
*jnana*deepa

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Models of Authority



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Editorial

More than thirty-five years ago, the Second Vatican Council called our attention to an anomaly in the contemporary world: “Never before today has man (sic !) been so keenly aware of freedom, yet at the same time, new forms of social and psychological slavery make their appearance” (GS 4). While there is a growing sense of personal freedom among humans everywhere in the world today, there is also widespread misunderstanding and abuse of authority in many parts of the globe. This has led to a crisis of authority both in the Church and the state.

It is against this background that this issue of *Jnanadeepa* has chosen to discuss models and structures of authority. An effort is made here to develop a new understanding of and a new approach to authority especially in the Church.

There are two historical studies in this issue: one discusses models of authority in the Catholic Church and the other examines models of authority in Protestant Churches. What has become quite clear is that there have been different ways of understanding and exercising authority in the churches during the last two thousand years.

One of the articles studies the sources of authority in Islam. While all the sects of Islam hold that the Holy Qur'an is the most authentic source of authority, they do not interpret the Qur'an in the same way. Besides, different sects recognize different sources and models of authority.

Similar studies of sources and models of authority in Hinduism and Buddhism were planned. But because of certain unforeseen developments this issue of the Journal does not carry those studies.

There are three articles which look at authority from socio-political, philosophical and psychological perspectives. The first one examines the nature of authority, discusses authoritarianism in Indian politics and points out that the post-Independence state has often manifested clear authoritarian tendencies. The second one deals with authority in postmodernity and seeks to discover the network of similarities and relationships that exists amidst the diverse forms of authority. It situates authority in the ‘circle of radical relationality.’ The third one examines authoritarianism from a psychological point of view and spells out its implications for the church of India.

Two of the articles included in this issue attempt to offer orientations for the future. One reflects on Karl Rahner’s ideas of “authority” and “the Church” and contends that these ideas can help the Church in its efforts to respond to the challenges of our time. The other criticizes the theory and practice of authority in the Church today and advocates a more maternal model of authority which will be life-giving and growth-promoting.

There are three new features in this issue. The first is an address delivered at the inauguration of the Platinum Jubilee Celebrations of Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth on June 11, 2001. It discusses the mission of ecclesiastical faculties in the contemporary world. Then there are two articles on Peace which could not be published in the last issue of the Journal which dealt with peace. Both of them offer new perspectives on peace and are, therefore, included in this issue. Finally, there is an article which discusses the relationship between the Old and the New Testaments. What is suggested in the article can be a help in our efforts to develop a more positive attitude to the scriptures of the different religions of humankind.

Kurien Kunumpuram SJ
Editor

Abstract: More than thirty-five years ago, the Second Vatican Council called our attention to an anomaly in the contemporary world: "Never before today has man (sic !) been so keenly aware of freedom, yet at the same time, new forms of social and psychological slavery make their appearance" (GS 4). While there is a growing sense of personal freedom among humans everywhere in the world today, there is also widespread misunderstanding and abuse of authority in many parts of the globe. This has led to a crisis of authority both in the Church and the state. It is against this background that this issue of Jnanadeepa has chosen to discuss models and structures of authority. An effort is made here to develop a new understanding of and a new approach to authority especially in the Church.