, certain and universally valid knowledge came to be accepted by most people. Science was taken as the paradigm of all knowledge and truth. But postmodernism following Nietzsche waters down the value of representational truth held so high by modernism. Now truth is seen as a mere interpretation or a perspective. Thus, the Cartesean-Lockean-Kantian "cognising" subject of modernism – a subject that is nothing but pure, disembodied gaze upon a fully objective world – has been deconstructed. That mind can no longer mirror reality become the mantra of postmodernism. Since truth is only an interpretation or a perspective, the postmodern thinkers show great respect to plurality of perspectives. This epistemological non-certainty is also seen in their habit of keeping the word or text under 'eraseure' or '*Sous rature*'. It is to write a word, cross it out and then print both the word and deletion. The idea is this: since the word is inaccurate, or, rather, inadequate, it is crossed out. Since the word is still necessary it remains legible. This important devise which Derrida popularised originally belonged to Martin Hiedeggar, who often crossed

out the word Being [like B~~e~~ing] and let both the deletion and word stand, because the word, though inadequate, was necessary.

Ontological Contingency: The western metaphysics focused on the 'stable,' 'unified,' 'One,' which forms the ultimate ground of everything. Hence the world of entities which was seen as multiple and changing was put outside the purview of metaphysics. This platonic bias of the world of ordinary experience was seen in the fact that the world of stability and unity was considered the norm for the world of change. Against this narrow essentialism/substantialism postmodernism embraces a broader perspective, which gives importance to contingency, which was abandoned by traditional metaphysics. One can realise this fact if one considers the efforts of those thinkers who emphasise the importance of the marginalized, the other (alterity), the different etc. In this context it will be enlightening, if we pay heed to the focus of postmodern thinkers on 'absence'. They claim that the entire Western tradition is the metaphysics of presence. The metaphysics of presence equates the primal truth with being and being is equated with presence: to be true is to be originally and fully present. In this light God is seen as the full presence of being. Indebted to Heidegger who first pointed out the folly of onto-theological thinking and presented the ontological truth as differential movement of 'un-veiling,' postmodern thinkers investigate the ways in which the manifestation of any presence depends on the concealment of some absence. They teach that, because the manifestation of presence is the differential movement, presence is not possible apart from absence. In all this I think postmodernism is taking metaphysics to a post-metaphysical realm.

Moral Relativity: With the denial of metanarratives, meta-ethical issues such as the possibility of trans-cultural and trans-historical criteria in morality is called into question. The search for universal, neutral criteria remains an unrealistic dream. For we can not transcend our cultural boundaries. Richard Rorty makes this crystal clear when he says "[it is an] impossible attempt to step outside our skins – the traditions, linguistics and other, within which we do our thinking. Thus, postmodernism drives home that morality that is universal and valid for everyone does not exist. Alasdair MacIntyre points this out when he affirms that morality that is no particular society's morality is to be found nowhere.

Theological Humility: Postmodern thought has a profound impact on religious thought in general and Christian theology in particular. The postmodern 'problem of God,' the role of Christian community in a postmodern world and implications of the traditional claim of Christian uniqueness in the face of postmodernism's attention to otherness are some of the important challenges that have emerged in the theological arena. Paul Lakeland devotes an entire book, *Postmodernity: Christian Identity in a Fragmented World*, to the task of responding to the challenges posed by postmodernism.

Scientific Openness: It is interesting to note that the modern developments of science run parallel to the worldview proposed by postmodernity. The naïve scientism of logical positivism is replaced by such distinctly positivist lines of approach to reality as relativity theory, uncertainty principle, quantum mechanics and chaos theory (Lakeland 1997: 36-38). Thus, science like postmodernism believes that absolute, certain, objective truth is only a myth. Science has come to admit that the world is a mystery and as such is unfathomable.

5. Conclusion

The key symbols of postmodernism may be seen in today's various human activities. In economics, if capitalism is the paradigm model of modernism, alternative economies, cottage industries that follow the "small is beautiful" philosophy represent postmodernism. The ecologically conscious industries also stand for postmodernism.

In science, as already hinted, the Newtonian mechanics and projectile motion are replaced by fractals (of chaos theory) as the symbol of postmodernism. Fractals, so beautiful to see on the computer screen, has an added affinity for the young generation. In the social life, if monogamy represented a development and the goal of modernism, non-permanent relationship (polygamy) with multiple partners symbolises postmodernism. Single parenthood also is a strong indicator of postmodernism. In the religious field, the emergence of fundamentalism, New Age movements and the Christian sects and charismatic movements, where the individuals are given attention and priority, represent postmodernism.

In the political field, the emergence of democracy has been a major achievement of modernism. But postmodernism goes ahead and asserts the political independence and individual identity of smaller groups, be it in former Yugoslavia, former Soviet Republics or in India. In the cultural domain the best examples are MTV and CNN where each programme or news is catered to a 30 second slot. The MTV generation (generation-X) is naturally for postmodernism. In the mass media the Shakespearean Dramas and grand orchestras or theatres of modernism are replaced by the multimedia programmes on the internet. Here of course a computer and the internet are enough to compose a musical piece or to make a film. Coming to literature, the printed books and especially the newspaper, which had become the symbol of modernism, are being replaced by CD-roms and emails, which are cheap, fast and transient. They are pointers to the attitude of postmodernism. It is in the field of information technology that postmodernism has its greatest influence. The rate of transfer of information multiplies. If air travel represents modernism, it is the network conferencing that represents postmodernism. Instantaneous, cheap, ephemeral and even free information exchange (through email and mobile telephones) becomes the key to postmodernism.

Discipline	Modernism	Postmodernism
Economics	Capitalism	Alternative Economics
Social life	Monogamy	Temporary relationships
Religious life	Monolithic Religions	Multitudes of religious sects
Political field	Democracy	Affirmation of individual and group identities
Culture	Movies	MTV, CNN
Literature	Printed Books	Email
Information	Television	Video conferencing

Symbols of Modernism and Postmodernism

So far we have seen that though postmodernism is in its infancy, it can legitimately trace its legacy both to the contemporary scientific and religious traditions. At the same time it may be noted that the mainstream religious and scientific leadership is still unenthused by it. But the rank and file seem to be, by and large, shifting their allegiance to a postmodern attitude.

Is postmodernism a movement or a fad? Only the next decade will be able to answer this question! Is it enduring? That is not a post-modern question. What is the basis of it? Postmodernists will refuse to answer. How will it affect the culture? Postmodernism will be indifferent to this question.

Postmodernism exhorts us to live, to celebrate. It is a clarion call to find joy in life, not to encapsulate it with solid foundations and inflexible metanarratives. It is a celebration of the surface, of the ephemeral and an affirmation of the temporal and transient.

It is too early to answer some of the basic questions. Will postmodernism turn out to be another philosophical tragedy and die a natural death leaving some remnants for future historians of philosophy to research into? Will postmodernism lose its fancy and become a mainstream philosophical and scientific discipline? Will it be taught as another "school of philosophy," as another "theory" which is coherent, systematic and organised? Or will postmodernism usher in a new mode of living, thinking and being, which exposes the shallowness of today's culture?

Will postmodernism become a constructive and prophetic voice that ushers in more human and humane values? The next few decades will tell. At the moment, we can only imagine what postmodernism is likely to bring about in the intellectual, cultural, linguistic, religious and social areas of our lives.

Notes

1. A better term is 'postmodernity' since it avoids the dangers of an "ism." For the sake of consistency I use the term "postmodernism" in this article.
2. Here we use the exclusive language since in modernism "man" is considered to be superior to woman. For this section I am grateful to Dr Paul Parathazham.
3. The postmodern ambience goes beyond classical physics through Quantum Mechanics, to Theory of Chaos, Einstein-Bohr debate.
4. It is possible that there is something inherently secularising about Christianity, for no other religion seems to give rise spontaneously to secular beliefs.
5. The postmodern move through the emergence of non-institutional religions, religiosity deepens. New age movements, sects. Briefly, we may sum up modernism in the words of John Searle. Searle in his 1993 work, *Rationality and Realism*, assumes the epistemological and metaphysical postulates of the "Western Rationalist Tradition."

   a. Reality exists independently of human representations. If this is true then this postulate supports the existence of "mind-independent external reality" which is called "metaphysical realism."

   b. Language communicates meanings but also references to objects and situations in the world which exist independently of language. Contrary of postmodernism, this postulate supports the concept of language to have communicative and referential functions.

   c. Statements are true or false depending on whether the objects and situations to which they refer correspond to a greater or lesser degree of the statements. This "correspondence theory" of truth is to some extent the theory of truth for postmodernists, but this concept is rejected by many postmodernists as "essentialist." Essentialist is a sharp contrast from the "coherence or narrative" theory.

   d. Knowledge is objective. This signifies that the truth of knowledge claim is independent of the motive, culture, or gender of the person who makes the claim. Knowledge depends on empirical support.

   e. Logic and rationality provide a set of procedures and methods, which contrary to postmodernism, enables a researcher to assess competing knowledge claims through proof, validity, and reason.

   f. Objective and intersubjective criteria judge the merit of statements, theories and interpretations.
6. For this section I am indebted to William Grassie's article on postmodernism available from the internet (metanexus) (Grassie 1997).
7. For this section I am indebted to Ferrao 1999.

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JPJRS 5/1 (2002) 25-34

Jesus Christ Beyond Postmodernism

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Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today and forever. But Christologies are many. Do all these Christologies articulate authentically what the real Jesus of the New Testament was and what he stood for? The insights of postmodernism may help us in our inquiry into whether the various Christologies that emerged at different historical moments and different contexts refer to the real Jesus Christ of the apostolic experience. All Christologies emerge from an experience of Jesus Christ as the absolute meaning of one's life and the expression of the same in a language meaningful to a particular context. It can so happen – in fact this has already happened in the history of Christological reflections – that a particular Christology is produced that does not refer to the real Jesus Christ of the apostolic experience.

In this article an attempt is made to understand, how postmodernism challenges the traditional and historical articulations about the person and message of Jesus;[1] secondly, how the insights of postmodernism help us to delve deep into the mystery of Jesus Christ and, finally, how the person and message of Jesus go beyond the approaches of postmodernism in revealing the mystery of Reality.

I. Postmodernism's Challenge to Christology

One of the notable contributions of postmodernism was that it challenged the settled foundations on which social order, state's governing principles, rule of law etc. were built and unsettled them. Postmodernism, first of all, challenged the contention of the modern period that humans are rational and coherent subjects. It showed that what was thought to be the natural product of the human reason was indeed a product of social forces expressed through language. It affirmed that even our own self-understanding about ourselves was not something objective but was constructed by the way reality was named to us (Thistlethwaite 1995: 269). An understanding of the significance of language is the key to the understanding of power structures, social organizations, social meanings and individual consciousness. Philosophers like Jacques Derrida, Jacques Lacan, Julia Kristeva, Louis Althusser and Michel

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Foucault contributed to the development of a poststructural critique of all that we take for granted in life and, more importantly, the way we understand ourselves and our world. If this approach to reality leads us to a better insight into the mystery of life and transforms our consciousness for better it can also challenge the foundations of our Christian faith, namely, our understanding of Jesus Christ as the centre of our lives and our commitment to him. But everything that falls under the name of postmodernism or poststructuralism may not lead to a transformative experience.

In his challenging and insightful book *Jesus and Postmodernism* James Breech raise a rhetorical question: "What has Jesus to do with postmodernism?" He says further: "Those of us entrusted with the resources and responsibility for generating knowledge and understanding of the Christian tradition can and should ask what relationship postmodernist theologies, which present themselves in Christian guise, have with the historical Jesus" (Breech 1989: 22). This cautious remark of J.Breech about postmodernism and the historical Jesus points to the typical ambivalence of all that goes under the umbrella of postmodernism. However, there are certain challenges posed by some postmodernists like Michel Foucault which can wake the theologians up from their dogmatic slumber and give new insights into the inexhaustible mystery of Jesus Christ.

Michel Foucault (see Carrette 1999) has shown convincingly that each system develops its own way of organizing concepts through language. Each system has its own "discursive field" and the discourses in that particular discursive field will not have the same recognition and acceptance or power in another field. This may be obvious enough. Theological discourse will not have the same impact and acceptance in other discursive fields like politics, economics or other secular fields. Once the dominance of theology in all other fields suffered heavy battering during the Enlightenment and irretrievable loss of credibility during the periods of modernity and the advancement of science and technology, it became clear that theology cannot answer all the questions that are raised about society and life. At this juncture two options were open to theology. Fall back into fundamentalism and dogmatism, or to discover the potentialities of the theological discourse to liberate religion from its obscurantism and exclusivism and release its innate power for integral human liberation.

Theology cannot be neutral. It is the articulation of faith dialoguing with the context of the theologian The context of theological reflection itself is a complex web of power relationships, humanizing or dehumanizing structures, religious beliefs and practices, cultural elements, socio- political and economic systems etc. Therefore, a theologian himself or herself might support an existing oppressive system consciously or unconsciously, while being immersed in the context if he or she has not transcended the context itself through a liberating experience of the *theos*. The

logos the theologian constructs can be prophetic and liberative or supportive of and justifying the existing structures of oppression. According to Foucault, words are the products of historical forces and functions in fields where meaning is made or not made (Thistlethwaite 1995: 272). If we analyse the context, content and consequences of some of the Christologies of twentieth century, it would become clear to us that Foucault's insight into the influence of historical forces and powers in the making of the language of a particular discursive field is valid.

We have already mentioned that Jesus is one but Christologies are many. The prominent models of Christ in the twentieth Century, like the Germanic Christ, the Latin Christ of France, the Anglo-Saxon Christ, the Afrikaner Christ, the Black Christ (Thistlethwaite 1995: 267-268; Davies 1980: 72), the liberationists' Christ, the feminists' Christ, the Brahminic Christ and the Dalits' Christ are either sources of oppression or sources of liberation.

The Germanic Christ emerged from the claim that the German people were the chosen ones through whom salvation is offered to all.Drawing implications from Luther's theory of the *Two Kingdoms* and the order of creation, the protagonists of this theology, namely, the German-Christians (*Deutsche Christen*) attempted to make a synthesis of Nazism and Christianity. They eliminated everything Jewish from the Bible and declared Germany as their holy land and Hitler, the embodiment of the law of God. Though the *Confessing Church (Bekennende Kirche)* movement led by M.Niemoeller and others valiantly confessed the Jesus Christ of the Christian Tradition at the cost their own lives, the Germanic Christ of the Nazi-period prevailed over and supported an oppressive, racist and tyrannical system till its collapse.

The royalist movement in France presented a Latin Christ whose atoning death was for the French race alone. Such an exclusive racial bias could also be clearly seen in the Anglo-Saxon figure of Christ who was believed to be the greatest member of the great Anglo-Saxon race and was blond and Nordic like the Olympian gods. According to this understanding, Jesus was the white man par excellence (Thistlethwaite 1995: 268; Davies 1970: 152). For the Afrikaner, Christ became the symbol of racial superiority, an Aryan God. The Afrikaner Christ could be invoked by the white racist regime to strengthen and support its brutal oppression of the black majority. The black Christ of James Cone and others can become the symbol of black racism against white racism if this Christ is not recognized as the one who liberates both the whites and the blacks from their dehumanizing prejudices and discrimination and hatred of one another.

The attempts at presenting a picture of Christ meaningful to the Indian Context has produced the image of Christ as an *Avatara* or incarnation like the other *avataras* of Vaishnavism. Those theologians who find the insights of *advaita* or non-dualism more meaningful to understand the mystery of Christ understand Christ as *Isvara*, the link between the Absolute and the rela-

tive. Both the *Avataric* Christ and the *Advaitic* Christ can become the supporter and upholder of the dehumanizing caste-system which condemns a vast majority of Indians to undignified and worthless human existence. S. Kappen observes: "Landed on the Indian soil, he [Jesus] took more after Vishnu than Siva. Like the former, he is solar (*sol invictus*), patriarchal, conservative, preserver of the world-order, proto-type of and protector of priesthood, patron of whoever happens to be in power" (Kappen 1977:19).

The Dalit-Christ of the victims of caste oppression can be liberative if while restoring the dignity of the victims he liberates the oppressors from being the victims of their dehumanizing religious system. If the Dalit-Christ is presented as the one who supports the violence and hatred of the victims against the upper-castes, then he too becomes a victim of the victimized in their collective effort to justify their ideologies and actions.

Not only modern Christologies but also classical Christologies have their ideological underpinnings. Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite affirms that even the fundamental Christian affirmation that 'Jesus is Lord' reveals a number of complex issues when it is submitted to poststructuralist analysis. When the persecuted Christians who were only a minority affirmed that 'Jesus Christ is Lord' they were at the same time asserting that Caesar is *not* Lord. In this way the early Christian community subverted the hegemonic and military power of the Roman empire by a counter-culture of love (I Cor 13) and a life according to the beatitudes (Lk 6:20; Mt 5:1-11) (Thislethwaite 1995: 274). So the faith affirmation in a subversive language was at the same time a political statement about the power of the powerless against the all powerful Roman power structures. However, when Christianity became the religion of the Roman Empire, the same faith affirmation that 'Jesus is Lord' assumed a new meaning of power and domination. The Lordship of Christ was understood in imperial terms and, therefore, Christ becomes the protector and supporter of the existing system of hierarchical order, the legitimizer of the divine right of kings. The kenotic image of Christ gives way to the kyriarchic figure of Christ. Consequently, the Church of the poor and the marginalized became the imperial Church of domination and control. S.B.Thistlewaite says:

> If traditional Christian doctrine was formulated at a time of imperial rule that invested its doctrinal language with militarism, hierarchy, and the reification of gender and race dominance, how do we reconstruct Christian doctrine to recover the critique of power and the communitarian vision of the first three centuries? The context of the first three centuries was one of resistance to oppression. The use of the political language of 'lord' or 'king' then produced a practice of subversion of dominant modes of authority. Hence, what we have to do to begin to reconstruct Christology, is to put our feet somewhere else; we have to move our lives and our commitments away form authoritarianism to the road to Emmaus (Thislethwaite 1995: 276).

Even the doctrine of the incarnation, that God became human, was construed to mean that God became male, to exclude women as if they were non-persons. Thus, a sublime doctrine of faith could be manipulated to suppress the legitimate rights of women who form fifty percent of the entire humanity at a given time. Indeed, God became human means that in Jesus of Nazareth, God became the flesh of *our* flesh, of every human being, male and female, the oppressor and the oppressed, the ruler and the ruled, the black and the white, the Brahmin and the Dalit. The critique of postmodernism, thus, compels us to look into our fundamental faith-affirmations which we often take for granted and challenges us to reconstruct them that they may be able to unleash their liberative potentialities to build true communities of authentic humans without domination or discrimination of any sort.

II. Postmodernism's Insight into the Mystery of Jesus

The irreverent iconoclasm of the poststructuralists is exhibited in their deconstruction of systems, dogmas, doctrines and practices that claim to be absolute and terrorize humans to submit their lives to an illusion of certainty. Therefore, if there is an absolute dogma in postmodernism it is the doctrine of relativism. When such relativism becomes not only a creed but also an attitude towards the reality of life itself, it terrifies the guardians of public and private morality and traditional values, religious authorities, structures and systems of power like those of governments. It is obvious that if there is nothing that is certain or absolute, anything goes. No insistence on the practice of morality is possible as its foundations can be questioned and rejected or relativised . It may be one possibility.

Nietzsche's announcement that 'God is dead' seemed to have liberated humans from the tyranny of subjugation and enslavement that prevented them from becoming superhuman. One of the dogmas of postmodernism that 'Death is God' seems to liberate humans from the inhibitions of responsibility and conscience. Mark C.Taylor, a self-proclaimed postmodernist theologian, says, 'Postmodernism opens with the sense of irrecoverable loss and incurable fault. This world is infected by the overwhelming awareness of death – a death that 'begins' with the death of God and 'ends' with the death of our selves" (Cited in Breech 1989: 15). For J.D.Crossan, the New Testament scholar, human life is a life towards death. His 'theology of limit' allows the possibility of the experience of transcendence, the experience of God. Death being the final limit of life becomes the door to final transcendence, to God. Taylor's affirmation that 'death is God,' leads to the destruction of traditional values and morality giving way to nihilism, profanity and perversion. Through the 'theology of limit' J.D.Crossan too relativizes morality and affirms its subjective nature. However, this does not lead to anarchy or nihilism but promotes "freedom for human responsibility, personal and social decision, and the creation of those conventions that make us what we are" (Crossan: 1979: 117 cited in Breech 1984: 17). J.Breech, who refers to

J.D.Crossan in his study on *Jesus and Postmodernism,* seems to think that J.D.Crossan's approach to the reality of death is similar to that of Taylor though the way they articulate the implications of the same for morality is different. However, both J.Breech and J.D.Crossan reach almost similar conclusions at the end of their study and analysis of the parables of Jesus. According to J.Breech, a closer look at the parables of Jesus in the context of post-structuralism shows that the parables of Jesus do not end with a closure although the evangelists present them as if they were stories with an ending. The parables in their original form, according to J.Breech, were not stories with an end. "In Jesus' parables we see a mode of being human, neither that of those who live episodically nor that of those who live in moralizing plots. Both these modes are imprisoned in time, in their own temporal sequences.... Jesus' characters transcend their own temporal sequences. In that sense, they are out of time"(Breech 1989: 76-77). Both the characters in the parables as well as Jesus himself transcend time though they exist also within the bounds of time to some extent. Both Jesus and other humans are persons who live unending stories. J.D.Crossan, at the end of his study of the parables in contrast to the myths says that the parables subvert the myth's final word about reality and thus opens up the possibility of transcendence.

For Taylor, the reality of death as the end of everything, explains postmodernism's predilection for a "demoralized" world that repudiates traditional values and prefers nihilism, perversion etc. However, for J.D.Crossan, the relativization of morality as a consequence of his 'theology of limit' does not lead to anarchy or perversion but to freedom, responsibility and transcendence. Taylor claims to be a postmodernist while in J.D.Crossan one can detect the influence of postmodernism. J.Breech, who makes a critique of both, does not claim that he is a postmodernist but takes the challenges of postmodernism and almost follows post-structuralism's critique of language in analyzing the parables of Jesus to arrive at a liberating vision of Jesus Christ and his message.

During his earthly life Jesus resisted any attempt to categorize him. Even though the early Christians encountered him as the absolute meaning of their life, therefore, their Lord and God, he can never be defined. Therefore, many Christologies are possible. None of them can exhaust the mystery of Christ as He is that Reality that surpasses every definition and system. Though it is unsettling for the believer not to have one clear picture of Jesus Christ, it leads to a realization that Jesus Christ is the mystery in which s/he is involved and, therefore, he is a pole of his/her own being. This awareness liberates humans from a narrow, limited and static understanding Jesus Christ and provides a refreshingly new and challenging awareness of their own being.

III. Jesus Beyond Postmodernism

The tendency of the human mind to define the indefinable so that it may be able to handle it further develops

into belief systems, dogmas and institutions. What suffers in the process is the insight into 'the height and the depth, the length and the breadth' of the Mystery that one encounters. If God's own definition of himself in Jesus Christ was to make humans recognize who God is and what humans are, the human tendency to define Jesus Christ makes him just another prophet, social reformer or Guru. Postmodernism challenges every system and structure that attempts to confine reality and manipulate it for justifying and promoting ideologies and power structures that in turn dehumanize humans. At the same time, postmodernism, by its very definition, accommodates all possible approaches to reality, sometimes even contradictory ones, letting each one draw support for what s/he is temperamentally attuned to, namely, despair or hope, anarchy or harmony, meaning or meaninglessness, or everything together. Human life itself provides such a drama of contradictions. Such an approach to reality can be so fascinating as it lets humans be confronted with infinite choices. For the postmodernists infinite possibilities offer an opportunity to choose everything at once. How is it possible in actual life, is another question. Do humans just live with such contradictions without taking decisions that make them authentic humans? There may be many who live as if they were condemned to a futile existence. For them death is the end of everything. However, if transcendence is in the very nature of humans, they take decisions which allow them to go beyond the temporal sequences of events. They do not react to the situations of life which try to control them. They pro-act to the situations through decisions that reveal their transcendence and influence the lives of others in such way that they too are enabled to unfold their transcendence.

J.Breech raises a pertinent question, "Is there a mode of being human that can be grasped as inherently meaningful, coherent, as grounded in the real and of itself, without being evaluated in terms of some external norms" (Breech 1989: 55)? He quotes the words of Thomas Beckett to the priests before he was murdered as expressed by T.S.Eliot in his drama, *Murder in the Cathedral* :

> You argue by results, as this world does
> To settle if an act be good or bad
> You defer to the fact. For every life and every act
> Consequence of good and evil can be shown.
> And as in time results of many deeds are blended
> So good and evil in the end become confounded.
> It is not in time that my death shall be known;
> It is out of time that my decisions are taken
> If you call that decision
> To which my whole being gives entire consent (Breech 1989: 55-56; Eliot 1952: 210-11).

Eliot's Beckett is pro-active. He is not controlled by the forces external to him; neither by those murderers nor by death itself. If results or consequences are the criteria to judge life and its actions, then they can be shown as both

good and evil. Beckett's decision is made within the framework of time but it is also beyond time. Postmodernism cannot explain coherently such moral decisions that are made in time but goes beyond the limits of time. In fact, only by recognizing the capacity of humans to transcend themselves and their history one can get an insight into the mystery of human beings. By referring to Bekett's decision to which his whole being gives entire consent , J.Breech suggests that, " the mode of being human inaugurated by Jesus does not receive its coherence from bounded time and cannot be judged by its results. If closure and bounded time do not lend coherence to this way of living in story, what is its principle of coherence? What do Jesus' parables tell us about the truth and coherence intrinsic to a life lived in unending story"(Breech 1989:56)?

From his own long research on the parables of Jesus by comparing and contrasting them with the stories from all the extant literature of late western antiquity J.Breech concludes: "Jesus' parables were dissimilar from all those extant to three hundred years before his time and three hundred years after him. This does not prove, of course, that Jesus was unique; that is a claim that can only be made from the viewpoint of Christian faith. But this research does prove in the scientific sense that Jesus' parables were dissimilar from all extant contemporary stories" (Breech 1989: 25). Jesus' parables are dissimilar from Graeco-Roman stories of antiquity including Rabbinical parables. How does Jesus' parables differ from other stories which end with a moralizing statement either by an approbation or by a reprobation of the actions of the characters of the narrative? Jesus' parables, in their original form, do not have any ending or closure because he narrated without moralizing (Breech 1989: 35). For example, we are not told whether the good Samaritan was rewarded for his actions, whether the elder son got reconciled with the younger son who squandered his share of the father's property, or whether the householder who hired workers for his vineyard at different hours of the day and paid everyone equally found a new way of making every labourer happy etc. The parables of Jesus are realistic but at the same time they are non-didactic, non-moralizing and fictional narratives (Breech 1989: 63). The actions of the main characters in the parables are unmotivated. Yet their actions open up new possibilities for others to act and react to what they have done.

At the end of his study of the parables of Jesus, J.Breech concludes that there is a consistent relationship between Jesus' parables and his own story. As his parables had no ending or a closure, his life too had no closure. The story of his life does not end with death. Death is not the God that winds up the reality of human existence as some postmodernists would like us to believe. Resurrection appears to be the happy ending of the story of Jesus. "Rather in my view," says J.Breech, "the earliest Christians used their own culturally received concept of the resurrection appearances to reflect their conviction that Jesus' mode of being human cannot be judged by its results, that death did not hold the key to the meaning of his mode of being human. The

clear implication of the resurrection experiences is that the personal mode is grounded in a reality which is ultimate, which engenders the lives of those who live in parabolic story" (Breech 1989: 78) According to J.Breech, therefore, like the characters of Jesus parables, Jesus lives in a story without end.

J.D.Crossan seems to arrive at a similar conclusion at the end of his study of the parables of Jesus. "Jesus announced the kingdom of God in parables, but the primitive church announced Jesus as the Christ, the Parable of God" (Crossan 1975: 124). Thus the Parabler became the parable. Further, he says that the Cross became the supreme Parable of the church as Jesus died as parabler and rose as Parable. Unlike myths which establish the world parables subvert the world, and so there is a difference between a mythical religion and a parabolic religion. While mythical religion gives final word about reality and thus excludes the authentic experience of reality, parabolic religion subverts final word about reality and thereby opens up the possibility of transcendence (Crossan 1975: 128). Whatever may be the understanding of J.D.Crossan about 'transcendence,' from the context of his 'theology of limit' it can be concluded that Jesus, the Parable, continues to subvert the human tendency to find false security in myths and systems that provide humans with an illusory comfort and prevent them from unfolding their nature by transcending themselves.

The Christian experience of Jesus Christ cannot but repudiate the philosophical claims of postmodernism that death is God, or that the human story ends with death. What he reveals through his life and his teaching in parables is that though the human story has a beginning it never ends. Paul seemed to have anticipated the postmodernists' claim that death is the end of everything when he confronted it after encountering the risen Christ and became convinced of the resurrection all. He says, "If the dead are not raised, 'Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die'" (I Cor 15:32). However, neither death nor resurrection is the last word on Jesus. The last word then is a new beginning, when "God may be all in all" (I Cor 15:28).

Conclusion

While it is true that there are different theoretical positions possible within post-structuralism and its philosophical approach postmodernism, we cannot deny that its insights into the significance of language open up new vistas for the understanding of the mystery of Christ. Post-structuralism has convincingly shown that historical and cultural contexts with all their complex web of power structures, human inter-relations, social conditioning and cultural prescriptions shape language. Words acquire an oppressive or liberative meaning depending on the historical conditions and compulsions from which they have emerged. So the language of a particular culture at a particular historical period is not innocent, devoid of any ideological biases and interests. This applies also to religious language. If any christology, whether orthodox, dogmatic, functional or ontological, universal or contextual, does not allow hu-

mans to encounter the living Christ and experience true liberation it cannot be an authentic christology. The Christ-encounter mediated through the context needs to make humans more human enabling them to transcend themselves to build a true community of all humans with right relationship among themselves and with the whole creation.

Postmodernism's insight into the significance of language can positively contribute to the understanding of the implications of various Christologies and enable us to judge whether they are liberative or oppressive. However, the tendency of certain postmodernists to explain everything by appealing to the inevitability of death and by enclosing everything within the framework of bounded time go against the fundamental human experience of transcendence and the Christian experience of Jesus Christ. In Jesus Christ, humans can encounter not only a timeless God who entered into time but also discover humans who are bound by time yet can transcend it to enter into timelessness.

Notes

1. Susan Brooks Thistlethwaithe's insightful essay "Chrstology and Postmodernism: Not Everyone Who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord'," *Interpretation* 49(1995)3, 267-280 has been a great inspiration for the first part of this article.

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JPJRS 5/1 (2002) 35-44

Is Science and Religion Multi-Cultural?

Feminist and Postcolonial Perspectives

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In this paper, I will address two issues in emerging postmodern thought that could be seen as problematic for the science and religion discourse (SRD).[1] The first is the assertion, coming from postmodern (or, post-Kuhnian), feminist and post-colonial science and technology studies, that all knowledge systems – even modern western science – are culturally laden practices. Each of these approaches have convincingly argued that the purportedly neutral practice of western science is permeated with the interests and perspectives of those that develop and practice it. This includes the models and metaphors used to describe phenomenon, the methods and interests of science, the way data are interpreted, even the very notions of objectivity and rationality themselves. On the whole, science and technology studies have demonstrated that modern western science is thoroughly tied to modern western culture, its interests and perspectives.

By extension, our understanding of "science and religion" is also culturally conditioned. In other words, my understanding of "science," "religion" and even the idea of a "science" distinct from "religion," is embedded in the ideas, concepts and ideals of my particular history and culture, often to an extent that I cannot perceive.

A second and related issue is a growing awareness of the ways that western culture has privileged itself. This privilege is comprised in part by a kind of centering, whereby western perspectives and experiences are understood as generically "human" or somehow given, an understanding which easily precludes alternative perspectives. Centering can be marked by the assumption that western practices and modes of thought are more advanced, or simply a blindness to other ways of thinking. Of particular interest for the SRD is the postcolonial trajectory in science and technology studies, which examines the ways that western science and technology has both encouraged and profited from the devaluing of non-western modes of thought.

These two observations give rise to the question that I want to address in this paper: Given the local nature of "science and religion," should the sci-

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ence and religion discourse be global? At issue is the realization that the very ways that the issues are posed – our understanding of science, of religion and any distinction between them – may be so irretrievably intertwined with western thought and history that it is impossible to expand this conversation into non-Western cultures without descending into a kind of intellectual colonialism.

In this paper, I will begin by suggesting a few reasons why the SRD should be global, despite the local nature of its core assumptions. I will then address the issue of how to be global in constructive ways. While there are many different considerations and contributions that can be made by postmodern, feminist and post-colonial thought, in this paper I will focus on a theological trajectory, the post-liberal or narrative tradition, particularly as articulated by Stanley Hauerwas. I will show that this approach challenges a misconception about how to engage in a global discourse, and then discuss its paradoxical conclusion that the best way to be global is to be as particular as possible about our own religious commitments.

Should Science and Religion be Global?

Given the local nature of the concerns of science and religion, the first question to be addressed is whether a global SRD is desirable. Despite the cautions raised above, there are reasons why a global discourse is a good idea. The first reason is a practical one: the SRD needs to be global because western science is global. If this discourse is to engage science then we must engage it in the many places that it encounters religious traditions and beliefs. This includes traditions from around the world.[2]

Second, the global reach of western science means that in order to transform science – and I have written elsewhere that one of the goals of the SRD is and should be a transformation of western science – the SRD needs to be global. If the discourse is limited to western traditions, it will be narrowed to an extent that makes it essentially meaningless. To ignore western science as it engages the world is to ignore many of its most destructive (and constructive!) aspects and practices. A global conversation is a necessary part of the transformation of science.

The final reason that the SRD should be global is because western science and western religion share many of the same paradigmatic assumptions and thus each shares the partiality of western perspectives. If, as stated above, science is culturally laden, then science has been in part constituted by religious commitments, which are an important component of culture.[3] Of course, the reverse is also true: religion is culturally constructed, and science is a part of the culture that constructs it. In other words, science and religion are both parts of the cultural soup that is responsible for science, religion and science and religion.

Because science and religion are aspects of the same culture, they share paradigmatic assumptions. Thus, the discovery that the models and meta-

phors of modern western science and modern western religion resonate with one another, should not be a surprise. After all, they are offsprings of the same parents and grew up together; sometimes fighting, sometimes cooperating, but always under the same roof.

This paradigmatic inter-relationship means that western science and western religion share many of the same cultural blind spots and cannot always be critical of one another, especially not in relation to their fundamental assumptions. Virginia Woolf once observed that men need women writers in order to describe the spot on the back of their heads that they cannot see, no matter how they twist and turn. The SRD needs to be global for the same reason.[4] Western scientists and western religious thinkers need to be in conversation with those who challenge the basic assumptions they share. It should go without saying that we also need to be open to hearing that challenge and responding to it.

If there are good reasons to be global in this discourse, there are also dangers. Given these dangers, the question is how to engage multiple traditions in constructive ways and, in particular, to avoid treating a particular perspective as though it were universal. One initial reaction is that the best way to do this is to pull back on our religious values and commitments. For religious thinkers committed to a multi-cultural discourse, the SRD might seem the perfect approach because science provides a nice neutral territory to meet, without the land mines of reincarnation, Jesus Christ, Muhammad or the Wheel of Samsara. There are several reasons why this is the wrong approach, reasons which become apparent from within the post-liberal or narrative theological trajectory.

The Post-liberal Trajectory

Post-Kuhnian, feminist and post-colonial science and technology studies all provide ample argument that scientific concepts, theories, methodologies, and truths are not objective, but instead bear the marks of their collective and individual creators. The social location of the scientist not only influences the direction of science, it can influence the shape of science itself and even the truths it discovers. In all the ways that matter, science is a local knowledge. This argument is congruent with the post-liberal trajectory in theology.

Post-liberals, such as Stanley Hauerwas, argue that modern liberal culture is based on a denial of the importance of narratives – our already existing cultures, traditions and stories – in forming who we are. Within liberalism, it is assumed that it is both possible and desirable to be free from any reliance on cultural narratives and to focus instead on universals, such as rationality. In short, it is the position that we are free to create our own stories.

"Narrative" can mean several things. In one sense, it means the history of a particular group of people, the thing that makes them a community. More than a common history, a narrative is a common interpretation of that history, a common story. Narrative is also central to the formation of the self,

with the emergence of my self occurring through the construction of a personal narrative that exists within the broader cultural narrative. I was born into the world, a not-yet-developed self. The world acted upon me – both literally and through its story which framed my emergence into the world – and I acted back. It is through action, and the process of organizing that action into my own coherent narrative, that I become a self.

There are several implications of this approach for understanding science. Foremost is the assertion that there is no such thing as universals or absolute truths, distinct from a given culture. This assertion that the abstract reasoning mind is a fallacy arises from the view that individuals are always part of communities. Our true selves are made of the stuff of communal life and when we try to eliminate our attachments and commitments, "the self shrinks rather than grows" (Hauerwas and Willimon 1989: 65). Everything that I do or think takes place in the context of the community.

Certainly, thinking and acting are the purview of individuals. But all that persons think and do happens in and because a community sets the boundaries of possible thought and action and, perhaps more importantly, because a community creates a context in which what a person thinks and how that person acts makes sense. Absent a community, there is no person to act, and no context to act in.

This connection between persons, actions and communities is expressed in the concept of character: "it is character, inasmuch as it is displayed by a narrative, that provides the context necessary to pose the terms of the decision, or to determine whether a decision should be made at all" (Hauerwas 1977: 20). Character is **not** an ontological category, but is instead the intersection of person, action and culture. Character expresses a self that is constructed from action, which in turn intertwines that self with community.

It is part of the nature of action to connect us with others. As Hannah Arendt points out, action is almost always reaction, a response to or continuation of the action of others within the community (1958: 239).[5] Further, while a particular action may begin as an individual event, it only achieves fruition by drawing others in. The same action that forms persons, entangles them in community.

> The realm of human affairs, strictly speaking, consists of the web of human relationships, which exists wherever men live together. The disclosure of the "who" through speech, and the setting of a new beginning through action, always fall into an already existing web where their immediate consequences can be felt. Together they start a new process which eventually emerges as the unique life story of the newcomer, affecting uniquely the life stories of all those with whom he comes into contact (Arendt: 1958: 183-4).

Thus, action is embedded in a community, an "already existing web of human relationships, with its innumerable, conflicting wills and intentions" (Arendt: 1958: 183-4) that forms our character and makes action and thought

both possible and sensible. Who I am – formed and framed by community – is inescapably connected to what I do and what I think.

A narrative approach resonates with the assertion within contemporary science studies that rationality and explanations are themselves dependent on context – a narrative – to frame reason, and what "counts" as an explanation (Hauerwas 1977: 25). The narrative assertion that it is not possible to abstract oneself from one's culture is also congruent with the suggestion within contemporary science studies that neither science nor scientists are objective but are instead value laden and intertwined with cultural values and images.[6]

Global Discourse: The Wrong Way

The post-liberal trajectory suggests at least three problems with approaching a global discourse through the "neutral territory" of science. The first is that this is an incorrect understanding of science. Western science has been built in the image of western culture, denying its own context and claiming to be a universal, objective system of knowledge, distinct from values embedded in any particular community and transcending the biases and values of the scientist. Science lets the facts or data "speak for themselves" and lead us where they will. Thus, an abstract notion of truth becomes the final arbiter of action.

From this perspective, social influences may influence science only externally – perhaps in the area of regulation or making rules for the proper development and use of science – but that influence is not internal. The scientist is, and should be, able to work free from cultural influences. Religion is even further removed, relegated to the role of – preferably unspoken – commitments, which may or may not inform us in the making of rules. Any commitments we have should be translated into universal – rationally defendable! – terms and justifications, stated with sufficient abstraction that everyone can agree upon them without reference to a particular tradition: no Buddha, no Allah and God forbid (whoops!) we should mention Jesus Christ. We can say life is precious, we just can't say why we think so.

Abstracting science from culture and from religious commitments – even when the religious commitment is to be free from religious commitments – distorts science by ignoring the influence of culture, character, beliefs and disposition. It ignores how our beliefs shape perceptions, instead depicting the world as a "given." How we believe we are to be in the world and how the world "is" are not unrelated.

Harding and others have pointed out that culture dictates which aspects of nature we will encounter (Harding 1998: 62-64). Science is not distinct from culture, so it is not distinct from our religious commitments. These commitments make a difference in part because they provide the varying metaphors, models and language, which enable us to see our particular parts of the world in diverse ways. These metaphors, models and language both reflect and generate different interests on the part of scientists. They also generate systematic knowledge and ignorance.

These different contacts create different perspectives and different questions. They even produce different – sometimes-conflicting – answers. The influence of these varying differences is evident even within western sciences:

> The conceptual frameworks of modern physics, chemistry, and biology on the one hand, and environmental sciences on the other hand do not fit together perfectly. The latter require learning to negotiate between the principles of these modern sciences and of both local and social knowledge of environments, neither of which has a place in the conceptual frameworks of those modern sciences . . . . Indeed, the conceptual frameworks of those three modern sciences no longer appear unifiable (Harding 1996: 18).

Science is not a nice, neutral, inoffensive, value-free starting point. Using science as a starting point is, in fact, the old colonial standpoint that in the past has dis- or undervalued traditional viewpoints – particularly those that even hint at being "religious" – as being "less than" or not as reliable as scientific ones.

This leads to the second problem with using science as a neutral starting-point. Because we are all thoroughly embedded in culture, it is not possible to speak or act in a way that is free from culture and even the assumption that it is possible and desirable to be value-free is value-laden. As Sandra Harding observes, "atomism, value-neutrality, and reliance on method themselves reflect historically specific . . . social images of the self, other, and community" (Harding 1986: 234).

Because the expectation that one can and should be value-free is a culturally specific value, taking it as a given or privileging it can lead to all of the problems that come from privileging local knowledge. For example, the expectation that one will express one's religious perspectives in a way that is not grounded in the particular history and symbols of that tradition – i.e. relying on "rational" justifications – excludes those who do not value secularization or share a reliance on or definition of "rational."

Finally, even if it were possible to be value-neutral, this would lead to a conversation lacking depth and vision. In the words of Helen Longino, "[w]hen purged of assumption carrying social and cultural values [observation and reason] are too impoverished to produce scientific theories of the beauty and power that characterizes even the theories we do have" (Longino 1990: 219).

This is in part because our religious traditions and commitments are rich resources for science, and for thinking about the relationship between religion and science, because they supply models, metaphors and language which makes it possible to "see" things in new and different ways. The usefulness of religious language and metaphors in contributing to science is one of the basic insights of the SRD, beginning with Ian Barbour's work over 25 years ago (Barbour 1974).

Harding expresses it by asserting that cultures – which includes religion – are toolboxes that give us resources

for thinking (1998: 61-72) and post-liberal theory suggests it by asserting that culture makes it possible to do science by forming us as persons, and giving us the context in which to think.

Not all perspectives are the same, and we need to bring our religious commitments into the room if we are to enrich and engage science. If we leave our particular religious traditions at the door, we leave all of our best tools in the hall.

A Global Discourse: An Alternative

The post-liberal tradition not only raises questions about approaching a global SRD via western science, it suggests an alternative. From the perspective of this approach, the way to be more open – and more effective – in the SRD is not to retreat from religious commitments but to be more overt. The premise that our knowledge systems – including science – are grounded in particular traditions implies that any contributions we make to science and/or religion we make as Hindus, Christians, Buddhists, Muslims and so forth. It matters that I am Christian or, more precisely, Lutheran. It matters both because my tradition shapes my perspective on science, religion and their relationship and because my tradition contains myths, models and conceptions that are valuable for understanding and transforming the sciences. It I try to hide my particularity, I not only distort and misrepresent my perspective, I lose valuable conceptual resources.[7]

Even if I wanted to abandon the distinctively Christian aspects of my position, I could not do so without rendering my position unintelligible. A Christian perspective cannot be stripped of, for example, Christological language or the tradition that frames that language and that perspective without making it meaningless. My positions are not "reasonable," outside of my tradition. My worldview is based on my belief that this world is created and sustained by God. My expectations of how we should act in and towards that world are based in the belief that it is the way God has acted and that that is the way God wants us to act.[8]

It is also important to speak from within the Christian tradition because the story of western science is intertwined with western culture and thus with western Christianity.[9] Carolyn Merchant, for example, has shown how prior to the 16th Century, nature was seen as female: a mother, a lover, etc., and as a living, dynamic entity with a body and a soul. This conception carried with it an ethic of care towards nature that was marked by moderation. In the 150 years from Copernicus to Newton, this view completely changed and nature became a machine, made up of discrete, interchangeable parts. Nature was no longer alive, with no spirit and no animation, and could be exploited at will.

This change had a religious dimension. Merchant, Rosemary Radford Reuther, Evelyn Fox Keller and others have argued that the scientific revolution was a child of the Reformation in that the removal of the divine presence from within nature contributed to the transformation from Mother to machine. In addition, human beings were seen to have fallen from innocence at the same time they fell from dominion. Innocence

could be regained through religion, dominion through science (*techne*). It was the duty of the scientist – ordained by God – to extract the truth from nature, by force if necessary, and through knowledge of nature, command and control it.

This intersection between the Christian tradition and western science makes Christian particularity all the more important because Christians are "in the belly of the beast," so to speak. Much of what has been destructive in western science has happened because Christians have abrogated their responsibility to be critical of western culture, including science and technology. This happened in part because Christians fell for the myths of a "sacred" secular sphere and notions of individualism. In so doing, we made it difficult to assess the ways that Christian convictions can constructively contribute to the practice of science. Christians need to take responsibility for our failure, and work to correct the excesses of the past.

Most importantly, my speaking as a Christian, while others speak as Hindus, Buddhists, or atheists, does not exclude all dialogue. On the contrary, it opens up space for conversation. It is approaching the SRD through a science that is idealized as an abstract, "rational," neutral territory that restricts discussion because if abstract rationality is the basis for discussion, then if we disagree, one of us is irrational (and it ain't me). But, when disagreements are based in a particular tradition, then they are based in our different stories. This makes it possible to talk about and understand our real differences and why they exist. Suddenly, it becomes possible to make informed, thoughtful decision about which particular perspectives – which tools – are the most appropriate for a particular task.

Conclusion

I do not mean to be naïve in suggesting that we be particular about our religious commitments. I am not unaware that approaching a global SRD thorough our religious commitments is also fraught with danger, and that religion has a past that is even more destructive than science. But, I believe that a commitment to our particular religious traditions is a much less dangerous path than denying them, and more likely to lead towards a destination that fulfills our hopes for western science.

I also recognize that, while I have given some justification for being particular about our religions beliefs, I have not given particulars for how to do that. Unfortunately, that lies outside the scope of this paper. My goal has been merely to suggest a direction, not dictate the path. I do hope that there was enough here to at least suggest that feminist, postmodern and postcolonial discourses are fertile resources for thinking of some specifics on how to be global in a way that can be truly positive. This includes the need to rethink many of our central questions through the lives and experiences of non-Westerners and the recognition that different cultures have distinct resources, which can be useful in addressing questions of science and religion. If religion and science can start

from different locations – from different understandings of science and religion – we can get a fuller picture of both, and of how to see them as interacting.

The goal of the SRD is not to begin with science and then somehow reconcile it with religious traditions, as if to legitimate either those traditions or science. Our goal is to ask questions and to move western science from its place of privilege as a knowledge system. Paul Tillich – a theologian from my own tradition of Lutheranism – described theology as a dialectic in which culture asks the question and religion provides the answers. If the SRD is to be global in a positive and transformative way, then I suggest that Tillich had it exactly wrong. In the SRD, our job as persons of faith is to challenge those aspects of culture that purport to have all the answers – whether that is western science, or any other particular perspective – and to ask pointed questions.

Notes

1. The "science and religion discourse" includes an incredibly diverse number of perspectives, approaches, methods and interests. Until a few years ago, its "fuzzy cannon" included the work of (i.e.) Ian Barbour, John Polkinghorne, Arthur Peacocke, Phil Hefner and the research being done at such institutions as the Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences (Berkeley) and the Philadelphia Center for the Study of Religion (Philadelphia). It also included publications such as *Zygon* and the online journal *Metanexus*. In the past five years there has been an exponential expansion of the discourse so that it is difficult to delineate, although these authors, centers and publications remain pivotal. For the purposes of this paper, SRD will refer to the explorations of the relationship between western science and religious values and commitments. This definition will likely become too narrow very quickly, precisely because of the global expansion of the discourse, which I address in this paper.
2. I will not address the issue of whether western science should be global. There are convincing arguments that the negative effects of the spread of western science and technology outweigh the positive ones, and that we should turn to indigenous sciences. As convincing as these arguments might be, they are largely moot. Western science is global, and it will remain so for the foreseeable future. A more helpful discussion would address ways to avoid—or mitigate—western hegemony and the damage it brings.
3. For a more in depth discussion of the connection between western religion and science, see Carolyn Merchant's, *Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution* (San Francisco: Harper, 1976), Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Gaia & God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1992), Margaret Wertheim, *Pythagoras' Trousers: God, Physics, and the Gender Wars* (New York: Random House, 1995).
4. And I hope I might be forgiven if I confess that I suspect that that spot on the back of the head of both science and religion shows evidence of male pattern baldness.
5. Interestingly, Arendt suggests that the only truly original act is forgiveness. All other actions are in some sense a continuation of what came before, only forgiveness is something new.
6. The literature on this is voluminous, but would include the works of Sandra Harding, Evelyn Fox Keller, Bruno Latour, Jean-Francios Lyotard, Helen Longino and scores of others.

7. This is not to say that Christianity is the only tradition that has anything to contribute. Christian perspectives are distinctive, and they have valuable and distinct contributions to make, but they are not universal.
8. This does not mean that Christian convictions can only be judged within that community. These are not immune to challenge from those who do not share our convictions. But those challenges and that discussion can only happen from a position of particularity.
9. For an excellent discussion, Merchant, *Death of Nature*; Reuther, *Gaia and God*; Keller, *Secrets of Life, Secrets of Death.*

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JPJRS 5/1 (2002) 45-52

Theology in a Pluralistic Context

Migration as a Trope

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1. Introduction

Ecclesia semper reformanda was a principle medieval church believed in. Raimundo Panikkar changes it a little to say *Ecclesia semper nascitura.* The basic and significant insight is the same. Heraclitus understood it years ago... Change is the only permanence, he had observed. Anything that refuses to change, stagnates and soon perishes. Change is the essence of life in all senses of the word. Change becomes most visible in movement.

Movement has become the defining characteristic of our age. On the roads of every continent, people are on the move by the million. The sad part of these migrations is that more and more people are forced to flee their homelands. Similarly, the rapid growth of urban centres indicates that people are migrating within a single country as well. One of the consequences of these migrations is the encounter and clash of cultures, the result of which is new experiences, new values, and new attitudes. What happens to religion and theology in such a situation?

Whether we like it or not we are living in a pluralistic context which influences each and every religion and each religion is forced to change, to adapt. Given this condition of constant flux this paper explores the individual and ecclesial response-ability in redefining themselves and coping with the context in which they find themselves.

2. The South Asian Context

Migrations have been a part of human history from the very beginning. Most of the early migrations were for food and for survival from extreme climates. The migration of birds and animals, which is instinctual, has been recorded in detail. Migration is a human experience that goes back to the dawn of history and has been a necessary ingredient in the development of civilization and the spreading of technology and ideas. The novelty of today's migrations is given by their global presence, their increasingly volatile and unpredictable appearance, the ease in intercontinental travel and the growing economic disparity between the rich and the poor.[1]

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When we look at the history of South Asia we see a series of migrations. We have the Aryans who moved into India about 2000 years before Christ. These large-scale migrations of powerful Central Asian tribes led to further migrations of the 'original' inhabitants of the land. We had other migrations in the name of invasions: first the Muslims and then the British, the Portuguese, the French, and the Dutch. All these migrations/invasions have given South Asia a rich and diverse culture. This diversity is best exemplified by the umpteen languages that are spoken in the region.

Our cities today and cities in general are becoming havens for migrants and people who have no roots. The texture of a city today is cosmopolitan with multiculturalism as an accepted fact, in spite of the fact that certain fundamentalist groups want to ignore it and believe in a uniform culture for all. Even the villages are not immune to this phenomenon due to television and the mass media.

Besides multiculturalism, the other pluralism that is most significant for us as thinkers in South Asia is the well-known religious diversity. So the context is a mosaic, its diversity so varied that one cannot name it and terms like India or South Asia are merely illusions which can only demarcate a geographical space and not a cultural one as it becomes impossible to say that anything is uniquely South Asian. Thus we see that the context is so different from the context of Israel, where Christianity was born and Europe, where Christianity grew and from where till this day it 'dominates' the rest of the Christian world.

3. Consequences of this Pluralistic Context

The environment shapes the organism that lives in it. Similarly all ideas that are born are influenced by the context in which they arise. No entity can remain unaffected by its context. If it tries to remain isolated and unaffected by its context it withers and dies a premature death. So what are some of the consequences of a pluralistic context.

a) Whenever a migrating community encounters a different culture it normally adopts an eclectic approach and tries to co-opt some of the practices, customs, ideas and even "idols" of the culture in which it finds itself. This eclecticism is essential for the growth and enrichment of the community.

b) The individuals in a migrating community experience a radical discontinuity in their life. The loss of roots is a major anxiety among most people. It is this lack of rootedness that is also responsible for the next consequence.

c) People in general begin to experience life in fragments. Postmodernism (about which we shall see more below) celebrates this fragmentary life and considers it an essential part of the contemporary condition.

These are some of the consequences of a pluralistic context that have a bearing on all theologizing as they directly affect the religious experiences and expression of people. We will have to delve deeper into these points and explore their subsequent consequences for theology.

Consequences for Theology

1. Eclecticism in theology is not something that is new. Christianity was

born in Jerusalem and during its period of consolidation in Rome it absorbed a lot of the Roman culture in its rituals and the Greek philosophy in its doctrines and theology, which held sway in even until recently under the name of Scholasticism. However this eclecticism is on the wane, if not completely suppressed, in our times. By eclecticism I mean a basic openness to the 'cultures' that form a part of our cultures. It is an openness and humility to accept that one does have the "complete" truth but that there are other ways of encountering the same reality. This 'perestroika' is necessary if one is to remain relevant in our day and time.

2. The discontinuity of life has special bearings for pastoral theology. The people that today's pastors have to cater to are not those who have a tradition to fall back on but people who have experienced life in a pluralistic context and who have been influenced by the diverse people with whom they grew up. The responsibility of the pastors is also to help such people in defining their own identity and mapping out their values in the new environments in which they regularly find themselves.

3. The third consequence is perhaps the most crucial for theology. Christian faith cannot remain unaffected by the processes of fragmentation in the world in which we live. The result of this fragmentation is a birth of the individual who is over and above the community. This process started with the enlightenment. Its final outcome is found in the postmodernist thinking which suspects and 'deconstructs' any authoritative 'overarching', 'totalising' explanations of things - like Christianity, Marxism or the myth of scientific progress. These 'metanarratives', which purport to explain and reassure are considered to be illusions, fostered upon people in order to smother differences, opposition and plurality. So the result is a belief in mininarratives which are "provisional, contingent, temporary and relative and which provide for the actions of specific groups in particular local circumstances" (Barry 1995: 87).

This situation and its outcome are well stated by Johann Reikerstorfer:

> The postmodern consciousness and the postmodern sense of life move unpretentiously within narrow perspectives; unmoved and without feeling much of a loss, the postmodern consciousness has left global solutions, total claims and answers behind in favour of the multiplicity, differentiatedness and the plurality of possible experiences and standpoints. Standpoints are adopted until they are proved untenable. Decisions are no longer made in the long term, but to some degree with a built-in option to change them; commitments are much more scattered than before, and lifestyle is becoming episodic (Reikerstorfer 1990: 17).

The sad story of Christianity is that it reacts very slowly to the changing situations. Church history teaches us that a lot of serious problems could have been averted if only the church had reacted in time and with proper understanding of the situation. Perhaps even the Eastern Schism and the Lutheran Revolt could have been averted. What is needed today is both an understanding of the situation and timely action.

What we need today, in the context of the pluralism, multiculturalism and the above mentioned experience of fragmentation, is a movement of Christian theologians toward the modern world in order to be present where today's people live and suffer. Regressive measures like the famous Oath denouncing Modernism in 1907 are not only harmful but show Ostrich-type behaviour.

Today more than ever the church must be open to dialogue with other religions and given the attacks on the Christians in some parts of the country we should also give serious thought to the Ecumenical Movement through dialogue with other Christian denominations.

We shall now consider how some of ancestors coped with this problem of pluralism. In the first example we shall consider the Exodus experience as the most significant cipher of the Old Testament and secondly we shall consider how the early church dealt with the problem of Pluralism.

The Exodus Experience

The Exodus experience holds the central place in the Jewish consciousness. In the Old Testament all the books seem to be written with reference to this one experience. The Experience of the passover, the journey from bondage to freedom, was always remembered in the collective unconscious of the people of Israel.

In Exodus it is Yahweh, with Moses the prophet, who leads the people's movement. The liberator God was also experienced as a God who was with them, on their side or going ahead of them (Ex.33:1-23). This is one reason why many struggles for injustice are finding their inpiration in the Christian faith. There is a striking insight in Ex. 20:4-6, where Yahweh bans the use of idols. There are no images for Yahweh as an image is mute. The Yahweh the people experienced was 'Emmanuel', a living voice, which continually addresses the people (Pixle 1983: 132). He is a challenging presence, an ongoing demand for justice. A far cry from the Jesus we keep locked up in the tabernacle. Thus making an image of Yahweh would serve to efface this demanding challenge.

This same insight will recur in the New Testament in the Jesus event. Emmanuel will have a tangible presence. Life is a journey and the encounter of the divine happens on this journey. It can take several forms as the disciples of Emmaus experienced. It needs humility and openness to receive the revelation.

The Early Church and Pluralism

There is an increased interest in the Early Church in the present time. Their problems and issues seem to be quite akin to ours. I would agree even with regard to the problematic of this paper. We should bear in mind also that much of the doctrine we practise, profess and propagate today was fixed by the 5th century. There are several lessons we can learn from the early church.

First of all pluriformity was the hallmark of the early church. The most tangible marker of this pluriformity is the scripture of the New Testament. The

early church accepted a pluriform gospel. Each of these was written in a contextual way. Similarly the early church had no difficulty in coping with two schools of theology - the Antiochian and the Alexandrian. Obviously there were minor differences and bickerings but these often were more due to prestige and power rather than due to the fact that one group felt threatened by the other. The diversity and richness of the early church was because it made allowances for pluralism to thrive. What was central was the faith in Jesus Christ. Current New Testament studies reduce the gospel to its formulas and the formulas to the ensemble of their backgrounds, sources and parallels. From this it follows that early Christianity was never "one" but always "many"(Meyer 1986:160).

The other lesson one can draw is the participation of lay persons in the early church. The members of the Society of Jesus feel that they have achieved something great because of their decree on 'Lay Participation'(GC 34). However, lay people played an active role in the early church. Both the male and female monastic movements trace their origins to lay persons who felt the need to lead a pious and ascetic life. The contribution of women in the early church was significant and has to be seriously researched and documented given today's just demand to give them their rightful place in the church.

Thirdly, Justin the Martyr can teach us a thing or two about dialogue (another hot cake today). Justin (died 165 CE) looked favourably on other religions. In his concept of Logos Spermatikos we have an ideal principle for all dialogue among religions. He believed that God is already present in other religions in the Logos form. Hence the need to take off one's shoes in a dialogue!

Finally, the early church had the not so easy task of self-definition. The question whether the identity of the primitive apostolic community is the same as the identity of the historic Catholic church cannot be easily answered. The separation of Christianity from Judaism resulted in the emergence of a new identity. However, it soon had the face the problem of the influx of gentile Christians, its world mission. The world mission effected changes of vantage point and horizon, a changed consciousness and changed ambitions. If the earliest Jerusalem community had looked on itself in awe as messianic Israel, the world mission produced a nascent communion of Jew and Greek, the beginning of a fellowship to be fully realized in history (Meyer 1986: 18). Here we see an attitude of openness, a readiness to change according to the signs of the times. This was necessitated by the migration of Christianity from one world to another. It entailed not only the task of bringing the gospel into the Greek field of vision but also generated a change in Christianity itself from its original self understanding as the elect of Israel to a world religion.

Christian Theology and the Pluralism of Religions

Most of the South Asian Christianity, some historical exceptions notwithstanding, is a western institution trans-

planted into the East when it was practically sixteen centuries old and already had a strongly developed constitution. In spite of nearly 200 million Asian Christians, theology is still very much a western concern. The attitude of the South Asian Church towards other religions can be visualised in two simple concepts; 'Exclusivism' and 'Inclusivism'. The former distances and depotentiates the historical religions in the name of divine revelation. It distinguishes between faith and religion and suggests the notion of a pure Christianity, which immunizes itself from all religion.

In contrast to this, the concept of 'Inclusivism' recognises the significance of other religions for salvation. It interprets them as 'implicit' or 'anonymous' Christianity.[2] However, with this interpretation it undermines the historical self-understanding of the non-Christian religions and makes itself incapable of receiving their prophecy

Vatican II was an important and pathbreaking council with regard to the church's views on other religions and the formation of a local church. In this direction two decrees were of paramount importance; *Lumen Gentium* and *Gaudium et Spes*. The former was perhaps the greatest document of the Council. It indicates the fact that the church understood to a large extent the situation in the world. It presents the church primarily as the "people of God" on a pilgrimage. The latter is important because it flows from the former as it shows the attitudes of a pilgrim. In this constitution the Council shows that the church has rediscovered the significance of the world. Similarly it awakened a fresh exploration of the church's relationship to other religions and its mission vis-a-vis their presence. These two documents created a lot of enthusiasm among the South Asian theologians both in terms of visualizing a local church and for going ahead with inter-religious dialogue.

One significant insight to be found in *Lumen Gentium* is the Council's assertion that the church is a mystery. This implies that the reality of the church can never be adequately conceptualized. No single model of the church has an absolute value. This insight moves away from the image of the church as a monolithic institution. The stress on the mystery aspect, which actually stresses the importance of an experiential approach to religion, can more easily resonate with the people in our country who follow other religions. However one must admit that precious little has been achieved and the church still retains a 'superiority' and 'teacher' complex.

The Road Ahead

To most Christians the church still appears to be a monolithic institution. A good number of people does not easily find it difficult to find their identity as well spiritual satisfaction in such a structure. This statement will be well borne out by the large number of Christians that are joining the numerous sects that are mushrooming all over South Asia. Increasingly, religion is ceasing to mean formal church religion and is being replaced by other agencies like a more private religious commitment as also such systems of belief as psychiatry and communism. Christianity as the 'Sacred Canopy', i.e., the symbolic universe that helped people to

cope with their life experiences now seems to be inadequate. Many individuals cannot relate their experiences with what the church has to offer.

Likewise one has to bear in mind the fact that Christianity was born as a marginal religion. Jesus himself lived a marginal life. However, as it began to get state sponsorship (post-Edict of Milan) it slowly began to settle down as the religion of the majority and this is where perhaps it lost a bit of its vitality. In a world that is dominated by identity politics the natural question that arises is whether the church today can continue being a highly centralised institution that legislates for all cultures and peoples. Will such a church keep making sense to people as diverse as the universe itself? Perhaps the answer lies in the insights provided by postmodernism. Christians need to take seriously the insight that the church is a mystery and hence there can be varied approaches in articulating one's religious experience. Christianity will thus be able to accept a wide spectrum of practices and beliefs. 'Any Christian theology that claims its basic continuity with its biblical roots may find what it needs in the full spectrum of forms in the Bible itself' (*Theology Today* April 1994: 112). The most important form which the church needs today may be the prophetic one. The prophet speaks not because he or she wishes but because God demands it. The prophet speaks on behalf of the other - the neighbour - especially the poor, the oppressed, the marginal other.

Not only the Liberation and Evangelical but all serious Christian theologies must maintain that prophetic form or admit that its transformation into some other reality has become something rich and strange but no longer Christian, that is, prophetic. In this pluralistic context, 'road', 'journey', 'pilgrimage' and 'migration' become tropes for all theologizing. One notices here that the aspect of migration that I began this paper with is not only a fact that necessitates a pluralistic understanding of theology but also acts as a metaphor for the attitude one needs to adopt while theologizing.

The Third Millenium

As the church enters the third millennium, the mass of Christians will not be in Europe, but rather in the two Americas, Asia and Africa. The 'centres' of Christianity, however, are still in Europe. Perhaps Christianity is moving towards its third millennium with the heavy liability of its messianic Eurocentrism and of its being the dominating religion of the first world. Wherever Christianity spread it carried with it its culture and its divisions. This is one reason while Christianity is still considered a foreign religion in most places. Similarly, it is perhaps also responsible for Christians staying a little aloof from the main currents of the cultural and political life of their respective countries. I mentioned the divisions because all over the world, one finds the divisions of European Christianity reflected in the many different denominations.

So what is the proposal for the future that is already here. Latin American, African and the Asian Christians need to free themselves from this inher-

ited and encumbering baggage. In order to do this we must "inculturate" ourselves and thus come to be at home in our own cultures. We must build our churches in our own architectural styles and name them after our own martyrs and saints. We must sing our own hymns and write our own catechisms. We must develop our own moral teachings and write our own contingent dogmatics. Eventually we must organise and administer ourselves at the local, regional and continental levels and no longer look to Europe. We will perhaps no longer cling to the denominations of our missionaries but overcome the divisions in European denominations. Then the church will be truly the one ecumenical church of Christ.

Conclusion

The age of excommunications, cautions, bans, etc., must come to an end if we are to truly make the church relevant in today's pluralistic context. The church must be ready to accept a wide spectrum of forms of understanding and expressions of religious experiences, Scripture and Tradition. Christianity must become pluriform if it has reach out to all the people among whom it has spread and grown. I have used the metaphor of movement to indicate the attitude one ought to have and show that most of our beliefs and interpretations have only a limited value and not a universal claim. The charge of relativism will be hurled at this line of thought. What happens to the church as we know it? It will obviously not be in fragments. This church may appear to the western mind as 'fragments' of a church of Christ torn apart but to the South Asian mind it will appear rather as 'parts', portions of a whole whose cohesion and unity lies elsewhere, beyond any institution.

Notes

1 For a more detailed discussion on migration in our age and time see 'The Worldwide Context of Migration: The example of Asia,' Migrants and Refugees, "The Worldwide Context of Migration: The Example of Asia," Migrants and Refugees, *Concilium* p 3. See also the whole issue of *Theology Today* (April 1994).

2 This idea has its strongest proponent in Karl Rahner

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Postmodernism Seen from a Critical Perspective

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Introduction

Postmodernism is the contemporary intellectual movement which originated in the West, and now affects the entire socio-cultural and political milieu of our times. It has within itself a wide variety of views and even conflicting conceptual positions. Its moral and religio-cultural positions are a challenge to all the existing socio-political and religio-metaphysical views and the ways of life that we all take for granted. Its influence is reflected in almost every walk of life. Postmodernism is making its presence felt in literary circles, youth movements, scientific communities, feminist and homosexual movements, and the spectrum of academic disciplines such as art, media, music, politics, theology, pedagogy and empirical sciences. Postmodernism questions the thrust of modernity, namely, methodical and monological reason. It rejects such a reason and calls for the affirmation of plurality and diversity. Nevertheless, it has failed to offer a credible alternative to reason, even a relative one, and hence all that it offers are preposterous proposals. Knowing well, that there are a lot of persons who wish to be labeled as postmodern in our own country in various disciplines, this essay seeks to examine direction, of postmodernism as well as its consequences.

The term postmodernism is widely used to denote a number of philosophical views developed in France in the late sixties, Originally known as post-structuralists this group of philosophers were trained in structuralism. According to them, all societies and cultures possess particular and variant structures which shape and form the consciousness of the members of that socio-cultural group. Postmodern philosophers agree with this position of the structuralist thinkers in toto and argue further that there are no objective universal meanings of words or texts or any such permanent structures that are at the foundation of human consciousness. All structures are relative. According to postmodern authors, socio-cultrual structures are a burden on humanity. The earlier we get rid of them from our cultural discourse and practice, the better it is for us all. Then we can live our freedom and creativity in its fullness. Postmodernists stand for the creation of new meanings

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and values, and wish to let the symbols to dance and sing in a free play of creation.

History of Postmodernism

The term postmodernism was first used as early as 1917 by a German philosopher, Rudolf Panwitz to describe the nihilism of the century culminating in Nietzsche. Later the word appeared in one of the Spanish literary critique Frederico de Onis in 1934 to refer to the backlash against the literary modernism (Madrid 1934: xviii-xix; see Rose 1991). In 1939 Bernard Iddings Bell, an English theologian used it to refer to the failures of secular modernism in the religious sphere. Arnold Toyenbee has used the term in his historical writings to denote the post first world war mass society. In philosophy the term is currently used to refer to the post-structuralistic philosophy of the French philosophers Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Derrida, Michael Foucault, Georges Battaile, Jean Francios Lyotard and a host of contemporary thinkers.

Most of these French authors have been influenced by the structuralist thought as well as the phenomenological ideas coming from German philosophy. They agree with the structuralists that there are no universal structures or categories of thought that form the human self. However, these post-structuralist thinkers refute the structuralists' position that cultural signs and symbols are the key to the formation of human self. According to these authors, it is not cultures that create man; rather it is man who creates his culture. Postmodern authors are intent on deconstructing the symbolic world of man in view of self-liberation and free self-formation.

With these thinkers, philosophy in France underwent a sea change in the sixties. Marxist existentialism and phenomenology, which called for the restoration of the alienated self, received further contributions from the post-structuralist group of philosophers. Marleau Ponty and Sartre were displaced by these radical thinkers giving a new impetus to cultural evaluation and critique. Their criticism is not only directed to the socio-political situation, but to the very legitimacy of the western culture and civilization. They review the basic principles that contribute self-formation in our cultures such as rational thought, universal moral code, sexual differentiation and all universal socio-political and cultural values and regulatory premises of life.

Postmodernity expresses its radical views not only in philosophy but also in a variety of disciplines, art, architecture, morality, religion, literature, social and political behavior and many other socially significant fields and disciplines. The idea of staid and functional modern architecture of urban dwellings was the point of criticism in Death and Life of Great American Cities by Jane Jacob. She exposed the hollowness of urban reform movements in America and showed its anti-urban and anti-human tendencies. In his Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture, Robert Venturi promoted architectural extravagance in the place of simplicity and functionality. The student revolution of the late sixties in Europe played a crucial role in the making of a postmodern

sub-culture. Postmodernists challenge the medieval awe for authority on which is based the socio-political and cultural order of the West. It is this unquestioned authority, postmodernist authors in the beginning had challenged. Most of the postmodern criticism is focused on delegitimising authority that and emphasizing freedom and spontaneity. Daniel Bell (1973) notes this change as one which alters the social, political and cultural order of the West in a radical manner. The era of the triumphant industrialism, which reconstructed life for most of the European world, is over and a new era dawns where the West is forced to recognize the competing universe of co-players.

The history of postmodernism in the 70s and the 80s is basically one of widespread acceptance of the ideas spread by Jacques Derrida, Jean Francio Lyotard, Georges Battaille, Michel Foucault etc. Their postmodernist ideas could be gathered together below.

Major Features of Postmodernism

1. Postmodernism criticizes the notion of 'presence' or 'presentation' in knowledge, as the phenomenologists explain it . Presence refers to the immediate phenomenal datum available to man of an object in his knowledge of that object. Is this datum self-given by the object? Postmodernist authors, especially Derrida, take up this question for discussion. He denies that there is any pure presentation of objects in our consciousness. Nothing is immediately given, he would say. All objects in presenting themselves are represented through our sign systems, language and interpretation etc. There is nothing that is directly presented to the human mind without the medium of our cultural and linguistic categories. Hence, all presentations are representations. Derrida vehemently rejects any such thing as 'pure presentation', i.e., an immediate, unmediated, transparent givenness of the object.

2. Postmodernism also criticizes the attempt of rational enquiry to look into the origin or source of all human knowledge. According to the postmodern authors, there are no ultimate foundations for our knowledge. Beyond the phenomena there is nothing. Phenomena are all what reality is. Going beyond phenomena is a futile exercise in imagination and achieves nothing. The possibility to return to the origin of phenomena, to recapture the original text, and the attempt to look into the foundations lead to nothing. 'Every author is a dead author'. Digging into the history of the text can never recapture an author's intentions. There is no authoritative foundation in interpretation, argue these authors holding a radical hermeneutic position. And authorial intentions are not relevant to understanding a text. This would mean that there is no single right interpretation. All readings are correct. As many readings there are, so many meanings are possible.

3. Thus, postmodernism criticizes the claim to unity in knowledge. Knowledge is plural as interpretations are plural. All our knowledge is relational. And relational knowledge can never be single - it will always be plural. All texts are read differently by different persons.

And the reader of a text too is never the same. Individuals too are plural and relational. Everything is constituted by relations, even the self. As a text is read in different ways, so too an individual person is according to his relations, plural. There is no unity or universality of the self. We are different at different times and situations. Human self is a multiplicity of forces and relations.

4. Postmodernism also denies the transcendence of such ideas as truth, goodness, beauty, rationality etc. These are, according to postmodern writers, simply socio-cultural products, and there is nothing absolute or transcendent about them so too all norms of conduct are relative and relational. There is nothing per se sacrosanct about them. Norms vary from place to place and from people to people. Jürgen Habermas, a major critique of postmodernism, would complain that what postmodernists promote is anarchy, not liberation. But one thing is obvious: postmodernism calls for a critical analysis of our smug complacency towards accepted norms and traditions.

5. These postmodernist features are complimented by most of these authors by their focus on the marginalised, the outlawed and the abnormal of the society. "The other" in the society is often excluded and sidelined. The postmodernist writers will show how abnormal we ourselves have become with our obsession with normality. This is true not only of every society, but even of our own acceptance of ourselves. We tend to hide or ignore certain constitutive aspects of our lives such as sex, aggressiveness, jealousy as unacceptable. Normal society rejects the insane, the mad, the poor and the wretched, the homosexual, the feminine and the cast-offs. Postmodernists will embrace these sections of society and focus their attention on them.

Some Representatives

Having described these major features of postmodernism, I shall now discuss a few postmodernist authors. I have selected these authors as representatives of postmodernism with a view to showing the unbeaten path they take in their writings. From a philosophical point of view postmodernism challenges the modernist and medieval mind-set. It has threatened the religio-metaphysical and mythical world-views and moral positions. A new anthropological project is envisioned. Nietzsche is credited with initiating this change in western philosophy. He exploded the myth of the liberating capability of the Enlightenment Reason. He argued that reason is nothing but the will to power. Reason overtly or covertly operates for power and domination. In science, morality, in art and even in metaphysics, power is the major category. Knowledge for him is a means of power.

This Nietzschean critique of reason introduced western philosophy to a new era. Nietzsche flattened out the genre of knowledge into the level of self-aggrandizement and domination. This, according to Habermas, one of the prominent contemporary critique of Postmodernism, "is enthroning taste, 'the Yes and No of the palate' as the organ of a knowledge beyond true and false, beyond good and evil" (1987: 96).

Habermas objects to the aestheticising of reason by Nietzsche. According to him, Nietzsche has failed to recognize reason in its manifold expressions. Aestheticising of reason with his theory of power gets him entangled in the dilemma of a self-enclosed critique of reason and prevents him from recognizing the capacity of reason for critical assessment. According to Habermas, argumentation is the ground of judgement, and it is based on logic, not on taste. Logic does not admit the category of power for validation in any of the human sciences.

Nietzsche has inspired many contemporary thinkers in the West to look at knowledge differently. Heidegger and Derrida have been led on the Nietzschean anti-metaphysical path to subject centered philosophy, while Battaille, Lacan and Foucalt have carried on the skeptical project of Nietzsche by unveiling the distortion of the will to power.

1. Martin Heidegger (1884-1976)

Heidegger is one of the most prominent philosophers of the West in the twentieth century. He disputed the very foundation of western theory of knowledge by challenging the primary premises of western metaphysics. Metaphysics in the West as it was developed since Aristotle and Plato was, according to Heidegger, a final answer to the ontic enquiries. It was in his terms, ontotheology, not ontology. It was always the study of the Being of beings as the presumed explanation of beings and never the question of Being itself. He undertakes to unveil the forgotten history of Being as that which the Being itself closes and hides. For Heidegger, Ontology is not an objective study as other sciences are but a subject's intuitive inquiry into the self. It is the self-enquiry of what Being reveals and hides. It is then phenomenology – a study of the experiential-existential phenomenon of the Dasein. Ontological enquiry, according to him is primordial to any ontical enquiry. It is before all relations. Hence it is before any objective thought. Metaphysics is not an after thought of sciences. Sciences are only one way of man's thinking, not the whole of his thought. They are objective inquiries.

The primordial enquiry of Being for Heidegger then becomes an analysis of the Dasein (the being-there), and later of language. In this way, Heidegger converts Husserlian phenomenology into an ontological hermeneutics. According to Husserl's epistemological theories, phenomena are self-given to our mind and are intuitively grasped by man. Heidegger questions this assumption and argues that phenomena are always presenting themselves in an interpretative mode. It is always given within a format. These are no pure showing themselves of phenomena. Heidegger's conversion of Husserelian phenomenology into an ontological enquiry takes him to the path of his fundamental ontology. Truth is an uncovering. Being true means being uncovering. This uncovering, is the way of the being of Dasein. This uncovering has the character of doing violence. Violence is, for Heidegger, the distinctive ontological character of the Dasein.

The ontological enquiry of Dasein becomes an existential enquiry now. Fundamental ontology takes an anthropological turn. In that enquiry, Heidegger asserts that Dasein's authenticity/inauthenticity would finally be the deciding factor in the revelation of Being. We can either ignore in our inauthenticity the revelation to Being or else in our concern, solicitude and care, affirm it.

Heidegger successfully exploded the myth of the onto-theological notions of Being. However, he failed to explain further what this Being is and what is the essence of reason. He also stumbles by his immersion with the subject-centered philosophy in Being and Time. Consequently, Heidegger in his later writings becomes cautious. Henceforth, he speaks only of the revelation of being. Language now mediates Being to Dasein. Language is then the happening of Being. It is the house of Being where man dwells! Man thus becomes a guest, a shepherd and a mere guardian. Reflection and evaluation of language is forfeited at the altar of Being. Heideggerian opposition to the Onto-theology retreats into a mysticism of Being.

Habermas bitterly criticises Heidegger for this sacrifice. "The language of Being and Time had suggested the decisionism of empty resoluteness: the later philosophy suggests the submissiveness of an equally empty readiness for subjugation," he writes (1987 *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, 141). Habermas considers the entire philosophical enterprise of Heidegger as not merely antimetaphysical, rather as a legitimating argumentation for the German fascist National Socialism. Heidegger was yoked to the ideals of German nationalism and the Führer more than to the realization of the destiny of Dasein. Habermas points to Heidegger's blunder in his philosophy of Being in the following statements (159-60):

> With in the frame of this concept, Heidegger's fascist error takes on significance related to the history of metaphysics. In 1935 Heidegger still saw the inner truth and greatness of the National Socialist movement in the 'encounter between global technology and modern man.' At that time, he still trusted in the National Socialist movement to enlist the potential of technology in the service of the project the new German Dasein. Only in the later course of the debate with Nietzsche's theory of power does Heidegger develop the concept of technology in terms of the history of ontology as that of Gestell. From that time, he was able to view fascism itself as a symptom and to classify it, alongside Americanism and communism, as an expression of the metaphysical domination of technology. It is only after this turn that fascism, like Nietzsche's philosophy, belongs to the objectively ambiguous phase of the overcoming of metaphysics.

Those who admire Heidegger and his philosophy do not always remember that he was one of the spiritual guides of Nazism. As Habermas has remarked, "The story of Heidegger's influence is great. Perhaps this very case makes understandable why our relationship with greatness is a broken one" (1985: 62).

2. *Jacques Derrida (1930)*

This Algerian born French philosopher too has evolved his philosophy of a radical hermeneutics from the ideas of signs and meaning developed by Edmund Husserl. Husserl understands that meaning is derived for a sign by its intention. Signs have their meaning in the intention of the sign-user/s. According to him, there are two aspects of a sign: a leibliche seite (a bodily aspect), and an ideale seite (ideal aspect). The bodily aspect is different from the intentional aspect. However, both are connected to each other in a special way. The bodily aspect exteriorizes the mental aspect. According to Husserl, meaning is an act of expression. Expression is guided by rules, grammar, logic etc. Meaningful language is limited to expressions. For Husserl, the ideal aspect of expression is fixed.

Here Derrida differs. Derrida argues that an ideal meaning is never a pure presentation. It is not fixed. Ideal meaning itself is a representation and is constituted in repetition, and it is never completed for us as finite beings. Linguistic meaning can never be ideally completely present. There can never be an absolutely significant content or an absolutely identical or univocal meaning in language. A post card can have as many meanings as there are readings. This is the contention of Derrida. According to him, Husserl has platonised meaning. Derrida overturns the project of Husserl. He shows the primacy of signs over meaning. Meanings can vary. Signs remain open to various interpretations. Meaning is liberated of being, truth and presence in an act of creativity and innovation.

Having liberated signs from meanings imposed on them, Derrida lets signs dance. In this freedom signs achieve the capability for creation. Derrida speaks of two types of signs: signs of rabbinical order and signs of poetical order. Rabbinical order restricts signs, whereas in the poetical order they are let to dance and sing and express themselves freely and creatively. Derrida wants the future to be approached by laughing and dancing, not in trembling and fear. Caputo, an appreciative commentator of Derrida, captures the spirit of Derrida in the following words:

> But the work of deconstruction is not work but play. That is the point of the DerridSan stylus, and that is the "contribution" he makes to radical hermeneutics. We must understand that any talk of solicitation and anxiety in Derrida is subordinated to a Dionysian laughter and exuberance. He is no captive of the spirit of seriousness. He makes the austere pages of transcendental phenomenology rumble with deconstructive energy. He spirits the signifier across the borders of a priori grammar and sets it free to produce effect in its own region, without regard to intuition and objectification. Whatever solicitation and trembling is here is made to dance. Whatever anxiety is here has learned how to laugh (Caputo 1987: 147).

From a critical perspective Derrida's rhetoric of deconstruction is ignorant of the contemporary speech act theories. He, just as Nietzsche, has failed to recognize that speech acts are different kinds. Signs are not employable in poetic manner in scientific or philosophical writings. Literature or poetry may belong to one type of genre. Sci-

ence, philosophy, logic and mathematics cannot be placed in a poetic and imaginative speech mode. Aestheticising of language is not liberation. It can simply become at the most day-dreaming. Paradoxes of modern age, Habermas – a contemporary critical theorist would argue, need answers which will solve the anomalies of the age. Mere deconstruction cannot replace the exigency of the times for new paradigms and logical solutions.

The same host of problems as his mentor, Heidegger, also plagues Derridean deconstruction. Only difference is that, avoiding the authoritarian Being, Derrida walks on an anarchist path. Deconstruction sings the lines, 'everything goes.' "Derrida means to go beyond Heidegger; fortunately, he goes back behind him," writes Habermas in the *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (1987: 183). The problem with Derrida is that he has no answers to the self-contradictions of modernity. Habermas suspects in him some sort of a leaning towards Jewish mysticism as the sort of answer that he proffers for the problems that he himself has raised in his Gramatology. Habermas writes, "Derrida's grammato-logically circumscribed concept of an arche-writing whose traces call forth all the more interpretations the more unfamiliar they become, renews the mystical concept of tradition as an ever delayed event of revelation" (1987: 183). Derrida seems to revive the tradition of Jewish aleph – the mystical Word. Habermas holds that grammatological mysticism to the simmering modernity is no answer at all. Derrida is only reviving the rabbinical hermeneutics in a displaced way, he complaints.

3. *Georges Bataille and Michel Foucault*

Both these above authors intend to transgress the boundaries of modernity, one in erotic excesses and the other in exposing the neurotic nexus between power and truth. They try to explode the self-confidence of modernity. Bataille, like Heidegger, opposes subjectivism as it got developed in modernity as objectivism. While Heidegger's critique is on transcendental subjectivity, Bataille focuses on a moral critique.

By transgressing the traditional morality and giving free play and spontaneity to life and its instincts, Bataille hopes to affirm the true sovereignty of the subject. Bataille, thus seeks to liberate subjectivity and establish it in total freedom. According to him these unbounding and transgression take place through the profanation of the holy. This profanation has taken various routes since modernity itself. From the anti-political and religious reformation to contemporary capitalism and religious secularism, this spirit is continuously changing the traditional world. The only area left out from the purview is the moral world and hence, through eroticism, Bataille intends to profane the moral world.

According to Bataille, the death of God concept of Nietzsche in religious world can correspond to the moral transgression of sexual horizon. He considers the transgression as comparable to the squandering ideal of nature itself. Ostentatious squandering preserves

nature's balance. Sexual ostentation can preserve the balance of unbalanced humanity. For Bataille, death and sexuality are the climax of the festival celebrated by life and nature. In ostentation and lavish indulgence purposive rationality is contradicted. In capitalism, reified labour is again and again, with great calculation, reinvested for material production and self-aggrandisement. The result will be catastrophic adventures, global wars, ecological disasters, mindless violence and terror and even nuclear holocausts. The normatively regulated capitalistic society is based on prohibitions and authority. Being a free Marxian, Bataille wants to show also the inner contradictions that are involved in Marxism.

Bataille compares erotic experiences to religious experiences. In his own words, "The inner experience of eroticism requires of the one undergoing it no less great a sensitivity towards the anxiety that establishes the prohibition than towards the desire that leads to its transgression. It is the religious sensitivity that continuously connects desire and terror, intense pleasure and anxiety, with one another" (1982; Habermas 1987: 232). Bataille considers the ideal man to be the one who establishes his own norms. He employs eroticism to transgress modernity and its discursive thought and banish morality, God and his agents from the face of earth. He intends to establish a world of erotically stimulated mysticism. Is the project of Bataille similar to that of some of the Indian Tantrics?

Michel Foucault continues this counter cultural attack on reason more over in the same line as Bataille. Foucault considers Bataille his Guru, especially for his assessment of religion and sexuality as capable of attaining self-transcendence. Bataille, according to Foucault, has enriched our cultural debate. In his attempt to further this discourse, Foucault posits madness as a phenomenon complimentary to reason. He studies the pre-history of psychiatry in his work Madness and Civilisation, and discovers that madness and abnormal behaviour were sidelined by a compulsively normal society. Those who expel the abnormal and the mad are no less disfigured psychologically than the mentally abnormal people themselves. Western history of reason, Foucault will assert is a history of compulsive normalcy and a case of monological development of reason where diversity and pluralism were excluded and banished to the sidelanes. According to him, the so-called rational society has tried to restrict and eliminate the heterogeneous elements, the mad and the criminal, the poor and the eccentric from the main stream. Foucault drew up a parallel history of reason on the face of psychiatric history.

In the march of reason in the West truth has become the casualty by exclusion and elimination. The will to power hides behind every truth. Foucault tries to unmask this history of reason in his "Nietzsche, Genealogy and History". According to him, power lurks behind the genesis of all knowledge. Power constitutes the truth of discourse and even sign systems. Will to truth is a concealed from of power. Power and the will to knowledge are at the foundation

of all human sciences. At the social level too power is the deciding factor.

Postmodernism with its deconstructive turn in language has taken various forms and tried many projects. Without exception, this deconstructive project does not go beyond the realm of the mundane, and today an attempt is being made to include in its purview the question of the transcendence. More than ever, it looks possible that the deconstructive project will leave the path of destruction as its main task and play a positive role in finding new paradigms of knowledge for our age. The world is in need of such paradigms.

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JPJRS 5/1 (2002) 63-80

Radical Hermeneutics or Pre-hermeneutic Nostalgia?

A Critique of John Caputo's Philosophy of Religion

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This is meant to be a critical article on postmodernism. But how does one talk about postmodernism, which is a whole outlook on life, in a short article? Compounding this difficulty is my own judgment of postmodern philosophy (which is only one aspect of the wider cultural phenomenon of postmodernism) as a Wittgensteinian ladder (Wittgenstein 1974: 6.54): it is something that is to be kicked away, but only after having used it to see some of the blunders perpetuated by traditional Western thinking, and not before. To circumvent these difficulties I have decided to focus on a single postmodern theme and on a single author. The author is John D. Caputo and the theme is that of undecidability. Caputo, professor of philosophy at Villanova University, is considered "the foremost American continental postmodernist, continuing a line of inquiry extending from Nietzsche and Kierkegaard on up through late Heidegger, Derrida and Foucault" (Marsh 1988: 459). But this is not my only or even primary reason for choosing to focus on Caputo. The primary reason is his engagement with religious, and specifically Christian beliefs. Besides regarding Meister Eckhart as one of the heroes of his "radical hermeneutics" (his version of postmodernism), he has also made a significant comparative study of Thomas Aquinas and Martin Heidegger.[1] He has also been encouraging Catholics to adopt a "prophetic postmodernism" (Caputo 2000). In this essay, however, I shall restrict my discussion to Caputo's contention of undecidability between the religious and the tragic views of life and its application to Jesus and his resurrection.

The paper is divided into three parts. The first part gives a brief view of postmodernism and its significance, so that there is at least an inkling of why the postmodern ladder is needed.The second part of the paper is an exposition of the theme of undecidability, with special emphasis on Caputo's employment of it. In the last part I examine what this undecidability amounts to. I suggest that Caputo's espousal of radical undecidability is the result of being a prisoner of a pre-hermeneutic mind-set.

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I. The Significance of Postmodernism

Postmodernism is a slippery concept. But in its philosophical form, it is generally taken as an attempt to dismantle the cardinal principles and assumptions of the modern outlook — a "radical critique of the 'philosophical discourse of modernity'"(Van Niekerk 1995: 175).[2] If Descartes, Hume and Kant exemplify the modern, Jean-Fracois Lyotard, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault and Richard Rorty epitomize the postmodern. F.Nietzsche, M.Heidegger, and L. Wittgenstein are the transitional figures.[3]

Postmodern philosophy, however, is more than a critique of modernity. Much of what the postmoderns criticize go back to the origins of Western philosophy. Postmodern philosophy "clears up some of the smoke metaphysics has been sending up for over two millennia, ever since Plato took it upon himself to answer all of Socrates' questions..."(RH 6), as Caputo puts it. That makes it rather inappropriate to characterize the postmodern mood as a reaction to, or an attempt to dismantle, the modern. The term is appropriate only to the extent that modern philosophy accentuates some of the features present from the beginning. The metaphysical history of Western philosophy, especially that of the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition, may be characterized as common sense writ large on the cosmic canvas with the indelible ink of Aristotelian formal logic. By common sense I mean the everyday perceptual world of objects where objects are given to the senses as readymade entities. We classify them and talk about them in terms of genus and species, substance and accidents. Language is considered primarily in referential terms, a view that was most coherently and systematically expressed in the philosophy of early Wittgenstein. Into these categories we use for talking about what we take to be reality as a matter of common sense, enters logic. The laws of meaningful discourse like the principles of identity and non-contradiction now come to be seen as the laws of reality itself.[4] The implication is that our talk about reality is no longer seen merely as that (i.e., the outer limits of discourse such that our talk does not end up in contradictions and, hence, meaninglessness), but as expressing the underlying nature of reality itself. Thus, reality comes to be seen in terms of unchanging, eternal essences and changing accidents. And when the law of non-contradiction, now imported from the realm of logic and discourse –which requires the classificatory device of genus and species-- into the realm of metaphysics and reality, it would follow that all reality and truth can, in principle, be classified into one coherent system. The main difference between a religious 'being' and other 'beings' is that the former is the most general category 'Being' with a capital B which underlies every other 'being'. Further, by making the common sense world of perception as its paradigm, this grand metaphysical tradition lost sight of the knowing subject and her consciousness. This neglect of the subject has implications for decision. Decision is a matter of conforming to the reality of things, the unchanging essence to be discovered in the cosmos; it has

nothing to do with the interests and concerns of the subjects who decide.

This common sense view and the grand metaphysical synthesis faces its first major challenge in the modern period with the revolutionary developments in science, such as the overthrow of geocentrism. What is important here is not the individual scientific developments but the overthrow of the deliverances of common sense. Rather than suspend the wisdom of common sense, the moderns could have drawn another conclusion: that there are limits to our common sense categories. But that would have meant a radical departure from the ancient metaphysical tradition with its doctrine of one essential truth of reality. Brought up as they were on that tradition of metaphysics with its singular truth, they now began to see that singular truth to lie rather in science than in common sense. But a positive development of the uncertainties brought about by modern science was the discovery of the subject. The subject they discovered, however, was a subject of conscious operations; there is still no place for the unconscious or the different states of consciousness or for any hermeneutic mediation in knowing. For the moderns, the knowing may require an effort but there are no variations in the knowing consciousness. As a result, the Kantian knower may have to engage in an active interrogation of nature but the answers received from nature would be universally true and valid, in as much as reality could be known. Therefore, all knowledge could still be systematized into one logically coherent whole. It is easy to see that this dream of the moderns is in direct continuity with the older metaphysical tradition.

What postmodernism does is to expose the true nature of this heritage for what it is. It draws our attention to the fact that the objectivism of common sense itself is the result of the forgetfulness of the subject, that logic is not a feature of the cosmos, that the human subject is much more than the conscious reason with its formal logical operations. With the discovery of the various levels of consciousness, there is no way in which all knowledge could be synthesized into one coherent system. Thus, we are confronted with a multiplicity of language games and life worlds; we play different language games and inhabit different worlds. This, it seems to me, is the valid point in Jacques Derrida's critique of logocentrism: a repudiation of the idea that logos is not merely *our* word or *our* representation of the world, but an encapsulation of the essential nature of reality (what he calls "metaphysics of presence"). Once we give up that idea and recognize the hermeneutic mediation involved in our encounter with reality, we are not far from concluding with Rorty that "the world does not tell us what language games to play"(Rorty 1989: 6). If this is taken as the essence of the postmodern sensibility, we can see how different it is from that of the ancients and the moderns. For the ancients, with their metaphysical certainties built on common sense and its forgotten subject, it was the essential nature of reality that determined our language. With this referential view of language, there was no question of a multiplicity of language games. The same goes for the moderns with their

scientific certainties (built on the conscious operations of the subject, and the neglect of variations in consciousness). It was still the nature of reality that determined the limits of our language and knowledge; here again, there was no question of any multiplicity. Postmoderns, in contrast, have become acutely aware that they have no basis for building a single unified language: they can neither lay claim to a "metaphysics of presence" nor to the optimism and certainty moderns had in science.

II. Undecidability and Religious Truth

The contention of Rorty ("the world does not tell us what language games to play") can also be taken as the most succinct articulation of undecidability. The contention is that there is a multiplicity of truths, meanings, interpretations, worldviews, theories etc. and we have no basis for deciding among them. Derrida is well known for his claim that "There is nothing outside the text" such that there could be any "reassuring end to the reference from sign to sign"(Derrida 1994: 158, 49). There could only be interpretations, and interpretations of interpretations. In the words of Madan Sarup,

> Just as signs refer only to other signs, texts can refer only to other texts, generating an intersecting and indefinitely expandable web called intertextuality. There is a proliferation of interpretations, and no interpretation can claim to be the final one... [Derrida] opens up the vista of an endless play of signifiers that refer not to signifieds but to other signifiers, so that meaning is always ultimately undecidable (Sarup 1993: 52).

John Caputo applies the doctrine of undecidability to the religious realm. In his opinion, there are two fundamental approaches to life: the religious and the tragic. He takes "the religious" as a certain way of responding to suffering. In the religious framework, "the very idea of 'God' means He who stands always and necessarily on the side of those who suffer" (RH 280) Although one could take exception to this characterization of religion as being excessively narrow, that would be diverting our attention from our theme. He contrasts this (religious) view of life with the tragic view as found in Nietzsche. "In the tragic view, suffering is *not* a violation, not a vandal which comes crashing into life, destroying and undoing life. It is, on the contrary, part of life..."(RH 282).[5] On this view, "suffering is worked into the very texture of life, entangled with it... as part of the natural movement of the flux and its system of tensions and strife". Driving the difference home, he says: "The real difference between the religious and the tragic is that, in the tragic view, suffering is not a violation, not an injustice, not an intruder without rights. Life is not unfair. It is as innocent as the wind" (RH 284).

That suffering may be "as innocent as the wind" does not mean that Caputo is about to side with the tragic view of life, as against the religious. This is so because he also realizes that

> The tragic view, against its own rhetoric, is in fact not hard enough: it accepts, embraces, and makes light of

> just what it should resist. It is tolerant of that against which it should raise its voice in protest. It accepts just what it should defy. It lets violence off too easily. Its notion of justice of strife is that of a weak-willed judge. It has no nerve for a real fight, which means to resist the wasteful effects of suffering (RH 285).

He recognises that from the religious point of view,

> the tragic view has a short memory and is a pawn in the hands of those who know how to play the game of power. It is the religious view which is liberating, while the tragic view is the laughing gas of the suffering. It asks them to love their exploitation and affirm it in a Dionysian dance. Suffering is not innocent, not when there is systematic exclusion and oppression all around (RH 286).

One would have thought that this is reason enough to throw in one's lot with the religious view. But not for Caputo. He says, "I know of no way to adjudicate between these incommnesurables, nor is that my wish. I prefer to keep the debate open..."(RH 285)

2.1 Undecidability and Christianity

If one cannot decide between the religious and the tragic, it is only to be expected that there is no way of deciding the truth of specific religious doctrines like the resurrection. In a lengthy article, Caputo takes on the Christologies of two prominent theologians, Thomas Sheehan and Edward Schillebeeckx, to make the point.[6] Adopting the hermeneutic method of historical criticism, both these theologians agree that the earthly Jesus underwent a series of transformations in history: from an eschatological prophet to the coming Son of Man, from this to the reigning Lord, and finally, to the eternal Son of God. Only in the last version does he attain flat-out divinity.

In spite of such broad agreement, they reach very different conclusions about Jesus, his message, and his relation to Christianity. For Sheehan "historical-critical method uncovered the cold truths about Jesus": he is the prophet who proclaimed the good news that God has descended without remainder into humankind ("God disappears into man"), thus effectively proclaiming the end of the Old Testament religion with its transcendent God. But the Church reverses this message and makes the messenger the message, which must be considered a "standing heresy". Schillebeeckx's hermeneutics, on the other hand, leads to a more traditional Christology, which not only permits the divinisation of Jesus but also traces the origins of Christianity to him. The main source of their difference lies in what they take to be basic. The basis of Sheehan's death-of-God Christology ("hermeneutics of unbelief") is his interpretation of the *Abba*-experience of Jesus; the heart of Schillebeeckx's "hermeneutics of belief" is the conversion experience of Peter and the disciples.

Caputo wants to go beyond this divide between a hermeneutics of belief and unbelief. He disagrees with Sheehan's interpretation of the *Abba*-experience, but agrees with him that Christianity does look like a mistake. According to Caputo, "the *Abba* experience does not mean that the Father has

just disappeared *into* his children..."; its whole point is *religious:* "he stands unequivocally *with* them [the poor and the despised, the outcasts and the dispossessed], takes their side in thick and thin, like a faithful and loving father"(RT 160. italics original). Caputo disagrees with Sheehan, not because he thinks that there is any basis for adopting the opposite point of view (hermeneutics of belief), but because Sheehan closes off the religious option. This, he considers illegitimate from the perspective of radical hermeneutics. Jesus "may have been right about his *Abba* [standing by the suffering and the dispossessed]" (RT 169). We cannot close that possibility. But that does not license us to say that *Abba* does stand by the poor; that would be to close the possibility in the opposite direction. Caputo's complaint against both is basically the same, though they cut in different directions. Both fail to take the radical implications of hermeneutics (i.e., undecidability) seriously: "if Sheehan has closed down undecidability in the direction of an atheistic humanism, Schillebeeckx closes it down in the direction of a trust in things for which hermeneutics gives no warrant" (RT 149). If Sheehan is wrong in trying to cut Christianity off by arguing that Jesus taught the death of God, this does not authorize us to think that Christianity can be legitimately traced back to Jesus as a continuation of his message.

According to Caputo, a great deal depends on what we think happened to Peter, which is at the heart of Schillebeeckx's hermeneutics. And Caputo gives an excellent phenomenological account of what could have happened to him. He does it in terms of the "impossibility' of murder". The basic idea, taken from Emmanuel Levinas, is that although someone can be murdered physically, the otherness of that person cannot be eliminated. Levinas explains this by attributing a certain "infinity", and hence inextinguishability, to the other person. Levinas' own phenomenological analysis focuses on the murderer. He is haunted by his deed, by the "ghost" of his victim. Caputo, in contrast, focuses on the survivors, the friends and disciples of the victim: they too experience the ghost, the spirit of the victim, especially when they gather together. The power that Jesus had in face-to-face situations, in his look, haunts the disciples after his death. They experience the infinity of Jesus and in that depth they have a glimpse of the face of God, says Caputo. Something extraordinary had just happened to them. So resurrection, phenomenologically, is "that kind of power that came crashing in upon the disciples"(RT 167). Jesus' life was totally given over to the message and he kept faith in the face of death. This is an experience of the impossibility of murder, the triumph of love over death, which Caputo says, is the basis of Simon's experience. "The impossibility of murder is the phenomenological counterpart of the theology of resurrection" (RT 167) Peter's conversion experience, that God stood by Jesus to the end, is what the disciples meant when they said that Jesus was raised.

It is hard to see how even a diehard naturalistic philosopher could object to such an account of the resurrection. And it does seem to give sufficient

basis for tracing the origins of Christianity back to Peter's experience of Jesus. What, then, is Caputo's objection to Schillebeeckx? The objection is twofold: First, to trace Christianity back to Jesus would be against the intentions of Jesus. Second, impossibility of murder is "*an experience that is in principle available anywhere*, and is not localized in Jesus of Nazareth."(RT 167. italics original). Of course, the point of both the objections is to maintain the undecidability about Jesus because "If Jesus is an undecidable, then he is a place where the bottom drops out..." (RT 169). To accept Schillebeeckx's hermeneutics would be to close off such undecidability. That would amount to denying that "the world is innocent and does not need saving... The world just plays itself out, the quanta of energy just discharge, and it — the world, *das Spiel, das 'Es'* — just does not know that we are here"(RT 170) "Yet surely, *the believer must concede this possibility*" (RT 171). Caputo would let this thought cross Simon's mind, that Jesus' murder was just part of the way cosmos discharges its energy, that history has no point at all not only in the immediate aftermath of the crucifixion "before he started to round up the disciples [before he experienced the impossibility of murder]; and even after he had gotten the whole thing going" (RT 172).

Consider, first, the intention of Jesus. One might wonder how an ardent devotee of undecidability could be so sure about the intentions of Jesus. But I shall not pursue that line. Caputo reasons that as a devout Jew, Jesus speaks, not in his own name, but in the name of the Father. Therefore, "Christianity does look like a mistake... not because, as Sheehan makes out, Jesus was an atheist but because he was so devoted to the true spirit of the Torah" (RT 161) It is not that people like Schillebeeckx are not aware of this. But they ignore the intentions of Jesus on the basis of the hermeneutic principle of semantic autonomy. The principle says that meaning is not governed by the author's or the agent's self-understanding; that meaning far exceeds the original intention, that meaning continues to unfold in the tradition. Caputo objects to this move because "while Gadamer's theory works very nicely with Shakespeare and the American constitution, there are [three] rather special complications involved in the claims that the moderates make" (RT 162).

1. The moderates have an inverted version of the argument of semantic autonomy. "The argument says that you should ignore the person of the author and pay heed to the intentional content, the *Sache* of his message. But the moderates are doing exactly the opposite": overriding the message and exalting the person. "This is like making a cult of the person of Shakespeare or Thomas Jefferson and ignoring what they said or wrote" (RT 162-3).

2. Acceptance of the historico-critical (hermeneutic) method places the moderates in a curious position of having to divinise the author and at the same time override his intentions. Jesus was divine, but he himself did not quite appreciate it; that was the work of the disciples. "The Church... claims to have a different (and may be even a better, more

thematic, reflective) understanding of what he was doing than he himself had" (RT 163). This "better" view may even be opposed to Jesus' self-interpretation. Caputo imagines a situation where someone projects the post-resurrection theological developments and submits them to Jesus for his consideration. He suggests that Jesus might have been scandalized by it and condemned it as coming from Satan. Then he poses the rhetorical question, "How far can you go in disregarding the intention of the author if you also claim the author was divine?" (RT 163).

3. Lastly, Caputo presents a scenario where Jesus' message was roundly accepted by everyone, lived a long life etc., resulting in a Judaism revivified with the *Abba* spirituality of Jesus. Then, Christianity would not have got off the ground because in that scenario all would have believed that the Father was all and Jesus was nothing. Message would have prevailed and not the person.

The long and short of these considerations is plain: for Caputo, the sort of "death-of-the author hermeneutics" adopted by moderates like Schillebeeckx is illegitimate.

III. Understanding Undecidability

Let us examine the validity of these objections since some of the assumptions involved here go to the very heart of the doctrine of undecidability. And I suggest that we examine these objections by attempting to answer a basic question: What does Caputo mean by undecidability? There seem to be at least two plausible ways of understanding his contention. Undecidability may be considered to be (1) an exaggerated form of apophatic theology; or (2) an existential wavering of faith that occurs even in the lives of saints. While the first relates to the content of religious doctrines, the second concerns the concrete life situations of believers. Roughly, the distinction corresponds to the distinction he makes between the message and the person. In the remainder of this article I shall argue that Caputo's undecidability is very problematic when understood in either of these ways. I suggest a third possibility that it is best understood as a nostalgia for a lost world, an era when it was possible to believe that the world chose the language game we played.

3.1 Undecidability as Negative Theology

There are some indications to show that Caputo's rhetoric on radical hermeneutics and undecidability is an advocacy of a negative theology. Understood in this sense, undecidability just means that we must acknowledge "the contingency of its [religion's] symbols" (RH 280). The fact that one of Caputo's heroes is Meister Eckhart ("one of the masters of disruption" who throws "the guardians of Being and presence... into confusion and consternation", RH:265) is significant. Moreover, at the end of his article on Sheehan and Schillebeeckx, he explicitly talks about the need for a negative theology (RT 172). Caputo's emphasis on truth as *a-letheia* points in the same direction. As a matter of fact, although I have given his account of the resurrection earlier, he places it much later and the purpose

of his account is to caution us "not to break off too quickly and reach a resolution" of the hermeneutic conflict (RT 169). And not for a moment do I doubt that truth as *a-letheia* really has a role to play in terms of a negative theology. It says that disclosure/unconcealment is also a closure and concealment, that reality is not revealed to us in its fullness; if it were so revealed we humans would be incapable of receiving it. Truth –humanly grasped reality— does seem to involve a concealment; it is not a "mirror of nature" (See Rorty 1979). Besides such theoretical considerations, I am also willing to grant that in the face of institutional Christianity's obsession with the objective truths of faith, such negative theology may be a need of the hour.

While Caputo may see undecidability as a matter of negative theology, there are two reasons for considering this form of negative theology to be mistaken. The first reason is this: traditionally a negative (*apophatic*) theology was done in the context of a positive (*cataphatic*) theology, which gave expression to certain key religious experiences. Just to take one example, we find religiously oriented people from across religious and cultural traditions talking about grace. There are also experiences which are historically unique and may not have exact cross-cultural parallels. The experience that led Jesus to call God "*Abba*" could be counted among such experiences; so could the experience of the first disciples of Jesus that led them to proclaim that God had raised Jesus from the dead. Note that each of these affirmations –whether cross cultural ones or others— has a positive content. The role of cataphatic theology is precisely to give expression to that content. But Caputo does not seem to make room for any content whatever. How could there be any content if a religious view of life cannot be affirmed against its opposite? Such undecidability amounts to saying that one cannot say *anything positive* about religious truth (or its opposite). Advocating such an apophatism that makes no room for cataphatism is like saying that we must erect traffic signals all over the place, but not build any roads! Therefore, while we need to remain very cautious about the cataphatic theology, it cannot be completely dispensed with. And this, it seems to me, is what is implied in the utter undecidability advocated by Caputo.

The second reason for considering such apophatism to be mistaken is the nature of religious content. The original context of negative theology is the metaphysical tradition that I have called the fixation of common sense[7] and the realization that God cannot be fitted into such categories; that all attempts to fix the "essence" of "God" in such categories are bound to go astray. This is one way of affirming that the content of religious talk is utterly different from the content of everyday talk. Therefore, it makes perfect sense for Eckhart to throw "the guardians of Being and presence" into utter confusion, such that it leads to a "breakthrough" in their understanding of the nature of God-talk, done in terms of the metaphysical categories of common sense. However, the case of the resurrection or Peter's conversion experience, (to take a concrete example), just does not fit this because what is af-

firmed in the resurrection, even in Caputo's phenomenological version, is totally contrary to common sense. To experience the impossibility of murder is already to have achieved a breakthrough from the realm of common sense to the realm of religion. The danger is that those who were not privy to that experience may lose touch with that breakthrough and, having an inherited doctrine, may fall back into common sense and start thinking of resurrection in terms of, say, resuscitation. This is what calls for a negative theology. But Caputo's notion of undecidability is far more: it would not permit even Peter to talk about the breakthrough he experienced. What is implied here seems to be not merely an affirmation of the utter difference between the content of religious statements and the statements of common sense, but a total denial of any content whatever to religious statements and experiences.[8] And if no content whatever is given to religious talk, would it not be nonsensical even to speak about the message of Jesus, which Caputo is keen to distinguish from the messenger?

This is probably the place to examine his argument against using the principle of semantic autonomy. His argument is that the point of semantic autonomy is to pay heed to the message and not the messenger, whereas the moderates are doing the opposite. This assumes that the message of Jesus is different from the person. The Christian claim has been that in this *particular* case, such a dichotomy between message and messenger does not exist, that Jesus lived his message so fully that words and deeds, message and life, become one. The real issue, then, is whether this is a reasonable claim. According to Caputo himself, the message, the core of the *Abba* experience of Jesus, is that God is on the side of the poor and the despised, no matter what. Now if the core of Peter's conversion experience is that God stood by Jesus to the end through his suffering and shameful death, and this is what the disciples meant when they said Jesus was raised, then it is just a concrete exemplification of Jesus' own message. Therefore, on Caputo's own interpretation, it does seem reasonable on the part of the disciples of Jesus to have identified the message with the messenger, (irrespective of what one might say of Shakespeare or Jefferson). Moreover, such a claim alone would be faithful to (i.e., would be an adequate expression of) their experience of the resurrection. But it does raise another question: if resurrection or the impossibility of murder is an experience that is in principle available anywhere, doesn't that imply that such an experience is not to be used for divinising Jesus? Since this question raises an issue that goes far beyond Jesus to the very heart of the claim of undecidability, I shall deal with it separately, while discussing the aversion of the postmoderns to the concrete and the existential.

What if an application of the principle of semantic autonomy leads to an explicit negation of the agent's intentions? As far as Jesus' own self-understanding is concerned, I think Caputo could not have been more right in saying that Jesus would have been scandalised, if the post-resurrection theological developments were submit-

ted to him as a future plan. It would be very strange if Jesus, as a faithful Jew in love with his *Abba*, was not scandalised by such suggestions. However, the important question is not how Jesus would have responded to such a suggestion, but whether self-interpretation is the last word in matters of personal communication, i.e., matters that concern truths about the speaker himself or herself. The answer would seem to be in the negative. The self-interpretation of a person in love, for example, is usually that s/he is unworthy of the beloved. But which beloved would take that serioulsy? If a beloved were to do that —other things being equal— that would amount to a Himalayan blunder! Self-interpretation in such matters has nothing to do with the assessment of the real situation, nor with the experience of the beloved. So, too, Jesus' self-understanding does not matter for the disciple's assessment of the master. A disciple can take that seriously only to the extent that his own experience is limited to the words of the master. It would be foolish of a disciple who has not only heard the master but has lived with him and in the process found the master to be the locus of his own God-experience, to ignore that experience and cling to the words —as foolish as the lover who takes the beloved's protestations of the unworthiness so seriously as to leave the beloved!

The answer to Caputo's rhetorical question ("How far can you go in disregarding the intention of the author if you also claim the author was divine?") is rather easy. The intention of the author may be disregarded to the extent that such disregard does not contradict the message, but enhances and preserves it. The message in this case, we recall, is that God is on the side of the poor no matter what. Cannot Christianity make the claim to have at least preserved it? There would seem to be enough evidence to show —in spite of its numerous failures in living that message— that the Church has helped to preserve the message. Notice that this is not a philosophical or theological claim, but a matter of empirical evidence for a claim made on behalf of a two thousand year old culture. Further, I think, one could also make a cogent case to claim that this preservation and enhancement was made possible by the divinisation of the author. It is the neglect of that particular self-interpretation of Jesus that has made the life of the message possible in a manner that does not remain merely a intellectual goal to strive after in futility, but an existential message that is powerful enough to affect and direct the whole person of the disciple.

3.2 Undecidability as Existential Wavering of Faith

A Second way of understanding Caputo's notion of undecidability is in terms of an existential wavering of faith. If negative theology was concerned about the content of religious affirmations, here the concern is with faith life of believers. Indeed, there are places where this interpretation seems to be the most suitable. For example, Caputo remarks at one point that there never really was an Augustine or a Nietzsche who instantiated the religious and tragic views, "not if that means to have consolidated oneself entirely on one side or the other of the divide, to be

religious or irreligious, decidably without doubt" (RH 287). His reference to doubts here seems to point in the direction of an existential wavering of faith. Understood in this sense, Caputo is referring to that common phenomenon where even after having decided on one's life orientation, one encounters moments of doubt. Even saints are not exempt from this, as the life of the Little Flower makes clear. Even Jesus complained about being forsaken by his dear *Abba*.

But this would not give us anything like the radical undecidability to which Caputo lays claim. While people like Jeremiah or the Little Flower may undergo serious moments of crisis in their faith life, there can be no doubt about their basic life orientation. Jeremiah might even accuse God of having seduced him, but that does not prevent him from being a prophet; even his very accusation is an expression of his religious commitment. The same can be said of Jesus. In other words, their doubts are not of the type where they cannot decide between the religious and the tragic. On the contrary, they come across as people who have made the cognitive counterpart of what contemporary moral theologians call a "fundamental option" (see Podimattam 1986), and any wavering is to be seen in the context of that option. But Caputo's undecidability is so radical that no such option can be made.

Of course, the contention is that such fundamental options are not based on any criteria. If this be the case, it depends on what sort of criteria one is looking for: if the criteria be experiential, there seems to be enough of them. Let us pay closer attention to Caputo's claim. Notice that he is not merely saying that *we* cannot decide between the religious and the tragic on the basis of what may have happened to Peter, or that *we* cannot even decide what happened to Peter. He is talking about Peter himself: that he would have Peter doubt whether Jesus' death had any point at all (other than a cosmic play of forces). If resurrection was indeed something like a realization of the impossibility of murder, there is no reason to say that Simon came to that realization without having gone through such thoughts and their opposite. But Caputo wants more. He wants Simon to remain there, "worrying about that [possibility]" "even after he had got the whole thing going" (RT 172). This is tantamount to saying that even if Peter had an experience of the impossibility of murder, that would not license him to decide between a religious view of life and a tragic one. This is what makes us suspect that perhaps Caputo is looking for another sort of criteria, which will be dealt with in the next section.

Not only is Peter not licensed to decide on the basis of his experience, but also remaining in such a state is the very mark of genuine faith for Caputo. Faith, he says, "is genuine only to the extent that it acknowledges the abyss in which we are all situated, the undecidability and ambiguity which engulfs us all." Thus to remain undecided, to remain on the fence and watch both sides and never to get to either side of the religious-tragic divide seems to be an a priori requirement of faith! Life of the believer, on this view, is a con-

tinual groping in the dark without the slightest ray of light to direct; or a monotonous flow without even a glimpse (much less, the reach) of any shore. There are no decisions, no stages, no progress, no regress. In the absence of a fundamental option, there would be no spiritual growth. There would be neither a Mother Teresa nor a Maximilian Kolbe! And what dreary world that would be! In the absence of a fundamental option for the religious view, one wonders what these words "faith" and "believer" are doing here. Do these words have any meaning? If a person must remain undecided about the religious view of life itself, I fail to see what meaning they could have.

To remain with such radical undecidability is to abdicate human responsibility. And a Simon who does that would not be the Simon of historico-critical method, but a Simon of Caputo's Nietzschean nihilism. Although he denies radical hermeneutics to be nihilistic, the reason for considering it nihilistic is this: If truth is 'openness to mystery', *a-letheia* (as he says it is), then there remains the possibility that one who is so open may be touched by that transcendent mystery. And how could anyone who has been so touched continue to remain undecided? To remain undecided is equivalent to saying that one has not been touched, that the transcendent has made no difference in one's life. Caputo's love for undecidability, then, is in effect, foreclosing the religious option. When that possibility is left open, as he does against Sheehan, he cannot at the same time say that even when a person has been touched by the transcendent s/he should remain undecided. Caputo's Simon is not merely a psychologically defective individual incapable of deciding about the significance of experiences in his life, but much worse: he is one who, even after knowing the significance of his experiences, refuses to decide. This is equivalent to saying that no experiences are really of any real significance! All interpretations of life are equally valid or equally invalid!! This is what gives a nihilistic flavour to Caputo's radical hermeneutics.

3.3 A Pre-hermeneutic Nostalgia?

If Caputo's doctrine of undecidability can neither be properly considered a legitimate negative theology, nor a matter-of-fact existential wavering of faith, then we must begin to ask what exactly is going on here. What then is this undecidability all about? Why is it that even after finding the tragic view of life to be a weak-willed judge and the religious view to be the liberating one, Caputo still finds no way of deciding between them? What is the sort of criteria he is after? Let me suggest that his is a nostalgia for a lost world. The traditional metaphysical approach aspired to arrive at decisions under the illusion of having captured the presence (an unchanging essence of things outside language). Modern philosophy aspired to a pure reason outside the uncertain world of empirical knowledge and messy historical situations. It seems to me that Caputo is on the lookout for these very same things to base one's decisions upon. And finding them absent, he returns the verdict of undecidability. How else to explain the suggestion that Peter, even af-

ter the experience he has had, must remain on the fence or that even one who finds that suffering is not as innocent as the tragic view makes it out to be, has no basis for deciding? Obviously, Caputo is looking for a criteria that exists somewhere out there independently of the humans. One positive indication that such nostalgia is indeed at work (besides the negative ones considered so far) is the terminology. Phrases such as "the world as it is" (taken from Nietzsche), the possibility of "suffering having no meaning" etc.(RT 171) seem to indicate a pre-hermeneutic ontology. It assumes a pre-fabricated world that is not humanly constituted, something called 'meaning' that is independent of human values, needs and desires (hence, can be found just like pearls in the sea, if only we look hard enough). Others have also noted the nostalgia underlying this postmodern style of thinking, although there is some difference of opinion as to how widespread it is.[9]

Such nostalgia implies a certain style of thinking inherited from the past, a style that has no place for the concrete and the existential. Terry Eagleton makes the following observation about postmodern literary theory:

> 'meaning' may well be undecidable if we view language contemplatively, as a chain of signifiers on a page; it becomes 'decidable' and words like 'truth' 'reality', 'knowledge', and 'certainty' have something of their force restored to them when we think of language rather as something we do, as indissociably interwoven with our practical forms of life (Eagleton 1983: 130, cited in Sarup 1993: 53).

Something similar can be said about Caputo's philosophy of religion. There are two instances where his disregard for the concrete is manifestly present. One is his third objection, the hypothetical situation where Jesus' message was roundly accepted. In that case, *Abba* (the message) would have been everything and Jesus (the messenger) would have been nothing. Then, Christianity would not even have got off the ground! This seems very reasonable. There would have been no Christianity in that hypothetical scenario because (a) such a revivified Judaism would have carried on the *Abba* spirituality that Jesus exemplified in his own person. In effect, wouldn't this mean that such Judaism would have become a substitute for Christianity? This is pure speculation, of course. And that takes us to our main point, which is the importance of actual history in the hermeneutics of religion. In the hypothetical situation envisaged by Caputo there would be no Christianity because (b) the Jesus of that scenario would not be the same Jesus to whom Christians trace back their origin. Their Jesus is a historical person who preached the *Abba* spirituality, was murdered in the process and precisely on that count, a Jesus in whom the disciples could experience that the Father was with the despised, the outcasts and the dispossessed, no matter what. Devoid of this concrete experience of murder and the subsequent realization of the impossibility of murder, the identification of the message and messenger would not have been possible. And there would have been no Christianity. But how is such a hypothetical situation relevant to the traditional Christian claim

that their origin is to be traced back to Jesus? Is anything more required to show that Caputo has not learned that important lesson taught by Wilhelm Dilthey, that the actual course of history is important to the human and cultural sciences?

The same lack of appreciation of actual history and culture is seen in his discussion of experiencing the impossibility of murder. After giving an excellent account of what could have happened to Peter, he goes on to add that such an experience is, in principle, available anywhere. It is "not localized in Jesus of Nazareth... or even Judeo-Christianity.... Everyone reveals the face of God. Jesus would not be the exclusive focus of our experience of the divine...*[W]e are all of us*, each for the other, *a possible locus of the divine*, a potential launching point for transcendence" (RT 167-68. italics original). Let us examine the claim. The issue is not whether Jesus is the exclusive focus of the divine. Such a claim would seem to go against the Christian tradition itself. (If God is omnipresent, anything in the cosmos can be a possible locus of the divine.) But Caputo may have a point here when seen against the background of the long tradition that exclusively exalts Jesus to the heavens. However, the claim, as it stands, raises an important philosophical issue. It concerns the conditions of the possibility of experience: given that cultures are different, do cultures of certain sort contribute to certain types of experience, while others to other sorts? In other words, is there an intrinsic relation between the nature of a culture and the sort of experience possible in that culture? Earlier, while talking about cataphatic theology being an expression of certain religious experiences, I mentioned two types of experiences: those that are relatively independent of cultures and those that are intrinsically culture-dependent. But if Caputo is right, either there is only the former sort, or at least experiencing *another* person as the locus of the divine belongs to that type. It has no intrinsic relation to any culture.

There is a sense in which this claim is unobjectionable. In as much as cultures develop and change, a culture could change in a manner that makes it possible to have such an experience. But Caputo is not talking about changes in cultures; his claim seems to be that culture plays no role in this sort of experience. I wonder what sort of evidence is available for such a claim. Notice that this claim of *another* person being the locus of one's religious experience (let us call it "neighbour mysticism") is very different from what is known as "introvertive mysticism" where one's own soul is the locus of such experience. While the fact of soul-mysticism occurring in both East and West and across large time spans may be pointed out as evidence for their culture-independence, is there anything comparable to show as evidence for neighbour-mysticism? If anything, pointers are in the other direction. If culture be considered the societal equivalent of individual's habit, to talk about such culture-independence of neighbour mysticism would be like saying that the deadened conscience of a pathological killer can as much experience the divine in his victim as Mother Teresa did in the poor! Therefore, while agreeing with Caputo

that "every one reveals the face of God" in principle, I would add that not every one is capable of receiving that revelation; that would usually be possible only with the assistance of a culture.[10] It is an appreciation of concrete human situations and the particularities of particular cultures that I find missing in Caputo's philosophy. Devoid of it, there would be no possibility of change and development of beliefs, but only presumed eternal verities – whether of metaphysics, scriptural authority, or the intention of the historical Jesus, as in the present case.

In conclusion, then, postmodernism rightly recognizes that we have a multiplicity of language games, that there are no "objective" criteria out there to determine our choice of language games. If the world does not tell us what language game to play, if it is open to a multiplicity of language games, the obvious conclusion one would expect is that we need to choose the language games we want to play. But if Caputo be taken as a representative of postmodernism, we can say that this is not their conclusion. And the reason is that the postmodern view still remains a prisoner of the old objectivist picture. And this is its tragedy. It has seen the constructive role of the subject in the making of the cosmos[11], but it is not yet willing to let go off the old. It still wants a universality that is independent of concrete human situations. And not finding it, they pronounce all language games to be on a par, with no way of deciding between them, which is nothing short of abdicating human autonomy and responsibility. If the postmoderns were to pay more attention to concrete human situations they would not only have found it inevitable to decide but also found that their decisions are neither arbitrary nor based on some criteria out there. Kierkegaard would have said: It is only someone who is not an existing individual who would find any undecidability between the religious and tragic views of life. Only a "pure reason" that watches both sides from afar can sit on the fence in this matter. An existing individual, whether it be a Jesus who had the *Abba* experience or a Peter who found the *Abba* to be on the side of the unjustly crucified one, would not find any undecidability in the matter. And if their decisions are to be branded "unreasonable" or "arbitrary", what could these terms mean other than the non-existence of pure reason and the impossibility that the world can decide for an existing individual?

Notes

1. Caputo's major works include, *Heidegger and Aquinas: An Essay on Overcoming Metaphysics*, NY: Fordham University Press, 1982; *Radical Hermeneutics: Repetition, Deconstruction, and the Hermeneutic Project*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987 (henceforth abbreviated as RH), *Demythologizing Heidegger*, Indiana University Press, 1993.
2. Van Niekerk's own quote is from Habermas.

3. For the purpose of this paper, I shall not differentiate between postmodernism and poststructuralism because of the close similarity of their doctrines. See Madan Sarup 1993. For a different view see note 9.
4. Prof. Patrick Byrne of Boston College holds (in personal conversation) that Aristotle cannot be blamed for this and that he had a much more limited view of logic. Irrespective of what Aristotle himself thought there can be little doubt that Aristotle has been traditionally understood in this manner. See, for example, Mortimer Adler's book, *Aristotle for Everybody,* 1978 p.140
5. Further, "Suffering does indeed have its rights; it is part of the overall 'justice' of life. Suffering is not guilty but innocent. Suffering belongs within the sphere of Anaximander's *dike*, part of its balance of forces." 283.
6. Caputo: 1990, abbreviated as RT. The books under consideration are Thomas Sheehan, *The First Coming or How the Kingdom of God Became Christianity*, NY: Random House, 1986; Edward Schillebeeckx, *Jesus: An Experiment in Christology*, tr. by Hubert Hoskins, NY: Crossroad, 1985. The following summary of their positions is entirely based on Caputo's article.
7. Caputo calls it "everyday conceptions". See, RH, p.268
8. Here is one indication of such denial: "For a radical hermeneutics God is always and everywhere, in all the epochs, essentially withdrawn from the world..." RH, 279
9. Elizabeth Deeds Ermarth, unlike Madan Sarup, would sharply distinguish the deconstructionists from the postmoderns and attribute this nostalgia only to the former. See, "Postmodernism,"in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2000. I do not think the postmoderns can be so easily be absolved of this nostalgia, although I shall not argue for it here.
10. I am assuming a certain relationship between nature and culture here. All humans, for example, may be said to have a built-in sense of the ethical equality of humans which can be considered human nature; but this nature is not so compelling as to constantly treat others in that manner. That needs training and cultural support which provides the individual with a rough and ready map of ethical behaviour such that each time one has to act s/he does not have to begin at zero point and see why the other must be treated with respect and dignity. For more on this point, see, George Karuvelil, "Hierarchy, Equality, and Liberation: Some Reflections on Indian Culture", *Jnanadeepa*, 2/2. A similar relationship holds between culture and religious experience.
11. 'Cosmos' is used here in the phenomenological sense. See, Peter Berger, *The Social Reality of Religion.*

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JPJRS 5/1 (2002) 81-96

God-Talk Beyond Metaphysics

The Dawn of Postmodernism and the Decline of Metaphysics

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The second half of twentieth century has generally been referred to as 'postmodern.' The term 'postmodern' and its derivatives like postmodernism and postmodernity refer to a movement "at once fashionable and elusive" (Sarup 1993: 153). They reflect a shared sense of an end or at least the decline of some structure called 'modernism' that had been reigning supreme in the West for several centuries (Smith 1996: 3). They envelop many a discipline of knowledge, pattern of culture, expression of art, media of communication, etc. Beyond these vague characterizations when scholars and writers try to define the nature of postmodernism, they begin by first expressing their inability to carry out the task adequately (Featherstone 1988: 195; Zukin 1988: 431).

A promising way of attempting a definition of postmodernism is by stating that it is a critique of or reaction to modernism. Modernity attracts strong criticism because in it the subject becomes the arbiter of truth and the world becomes the 'object.' Scott succinctly summarizes the logic of modernism when he writes, "Modernism stood for the logic of domination and planetary imperialism that lead to the subjugation not only of nature but of people as well. Even God is not spared by the power-hungry and domineering reason and its subject-centered conceptual enterprise" (see Scott 1999). Many in the later part of the twentieth century found the assumptions of modernism unacceptably alien to human nature. Nietzsche condemns this situation with two phrases, namely, "the death of God," and "the decadence of reason." He pleads for a time when intuition and art will reign supreme and the rule of nonsense, chance, fate, the contingent, the unpredictable, instinct, appearance, the hegemony of the surface and faithfulness to the earth will be restored, thus initiating with Heidegger the move towards postmodernism. Heidegger goes to the extent of saying that, "Thinking begins only when we have come to know that reason, glorified for centuries, is the most stiff-necked adversary of thought." (cited in Puthenpurackal 2000:104). In postmodernism, reason, glorified for centuries, is thus exposed as the most bigoted adversary of thought.

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Inspired by Nietzsche, Heidegger and other critics of modernism, postmodern thinkers are convinced that the continental philosophy has irrefutably demonstrated the end of metaphysics. It is claimed that with the advent of postmodernism "metaphysics and metaphysical thinking get exposed for what they are," and that "grand narratives and system building ...have lost their value" (Scott) This seems to be what Merold Westphal had in mind when he claimed that "postmodernism replaces Nietzsche's announcement of the death of God with an announcement of the end of philosophy" (Westphal 1998: 583).

The theological import of postmodernity

Traditionally, philosophical theology was the investigation of the being and nature of God without explicitly appealing to the truths of Revelation. The end of metaphysics and of system building is generally believed to have great import for traditional and contemporary theological systems which have historically relied heavily upon metaphysics in forming a view of the nature and necessary attributes of God (Scott). If reason, metaphysical thinking and grand narratives, where God-talk was secure, are discredited, what about God who was supposed to be the ultimate point of reference of all rational thinking? For some, the end of metaphysics signified the end of traditional theological systems as well. That probably is what Nietzsche and others had in mind when they, having claimed to demonstrate the implausibility of the claims of metaphysics, claimed that "God" is dead.

To avoid this consequence, some theologians have questioned posmodernity's claim (a claim having its foundation in Hume, Kant and Nietzsche) of the end of metaphysics. But more sophisticated engagements have acknowledged the problems raised by anti-metaphysicians, but refused to accept their conclusion regarding the end of philosophical theology. Postmodern theologians, while accepting the claims of postmodernity regarding the unreliability of metaphysics, have clarified that what is made untenable by postmodern philosophy is not the discourse about God as such, but certain types of discourse tied to certain metaphysical assumptions. They have, then, sought to find space for God-talk between the extremes of theism and atheism and beyond grand systems (Westphal 1998: 553).

One such attempt tries to resurrect the negative theology tradition of Pseudo-Dionysius (also known as Denys), and Meister Eckhart. It attempts to avoid the extremes of unmitigated absolutism of rationalism, on the one side, and rank skepticism on the other, by a vigorous denial of absolute knowledge, but without subscribing to the critical negations of' postmodern philosophy. A second candidate is the a/ theology of Mark C. Tayor, which seeks to take theological discussion beyond the simple opposition of theism and atheism, but without taking the mystical turn. Taylor thinks of theology as "a permeable membrane that forms a border where fixed boundaries disintegrate," where the "traditional polarities between which Western theology has been suspended are inverted and sub-

verted" (Taylor 1984: 95, cited in Scott 1999). Finally, Jean-Luc Marion seeks to free theological discourse from the horizon of all metaphysical discussion, including Heidegger's own postmodern analysis of Being. His significantly titled work, God Without Being is not insinuating that the God 'without being' does not exist, but an attempt to work out an understanding of God through means other than ontological categories such as Being. In God Without Being, acclaimed as a classic work in postmodern theology with a sustained critique of Heidegger's ontology, Marion attempts to bring out the absolute freedom of God with regard to all determinations, including the fact of Being and offer a contemporary perspective on the nature of God.

This paper intends to explore the postmodern evaluation of traditional theistic systems, focusing predominantly on the writings of Jean-Luc Marion, a leading Catholic philosopher and one of the foremost pupils of Jacques Derrida. Our aim here is to arrive at a brief but meaningful overview of postmetaphysical approach to theological reflection using the writings of Jean-Luc Marion for a case study. In his masterful work, God Without Being, an essay written at the border between philosophy and theology, Marion launches a profound offensive against the tradition of metaphysics in general, and more specifically, to the related field of philosophical theology. Marion claims that God must no longer be thought of in terms of the traditional category "Being," or "causa sui," for that reduces God to an all too human concept which he calls "Dieu." When we think of God in these terms, in a sense, a violence is done to God and our understanding of God, for we seriously delimit that which by nature is indeterminable.

Heidegger's rejection of theiology in favor of faith

A work of philosophical postmodernism whose bearing on Marion's theology is most direct is Heidegger's critique of "the onto-theological constitution of metaphysics." To examine whether or not metaphysics is a reliable tool for the theologian, Heidegger found it necessary to distinguish between theology and theiology[1] Theology, he suggested, is a matter of faith, whereas theiology, also called onto-theo-logy, is an attempt to obtain cognitive insight into the divine, into Dasein or Prime Being through philosophical reflection. As a philosophical reflection that seeks explanation and definition, it stands in stark opposition to both faith and theology that relies upon faith.

On the distinction between theiology and faith or theology Heidegger writes:

> If I were yet to write a theology...then the word 'Being' would not occur in it. Faith does not need the thought of Being. When faith has recourse to this thought, it is no longer faith... I believe that Being can never be thought as the ground and essence of God, but that nevertheless the experience of God and of his manifestedness, to the extent that the latter can indeed meet man, flashes in the dimension of Being, which in no way signifies that Being might be regarded as a possible predicate for God. On this point one

would have to establish completely new distinctions and delimitations. (Cited in Marion 1991: 61)

Here we may profitably note Heidegger's unwillingness to conceptually equate God with Being and to employ the term "Being" in discussions of God. According to Scott, this unwillingness clearly derives from what Heidegger sees as a diametrical opposition betwen philosophical reflection and faith. According to Heidegger, somewhere along its history, theology misunderstood the unique nature of its task and rather than pursuing the "interpretation of man's being toward God," it resorted to discussions of the Being of "God" (Scott 1999). As Marion notes, Christian theology does not have to do with "God" as defined by philosophy, but with faith in the Crucified, a fact that only faith receives and conceives (1991: 65) This fact alone is the positum of theology, the "science of faith." The possession of such a positum allows Heidegger to deem theology an ontic science with the same standing as chemistry or mathematics, distinct from the sole ontological science, philosophy, which alone focuses on the analysis of Dasein, Being itself.

While theology has to do with the fact of faith in the Crucified, theiology or onto-theo-logy discourses upon "God" and formulates divine names without having recourse to faith. The more precisely theiology attempts to define the divine names, such as Prime Mover, Efficient Cause, Necessary Being, "God as morality" (Kant, Fichte, Nietzsche), "God as causa sui" (Descartes, Spinoza), the more such names lend themselves to the death of God. For, on the one hand, these concepts fail to compel their audience to believe in God, and on the other hand, these precise concepts proposed for theoretical explanation invite rigorous criticism and lead ultimately to blasphemy. To use Heidegger's own words:

> A proof for the existence of God can be constructed by means of the most rigorous formal logic and yet prove nothing, since a god who must permit his existence to be proved in the first place is ultimately a very ungodly god. The best such proofs of existence can yield is blasphemy. (cited in Marion 1991: 64)

Having distinguished theology from theiology or onto-theo-logy, Heidegger treats the latter with undisguised disrespect. He remarks that in onto-theo-logy "the deity can come into philosophy only insofar as philosophy, of its own accord and by its own nature, requires and determines that and how the deity enters into it" (Heidegger 1969: 56 cited in Westphal 1998: 584). In other words, a tradition that stretches at least from Aristotle to Hegel uses God as a means to its own ends; as a resource in the service of its project of rendering the whole of being intelligible to human understanding, which is nothing short of blasphemy.

Heidegger, therefore, advocates faith, which must abandon the God of philosophy, God as causa sui. The object of this "God-less thinking" is perhaps closer to the divine God. For Heidegger it is more open to Him than onto-theo-logy would like to admit (see Heidegger 1969: 72 and Marion 1991: 35).

Marion's rejection of theiology and theology in favor of Agape

Marion fully agrees with Heidegger's critique of theiology. Drawing upon an Heideggerian-inspired notion of the phenomenological *Destruktion*, Marion maintains that God must be thought outside the ontological difference and outside the very question of Being itself. In so doing, we free ourselves from an idolatry wherein we reduce God to our own all too narrow conceptual schemes. To avoid idolatry Marion urges us to abandon the terms of theiology and to think of God in the light of St. John's pronouncement that "God is Love" (1 Jn 4,8), which he believes has not been thought through in the metaphysical tradition. Thinking of God as 'Love' will lead the philosopher to a more accurate understanding of God as unlimited giver/gift, and liberate Him from the limitations of theiology.

Marion argues that it is an error to conceive God within the domain of Being. God is comprehended neither as a being nor as Being, nor by any essence. He agrees with Denys and Nietzsche that it is not possible to approach God with concepts (Marion 1991: 106). Among the divine names none exhausts God or offers a grasp or a comprehension of Him. The sole function of the divine names such as Being and causa sui is to manifest this impossibility. Thinking of the being of God in these terms results in a limited conceptual understanding of God. By our concept of God being the source of His own being, as self-caused cause, God becomes an undifferentiated unity and His transcendence becomes severely limited. The thought behind describing God as causa sui was to create a space wherein God transcends finite human reason. However, in making God so reliant upon Himself we are left with a "God who is essentially unrelated to us except for the fact that we know that God is the cause of His own Being. In our concept of God as causa sui, God becomes unthinkable as He really is" (Calcagno 2001). If God is placed in the domain of Being, He becomes thinkable, an idol; "it becomes thinkable to release oneself from it" (Marion 1991:3) This, according to Marion, is vanity.

When we conceive objects, people and God, we determine them by our own conceptual understanding of them. In attempting to conceive God, we categorize or give names to God – names which are essentially restricted to human conceptual understanding. In the Five Ways, wherein Saint Thomas repeatedly refers to God as "id quod omnes nominunt," Marion finds him doing precisely this, i.e., naming God conceptually, idolatrously. Marion insists that things, especially God, are not necessarily and absolutely determined by our conceptual understanding of them. Things are given to us prior to our conceptual understanding of them. "They have an originary being unto themselves distinct but somehow knowable by us," (Calcagno 2001) which is not grasped by concepts. This implies that the metaphysical names imposed on God reflect purely metaphysical functions of "God" and to that extent hide the mystery of God as such. "Under the conceptual names of 'God' only metal 'idols' emerge, imposed on a God who is still to be encountered" (Marion

1991: xxi) For Marion the "death of God" signifies the failure of all the metaphysical concepts of "God."

The "death of God," however, is not the absolute end of all God-talk. In "the death of God" Marion sees only the death of the moral God of theiology. It is only the moral God who is hit with nihilism when "the highest values are devalued" (Marion 1991:30). Marion notices that religions do not think of God starting from the cause or within the theoretical space defined by metaphysics, or even starting from the concept but indeed starting from God alone, grasped to the extent that he inaugurates by himself the knowledge in which he yields himself – reveals himself. The divine God is infinitely above that First Cause and Prime Mover known to philosophers. Nihilism, therefore would have no hold on "God," since God is not exhausted in the moral domain. "The death of God" leaves intact, even more opens and provokes, the coming of the "new gods." Thus the death of God is valid only as the death of the idol of the moral God, since beyond this there is the dawn of the divine (Marion 1991: 37)

The "death of God," therefore, marks the end of theiology and allows the emergence of a God who is free from onto-theo-logy (Marion 1991: xxi). Marion pleads for this liberation of God from the sway of onto-theo-logy. To liberate God from onto-theo-logy, Heidegger had distinguished theology, the ontic science which dealt with our experience of the divine, from theiology, an ontological science, the science of Being. Marion thinks that even this track of Heidegger would not help us in liberating God; for, due to "an irreducible ontological dependence," Heidegger's theology fails to escape the critique aimed at theiology (cf. Scott 1999). Marion recognizes that even when we release God from the constraints of onto-theo-logy, Being (i.e., thought as such, without its metaphysical figure) is still being imposed on Him (Marion 1991: xxi). Marion, therefore, argues that in Heidegger's liberated theology "the question of 'God' suffered as radical a reduction to the first question of Being as in the phenomenological enterprise of Heidegger" (Marion 1991: 69). This, according to Marion, is second idolatry, which "appears once one has unmasked the first—"God" according to onto-theo-logy" (Marion 1991: xxi).

Marion's project

Since both theology and theiology are inadequate in our approach to God, Marion believes that He has to be liberated through another route, a third way, i.e., by developing a discourse without reference to Being. This can be achieved by opting for God's most theological name—"charity the Agape properly revealed in and as the Christ" (Marion 1991: xxi). This new discourse is not concerned with Being or Dasein , but purely and simply with the faith of a man in the event of Christ's being put to death (Marion 1991: 67).

Marion's philosophical task is to inaugurate the dawn of the divine by presenting God in a manner that is free from all categories of Being so that the charges of postmodernism regarding the

status of God-talk will be rendered invalid. Theiological concepts such as "Being," can only act as idols revealing only a small portion of God. Since every thought of God becomes an idol, the unthinkable God enters into our thought only by rendering Himself unthinkable, that is, by manifesting Himself outside the question of Being. Therefore, to reach a non-idolatrous thought of God, one would have to search for Him outside the question of Being, think of God outside of metaphysics.

In God Without Being, Marion's task is to develop a non-conceptual thought of God outside of the doctrine of Being. Outside the realm of ontology, the best way to conceive God is as charity, as one who invested Being on us when we were not, as the one who loved us first. Therefore, Marion seeks to understand God in the radical horizon of the gift – God gives Himself to be known insofar as He gives Himself. Since the gift is God's own self, it gives absolutely everything, as a pure gift.

Marion conceives God as 'Love,' because "charity belongs neither to pre-, nor to post-, nor to modernity; but rather, at once abandoned to and removed from historical destiny" (1991: xxii). Thus this term "remains unthought enough to free the thought of God from idolatry" (1991: 47). Marion argues that only by giving Himself to be thought of as love, hence as gift, a gift which gives itself for ever, can God give himself to be thought of without idolatry (1991: 49). He chooses to conceive God as love because this term goes beyond the limit of a concept even that of metaphysics and Heideggerian onto-theo-logy.

The idol and the icon

In order to situate his argument that God, as interpreted by the metaphysical tradition, has been reduced to a conceptual idol and to develop the concept of God as Love, Agape, Marion dexterously develops the difference between an icon and an idol. Both idols and icons are not beings, but they indicate a "manner of being of beings" (Calcagno 2001); they are two modes of apprehending the divine. Both propose to offer knowledge of the invisible referent, though they differ in the degree and the manner in which they make the divine present. Both the idol and the icon are related by being respectively the low and high water marks of an all-encompassing divine.

An idol, as the Greek root (eidô = I see) suggests, has to do with vision and the visible. Idols, like the great statue of Athena in ancient Athens, were designed to be looked at, they are objects upon which we fix our gaze. The idol results from humanity's gaze aimed at the divine. The gaze "strains itself to see the divine," but, unable to reach the ungazable divine, it comes to rest on the idol." The idol is, therefore, "the landing place of the gaze that aims at the divine." (Marion 1991: 11). But when the idol is encountered, its splendor and brilliance command our attention and dazzles the gaze, so that the gaze proceeds no further. Thus the idol stifles any pursuit of the divine beyond itself; it consigns the divine to the measure of human gaze.

The idol acts as a mirror that reflects an image, i.e., what human gaze has experienced of the divine, not as a

portrait that represents. The idol represents nothing, but presents what we have experienced of the invisible divine, leaving the remainder of the divine invisible. The idol is not a false or untrue image of the divine, but a limited and indefinitely variable figure of the divine. Thus, the idol divides the invisible divine into two parts, that part which is brought to visibility through its representation and another part which remains invisible due to the gaze's fixation on the idol.

The idol tries to capture what is unique about the deity. What makes the idol visible, however, is not the idol itself, but our gaze upon it, for it is we who decide what to see as unique to the idol. In other words, in looking at the idol, we create the divinity. God becomes trapped in our gaze. God becomes a concept in that He is seized by and confined to our own understanding. In so far as God is reduced to our own conceptual categories and understandings, God no longer has His own identity; His identity is super-imposed. Our concepts of God become idolatrous in that they limit an essentially indeterminable reality to our own understanding.

Whereas the idol results from the gaze that aims at the divine, the icon does not result from a vision but provokes one. Because it is manufactured 'by the hands of men' and because it functions as an 'intelligible medium', icon is regarded as manifesting materiality. Nevertheless, it differs from the materiality of the idol, since it attains a certain transparency which "summons to infinity" (Marion 1991: 24). The icon makes the sight of the invisible divine possible without attempting to reduce the invisible to the visible. It attempts to make the invisible visible by allowing it to saturate the visible. Strictly speaking, it shows nothing of the invisible. The invisible always remains invisible.

Though icon shows nothing of the invisible, using it as a medium, the invisible makes its presence felt. "In the icon the invisible proceeds up into the visible." (Marion 1991: 17). The icon teaches the gaze to surpass itself by never freezing on a visible so that something new of the invisible is encountered. The iconic gaze never rests or settles on the icon; instead, using the visible as the medium, it gazes at the infinite. "The icon summons the gaze to surpass itself by never freezing on a visible... The gaze can never rest or settle if it looks at an icon." (Marion 1991: 18) The iconic gaze rebounds "upon the visible, in order to go back in it up to the infinite stream of the visible... The icon makes visible only by giving rise to an infinite gaze" (Marion 1991: 18). The iconic gaze makes us privy to that which cannot be seized, to that which lies beyond our conceptual understanding. Through the medium of the icon we are given a presence of the divine.

Metaphysics and the idol

Aquinas's reflection on God in Summa Theologiea conceives God either as Ground (Prime Mover, Efficient Cause, Primary End) or as Prime Being (Necessary/Possible Being). Likewise, St Anselm's ontological argument depends on the assumption of God as

Prime Being or as Necessary Being. Marion deems any such philosophical thought about the invisible divine and the various names we use to refer to it as functioning precisely as an idol. Such concepts in philosophy arise less from God himself than from the metaphysical thought of Being (1991: 34). Therefore, to characterize God as Being or as causa sui is for Marion to gaze upon Being as an idol.

As an idol, Being purports to reveal God, yet only at the expense of limiting the horizon of the gazer's ability to grasp God. The philosophical presentations of God, in other words, do capture the divine, but at the expense of locking the gaze to themselves and hiding a large portion of the divine. In Marion's own words, "In thinking of God as causa sui metaphysics gives itself a concept of God that at once marks the indisputable experience of him and his equally incontestable limitation" (1991: 35). In other words, metaphysics constructs for itself an apprehension of the transcendence of God, but such an apprehension places a limit on the concept. The idol that metaphysics offers of "God" is so limited that it can neither aspire to worship and adoration. "Man can neither pray, nor sacrifice to this god. Before the causa sui, man can neither fall to his knees in awe nor can he play music and dance before this God" (Heidegger 1969, cited in Marion 1991: 35). The causa sui says so little about the "divine God" that to equate it with the latter amounts to speaking crudely, or even in blasphemy. In order for us to allow God to truly break through our conceptual understanding, in order to move from idol to icon, we must begin to focus on God as the unthinkable, the inconceivable, the unseizable.

Christ as the icon of God

The concept of the divine is not exhausted by metaphysical terms or our concepts, but includes the notion of infinite depth, so that the divine is completely indeterminable by any concept. The idols generated by metaphysics will not be able to fathom its depth. Only an iconic glance can hope to overcome this limitation and grasp the essence of God. The iconic glance is not a question of using a concept to grasp the essence of God but of using the iconic concept to contemplate the invisible God who advances into the visible and inscribes himself therein by the very reference of the visible icon (Scott). Searching for an icon in order to overcome the limitations imposed by the idol, Marion chooses the formula set forth in Colossians 1:15 wherein Paul proclaims Christ to be "the icon [eikon] of the invisible God." What is being claimed by Paul when he referred to Christ as the icon of the invisible God, according to Marion, is that God remains invisible, except through the transparency of Christ and that by looking at Christ we see the Father. For Marion Christ is the icon who will bring the full revelation of the Father.

The primacy of the good

Onto-theo-logy in general and Saint Thomas in particular believed that the term 'Being' "specially nominates God." Marion asks whether we can as-

sign 'Being' or any other name as "maxime proprie" to God:

> When God offers himself to be contemplated and gives himself to be prayed to, does he primarily present himself as Being? When he appears as and in Jesus Christ, who dies and rises from the dead is he concerned primarily with Being? No doubt, God can and must in the end also be, but does his relation to Being determine him as radically as the relation to his Being defines all other things? (1991: xx)

Following the mystic Denys Marion insists that the term Being does not describe God's essence. In Denys Marion finds an attempt to replace Being with the beautiful and the good. For Denys the good enjoys primacy over all beings. "All beings come from the beautiful and the good, and all non-beings reside beyond every essence in the beautiful and the good" (cited in Marion 1991: 77). For Denys goodness has primacy over the ipsum esse. Nevertheless, Denys does not pretend that goodness constitutes the proper name of God, but "in the apprehension of goodness the dimension is cleared where the very possibility of a categorical statement concerning God ceases to be valid" (Marion 1991: 76). Since names including "the good" would function as idols placing limitations on us as we approach God, for Denys, praising, which "abolishes every conceptual idol of 'God' in favor of the luminous darkness where God manifests (and not masks) himself, in short, where he gives himself to be envisaged by us" (Marion 1991: 76), is the most appropriate response when we approach God about whom we cannot speak.

God as Agape

While largely agreeing with the arguments of Denys, Marion prefers to characterize God as Agape, instead of goodness. This is not a fundamental difference, because in conceiving God in terms of goodness, Marion finds Denys close to the spirit of Saint John who understood God as love, Agape (1 John 4:8). Marion, then, points out that till Saint Thomas God was understood as Agape; it was in Saint Thomas that "the God who revealed in Jesus Christ under the name of charity finds himself summoned to enter the role of the divine of metaphysics, in assuming esse/ens as his proper name" (Marion 1991: 82). In Saint Thomas the "God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob" came to be identified with the "God of the philosophers and the learned," which eventually resulted in the "death of God." Marion attributes the "death of God" to the "inability of theological understanding,... to envisage a properly Christian name of the God who is revealed in Jesus Christ—a name anterior to the Being of beings..., hence also to every thought of Being as such" (1991: 82).

This shortcoming of theology, in Marion's view, can be overcome by conceiving God as charity, Agape, since Agape can transgress Being. For Marion the first act of God is love, not being. If "'God is love,' then God loves before being," Marion argues (1991: xx). In the act of loving God invests Being. If we conceive God as love, then we do not have to wait for him in the horizon of Being, but respond to Him in love – bare and raw.

Marion prefers "Agape" since it helps us to seek theological discourse outside the paradigm of Being and essence by focusing on the intention of God. God as Agape proves promising because the conceptual content it potentially offers is "unthought enough to free... the thought of God from the idolatry of [God as Being]" (1991: 47). God as unconditional love is not a being to be conceptualized, named or comprehended, but a being that fulfils itself in giving of itself. Agape appears only as a pure given, freed from the bondage of thought. Humanity necessarily responds to this Divine Love, since it is given without limit and condition. Humanity has no alternative but to will to receive or refuse such Love.

Unlike the causa sui, Agape prohibits a limiting or fixing of the gaze of the recipient. "To think God as Agape equally prohibits ever fixing the aim on the first visible object and freezing it on an invisible mirror" (Marion 1991: 48). For Love does not present itself as an object to be admired and contemplated in and for itself, but rather directs the recipient's gaze to the Giver and Subject of that Love. Love gives itself, abandoning itself, "so as to be transplanted outside of itself." It prohibits fixation on a response, a representation, an idol. Love thus subverts the idol, "For love holds nothing back, neither itself nor its representation" (Marion 1991: 48). Love does not pretend to comprehend or embody the invisible but instead gives itself over in order that the intention of the Giver might be encountered by the recipient. When we approach God as Agape, we do not fix God by our gaze, but God fixes us in His iconic gaze upon us.

God encountered as Agape gives Himself as a free gift and in doing so, God makes His invisibility visible. The visible gift which the invisible God gives is Himself, namely, the gift of love, Agape. The nature of a gift, which is being given freely, cannot be determined by the receiver. Hence, God's visibility cannot be idolatrously determined by the receiver of the gift. The gift cannot be idolized, for it springs from a source which is not susceptible to our control. Although we can do what we wish with a gift once we receive it, we cannot change the fact that it is given originally in a particular way with a particular content. We may even refuse a gift, but we cannot change the fact that it is given.

Silence

Wittgenstein has insisted that "What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence" (cited in Marion 1991: 53) If this citation is valid, then, silence is the best response with regard to something like God, since God is, by definition, ineffable, inconceivable and unnamable. Marion proposes silence, precisely because it does not explain itself, or expose itself to an infinite equivocation of meaning (1991: 54). What surprises Marion is that we speak too much about God who escapes all speech. By not keeping silent, by covering it with our busy chattering, we silence that which silence alone could have honored.

To avoid idolatry, in Marion's view, it is not sufficient to remain silent,

since the characteristic of idol is to remain silent. "Silence" for Marion is not the absence of every type of discourse. The total absence of every discourse will not suffice, for "in order to keep silent with regard to God, one must, if not hold a discourse on God, at least hold a discourse worthy of God on our silence itself" (1991: 54). The silence that is suitable to God who reveals himself as Agape in Christ consists in remaining silent through and for Agape. To receive and return the gift, this is not said, but done. Love is not spoken, it is made. The silence suitable for God requires knowing how to remain silent, not out of agnosticism, but simply out of respect (1991: 107).

Eucharist as theology

If we cannot speak about God, if respectful silence is the fitting response to the divine, what is the status of theology? In Marion's view, theology can reach its authentically theological status only if it concerns with that God who strikes out and crosses out every divine idol, sensible or conceptual. "The theologian must go beyond the text to the Word, interpreting it from the point of view of the Word "(1991: 149). Theology becomes authentic when it exposes the logic of the self-giving of the "Word given even in the silent immediacy of abandoned flesh" (1991: 139). To Marion the Emmaus story shows how the texts of the prophets and even the chronicle of the things seen at Jerusalem remain unintelligible, so long as the Word does not come in person to interpret, them to the disciples. Without the help of the Word, the disciples comprehend nothing, they do not see what is evident.

Without the intervention of the word, our hermeneutic is bound to remain a rationalist interpretation of Scripture. Since the Word intervenes in person only at the eucharistic moment, Marion argues, the hermeneutic, hence fundamental theology, will take place only in the Eucharist. To open our eyes and render the Word visible in the text, we need the absolute hermeneutic—the eucharistic moment. It is in the breaking of the bread that the disciples "recognize him" and at last "their eyes were opened." But the Eucharist does not render the text and its interpretation redundant, for prior to the revelation in the breaking of the bread, the hermeneutic was sufficient to burn the hearts of the disciples (Lk. 24:32). Yet the Eucharist alone completes the hermeneutic; the hermeneutic culminates in the Eucharist. The Eucharist is thus the test of every theological systematization, because in the Eucharist the Word intervenes directly, posing the greatest challenge to thought.

Since fundamental theology takes place only in the breaking and sharing of the bread, Marion concludes that the primary requirement for the theologian is not to become "scientific," but to become holy. By holiness he means neither pious edification, nor an acceptance of the limits an episcopal delegation imposes on the freedom to think. To be holy, the theologian must be able to speak of the referent. In order to speak of the referent, the theologian must have an understanding of it. The qualification that makes a theologian is that he has encountered the referent in mystical union. The human theologian begins to merit his name only in so far as he

imitates the theologian superior to him, the Saviour. What is emphasised by Marion is not the private virtues of the theologian, but his competence acquired in the matter of charity in the celebration of the Eucharist. The rest, according to Marion, is a question of vision, of intelligence, labor and talent (1991: 156).

Conclusion and critique

It is clear that taking a characteristically postmodern stance, Marion has proposed a solution to the problem of God-talk beyond metaphysics. Postmodernism provides Marion with the post-metaphysical structures whereby God can be thought of beyond onto-theo-logy. Phenomenology opens the dimension of love, "the unthinkable Agape" beyond knowledge and puts at a distance Being as an idol. As regards his dedication to a postmetaphysic system one can only applaud the precision and clarity of his argument.

Because of Marion's commitment to a postmodern stance, a positive natural theology that relied on metaphysics seems unfeasible. Therefore it is a negative theology that Marion develops in terms of Agape. This, indeed, raises the question of God's relation to Being. But since the gift gives Being itself, for Marion, it is prior to Being. This obviates the need of an ontological investigation as such; at least such an investigation can be bypassed. For Marion, a passage through Being is unnecessary, for as Heidegger wrote and Marion quotes: "Faith does not need the thought of Being" (1991: 61). The experience of God, no doubt, implies Being, but revelation and faith are indifferent to Being, and so gradually Marion's discourse moves from ontology to biblical exegesis, philosophical reflection gives way to the testimony in "biblical revelation,"

For Marion the biblical revelation remains beyond interpretation, existing as a meta-critique of metaphysics. It lies outside critique as "a discourse held about faith and on the basis of faith" (1991: 87). The authority of faith is self-affirming. There is no room for self-critique. Faith is this assertion of the will, which is not to be confused with the will-to-power which constitutes idolatry. Marion's faith in the testimony of revelation points to a God beyond Being, a God who comes as a gift, signifying "the purity of givenness without return" (Ward 1998: 235). This pure gift can only be thought of in terms of a logic of love.

While we would agree with Marion's challenge to metaphysics to think in terms of Agapeic love and think through its implications for our own lives, critics see Marion making grave errors in his attempt to subvert Being as a viable metaphysical framework within which one can think of God. First, it is pointed out that while strongly objecting to the characterization of God as causa sui, Marion fails to carry out an investigation into the existential implications of conceiving God as causa sui. (see Calcagno) The causa sui is also our efficient cause. Like the sculptor who leaves a trace of himself in his work, so too does God the Creator leave a trace of himself in His creatures. The

implications of this relation must be carried out. Marion thinks that when we conceive God as causa sui, we idolize Him. This prevents him from carrying out an investigation of the full implications of the fact that the causa sui leaves traces of His Being within the effect. Starting from the effects, through a process of analogical thinking, it must be possible for us to have a glimpse of the nature of God as Being, albeit vaguely. Marion does not consider the full implications of analogical thinking as a way of guarding against the idolatrous tendency, while conceiving God as being.

It is again pointed out that Marion does not do justice to the tradition of metaphysical theology in that he does not emphasize the fact that there are different ways to know God. Calcagno draws our attention to how Edith Stein, in her short essay titled ":Ways to Know God," suggests that there are three principal ways to know God: natural knowledge, revelation and personal encounters with God (Stein 1981). Natural knowledge denotes the discourse possible within the limits of human reason. Such a discourse will necessarily be limited and never pretends to be absolute and universal. It is widely acknowledged as only one level of discourse to be situated within other levels of discourse, including that of Revelation. Saint Thomas would readily acknowledge the limits of his viae, the Five Ways. He does admit the limits of natural human reason and turns to revelation in order to illuminate human understanding. The medieval image of the water of philosophy being transformed into the wine of theology is a graphic way of stating St Thomas's conviction that revelation is superior to natural human understanding. But Marion erroneously takes natural metaphysical discourse of causa sui as absolute and universal, and criticizes it for that reason.

Thirdly, Marion is faulted for inviting us to undercut Being as a viable framework within which one can think of God by thinking in terms of Agapeic love. Critics wonder how it is possible to love without first existing. They point out that the notion of a God who comes as a gift includes also the idea of being; for in order for God to give Himself as a gift, he must first exist. Surely, a gift and the giving itself, can only be understood within the economy of Being. Critics argue that the notion of a pure gift is not only inexpressible and inconceivable, but also impossible (Ward 235).

Finally, Marion is accused of not taking seriously the possibility of love becoming a concept, and therefore, an idol. To liberate God from the concept "Being" an appeal is made to conceive Him as the gift of love. But critics argue that God thought of as love may, like Being, become a concept and thus become graspable, an idol (Calcagno 2001). Marion is right when he says that we must move from idol to icon. However, as Calcagno argues, the tendency to idolize is part of human nature and is applicable to anything which falls under human understanding, including love and Being. The solution to the problem of God-talk in post-metaphysic era is not to "abandon the discourse of Being, but move to a more

iconic discourse of Being, namely of Being 'made visible' as person, as well as a more iconic understanding of love" (Calcagno 2001). An iconic gaze, whether of love or Being, would result in a discourse wherein the uniqueness of God would be cultivated.

As Graham Ward has rightly pointed out, Marion's postmodern natural theology, divorced from ontology, is more a commitment to Catholic orthodoxy (Ward 1998: 237) than an uninvolved, impartial investigation. The deeply Catholic background of Marion's work makes it look more like an essay in Christian apologetics than a philosophical investigation and lessens its appeal for those not familiar with the many tenets of or ongoing debates within the Catholic theological tradition. But this need not be conceived as an insurmountable difficulty. The framing of Marion's thesis as a working out of one's own faith allows the reflections to operate perfectly coherently on a logical level, and even more so on an individually emotional level.

Notes

1. Theiology is derived from the Greek "theios" meaning divinity or deity. Paul uses "theios" in Romans 1:20 when speaking of those attributes of God which are manifested to all humanity through the created order. Heidegger employs the term theiology to refer to the human philosophical endeavor to arrive at an understanding of the divine nature. This term may rightly be equated with onto-theology.

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JPJRS 5/1 (2002) 97-111

The End of Ethics?

Interface between Ethics and Postmodernism

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The word 'postmodern' came into popular currency with Lyotard's famous book, *The Postmodern Condition*. The term was probably first employed by Toynbee to designate the period following modernism. However, postmodernism cannot be restricted to a historical epoch; rather it should be understood as an attitude, and as such it can be shown to have existed even before modernism. Postmodernism defies all attempts at a precise definition. It is both "fashionable and elusive" (Sarup 1993: 129). It is an emerging consciousness adopting a reactionary attitude to modernism and all its dogmatic claims. Some of these dogmatic claims are the centrality of the human person, the supremacy of reason, the objectivity and certainty of knowledge and the existence of universally valid truths. Today postmodernism exerts a lot of influence on all areas of knowledge. In this paper I shall deal with its impact on ethics.

Ethics or Moral Philosophy has been a matter of great concern from the dawn of human civilization. The history of western thought bears testimony to the systematic treatment of ethics already in the pre-Socratic period. All schools of moral philosophy have taught a well-defined set of moral values. But there is hardly any agreement among these schools concerning the final end of moral life. Put it in brief: there is an ultimate goal to be achieved by adhering to moral values and precepts, but what that ultimate goal is is a matter of controversy. However, all moral philosophers agree that ethics is built on certain foundations. The challenges posed by postmodernism to ethics is quite serious. By calling into question anything that is foundational, the continued existence of ethics becomes almost impossible. Hence, our need to respond to the question arising out of this: Is ethics viable in a postmodern age?

This paper is divided into three unequal parts: The first part focuses on the metaphysical foundation of ethics and the crisis of ethics emerging from the end of western metaphysical tradition. The second part, which is the central part of the paper attempts to radically re-vision ethics with the help of some postmodern thinkers; and the fi-

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nal part seeks to respond to some of the challenges posed to such a re-visioning of ethics.

1. The Ethics of Modernism

Ethics, as traditionally understood, has developed down the ages. The growth of ethics as a philosophical discipline cannot be understood without its dependence on metaphysics. Ethics thrived on such a metaphysical tradition, grounding morality on the metaphysical principles of universality and ultimacy. Universality became the hallmark of modern philosophy that served as a fertile soil for the growth of ethics. Kant is the chief proponent of universality in the field of morals. He recommends universalizable moral principles, that is, principles that can be accepted by all irrespective of social identities, and discards all non-universalizable principles. Kantian universalism, therefore, seeks to anchor ethical justification in a more formal fundamental universal principle, which he calls the 'supreme principle of morality' or the 'categorical imperative.' His formulation of the categorical imperative runs thus: "Act only on that maxim whereby thou canst at the same time will that it should become a universal law."

1.1 The Crisis of Ethics

Ethics has been founded on the metaphysical principle of universality and the epistemological principles of truth and certitude. Such metaphysical and epistemological presuppositions are crucial to ethics. It is precisely such categories as universality, truth and certitude that postmodernism suspects. The crisis of ethics is the crisis of its metaphysical and epistemological presuppositions. The seeds of this postmodern tendency already prefigured in the masters of suspicion, Freud, Marx and Nietzsche. Nietzsche himself applies the hermeneutic of suspicion in the field of morals at least to some extent.

1.2 'The Death of God'

According to Nietzsche, God is the symbol of all that the West stands for. By announcing the death of God, Nietzsche denounces the western metaphysical tradition. Nietzsche speaks of three stages in the history of western philosophy – decadence, nihilism and the vision of tragic life. He characterizes the three periods allegorically – camel, lion and child. Morality belongs to the period of decadence, which he depicts by using the analogy of camel. The human person is enslaved by morality and carries the burden silently. Nihilism is a period of reaction, refusing like a lion to be a camel, a defiant no. The defiant no to the enslaving burden of morals is also an affirmative yes to life – the tragic vision of life portrayed by the analogy of a child – the symbol of spontaneity and freedom. Nietzsche characterizes the human person as a tightrope walker. The human person cannot be stagnant; he/she must always be on the move. Thus, his superman is not just a dethroning of God and enthroning of the human person but a constant invitation to transcend limitations. By calling into question the metaphysical tradition that has become stagnant and static, and by critiquing the enslaving morality arising from the staticity of metaphysics, Nietzsche calls for a transvaluation of values. Nietzsche's

philosophy is a call to transition – from being a suffocating beast to becoming a child, from the ultimate man, the man of decadent modernity, to the superman (Puthenpurackal 2000: 106).

1.3 The Forgottenness of Being

The decisive and more explicit critique of western metaphysics came from Martin Heidegger. The philosophy of Heidegger has been a breakthrough in the tradition of western philosophy. His vital concern is to retrieve the forgotten question about the meaning of Being. Being (Sein) in the western metaphysics came to be identified with beings (Seiendes), that is, from the perspective of thinghood. Thus Western philosophy, according to him, deviated from the fundamental ontology, which was really a concern of the early Greek philosophers. In his book, *Identity and Difference*, Heidegger shows how metaphysics has been onto-theo-logical. Metaphysical tradition began with Plato and Aristotle, reached its apex in German idealism and began to decline rapidly with Friedrich Nietzsche. Heidegger regards the advent of such a philosophy as the end of real philosophy. The preoccupation of metaphysics was to consider every entity either in abstract universal traits or in the ultimate grounding. In so far as every entity shares the commonality in the abstract universal trait of 'beingness,' it is ontology, and in so far as every entity is considered to be grounded in the ultimate being, God, it is theology. Hence, metaphysics has been onto-theologic. The forgottenness of Being challenges Heidegger to restate the question of Being. Restating the question of Being is to shatter the metaphysical tradition that has been onto-theo-logic. Hence the crisis of traditional ethics which was built on the onto-theo-logical metaphysical tradition.

2. Re-visioning of Ethics

Now that the metaphysical foundation on which ethics was built has collapsed, do we witness an amoral situation in the age of postmodernism? Are we left without ethics? Can we look for an ethics emerging from the debris of the collapse? After all, postmodernism is described as "a desire, a mood which looks to the future to redeem the present" (Docherty 1993: 2). We shall discuss now the contribution to ethics made by Heidegger, Michel Foucault, Emmanuel Levinas, Jean-François Lyotard and Jacques Derrida.

2.1 'Original Ethics' of Heidegger

Heidegger is considered to be one of those philosophers who initiated the transition from modernism to postmodernism. Hence, it seems paradoxical to speak of an ethics of Heidegger for two reasons. Firstly, he is responsible for the collapse of ethical systems in as much as he has rejected the western metaphysical tradition. Secondly, Levinas has made a series of accusations against Heidegger for ignoring ethics due to his preoccupation with ontology. It is true that Heidegger's concern was to inquire into the meaning of Being, not to develop a system of philosophy, much less a moral philosophy. Yet, Levinas' Semitic prejudice might have played a role in his criticism against Heidegger. Luk Bouckaert holds that Levinas adopts an attitude of a per-

secuted Jew in World War II towards the German Heidegger (1970: 402).

Heidegger no longer views ethics and ontology as two philosophical disciplines. He argues from the etymological meaning of ethics as deriving from the Greek *ethos* meaning abode, that it ponders over the abode of human person. Thus, ethics and ontology are brought together in a radically new way in so far as ontology is concerned with the truth of Being, and ethics, with the dwelling of the human person in the truth of Being (Bernasconi 1987: 122). "Heidegger interprets *ethos* as abode, or dwelling place (*Ethos bedeutet Aufenthalt, Ort des Wohnens*); and thus the foundational meaning of ethics is thought of in terms of the abode of man - that is, the familiar and everyday place where the human being dwells and comes to stand out, to ek-sist, in the unfamiliar truth of Being (*die Wahrheit des Seins*) (Critchley 1992: 15). In fact, when requested by Beufret to write on ethics, Heidegger wrote his *Letters on Humanism*. "To demand an ethics which will provide rules and directives no doubt misunderstands what it means to live in a fitting manner... It is by refusing the demand for an ethics that Heidegger ensures that he does not deny the person who demanded it. To follow rules is to uproot oneself from dwelling. To provide ethical directives is to condemn to the everyday the person who adopts them" (Bernasconi 1987: 134). The Being-question for Heidegger is so basic that an all-tragic form of life stems from its forgottenness. Therefore, it needs reformulation. Only the retrieval of the meaning of Being, according to Heidegger, will pave the way for an original ethics. "Original ethics is a mode of *Seinsdenken*," (Caputo 1971: 133), that is thinking committed to Being. Heidegger in no way has closed the possibility of ethics as an ontic science that deals with prohibitions and injunctions, but "beyond the problem of how men ought to conduct themselves in their mutual dealings with one another is the very manifestation of the human community and the human world" (Caputo 1971: 133). A hermeneutical reading of Heidegger offers a tremendous possibility to develop what might be called original ethics, which in my opinion is truly postmodern.

2.2 Stylization of the 'madman'

Foucault was a French philosopher of history. His major works are *Madness and Civilization*, *The Order of Things*, *Discipline and Punish*, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* and *The History of Sexuality*. It is necessary to explore the concepts of power, knowledge and truth to get into the heart of Foucault's philosophy. Truth, for Foucault, is not a universal *a priori*, but a social product. "It [Truth] presents itself, rather as the product of discursive practices – or, more precisely, of the component of discursive practices which we may call practices of *veridiction*" (Pasquino 1993: 41). Truth is the monopoly of the powerful. He reverses the old adage 'Knowledge is Power' as 'Power is Knowledge'. There is no truth outside the network of power-relations (Rouse 1994: 99). Power, for Foucault, is not mere domination or intervention but is inclusive of what he calls 'normalization' through 'governmentality'. Normalization is a

mechanism of a socialization process often employed in liberal democracies whereby every individual is made to conform to what the State projects as a value (Gane and Johnson 1993: 9). Normalization aims at the obedience of the citizen that guarantees the legitimacy of power in the modern state. Those who are labeled mad and criminals are in fact those who offer a strong resistance to normalization. Governmentality stands for the techniques and methods used in normalization. It is a new tool of domination that includes "the construction of new deviancy control systems, the institutional expression of which were the 'austere' and 'rational' bureaucratic organizations created for the classification and segregation of the poor, the criminal, the mad, the sick, the young, etc" (Johnson, 1993: 143).

Thus, the modern political arena is characterized by privileging the dominant perspective. The dominant perspective occupies the privileged centre by violently pushing other perspectives to the periphery. What really exist in knowledge are only perspectives. This explains why Foucault conceives of ethics as 'self-government'. Ethics is the "process in which the individual delimits that part of himself that will form part of the object of his moral practice, defines his position relative to the precept he will follow, and decides on a certain mode of being that will serve as his moral goal. And this requires him to act upon himself, to monitor, test, improve and transform himself" (Bernauer and Mahon 1994: 143-144). In spelling out his ethics, Foucault is at pains to distance himself from a moral code of conduct lest he may fall under the spell of authority – the dominant perspective. In so doing he presents the history of ethics "as a reconstruction of the forms of self-reflection of behaviour which are at the origin of the modes of conduct of life, considered here in the perspective of 'self-government' rather than as 'disciplines'" (Pasquino 1993: 41).

Foucault thus radically re-visions ethics as stylization – a way of being that is made possible through the revolt of "a madman" who "can no longer accept confinement and the forfeiture of his rights"; a people who "refuses the regime which oppresses it" (Bernauer and Mahon 1994: 153). It is a pursuit of freedom transgressing the limits set by the powerful, a movement from the periphery to the centre. This does not mean that Foucault subscribes to an aggressive self-aggrandizement to escape self-annihilation. Rudi Visker argues that Foucault views his own philosophical task as a 'double-bind' – attack on individualization and totalization (1995: 99-105). In an interview that appeared in an edited work by Bernauer and Rasmussen entitled *The Final Foucault*, Foucault has said: "care for the self is ethical in itself, but it implies complex relations with others, in the measure that this ethos of freedom is also a way of caring for others" (Norris 1994: 161). In his own lifetime he was himself committed to the emancipation of the deprived sections of society both in his philosophy and praxis. Foucault, therefore, subscribes neither to anarchy nor to tyranny.

2.3 The Face of the Other

Emmanuel Levinas, a Jew by birth and French by nationality, is a moral

philosopher. He calls ethics 'the first philosophy.' His major works are *Totality and Infinity*, *Otherwise than Being*, and *Ethics as the First Philosophy.* He cautions us that the clamour for objectivity and universality is nothing but violence. He highlights how the history of human thought with its strong adherence to objectivity and universality has reduced the alterity (otherness) of the other to the sameness of the self. "The ontological event that defines and dominates the philosophical tradition from Parmenides to Heidegger, for Levinas, consists in suppressing or reducing all forms of otherness by transmuting their alterity into the Same. Philosophy qua ontology is the reduction of the other to the Same, where the other is assimilated like so much food or drink - 'O digestive philosophy!' as Sartre exclaimed against French neo-Kantianism" (Critchley 1992: 6). The other is seen always from the privileged point of view of the self. The other has a place but not as the other in its nakedness but as the other as reduced to the sameness of the self. In fact, when Levinas asserts "Ethics as First Philosophy," he does not refer to a set of rules or a moral code. Levinas makes it clear: 'my task does not consist in constructing ethics; I only try to seek its meaning" (Levinas 1985: 90). He does not concern himself with constructing an ethical system though he does not denounce one; rather he probes into the primordial experience of ethical relation. "Thus, rather than ethics being understood as a traditional and regional component of philosophical thinking, built upon the ground of an ontological or logocentric metaphysics, Levinasian ethics is a 'first philosophy' that disrupts ontology or logocentrism" (Critchley 1992: 7). His ethics is an "ethics of ethics" (Derrida 1978: 111). The ethical relation is a transcendental move of the self to the other without ever returning to the self. The other (*autrui*) cannot be reduced to a concept or totalized in a category. The other escapes all forms of conceptualization and totalization. Levinasian Ethics can be said to fall outside the non-metaphysical and non-logocentric forms of traditional ethics (Robbins, 1995: 178).

> The ethical is therefore the location of a point of alterity, or what Levinas also calls exteriority (exteriorite), that cannot be reduced to the Same. Thus... moral consciousness is not an experience of values, 'but an access to exterior being'. This exterior being is named 'face' (visage) by Levinas, and is defined as 'the way in which the other [*l'Autre*] presents himself, exceeding the idea of the other in me'. In the language of transcendental philosophy, the face is the condition of possibility for ethics. For Levinas, then, the ethical relation – and ethics is simply and entirely the event of this relation - is one in which I am related to the face of the Other (*le visage d'autrui*), where the French word '*autrui*' refers to the other human being, whom I cannot evade, comprehend, or kill and before whom I am called to justice to justify myself (Critchley 1992: 5).

The face of the other challenges the self to be responsible. Face is the most tangible expression of the other. To understand and appreciate Levinas better, a distinction must be made between responsibility for the other and responsibility to the other. Responsibil-

ity for the other is to account for the words and the deeds of the other, whereas responsibility to the other is to give adherence to the general laws of social life. Traditional ethics has been confined to the latter but Levinas pleads for the former, that is, responsibility for the other. It precedes any metaphysical principle, even before reflexive consciousness. It is analogous to Heidegger's concept of care, in which "I am able to substitute myself for the other or to precede him in his own possibilities" (Waldenfels 1995: 43). Levinas makes a radical shift from the conception of ethics as a well-demarcated frame of instruction to a primordial self-transcendence to the other.

2.4 *Enthronement of 'Little Narratives'*

Jean-François Lyotard was a French philosopher. He became famous with the publication of his major work, The *Postmodern Condition*. His other important works are *The Différend* and *Just Gaming*. From everyday experience of human life we know that two persons do not view an event in the same way. This is because all understanding is governed by preunderstanding. There is no so such thing as presuppositionless understanding, pure and simple. Prejudices play a vital role in the process of understanding an event, and prejudices are socio-cultural products formed by the tradition to which one belongs. This being the case, there cannot be a value neutral approach to ethics. The criteria for the moral judgment of an action are dictated by the paradigm of values evolved from within every tradition. Ignoring this hermeneutical parameter leads to the formation and stabilization of what Lyotard calls metanarrative. The essence of postmodernism, according to Lyotard, is "incredulity toward metanarratives" (Lyotard 1984: xxiv). In his much celebrated work *The Postmodern Condition*, Lyotard directs his arguments against the naïve presumption that "philosophy can restore unity to learning and develop universally valid knowledge for humanity" (Sarup 1993: 132). With Lyotard postmodernism "became identified with the critique of universal knowledge and foundationalism" (Sarup 1993: 132). Lyotard transports Wittgenstein's analogy of language games from the field of linguistics to the social reality. Just as each game is governed by a specific set of rules and criteria, different literary forms in a discourse involve different language games with specific sets of rules and criteria. Applying the criteria of interpreting one literary form to another is as foolish as judging one game by the criteria of another. Human societies are characterized by heterogeneity. As a result, there is a "lack of any common ground for judgement between the various 'phrase-regimes', 'discourses' or 'language games' involved" (Sarup 1993: 151). Lyotard introduces the concept *différend*, which stands for an irreducible conflict of interests. Resolving a dispute between two persons with *différend* by applying a rule would not reflect a sense of justice, as both do not subscribe to the same rule (Sarup 1993: 152).

2.5 *Ethics of Deconstruction*

Deconstruction is the key term in the philosophy of Jacques Derrida, a

post-structuralist French philosopher. Some of his major works are *Writing and Difference*, *Of Grammatology* and *Speech and Phenomena*. If deconstruction attempts to deconstruct metaphysical foundations on which ethics is built, "what could deconstruction possibly have to do with ethics, apart from radically putting into question the possibility of the latter?" (Critchley 1992: 2) But within the Levinasian understanding of ethics deconstruction can be shown to be an ethical demand. "Derridian deconstruction can, and indeed should, be understood as an ethical demand, provided that ethics is understood in the particular sense given to it in the work of Emmanuel Levinas" (Critchley 1992: xi).

Deconstruction is an oft-used term in current debate and discussion, a term which is often misunderstood. The prefix 'de' is not to be taken in the negative sense of demolition and destruction. Criticisms against deconstructionism are directed against the misunderstanding of deconstruction as paving the way for nihilism. Derrida has borrowed the term from Heidegger who calls for a *Destruktion* (destruction) of western metaphysics. The destruction of metaphysics does not mean doing away with metaphysics, but to retrieve the original meaning of Being that has been lost in the history of metaphysics. Heidegger aims at 'destructing' the metaphysical tradition that has deviated from its origins to land in totalizing Being as an abstract universal trait. Derrida employs the term 'deconstruction' in the context of reading a text. A deconstructive reading is one that breaks through the text to show that the text inscribes within it a set of binary opposites like masculine/feminine, true/false, central/peripheral etc., and privileges the first term. In uncovering the privileging of the first term, deconstruction brings out its dependency on the subordinate term and shows "that primacy belongs to the subordinate term instead" (Sarup 1993: 51). In a metaphysical discourse there is a violent hierarchy of terms and what deconstruction attempts is the conquering of hierarchy. Deconstruction, therefore, strives "to locate the promising marginal text, to disclose the undecidable moment, to pry it loose with the positive level of the signifier, to reverse the resident hierarchy, only to displace it; to dismantle it in order to reconstitute what is always already inscribed" (Derrida 1976: xxvii).

What is it that makes the privileged term privileged? It is the 'metaphysics of presence'. Derrida contends that many philosophers based themselves on what is present which they believed to provide certainty. Phonocentrism or the privilege of speech over writing belongs to the metaphysics of presence, because speech implies immediacy, and voice is the most fitting evidence of self-presence. Derrida links phonocentrism with logocentrism. He uses the term logocentrism as a substitute for metaphysics, and it refers to the foundations on which philosophical systems are built. Thus, the metaphysics of presence hinges on phonocentrism and logocentrism (Sarup 1993: 34-38). The quest for 'centring the privileged' finds expression in hierarchized oppositions within the texture of social fabric. Derrida here shows a resemblance to Heidegger who holds the western meta-

physics of the past responsible for the domination exercised over both human and non-human realities in the technological present. Deconstruction in the socio-ethical context would then mean de-centring the privileged, the powerful, who impose their norms of morality and encapsulate others within their ethical structure. The universal moral principles generally held sacrosanct can be shown from the deconstructive point of view as the principles of the powerful. While destabilizing such universal abstractions, deconstruction announces the existence of legitimate differences in morality and calls for the celebration of difference.

3. Challenges and Possible Responses

The re-visioning of ethics has not left us with definitive values or norms. It is only an invitation not to subsume the other in the self and to celebrate difference. Though it may be theoretically viable, how far is this practically possible? Serious objections to such a postmodern approach would inevitably emerge that are to be addressed.

3.1 The Quest for Uniformity

The most important objection emerges from the context of globalization. It is commonly held that we are part of the global village. It is a clear articulation of human interrelatedness and an affirmation of a common space. This gives rise to an increasing tendency to search for a global ethic. If differences are central to postmodernism and if they are to be recognized, promoted, encouraged and celebrated, how can we meaningfully conceive a global ethic? Would this not become a metanarrative? Is our affirmation of a common space then obsolete? The same objection can be raised agianst the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Some sociologists today point out that human rights do not have a universal meaning. The concept of human rights in an elite society has as its axis the interests and preferences of the elite. Obviously, the people of the periphery have different if not contrary interests and preferences, and as a result human rights take on a different meaning. There are also other factors such as ethnic and gender differences that further intensify the differences of the meaning of human rights. The continued insistence on one religion, one language and one culture often paraphrased in a catchy slogan, 'Hindu, Hindi and Hindutva,' popularised in recent decades by some fundamentalist Hindus, meets with resistance and that is keeping in line with the postmodern intuition. Authentic pluralism and the celebration of legitimate differences are constitutive of postmodernism. Perhaps the persistent demand for political autonomy in Kashmir and the North Eastern states can find its justification within the strands of postmodernism. Within the Catholic Church, the existence of different liturgical rites is no longer seen as a threat but can be accepted as meaningful. This is indicative of a major shift in the self-understanding of the Church and is reflective of postmodern sensibilities. All these meaningful differences, elucidated above, can be critiqued as nothing other than justifying fragmentary existence. The concern raised above about the pos-

sibility of a common space remains as yet unanswered.

3.2 Impossiblity of Moral Commitments

To make the situation worse, there have been reports of murders of young boys and girls born in different caste communities for falling in love in the state of Uttar Pradesh. The Star News on August 22, 2001, reported the case of a Dalit girl by name Neha and a high caste boy taking refuge in the police station. Since Neha was only 16 years old, the police handed her over to her parents after getting a written assurance from them for the security of her life. Yet Neha was scared that her own parents might kill her. The villagers demanded that she be killed. They operate from a specific moral perspective. They are neither mad nor pathological but believe that her death alone can restore honour to their village, which was disgraced by what they characterize as her 'anti-social' act, and can ensure that the morality of their village remains untransgressed. If there can be no metanarrative against the backdrop of which the act can be looked upon as immoral, we can only remain silent over this issue. Many more murders will have to be passively witnessed. The crux of the problem is this: Does not postmodernism obstruct us from making moral judgments by its rejection of metanarratives which alone are capable of ascertaining the moral worth of an action?

This complex problem has to be addressed at two levels. First, though the crisis seems to be emerging from a 'little narrative,' that is, from a moral paradigm of a particular society at a given period of time, it does operate as a metanarrative. The caste discrimination based on the principle of purity and pollution is surely a metanarrative that guides the thoughts and deeds of a casteist society. Though it is a construction of the dominant caste people, eventually the so-called low caste people have internalized this and allow their own lives to be controlled by this metanarrative. Secondly, the problem cannot be solved by traditional ethics without giving rise to other problems. Traditional schools of ethics make the assumption that there are certain fundamental values that are common to all humans cutting across differences of caste, colour, creed and gender. Preservation and promotion of life is one such fundamental value, which cannot be compromised at any cost in any situation. But then problematic questions emerge! To what extent can I really stand for the value of preservation of life? Can I kill someone in self-defence, to preserve my own life? Should a girl who has been sexually assaulted carry the child conceived in this tragic incident? If she aborts the fetus, does she go against the fundamental value of preservation of life? Traditional ethics, though it has tried to offer some solutions, has not been satisfactory. These ethical dilemmas challenge us to rethink the values we consider absolute. Love has been characterized as the fundamental value in Christian ethics. But only when we begin to spell out the nuances involved in love and its different dimensions do we realize that the word itself is open to many interpretations, and the inability to decide which interpretation

is to be taken as fundamental and absolute only leads to further complications. Thus, traditional ethics, despite its promise to offer clear solutions to all problems, only betrays its insufficiency and inadequacy. But this does not say anything positive about a postmodern approach to ethics unless it is capable of offering an effective alternative for an authentic common space.

3.3 In Search of a Common Space

How does postmodernism leave room for a common space? The spontaneous and creative response to this question can be summed up in a key word: dialogue. Heidegger's philosophy offers a sound philosophical basis for dialogue. He uses the term *Ereignis* which refers to both an event and its appropriation. Combing both the meanings, Heidegger uses it to denote the 'event of appropriation'. The event of appropriation shows itself in such a manner that Being as giving and human person as receiving belong together, but there is a difference between Being and entities. The difference is the process of coming-to-be of the entities. It is the same as the process of 'un-concealment', or still better, the holding together of concealment and 'revealment.' From this perspective, truth, for Heidegger, is not opposed to falsity but a process of coming-to-be. Fundamental speaking comes from Being, and we at best give voice to the voiceless speaking reality, and thus language is not a finished product, but is, as he calls it, a languaging of language – a lighting process, a coming-to-be. This offers a model for dialogue. In its etymological sense dialogue has the character of *legein*, letting the meaning emerge and not arbitrarily imposing one's views on others in trying to convince them.

Different paradigms can and should interact and intersect in a spirit of openness to learn from and to enrich one another. This dialogical process involves two main presuppositions: (1) differences exist; and (2) differences can be celebrated in the form of mutual education and enrichment. There is no single paradigm which is absolutely right or wrong. This is already a significant deviation and discontinuity from the traditional mode of ethics that prefers to remain a cohesive system forbidding any toleration of difference. From the traditional point of view, if difference exists, it has to be either harmoniously blended or artificially fused. It is worth recalling Habermas' theory of communicative action that attempts to bring about consensus in the event of communication. Habermas, though he adheres to Lyotard's incredulity to metanarratives, breaks away from him by proposing an alternative. "He is profoundly aware that there is a potential inequality in a system which claims reason for itself, and stigmatises all those with whom it will communicate as being inherently unreasonable... The counter to this lies in a 'theory of communicative action'; but here Habermas and Lyotard diverge once more" (Docherty 1993: 25). The reason why Lyotard is not comfortable with consensus is because he believes that "there is a 'soft imperialism, 'a conversational imperialism' at work in the drive to establish consensus between participants in a dialogue" (Docherty 1993: 25). Hence, the essence of the postmodern

approach consists in primarily recognizing the difference as genuine and eventually celebrating it as meaningful. The point of departure obviously then is to acknowledge different paradigms, each of them as confined to time and space. These paradigms are incomparable because there is no objective and standard criteria against which they can be compared and evaluated. Each in its own right is meaningful. Nevertheless, there is a broad scope for different paradigms to encounter and enhance one another. It is no longer an attempt to reduce the otherness of the other to the sameness of the self but to extend oneself to the other.

Each paradigm is a little narrative and has the potential to function as a metanarrative. As a little narrative, every paradigm becomes normative for a particular group of people at a particular time. Postmodernism, therefore, does not cancel out criteria for moral judgment but is only suspicious of its universal and objective nature. If the little narrative does not offer criteria for moral evaluation, then commitment to justice and option for the unprivileged section of the society are impossible. It is quite interesting to note that postmodernism does not totally abandon ethics but creatively makes way for ethics from subaltern perspectives or from the underside of history. The paradigms of the periphery assume equal prominence to that of the privileged centre. To put it in concrete terms, it allows room for the emergence of Dalit ethics, Tribal ethics, Feminist ethics etc. that can challenge the Brahminical ethics and the elitist ethics that appear in the disguise of objectivity and universalizability. The task of postmodernism can be seen as subverting the supremacy of the ethics of the privileged and extolling the ethics of the people of the periphery.

3.4 Universality of ideals

Historians project some heroic role models as universal. We cannot deny the impact made by some people in the history of humankind. But can we say categorically that these people stand out in prominence as role models for all peoples at all times? For instance, the moral ideals of Gandhiji can be truly inspirational to a particular people in a given context at a certain period of history, but to make them absolute is neither realistic nor justifiable. This is very evident from the resurgence of the Ambedkarian ideals to counter the glorification of the Gandhian ideals. This is in no way to suggest that Gandhian moral ideals are insignificant or meaningless. Rather, the significance and the meaningfulness of the Gandhian ideals can be much appreciated within a specific paradigm, but a hasty extension of the same to different paradigms is not only questionable but also unacceptable. This explains why Lyotard, who in his early phase of scholarly life adhered to Marxism, later began to view it as a metanarrative and abandoned it. The Marxian analysis of economics is undoubtedly powerful, but is not adequate to encompass all peoples. No ideology, no value system, no normative thought pattern can be universalized. Singling out role models serves its purpose within a specific socio-cultural, historico-political context, but not outside this context.

Are we ultimately subscribing to a sophisticated moral relativism? How

is the envisaging of ethics in a postmodern age substantially different from moral relativism? The concept of relativism is itself relative. Relativism presupposes that there is something absolute. The relative-absolute framework does not fit in a postmodern worldview. The postmodern approach to ethics precedes the relative-absolute divide. This can be shown by drawing a parallel from Heidegger's fundamental ontology. Heidegger perceived the glorified status of rationalism in modern philosophy to be responsible for the subject-object dichotomy. Objectification of Being was the greatest mistake of metaphysics, and Heidegger believed that his mission was to undo the harm and to restore ontology to its pristine purity. His hermeneutical approach to fundamental ontology eliminates the subject-object dichotomy. In his project the human person is not a subject as opposed to an object but a being-in-the world which includes being with other persons.

Conclusion

Is it not clear by now that postmodernism does not provide a system of ethics? Postmodernism offers a constant invitation and a persistent demand to be critical of laws and norms that are absolutized and held sacrosanct. Perhaps, it allows the emergence of different ethical paradigms, and makes one aware of their historical contingency. The different paradigms emerging out of the collapse of well-established ethical systems of the past need the accompaniment of postmodern perspectives, lest these little narratives in the long run end up becoing metanarratives. Postmodernism as a genuine partner in dialogue with the little narratives in the field of morals becomes all the more appealing not merely because it is novel but because it is potentially a powerful liberative tool. Thus, no definite ethical paradigm is proposed here because it may itself become a metanarrative "and the possibility of ethics is referred, not to its actuality, but to its impossibility [as a philosophical system]. This does not mean that writing ethical systems is impossible. Only that the attempt to do is a denial of the ethical relation, though one which (fortunately) can never be complete" (Bernasconi 1987: 135). All that is intended here is to show that postmodernism enables a re-visioning of ethics not as a once and for all system but broadening its scope from mere laws to life, thus opening up many possibilities of doing ethics but within a spatio-temporal boundary.

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JPJRS 5/1 (2002) 113-118

Postmodernity and Ambedkarism

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We are living in an age which is described as postmodern: "ours is the world that, for better or worse has been labelled as 'post-modern'" declares Paul Lakeland (Lakeland 1997: ix). In fact the so-called postmodernism is spreading rapidly, influencing almost every sphere of our life. But its growing popularity has its 'minus point'. It has lost its clarity and precision of meaning and implication, in the face of a cluster of multiple viewpoints. Paul Lakeland drives this home when he writes: "there are probably a thousand different self appointed commentators of postmodern phenomenon and bewildering discrepancies between the ways many of these authors understand the term postmodern and its cognates" (Lakeland 1997: ix-x). Thus the postmodern arena becomes somewhat like satellite T.V., which makes us look like idiots, who waste the major chunk of our time hopping from one channel to another in search of some good programme. That is why some scholars have recommended that we speak about this topic in the plural—as postmodernisms.

Amidst this diversity of views and perspectives we can still clearly find some pointers, which knit and weave it into a challenging movement. Lyotard says, "I define postmodernity as incredulity towards metanarratives." (Sarup 1993: 4) Prof. Madan Sarup makes a similar claim when he says "philosophy with a capital 'P' is no longer a viable and credible enterprise" (Sarup 1993: 156). The postmodern thinkers argue that there is no magical meta-theory or universal theoretical ground that can provide a foundation for every other subsequent theory. The so-called meta-theories that evoke universal totalising claims are referred to as metanarratives. For instance, in Lyotard's view the overarching philosophies of histories like the enlightenment story of the gradual but steady progress of reason and freedom, Hegel's dialectic of spirit coming to know itself and more importantly Marx's drama of the forward march of human productive capacities via class conflict culminating in the proletarian revolution are categorised as great metanarratives. Following Nietzche, Foucault asserts that our claims to truth often represent disguised

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attempts to legitimise uses of power (Thiselton 1995: ix).

Hence, the postmodernists ruthlessly declare that the so-called metanarrative is simply one more discourse among many others, and hence can no longer operate as legitimising structures. In its place, they uphold the legitimising structures that are at once plural, local and immanent. Hence, we can refer to postmodernity in general terms as a war against all forms of totalization.

Ambedkar in waging a war against the reigning oppressive casteist metanarrative that has shaped the lives of tens of thousands Indians for centuries has already trodden the path of postmodernity, that is emerging as an important politico-cultural current in our times. Although the term postmodernity is relatively recent, the perspective that it connotes is primarily seen as a movement or attitude rather than a kind of 'ism.' Hence, we need not limit its purview to a thought pattern that strictly arises in chronological order. One can indeed trace it in almost every period of history. Scholars have already attempted to trace postmodern underpinnings in the lives and doctrines of great personalities such as Confucius, Gautama Buddha, Gandhi etc. (Gier 1996: 261-281).

In this paper I attempt to study relation between Ambedkar and postmodern thought. I believe this exercise can provide us with great lessons as we join hands against every kind of oppression in our society.

1. The Person of Ambedkar

Some dalit activists have already declared the new millennium as the 'Dalit millennium' or 'the Ambedkar era' (Thumma 2000: vii). This has indeed kindled a hope of golden future for 200 millions Dalits in India and has created a great dynamism, which appears all set to upset the power politics of the casteist elements in Hinduism. One must say that this upsurge is timely. With the reigns of political power falling into the hands of the Hindutva forces, the centuries old oppression appear to have gathered momentum and attained a new vigour. The urgency in the implementation of the (Ram Raj) Hindu Rastra agenda, the attempts at the saffronisation of education, the efforts of hinduisation of the constitution, and other legal, administrative, and academic institutions, the growing attacks and atrocities on Dalits and other minorities, the boosting of the capitalistic globalization process thorough privatization, liberalization and marketization exhibit without any doubt that oppression is looming large on the dalit community with new aggression. In this dark, gloomy period Ambekarism appears to be the need of the hour for India. Hence, we get a bird's eye view of the life of this great man who could be said to exhibit a postmodern perspective.

1.1 The Man Who Saw His World with Open Eyes

Ambedkar saw the reality of India with honesty and open eyes. His realistic analysis of his motherland becomes evident if we take pains to hear him say: "we must begin by acknowledging first, there is complete absence of two things in Indian society. One of this is equality. On the social plane we have in In-

dia a society of graded inequality, which means elevation for some and the degradation of the others. On the economic plane we have a society in which there are some who have immense wealth as against the many who are being in abject poverty" (Das 1969: 187). Faced with the prospect of political liberation, Ambedkar saw that it is like running a race where the participants have unequal starting points. Hence, he said, " On 26th January 1950 we are going to enter into a life of contradictions. In politics we will have equality and in social life and economic life we have inequality...we must remove these contradictions at the earliest possible moments or else those who suffer from inequality will blow up the structure of political democracy which this assembly has so laboriously built up" (Das 1969: 187). These prophetic words appear to have fallen on deaf ears. As a result, our motherland is already facing the prospect of disintegration from various militant, naxalite and other secessionist groups.

1.2 Towards a Liberative Religion

Ambedkar was convinced that religion was essential for human social growth. Hence, with wisdom and vigour, he fought against the secularist (western type) and Marxist attacks on or indifference to religion. He would say, "Man cannot live by bread alone. He has a mind, which needs food for thought. Religion instils hope and drive him to activity" (Keer 1991: 502). Although he advocated religion, he endorsed a religion that is liberative. He believed that liberation plays an important role in emancipating the minds and souls of people. He knew that any social change needs religion as a motivating, conscientizing, empowering and energising factor. Hence, a religion that is not liberative, a religion that breeds oppression and sanctions unjust inequalities, is no religion in his eyes. Unfortunately, it appears that Hinduism does exactly this. By idealizing the brahmins and by degrading the shudras, the untouchables, the unapproachables and the unseeables to the level of slaves, it has failed to deliver individual justice, equality, fraternity, and liberty. Hence, Ambedkar declared, "inequality is the soul of Hinduism" (Keer 1991: 66). Therefore, he himself left casteist Hinduism and embraced Buddhism and invited others to follow suit. This becomes clear when he says, "so long as we remain in a religion, which teaches a man to treat another man as a leper, the sense of discrimination, which is deeply rooted in our mind cannot go. For annihilating caste and untouchability from among the untouchables change of religion is the only antidote" (Ambedkar 1987: 7).

1.3 Burning the Casteist Narkasura

Ambedkar dedicated his entire life for the cause of the Dalits. The 1920's saw the birth of this life long struggle. It was inaugurated by daring events, which would become glaring symbols of his entire life struggle. He along with his Mahar movement activists tried to enter the temples forbidden for the Dalits and burnt the Manu Smriti, the sacred law book of Hinduism, a book that sacaralised oppression and discrimination. This movement of course reached its climax in his conversion to Buddhism

and the total rejection of Hinduism (Thumma 2000: 39).

1.4 Unmasking the Casteist face of Gandhism

Ambedkar did appreciate many of the teachings of Gandhi but he honestly strove hard to expose the hidden casteism in Gandhism. To achieve the same he used the very words of Gandhi. Ambedkar could not tolerate caste-based discrimination at any level of our society. He believed that all are born equal and should be treated as equals at all levels. Ambedkar attempted to expose the hidden caste bias in Gandhism by citing many of his sayings that were loaded with casteism. For instance, he points out that, Gandhi would say, "The object of varna system was to prevent competition and class struggle and class war. I believe in varna system because it fixes duties and occupation" (Ambedkar 1990: 279). This might appear to show that Gandhi follows the middle path, but one must bear in mind that Ambedkar, the ardent follower of the Buddha's middle way, saw that there can be no middle path in this matter. What appears to be the middle is already on the side of the high castes. Hence, he clearly saw that Gandhi's varna system was simply another name of caste system. Of course, Gandhi did state that the caste system was an anachronism and that he was not in favour of it. But his lack of social understanding coupled with his love of peace might be the reason for the absence of any radical solution for the evil of caste system. Hence, Ambedkar asks:

> What hope can Ghandhism offer the untouchables? To the untouchables Hinduism is a veritable chamber of horrors. The sanctity and the infallibility of the Vedas, Smritis and the Shastras , the iron law of caste, the heartless law of karma and the senseless law of status of birth are to the Untouchables veritable instruments of torture which Hinduism has forged against the Untouchables. These very instruments which have mutilated, blasted and blighted the life of the Untouchables are to be found intact and untarnished in the bosom of Gandhism. How can the Untouchables say that Gandhism is a heaven and not a chamber of horrors as Hinduism has been? The only reaction and a very natural reaction of the Untouchables would be to run away from Gandhism (1990: 296-297).

1.5 The Quest for Dhamma Raj... Liberation for All

The ultimate vision and goal of Ambekar's liberative struggle can be said to be a quest for the kingdom of righteousness. He says, "the kingdom of righteousness lies on earth and is to be reached by man by righteous conduct" (Ambedkar 1991: 131). Thus, one can trace the privileged status of 'this worldly' as against the 'other worldly' approach of the some of mainline religions. This Buddhist quest for *Dharma Raj* is indeed noble for it is aimed at bringing about a total and integral liberation of every human being within the framework of one's community and nation. Hence, love, justice, and peace are the prime values of the kingdom of righteousness.

1. 6 The Dalit Critical Principle

Ambekar's views on the Dalits are experience-based. He did bear the stigma and the alienation of being an untouchable. Though a scholar of repute abroad he had to put up with the insults of the ignorant in his homeland. Thus, experience strengthened his commitment to Dalit liberation. Experience and critical reflection motivated and inspired all his studies and writings. Often the postmodern thinkers are said to be armchair thinkers, but he was no armchair philosopher. Action-reflection was his methodology. His Dalit hermeneutics travelled the road of Dalit movement for justice and dignity. His satyagrahas for the right to drinking water from the public lake, and the right to enter the forbidden temples, his struggle for economic and social justice, indeed all his thoughts, actions and writings were shaped and motivated by his dalit hermeneutics. He judged every event in India, every decision taken, every reform initiated, with his Dalit critical principle. Indeed he was a man who breathed the cause of dalit liberation every moment of his life.

2. Conclusion

It is clear that Amedkar did exhibit postmodern tendencies in his war against the casteist metanarrative. He understood caste system as the power game of oppressing the weak. Hence, he rejected Hinduism that legitimized and sanctioned it. His fight for the dalit cause, his rejection of the entire metanarartive of Hinduism can be a great inspiration for us. It has the power to subvert and clip the wings of the casteist agenda still growing strong under the banner of the BJP-RSS combine. In this context, I think Ambedkarism can go a long way in our fight against our highly stratified society arranged in an ascending order of reverence and descending order of contempt.

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JPJRS 5/1 (2002) 119-130

Postmodernism

Transition from the Newtonian to the Relativistic-Quantum Paradigm

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The praxis of modern culture, including its life styles, values, metaphors, languages, myths, etc. have been almost imperialistically generated and dominated by science. The scientific culture is universal because, as Peacocke has rightly judged, "today one of the universal languages of humanity cutting across all cultural boundaries is that of science" (1989:11). This dialectical mutuality between science and culture has been a historical reality over the centuries, and this indissoluble link between the two is what has brought science and scientific issues on to the platform of the postmodern debates. No wonder the polyvalence of the concept of modernity has been so over-encompassing:

> It (Modernity) is the name given to a series of spectacular transformations of life that are the very stuff of any interpretation of our contemporary situation: from feudal economic systems, to free-market, industrialized economies; from political power, concentrated in the hands of a few, to vast democratic institutions that encourage wide distribution of information and responsibility; from natural science as primarily classification and description, to an internationally coordinated quest for progressive, experimentally supported theories that enable prediction and control; from candles and ox-drawn plows, to a panoply of technological marvels that have transformed the average standard of living and the way we relate to the world around us; from widespread superstition and credulity that lent itself to exploitation by a few and preserved ignorance of social and psychological realities, to an equally wide-spread spirit of criticism that has given birth to free speech and the free press, to social and political institutions with a rudimentary capacity to criticize and correct themselves, and to the systematic study of human psychology, religion and social life (Wildman 1996: 43).

The transition of modernity in its manifold dimensions to postmodernity is effected by a series of factors. Science has played a crucial role in this transition. There has been substantive interaction between the postmodern cultural and intellectual transition and the transition in the scientific scenario. The

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move from modernism to postmodernism, scientifically understood, is a move from the classical or Newtonian worldview to the relativistic-quantum worldview. Nevertheless, there exists a number of conceptual commonalities between the postmodern tenets and the emergent scientific perspectives. My concern in this paper is to highlight these commonalities of perspectives from ontological, epistemological and anthropological points of view and to show the divergent roles played by modern sciences in effecting the transition from modernity to post modernity.

1. Modernity`- The Epistemic, Anthropic and Ontological Assumptions

The Scientific paradigm that dominated and in some way controlled the conceptual foundations of the social, religious, cultural and philosophical currents of modernity was the classical paradigm founded on Newtonian mechanics, which was corroborated by logical positivism in the 20th century. In the history of science, the 17th and 19th centuries witnessed the unprecedented triumph of Newtonian mechanics. Newtonian mechanics was based on the idea that the universe works like a huge machine according to some fundamental laws of nature. Determinism was the immediate consequence of this outlook. The universe is viewed as a great clock set in motion. The future of the universe is already determined by the past; which as finite beings we cannot know, but which is known by the divine mind. In a way, eternity has already happened. We are mere spectators of an eternally pre-determined cosmic drama. It was a world-view, which arose due to the development of science, mainly the science of mechanics, chemistry and medicine. It arose as an attempt to eliminate from science all unobservable elements like substantial form, vital force, etc.

According to the Newtonian view, all phenomena of our experience can be explained in terms of matter in motion and interaction between parts of matter. In other words, the laws of mechanics can explain everything. It claims that all phenomena of our experience can be accounted for in terms of four fundamental elements, namely, mass, force, space and time. The laws of mechanics are universal. They can explain even biological phenomena. Chance and contingency have no place in science. This view has led to physical reductionism, which means reducing biological organisms to machines, and thereby reducing biology to physics and chemistry.

Epistemologically, mathematical formalism is emphasized. Laws of mechanics are expressed in terms of mathematics and everything can be explained in terms of mathematics. Due to the stress on mathematics, absolute accuracy and certainty began to be emphasized. Absolute objectivity is thought to be possible. Subjectivity has no place in science. Despite the fact that Newton, Galileo and Kepler were strong believers, the end of this theory was atheism. Spirit and spiritual beings have no place here. The matter spirit distinction got blurred. Intelligence is no more a quality of the soul, but of sophisticated complex matter. The consciousness and spirituality of the humans are explained

as the reflective properties of sophisticated matter.

The logical positivists were reacting against the intrusion of metaphysics into science. To demonstrate the meaninglessness of metaphysics was their goal. Logical positivism went to the extreme of claiming that any knowledge that is not based on experience is invalid. Any valid statement must have an empirical basis. Science according to them is a set of laws, theories, concepts, etc. Scientific knowledge is governed by strict rules of rationality. Non-scientific factors like prejudices, upbringing, status of a scientist, etc. have nothing to do with science. Scientific knowledge is totally objective. Science is valid for all places, persons and times. Logical Positivists advocated the verification theory of meaning. It says that a statement is meaningful only if it is empirically verifiable. A contingent proposition is meaningful only if there is an empirical method for deciding whether it is true or false.

Ontological determinism gave rise to methodological reductionism and scientific absolutism. An explanation of the mysteries of a human being needed nothing more than a few neurological and psychological traits. This scientific absolutism was distasteful to religion. Religions, especially monotheistic religions, in defence of their metaphysical presuppositions, became the major opponents of science. The split and antagonism between science and religion is the natural consequence of the deterministic world-view adopted at the beginning of the modern era:

> Our modern western civilization began with a kind of cultural schizophrenia. Our scientific enterprise effectively decoupled itself from our humanistic-spiritual traditions at the beginning of the modern period. All for good reasons, yes, but now the neurosis spreads over several continents. Enmeshed in the most terrifying pathology in the history of humanity, we can perhaps dare to ask if this was such a good idea, this splitting of the universe (Swimme 1985: 17).

Another theoretical consequence of the reductionistic and mechanistic worldview was the "disenchantment and desacralization of the world" (Arakkal 1988: 47). There are many religions, which attribute a certain amount of divinity to material realities like the earth, the sky, the sun, rivers, stones, mountains, etc. The mechanistic understanding of the world makes no room for such an approach. A profound dedivinization of the world and a disenchantment of nature and natural powers are the outcome. Though the mechanistic worldview had been a decisive step towards our technological and scientific enhancement, it has to be considered a mixed blessing in regard to the dedivinization of the world.

Anthropologically, an extreme formulation of the spirit-matter dualism to be found in the seventeenth century philosophy of René Descartes also accompanied the birth of modernism. Descartes' famous sentence *Cogito, ergo sum* - I think, therefore I exist - has led Westerners to equate their identity with their mind, not with their whole being. When humans understand themselves as mere aggregates of parts, it will

reflect in their view of the world as a multitude of separate objects and events:

> The belief that all these fragments - in ourselves, in our environment, and in our society - are really separate can be seen as the essential reason for the present series of social, ecological, and cultural crises. It has alienated us from nature and from our fellow human beings. It has brought a grossly unjust distribution of natural resources, creating economic and political disorder, an ever-rising wave of violence, both spontaneous and institutionalised, and an ugly, polluted environment in which life has become physically and mentally unhealthy (Capra 1984: 9).

Mechanism, reductionism, anthropocentrism, determinism, objectivity, certainty, absolutism, etc. are the central pillars of the modernity. These perspectives have broken the awareness of a universal harmony between God, humans and the rest of the creation. Isolation, privatisation, objectification etc., were the result of this alienated state of affairs. A total fragmentation of Reality into subject and object, into humans and the world, etc., were the necessary consequences.

Scientific and technological developments have led to a denial of the "mystery" of the universe. Science claimed to be able to interpret everything in terms of objective and rational knowledge. Humanity hoped to reach the zenith of everything on the wings of science. A universal scientific culture which resulted in the termination of all divergent and local natural values was the immediate result of it. Unfortunately, when the polar ends came closer on the wings of science, hearts were flying away. Humanity was thrown away from the noble cosmic hearts of solidarity, unity and harmony.

The technological age marked a total flight of humanity from the bosom of Mother Earth. The radical dualism between heaven and earth and loyalty to rationalism and science are some of the characteristic features of the value system of this stage. "We switched our worship from the heavenly Father to this worldly science, from the veneration of religious saints to the almost religious belief in the capacity of our scientific saints to understand and control our world. And, consistent with Epoch II values, the prodigal son's theology was "3 M" - masculinity, materialism and machines" (Keck 1993: 219).

This ambivalence brought out mostly by the sciences leads us to think along with Wesley J. Wildman that the "root cause of the problematic character of modern western culture is a profound confusion, a schizophrenic uncertainty, about how to *be* in the world" (Wildman 1996: 44). This schizophrenic tension is manifested in the economic, political and religious life of the contemporary West. The economic practices of the free-market economy undermining the moral and natural resources necessary for its own continuation, the failure of the western democratic political institutions to give leadership to their constituents such as family, education, etc. are remnants of the chasm within modern culture.

> Most of us in the West no longer confuse between myth and history, but neither do we know how to

reappropriate our demythologised stories. We seem to know a great deal about how we human beings and the world work, but we are often at a loss to know how to affirm meaning for our existence in that supposedly "well understood" world, unless it is by means of regression to that *naiveté* so seductively packaged in religious fundamentalism and political fanaticism of the right and the left (Wildman 1996: 44).

2. Postmodernity – The Post-Newtonian Scientific Paradigm

The triumph of modernity coupled with the onslaught of the scientific culture was powerful and pervasive. But it was too one-sided to last forever. Hence, the crucial question raised in the middle of the 20th century was "whether this Western cultural prodigal will return home" (Wildman 1996: 44). An ancient Chinese proverb says that the *yang* - one of the two polar opposites in the cyclic motion of the Tao - having reached its climax retreats in fervour of the other, *yin*. If the classical ideals of objectivity, determinism, reductionism, etc. resulted in the plight of modernity, the self-critical spirit of modernity as manifested in the postmodern strategy of the human quest for understanding has retrieved the opposite direction showing an unprecedented level of unification and defragmentation. The Relativistic Quantum paradigm often termed as the new physics has radically altered the very frameworks of our ontological, epistemological, anthropological and theological thinking. The divergent tenets of postmodernism are equally paralleled by a scientific phenomenon that it is often difficult to distinguish between the two.

2.1 The Unifying Ontology

Classical physics believed that every reality in the world is made up of some material stuff. It always associated the mass of an object with some material substance. This belief in some "basic building blocks" of the universe was completely shattered by Einstein's theory of relativity. Einstein's strong faith in the inherent harmony of the universe is manifest in his theory of relativity, which showed that the mass of an object has nothing to do with any substance. Mass of an object is nothing but a form of energy. It means that a particle can no longer be seen as a static object, but rather as a dynamic pattern. Since every object in the world is understood as a pattern of energy, in relativity theory the whole universe appears as a dynamic web of inseparable patterns (Capra 1984: 186-188).

According to the classical understanding, the universe consisted of solid objects. In Newton's own words: "It seems to me that God in the beginning formed matter in solid, massy, hard, impenetrable movable particles, of such sizes and figures, and with such other properties, and in such proportion to space, as most conducive to the end for which he formed them; and these primitive particles being solids, are incomparably harder than any porous bodies compounded of them" (Crosland 1971: 76).

Max Planck's discoveries regarding heat radiation was a turning point in the development of modern physics. Max Planck discovered that the energy of heat is emitted not continuously, but as energy packets.

This led to the discovery of the probability waves in quantum physics. According to Heisenberg: "The probability wave... means a tendency for something. It is a quantitative version of the old concept of *potentia* in Aristotle's philosophy. It introduces something standing in the middle between the idea of an event and the actual event, a strange kind of physical reality just in the middle between possibility and reality" (Quoted in Herbert 1987: 27). The discovery of the probability waves in quantum mechanics totally destroyed the classical concepts of solid objects. The new discovery showed that the solid objects of classical physics were to be understood as wave-like patterns of probabilities.The developments in particle physics further revealed that the probability waves actually represent the probabilities of interconnections. The subatomic particles get meaning only when they are understood as interconnections.

Quantum theory has thus wiped out the theory of determinism. Classical mechanics with its deterministic view of the entire material creation moving in a way that can be predicted with absolute accuracy left no room to chance. The ideas of probability, uncertainty, randomness, etc. which are so fundamental to quantum theory are in sharp contrast with determinism. Heisenberg takes a tough stand against any kind of a deterministic understanding of quantum theory. "The hope that new experiments will lead us back to objective events in time and space is about as well founded as the hope of discovering the end of the world in the unexplored regions of the Antarctic" (Quoted in Herbert 1987: 17).

The reductionism, mechanism and determinism which provided the ontological foundations for the classical worldview have now retreated in favour of a more organic and indeterministic vision of reality. The shift from modernism to postmodernism is thus paralleled by this paradigmatic shift on the scientific scenario.

2.2 The Epistemological Transition

Postmodernism is born out of modernism. The natural science of today can no longer be called 'modern.' It is in the process of becoming postmodern science. Epistemological uncertainty as opposed to certainty, existential insecurity instead of the modern promise of security, ontological contingency against the modern necessity, the ethical paradoxes and the relativization of the absolute characterise postmodern philosophy, science, religion, literature and so forth (Puthenpurackel 1999: 5).

The theory of relativity, the quantum theory and chaos theory which constitutes the new physics point to the parting ways with the classical or Newtonian physics. The new physics and postmodernity enrich each other. Modernity argued for the truth existing independently of beliefs, concepts and human intelligence. Postmodernists do not agree with the objective character of truth. There is a plurality of belief systems. Postmodernists argue that there is no foundation to secure a universal and objective reality. "Postmodern

thought is characterized by a loss of belief in an objective world and incredulity towards meta-narratives of legitimation" (Kavle 1995: 19).

Postmodernism means:

> a doubt that any human truth is a simple objective representation of reality. A focus on the way societies use language to construct their own realities. A preference for the local and specific over the universal and abstract. A renewed interest in narrative and story-telling. Acceptance that different descriptions of reality can't always be measured against one another in any final, i.e., objective and non-human-way. A willingness to accept things as they are on the surface rather than to search (Kavle 1995: 18).

2.3 Loss of Belief in Objective World

Two significant features of postmodernism, as described by the American critic Fredric Jameson, are 'pastiche' and schizophrenia (Sarup 1998: 146). By pastiche is meant that there are no longer innovations but only a rediscovery of something that preexisted. This is a practice of style, the imitation of dead styles so that we become unable to focus on the present (time). And we have a tendency to look at ourselves historically. "Postmodernity seeks to leave alterity as its destiny and not to be the source of alterity in so far as postmodernity chooses not to produce the differentiated or disseminated other" (Calcagno 1997: 819). Postmodern philosophy typically opposes foundationalism, essentialism and realism. In short, it is said that postmodern philosophy is a kind of negation of all sorts of established thought, valued and preserved until the middle of the last century.

Postmodern philosophy is usuaully regarded as a complex structure of concepts which includ an anti-essentialism; anti-epistemological stand point; anti-realism; anti-foundationalism; opposition to transcendental arguments and a transcendental standpoint; rejection of the idea that knowledge is accurate representation; rejection of truth as correspondence to reality;...rejection of principles, distinctions, and categories that are thought to be unconditionally binding for all times, persons, and places; and suspicion of metanarratives of the sort perhaps best illustrated by dialectical materialism... it also rejects the traditional dream of a complete, unique and closed explanatory system typically fueled by binary oppositions (Audi 1995: 634).

Post modernists generally reject foundationalism, which is in quest of an absolutely clear and certain foundation of knowledge. Thus, the very central ideas of the Cartesian vision are turned down. Epistemological certainty, logical validity and metaphysical necessity are questioned. It is claimed that there is no universal truth that is valid for all. Anti-foundationalism leads to relativization in the sense that the meaning and truth of our judgment are relative to certain convention or local experience (Charlesworth 1976: 194).

A parallel to the postmodern shift in the epistemological paradigm is found in the emphasis laid by philosophers of science on the uncertainty and subjective dimension of the scientific

knowledge. The uncertainty or indeterminacy principle expounded by Werner Heisenberg constitutes the most central principle of the quantum theory.

This principle says that it is impossible to determine exactly both the position and momentum of a particle at the same time. No matter how we try, no matter how sophisticated the instruments we use, there will be a certain amount of uncertainty. Thus, uncertainty principle puts a natural limit to precise measurement of atomic particles on theoretical grounds. If we try to know the position with complete accuracy, then the momentum or velocity escapes us completely. Thus, the uncertainty principle arises not simply due to the disturbance on the event by measurement but as an actual property of physical events. In other words, the nature of reality is such that we cannot have precise knowledge of the velocity and position at the same time. It means that the clear-cut particle of classical physics no longer represents the real state, but only the idealised state. The uncertainty principle restricts the scope of our knowledge of the ultimate structure of reality. The absolute certainty of classical physics is absolutely under scrutiny here.

The subatomic world is a world of puzzles, paradoxes and perplexities. Chaos, randomness and probabilities rule the subatomic world. The subatomic units of matter are abstract entities which have a dual aspect. Depending on how we look at them, they appear sometimes as particles and sometimes as waves. This is a very strange property of matter. A particle is confined to a very small volume. But a wave is spread over a large region of space. It was the observation of this paradox that finally led to the discovery of the new quantum theory. The contradiction between particles and waves was solved as the physicists realized that subatomic entities are merely "tendencies to exist," and atomic events do not occur with certainty at definite times and definite ways, but rather shows "tendencies to occur" (Capra 1984: 39). This means that unlike our ordinary experience, matter at the subatomic level is only a quasi-reality. Quantum physics brought in a new vision of matter. Matter itself is not purely material in quantum physics. It was here the scientists felt that they were slowly losing their grip on reality.

Again, the laws of atomic physics are expressed in terms of probabilities. Probability means we can never predict an atomic event with certainty; but we can only say how likely it is to happen. This is because subatomic events do not occur with certainty. They occur at random. The certainty of the macroscopic world is reduced to uncertainty in the microscopic world.

The subject-object distinction of the macroscopic world does not exist clearly in the microscopic world. This is evident from the experiences of the physicists in the microscopic world. Herbert's imagination beautifully conveys this idea:

> Suppose, the famous quantum physicist Max Born, decides on Monday morning to face the quantum facts. Putting on quantum-resistant body armor, he climbs inside his bubble chamber, waves goodbye to the work-

a-day world, and prepares to enter the mysterious realm of the quantum world. Suddenly he drops through the world's phenomenal surface into deep quantum reality. Holy Heisenberg! Centuries of Newtonian certainties vanish in an instant. Solid objects melt into the undivided wholeness as he enters the place without preparation. Max's subject-object membrane dissolves. He mixes with the mystery. In tune with totality he feels he is in a new universe and that universe is he himself (Herbert 1987:55-56).

Mass, force, space and time were the fundamental pillars of Newtonian Physics. However, the new physics challenges this by reducing force to field, mass to energy, and solid atoms into subatomic particles. Here we have the postmodern traces of blurring and transcending boundaries.

The recent insights into the nature of science and scientific knowledge as highlighted by the historicists and historical realists also are analogically in tune with the postmodern traits of knowledge. Historicists emphasized the history of science. Historicism arose mainly as a reaction against logical positivism. The historicists looked at science as it is, whereas the logical positivists looked at science as it should be. Their main aim was to demythologize the logical positivist understanding of science. Historicists were of the opinion that there are also non-rational elements in science as opposed to the logical positivists' mythical claims of the absolute rationality of science. For historicists science is a mixture of rational and irrational elements. The logical positivists' belief that science has a unique claim to truth is proved to be mythical. Science is just one among many other disciplines. According to the historicists nothing in science is permanent. Meaning, criteria, theories, methods and laws change.

The unique contribution of the historicists to scientific epistemology, critically understood, is their emphasis on the *Weltanschauung*. *Weltanschauung* or world-view is a collection of factors like background, training, passions, bias, prejudices, etc. of the scientist. The worldview of the scientist plays a crucial role in science. The worldview colours and controls the world of the scientist. Philosophy of science is meant to identify this worldview.

The relativistic-quantum paradigm of the new physics has parted ways with the epistemological assumptions of Newtonian physics and logical positivism, the hallmarks of modernism. Of course, science cannot stand apart from the mainstream cultural evolution, rather it has to pave the way for emerging cultures.

2.3 The Anthropological Transition

Where modern anthropologists advocated a mechanistic and dualistic vision of the human being, the postmodern anthropologists aim at a world in which all realities, cultures, worldviews, symbols, etc, flow together. In the words of Richard Shweder, "There is no single best place to be raised, but one of the really good places to be raised is any place where you learn that there is no single best place to be raised. I call that place postmodern humanism" (1995: 74). It is an era of hu-

manism where the inside (native) is out and the outside (foreign) is in. Its humanism is a universalism without uniformity, which challenges us to do several apparently contradictory things (Shweder 1995: 68). The unity of human beings is no longer to be found in something which makes us the same but in a universal original multiplicity which makes us so variegated that others become accessible and imaginable to us thorough some aspect of our own self (Shweder 1995: 74).

Hence, the scope of our generalization is restricted to local cultural worlds. It implies the transcending of the human spirit across divisions in cultural milieu and an appreciation of the value of alien things. The new humanism acknowledges the intrinsic worth of each infinitesimal particle. Balancing multiplicity with due recognition of individuality is characteristic of postmodernism. Modernity's concept of self as occupying the top rung of the ladder of reality has been relativised by postmodern thinkers (Anderson 1995: 123). The human is put back as one among the other realities. For postmodernity there is no true self. "What is named as self is merely momentary reflection of bodily states and environment; some say this is proving to be a sense of identity based on a reality of immersed interdependence in which it is a relationship that constitutes the self" (Anderson 1995: 123). This marks the end of individualism. Postmodernity avoids the dichotomy of the other by regarding the other not as opposed to but as constitutive of the self.

Today in the scientific context, human being is no more the measure of all things. In the light of the new physics, a proper understanding of humans extends far beyond the cosmos to the consciousness of humans. Humans and the cosmos seem to join hands on the ground of reality in the bosom of the natural sciences.

The human observer, in atomic physics, is an essential part of the definition of the properties of subatomic phenomena. The scientists, in atomic physics, can no more play the role of a detached observer. Contemporary physicist John Wheeler, therefore, suggested replacing the word observer by the word participator in science:

> Nothing is more important about the quantum principle than this, that it destroys the concept of the world as "sitting out there," with the observer safely separated from it by a 20-centimetre slab of plate glass.... To describe what has happened, one has to cross out that old word "observer" and put in its place the new word "participator." In some strange sense, the universe is a participatory universe (Wheeler and Mehra: 244; Quoted in Capra 1984: 127-128). Now in the postmodern scientific age we need to transcend our own egos. "So, from domination and pinnacle status we are now beginning to see ourselves as participants in an incredibly interrelated, marvellously synergetic, ecological matrix - a point of view that emphasizes relationship, responsibility, community, communion, and a common destiny" (Keck 1993: 226).

Copernicus threw us away from an illusory royal position at the centre of the universe. Galileo kept us aside as a mere spectator in the cosmos. Classical physics reduced us to a pure physical

mechanism existing in itself. However, postmodernity and postmodern sciences have given us a glimpse at the polyvalence of the human mystery. Einstein sums it up well: "A human being is part of the whole called by us 'Universe'; a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest – a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. . . . Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty" (quoted in Herbert 1987: 250).[1]

The ontological, epistemological and anthropological transitions in the postmodern intellectual milieu place the human critical spirit on a rich productive soil. The question here is not so much whether postmodernity has brought the prodigal back home, but how much postmodern humans can be at home in their newly discovered home. A well authenticated praxis of postmodernity evident in a penetrating reassessment of the perennial foundations of our social, religious and political life may reinforce our optimism about the future of the postmodernism.

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Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth Institute of Philosophy and Religion, Pune

A Historical Retrospect on the Occasion of its Platinum Jubilee

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Introduction

Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, or JDV as it is conveniently and fondly called, has a history spanning three centuries and two countries. Its origin goes back to the 19th century when the Papal Seminary was founded in Kandy, Sri Lanka, in 1893. The raising of the Papal Seminary to a Pontifical College in 1926 with the right to confer degrees in philosophy and theology up to the doctorate was in reality the birth of JDV, but it was still part of the Papal Seminary. The faculties were raised to the status of an Athenaeum (a university) in 1940 after new Statutes were drawn up and approved according to the norms laid down by the Apostolic Constitution *Deus Scientiarum Dominus* of 1931. The Statutes spoke of a distinct academic set-up for the Athenaeum but it still continued to exist as part of the Papal Seminary. This was the case even after it was transferred from Kandy to Pune, in 1955, until 1994, when the two related institutions were declared *de facto* and *de jure* distinct. However, the process of separation could be said to have begun soon after its transfer to Pune, which called for new structures because of the changed situation in India. Thus in 1968 a separate Rector was appointed for the Athenaeum. In 1973 it adopted the Indian name Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth and registered itself as a Trust. JDV acknowledges its historical evolution from the Papal Seminary of Kandy and Pune which takes its history back to the 19th century. But the present Platinum Jubilee celebrations of JDV are based on the fact that its real history begins in 1926, when the Papal Seminary was raised to the status of a degree conferring Pontifical College. This short history will try to identify a few phases in the birth and growth of the Athenaeum and acknowledge its role as a premier academic institution in the Indian Church in the fields of philosophy and theology, and in the intellectual and pastoral formation of priests and Christian leaders for the past 75 years.

The Founding of the Papal Seminary in Kandy

The origin of the Papal Seminary is intimately connected with the reor-

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ganization of the Catholic Church in India in 1886 by Pope Leo XIII and the establishment of the Indian Catholic hierarchy. This put an end, at least in principle, to the unfortunate inner-Church rivalry between Portugal and Rome regarding ecclesiastical patronage rights, which in Indian Church history came to be known as the *Padroado*-Propaganda conflict. One of the things that suffered most in the wake of this infamous squabble was the recruitment and training of local clergy, especially in the Latin Church in India. The recruitment and training of local clergy in India were enjoined upon the ecclesiastical authorities repeatedly, but it was seldom followed in practice. There were plenty of local clergy in some places: for example, in the Thomas Christian community and in Goa, but the overall situation was wholly unsatisfactory. This prompted Pope Leo XIII to found a National Seminary to train priests for India. The Pope insisted on the training of local clergy because of their better acquaintance with the country and its people, the small number of European missionaries, and, finally, the possibility that the latter could be expelled from the country any time. Therefore, he wanted a fully equipped institution of higher ecclesiastical studies in India, imparting a solid spiritual and intellectual formation comparable to any such institution anywhere in the world. This special concern of Pope Leo XIII for India found expression in the famous words attributed to him: "*Filii tui, India, administri tibi salutis*" (India, your sons are ministers of your salvation).

As a response to the Papal appeal for help toward the realization of this project, in 1888 there came a generous gift of £ 32,000 from a wealthy Englishman, Mr. Woodhouse (?), for the express purpose of erecting a Seminary for Indian students. With this began the history of the Papal Seminary. Entrusted with the task of executing the project was Ladislaus Zaleski, a Papal diplomat, and later archbishop and Apostolic Delegate to the East. There was some problem about the location of the Seminary. Some suggested Rome itself, where it would be the "Indian College", similar to the other national ecclesiastical colleges already existing there; others preferred India or Sri Lanka where several cities were proposed: Poona (now Pune), Tranquebar, Bangalore, and Kandy. Rome was soon excluded as the site for a National Seminary for India! Among the four cities suggested in India and Sri Lanka, Poona and Tranquebar too were eliminated and the choice had to be made between Bangalore and Kandy. It ultimately fell on Kandy, probably because it was the residence of Zaleski who liked this little beautiful place and its climate immensely; but he alluded to several other reasons for not preferring an Indian city, like, the students being attracted to the National Movement, the caste system, freedom from the *Padroado*-Propaganda conflict, etc. The next question was who would run the Seminary. Regarding this, too, Zaleski had already made up his mind. Impressed by the work of the Belgian Jesuits in the Calcutta mission, he wished to entrust the Seminary to them and had the express approval of the Pope for it. It was first vehemently resisted by the superior of the mission himself, Fr. Sylvain

Grosjean, SJ; but the legendary Jesuit obedience prevailed, and what is more, he was asked to be the first Rector of the Seminary. It started functioning in May 1893 in a temporary building with three students from India, Dominic Swaminather of Tuticorin, Joseph Chereath of Trichur and William Smith of Agra. Thus the Papal Seminary of Kandy, a National Seminary for India for the higher theological and pastoral formation of the young clergy, came into existence. Both the Pope and his delegate were determined that it must be a first-rate institution which could rank with the best European ones. The staff and the students too were aware of this great task and responsibility from the beginning.

The Birth and early years of the Athenaeum

A new phase in the development of the Seminary and an event unique among the existing Institutes of priestly formation in India at that time was the raising of the Papal Seminary of Kandy to a *Collegium Pontificium* (Pontifical College) with the power of conferring the degrees of baccalaureate, licentiate and doctorate (Bachelor's, Master's and Doctorate) in philosophy and theology in 1926. It meant a new responsibility because it involved the reorganization of the curriculum to suit its new status. Stringent conditions had to be imposed on both the staff and the students as regards teaching and examinations. One of the courses added to the curriculum on account of this was the introduction to Indian philosophical traditions, quite an innovation at that time. Between 1926 and 1932 sixteen doctorates in theology and twenty-six in philosophy were awarded! But a more complete and thorough reorganization of the curriculum was required after the publication of the Apostolic Constitution *Deus Scientiarum Dominus* of Pius XI in 1931. It demanded the reorganization of studies in ecclesiastical faculties, with a view to promoting still higher standards of scholarship. It was Fr. Xavier L'Hoir, SJ who guided the institution during these years of transition. Finally, in 1940, the new course of studies and the Statutes raising the Pontifical College to the status of a Pontifical Athenaeum (Pontifical Athenaeum of Kandy) with two faculties of philosophy and theology were approved, another important milestone in the history of the Papal Seminary and of JDV. The degrees were now conferred by the Athenaeum and not the Seminary. It was Fr. John Ancot, SJ who steadily worked toward the realization of this dream. The Papal Seminary celebrated its Golden Jubilee in 1946 (the Second World War made the celebration in 1943, the actual jubilee year, impossible). It was an occasion to review its successes and failures in the light of its original vision. It had by then sent out 494 priests to various dioceses in India, Ceylon, Burma and Mauritius.

The Kandyan Spirit

The older alumni of the institution often speak of the "Kandyan spirit". It is something that has distinguished this institution from the rest. It involved many things. First and foremost, it referred to the integral formation that was imparted to its students. While intellectual work was emphasized and a solid

spiritual life and discipline were cultivated, equally important was social and cultural life. The Language Academies, which have remained part and parcel of the Papal Seminary and later on of JDV, were started and nurtured with this vision. Freedom with responsibility was another hallmark of this institution, something revolutionary at that time. Students were given sufficient freedom and treated with respect and fairness. There was little supervision. They were expected to do the right thing from personal conviction and a sense of duty, not by compulsion from outside. This would be the best preparation for their future life of responsibility in the ministry when they would be left without the props of the Seminary environment. It would make them adapt themselves easily and spontaneously to changing situations. Another hallmark of this institution was the unity in diversity that existed there. The possibility of bringing together people from such diverse backgrounds was at first seriously doubted, but in the end it proved to be a successful experiment and the tradition continues even today, making JDV a unique institution in India. It has helped people to be broad-minded, tolerant, open and appreciative of diversity. The Kandyan spirit also included love for hard work and fidelity to duty, students sharing the responsibility in the administration of the house in various ways, the spirit of selfless and cheerful service, striving for excellence and frankness and sincerity in everything.

To the Queen of the Deccan - Transfer to Pune

The Second World War had just begun as the Athenaeum of Kandy came into existence. The War years caused some disruptions, but it was the momentous political developments of the post-War years that affected the Institute and its future radically. India became independent in 1947 and Sri Lanka in 1948. Hence, it was quite anomalous to have the National Seminary for India outside its boundaries. It was necessary to transfer the Papal Seminary and the Pontifical Athenaeum to India. There were also other practical reasons for a change of place, like the need for travel documents and the long distance and time involved in travel, the cost of living in Kandy, and above all, the alienation from the context of mission. Already in 1921 the question had been discussed whether the Seminary should be transferred to India, but after considering the pros and cons, the project was abandoned. The issue came up once again in 1942 but the War made it impossible to undertake such a massive operation. In 1949 the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India discussed the transfer proposal once again; but it was the Plenary Council of India the next year that finally decided to transfer the Papal Seminary and the Athenaeum to India. Thomas Pothacamury, the archbishop of Bangalore, and himself a Kandyan, strongly advocated that they should be brought to Bangalore, but the lot finally fell on Pune in Maharastra. For the Jesuit superiors who were entrusted with the administration of the institution there were important reasons for this choice. In Pune there already existed a Jesuit Scholasticate, De Nobili College, from 1937 where there were also non-Jesuit students attending classes, like the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate (CMIs)

and the Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales (Fransalians). It would be an excellent idea to make the services of the Athenaeum available to them, and later on to others as well who would choose to study there; secondly, the Jesuit staff of De Nobili College could be incorporated into the staff of the Athenaem, another important consideration for the superiors, who had the responsibility of providing staff for both the institutions. Pune was also more or less in the central part of India and an ideal place for the National Seminary. The Queen of the Deccan, as it was known, Pune with its excellent climate had been the monsoon capital of the Bombay Presidency and an important cultural, educational and political centre. The Pontifical Athenaeum, it was hoped, would be able to add something to the life of this city, a dream that has largely remained unfulfilled. There started a feverish building activity in Ramwadi near the De Nobili College under the leadership of the then Jesuit Provincial Pius Geisel, SJ. But the real architects of the magnificent structures with their exquisite furnishings that we see on the campus today were three unassuming but highly talented Jesuit Brothers from Switzerland, Otto Widmar, Josef Pfiffner, and Anton Herbert!

Under the leaderhsip of Fr. John Ancot, SJ, the then Rector, the staff (persons like Criem, Koelman, Rayanna, Starace, Uricchio, Grasso, Sabino etc., come to our mind) and the students of the Papal Seminary and the Athenaeum made the historic journey from Kandy to Pune in May 1955. One can only imagine the contrast between the lush green surroundings of Kandy and the arid rocky soil of Ramwadi 50 years ago! The greenery that surrounds JDV today is the result of the efforts to recreate some semblance of Kandy in Pune, and this was done under the leadership of Peter Pou-Montfort, SJ, the then minister of the Papal Seminary, and successive generations of staff and students. Classes started with the meagre facilities available. The official inauguration of the buildings in Pune took place in 1957.

Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth of Pune

The transfer of the Papal Seminary and with it the Pontifical Athenaeum to Pune, and the Second Vatican Council could be considered the two most important events in the history of Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth. The transfer to Pune put the Athenaeum on the map of the Indian Church and the world. It gave JDV a new identity. The other influence was the Second Vatican Council which began in Rome in 1962. Whether the staff and students of JDV were then aware of its implications for them and the whole Church is a moot question. They did what they could do best, namely, prayed for its success at a common prayer service organized for the occasion, and several times thereafter. The Athenaeum had also the privilege of sending one of its reputed professors, Fr. Josef Neuner, SJ, as a *peritus* to the Council. He was actively involved in three Commissions of the Council which drew up the decrees on the Missions, Priestly Ministry, and Non-Christian Religions. These events were to change the campus in manifold ways. Let us start with the adminstrative ones which were important as far as the future of the Athenaeum was concerned. Even after the transfer to Pune, the Ath-

enaeum had continued *de facto* to be one institution with the Papal Seminary, with the Rector of the Papal Seminary being its head. But it was now changed considering the new situation and the added responsibilities of the Athenaeum. In 1968 Fr. Julian Bayart, SJ, was appointed Rector of the Pontifical Athenaeum, while it still continued to remain attached to the Papal Seminary. The next task was the revision of the Statutes in line with the *Normae Quaedam* issued by the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education. According to the *Normae*, the study of theology is to contribute towards an advanced and deeper knowledge of Christian faith. It emphasized research which is existential and contextual so that the dissemination of the Christian message in contemporary society may be facilitated.

No. 25 of the *Normae* also advocated the setting up of a Students' Council, and it was decided to set this up in order to foster active dialogue with the students of the Athenaeum. Thus in 1968 the Athenaeum Students' Council was inaugurated, the first of its kind in the country. Its responsibility was confined only to academic matters, namely, to represent the academic concerns of the students in the Faculty Councils and the Seanate. All other activities were looked after by the "Athenaeum Amigos" (not a group of Mexican bandits!), but a students' organization of the various houses to foster the spirit of true friendship and genuine cooperation. The idea originated in 1963 under the leadership of Ferdinand Moraga, a Jesuit Scholastic. It looked after entertainment, sports, liturgy and the *Inter Nos* (a publication for the organization). Today the Students' Council of JDV shoulders all these responsibilities.

In 1968 the Athenaeum conducted the "Priest in India Seminar", which for the first time, initiated a serious discussion on the context of the study of philosophy and theology. It was felt that we must know the India and Indians of today, and for that immediately begin with the Indianisation of our thinking, living and worship. This seminar was also a part of the Diamond Jubilee celebrations of the Papal Seminary from 1st - 3rd December 1968. The Athenaeum was also actively involved in the "All India Seminar of Bangalore" in 1969, and the revision of the training programmes in seminaries decided upon at the "Consultation of Seminary Professors" in Bangalore later that same year. A *Commissio Technica* for seminaries had already been set up in order to draw up a new programme of priestly training in India.

The Statutes and the new study programme prepared according to the *Normae Quaedam*, the *Ratio Fundamentalis* of the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education and the new "Programme of Priestly Training in India" came into force in 1970. As a result, a "Programme of Integrated Studies" was introduced in JDV in 1970-71. The Athenaeum was now officially open also to non-clerical students, both religious and lay, if they fulfilled the conditions for admission. Already from the academic year 1969-70, JDV had women students, another important innovation at that time. The next year

there was a layman studying theology. It set in motion the entry of hundreds of women religious and scores of lay men and women to the campus. Today women constitute almost 10% of the students and there are two women on its staff. However, the number of laymen and women studying philosophy and theology, unfortunately, is still very small.

An important change that was envisaged by the new Statutes was a new name for the Athenaeum. Given the post-Vatican II spirit of adaptation and inculturation, the nostalgic suggestion by some to give it the rather (to our present ears) atrocious name *Leonianum* was rejected. According to Fr. Neuner such names were meaningless for the Indian people who, he said, were still trying to figure out what De Nobili College actually meant. Therefore, an Indian name would be the most appropriate and thus in 1973 the Athenaeum officially adopted the name Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth: Institute of Philosophy and Religion. In the same year it was registered as a Trust. In 1975 it was admitted to the International Federation of Catholic Universities and thence to several other international organizations.

The academic year 1975-76 signalled a profoundly new beginning for JDV. It marked both the end of a critical phase of self-assessment and self-evaluation that had begun in 1972 and the start of a fresh orientation given to the institution. The emphasis of the Institute should be, it was decided, meaningful theological and philosophical formation rather than merely amassing information. The need was also felt to provide for diversification in training to meet the personal talent, individual interest and specialized formation. It was felt that adequate facilities should be created for serious research. Departments were created with relative autonomy under the two faculties. The departments created under the Faculty of Theology were: Scriptural Studies, Theological Reflection, Moral and Pastoral Theology, Spirituality and Worship, and History and Development of Christianity. Under the Faculty of Philosophy there were the departments of General Philosophy and Psychology and Counselling. The departments of Indian and Oriental Studies and Applied Social Sciences were eventually to form a third faculty, the Faculty of Indian and Oriental Studies. The department of Preparatory Studies remained independent of any faculty. A large number of obligatory and optional courses were introduced and with it also the credit system. The departmental system has been successfully continued, but the Faculty of Indian and Oriental Studies has still remained an unfulfilled dream. Mention must be made of the department of Social Sciences which has brought to the campus a large measure of scientific temper. It also helped introduce the programme of Field Study (today Contextual Theology Project) into the theology curriculum from 1990. The revision of the study programme from 1968 onwards have always laid emphasis on Indian religions and human and social sciences.

The Statutes of the Vidyapeeth were further revised in the light of the Apostolic Constitution of Pope John Paul II, *Sapientia Christiana* on Eccle-

siastical Universities and Faculties and the accompanying *Ordinationes* of 1979. These were finally approved in1989. Considering the growing need for more space and conveniences, JDV added a spacious administrative building block to its existing structures in 1993 under the leadership of the then Rector, Kurien Kunnumpuram, SJ. His two successors, Anthony da Silva, SJ and Noel Sheth, SJ, introduced many administrative reforms and initiated a landscaping and beautification project for JDV which has transformed it beyond recognition. The Library of JDV, one of the largest and most important ones in philosophy and theology in the whole country, built up by the singular devotion and untiring labour of Fr. Aloysius Schlegel, SJ, also underwent a thorough renovation in 1998 to make it more user friendly. The diversification and contextualization of learning took another step forward through the introduction of the Extension Centres of Theology (Bethany Vedavijnana Peeth, Pune, Sammeksha, Kalady and Gujarat Vidya Deep, Ahmedabad) which under the supervision of JDV offer to students a programme of contextualized study of theology, mostly in the language of the place itself.

The Community of JDV - Staff and Students and the Campus Houses

There were also other momentous changes that occurred in the academic and social environment of the JDV Campus. The Institute was now open to a large number of religious congregations, which compared to the Kandyan days, was enormous, where only a few Benedictines and T.O.C.D. students attended classes. In Pune many more houses slowly joined the existing ones, like the Bethany Ashram, the Divine Word Seminary, the Holy Cross Seminary, etc. Today there are about 25 so-called "Campus Houses" around JDV which send students to it. Already in 1960 the total number of students had reached 460. This together with other significant factors like the availability of more staff from De Nobili College (like Neuner, Staffner, Lionel, Clausen, Miranda, Savarimuthu, Edamaram, Hambye, Kheres, Bowling, etc.) and many visiting teachers created a new intellectual dynamism which gave the Institute a totally new direction. The staff of JDV comprising the staff of the Papal Seminary and De Nobili College had some of the best minds in theology, philosophy and Indian Philosophy in the country at that time. Special mention should be made of Fr. Josef Neuner, who strode like a colossus the landscape of JDV for over three decades. The literary output of the Staff was enormous in the form of books and contributions to numerous periodicals. It continues unabated even today. From 1998, JDV began publication of its own scholarly journal: *Jnanadeepa: Pune Journal of Religious Studies.*

The staff of JDV also established contact with many institutions, associations and movements, like Jean de Marneffe, SJ and Richard De Smet, SJ with the Pune Univesity and the Indian Philosophical Association; Hans Staffner, SJ in the filed of Ecumenism and interreligious dialogue, etc. Several JDV staff were actively associated with the Indian Theological Association, the Biblical Association of India and the

Church History Association of India. Speaking of biblical studies, JDV produced perhaps the most influential biblical scholar of India in the past quarter of a century, George Soares-Prabhu, SJ. Similarly in the field of moral theology one cannot forget the well-known moral theologian George Lobo, SJ. The staff were active in consultations, conferences, retreats and courses throughout India. They also helped in reorienting and updating the Constitutions and the Rules of life of numerous religious congregations in the spirit of the Second Vatican Council. JDV was also a confluence of influences from a number of visiting scholars. Going through the records of the visitors to the campus, one is amazed at the variety of influences that the campus was exposed to. Men and women of eminence from all walks of life, nationalities, cultures and religions debated and discussed various issues with the students and the staff.

Truly unique was the composition of the students of JDV who came from many parts of the world: from neighbouring countries like Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Bangladesh; many countries of Europe, Africa, and East Asia, and literally, the whole of India. This cosmopolitan composition has been something that is unique to JDV till today. It has students from practically every State of the Indian Union, belonging to all social classes. I believe it is a unique experiment in national integration. The community of JDV has always transcended ritual barriers. This was manifested in the yearly celebration of the Oriental Day on July 3rd, (now a thing of the past) which was set aside to reflect on the ritual diversity of the Indian Church and to appreciate its Oriental heritage. The students of JDV were known for their intellectual, cultural and social dynamism in a spirit of unity and cooperation. There was tremendous interaction between the students through the numerous groups on the campus. Another important characteristic of those years was the enormous publishing activity by the students. Most of the groups on the campus had their own publications, either in English or in regional languages. Each house, too, had its own publications, in English as well as in regional languages. The most important publication of the students was the *PATHS-MARGHA* (Pontifical Atheneaum Students' Magazine) which commenced publication in 1963 and contained the research and writing attempts of the students. It was resurrected recently in the students' magazine, *Vidyankur*. In the academic year 1970-71 alone, the students of JDV published 56 articles in various national newspapers and journals in English, Marathi, Tamil, Malayalam, Gujarati, Hindi, and Konkani. Panel discussions and debates were frequent occurences to which students used to look forward eagerly. In the early 1980s the Students' Council of JDV organized two important seminars and brought out two volumes containing the proceedings of these seminars. Cultural events organized by the students were galore. What caused this tremendous intellectual and cultural dynamism of those days? One reason may be the absence of the modern entertainment culture (the CAT - Cricket And Television - culture of today), and the other, the restricted scope for pastoral ministries those days.

Social Week was introduced on the campus from 1956 to study realistically the changing social conditions of India and the Church's response to it. This has been the secret behind the tremendous social action and the spirit of social awareness that characterized the Pune campus ever since, especially in the heady days of Liberation Theology. Not one lecture in JDV would pass off without reference to the "millions of people who are in the shackles of poverty, illiteracy, ignorance and disease." It was manifested not only in theoretical reflection but also in a desire to experience the social reality. That was the reason for the readiness to live with the people outside in small groups sharing their lot, again an innovation in priestly training at that time. The awareness of the social reality was also shown through the active participation in social and relief works. The first such opportunity came in 1961, when the Khadakwasla Dam in Pune breached and the entire city was flooded, causing 500 deaths and making 84,000 people homeless. The students were actively engaged in the relief work foregoing their classes. They have participated in several such relief and rehabilitation work throughout the country. However, from the 1990s, there has been a marked decline in the spirit of social awareness on the campus. Opposition to Liberation Theology in the Church, economic liberalization and globalization, collapse of communism, increasing conservatism in the Church and the gradual disappearance from the scene of persons who actively espoused such ideas, etc. might have caused such a shift. Living outside in small groups has become a rarity. One hears a lot on interreligious dialogue but little on poverty, injustice, etc.

Toward the Future

It is with a great sense of gratitude that I conclude this short history. Gratitude toward this institution which has taught me and thousands of others some great values in life: freedom to be oneself, openness to pluralism and diversity, justice and fairness in everything, etc. Gratitude for the personal examples of our teachers who showed us the value of hard work, simplicity, intellectual honesty, justice and fairness, and great faith. Some of them from the first years of JDV in Pune are still with us: Josef Neuner, Carlos D'Melo, Lionel Mascarenhas, Aloysius Schlegel, Felix Clausen, Paul Kehres, Theodore Bowling, etc. Gratitude to our numerous benefactors world wide who have contributed toward its material well being. Gratitude toward the thousands of priests, secular and religious, hundreds of religious women and lay men and women who have been educated in this institution. Many of them have achieved outstanding eminence in various fields. Some of them have left behind great personal examples, even of martyrdom. JDV produced the first two Cardinals of the Indian Church, Valerian Gracias and Joseph Parekkattil and several other outstanding ecclesiastical dignitaries. JDV can rightly feel proud of what it has achieved.

But I also feel a sense of disappointment. Disappointment for the lost opportunities to climb to further heights and provide intellectual and pastoral leadership to the small Christian community in India. Especially glaring is the failure to give leadership in the field of

inculturation, and in the attempt to create a truly Indian Church. But jubilees are always invitations. Today JDV has students from every Indian state, belonging to numerous tribes, castes and classes. They belong to fifty-five different religious congregations and sixty dioceses of India. The staff too come from a variety of backgrounds. With this unique composition, JDV is in a privileged position to play a leading role once again in the Indian Church in the spheres of intellectual leadership and pastoral methods. This it has to do, taking into account the totally changed composition of the staff and the students, which in a way, is a reflection of the changed realities of India itself. Everyone today complains of a decline in standards. Where do its roots lie? The tremendous activism that prevails on the campus in the name of pastoral ministry gives one the impression that JDV is being conceived merely as an institution for priestly formation. This would be to miss an important aspect of the original vision of JDV. The emphasis on local cultures and languages has led to the unfortunate situation that many of its students fail to pass an elementary English test; all these should bring to our awareness the fact that there is something radically wrong with the preparation of Christian leaders for the 21st century. Added to that there is a chronic shortage of staff. The end result is that the professed mision of JDV, "to foster an integral understanding of the human person which mediates the vision of Jesus for India," remains largely unrealized. One needs courage to read the signs of the time and venture into the unknown. We may need to leave the past behind, but, as this survey shows, the past can be a reminder to us of our original mission. One recent example of JDV trying to adapt itself to contemporary challenges has been the founding of the Association of Science, Society and Religion (ASSR) and the impact it has created nationwide. May many such ventures flourish. May JDV continue to inspire many more generations of students. And if this "his/her-story" has been a help in this, I am satisfied, because "this is true too: stories can save us" (Tim O'Brien).

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Statement of Asian Theology Conference

Ecclesia in Asia (*EA*) & Church's Service to Asia

Introduction

1. We are 40 theologians from different Asian countries who have come together to reflect on the document EA. We are grateful to the document for challenging us to rethink and revision what it means to be Church in Asia. EA brings into focus the importance of an inculturated theology. We acknowledge the need of being Church in a holistic way that recognizes human needs in an Asian context. At the same time, we realize that we have too easily absorbed even dehumanizing elements. We confess our shortcomings. We remain in great part a clerical Church in which patriarchy, inequality based on caste differentiation, gender insensitivity and an unhealthy spirit of proselytization continue to disfigure the countenance of the Church in Asia. Yet we discover God's saving action and the presence of the divine in the many faces of the Churches in Asia as well as in other faith persuasions.

2. To be Church in the Asia of our times is to be listening to the voice of God in the different religions and in the poor; to be a pluriform community in the differing and diverse contexts of our world; to be a kenotic Church that finds its true identity in selfless service to others. In most Asian countries, the Church is a "little flock" and as such has learnt to live among other religions. We note that in some parts of Asia, the Church has to contend with persecution due to various factors, yet it continues to take to its heart the hopes and aspirations of Asia. A primary characteristic of the Asian Church is that it has made experience the basis of its identity and continues to realize itself in dialogue with other religions.

Challenges

3. The newness of the Asian context invites the Church to recognize questions and issues that established churches in other parts of the world do not face. In the first place, there is the experience of religious and cultural pluralism that invites us to discard any single viewpoint from which one passes judgment on other religions, customs, practices, and others' ways of thinking and perceiving the world.

4. Secondly, the cultural and religious richness of the peoples of Asia goes together with an enforced poverty and a systemic injustice that still oppress and dehumanize vast masses of our peoples. Stark inequalities marginalize a multitude of vulnerable groups such as indigenous peoples,

Dalits, the landless, migrants, and the displaced. Today, predatory and/or exploitative globalization complicates and aggravates this situation, betraying the promise of a better and more just world. The destruction and the destabilization of the eco-systems adversely affect the poor, women and the marginalized more than the beneficiaries whose life-style is the main cause of the environmental degradation in Asia.

5. Thirdly, violence has increasingly corrupted the atmosphere in many countries of Asia. Though the root causes are usually economic and political, many of these countries are racked with communal violence. Many conflicts have taken on an inter-ethnic and inter-religious dimension. Religious fanaticism and extremism become manifest when groups of people lose confidence in civil society's ability to preserve a just social order and freedom for all peoples to charter their legitimate destiny. Neither can we ignore the manifold violence to which children in Asia are subjected.

6. Fourthly, in a world that is becoming increasingly globalised, many people in Asia are uprooted both geographically and culturally, and are used as commodities. This makes them lose their religious and cultural moorings. Such erosion and loss lead to a crisis of identity and a lack of universal values. People thus become vulnerable to manipulation by extremists' groups and /or are enmeshed in a consumerist culture of instant gratification. Many are even tempted to self-destructive behaviour.

7. Fifthly, women experience discrimination on different fronts and suffer because of gender-based myths and stereotypes that unjustly marginalise women from the centre stage of life. By excluding half of the baptised members from Church leadership and governance, the patriarchal-hierarchical Church legitimizes gender inequality and injustice. Thus women's voices, views and decisions are absent in all major deliberations concerning Church life and order.

Responses

8. In the context of cultural and religious pluralism, the Church increasingly sees herself as a co-pilgrim with other religions in a common effort to achieve wholeness in persons and societies. In the shared journey, the Church comes face to face with many cultures that for good or bad affect each other. In such a symbiotic situation, we feel the need to discern and discard the elements that dehumanize people so as to identify with those that lead to healing and wholeness. When dealing with religious experience, pluralism requires us to stress mutuality and the existence of different faith perspectives. In the context of pluralism and the values of wholeness and harmony, compassion and justice, we appreciate the experiential and symbolic approach of Asia.

9. The option for the poor that has characterized the efforts of the Church during the past few years brings human dignity to persons and offers support

to those fighting for the rights of the marginalized including children denied the benefits of their childhood. A primary goal of the Church's efforts would be to build up communities of peace and reconciliation that would cut across all social, cultural and religious barriers.

10. In its efforts to enhance the integrity of creation, the Church joins hands with those organizations and movements that are engaged in the struggle against ecological destruction. Efforts to evolve a theological and philosophical education that is sensitive to the well-being of the earth, will result in the linking of social justice to eco-justice as well as gender justice so that the option for the poor will also include the earth that has become the 'new poor.'

11. The Church has made efforts to relinquish its patriarchal structure and culture of dominance and discrimination. Through a process of gender-sensitivity, she makes a preferential option of concern for the silenced and invisible women in order to restore their rightful identity, dignity, place and role. To foster a participatory Church in Asia that is at the service of all Asian people, she empowers women to be co-workers and co-leaders of the Church community where all work as equal partners of the Kingdom mission.

Signs of Hope

11. Christians in different parts of Asia have shown remarkable courage in the face of past and continuing persecution and government harassment. There is a faith dimension and robust dynamism present in the Churches of Asia that is responsible for dialogue with others, the constructing of Asian theologies (Dalit, Minjung, Feminist) and the active presence of the laity, especially women, in movements that liberate.

12. The presence of small interfaith communities at the grassroots furthers the cause of the poor and responds to their needs. Churches are increasingly collaborating with each other, with peoples' movements and with NGOs. Modern secular developments promote many liberating and universal values such as democracy, human rights and women's liberation.

A New Way of Being Church in Asia

13. As a "little flock" in a Diaspora situation, we see ourselves as committed to a way of life in the Church that is called to be more of a movement than an institution. As followers of Jesus, we recognize the Spirit at work in other faith traditions. Hence we are called to be a listening Church that discovers rather than proclaims the Christ of Asia. Eschewing a minority syndrome as well as an obsession with numbers, we feel called to be "salt" and "light" to the peoples of Asia and the world. The Asian Churches have a special responsibility to build bridges between cultures and polities of the East and West. We also realize that the ineffable mystery of God is

both the beginning and end of our mission. This implies our being led by the Spirit in a theologizing mode that emphasizes not only the Christological but also underscores the Pneumatological .

Conclusion

14. The Spirit of God, sovereign and all-encompassing, manifests herself in all of creation. She is at work in peoples of all ages, in the different and diverse cultures of the world and in the histories of nations. Recognizing the Spirit at work in her diverse forms and effects is the task of the Churches in Asia. The scope of the task is immense and so needs to be undertaken in collaboration and association with the different cultural and religious groupings in Asia. This is Asia's gift to the Church that calls for a response that is discerning, dynamic and dialogical. This is our hope and our dream.

JDV, Pune 411014
Nov. 15-19, 2001

JPJRS 5/1 (2002) 147-153

Action Statement of the South Asian Jesuits for Living and Sharing the Good News in South Asia

We, the 170 delegates to the first South Asian Assistancy Assembly (SAAA), having met at Mumbai from 22-28 Oct 2001, deliberated on the serious and challenging issues related to our LIVING AND SHARING THE GOOD NEWS IN SOUTH ASIA TODAY.

A deep personal love for Jesus Christ with a genuine commitment to the values of the New Creation shapes our spirituality. In Jesus Christ we encounter the compassionate face of God turned towards the world. In and though him we realise that God loves us and His Spirit fills us with the new life manifested in Christ. As an apostolic body in the Church we are called to be contemplatives in action, walking the way of Jesus in solidarity with those most in need. The Ignatin pedagogy of discernment inspires us to interpret the signs of the times and to listen to what the Spirit is telling us in the present context of South Asia.

Following in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, we share with the people what we have received in our vocation, what we try to embody in our own life, personal and communitarian. Against greed for comfort, craving for social status and struggle for power, we proclaim the message that God is the true centre of all life. We stand against the consumerism of our world, which infiltrates also into the life of the Church and of religious communities. We stand for solidarity against every form of exclusiveness. separation and hostility that divides our society. We acknowledge the creative movements of the Spirit in the struggles and aspirations of the poor, in the symbols and Scriptures of other faiths and in the diverse cultural expressions of our people. The orientations given by General Congregations 32 & 34 help us to reaffirm our apostolic priorities and to commit ourselves to this action plan in the spirit of the Ignatian *magis*.

Our Context

Rapid technological change has created a world marked by opposites. We find both intensely painful human problems and a heightened global awareness of injustices and a new search for God and much action for good.

On the one hand, globalisatlon, religious fundamentalism and ethnic nationalism are the dominant forces confronting us today. The nexus among these aggravates ethnic and religious conflicts in our region. There is also a concerted move of the privileged classes to maintain their privileges and power by imposing mono-cultural religious nationalism on the people. Predatory capital exploiting cheap labour, especially of women and children, manipulation of the media, state and counter terrorism, casteism, religious persecution, economic marginalisation, environmental degrada-

tion, displacement of peoples, cultural erosion and consumerism abound in this region. In spite of its being the home for some of the world's great religions.

On the other hand, it is heartening to see how our people continue to nurture aspirations for a more just society and strive energetically to realise it. Movements like Narmada Bachao Andolan, Netarhat, Koel-Karo, Grameen Bank in Bangladesh and Peace Initiatives in Sri Lanka express the conviction that people must themselves be the primary agents of their destiny. The work of dedicated Voluntary and Civil Liberties Organisations and secular-minded intellectuals is further reason for hope. The heightened world consciousness about human rights. environmental and social concerns, allied with advances in communication technology, make lobbying and advocacy at national and International level a powerful instrument in favour of the poor. We also acknowledge that globalisation has brought about an intense consciousness of human solidarity, particularly in times of disaster.

This situation calls for a renewal of our commitment to and ways of living and sharing the Good News, which should help us to enhance our fervour and passion for the New Creation. In our deliberations we have identified areas of ministry for a renewed commitment.

I. Pastoral Ministry

We understand pastoral ministry as caring for all people, not exclusively for Catholics, in their total and integral growth. Primarily three dimensions will characterize Jesuit pastoral ministry in South Asia:

1. Spirituality which is incarnational, communitarian, prophetic and dialogical.
2. Solidarity by experiencing the life of the poor and actively participating in their struggles for integral liberation.
3. Service which means sharing generously and magnanimously with others what we are and what we have received from God.

Hence we resolve;

1. To immerse ourselves in the liberative aspects of the culture of the local people, their world of rites, symbols, language, myths, feasts and festivals,
2. To share the lifestyle of the poor and participate in their struggles so that we give credible witness to Jesus Christ.
3. To promote Basic Christian Communities leading to the formation of Basic Human Communities built on freedom, fellowship and justice,
4. To participate in movements and programmes for promoting inter-religious and inter-ethnic harmony through the four-fold dialogue of life, action, sharing of religious experiences and sharing of theological reflection (GC 34, Dialogue, 4) and to respect sisters and brothers of other traditions as co-pilgrims.
5. To respond comprehensively to the phenomenon of growing religious fundamentalism (including Christian) and ethnic chauvinism, enter into critical dialogue and be agents of reconciliation.

II. Education

Our educational apostolate aims at accompanying persons to fullness of life and integral development, especially those belonging to the marginalized and exploited sections of society. This apostolate demands of us a high intellectual rigour and a value system to find meaning in life against the artificial needs fostered by consumerism. Our education should enable people to become effective agents of social change and persons with and for others.

Therefore, we resolve:

1. To evolve policies to reserve an appropriate percentage in appointments/admissions for our priority groups in all education institutions.
2. To initiate and join people's movements that demand free and compulsory education from age 6 to 24 declared a basic human right,
3. To start remedial education projects, neighbourhood schools, evening colleges, vocational training and non-formal education in order to serve the deprived sections of society.
4. To create a cell/task force to do socially relevant research, oriented towards advocacy, devising pedagogy programmes and making the advances of science and technology available to the deprived masses.
5. To promote networking among ourselves and with other agencies concerned with the problems of education.
6. To provide teaching material in value education comprising basic elements of all religions, problems of social justice, human rights and environmental concerns, questions of sex-education and issues of civic responsibilities.
7. To carefully review and adapt the IPP with a view to implementing it in all our educational institutions.
8. To share our mission with our collaborators, students, parents and alumni/ae in our educational institutions and thus build effective teams imbued with the values of the Gospel.

III. Social Action

A truly democratic society is participatory at all levels and in different arenas. In reality such participation is beyond the possibility of several groups discriminated against in society. Living and sharing the Good News for us today means working towards equality and human dignity in solidarity with and for these marginalized groups. With this in view, we endorse the JCSA document, *Walking with the Poor*, and resolve:

1. To enhance the solidarity of Jesuits with the poor by making our living quarters functional, simple and accessible to people.
2. To encourage every Jesuit to experience working with people's movements or grass roots organisations at least for a period of one year, especially during formation.

3. To ensure that every province has Jesuits professionally trained in social action.
4. To build up effective advocacy and networking by getting involved in people's movements like campaign for human rights, tribal self-rule, *panchayati raj*, rights for women, refugees, displaced persons and environmental issues.
5. To require that each province identify critical and crucial issues, which need our response and participation.
6. To issue public statements at province/assistancy levels in situations of grave social injustice and violations of human rights.
7. To network closely among ourselves as well as with other like-minded groups at local/zonal/ national/international levels.
8. To make our personnel, resources and institutional facilities available to people's movements and grass-roots organisations.
9. To support social action by strengthening research and study centres, as well as by a body of resource persons at the Assistancy level to guide, facilitate and monitor Implementation.
10. To recommend establishing mechanisms at the level of the Curia of the General in order to fight the forces and negative impact of globalisatlon.

IV. Dalits

Our inspiration is Jesus Christ, the Crucified and Risen Lord, who struggles along with the broken people, the dalits. We. his companions, share the brokenness of both Christ and the dalits by participating in their struggle to regain human dignity and identity as children of God. We commit ourselves to fight casteism and create a society without caste discrimination, beginning with ourselves, where every woman and man is respected and treated equally.

Hence we resolve:

1. To emphasize dalit concerns at the existing research centres and network with different dalit movements and human rights groups, and allocate sufficient personnel and resources needed for the ministry among the dalits.
2. To opt preferentially for the most marginalized sections among the dalit groups, irrespective of their religious persuasions, while working with all sections to minimize the divisions and differences among them and moulding them into a united and powerful group.
3. To reserve an appropriate percentage in admissions and appointments for dalits in our institutions while offering special programmes to enhance their learning abilities.
4. To develop a spirituality of self-emptying whereby we all have an opportunity to feel the presence of the Spirit in the dalit-awakening.

V. Adivasis/Tribals

Living and sharing the Good News with the Adivasis/tribals of SA demands enabling and empowering them to affirm and to assert their own dignity, and to rise up to take their rightful place in the modern world. It means accompanying them and facilitating their traditional system and leadership to protect the land, forest, water and habitat from all destructive forces. It entails recognizing the diversity among the Adivasis/tribals and, at the same time, building up unity to counter the de-tribalizing forces that negate their distinct identity, culture, social organisation and land rights.

We resolve to attain this through:

1. Assisting them to assert their identity as Adivasi/tribal people in their own right and support their struggle for a due place and share in the larger society, by unifying them into a politically active force by promoting and strengthening Adivasi/tribal self- rule through *gramsabha* and *panchayat.*
2. Advocacy and networking among ourselves and other like- minded groups in each zone for promoting justice, protecting human rights and control over the use of natural resources by arresting the unjust transfer of resources from Adivasi/ tribal areas.
3. Focusing our efforts to equip Adivasis/tribals to undertake economic activities to meet their needs and to take control of their production and marketing, thus freeing themselves from economic exploitation.
4. Fostering research among Jesuits and others, particularly among the Adivasis/ tribals themselves, to help develop a scientific understanding of Adivasi/ tribal culture and society, for appropriate interventions as well as helping to develop a theology based on an Adivasi/tribal worldview.
5. Facilitating proficiency in the English language among Adivasi/ tribal students, while upholding the primacy of Adivasi/tribal languages in the early years of education.
6. Ensuring that special investment is made for the education of Adivasi/tribal children, particularly girl children, and training and empowering Adivasi/tribal women to take up leadership roles to bring about social change.

VI. Women

Women, in the wider patriarchal society and in our male dominated Church, have been often treated as inferior and subjected to manifold forms of discrimination and stereotyping. Globalisation and conflict situations have resulted in the feminisation of poverty and labour, and the commodification of women. Living and sharing the Good News today demands affirming the status and dignity of women. Valuing the feminine way of experiencing reality, a Jesuit is invited in the light of GC 34 ("Jesuits and the Situation of Women in Church and Civil Society") to discover the feminine in him, to change his mind-set, and to enhance his way of relating to God, world, humankind and creation. This involves empowering women as equal partners in society and the Church. Hence, we resolve:

1. To assist in organising. mobilizing and empowering women by networking with women's groups, making our resources available to these groups, by taking up social and economic issues such as violence against women, sex-ratio, female infanticide and foeticide.
2. To ensure women's participation in the sharing of responsibility and decision-making in our ministries.
3. To involve women resource persons in the formation of Jesuits.
4. To empower school dropout girls, illiterate, displaced and unorganised women like domestic and casual labourers through vocational training and non-formal education.

VII. Youth

Young people constitute a major component of South Asia's population. They play a crucial role in building up our nations. Because of the confusion of values in today's competitive and fast changing society, many of them fall prey to sects, cults, violence, drugs, alcohol. sexual exploitation and other destructive influences. Therefore, living and sharing the Good News with the youth implies accompanying them and forming them as men and women for others.

Hence we resolve:

1. To equip Jesuit youth animators with competence and skills to motivate the youth to get involved in socio-political issues and social service of the poorest.
2. To make Jesuit communities hospitable and our facilities available to the youth.
3. To have in every province a team of Jesuits to plan, implement, coordinate and evaluate youth animation, and make available the necessary funds and resources.
4. To collaborate and network with other youth centres and organisations which share our values.
5. To promote JYMSA's objectives among the unorganised youth.

Accountability Structures

Accountability helps translating good will into effectiveness. We have excellent examples of Jesuits who have internalised the spirit of the Society and have been models. The vertical structures have inbuilt mechanisms of accountability. However, the horizontal aspect of accountability is yet to be fully realised in our mode of functioning. In order to elicit better accountability both at horizontal and vertical levels we resolve:

A. Province/Region Level

1. To promote a culture of accountability through meetings, with prior agenda between consultors, directors of works, superiors and commission co-ordinators, with subsequent minutes and action taken reports, at least once a year.

2. To conduct extended consults in the Province/Region periodically.
3. To strengthen the various province/region commissions by delegating effective powers.
4. To urge major superiors to demand accountability as a normal administrative measure.
5. To ensure that decision-making processes are transparent, as far as possible, so that decisions are owned by the implementing agencies.
6. To utilise Province/Region assemblies and congregations as occasions for review and follow up.

B. Zonal Level

1. To arrange annual meetings of Major Superiors with Commission Co-ordinators.

C. Assistancy Level

1. To revitalize the Secretariats at the Assistancy level.
2. To have Action Taken Reports presented by major superiors at the JCSA and to promote co-responsibility at the Assistancy level.
3. To strengthen the POI with an appropriate mandate for the smooth implementation of the decisions taken at the Assistancy level.
4. To Improve communication channels and the information dissemination system at all levels.

Conclusion

This Assembly has been an encouraging experience of union of minds and hearts among us Jesuits in South Asia. Our deliberations dealt with some of the major apostolic priorities of the Society in South Asia in response to the challenges of the times. Our "sharing of the Good News" can be authentic and effective only if it emerges from a credible "living of the Good News".

A dynamic spirituality must animate our works. Hence, the focus of our living the Good News in the coming years would be a deep personal experience of the Spirit of Christ active in our world and a lifestyle characterized by simplicity, hospitality and closeness to the people. The thrust of our sharing the Good News would be marked by networking with other agencies, a culture of dialogue with brothers and sisters of other faiths and all people of good will for the emergence of a new and just society, following in the footsteps of Jesus Christ who came to make all things new.

Book Reviews

The Folly of the Cross – Festschrift in Honour of Prof. Dr. Varghese Pathikulangara, CMI, Edited by *Paulachan Kochappilly, CMI*, Bangalore: Dharamaram Publications, 2000. pp 371, Rs.250.

This festschrift, *The Folly of the Cross*, is a collection of 23 articles written in honour of Prof.Dr. Varghese Pathikulangara CMI on his 60th birthday by his students and friends. Both in the Forward and in the Preface the contributions of Prof.Dr.V.Pathikulangara CMI in the field of Syro-Malabar Liturgy and Liturgiology in general are recognized and highlighted. The Preface also contains a list of the works published by this eminent liturgiologist.

The articles in this volume mainly deal with various aspects of the theology of the cross, its importance in the liturgical celebration and its challenge to practical Christian living. There are a few articles on the theology of Liturgy and the celebrations of the sacraments in the Syro-Malabar tradition. Though this volume is a collection of articles written by different theologians a reader can easily find a systematic development of the theology of the cross beginning from the biblical sources culminating in the affirmation of proclamation of the power of the cross of Christ. The following review of the articles includes all of them but does not follow their order of in the volume.

G.Kaniarakath introduces the discourse on the Cross of Christ attempting to show the theological and literary expressions of the Cross in the Bible. He refers to the symbols of 'tree' and 'wood' in the First Testament which receive significance in the context of the Second Testament. He summarizes the theology of the Cross in the Synoptics, John and Paul, and finally attempts to highlight the meaning of the Cross in the ecclesial context of St. Thomas Christians. Following the Biblical sources, the Fathers of the Chruch developed a rich theology of the Cross. I. Arickappillil cites the example of Mar Narsai, an East Syrian poet-theologian of 5th Cent. in his article "the Folly of the Cross and the Glory of Resurrection in Mar Narsai" to show how the fathers tried to comprehend the mystery of the folly of the cross by relating it to resurrection especially using the first Adam and second Adam typology. The rich meaning of the symbol of the cross was expressed also by other Syriac writers and mystics .T. Kollamparambil introduces some of them in his article "The Cross of Christ and Christian Life." The various imageries and symbols used by Ephrem, Aphrahat, Jacob of Serugh give us a deep insight into the significance of the cross as well as its challenge to Christian life. A[f]rahat's explanation of the meaning of the cross in context of the historical persecution and suffering of his people is the theme of the article 'The Cross of Jesus Sweetens the Bitterness of our Suffering" by G.Mangara. In his article, "The Cross and Shepherding of Christ," A.Amarnad argues very cogently and systematically that a true Christian discipleship involves following the praxis of Jesus, the shepherd, who gave us a challenging model of true shepherding. He warns against the tendency in the Church to domesticate the radical Jesus and his praxis leading to the Cross through rituals, traditions, structures and spirituality.(p.70).The shepherding of the flock as missionary priests calls for a spirituality which has its foundation in the sharing of the paschal mystery of Christ that is celebrated in the liturgy. This is the main theme of the article, "Spirituality of Missionary Priests" by L. Arangassery.

Sophy Rose explains the importance of celebration of the Cross more as a sign of victory than of suffering and death in the liturgy of the Oriental tradition in her article "The Cross and its Ecclesial Implications." The Church originates at death of Jesus on the Cross as it was to 'gather together' all and it is a community of the redeemed sinners to live in unity as 'Bride at the Cross'. It must be said that a mystification of the Cross and the Church is inevitable in this approach to Ecclesiology from Liturgy. K.Perumpallikunnel proposes a way to overcome the negativity attached to the cross and the tendency of making it just an object of worship by discovering the richness of the *kenosis* of Jesus in his article "The Ascent on the Cross as Ascent to the Throne." He affirms that an insight into the kenotic dimension of God revealed in the cross of Christ liberates us to realize our potentialities through self-emptying. Christian experience of the mystery of the cross expresses itself in Christian ethical or moral living. P.Kochappilly articulates clearly in his article "The Cross and Christian Ethics" that the cross is the source, strength and style of Christian ethics as the Christian vocation is to 'live in Jesus Christ' and to live like Christ' (p. 179) with right relationship to God, humans and cosmos. How this Christian life is lived in the context of the St. Thomas Christians is explained by S.Kanniyakonil in his article "The Moral Foundations of Thomas Christians in India Re-Visited" (The title of the article is wrongly mentioned as 'Memorial Foundations' in the subsequent pages!). The author mentions biblical, liturgical and socio-cultural foundations of the moral life of Thomas Christians.

As the Christian life of faith is celebrated in the liturgy and popular devotions some of the articles of this volume attempt to elucidate the meaning of the cross in the liturgical celebrations and devotions. P. Maniyattu explains systematically the importance of the cross in the liturgical celebration and liturgical architecture in his article "The Theological Significance of the Cross in the East Syrian Liturgy'. S.Athapilly highlights some of the aspects of the Syro-Malabar Qurbana which appeal to the affective side of human beings from his own experience of celebration of the same in his article, "The Affective and Affectionate Dimensions of Syro-Malabar Qurbana." G. Aranjaniyil makes a comparative study of the symbols, rituals and forms of worship in Syro-Malabar Qurbana and Hindu forms of worship and attempts to show that they both appeal to the mystery sense of the humans in "Mystery-sense in Syro-Malabar Qurbana and Hindu Worship and Prayers,." The importance assigned to the cross in the celebration of the sacraments of initiation is explained by G.Pallikunnel in his article "Signing (*Rušma*) in the Sacraments of Initiation" and in the sacrament of reconciliation by R.Matheus in "Taksa D-Hussaya."

G.Thadikkat, in his article, "The Cross in Different Ecclesial Traditions" explains how the importance of the cross is expressed in various ways in different ecclesial traditions. It gives an insight into the mystery of the cross when various traditions articulate their experience of the cross from their own contexts of faith-experience. In the ecclesial tradition of St.Thomas Christians the cross is venerated on various occasions besides during the eucharistic celebrations. F.Thonippara explains the meaning of such devotional practices in "Veneration of the Cross among the St.Thomas Christians." A concrete example of the veneration of the cross is narrated by J.Vellian in his article, " Prayer at the Foot of the Cross at the Open-air at Kaduthuruthy." T. Mannooramparampil attempts to show the historical development of the devotion to the cross and particularly the devotion to the *Mar Thom[m?]a Sliba* or the St.Thomas Cross in "Devotion to the Cross in Syro-

Malabar Church." He advances some arguments to show that St. Thomas Cross is not Manichean Cross though it may have some affinity to Buddhistic symbols! He seems to presume that those who reject this cross has only one reason that they consider it as Manichean and not, perhaps, that it is a reaction to the high-handedness in suddenly imposing the *Mar Thomma* Cross rather than gradually introducing the same with proper catechesis. V.Pathikulangara's own explanation about the various symbols of the *Mar Thomma Sliba* included in this volume is informative (pp.366-369).

The Church must proclaim her the faith experience of the cross and resurrection. The missionary spirit of the St. Thomas Christians expressed in preserving their faith and transmitting it to the future generations and influencing the lives of the believers of other religions was different from the western missionary spirit of evangelization. This is the theme of the article, "The Cross and Evangelization: The Legacy of St. Thomas Christians" by X. Kochuparambil. The Christian proclamation of the Gospel involves total commitment to the extent of giving up one's life for the values of the Kingdom. A. Kochalunkal cites the examples of Sr. Rani Maria and Staines to prove this point in his article, "The Meaning of the Cross and Martydom and its Ecumenical Relevance in the New Indian Context." The book under review includes also a translation of the homily of Narsai by P.Komban titled, "Second Reading about Joseph by Narsai."

Though the editor may have his own reasons for arranging the articles in a particular order, the placing of certain articles as it is done in this volume does not seem to facilitate the thematic progression of the theme. The article on p. 48 on Syro-Malabar Qurbana, for example, breaks the theme under discussion in the preceding and the following articles. A glossary of Syriac terms used in the articles could have been included to enhance a better understanding of the text by a reader who is not familiar with Syriac terminologies. Even the title of an article is in Syriac without a reference to its translation (p.280)! Maybe in the second edition of the book these minor deficiencies can be rectified. The articles in this *Festschrift The Folly of the Cross* dealing with the various aspects of the theology of the cross give us a deep insight into the mystery of the cross and its various challenges.

Jacob Parappally

The Councils of the Church: a Short History, Norman P. Tanner, The Crossword Publishing Company, New York, 2001, pp. xii-132.

This little but important book is an example of the art of compression by one of the authorities on the Councils of the Church today. Dr. Norman Tanner who teaches Medieval History in Oxford University and Church History in Heythrop College, London University, has lectured on the Councils of the Church in several institutions throughout the world. He has now in 132 pages traced the important stages in the development of the Church's conciliar tradition spanning 2000 years. For those who cannot afford to go through the author's own magisterial two-volume *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* (1990), this short introduction will give all the necessary information about the twenty-one important ecumenical and general Councils of the Church. Especially useful will this volume be to students who did not till now have such a short introduction in a simple and straight-forward style till today.

The book has three chapters, dealing with the Councils of the Early Church, the Medieval Councils, and the Councils of the Modern Era with a useful introduction to

each chapter. There is a very helpful glossary which clarifies some important concepts and an index. The titles of the chapters point to the author's mind regarding the concept of the "Ecumenical Council." The Councils of the early Church are called "Ecumenical Councils of the Early Church" but the other Councils are called Medieval Councils, and Councils of the Modern Era. In the second Chapter one gets an explanation for this necessary distinction between the Ecumenical Councils and the general Councils of the western Church. But I don't think that it is easy for every student to make this distinction because officially one still speaks of the twenty-one Ecumenical Councils of the Church although it would have been better if some of those Councils were never convoked at all!

Another helpful thing about this little book is the importance it gives to the disciplinary decrees of the Councils. Generally one thinks that the Councils were mainly meant for doctrinal clarifications, and manuals on the Councils usually concentrate on doctrines. But the practical life was an equally important concern for the Church, especially in the Middle Ages. Today one is rather amused by the disciplinary legislations of some of those Councils like, for example, of Lateran IV, which, unfortunatley is the only one dealt with in some detail in the book. The author's opinion on another medieval Council, the Council of Constance, is an example of the balanced judgment that he has maintained throughout the book: "In my opinion the Council of Constance should be considered a general Council of the western Church and its three major decrees be taken as authentic" (p. 70). Considering the conflicting positions that have been taken regarding the validity of this Council and its controversial decrees, this view is commendable.

The Councils and synods are pointers to the democratic tradition that existed in the Church from very early times, even from the New Testament times, and there is large number of Christians who still value this important tradition as sacred. They allow nothing to override the Councils. The Catholic Church too has maintained this tradition intact in spite of the aversion of some of the popes toward Councils in the wake of conciliarism, and they have stood the Church in good stead. The Councils came to the rescue of the Church in crisis situations and when the Church was in need of renewal. Otherwise we would not have had the good fortune to experience the renewal brought about by Vatican II. To keep this memory alive, it is important that one is familiar with the conciliar traditions of the Church and this book by Norman Tanner is by far the best introduction to it that I have come across so far.

Isaac Padinjarekuttu

Behold Your Mother: Mariological Studies Dr. Joseph Kottackal, Oriental Institute of Religious Studies, Kottayam, 1999, pages 100, Rs. 45.00.

Behold Your Mother is a useful handbook that covers many major areas of Mariology in a systematic manner. The style is simple and makes for easy reading.

In the opening chapter, the author has made quite an extensive survey of the first five centuries which are the most decisive period for the development of Marian faith. Particular reference is made to the significant contributions of the early Church Fathers on Mary. The second chapter on 'Mary in the Bible' situates Mary's symbolic presence from the beginning to the end of salvation history in the light of contemporary biblical scholarship.

With this backdrop of the two foundational sources for the development of an integrated Mariology, the author's study ex-

tends to some important mariological themes such as the divine motherhood of Mary and her Perpetual Virginity, Mary, the Type of the Church and her unique place in the work of salvation. A systematic exposition of Mary's divine motherhood from a biblical and patristic perspective provides a basis for understanding the other thesis on Mariology. The last two Marian dogmas, namely, the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption of Mary also find their rightful place in the book.

The fourth chapter enquires into the relationship between Mary and the Church. The author presents Mary as the type of the Church in female symbols: woman, mother, spouse of Christ, New Eve, Virgin Church and as the model of its pilgrim life of faith. Mary, as the pre-eminent member of the Church, embodies an exemplary life of faith, hope and discipleship.

The fifth chapter retraces the centrality of Christ's mediatorship and situates Mary's special place within the redemptive work of Christ. Mary is no longer considered in idealized isolation but in her theological role within the community of believers. The author has made a commendable attempt to explain the various Marian dogmas. However, he has not effectively drawn the theological significance of the dogmas and their relevance for the believing community in today's context.

In the last chapter a rather inadequate reference is made to Marian devotions and apparitions, subjects that invite many questions and much discussion among contemporary Christians and students of theology. This slim book of 100 pages will serve as a useful guide in Mariology to students of Theology and the laity.

Evelyn Monteiro

Dimensions of the Word, Joseph Pathrapankal, CMI. Dharmaram Publications, Dharmaram College, Bangalore 560029 First Published 2000. PRICE: Rs. 250.00 / $ 18.00. Pages: xvi + 343.

The expertise that Fr. Joseph Pathrapankal CMI brings to his writings enables him to deal with the Word of God in a competent, credible and pastoral way. This book has been written to mark the golden jubilee of the author as a religious. In *Dimensions of the Word*, Fr. Pathrapankal addresses himself to the task of making the word of God active and effective in the concrete lives of persons: "Times are gone when the exegetes spent their time in literary, historical and textual criticism and in philological analysis bringing out some dry and insipid arguments and doctrines which did not mean anything for the people in their everyday struggle of life. Now it is a question of re-reading, reconceiving, actualizing, exploring the *dhvani* meanings of biblical passages, complementary approach in the study of religious scriptures of world religions and enriching each other, inculturating the message of the Bible into the manifold areas of human life and thereby making the word of God living and dynamic" (xiii).

The aim of the author is "to analyse the various dimensions of the word of God as it is encountered in the pluralistic society of our times" (xiv). In the space of 14 studies, he has dealt with various tasks that have an important bearing on the believing Christian in the Church. He begins by inviting theologians and exegetes to accept history in its broader dimensions and to focus on a "realistic understanding of evangelization" (xv). A special effort is made to see the person and mission of Christ in the context of today's religious pluralism. An enlightened view of evangelization is presented and the crucial function of the Church is portrayed from the vantage point of New Testament perspectives. Mary, "a model disciple in the

New Testament," represents all that "Jesus Christ expects from his followers."

Pluralism is given much importance in the author's considerations. He claims that the "kenotic dimension of the Christian message has greater credibility when the very reality of the Church is approached from a perspective which respects and promotes culture and cultural characteristics of each nation, a point which is being emphasized in recent documents of the Church" (xv). The secular dimension of the word of God is highlighted when considering Paul's apostolic ministry "as closely related to assisting the poor members of the Church of Jerusalem." The holistic approach to the kingdom of God offers an opportunity to examine religious life as "a life of discipleship" that must be envisaged from "not only biblical but also Indian perspectives" (xvi). Finally, the author considers what leadership entails in today's Church.

The different studies are based on personal research and offer a meaningful understanding of the word of God as incarnated in everyday life. Fr. Pathrapankal has endeavoured to translate the advice that he proffers to the theologians and exegetes in general into each of the individual studies. The results are substantial. For instance, in his first study of "The Profile of the Theologian," Fr. Pathrapankal shows how Matthew's gospel presents a message for Palestinian Jewish Christians who have broken with official Judaism. In turn, Fr. Patrapankal proposes a new *dharma* that is didactic and pastoral and "which should characterize the life and mission of every disciple of Jesus" (p. 6). Hence, it applies to all Christians. This study ends by pointing out how the theologians perform their tasks as stewards, responsible to and for the household of God.

In the tenth study, the focus is on the Church and culture: "Church and Culture: Some Biblical Reflections." Fr.Pathrapankal avoids a Biblicism that makes the text in the bible the sole point of reference for interpreting life. He accepts the insights found in the text but marries it to the cultural context in which it must unfold itself. To this end, he offers a short historical overview of the Church and her meeting with culture and highlights the strong support that Vatican II gave to efforts at inculturation and interculturation. The "fuller content of interculturation" must be probed if inculturation is to continue. "The fear that in this approach Christianity would lose something and that it will be mistakenly understood as one religion among others comes not from theological concerns; rather they come from the age-old complex that Christianity has only to give and nothing to receive."

In each of the studies, Fr. Pathrapankal uses a persuasive tone that is reflective. The reader can identify with the concerns of the author and becomes enlightened, as he/she perceives the relevance of his thinking to life's concrete situations. The studies are meant to enlighten the mind, touch the heart and bring one to a greater awareness of his/her identity as a Christian. Varied audiences will find in "Dimensions of the Word" sufficient matter to satisfy their different expectations—building a Christian attitude of mind and heart, actively participating in the life of the Church and understanding the authentic imperatives of the gospel.

A more detailed examination of the text would have succeeded in removing the mistakes made in the use of language. However, the book remains a substantial contribution to Christian texts that refuse to be "simplistic" and "pietistic." Rather, it enables today's believer to be nourished by the word of scripture and to carry out courageously the task of Christian witnessing. Modestly priced, the book is recommended for Christians who base their life on a solid spirituality.

Errol D'Lima S.J

jnanadeepa

Pune Journal of Religious Studies

The next issue (July 2002) of *Jnanadeepa* will deal with *Religion, Ideology and Violence*. There is reason to believe that there is a connection between religion, ideology and violence in the world today. We wish to explore the nature of the relationship between religion, ideology and violence.

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