

Book Reviews

Frans Wijsen, *Seeds of Conflict in a Haven of Peace: From Religious Studies to Interreligious Studies in Africa (Studies in World Christianity and Interreligious Relations, no. 44)*, Amsterdam & New York (NY): Rodopi, 2007, pp. 282

This book is the fruit of over three years of research, concluding with three months of fieldwork in Nairobi in 2004. The awareness of the connection of religious terrorist groups with Africa, prompted many Africans to be engaged in interreligious dialogue. "Theoretical reflection on the practice of interreligious dialogue, however, has yet to come." (p. 10) Other scholars, who have written on dialogue, have ignored the African perspective, and those that do speak about Africa, do so only in a descriptive manner.

"This book is an attempt at making good this deficiency. It is written by a European, but a European who has been working and travelling in Africa for 25 years." (p. 11) Wijsen tries to answer the following questions: "Why are African scholars of religion and theologians so remarkably silent about interreligious relations? Is there an African model for interreligious relations?.. How should the subject of interreligious relations be taught in departments of religious studies and schools of theology?.. Have African scholars of religion and theologians anything to contribute to the (international) debate on this subject?" (p. 12) In trying to answer these questions, Wijsen brings together theoretical reflections and insights from the field. He hopes that his study "will lead to new and better ways of teaching interreligious relations in departments of religious studies and faculties of theology." (p. 27)

Wijsen begins by explaining his multi-perspective and poly-methodical approach. He examines the religious scenario in Africa today, and the impact of secularism. This is followed by a discussion of the current trends in the academic study of religions there. Wijsen then presents the result of his fieldwork on education in interreligious relations at faculties of theology and departments of religious studies in East Africa. He then examines "some key issues in the study of religion in Africa: religion and conflict, human rights and reconciliation, as well as dual allegiance and syncretism, secularism and extremism, mission and dialogue." (p. 29) Added to this is a theological reflection on mission and on ecclesiology. Wijsen suggests that seeing the Church as a community of co-pilgrims in search of God is more helpful in promoting interreligious dialogue than the image of the Church as the family of God. He also underlines the importance of women theologians.

Religion in Africa is 'an ambiguous reality' (p. 75), and it is not easily understood by scholars. This ambiguity is further intensified by the fact that "religion, society and culture are not perceived as separate domains." (p. 100) Hence "in the process of reconciliation religion can play a purifying role, but scholars of religion should be aware that religion is also part of the problem." (p. 141) The awareness of the need for interreligious dialogue is a recent development in Africa; the result of globalisation and pluralisation. Wijsen believes that for interreligious dialogue to be possible we need to insist on the role of the Spirit in other religions, because "the Spirit blows where it wills." (Jn 3.8, p. 178)

This awareness will lead to 'a spirituality of the road', based on the African tradition of accompanying "a departing guest a little way on his or her road as a gesture of respect." (p. 210) This is also in harmony with other traditions that see religion as a way: *tao* (Chinese), *shinto*

(Japanese), *marga* (Hindu), *halacha* (Jewish) and *mazhab* (Islamic). These traditions are based on the fundamental awareness that we are all strangers to one another and to the Other. Mission, then, will be less the crossing of geographical boundaries, and more the crossing of religious and cultural frontiers. This "does not imply wishy-washiness about one's own faith. It means willingness to learn from the other and letting go of the need to have all the answers." (p. 218).

Wijsen's study can help those who are engaged in interreligious studies and dialogue. Religions as social phenomena with ancient roots are very complex, and hence we need to be careful and avoid generalisations and naive comparisons. We need to walk with peoples of other faiths, and find our way by walking. Interreligious dialogue also calls for the commitment to inculturation and liberation: allowing ourselves to be enriched by local traditions and committing ourselves to build up the local communities that are rooted in justice and love.

Subhash Anand

George Nedungatt, *Quest for the Historical Thomas: Apostle of India. A Re-Reading of the Evidence*, Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 2008, xxxiv-428.

The last time the Indian Christians were challenged in their age-old tradition about St. Thomas, Apostle of Jesus Christ, being the founder of the Christian Church in India was in 2006 when Pope Benedict XVI stated that the Apostle Thomas preached the Gospel in north-western India from where Christianity reached south India, which would imply that he did not take the Gospel to south India. It was so vehemently denounced by the Christians of south India that the Vatican had to issue a corrective and asserted that the Apostle himself

had proceeded to preach the Gospel in south India. It is doubtful that the Pope had reevaluated the material to make such a dramatic turnaround within two months. It would make after all no difference to him and for that matter to most European historians whether Thomas preached in India or elsewhere. Nor has the incident in any way added anything to the centuries-long polarization of opinion about St. Thomas and India that exists between Western and Indian historians. But George Nedungatt's book has definitely added some clarity to the debate. It is a re-reading of the evidence as well as a presentation of new evidence and, as someone has rightly commented, it is a book for which many were waiting for long, students, teachers, ecclesiastical historians and any one interested in the culture and history of India. George Nedungatt, who is a canon lawyer by profession but has spent a lifetime researching for this important book which is a significant contribution to the history of Christianity, deserves sincere appreciation and gratitude for this gigantic undertaking. It is often said that what cannot be cured has to be endured. The incurable Eurocentrism of Western Church historians who have pronounced the last words on Christian origins elsewhere therefore will have to be endured. But for those who look at history as a never-ending search, whether European or non-European, Nedungatt offers a serious challenge to look afresh at their sources, hypotheses and conclusions.

The book has an introduction, five main parts and a general conclusion. The introduction presents the real problem confronting the research on Thomas and India: the sharply divided opinion about Thomas and India. While most of the non-Indian authors tend to be skeptical (ranging from unprovable, unhistorical, legendary, non-proven but possible, not likely, probable or very probable), some non-Indian and almost all Indian authors consider it historical and certain. It is difficult to believe that there is any chance for the two groups to meet but at the end of the book many of the skeptics would, had they been alive, make a serious reconsideration of their views. Part I offers the survey of recent literature in English, German, French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Greek, Polish, Hungarian, Malayalam, and Tamil,

Part II is a critique of the method of those who are skeptical about the historical Thomas in India, namely, historicism which he blames for the uncompromising attitude of Western historians and pleads for the historical method which uses both written documents and unwritten traditions.

Part III offers the nine theories put forward by those who deny the Indian apostolate of Thomas: (1) India is confused with other countries like Ethiopia; (2) The Acts of Thomas is no historical source; (3) Apostolic foundation in India is an Edessan invention; (4) No Christianity in India in the second century; (5) Parthia and India are alternatives; (6) Apostle Bartholomew is India's Apostle; (7) Not Apostle Thomas but Thomas of Cana (Kinai); (8) Christian origins in India is from Nestorian missions; and (9) the problem with Calamina, the place of death of the Apostle. These are the objections that are usually put

forward by those who deny the apostolate of Thomas in India. It is for the first time that we find all of them in one place with a detailed critique of each of them and offering rather convincing solutions.

Part IV is another important contribution, namely a detailed analysis of the Patristic evidence about the apostolate of Thomas in India. 31 persons are quoted, some of them anonymous authors, which once again is an important contribution. Many readers will be surprised that there are so many Patristic references to Thomas in the first place. I have not come across another book where all these sources are placed together. Many hitherto confusing expressions are clarified in this section, one important one among them being the confusion between Parthia and India, the clarification of the expression Greater India and the relationship between India and Edessa.

In Part V the Indian tradition is analyzed, starting with the northwest Indian tradition revolving around Gundaphar of Taxila, which is basically based on the Acts of Thomas. Many would be surprised to find that there are other living traditions connected with the northwest Indian tradition of the apostle Thomas, like the Gar-Thoma village close to Sirkap in the district of Islamabad, and Tatta in Sind. Besides the several places mentioned outside the Malabar tradition (p.278) the one most interesting would be the central Indian tradition, namely, the Udayapur inscription in Madhya Pradesh. Unknown to many yet, this could turn out to be a significant archeological source about the Apostle Thomas in India but needs further study, and as the author admits, correct translation and interpretation. Then the author turns to the south Indian tradition, the most known in India and abroad, the Tomb of Thomas, the place, year and circumstances of his death, the traditions on the Malabar Coast, like the seven churches, the tradition about the Palayur Church, other ancient churches, the ballad, like the Veeradian song, Margam Kali, Pattu, Rambanpattu etc. In the process he has dealt a blow to some Thomas Christian leaders of today who have prided in the designation nasrani which according to him is a late Muslim imported name for the Christians. Nor does the designation Thomas Christians is of any historical value. Certain things which are considered to be non-negotiable by many Indian Church historians are pure non-starters according to Nedungatt: The Thomas Christian Priesthood, the Law of Thomas, the Thomas Cross, Brahmin social customs among the Thomas Christians, Christian influence on early Indian religion, etc.

The general conclusion offers a summary of the entire discussion, a bit repetitive perhaps, but finally sees the convergence of so many traditions as a sure proof of the historical mission of St. Thomas the Apostle of Jesus in India. The title given to the book is fully justified. It is a rereading of the evidence with a number of additional pieces of evidence brought under a single volume. The dialogical style of engaging the opponent is praiseworthy but at times the forthright conclusions seem to be dismissive of the other's position. The style is rather pedantic. Canon Law and historical narrative have little in common

and the author cannot be faulted for that. The unfortunate list of errata could have been avoided in this age of computers. But this is an invaluable book for all students and teachers of Indian history, culture and history of Christianity in India. As a single volume work on the vexed problem of the foundation of Christianity in India, it would be difficult to supersede this book for some time to come.

Isaac Padinjarekuttu

Pandikattu, Kuruvilla (ed). *Dancing to Diversity: Science-Religion Dialogue in India*. Serials Publications. New Delhi, 2008, ISBN 978-81-8387-194-5, pp. 246+xvi. Rs. 750.

The editor and authors of this book try to understand the phenomenon of diversity, and to respond to it creatively? What are contemporary scientific and religious responses to diversity and pluralism? Given the postmodern ambience, how do we enrich ourselves through the plurality of scientific theories, religious experiences and cultural preferences? These are some of the questions posed to some research scholars in the fields of science, religion and culture. The articles in this volume attempt to answer these questions at least partially.

The context of these articles is science and religion dialogue in India. India is considered to be not merely a "melting pot of civilization," that transcends the "clash of civilizations," but a creative and amicable source of "unity in diversity." Such a variety and diversity is easily noticed by a student of Indian culture. It is noted that the contemporary India is not merely a conglomeration of paradoxes, but a place where diversity is cherished, affirmed and even celebrated.

Within this context religious pluralism and cultural diversity that Indian Institute of Science and Religion, Pune, has organized twelve week seminar, spread over three years, on "science, values and visions." The seminar provided about thirty young scholars a chance to think deeply on issues of science, values, vision and religion and to interact innovatively so that they can contribute significantly in this field. These articles in this volume are by scholars who have worked intensely, reflected deeply and shared creatively to relate critical science with creative religions. The young scholars hailed from different parts of India, spoke different languages and possessed different faith and scientific traditions. These articles reflect some of their insights, many of them seminal, towards ushering a society where differences are cherished and creativity fostered.

The articles fall under four categories. The first two introductory articles speak of the need and social status of science-religion dialogue, since it has become a fast developing field particularly in the Indian scene. The next section carries four articles that deal with nature and reality with its unity dimension. Two articles are on Bohm's interpretation of reality, while another philosophical article deals with the nature of nature in itself. The last article in this section

draws parallels between the book of nature understood by Kepler and the Indian tribal traditions. This section has scientific basis and metaphysical implications. The third section focuses on diversity, relating health, beauty and wonder to it. Two articles in this section deal with the tragic Tsunami and the need to preserve the rich biodiversity in India. The last section is application of science-religion dialogue in the Indian context. A statistician survey on the relationship between health and spirituality is included. Since the contemporary Indian situation is driven by bio- and information technologies, two articles focus on stem cell research which has significant influence in India and one deals with the possibilities opened up by artificial intelligence.

The aim of these articles is to give young and aspiring scholars a chance to relate science and religion constructively. So these articles are primarily meant for educated staff and students in the universities. The articles are characterized by religious rootedness and scientific openness. They reflect the emerging India which is young, dynamic, ambitious and at the same time socially conscious. Another companion volume which will take up more focused issues will come out shortly.

The editor and the authors have succeeded, I believe, in deepening the ambience of religious, scientific and cultural dialogue within the larger Indian psyche. It can be recommended to all libraries and research departments.

S V George

Zacharias Mattam, *Not I, But Christ Lives in Me*. Kristu Jyoti Publications, Bangalore, 2007. pages 406. Price Rs. 300.00

The work of Fr. Mattam S.D.B. originated as a doctoral dissertation from the Salesian Pontifical University, Rome, under the direction of Prof. Giorgio Zevini, S.D.B. Surveying the books of the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, the author attempts to trace the various stages of God's mystical union with human persons in Christ. The salvation history is presented here as a process, a progressive self-gift of God to humans.

The author identifies six stages of this process: i) "Walking with God" is the first stage. This is the time of man's first acquaintance and friendship with God as it is portrayed in the OT stories of the Patriarchs. Walking with the forefathers of Israel God transforms them and makes them instruments of blessing and salvation for the world. ii) The God who introduced the people of Israel to the world and walked with them 'falls in love with them'; he liberates them from the slavery in Egypt and owns them up as his chosen possession with the covenant at Sinai. During this stage, qualified as the time of *betrothal*, God dwells with his people and enables them to stand in his presence. iii) In the third stage of the process, depicted as the *wedding feast*, God sends his beloved Son as the bridegroom to establish the new covenant. Israel hears the voice of the bridegroom in the public life of Jesus and rejoices in his presence with

them. iv) The one who heeds the call of the bridegroom partakes of the nuptial union with him in the Church, his bride. This is the fourth stage and it is continued through the celebration of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist. v) By participating in the mystery of Christ through the sacraments and through ecclesial communion a believer is being transformed into Christ; in this fifth stage the believer realizes that it is no longer he but Christ who lives in him (Gal 2,20). vi) The final stage is described as the participation in the *wedding feast of the Lamb*, the ultimate goal the Church is eagerly looking forward to.

These six stages have been discussed in this work in three parts (six chapters) in addition to a general introduction and a conclusion; one finds the heart of the thesis in the fourth chapter where a detailed analysis of Galatians 2,15-21 is given. The content of the text is organized very well in short sections with proper titles and subtitles; the short résumés given at the beginning and end of each chapter help the reader to follow the flow of the argument.

As Prof. Wirth Morand in his appreciation of this work says, “a reading of these pages shows the experience of a man of faith and a minister of the Word”. Even a cursory glance would reveal the richness of this work and its plentiful use of scripture. Fr. Mattom quotes liberally from the Bible for every affirmation he makes. One may also notice that in his interpretation of the Bible the author has opted for a traditional reading of the text, ignoring modern critical studies. The work, as a result, does not discuss in depth questions of historicity and diachronic formation of texts. Thus an impression is created that the work is more ‘spiritual’ than exegetical in nature. Readers cannot be blamed if they expect a more scientific analysis of the texts, applying both synchronic and diachronic approaches, from a scripture scholar.

This work in which various themes and imageries both from the OT and the NT are analyzed and explained is a rich resource for the study of biblical theology. It is indeed a gift to all who sincerely seek the meaning of their Christian identity and strive to live it.

Henry Pattarumadathil S.J

John Mialil SJ, *Wonders in Nature*, Media House, Delhi, 2008, pp 150, ISBN: 81-7495-329-9, Rs. 100.

A knowledgeable and practical botanist, Fr. Mialil has attempted to present a scientific account of the functioning and progress of life in the plant kingdom and animal kingdom. He has elaborately explained the anatomic functioning of the human body and has colored his arguments with a theological understanding – that there exists the Supreme Intelligence of God in all things. All the seven chapters are presented systematically well in progression, to show that the hidden hand of an Intelligent Designer is at work in the universe and its organisms. The literary style and logic in the presentation of these arguments is commendable and it enhances better understanding of the themes.

Chapter 1 carefully discloses the amazing ability of plants to choose suitable natural techniques in multiplying themselves with extreme care and precision. Chapter 2 meticulously studies the living mechanism and reproductive systems in animals and establishes that though they are instinctual, an Intelligent Agent has set things in the way they are. From the following chapters it is quite interesting to learn how human body functions in tune with nature and preserves itself in varying conditions from birth to death. Through many instances from different levels of life the author tries to respond to the notions of some of the scientists and philosophers who try to rule out the presence of God in nature. According to the author, there are enough evidences to show that behind every natural activity there is a mysterious hand that operates and which is not completely comprehensible to human minds. Looking at nature we are moved with awe and wonder and are led to a deeper faith in God.

The book is set as a critical and relevant response to the postmodern tendency that rejects God completely from the universe. The author goes against the view that science can explain all processes in the universe without any intervention of God. Hence the whole book is an attempt to show that nature does speak of God and this is clear from the mysterious and miraculous way in which nature operates. The book mainly addresses only part of the debate in science and religion, namely the aspect of Intelligent Design.

Ramlal Thomas SJ

Isaac Padinjarekuttu, *Challenges to Religion, Church and Theology*, Mumbai: St. Paul's Publishers, 2008. pp. 213. Rs.90.ISBN: 978-81-7109-873-6.

The book is an attempt to highlight the significance of moral and social ethical values, religion and spirituality for ensuring an authentic human existence in the modern world. At present peoples and societies all over the world are facing uncertainties regarding the meaning and purpose of life. Human life is fast losing its direction and goal. Lacking a sense of proper values and purpose to guide, people are groping in darkness. Taking advantage of this situation, unscrupulous political and religious leaders seek to reduce the people into objects of manipulation. They become easy victims of the quick-fix solutions and superficial satisfactions their leaders offer.

The crises confronting the modern world are symptoms of a deeper malaise. They indicate the moral and spiritual vacuum experienced by our contemporaries. In this situation, it is incumbent upon religion, theology and the Church to creatively respond to the multifaceted challenges facing the people of the present world. A failure in this would amount to courting irrelevance and turning religion, theology and the church into inconsequence – a phenomenon that the people of today are increasingly experiencing.

At this juncture, a sense of history, more than anything else, may be the sure guide of action for religion, theology and the Church. The understanding of history is the understanding of human behavior both in the past as well as its inevitable fall-out in the present. The contemporary experience of moral vacuum and the accompanying sense of a lack of meaning and direction in human life emerge from the blunders that humans, on account of their frailty, have committed in the past. These blunders involve the spheres of politics, religion, church, and theology. A historical awareness will enable us to judge the appropriateness of a specific action or inaction resorted to at present in the light of its historical precedents. And this will forestall the repetition of the same blunders and help us determine the realistic response required by the present situation.

The book provides an analysis of the various dimensions of the challenges facing religion, theology and the church against the larger picture of the global situation, offers the historical background of the challenges and suggests the possible ways to respond to each of these challenges.

The book is a collection of twelve articles written in the past one decade and are arranged in three parts. Part I deals with the challenges to religion in general and identifies the failure in responding to the challenges as the root cause of the present crisis in religious belief. The five essays in Part I discuss the challenges from Modernity, Religious Violence, Religious Fundamentalism, Science and Pluralistic Culture.

Part II of the book focuses on Christian Theology and delineates the task of theology in a world assailed by various challenges. If the task of theology is to help people understand their faith in the contemporary world, then theology needs to re-conceive this task anew taking into account the various elements of the situation in which people live their faith. Thus, the four essays in Part II seek to provide a clear understanding of the secular context, the presence of other world religions, and the need to bring the sources of faith in dialogue with the context and to link the cultural situation with the sources of faith.

Part III concentrates on specifying the ways to make the church a credible institution in the contemporary world. The credibility of the church will be predicated upon the nature and the relevance of the services it provides to humanity as well as on its commitment to the values it professes. Once again, the service that the church is called upon to perform is in response to the crying needs of the world. Accordingly, the need to serve the cause of freedom, the need for the church to become a servant of the world, and the necessity of providing spiritual leadership are discussed in the three essays of Part III.

The twelve chapters in the book, written in clear, lucid and direct language, reflect the strong conviction of Fr. Padinjarekuttu and his commitment to making religion, spirituality, moral and social ethical values the foundation on which the modern world could re-found itself. It is from this perspective that he looks

at the function of theology and the role of the church in the world. As a historian, especially as a church historian, Fr. Padinjarekuttu brings out from his storehouse of knowledge and information the historical trajectory of each of the challenges facing the people of today. The realistic solutions he proposes to these challenges in the light of his wide range of knowledge, his experiential understanding of the situation of the world as well as his clear vision for the future leave the readers with no other option but to share his convictions and to commit oneself to the task of reshaping society and world in such a way as to make an authentic human life possible in the present times. Mathew Jayanth SJ

Pandikattu, Kuruvilla (ed.) *Postmodernity: An Indian Appraisal*. Serials Publications, New Delhi, 2008. ISBN 978-81-8387-200-3, pp. 282+xvi Rs. 895.

"Is India postmodern?" This is the question posed to the authors of the articles included in this book. They hold that India is at the same time traditional, modern and postmodern. All these elements are present in different sections of the kaleidoscope that India is. Also these elements are present in each individual. In many areas in our own lives, we are still at the traditional world-view. The modern world-view has taken deep root in the Indian psyche, though not completely. Today, India is also opening itself to the postmodern world-view. So this book attempts to address this peculiar situation in India. Responding to the postmodern challenge, this book wants to focus on India and offer some creative Introduction proposals within the Indian ethos.

This book is also primarily addressed to the Christian audience. So some of the themes dealt with in this book are predominantly Christian. Christianity has been purged and purified by the enlightened and by the "crisis of modernism." It has grown out of it and come out with more vitality and vigour. And similarly the authors of the articles in this volume believe that Christian tradition is strong enough to brave the challenges and opportunities offered by postmodernity. As Christians we need to face the world and the world-views squarely. Without being gobbled up by these views, the living Christian traditions can respond positively and creatively to the phenomenon of postmodernity.

So the articles in this volume attempt to respond to the postmodern challenges and prospects. Some of the articles in this volume are introductory, introducing the postmodern life style to the audience. Some are rather critical of postmodernity, while other are appreciative of it. A few of the articles are creative applications made in the light of the postmodern challenge and critique: notion of God, renewed vision of reality (metaphysics) and Jesus (Christology).

The first section introduces the vague and fashionable notions related to postmodernity. It is both general and introductory in nature. It focuses on the historical origin, the salient features and the innovative challenges offered by postmodernity.

George Rajmohan, a young phenomenologist, traces the main ideas of postmodernism and some of its prominent exponents including Martin Heidegger, Jacques Derrida, Georges Bataille and Michel Foucault. The author hopes that postmodernism will constructively create new paradigms of life which the world badly needs today.

The next article by Kuruvilla Pandikattu traces the scientific domains (like quantum mechanics and chaos theory) that have given birth to elements of postmodern thinking. Then he applies some of the key notions of postmodernity to the religious and social life of the contemporary world. He concludes the article by tracing the elements of postmodernity in various levels of contemporary human life like economics, informatics and social life. The questions he finally asks is: Will postmodernism play also a constructive and prophetic voice that ushers in more human and humane values?

The article of the budding scholar, Augustine Pamplany, first analyses the epistemic, anthropological and metaphysics assumptions of modernity and points the way to going beyond them, leading in the process to postmodernity. He concludes hopefully: 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 postmodernism

After the introductory section, the second section invites the readers to engage themselves in some concrete applications to India from postmodern perspectives. This section tries to engage some of the insights with the complex Indian phenomena like the caste system, domination, exclusivity and folk religiosity. Hence it provides us with concrete applications of some of the postmodern insights and offers new paradigms for the Indian Church.

The young scholar of science and religion, Victor Ferrao, argues that Ambedkar exhibited postmodern tendencies in his war against the casteist metanarrative in India. He understood the caste system as the power game of oppressing the weak. He hopes that 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.

The anthropologist, Joe Arun, carries on this conversation with caste system and studies this phenomenon from the perspectives of domination and exclusivity – from that of Brahminism and British colonialism. Drawing inspiration from postmodernity, he pleads for a “celebration of the dignity of difference.” He urges us to appreciate the dignity of difference in the ways in which people are and live in their own situations. And this is why it is hard to find any precision in the arguments of postmodernism and it refuses to settle down to one single meaning by which one could characterise postmodernism.

James Ponnaiah, a budding scholar in folk religiosity, applies the insights of postmodernity to the role and significance of rituals practised by the Indian folk. He sees rituals as both the locale and the instrument of “the techniques,

technologies or strategies of power.” Thus rituals have a type of efficacy or special power, not only to shape social organisation and thereby the dispositions of individuals, but also in the articulation, redefinition, and legitimisation of socio-economic and cultural realities of India.

A young German theologian, Christian Bauer, tries to carry on this conversation by bringing in the Church and the poor. Facing politics and mysticism of the Sacred today, the Church will have to reformulate the famous ‘option for the poor.’ Following the maxims of two great martyr-bishops, it has to be radicalised towards an existential option of the entire people of God for *Homo sacer*, the extreme paradigm of ‘the poor’ in and beyond modernity: Oscar A. Romero interpreted the often-quoted statement, “Gloria dei vivens homo” of Irenaeus of Lyons in the light of his Latin-American context as “Gloria dei vivens pauper”. Maybe theology today will have to extend these sentences into their very extreme of that double frontier, which excludes *Homo sacer* from the ‘modern’ world of God and Man – and thus open up a wide field of transgression beyond both. That extension might be without any frontier, but it is never without the horizon: ‘Gloria dei vivens homo sacer’.

This vision for a religious community is complemented by Hector Andrade, who brings in the metaphor of “migration.” He hopes that the Church will be ready to accept a wide spectrum of forms of understanding and expressions of religious experiences, Scripture and Tradition. Religion must become pluriform if it has to reach out to all the people among whom it has spread and grown. From a postmodern perspective, the author holds, that this reaching out is beneficial to the religious communities and does not smack of ‘fragmentation.’ Such religions may appear to the western mind as ‘fragments’ of a true religion 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.

Nishant, another young scholar of philosophy and postmodernity attempts at a Derridean deconstructing of Husserl and Levinas and shows how responsibility and responding to the phenomenon of life can help us to live our suffering meaningfully. This moral philosopher attempts to respond to the radical questions: Is ethics viable in a postmodern age? After attempting to respond to some of the challenges posed by postmodernity, the author concludes: Postmodernism as a genuine partner in dialogue with the little narratives in the field of morals becomes both relevant and appealing in the contemporary world.

The third section attempts at responding creatively to wider issues of significance based to some extent on the Indian realities and postmodern challenges..

The first article by LeRon Shults, a prolific American theological writer, is a theological response to postmodernity. This article attempts to explore a new opportunity that arises at the contemporary postmodern intersection: the opportunity to articulate theological concepts in a way that links them to the modern fascination

with human desire. The author hopes that by responding reconstructively to late modern concerns in this way, the author hopes that academic theology may contribute to the ongoing mission of the body of Church in the world.

Then the crucial question is raised: Is Natural Law Morality Defensible in a Postmodern World? Taking up the ethical domain, Craig A. Boyd, an American ethicist, tries to go beyond moral relativism and asks the questions: Is Natural Law Morality Defensible in a Postmodern World? His answer is inspiring: Natural law morality can plausibly be reconstructed in spite of the postmodern criticisms. Accordingly, he maintains that natural law morality depends upon a viable realist epistemology that explicitly denies the skeptical assumptions of postmodernism.

The next article by Augustine Perumalil, a young systematic philosopher, deals with the "dawn of postmodernism and the decline of metaphysics." It may seem that "postmodernism replaces Nietzsche's announcement of the death of God with an announcement of the end of philosophy". In this context Perumalil brings out valid insights from Marion's postmodern natural theology, which is primarily a commitment to Catholic orthodoxy without its unwanted metaphysical baggage.

In the same vein, another promising systematic philosopher, George Karuvilil, uses postmodernity as a ladder to offer a critique of John Caputo. The author shows that Caputo's espousal of radical undecidability, a postmodern feature, is the result of being a prisoner of a pre-hermeneutic mind-set, of the old objectivist picture. He indicates how we can go beyond such limitations imposed by postmodernity.

In the concluding reflections, some authors attempt to sum up, our responses to postmodernity. An acclaimed systematic theologian, Jacob Parappally, indicates the relevance of Christ in the larger background of postmodernity. The author contends that 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. Finally, Cyril Desbruslais offers a constructive criticism of postmodernity based on Juergen Habermas and Ken Wilber.

The good is a good asset to libraries and houses of higher learning. The editor and the authors have succeeded, I believe, in introducing and applying postmodernity to the complex Indian scenario.

S. V. George

jnanadeepa

Pune Journal of Religious Studies

Master's Programme on Interfacing Science, Philosophy and Religion

Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth is happy to introduce a new Master's Programme in Philosophy on Interfacing Science, Philosophy and Religion.

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