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ETHICS OF CHRISTIANITY IN POSTMODERN SOCIETY

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This paper brings together Christian thought and postmodernism in their interface for engaging a critical dialogue between them. I argue that though Christian thought is grounded in absolute truth claims, and postmodernism propel a sense of relativity of truth yet there is a common theoretical and political space that both these trends can converge. While postmodernism regards truth as matter of community construction lived by its participants, Christianity is lived by its members given to its specificity. The mode of deconstruction suggested by the postmodern, especially Derrida, is not antagonistic to the value of the Gospel – to bring sword – to reclaim justice to the poor and the disadvantaged. The affirmative side of postmodernism in terms presenting the voice of the pluralistic cultural presence and their ethical imperative to empower the powerless as against totality is perfectly in line with the message and the spirit of Christian gospels. Postmodernism for the Christian is only a challenge and not necessarily an engulfing school of thought about which Christians need to become conscious for reasons of being self-critical of those ideological and structural disabilities of the Church, especially of its Grecian and Roman logical roots and its value based hierarchical attributions in order to actively and responsibly be involved in the realization of the magnetism of the gospels.

Christianity vs. Postmodernity: Conflicting Context

Christianity is grounded in absolute truth-claims, where as Postmodernism¹ uphold a strong sense of relativity of truth. This propels a problem whether we can speak of a postmodern sense of Christianity and the issue is related with more queries such as, While Christian theology harps on monotheism, the belief that there is only one God who as the ground of all existence, but on the contrary the postmodern reject any such overarching ground -be it theological or philosophical or socio-cultural. Hence, does it mean that postmodernism be viewed as the most recent brand of atheism as part of the extension of the modernist secularism and humanism. Since after the medieval period, there seems to be a philosophical passivity on the part of the Christian theologians/philosophers, except certain moralist claims, does it mean that Christianity is vulnerable to

postmodernism? Broadly speaking the issue is, Can a Christian be a postmodernist without losing his/her being Christian and a Postmodernist be in some sense a Christian yet a postmodernist? How should Christian thinkers respond to postmodernism – as a threat or as a challenge or as new outlook by which the Christian has to re-look his theological/philosophical grounds? Of course this would call for a critical dialogue and a deeper analysis between these two positions, the Christian and the Postmodern.

Methodological consideration: Need for a critical dialogue by a mode of falsification

A critical dialogue between any two positions or persons is possible when both of them agree to meet for purpose of putting forward their set of opinions or claims, and may engage to 'see' whether there are any common grounds of agreement between them, to see the points of divergence and respect the points of divergence more than the points of convergence; the method of engaging a critical dialogue, I suggest is possible by adopting to the mode of 'falsification'² than verification for verification is only possible to matters of fact rather than to theoretical positions /issues. Moreover the mode of falsification is less provisional for instance it takes only one proposition to falsify the entire of scheme or system of thought, yet treat the same for pragmatic purposes. For instance, to say that Petrol is the best form energy is falsifiable by another proposition that atomic energy is the best form of energy, and the proposition that atomic energy is the best form of energy may further be contra-positied by some other form(s) of energy under scientific experimentation. The interesting thing is that, by treating atomic energy as the best form of energy, the proposition that petrol is the best form of energy is falsified but not completely verified to be counterfeited rendering it completely impractical. Give you another example, it only takes one black rose to falsify the proposition, 'all roses are red'. Falsification if employed amounts to certain mutual corrections between positions or propositions and in no way completely throw them outboard. Falsification as mode of engaging critical dialogue guards against any 'excommunication' of each other positions. This sense of a dialogue to some extent is

to risk certain claims in one's position/belief/theory, but it is an invitation to enter freely to exchange of opinions, engage mutual corrections, to view one's limitations in his belief-system in the light of the other. To a large extent, to engage a critical dialogue is to set oneself into a rational and ethical demonstration of his long owned set of ideas, to correct one's positions if found conflicting and appreciate the other/enrich each other and correct his ideas. The aim of a critical dialogue is to enter into ethical relationship by becoming mutually conscious of one's limits and enrichments.

To contra posit both Christianity and Postmodernity is to see whether there is any space for a reciprocal discussion among them. I hold that the Christians in general and 'Christian scholars' in particular have to learn to unlearn from postmodern sensibilities. In other words, the intention of this paper is to employ a critical dialogue between Christianity and Postmodernity. I assume that there is common political space/ground for both for engaging such a dialogue refraining from viewing them mutually antagonistic positions, and the common ground I believe is the affirmative dimension of Christianity in the embrace of the discriminated poor, and the postmodern sensibility of the affirmation of 'differences' as against any universalities.

Let me first trace certain salient themes of Postmodernism as to pave way for a discussion whether Christian thinking would agree to such positions:

No absolute truth means a Call for Solidarity

'[Postmodernism] affirms that whatever we accept as truth and even the way we envision truth as dependent on the community in which we participate . . . There is no absolute truth: rather truth is relative to the community in which we participate.'³ Such a position of the postmodern seems contradictory to the Christian position that the monotheistic God is the Absolute truth, which in the medieval theological language is conceived as Omniscience, Omnipotence and Omnibenevolence, the Trinitarian aspects assimilated in the oneness of God and such a God is conceived to be three-in-one-person whose aspects are both transcendental and immanent simultaneously. I do not propose here to enter into the analysis of the mutual consistency of such descriptions; rather my point is that the Christian monotheism taken together with all its theological hermeneutics and its Hellenistic Greek groundings remains in disagreement to the postmodern rejection of any absolute truth claim.

A Christian scholar, say X, might argue that, the postmodern idea that truth is relativistic, specifically

community-constructed and context-conditioned is not in opposition to Christianity as a specific culture which believes in its own specific sense of truth, and in fact postmodernists do allow the advocacy of the any specific sense of truth given to any historical cultural sense of cultures. But then the postmodern sense of affirming the particularity of truth-constructions does not mean to defend such a position of X. It does not warrant such escapist argumentation. Infact the opposite is true with postmodern claims. It does not preach that all truth-claims be that of Christian, Hindu, or Islam are true because they are specifically grounded in the differentia of cultural milieu, rather they argue that what is called or conceived to be True is a matter of arbitrariness, and constructed, and therefore truth is no truth but a myth promulgated by cultures.

Postmodernism evidently rejects the existence of any source of truth, morality, and intelligibility distinct from human cultural constructions. Application of this idea amounts to the denial of any God -be that of Christian, Judaic or Islamic. And Postmodernism as a form of extended modernism known as late-modernism has its roots to the intellectual tradition of modernism which markedly denies the idea of any supreme Being/God as the source and guidance of the universe. And thus by extension, Postmodernism professes a complete denial of any absolute truth or Godhead. The denial of any absolute truth by the postmodernists would position them in the line of renaissance thinking as secular and atheistic. The postmodern atheism and the Christian theism are thus mutual boundaries to be conscious of/and appreciate each other of their grounds. But this I hold need not be a limitation for engaging a critical dialogue. The Christian theistic proposition stands outside the boundary of falsification, for it's a not proposition to be falsified or even verified, rather its meaning layers/hermeneutics has to be sought with in the life-situation of Christian community, by tracing its historical and cultural traces. The theodicy argument whether God exists or not, is not therefore a matter of argumentation/concern for the postmodernist, since he holds that most of cultural claims are not factual, therefore beyond verification, and what is claimed to be true is cultural constructions therefore relative pertaining to a need for 'inward' analysis within the spectrum of the formation of such belief systems. The relativistic position of Postmodernism opens up the space for the Christian scholar to come in mutual communication with each other's claims. In a sense, the postmodernist here is not rigid like the positivists he only guards himself or herself against any conceptual subjugations or assimilation by mentally remaining free from any 'conversion' to any

ontologisms. One can be reminded of the Lyotard affirmation: "the principles and the contexts have to be chosen by living human beings against their own life-worlds and in the light of their lives with others, by persons able to call, to say, to sing, and using their imaginations, tapping their courage to trans-form." (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_development_of_Postmodernism)

Richard Rorty one of the most prominent philosophical defender of postmodernism defends the basic postmodernist position. He insists that there is no absolute reality independently existing who can be said of revealing the reality to us apart from our own minds or of other human minds.⁴ He holds that each humans interprets reality in accordance with his/her own subjective condition, which is in turn is influenced by the social and the cultural. Truth, for Rorty, is an intersubjective agreement among the members of a community.⁵ That intersubjective agreement permits the members of the community to speak a common language and establish a commonly accepted reality. The end of inquiry, for Rorty, is not the discovery or even the approximation of absolute truth but the formulation of beliefs that further the solidarity of the community, in order "to reduce objectivity to solidarity."⁶ He argues that once the notion of objective truth is abandoned, one must choose between a self-defeating relativism and ethnocentrism, neither of which can be justified in a manner that is not circular. He responds that one "should grasp the ethnocentric horn of the dilemma" and "privilege our own group."⁷ As far as any new beliefs that we are to consider, they must at least roughly cohere with those already held by the community, or, as Rorty puts the point, "We want to be able . . . to justify ourselves to our earlier selves. This preference is not built into us by human nature. It is just the way we live now."⁸ Rorty speaks of a human community of solidarity based in the liberal principles such as equality, secularity.

The postmodern denial of any absolute truth claims and its rejection of objectivity of modernity is well intended to replace these claims for community solidarity. To say that there is no absolute truth, that truth is not out there does only mean that our claims are linguistic human constructions or creations, and this therefore, opens up the possibility for interactions in a intersubjective manner. What can be said of God, from the point of view of postmodern is that our talk about god (theology) is a matter of language descriptions and as such linguistic descriptions (sentences) need not be objectified to be true. For reasons of clarity let me summarize the argument as follows: The postmodern claim that All human inquiry, thought-frames, systems of beliefs, theoretical positions occur in language and language-descriptions are only

relative for language is entirely culturally determined, therefore our claims of objectivity has to suspended and this suspension opens up the space for interaction in view of solidarity.

Beyond the binaries (Relativism) means a call against vulnerability of ideological imprisonment

The old Aristotelian metaphysics through which Christianity theologized itself, from which its theologians and practitioners (not all) cannot redeem themselves, unfortunately maintains a metaphysical position in the footsteps of Aristotle, that the 'starting point of demonstration' of our beliefs or claims 'must either be affirmed or denied and that a thing cannot at the same time be and not be' (*Metaph.* III.2.996b.28-30) relegates the 'Christian thinking' to be crudely absolutistic and attribute objectivity. But the postmodern sensibility against our claims of absolutism and objectivity of truth is point correction of the Aristotelian Christian thinking in us. To treat our claims beyond the truth of the so-called laws of logic/thought (the law of identity etc), does pave for a dialogue as against systemic imprisonment within ideological constructs. In other words the postmodern invitation to do away with the logical rationality is a point affirmation of relativity of our truth claims and thereby positions each other in a comfortable place for ethical and social communication. The skepticism of the postmodern is not a threat but only a challenge and the Christian theism need not be afraid the postmodern atheism but can remind/conscious of itself to its alleged (wrong) foundations of Aristotelianism/Scholasticism. To treat Christian theism as either true or false propositions is different from treating them as matter of cultural constructions.

The postmodern release of the clutches of binaries or categorical oppositions (to be or not to be/ God is or is not type of discussions) calls for a re-look into our own belief-systems -the cultural/ideological constructions- to unmask their pretensions, to become aware of our cultural-self in and through which we are enchained, and unchain the process of self-consciousness. The absolutistic attitude of the Christian and its alleged all-knowing catechetical attitude for some time needs to be bracketed/suspended as to really pave way for a mutual presence. The space for irrationality by the postmodern is a reminder for the Christian of its rigidity of its coherency logic to claims of absolutism. In this sense, the postmodern is not a disguised enemy of the Christian but a prophetic voice against the clutches of the binaries/structural logistics/ideological imprisonments of the very same Christianity in which one is part-taker.

Let me illustrate what is meant by the postmodern sense of being *beyond-binary*. The idea that X is Holy is intrinsically linked with the idea that Y is unholy. Both X and Y is positioned in a binary relation, a mode of categorical opposition. The Aristotelian logic of non-contradiction is the mode in which X and Y is construed in the very same system. To consider X to be holy the construct requires Y, yet another construction to be relegated in the subjugated realm of unholiness. The Christian idea of Holiness is linked with the very same 'Christian' idea of construing unholiness and by extension and application, the humans in the Christian community may be position in the value hierarchical order of holiness to unholiness, from God to Devil, from Highness to lowness, from the 'Called-few' to uncalled many. To say that God loves us simultaneously is to affirm that the Devil hates us, and those who are construed in the political space of holiness automatically presupposed to love mankind and in the order of hierarchy the lower ones are construed oppositional. To render authority/power to holiness would then automatically mean the reduction or erosion of power or authority of those who are downgraded in the order of hierarchical holiness. And so the question of emancipation primarily begins in the very same constructs in which we are bound. Foundationally the ethos of emancipation is not 'out there' for the salvation of 'others' the very same system with its conceptual/logical constructs, the ontological foundations need to be released. It is not that X is to redeem Y alone but the point is that both X and Y is to be set beyond the construed binaries of thought and culture. Both sinfulness and holiness are thus two sides the very same coin and the coin is marketed culturally.

The postmodern sensibility of engaging a mode of *beyond-boundary* thus exposes the linguistic and cultural constructions within the system. The rigidity of the system needs to be exposed in order that a vacuum is created; a sense of void is ushered, to perceive life afresh. The relativism of the postmodern aims at this freshness of outlook rather than the destruction. In a sense it destroys the old ways of thinking to pave for freshness of thinking beyond any absolute claims. The strict borders are thus eroded, the question of identity (as in the language of Aristotle) is looked afresh, in a mode of relativism, where there is the merging of the borders, a profound space for interaction. Thus it is a call against our own vulnerability to the ideological constructs.

Deconstruction as the mode of mediation to expel the authoritarian centre

The postmodernists carry out deconstruction as a mediation to unravel the authoritarian centre of the

structure/linguistic and cultural totality. Derrida is the central figure attributed of suggesting the way of deconstruction of text in question. As we explore the reciprocal possibility between Postmodernism and Christianity, we need to be reminded of Derrida's caution in employing deconstruction of the given-text/structure. He says, 'I was quite explicit about the fact that nothing of what I have said had a destructive meaning. Deconstruction has nothing to do with destruction. [I]t is simply a question of ... being alert to the implications, to the historical sedimentation in the language we use and that is not destruction'(Derrida, (1972) p271). Derrida was against any totality and he favored, 'the death of the centre' by a mode of deconstruction. Derrida, in this writings, especially in *Grammatology*, analysis western philosophy, as a totality, a metaphysics of presence, supported by a series of founding concepts or centers, that each one hoped to rule or dominate other systems of thought, by remaining unsullied it promoted practices of domination. He says, "Successively, and in regulated fashion, the center receives different forms or names. The history of metaphysics like the history of the West is the history of these metaphors and metonymies. Its matrix is the determination of Being as *presence* in all senses of this word. It could be should that all the names related fundamentals, to principles, or to the center have always designated an invariable presence – *eidōs, arche, telos, energia, ousia* (essence, existence, substance, subject) *aletheia*, transcendentality, consciousness, God, man and so forth." (Jacques Deriida and Maurizio Ferraris, *A Taste for the Secret*, trans, Giacomo Donis (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001), p. 40.) Deconstruction for Derrida begins by identifying the centre of a system, or the privileged term in a violent conceptual hierarchy and represents an intervention to make that system or hierarchy tremble. The postmodernists sensibility to resist any totalities or monopolizations point out similar directions by a mode of deconstruction to restore the differences and particularities as they are in their inter connectedness and in ruptures, which are robbed/straightened within the imprisonment of the absolute truth claims.

I think in the interface between postmodernism and Christianity, the Christian thought as promulgated by the medieval thinking which is translated, as a social structure -the Church, needs to be brought in face to the task of deconstruction. The purpose ofcourse is not destruction but to identify the privileged centre(s) and its conceptual and cultural hierarchy in favour of rebuilding authentic sense of Christian community. The question therefore revolves around the exposure of the determination of Being, the *eidōs, the arche* of the Church hierarchy with its alleged value-ascriptions to restore non-centeredness

namely the community of the Christian in the spirit of the gospel. Within the Gospel there is no reference to any authoritarian centre, for the gospel narrate the ethos and ethic of restoration of the discriminated and disadvantaged people. So long there is a cultural investment of power and authority invested on the different power centers, individualized, the church will remain to be cultural text of the matrix of power relations with all its metaphors of love but deep down chained to philosophical tradition of the west webbing grand narratives such as Salvation, Kingdom, universal brotherhood etc., sustaining by a process of self-legitimation.

Incredulity towards grand narratives to sensitize towards the broken particular

Jean-François Lyotard a foremost postmodernist, who first distinguished between the modern and the postmodern, claims that the term 'modern to designate any science that legitimates itself (self-legitimation) with reference to a metadiscourse ... making an explicit appeal to some grand narrative, such as the dialectics of Spirit, the hermeneutics of meaning, the emancipation of the rational or working Subject, or the creation of wealth.' (*The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, (Manchester: University Press, 1989), pXXIV).

The terms metadiscourse, grand narrative, and self-legitimation here needs certain clarification. A metadiscourse or a grand narrative is the overarching theoretical construct explanatory of the social/cultural structure/text by which human lives are interpreted in a specific manner, in the light of the grand narrations provided within the system. Moreover, a grand narrative is one that self legitimizes itself, devoid of any readiness to falsification or any testability or scrutiny. For Lyotard, 'this is not to suggest that there are no longer any credible narratives at all. By meta-narratives or grand narratives, I mean precisely narrations with a legitimating function.' (Jean Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Explained* p. 19.) Rejecting the defining narrative structures of modernity, Lyotard announces the *post-modern* age 'as incredulity towards meta-narratives.' (*The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, (Manchester: University Press, 1989), pXXIV) The purpose of waging a war against any metadiscourse is to pave way for the voice of those narrations, silenced by the totality or truth claims of the meta-narrative. It is an attempt to refine ourselves to the subjectivized conditions (enslaved) within the totalized construct. 'Postmodern knowledge is not simply a tool of the authorities; it refines our sensitivity to differences and reinforces our ability to tolerate the incommensurable. Its principle is not the expert's homology, but the inventor's paralogy.' (Jean Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern*

Explained, p. xxv). The issue then here is to identify those grand narratives or metadiscourses within Christianity that have been promulgated that devolve the voices of the differences of cultural texts. Directionally I might suggest that, the pronounced spiritualism of the Church and amazing material wealth of the Church themselves are such totalities which turn might veil the church to listen to voice of the differences actively and responsibility and politically in differentia of the cultural contexts of the Christian people over the globe.

The narrative that as Christians we are people of God though sounds great, has perpetuated disability to take responsibility of the problem of casteism in Christianity in India. In other words, the type of metadiscourses available in the official church benumbs the Christian church to act locally and politically and often the church personals, I mean those who are power-invested by ecclesiastical rationality, tend to take security in the moralistic meta-narratives. For instance the meta-pronouncement of the Church – God loves mankind - in specific sense denounces/discriminates the church mind to love the disadvantaged in discriminate manner. The universal love veils the love in particular with specific risible ways. In sofar such metanarratives remain not intervened/questioned or interpreted in the light of the specificities of differentia of cultures, the church in India will remain minority less political of its capacity and vulnerable to political majoritarianism. The truth of all metanarratives cautions the postmodernists as an exaggerated error. In short, I would appeal that the Indian Christian Church has to break itself from its own self imposed/self-legitimated clutches and iron cages of hierarchical bureaucratic western rationality. This can be done only by developing sensitivity to the voice of the voiceless those who denied of representations within the structural hierarchy of the church.

Meaningfulness as matter of pluralistic relativism and relationality

The writings of Ferdinand de Saussure, whose writings ignited the post structuralists and postmodernists and Derrida's writings provide certain insights to the question of meaningfulness that the Christian church might embark upon for interventions. For Saussure, the question of meaningfulness is a matter of arbitrariness, where as for the Christian church the question of meaningfulness is matter of theological centrality. For Saussure both 'arbitrariness and relationality in the network of linguistic structure, and as against any objective or central text, is the matter of meaningfulness. He writes, 'In a language, there are only differences, without fixed terms' (Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics* (trans. Wade

Baskin), London, Fontana/Collins, 1981, p.120). Jacques Derrida indicates such intrinsic nature of difference with his own concept of *différance* indicating not only differentiation, but also the deferment of the moment of closure that is definition, and hence the perpetual play of difference. 'Différance is the nonfull, nonsimple, structured and differentiating origin of differences'. The writings of Derrida expose the view that postmodernists do in fact, reject any absolute truth claims both that of subjectivity as well objectivity. Emphasis of differentia, for Derrida implied a serious sense of the differentia of the Subject Self in the plurality of differentia of cultures. Difference, for Derrida, 'is at the origin of all ethics as of all would-be centers. It is the spatialization and temporalisation which precede all centers, all concepts and all reality, making these things possible' (both by difference and deference). (Jon Simons (ed.), *contemporary Critical Theorists – From Lacan to Said*, (Edinburgh University Press, 2004), p. 88.

The issue then here is would the Christian relook its philosophical constructions of what makes meaningfulness. Would the church be ready to allow itself to be challenged by the postmodern consideration of the question of meaningfulness? Can the Christian Church be ready to respond to the strong sense of non-centeredness, a rejection of any centered author as the meaning-giver? Derrida holds that the perceiving or meaning-giving essential self (The Perceiver or the Supreme perceiver, 'The Gaze' (Foucault) is also not devoid of deconstruction-for-difference. The Subject itself is called into question here. Derrida, the difference is not only of the people or objectivity but also of the Self (For the Christian theological linguistic description about God, Church, lay-people etc) that differentiates. Will the Christian Scholars treat postmodernist cautions as a risk or a challenge? The implication of the writings of Derrida, that the Subject, too, cannot be assumed to be a unitary whole without difference, but rather, must in turn, itself be deconstructed. (Jacques Derrida, *A Derrida Reader: Between the Blinds*, (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester, 1991, p64 - 65). The deconstruction of objectivity runs parallel to the deconstruction of subjectivity (*Of Grammatology*, Maryland: John Hopkins UP, 1997, p16) As objective truth is a narrative so also the subjectivity that assumes the authorship of objectivity is also a social construction, a myth then to be dispensed with. The Spirit of the Western Christian as the provider of meaning for the rest of the world has to be suspended if only the postmodernist's sensitivity on the question of meaningfulness is rendered explicit to the conceptual centralities of Christianity. Would the Christian allow himself to the postmodern critique of the notion of 'centered-Self' shared by web of power-relational selves epitomized in universalism and grand

generalizations. I think this is an area of a tough dialogue from both ends of Postmodernism and Christianity.

The hostility of the postmodernists against any absolutism, centrality of the Self, and their deconstructing of hierarchical power relations etc., have positive ethical content. Most of these insights are simultaneously tied with their heightened sensitivity towards differentia, of the people namely the subjected and the subjugated people. This is the rich area of mutual interface between the spirit of the Gospels texts (devoid of the Roman theological texts) and postmodernism. Their resistance to forms of totalitarianism, or territorial geo-politics of the powerful nations, voices against different forms of dominations would invite the Christian church to revisit itself, its ideological and structural patterns power relations and at the same time join hands with the postmodern cravings towards the restoration of those lives of the people who are systematically denied of their live-forms.

Stanley Grenz who teaches theology and ethics at Carey Theological College and Regent College in Vancouver makes this observation: "Postmodern people tend to be far more open to the supernatural and to spirituality than their modernist predecessors. Thus Christians need no longer begin their evangelistic efforts by proving such things as the existence of God. In fact, being less in tune with linear thinking, rational argumentation and final answers, postmoderns often walk away from classic Christian apologetic presentations, which assume that a logically articulated argument will carry the day. Such a presentation is likely to be met with the typical Gen-X response: "Whatever." Moreover, the spirituality endemic to the postmodern ethos is pragmatic and relational. Postmoderns tend to be less infatuated than moderns with the myth of individualism. Being the products of broken homes and living under the threat of impending ecological disaster, they often harbour a deep sense of alienation, not only from others but also from creation. They are keenly aware that no one is an island. The postmodern longing for relationships helps us understand anew the biblical focus on community. We must take seriously the biblical truth that spirituality involves being in relationship to God, to others and to creation—not as isolated elements of a spiritual checklist but as inseparable and interrelated dimensions of a single whole. The rediscovery of community ought to lead us to recapture as well the importance of the Church of Jesus Christ as a community of faith. The postmodern context reminds us that spirituality is not something that each of us develops in isolation. Instead, the Gospel of Jesus Christ entails a call to become participants in community. God does indeed love each of us and has wonderful plans for our lives. But God's wonderful plans involve life-in-relationship. Only in

relationship with others can we discover and reflect the character of the God who is the eternal community of creator (Father), redeemer (Son) and sustainer (Holy Spirit). Our participation in the faith community in turn ought to draw others to Christ as the Gospel comes into view through the fellowship we share. Having traded the correspondence theory of truth for pragmatism, postmoderns long to see people whose commitment fosters wholesome, authentic and healing relationships. This is poignantly evident in the theme song of the popular Gen-X TV program *Friends*: "I'll Be There for You." Arguably, the clearest apologetic we have in the postmodern society is the presence of a compassionate, caring fellowship of believers. So what does all this mean for the Church and for us as believers? In the postmodern world, many of the older marks of spirituality, especially adherence to creeds, doctrinal statements and denominational distinctives, are diminishing rapidly. Yet postmoderns remain keenly interested in spirituality itself. Above all, they gravitate to communities in which faith fosters a sense of belonging and visible wholeness in relationships. In a world longing for true spirituality, the Gospel of Jesus Christ comes as good news. But to be good news the Gospel must be lived. By the power of the Holy Spirit we must become people who embody Jesus' declaration, "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (*John 13:35*).

The Postcolonial and Premodern Christianity in India

Indian Christianity is not exclusive of the caste cultural texts. While Christian ideological and structural roots are western-roman, its practical life-world on the contrary is grounded on the hierarchical structures of Casteism. This means that any Indian Christian has a double-layered identity. On the one hand he is a Christian and on the other hand he is a caste person. This double layer identity though paradoxical but does affect his or her consciousness and in fact s/he is comfortable riding on the two horses. This is possible because, while the structure of the church is value hierarchical, so the structure of Casteism is value-hierarchical. The power or authority attribution of the Christians in India over the years goes in hand with the distribution of power/authority as per the hierarchical order of Casteism. The powerless both with the church and caste hierarchy and the powerful in it,

remains the same set of clan or people, and this in turn devoid Indian Christianity to be uncritical and deeply conscious of power hierarchy. To illustrate, Indian Christians by their caste identity can be classified into three major divisions: those who hail from high caste community, those who come from the upper middle caste communities and those from the lowest caste communities. The personals who have occupied positions in the Indian Church hierarchy 'happen' to be both high caste and upper middle class/caste Christians. And those who are relegated in down gradation, - the common- most of them 'happen' to be the lower middle class or lowest caste, namely the Dalit people. Accordingly church authority is unequivocally distributed in the order of Caste structure. Moreover, the church in general is not only simply male dominated, but also male-caste-priests dominated, and this means that the Indian church is on the side of privileged sections by its power structure.

Endnotes

1. By a 'postmodernism', I mean that the perception of a reality existing independently of thought and language is illusory, that what is normally perceived as real or truth is in fact a linguistic construct of the phenomena of subjective experience that is continually adjusted in response to a fluid social consensus.
2. Thomas Khunn speaks of the mode of falsification as against the logical positivist hard verificationism to the question of the progress of science. He claims that science progresses not solely by verifying its statements, rather by treating its claims falsifiable by agreeing to the possible anomalies that needs further scrutiny.
3. Grenz, S. J., *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 8.
4. Rorty, Richard, "Introduction," *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 13.
5. Rorty, Richard, "Solidarity or Objectivity," *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth*, p. 21.
6. Rorty, Richard, "Solidarity or Objectivity," *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth*, p. 21.
7. Rorty, "Solidarity or Objectivity," p. 29.
8. Rorty, "Solidarity or Objectivity," p. 29.