

Introduction

The articles in this year's issue of *ARC* were selected with an eye to emphasizing the interreligious nature of the journal, and with the aim of encouraging dialogue, both among academics and between academics and the community at large. Since it is this spirit of dialogue with the public that is the basis for the Birks Lectures, a series of public lectures held in the Faculty of Religious Studies in the Fall of each year, *ARC* is pleased in this issue to feature the 1994 Birks lectures, given by Dr. David Lyon. In "Jesus in Disneyland: The Church Meets the Postmodern Challenge," Lyon discusses and critiques various characteristics of postmodern society, and reflects on how Christian churches might best come to terms with postmodernity. In an effort to promote academic dialogue, responses to Lyon's views were solicited, and Gregory Baum and Eric Beresford both kindly agreed to provide their reflections. In these responses, Gregory Baum situates Lyon's thought within the history of the sociology of religion, while Eric Beresford provides a philosophical analysis of Lyon's views.

Though no overriding theme was chosen for the present volume, a recurrent focus of several of the articles selected is that of postmodernity and pluralism, and the issues these raise for religion. In addition to Lyon's article, which deals with this theme, in "Via Postmoderna: Toward Modal Theology," Joseph McLelland offers what he calls a "programmatic paper for discussion" on the way theology might be able to address and incorporate the postmodern critiques of reason and metaphysics through a shift to "modal" thinking. In the work which follows, Tinu Ruparell confronts the incommensurability problem encountered in interreligious dialogue, and suggests that a new model for "interreligious theologizing," is needed. He argues that a framework which includes Ricoeur's understanding of the interactionist structure of metaphor might serve to bypass this problem of incommensurability.

The pluralism to which these first essays refer is well-illustrated by the remaining selections, as they include studies of a variety of religious traditions and represent a variety of methodological approaches. In "Did Buddhism Anticipate Pragmatism?" Richard Hayes compares concepts developed by two Indian Buddhist epistemologists with the views of

Charles Sanders Peirce. He concludes that while there may be some superficial similarities between these two systems of thought, key differences between them preclude one from suggesting that these Buddhist thinkers “anticipated Pragmatism” in any significant way. In “Advaita and Imagery,” Noel Salmond uses a textual and art-historical approach to challenge convincingly the view that the Advaita Vedānta might be understood in any way as denigrating or downplaying image worship. Arti Dhand’s article offers a thorough and fascinating literary analysis of the feminine ideal of chastity as presented in the South Indian Tamil epic, the *Cilappatikāram*. Through analyzing the grammatical structure of four biblical narratives, Erin Runions provides an interesting and creative study of subjectivity and objectivity in “Of Bodies and Subjects.”

Finally, continuing the spirit of dialogue which inaugurates this issue, in “The New Story of Creation” Loren Wilkinson responds to Thomas Berry’s call for a new understanding of cosmology as presented in the 1994 issue of *ARC*. Wilkinson suggests that Berry’s “new story” will remain incomplete and inadequate from a Christian point of view if it is not situated within the “old story” of creation provided by Christian scriptures, and if it does not take into account the trinitarian understanding of God as both immanent and transcendent.

The “Book Reviews” section, edited by Jim Kanaris, presents a wide range of new works, reflecting both the diversity of our discipline and of the Faculty of Religious Studies at McGill. With the section “Dissertation Abstracts,” Stephen Gaudet continues an initiative of *ARC* 94 to indicate the range and types of research conducted by emerging religious studies scholars in Quebec.

While it would be impossible to acknowledge by name all those whose efforts went into the production of this volume, on behalf of the *ARC* committee I would like to extend warm thanks to Marina Costain, Helen Shepherdson, and Richard Hayes for their patient and cheerful assistance. As well, as the editor, I would like to express my gratitude to all the members of the editorial committee for their enthusiastic participation in creating this year’s issue.

Barbra Clayton

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