

## **Post-Vat. II Catholic Theological Sparks in India**

### **- A Bird's Eye View -**

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The Second Vatican Council, the most important event that took place in the life of the Catholic Church during the twentieth century, was a watershed in the journey of Indian Catholic theology. The Council inspired many Catholic theologians to confidently explore the theological world, and opened up the Catholic theological creative potential in a manner not seen for centuries earlier. Theologies began to emerge in relation to the modern world, social-cultural-economic and political realities, religious plurality, secular ideologies and movements. Growing in solidarity with Catholic theologians in other parts of the world, many Indian theologians undertook to do 'contextual theologies' which were being propounded all over the Catholic, if not the Christian world, during the second part of the twentieth century. Hermeneutical explorations were their forte, so to say. Most of them sought not just to apply the Christian Faith to the Indian context, but to interpret it in the light of Indian social, cultural, religious and economic realities, and of the religious-philosophical systems. The present paper is an attempt to get a 'bird's eye view' of these creative initiatives by Indian Catholic theologians.

## 1. Continuing with the Catholic *Ashram* Tradition

Jules Monchanin (Parama Arubi Anandam) and Dom Le Saux (Abhishiktananda) – two Benedictine monks had initiated the Catholic *Ashram* tradition by founding the *Saccidananda Ashram* in Thanneerpalli along the banks of Kaveri river near Tiruchirapalli in the year 1938. Their theologies, based on a deeper reading of Indian philosophy of *Advaita Vedanta*, endeavoured to see where and how the revelation in Christ could find its meeting point with the ‘Sanskritic Hinduism’ and lead to the latter’s fulfilment in Christ. In so doing the Benedictine monks drew inspiration from the Thomistic philosophical theology on the Holy Trinity, in terms of form and substance or essence and existence, and related it with the Sanskritic Hindu doctrine of *Sat-Cit-Ananda*, in terms both of the *Nirguna Brahman* (attribute-less ultimate reality) and the *Saguna Brahman* (personal God with attributes). Raimon Panikkar, a philosophical-theologian, with his profound knowledge of Indian Sanskritic philosophy and Christian philosophical theology, put forth reflections around the theme of the hidden Christ, who was present as the unknown Christ in Hinduism, nay, in all ‘cosmic religions’. Christian mission of dialogue, he said, was to contribute to the unveiling of this hidden Christ.

During the second part of the twentieth century, Bede Griffiths (1906 – 1993), known as Swami Dayananda, originally an Anglican who had embraced Catholicism at the age of 25 and had become a Benedictine monk, founded Kurisimala Ashram in Kerala, but later shifted to the Trinity Ashram in Thanneerpalli to spend his life as a contemplative *Sannyasin*, and continued with the *Ashram* model of theologising. His important theological concern was, like his predecessors, to relate the Christian revelation of Trinity to the *Advaitic* vision of unity of reality. During his initial years, when he held to the view that Christianity ‘fulfilled’ other religions, he thought of cosmos, conscience, and Christ as three levels of Divine revelation. The cosmic

revelation, according to him, was what the Bible witnessed to in the persons of Adam (representative of the universal humanity), Noah a 'pagan' representative and Melchizedek a 'pagan' priest; then came the revelation at the heart and conscience of the human person, as found in several religious traditions; and finally, the revelation in Christ fulfils all other revelations. Griffiths, however, later changed over to a view of 'complementarity' between revelations found in different religions, even while treating the Christian revelation as 'unique'. It was unique in that it presented the ultimate reality to be 'love', which was a radical relationship. While the *Advaitic* vision, for example, centred round monistic view of reality, it was Christian revelation which engaged the radical unity of God, but in Trinity, i.e., in relationality.

We see this *Ashram* tradition being continued by Indian born D. Amalorpavadoss, called as Amalorananda, who had founded the Anjali Ashram at the outskirts of Mysore, Karnataka. He was theologizing in the post-Vatican II context and he approached other religions with relatively more openness. He was particularly involved in inculturation in liturgy, catechesis and evangelization. He understood evangelization as a response to the "total situation of the country which includes its past cultural and religious heritage as well as its future hopes to be realized through its present historical struggles."<sup>1</sup> It implies that the Church dialogues with cultures, religions and socio-political realities of this country to do effective evangelization. Amalorpavadoss held that this evangelization began with the "experience of God-realization and the contemplation of the Gospel within the heart of the individual and within the Christian community..."<sup>2</sup>; it then extended to other religious and cultural communities through dialogue. He saw Christ working in other religions and cultures. He saw the Christian tradition together with Indian traditions as one whole, which mediated God's revelation and grace. In his words:

Each Indian Christian experiences within himself (sic) two streams flowing and merging into one: the stream of Judaeo-Christian experience communicated through the biblical Word and continued through twenty centuries of Christian experiences and then the stream of 4000 years of Indian religious life articulated by Indian scriptures. These two streams do not flow in parallel lines as two separate streams but both merge at the depth of our being as a single river and become an ocean of single experience. Christians benefit from the Indian Scriptures for a deeper understanding of the biblical World and the Hindus benefit by the biblical Word to re-interpret their Scriptures and to discover the unknown riches and facets.<sup>3</sup>

Another Indian theologian of the time who reflected theologically on dialogue of Christianity with Indian philosophical system was John Britto Chethimattam, a professor who taught philosophy, theology and comparative religion at Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram, Bangalore. During his initial years, he attempted to explore Indian categories and insights which could best express the Christian faith; but later, he adopted a more experiential and open-ended approach, in which he considered theology to be an interior experience of the Spirit that moved on to the exterior manifestation. He observed: “[T]he internal experience of the Spirit acting in us as the *Aham* (our real ‘I’), and the encounter with the world as the *Tvam* (Thou, the true Word) become unified in the supreme reality of the Father, the real *Tat*.”<sup>4</sup>

Others who contributed to the Ashram tradition in notable ways were Sara Grant (1922 – 2000) and Vandana Mataji (1924 - ). They had attempted, through their contemplative life and spirituality, to relate the Christian faith with the mysticism of *Advaita*. Unity of life, or a non-dualistic mysticism, mediated through *Advaita* appealed to them greatly. It is in place to point out that Vandana Mataji took care to relate the *Ashram* living with the concern for social justice too.<sup>5</sup> During the recent years, Sebastian Painadath (1942 - ), who founded the *Sameeksha* – Centre for Indian Spirituality, Kalady, has endeavoured to relate Christian spirituality to those of other religions so as

to promote the mystical sensitivity to life and thought. Treating all spiritual traditions as co-pilgrims towards the Divine, Sebastian calls for an inter-religious hermeneutics, wherein 'scripture' of one religion would interpret that of the other, challenging as well as complementing one another. Along similar lines, Jacob Theckanath (1942 - ) reflects that an Asian reading of Bible "should follow a contemplative intuitive style and give greater emphasis to the mystery dimension of the Word, letting it echo within oneself and allowing oneself to be claimed by the Lord."<sup>6</sup> Speaking of the need to study other religious scriptures, Subhash Anand (1943 - ), an Indian philosopher-theologian, holds the view that "Jesus is God's very special gift, a gift so profound that to understand Jesus we need the wisdom of all nations and all times."<sup>7</sup> Thus, cross-fertilisation of scriptures, through inter-religious dialogue, emerged as a salient theme among the Catholic theologians during the phase of Ashram tradition.

While this *Ashram* model of theologising sought to inculturate Christianity through the Sanskritic culture and religion, an effort to integrate the indigenous folk and tribal cultures in Christian theology became more visible during the last quarter of the twentieth century. For example, the Ishvani Kendra – Institute of Missiology and Communications, Pune, established in 1976, under the initiative of Engelbert Zeitler, made a significant effort to collect, document and study the indigenous cultures by way of doing mission theology. Jacob Kavunkal (1943 - ), Director of this Institute (1993 – 1996), gave fresh understanding of mission as being 'salt' of the earth, and not as a triumphant faith with its paternalistic attitude towards other religions. Francis Barboza (1958 - ) integrated the role of Bharata Natyam to communicate Christian faith, by innovating *deva-hastas* (hand gestures) for Christian symbols and themes. Sylvanus Sngi Lyngdoh, a tribal theologian, popularly known as 'Sngi', encouraged the Khasi people to "return to their culture and tradition in order to understand Christ and the Good

News of salvation more deeply.”<sup>8</sup> He was part of the initiative of Sebastine Karotempral who established the Don Bosco Centre for Indigenous Cultures (DBCIC), which, with a journal on Missiology and a museum for indigenous cultures, is involved in doing mission theology drawing insights from the indigenous cultures of the people of North-East India. Today there are several other theological initiatives from all over India to incorporate the folk and tribal cultures in Christian theology of mission.

## 2. Indian Liberation Theology

### Sebastian Kappen

A socio-cultural and political orientation in Indian Catholic theology was pursued by Sebastian Kappen (1924 - 1993) who proposed an Indian liberation theology, drawing inspiration from the Latin American theology. *Jesus and Freedom*, one of his early works (1977) in English and his theological tracts known as *Anawim*, along with his other publications like *Negations* and *Jesus and Cultural Revolution – An Asian Perspective* (1983), presented the vision of Jesus for a new society as embodied in his proclamation of the Reign of God, and called for a practice of liberation theology. Methodologically, he integrated socio-cultural analysis with theology with special reference to Christology. His publications like *Liberation Theology and Marxism* (1986), *Marxian Atheism* (1983), *The Future of Socialism and Socialism of the Future* (1992) were aimed at helping to bring about a healthy dialogue between Marxism and Liberation theology.

Kappen proposed a ‘foundational theology’, a theology which ‘crosses across the barriers of religions and ideologies, and critically reflects on the historical self-manifestation of the Divine as gift-call and on the human response to it.’<sup>9</sup> This theology brings together the experiences of the divine as found in various traditions, and sees how human beings across the traditions can respond to the Divine in a transformative way. “His conviction was the

the resources belonging to all religions, cultures, ideologies, sciences and technology are to be channelled and harnessed for the social transformation and humanization of our world.”<sup>10</sup> He prefers to use the word Divine, rather than ‘God’, first of all, to stay clear of the layers of meaning this word had obtained over the centuries, secondly, to be open towards genuine humanist ideologies which too are on a search for the ‘ultimate’ reality. By ‘gift-call’ he means the encounter of the Divine as a gift as found in genuine experiences of truth, love, and fellowship, and as a challenge mediated through the historical situation in which we live.<sup>11</sup> He calls these twin dimensions of the encounter as *theandric praxis*, and finds it relevant especially for the Indian context. He speaks of a hermeneutical circle between the Gospel and the theandric praxis (gift-call), in the sense that, Gospel can inspire a theandric praxis, and in turn be understood meaningfully through a theandric praxis.

Christianity is unique, according to him, not in the sense of being superior to other religions, but by being a corrective to the magical religiosity found in some forms of religiosity. As a prophetic religion, with its critical sense characterised by social justice, Christianity can find partners among the Indian religions of dissent like Buddhism and Bhakti traditions. Kappen classifies Indian religiosity as cosmic, Gnostic and prophetic. While the pre-upanishadic form of religiosity is cosmic in the sense that it is something primordial and ubiquitous, upanishadic religion is Gnostic in the sense that it deals with knowledge as its tool of liberation, and the Bhakti religion is prophetic in the sense that it integrates an ethical vision in its religiosity. Along with the latter prophetic religions of India, Christianity can create a counter-culture for integral liberation. Jesus’ movement, for Kappen, was a counter-cultural movement. In his book, *Jesus and Cultural Revolution*, Kappen “considers the contribution of the Jesus tradition to the revolution of consciousness required for the restructuring of Indian society through a new, humane and humanizing culture.”<sup>12</sup>

### 3. Theology as Transformative Art

#### Samuel Rayan

Samuel Rayan (1920 - 2019) combines active commitment, as a chaplain to the Kerala region of the All India Catholic University Federation (AICUF) from 1960 to 1972 and as a member of the Faith and Order Commission of the WCC from 1968 to 1983, with theological reflection, put forth in teaching systematic theology and missiology at various theological institutions run by Jesuits in India. He brings in an element of poetic imagination to his theology, as he was a good poet himself.

As the volume on *Asian Christian Theologies* put it, "For Rayan theology ... is the light that sparks when faith and life interact, disclosing new levels of faith's historical significance and new forms of transformative intervention to better the human condition."<sup>13</sup> Rayan brought forth a theology of co-relation, which deeply interfaced the experience of faith with a transformative intervention in bettering the human condition. Theology for him was, simultaneously, an articulation by experts of the theology implicit in the life, work, yearnings and relationships of people, and an inspiration for transformative action. To be an effective inspiration, theology, he thought, should integrate the knowledge of social structures, and can express itself better in art, symbols, and parables.

Rayan's theology, to use his own imagery, produced a theological spark, lighted with Christological, pneumatological, ecclesiological and contextual themes, along with methodological insights. According to Kurien Kunnumpuram,<sup>14</sup> a Professor of theology who edited his works, Rayan worked with two main concerns: "one, interpretation of the Christian Faith in the multi-religious context of India, and, two, to develop a theology for the creation of a just and more humane society in our land."<sup>15</sup>

Jesus, for Rayan, is both a history and a mystery. Jesus' humanity needs to be genuinely acknowledged. "An important task of theology" he

would say, "is to convince the faithful that God's Son is truly a man among men and not God merely appearing as a man."<sup>16</sup> Acknowledging the humanity of Jesus is, for Rayan, to convince us of the possibility of the 'passibility of God', and begin our faith not with formulaic statement about his divine sonship, but with "human life, its events, experiences and vicissitudes... (and) attend to their significance, and to the further, deeper realities they reveal."<sup>17</sup>

For Rayan, Jesus, as a human person, had his limitations. Only when we know his limitations, do we share with his humanity meaningfully. There were things Jesus did not know. Jesus had a "limited human mind, culturally conditioned and relativised... Jesus had no knowledge or foreknowledge of everything... he was not acting out a drama all written in full."<sup>18</sup> But, "It is the only way for the divine to become manifest in history. If God comes to us, it must always be in a limited, time-conditioned, human fashion."<sup>19</sup> Encountering the humanity of Jesus leads us to an experience of Christ, the divine son. In Christ, as Rayan puts it, "we do not have to 'reconcile' the divine and the human. In him the divine and the human make one single mystery of faith. Jesus the man is the expression of God."<sup>20</sup> Jesus was a historical person, however, a person who leads us beyond history. He was "crucified, died, and was buried", was "no longer merely history's victim, ... but its leader and fashioner as well. He is with humankind, guiding and moulding our history, leading it, in ways we cannot comprehend, into the Mystery of the Father."<sup>21</sup> His presence in history was one of solidarity with the struggles of the people for freedom, dignity, community and peace. Their "struggles are inspired and sustained by him in mysterious ways. By him are they invisibly led, encouraged, blessed and given meaning and hope."<sup>22</sup>

For Rayan, to be spiritual is "to be open and responsive to reality,"<sup>23</sup> and to be "carried by the Spirit and be profoundly transformed by her."<sup>24</sup> "Vivified and led by the Spirit, we become God's children and heirs of God

and coheirs with Christ (Rom. 8: 9-17).”<sup>25</sup> “The Holy Spirit is the Centre and Horizon of our life and openness and response to Her in terms of justice, mercy and solidarity constitute spirituality.”<sup>26</sup> Rayan explores the aspect of mission inherent in this spirituality. For him, not just the text of Mt. 28: 19 which gives the mission command, but several other episodes of the Bible dwell upon mission. The parable of Good Samaritan, for example, comes up with the command of ‘Go and do likewise’, which is nothing short of a mission command. So, mission command is present in many acts and utterances of Jesus. It is ultimately God’s mission. “God sends the Son and the Spirit, and through the Son in the Spirit God sends forth creation. The overall mission of the created universe is to be a translation, in the language of matter and motion and energy and beauty, of the eternal word of God.”<sup>27</sup> God’s mission, according to Rayan, reflects in every religious tradition, and cannot be contained in one particular religious tradition alone. “The Spirit’s activity overflows the bounds of the Christian community. The Spirit fills the whole earth and all history. *She* is new-creatively present in the lives of the followers of other faiths as well as in secular movements and struggles for justice, freedom and unity, and for the creation of the beautiful, whether physical or social. Not only the Church but humankind is endowed with a variety of Spirit-gifts (1Cor 12: 4-11).

Rayan’s reflections upon eco-theology are inspiring: ‘Earth is the Lord’s, for it is the Lord’s self-manifestation’. Earth “is something God is saying and doing. An ongoing revelation: an unfolding Word of God in which something of God’s thought and heart are disclosed, and much of God’s attitude to us is conveyed.”<sup>28</sup> Even while the earth is the Lord’s, it is also ours, because God has given it to us. “It is meant to serve the needs and the creative possibilities of all God’s children. It is a song of glory and love God gives for all of us to learn to sing after God. It is our common home...”<sup>29</sup> The belongingness of the earth to God comes to “complete truth in Jesus

Christ. In him the Earth does indeed become the Face of God and the place of saving encounter. In Jesus' resurrection, the Earth, which has seen and borne in its bosom so much death and dying, finally transcends death and attains abounding and endless life. In Jesus the Earth has become supremely honoured, seated as it is at the right hand of God."<sup>30</sup> We, humans, have polluted the earth, not only in its geographical and physical aspects but in bio-spiritual one as well. "It is the total quality of life and relationships, the whole human environment necessary for joyful and creative existence that has deteriorated and decayed."<sup>31</sup> The ideology of modern development, along with its instrumentalist science, has played no less a role in deteriorating the nature. The ecological crisis can be best met with a theology of nature. The bible, contrary to the accusation that it has promoted the human project of 'dominion' over the nature, sees nature as God's self-revealing and self-witnessing, temple of God, and sacrament of the Divine. Therefore, a "new perspective is to (be) developed which can see nature as a mystery, as an integrated whole, as an organic community and as endowed with rights."<sup>32</sup>

Theology, for Rayan, is "the meeting point of the Mystery of Man and God and History",<sup>33</sup> and its vocation is "to be Womb for Jesus to continue effectively his entry and birth into our history."<sup>34</sup> This incarnational understanding of theology, according to Rayan, is more heart-centred than head-centred, because "the Word became flesh in a Woman's Womb and not words in someone's head."<sup>35</sup> Rayan makes out a case for weaning theology away from being a cerebral word-centred exercise, with its presumed legitimacy from a reason-based explanatory process, to an artistic expression through stories, images, myths, songs, symbols, etc., which embody our response to God like that of a child and the poor, who "grasp reality and respond to reality's call not with their brain but with their Whole Being, with the Centre and Depth of their Being, with their Heart, their Womb"<sup>36</sup> so as to become human before God. It "means that the language of theology has

to be a total language in which the highest suggestive and connotative possibilities of speech will be allowed ample scope.”<sup>37</sup> This can happen only when we take theology to be an art, rather than a logically argumentative process. Speaking further on the language of theology, Rayan has this fine statement to make:

What kind of language and bodily reality shall we seek for our theology? A language that corresponds to our Life and our Faith. Our Faith circles round the rich Mystery and ineffable Wonder of God. It circles within our person and our history, of which the Depth and Centre is the Divine Inscrutability. It moves within the tortuous and obscure process of our becoming human. The Mystery of our Faith and the Mystery of human existence warn us against any facile adoption of formal rational logical language for theology.<sup>38</sup>

This non-rational dimension of theology makes it an art – an art which can be sacramental, and thereby transformative. “Art, then, is sacramental, and that precisely is what theology is meant to be and hopes to become.”<sup>39</sup> “Theology can be neither art nor theology if it is not committed likewise, if it is not capable of discerning the real issues and raising the questions that matter for the masses.”<sup>40</sup> This artistic language of theology should “facilitate the dismantling of the class structure of society since the primordial image with which theology works are those of an egalitarian Divine Community (God as Trinity) and of Humankind as God’s Family on earth (the Our Father) in which there can be no division into upper and lower classes, into privileged and disprivileged groups, into underdogs and topdogs.”<sup>41</sup> It makes a theologian a faith-based transformative artist.

#### **4. Indian Biblical Theology**

Indian biblical theology has put forth several foliages, taking the manure of the Indian soil. Many a Catholic Biblical scholar and theologian have endeavoured to bring forth these foliages. Herein I would like to present the

works of George M. Soares-Prabhu as a representative of Catholic Biblical theologians of India.

### **George M. Soares-Prabhu**

George M. Soares-Prabhu's (1929–1995) writings have been collected under four volumes with the titles: 1. *Biblical Themes for a Contextual Theology*, 2. *A Biblical Theology for India*, 3. *Biblical Spirituality of Liberative Action*, 4. *Theology of Liberation: An Indian Biblical Perspective*. The titles of the volumes themselves point to the major themes he dealt with in his attempt to do Indian biblical theology. Situating liberation theology in the Indian reality and doing contextual theology had been the central concerns of Soares-Prabhu. In so doing, he dealt with such important theological themes as mission, inculturation, Indian Church, understanding Jesus Christ in the Indian context, biblical ethics, prophetic spirituality and the like. His insights on 'Indian interpretation' of the Bible are very meaningful.

Soares-Prabhu did his biblical studies during a period when Biblical interpretation had passed over from the modernist historical critical method through a text-centred linguistic structural method to a reader-response method, wherein the text opens itself up to the reader even while the reader opens herself / himself up to the text. Though acknowledging the value of the historical critical method to understand the 'original, historical / authorial' meaning of the Biblical texts, Soares-Prabhu found it "not really adequate for interpreting a text which is not scientific but religious, which deals not with quantitative but with qualitative realities."<sup>42</sup> This inadequacy of the method made it 'ineffective, irrelevant, and ideologically loaded'.<sup>43</sup> "The ineffectiveness of the historical critical method is shown by its chronic inability to arrive at conclusive results."<sup>44</sup> The irrelevance of the method is shown in its objectivism, which "deliberately ... pursue(s) objective knowledge (not wisdom) for knowledge's sake ... rather than responding to concrete personal

and societal needs."<sup>45</sup> And, the supposed objective scientific neutrality of the method is not free from its ideological underpinnings, especially its 'class prejudices' as has been exposed by the Latin American Liberation theology.

He found the hermeneutical method more relevant. From within this method, he explored the pole of the reader from the perspective of the Indian reader, so as to enable a hermeneutical engagement with the prophetic meaning emerging from the historical Jesus, mediated through the authors of the biblical books, and from the linguistic structure of the very biblical text itself. The 'Indian mind', according to him, has certain unique world-views and are characterised by certain Indian-specific realities. The unique world-views are: i) an inclusive world-view, which goes more with synthesis rather than analysis, or identity rather than contradiction; ii) cosmo-centric world-view according to which a person is part and parcel of the cosmic reality; iii) symbolic world-view which ultimately treats the world as a symbol of the Absolute; and, iv) pragmatic world-view, which reads a text with a transformative concern.<sup>46</sup> And these world-views are, on the other hand, characterised by the realities of poverty, plurality of religions and the oppressive casteism. Against these concrete realities, an Indian exegesis of the Bible, Soares-Prabhu avers, would take place. It would not be, as he suggests, "an exotic plant growing in isolation out of the humid soil of traditional Indian methods of interpretation. Rather it will result from the cross-fertilization of modern methods of biblical exegesis with contributors from Indian exegetical tradition, coming to flower in the stormy climate of the socio-cultural reality of India today."<sup>47</sup> Its indicators are that it should be a religious and a social reading. The religious reading need to employ the methods available in the Indian religious traditions, like for example, the Dhvani reading, and the social reading should read the Bible in the light of the liberating praxis of the socially oppressed people of India.

He attempts to understand the relevance of Jesus Christ amid the religions and ideologies of India today. India suffers poverty and caste discrimination in spite of its vitality of religiosity and of its secular ideologies. How come poverty and untouchability can go with the vitality of religious experience? How come that the secular ideologies are not able to solve these problems? Soares-Prabhu avers that the religions of India are either privatized, as may be the case with the elites of India, or pursuing other-worldly goals, ignoring the social evils; similarly, the secular ideologies cannot bring about social transformation bypassing the religiosity of the people. In this context of apathy of religions to social problems and inability of secular ideologies to bring about social change in India, Soares-Prabhu opines that Jesus Christ as the symbol of unity between the Godly and the human can be very relevant. "The relevance of Jesus lies precisely in his ability to hold together in an intimate and indissoluble unity man's God-experience and his Man-concern. He is in fact the living embodiment of their oneness. Christian theology has from its beginnings expressed the significance of Jesus through the symbol of incarnation... its root meaning surely is that God has somehow become 'man' in Jesus."<sup>48</sup> This unity of the divine and the human, as found in Jesus Christ, will be a relevant religious wisdom to 'unleash the social concerns' locked up in the Indian religious traditions and secular ideologies. This unity is not just contemplative and pious, but translated into activities of agape, acts of love towards one another. This act of love, springing from the faith in the love of God (God who loved us first, rather than we loving God), can ultimately bring about the social change.

Soares-Prabhu's understanding of mission is biblical and contextual. According to him, mission is three-dimensional: cosmic, social, and personal,<sup>49</sup> the cosmic dimension is found in the creation from chaos looking up to the creation of new heaven and new earth; the social dimension found in the liberation from bondage as in slavery (Egyptian) and exile (Babylonian) looking

up to the realisation of the Reign of God, as indicated in a new community of table fellowship by Jesus; and the personal dimension found in salvation from sin to become a child of God, as found in the transformative experience of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Church has to carry out this three-dimensional mission not primarily by 'building up' an institutional Church as by helping the growth of the Reign of God on earth. The great mission command as given in Mt. 28: 16-20, according to Soares-Prabhu, has to be read in relation to Mt. 5: 13-16, to come to the realisation that "Mission ... is not just Christocentric (making disciples of the risen Lord) but theocentric (giving glory to God by building up God's Kingdom); and the way to this mission is not so much individual proclamation as community witness. Unless the Church lives as Church, that is, as the symbol and event of the Kingdom, it cannot engage in authentic mission."<sup>50</sup> The mission is not so much the verbal proclamation as 'infectious witness' by "doing good", as told in Mt. 5: 16 "that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven." "Seeing the good works and giving glory to God" is more congenial to the Indian mind which "sees the divine image" (darshan) rather than 'hears the word of God'" and has been sensitive to "visual manifestations of religious experience in the life of individuals and communities, than to mere words about it."<sup>51</sup> He writes:

*This understanding of mission is, I believe, specially appropriate in India today. Because of its plurireligious horizon, an Indian missiology will tend, like all Indian theology, to be centred on God rather than on the Church or even on Christ. Such a theocentric focus is nothing to be embarrassed about, for it is completely faithful to the Bible. The biblical story begins and ends not with the Church nor even with Jesus Christ but only with God who is all in all (Rom 11:36; 1 Cor. 8:6). It may be the task of an Indian theology to restore this theocentric focus to a Western Christianity, which, because it tends to stop short at Jesus (who is the way not the goal); or, worse, because it*

tends to sacralise the Church (which is a symbol and the servant of the Kingdom, but not the Kingdom itself), may have lost its sense of the overwhelming reality of God.<sup>52</sup>

Soares-Prabhu makes this argument persuasively in yet another essay on mission by pointing out that the mission command of Jesus is for a 'missionary discipleship', for *following* Jesus. "It is realised not merely through verbal proclamation, but equally through liberative action, indeed most of all (as is explicitly affirmed in the third great mission text of Mathew, the 'mission command' of the Sermon on the Mount in Mt. 5: 13-16), through the enduring witness of the Christian mission."<sup>53</sup>

Besides Soares-Prabhu, there are several other catholic biblical theologians who have contributed or are contributing theologically. Lucien Legrand is a well known scholar of scripture, who has given good biblical reflections on themes related to 'the biblical doctrine of virginity', 'mission in the bible in the context of plurality', 'bible and culture', and so on. Mathew Vellanickal ... Joseph Pathrapankal, another biblical theologian, interprets the Bible in the multi-religious context of India. Cruz Hieronimus is yet another biblical scholar who contributes much through regional translations and commentaries. Maria Arul Raja and Antony Baptist interpret the bible from Dalit and feminist perspectives. There are many other Catholic biblical theologians whose work we are not able to bring up here due to want of space.

## 5. Theology as Dialogue of Cultures and Religions

### Michael Amaladoss

A religio-cultural orientation in Indian Christian Theology, focussing upon inter-religious understanding and dialogue, has been pursued by Michael Amaladoss (1936 - ). Theology for him is not just an intellectual assent to formulated truth claims, but a reflection upon faith, which is a response to

God who is our creator. It should be contextual, indigenous, dialogical, personal and critical. He points out that when, in the history of the Church, faith was taken to be the light that illumines the intellect (as implied in 'faith seeking understanding'), theology was seen as a science; when faith was understood to be commitment to action (praxis), theology became a transformative, political and critical reflection-action dialectics; when faith is understood today, "as a total response to God's Word, involving not only transformation of the world and society but also conversion and self-realization of man, theology would become an integrated, multi-dimensional wisdom... The response is the whole of life in a continuing and discerning commitment, realizing the self and building up a new humanity, inserted in the historical process... Theology will then become more than a critical reflection, offering an ideology for involvement; it will also be an inspiring vision. It will lead not only to transforming action, but to celebration."<sup>54</sup> Celebration involves symbols, rituals, culture, music, and so on. All these can become valid forms of theology. Incidentally, supported by his knowledge of classical music, Amaladoss evolved a theology of music. It is, for him, *sadhana*, a path to the absolute reality. "Theology is for life" – said Amaladoss, wanting theology to be an 'applied' theology, to be relevant to actual life. To this end, he wrote theological pieces, named as 'theological musings', and 'theology and life' series which have been published in the Catholic national magazine, *The New Leader*.

His theology of religion plays an important role in his theologizing. Religions are "relative symbolic expressions of the experience of the Absolute",<sup>55</sup> and they cannot be reduced to any common experience or included into one another. Doing so would go not merely against the nature of religion, but against the limitlessly expansiveness of God. Plurality of religions is characteristically essential to the nature of religions, because religion is God self-disclosing or revealing in complete freedom, and human

persons responding too in complete freedom, and therefore, plurality is built into the very nature of religion. "The diversity of experience and the plurality in the commitment to the Absolute have an inscrutable place in the overall plan of God that moves towards the fullness."<sup>56</sup> As he puts it, "Each religion is capable, in its own historic-cultural situation, of giving expression to an absolute relationship. Therefore religions are relative to this absolute relationship and not to one another."<sup>57</sup>

What is necessary, therefore, is fruitful dialogue and cross-fertilization between them. He proposes a community model of relationship between religions. Rejecting the rainbow model suggested by Raimon Panikkar because it seems to treat different colours as part of a whole, i.e., the white light, Amaladoss opines that religions are what individuals are in a community, each unique, but related. As a community of persons, we grow together towards the experience of the fullness of God.

Religions, according to Amaladoss, have a dialectical relationship with culture, in the sense that both challenge one another and renew one another. Culture "has to do with a worldview and a value system that give meaning to life in community and orient individual and social behaviour."<sup>58</sup> This meaning is inculcated in a person or a community through ritualised behaviours. Religion comes into play as something that inculcates an ultimate meaning in the individual or community. In his words, "While culture provides an overall meaning system, religion is that element in culture which deals with ultimate or limit questions like the significance of birth and death and of the problem of evil. It may be said to be the deepest element of culture."<sup>59</sup> Religion as the deeper element, and culture as the general behaviour of meaning making, relate to one another in a prophetic tension, challenging and changing one another. This dynamic sense of culture and religion leads Amaladoss to rethink on the earlier project of 'inculturation'.

He wanted the Church to go beyond the project of inculturation, which, he said, had many questions to answer. For example, when Gospel is inculturated in a particular culture, then the pertinent question is whose culture is it? How about several other cultures which are left out? Can an encounter between Gospel and culture be thought in terms of 'embodiment' of Gospel in a culture? Trying to answer these questions, Amaladoss came to realise that the encounter between Gospel and culture can only be a dialogue, cast in an incarnational paradigm. Incarnational paradigm makes us be involved in the dialogue in a 'self-emptying' manner. It is by this dialogue that the Gospel can transform the culture, and ultimately transform the lives of the people. In his words, "The focus of the gospel-culture encounter is the transformation, not only of culture, but of society as a whole, in the process of its becoming the Kingdom of God."<sup>60</sup> Therefore the encounter is an ongoing reality, and it cannot be thought of in terms of static projects of 'inculturation'. He pointed out also that by the encounter between Gospel and culture, what is resulted is not a creation of a Church but an unfolding of the Reign of God, and a resultant new society. All these, for him, are implied in the dialogue of Gospel and cultures.

Amaladoss grapples with the religious conflicts which are caused by, among others, reasons related to the absolutist claims of different religions during the contemporary times. Religions are conflictual not merely because of their absolutist claims, but also because of the ways in which they get assimilated to identity formation and identity-competition. It is sad that religions get associated with war too. "Social and Political conflicts are prevalent in many parts of the world today. Some of these use religion as a prop so that they are experienced also as religious conflicts. One of many methods of conflict resolution in such situations is dialogue between religious groups."<sup>61</sup> Dialogue is the only meaningful way in our context of religious pluralism. Dialogue can take place at different levels. It can take place at a level

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where representatives of religions meet together. It can take place when followers of different religions meet together with the aim of getting to understand the beliefs of each other. It can also take place when people meet as believers. All the three, according to Michael, are important for effective dialogue of religions.

## 6. Theology as Inter-Disciplinary Dialogue for Liberation

### Felix Wilfred

Felix Wilfred, a renowned international theologian, takes the Asian reality as the context of his reflection. His contribution to the theological field continues to expand. Titles like *Emergent Church in a New India*, *Theological Education in India*, *Sunset in the East*, *Beyond Settled Foundations*, *From the Dusty Soil, Leave the Temple*, *On the Banks of Ganges*, *The Sling of Utopia*, *Asian Dreams and Christian Hope*, *Margins: Site of Asian Theologies*, *Dalit Empowerment*, *Asian Public Theology*, *Theology to Go Public*, *Christians for a Better India*, an edited volume of *The Oxford Handbook of Christianity in Asia*, and *Theology for an Inclusive World*, along with the number of theological journals he has edited constitute his rich scholarly oeuvre. Right from the early phase of his theological reflections, Wilfred worked with an understanding of theology 'as a way of opening humanity to the mystery of the Divine, implying a transformation of the individual and the society from their oppressive factors'. He was critical of the rationalistic positivist language of the Enlightenment to represent reality comprehensively. He wrote: "It should not be forgotten that the rational, discursive approach intersects the reality only at a certain point and many more important areas and dimensions remain concealed and inaccessible to it."<sup>62</sup> Therefore, he observed that "theology that is wedded to rational discourse and systematization of concepts, and

does not heed the fact that religious experience is best transmitted by symbols, would fail to respond to the experience of the people and their religiosity.”<sup>63</sup> He understood the language of theology to be analogical - a language characterised by symbols, myths, legends, and rituals, serving as the ‘icons’ of the divine. And he appreciated the positive potentials of this analogical language to accomplish the transformation of the Church and the society.

Methodologically speaking, Wilfred approaches theology as an explorative science. His writings are interpretative, rather than enunciative and prescriptive. Theology, for him, is hermeneutics of the manifestations of the Divine in our socio-cultural, political and economic realities, and therefore, he started his theology with societal experiences, rather than with dogmatic truth-claims. He interpreted the vision and mission of the Church, always relating them to contextual and current issues faced by the people, the poor and the marginalised. In a titled, *From the Dusty Soil*, he observes that the “guiding principle in all these (his) researches and reflections has been *contextuality*.”<sup>64</sup> Theology was therefore a ‘transformative hermeneutics’, which interfaced the actual realities of the people with religious-cultural resources on the one hand, and the secular sciences on the other. He hesitated not to enter into other disciplinary fields so as to bring about a meaningful theological insight.

Wilfred speaks of two functions of theology: one, *overall integrative function*, and the other, *critical role*. The ‘overall integrative function’ stands for the holistic and integral vision theology can give in our world characterised by fragmentations. In his words, “Responding to life calls for a holistic and integral vision in which the human nature and the Divine are harmoniously inter-related. The importance of an integrative approach stands out in bold relief when we set it against the present-day experience of fragmentation, to which science and technology have contributed.”<sup>65</sup> Providing a holistic vision is not building a theological conceptual system in

an architectonic way, but one which can be an integral part of reality in an 'organic' way. This organic way of theology can emerge, as he points out, only when theology "centres around the experiences of the poor and the suffering."<sup>66</sup> Secondly, the critical role of theology, as Felix envisions it, goes beyond the 'secularist' critical role introduced into theology by such streams of thinking as European Enlightenment; it becomes critical in the way it critiques substantively whatever is opposed to life. As he puts it, "If life is the centre of theology, critique begins from life inasmuch as whatever is opposed to life is anti-theological. In other words, if theology is based on the experience of the divine mystery as life, the primary *critical function of theology relates to the experience of the absence of the divine.*"<sup>67</sup> And the basis for this critical function of theology is the Gospel which embodies "Jesus' own prophetic critique of all that diminishes and corrodes life", and this cannot be "substituted by the forms of critique deriving from critical reason."<sup>68</sup>

One can find, in a very broad sense, three important aspects in the development of theological reflections by Wilfred. First aspect focuses on interpretation of the nature and mission of the Church in the contemporary world. Second aspect focuses on the relationship between theology and social sciences in an inter-disciplinary way. Third aspect seems to focus on relating theology to public life and reality.

Wilfred does much reflection upon the nature of the Church, mission, inculturation, religious pluralism, and dialogue with religions and secular ideologies. The new ecclesiology, put forth by the Vatican Council II, envisioning Church not so much an institution as a communion became meaningful to him. Along this new thinking, he presented a liberative understanding of the church. Church, for him, was a community of the faithful, who, empower and liberate the *antyodaya*, the least of the society. He writes:

The Church understands itself as a mystery of communion; its mission is to create fellowship. Therefore the Indian Church is called upon to contribute to the creation of a free and fraternal community, society, by releasing its moral and spiritual resources in the mid-stream of Indian life. The Indian Church can fulfil a meaningful role when it relates to peoples and groups as a builder of the community, while remaining deeply committed to the issue of justice... The real proof for the Church as an agent of unity and communion is precisely in its ability to respond to the situation of bondage and injustice. The Church cannot promote communion, amity and harmony among the various groups without itself being committed to justice and liberation.<sup>69</sup>

Inculturation, for him, “means solidarity and identification with the brokenness of the people and sharing in their cup of sorrow; it means hoping with them for the dawn of a new day of love, truth, freedom and justice. It is a question of being rooted to be able to offer spiritual fruits.”<sup>70</sup> Considering plurality to be a “gift of God to the human family for its enrichment”, Felix foresaw that “without a political and economic framework attuned to the Asian situation, pluralism (would) simply be a matter of folklore.”<sup>71</sup> So the focus, according to him, had to shift from *inculturating* Christianity in alien cultures to exploring the role of Christianity for social transformation in a religiously pluralistic world. It means re-envisioning the value of other religions beyond the frameworks of exclusivism, inclusivism and even pluralism. He writes: “The mystery of incarnation is a mystery of servanthood (Mk. 10:45; Mk. 10: 43-44), of self-emptying (Phil. 2: 8-9; 1Cor 8:9) and suffering (Heb 2: 17-18). In the task of relating to our neighbours of other faiths, the Church is challenged to follow Jesus who emptied himself (*kenosis*), and free itself from all kind of triumphalisms vis-à-vis other cultures and religions.”<sup>72</sup> Shedding the elements of triumphalism is necessary for a ‘living dialogue’ with other religions and cultures. “The participation of Christians in living religious dialogue is but a concrete expression of their faith in the universal

salvific will of God, in the action of the Spirit, and a manifestation of their hope in the coming of the fullness of God's kingdom."<sup>73</sup>

Wilfred reflects much upon the relationship of Christian theology to social sciences. According to him, both Christian theology and social sciences are in a new paradigm of knowledge. The traditional paradigm of knowledge, basing itself upon universal epistemological principles, sought for eternal and universal truth. But, today, it is increasingly being realised that knowledge is contextual, and unless it works with an emancipatory concern, producing knowledge would be a futile exercise for him. For example, in a rigorously argued essay titled, "The Struggles of Liberation Theology for a New Paradigm,"<sup>74</sup> Wilfred explored how liberation theology, in the light of the critical social sciences, began to consider its validity not in terms of universal claims but in terms of its praxis for liberation; and similarly how the social sciences needed to shed their 'value-neutral' objective positions in order to bring about the emancipation of the poor and the marginalised. "Knowledge even when it is systematized and organized into science cannot abandon its inherent orientation to liberation."<sup>75</sup> Both theology and social sciences, according to him, need to ask the question, 'how they could transform themselves from being the tool of domination to being the 'weapon of the weak'.

Integrating this liberative dimension of social sciences, Wilfred brings forth much reflection upon Indian liberation theology and contextual theology. He thinks of a multi-dimensional dialogue as the methodology for liberation and contextual theologies. Theology has to, first of all, dialogue with the overall situation, the situation of suffering and pain of the poor; secondly, it has to undertake an inter-religious dialogue in order to respond to the situation effectively; thirdly, it has to dialogue with other sciences, because, "the promotion of life, which is the vocation of theology, calls for the support of all the sciences that can throw light on the reality of life and help respond to

its contemporary exigencies”<sup>76</sup> and “no science can shirk the responsibility of promoting life. Though sciences may have autonomy in their respective spheres, their orientation needs to be such that they positively promote life and its quality.”<sup>77</sup> These three dialogues are the ways by which, according to him, theologizing takes place.

Indian liberation theology begins with its response to the ‘limit-situation’ of the poor in India. “Limit-situation of food or lack of food is ... a situation in which one is brought face to face with the Ultimate Mystery, even though this may not be expressly articulated by the people involved.”<sup>78</sup> Suffering, *dhukka*, is an “important locus of theologizing in India”,<sup>79</sup> and “Suffering is that which throws light on the reality and reveals it.”<sup>80</sup> God as the ultimate reality and mystery is revealed amidst the experience of suffering as the source of empowerment, and theology has to articulate this experience. As he writes, “The question of what is life and who is God, begins for the victims from such experiences and it is here that theology as the logos on God begins.”<sup>81</sup> Accordingly “The most immediate and striking source for theology is the unrelenting quest for life we find among the people in the midst of so much poverty, misery and struggle.”<sup>82</sup>

Comparing and contrasting with the Latin American liberation theology, Wilfred gives the following elements as characterising the Indian liberation theology: Unlike the Latin American liberation theology, Indian one is an *inter-religious* project. “In the pluralistic Indian society, the poor cut across the various religious affiliations. Therefore, any liberative endeavour should be attuned in its very dynamics to this *inter-religious* character.”<sup>83</sup> This inter-religious character requires that liberation becomes a common project, wherein the resources of different religions are integrated for liberative projects. Accordingly, “We need to seriously take into account the various ways the scriptures of our neighbours have responded to poverty, oppression and injustice.”<sup>84</sup> When it comes to the content of liberation, the Indian vision

has to integrate the 'interior liberation', along with the search for socio-political liberation. We need therefore to cultivate a 'spirituality of liberation', which integrates action with contemplation, which, in turn, ensues "a process of liberation of the self, society and nature – all organically linked together by common bonds of unity."<sup>85</sup> Bonds of unity, in the Indian context, necessarily implies "acceptance of diversity, difference and pluralism" and becomes a dynamic unity. Yet another crucial concern of Indian liberation theology is "the recovery by the oppressed and subjugated peoples of their authentic selves – the tribals, Dalits, women and so on."<sup>86</sup> While the Latin American liberation theology dwelt upon the economic liberation, in the Indian context, there can be no integral liberation without the social emancipation of the subaltern people. Understanding the dynamics of society in the Indian context cannot be undertaken only on the basis of the logocentric European Enlightenment rationality; but the mythos, the symbolic, plays a vital role in the social dynamics in India and therefore the power of the mythos need be integrated into the project of liberation in India. Similarly, along with the historical and dialectical dimensions of knowledge as emerged from the western context, compassion and harmony need to be integrated, as for example, Gandhi resisted the colonial power through compassion and inner harmony.<sup>87</sup>

Wilfred reflects on a relevant approach to Jesus Christ for the Asian context. He advocates a creative understanding and interpretation of Jesus Christ so as to be relevant to our context. He opines that "the Asian experience unmistakably shows that Jesus has been the object of devotion and interpretation by neighbours of other faiths"<sup>88</sup> too. He takes a look at the existing Indian approaches to Jesus Christ: "there is an approach in the *advaitic* experience of the Divine which has stimulated Hindu as well as Christian thinkers to speak of Jesus Christ as the *Cit* (consciousness) of the Divine"<sup>89</sup> understood as *Sat-Cit-Ananda*, in a Trinitarian model of divinity.

“Unlike in the *advaitic* interpretation where there is little room for love, in the theistic tradition, ... devotion and attachment of Jesus to the Father is to such an extent that he can say that he is one with the Father”<sup>90</sup>, and in this theistic tradition, Jesus Christ is considered an *avatar*. Going beyond these *advaitic* and theistic traditions, Jesus Christ has also been understood as an ethical teacher, proclaimer of a unique *dharma*. Beyond all these existing approaches, Wilfred looks at Jesus Christ as the poor and the marginalised look at him. They do so from a prophetic point of view:

To be able to understand the interpretation of Jesus Christ by the poor of India, especially the Dalits, one has to place it against the background of the strong confrontation of the lower and backward castes and classes against the continuing political, cultural and religious hegemony of the Brahmanic and other upper castes and classes. According to Ambedkar, the resistance on the part of upper castes to Christianity is not so much on the basis of doctrine as the challenge it represents to the *social order*. At least, in its ideals – if not in practice – Christianity has been a message of equality. And this is precisely what the poor and the Dalits see embodied in Jesus Christ.<sup>91</sup>

The poor understand Jesus Christ not purely in a historical manner, as a person of the past, but as a trans-historical mystery, a contemporary reality. And this, for him, is the relevant approach to understand Jesus Christ in India and Asia.

Wilfred has contributed significantly not merely to understand Asian Christianity, but also to inspire Asian Christians to commit themselves for the liberation of the poor, oppressed, and marginalised as part of their practice of Christian Faith. Asian Christianity, for him, is not so much a continuity of the western Christianity as an indigenous religious tradition with its challenges and opportunities. He has integrated the role of social sciences to describe and analyse Asian Christianity, even while integrating the insights of other

religions from Asia to interpret the life and mission of Asian Christianity. The emphasis that he lays on the way Asians have received and live out Christianity in their lives brings up Asian Christianity on its own, so to say.

During the present times, Felix reflects much about the relevance of public theology for Asia and India. Relationship between secularity and religion has been one of the important themes of his theological reflections for a very long time. He spoke of the 'sacredness of the secular'. Now, when the secular sphere has been wrecked by corruption, domination, exploitation, fundamentalism and communalism, the relationship between the secular and the religious, he thinks, has to be revisited. "Can religions sit idle and watch these things happen? How can religion and theology address public issues affecting the people, especially the poorest of the poor? How can theology respond to the aspirations of the poor? The existing forms of theology need to transform themselves into public theology..."<sup>92</sup> – he observes. It is a meaningful way of continuing our common journey along with other religious traditions to realise our quest for the mystery of the Divine in a post-metaphysical world. He holds that Asian public theology, with its own specificity, will concern with 1) defence of freedom against state despotism of various kinds and grades; 2) defence of the poor from the tyranny of the market; 3) creation of harmonious and non-exclusive communities; and, 4) protecting the environment. While these will be the public concerns of theology, potentials of faith found in different religions will become the common resource for public theology. Religions can theologise upon one another's faith claims. For example, "even Christology could be so interpreted and explained that a person who is not a Christian by religious belonging will find the discourse meaningful."<sup>93</sup>

Thus a multi-dimensional approach to theology, deeply embodying a dialogue of sciences – treating theology too as a science in a post-metaphysical sense, for the sake of seeking the Divine amidst the societal

realities of the sufferings of the poor and marginalised as the source of freedom and life, continues to emerge from Felix Wilfred.

## 7. Theologies of Dalit and Tribal Liberation

P. Arockiadoss, a systematic theologian, began to contribute meaningfully to theology of Dalit liberation. Inspired by the positive estimation of the Second Vatican Council on the 'spiritual and moral good' found among other religions and cultures, Arockiadoss showed deep interest in exploring the spiritual and moral resources found among the religions and cultures of the subaltern people for doing contextual theology. Unlike the previous Indian theologians who integrated themes, symbols and rituals from the Sanskritic Hinduism, Arockiadoss sought to integrate the religious and cultural resources emerging from the subaltern people of India. Theologizing upon the narratives of the liberative struggles and sacrifices of the Dalit heroes who evolved to be their deities, Arockiadoss wrote:

Delving deeply, we see some resemblance between these Dalit deities and Jesus Christ in his Paschal Mystery. The folk heroes and heroines behind these folk deities have sacrificed their own lives in their battle against the powers of death and darkness. Like Jesus, they also have suffered and died in order to uphold the just Reign of God. God has vindicated their noble sacrifice by their mysterious presence that lingers even after their cruel death, investing them with divine powers to protect and promote the life and dignity of the poor. ... The memory and celebration of their life and sacrifice mediate to the wounded humanity the healing and enabling grace of God.<sup>94</sup>

Thus Arockiadoss had opened a new terrain for doing the theology of Dalit liberation. Maria Arul Raja, a biblical scholar, followed suit, by integrating with his theological reflections active involvement in the struggles of the subaltern people for liberation. Starting with his Ph.D. thesis written on the topic, "Dalit Encounter with their Suffering: An Emancipatory Interpretation

of Mark 15: 1-47”, Raja has come out with voluminous literature on interpretation of Bible from the perspective of Dalit Liberation. Commentaries written by him on the Books of *Genesis*, *Job*, *Psalms*, *Isaiah*, and *Revelation*, and the commentary on the *Gospel according to Mark*, as part of the series of Dalit Biblical Commentaries, are milestones in his contribution to biblical theology of Dalit liberation. As part of his effort at contextual reading of the Bible, Raja has made inter-textual readings, relating Bible to religious texts, especially of subaltern religious traditions. Antony Baptist is yet another upcoming biblical scholar who pursues subaltern reading of the Bible, contributing notably to theology of Dalit liberation. His books, *Together as Sisters* and *Unsung Melodies from Margins* are good contributions in this regard.

Similar to their contribution to the theology of Dalit liberation, catholic theologians have contributed to theology of tribal liberation as well. One of the central themes discussed in relation to the contribution of Christianity to the liberation of Tribal people in India is the interaction of Christianity with the cultures of the Tribal people. While there are critics who hold the view that Christianity has ‘damaged’ the traditional wholesome culture of the Tribal people, Catholic theologians generally view the relationship as one of mutuality and cross-fertilization. Joseph Marianus Kujur, for example, endorses this view in the following words:

The contact between Christian faith and tribal culture has mutually enriched each other. The liberative aspects in the *sarna*<sup>95</sup> undo the ‘oppressive’ in the Church, and the positive elements in Christianity remove the ‘negative’ in the *sarna*. To preserve the traditional faith and enable it to cope with modern conditions in India should be the aim of the tribal Church. Christ must be presented to people in a relevant manner, addressing the main issues they are grappling with in their daily lives. At the same time he must be allowed to transform society from within. There is, in this process, an opportunity for tribal culture to transform the Church from within.<sup>96</sup>

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7 From this concern of cross-fertilization, several other theologians have explored the theological riches of tribal religions and cultures for a contextual Christian theology, and, similarly, related the tenets of Christian theology to the tribal world-view and life-world.

## 8. Theology of Indian Women / Feminist Liberation

Number of catholic theologians like Stella Balthazar, Margaret Shanthi Stephens, Pauline Chakkalal, Kochurani Abraham, Evelyn Monteiro, Pushpa Joseph, Shalini Mulackal, Astrid Lobo Gajiwala, Metti Amirtham and others pursue theology of women liberation in India. They adopt a hermeneutical approach to their theologising in the Indian context. Pushpa Joseph, for example, clarifies the Indian specific feminist hermeneutical approach in her publication *Feminist Hermeneutics – A Contextual Reconstruction* as a way of deconstructing the myth of ideal womanhood and reconstructing the silenced femininity, especially of Indian women.<sup>97</sup> And, they situate their theology in the context of involvement in the struggles of the poor and the marginalised. For example, Stella Balthazar “believes that theology must emerge from our involvement with people in their struggle for self-determination, dignity and control over their destiny.”<sup>98</sup> The sinful structures of caste and patriarchy have become major concerns of their theology. For example, the research of Shalini Mulackal on ‘Women and Rituals: A Critical Inquiry into the Religio-Cultural Practices of Catholic Women of Dalit Origin in Tiruvalluvar District, Tamilnadu,’ focuses upon the oppression the Dalit Christian women undergo in their life-worlds; and, the research of Kochurani Abraham on ‘An Inquiry into the Impact of Socio-Religious Aspects of Patriarchy in the Life of Catholic Syrian Christian Women of Kerala’, focuses critically upon the way religion inscribes patriarchy. Metti Amirtham explores theologically how the female body is

both the victim of patriarchal oppression as well as a source of empowerment of women especially in the Indian context.

Though situated within the Indian context, they do not fail to dwell upon themes common to feminist theology everywhere. Margaret Shanthi (1943 - 2013), for example, opines that feminist theology is necessary not merely for the uplift of women, but even to 'free' theology from its gender bias, which treats male as a universal principle. According to her, "The very concept of 'God as male patriarch', and the theology of sin and grace, which scapegoated 'woman as the source of sin', needs to be transformed by the feminist perspective of 'women as bearers / nurturers of life' and by recovering the respect and sacredness of women which was earlier imaged in the Mother Goddess – God as Mother."<sup>99</sup> Stella Balthazar (1952 - ), combining feminist and liberation theological orientations, thinks of theology as "a discovery of our partnership with God as women in the divine act of creating, sustaining and nurturing of life on this planet in both humankind and nature."<sup>100</sup> Astrid Lobo Gajiwala (1957 - ), a medical doctor and theologian, is committed to promoting the participation of women in the ministry of the Church, and supports the ordination of women in the Catholic Church. In her writings Lobo "has portrayed the close relationship between bodily experience, woman's life and Eucharist and has also developed innovative liturgies."<sup>101</sup> Evelyn Monteiro, a systematic theologian, contributes significantly to interface feminist theology with ecclesiology, dwelling upon the place of women in the Church, even while she reflects about the mission of the Church in the context of plurality of religions and cultures.

## 9. Religious Pluralism and Inter-religious Dialogue

Needless to say that plurality of religions is an important factor in the religious experience not merely of India, but the whole of Asia. It has always been a challenge for Christianity to relate with plurality, especially when it

comes to their theological position on the universality of Jesus Christ as the redeemer of humanity. Many a catholic theologian in India has grappled with this issue. From his philosophical-theological starting point of understanding reality itself in terms of cosmotheandricism, Raimon Panikkar went on to take reality in terms of its transcendence, history and immanence. These three dimensions of the experience of reality, according to Panikkar, informs all religions, which, for example, can be found in the *karma*, *bhakti* and *jnana margas* of Hinduism or the Trinity of Christianity. While this three dimensional experience informs all religions, the Christian experience, according to Panikkar, reveals this in its 'utmost fullness' in the iconic person of Jesus Christ.

In his later writings, continuing with the theme of experiencing the fullness of the manifestation of reality in Christ, Panikkar spoke of 'Christophany' as a befitting Christological theme for the twenty-first century. As he says, "Christophany stands for a manifestation of Christ to human consciousness and includes both an experience of Christ and a critical reflection on that experience."<sup>102</sup> It is rooted in the incarnation of Christ, which reveals the Trinity in its entirety. It offers an "image of Christ that all people are capable of believing in...", - all those who nourish an interest in Christ can meaningfully do so. This Christophany, according to him, is open to scientific as well as every religious mind. As Panikkar puts it, "Christophany is constitutively open to a dialogue with the contemporary scientific mind. It is not a discipline enclosed within either temples or academics; its epiphany, on the contrary, is 'like a flash of lightning that comes from the east and manifests itself all the way to the west.'<sup>103</sup> It "considers the other religions of the world not as Christians have often interpreted them but as they understand themselves – as, to use scholastic language, *loci theologici*, proper and legitimate places for theological activity..."<sup>104</sup> As Panikkar continues, Christophany is "a question not of converting the whole world to

Christianity but of recognizing that the very nature of reality shows the nondualist polarity between the transcendent and the immanent in its every manifestation.”<sup>105</sup>

Christophany, then, is not an experience that fulfils or completes other religious traditions, but something that opens the self to a deeper knowledge in the light of the other or a self-critique in the mirror of the other. This Panikkar called as *intra-religious dialogue* in a work published in 1978.<sup>106</sup> Also called by him as ‘dialogical dialogue’, intra-religious dialogue was that “unfolded within as well as between partners”,<sup>107</sup> which ‘stripped each other of their masks’ and became a religious event in itself. In this event, as he says, “We question ourselves on the meaning and purpose of life; we venture closer to those experiences at the very heart of the various traditions... The walls of ... our dogmatic attitudes collapse.”<sup>108</sup> This dialogue can take place only in a true encounter between religions. A true encounter is something that goes beyond ‘sociological’ representation or egoism, and opened oneself to “true communion”, a mutual fecundation between religions. “The true encounter between religions”, in his words, “is in itself a religious encounter, a meeting that transpires in the heart of each participant in search of truth.”<sup>109</sup> A dialogue born out of this encounter, according to Panikkar, is the need of the hour today, when religions are becoming aware of others as well as themselves in a deeper and intense way.

It needs be mentioned that Francis D’Sa, Varghese Manimala, Dominic Veliath, Clemens Mendoca, Antony Savari Raj, and others continue to explore the insights given by Raimon Panikkar on the cosmotheandric understanding of reality, encounter of religions and religious dialogue, and their relationship to our contemporary problems including the ecological ones.

A well articulated theology of religious pluralism emerges from the writings of Ignatius Puthiadam. After doing an analytical perusal of the existing Christian approaches to non-Christian religions, such as ‘exclusivism’,

'fulfilment theory', 'anonymous Christians', 'normative Christian revelation', etc., Puthiadam presents a Christian theology of pluralism. He treats it not as a crisis wrought by human wrong-doing, but a God-given reality. In his words: "Both the history of religions, the present pluralism of religions and the tenacity with which individuals and groups cling to their religions seem to indicate that God wants religious pluralism. The same God who wants individuals to be different, groups and nations to grow in their own separateness, seems to want also religious-pluralism."<sup>110</sup> Pluralism, for Puthiadam, is neither accidental differences nor unmeaning fragmentations. As he reflects, "Pluralism stamps reality; not brute plurality but the harmonious union of infinite riches."<sup>111</sup> They "remain finite and interrelated by their otherness; they are partly similar, partly complementary, and partly antagonistic to one another."<sup>112</sup> Puthiadam rightly takes note of the absolutist language present in every religion. He says: "Each one brings an absolute point of view; absolute because it is unsurpassable; a point of view because no revelation can express the totality in human language, since man is never totality and never of a piece."<sup>113</sup> Absolutist assertions by different religions, even in opposition to one another, are the ways in which the assertions become meaningful. So, what is necessary amidst pluralism is cultivating the ability to dialogue acknowledging the equal right of every religion to present their absolutes. In his words: "Unless we can cultivate the courage to take the other as the other, the Scriptures of other religions as they are ... we cannot create a theology."<sup>114</sup> Puthiadam is confident that Christian revelation gives us the ground "to understand the possibility of accepting the other as the other."<sup>115</sup> Finally, practical issues connected with pluralism have to be met in actual contexts of life, wherein "We should without combative apologetics, or giving up our convictions let ourselves be known to them."<sup>116</sup> Thus, Puthiadam gives us a sound theology of religious pluralism, which is very meaningful to our contemporary context.

Yet another catholic theologian who held clear views on religious pluralism was Jacque Dupuis, who taught at Vidyajoti Theological College in Delhi. He accepted the “constitutive uniqueness and universality of Jesus Christ”<sup>117</sup> and he said:

This uniqueness, however, is not exclusive, but relational, that is, related to all other divine manifestations to humankind in the one history of salvation. Religious pluralism exists as part of God’s plan. Religions have their origin in God’s self-manifestation to humankind and religious plurality has as its cause ‘the superabundant richness and diversity of God’s self-manifestations to humankind. Hence elements of truth and grace are found in these religions and they mediate for their followers the mystery of salvation in Jesus Christ... Interactions between Christianity and other religions bring about mutual enrichment... As the reign of God will reach its fullness at the eschaton, so too the convergence between the religions will reach its goal at the eschaton.<sup>118</sup>

There are many other theologians who reflected upon the theology of religious pluralism. Arulsamy Pushparajan (1944 - ), who served as the Head of the Department of Inter-religious Relations in Madurai Kamaraj University, gave the insight that “all religions are in search of Truth and thus *satyocentric* (truthcentric) in their pilgrimage... As a pilgrim towards the full actualisation of Truth, the Church further wishes to dialogue with other seekers of Truth so that all may realise the richness of their patrimony, be mutually reassured by the variety of the Word’s expressions and enriched by the outpouring of the Spirit.”<sup>119</sup> Jyoti Sahi (1944 - ), a renowned artist and theologian, endeavouring to relate ‘creative imagination to incarnational spirituality, insisted “on the role of symbols and images in theological reflection and the need for a ‘visual theology’ which goes beyond the verbal, discursive, rational and propositional statements about faith.”<sup>120</sup> In this effort of integrating the symbolic dimension in theology, Sahi was open to receive inspirations

from symbolic systems of other religions as well. Christian faith, for him, is a journey, rooted in Christianity but goes out towards other religions.

Kuncheria Pathil, specialised in ecumenical theology, spoke of the Church as the 'communion of churches', whose role in the contemporary world is to create a 'community of communities' during the contemporary era. Jose Kuttianimattathil (1955 - ) proposed a theology of religion in relation to the role of the Holy Spirit. In his words, "As long as we do not pay sufficient attention to the person and mission of the Holy Spirit we will be left without the 'hinge' that can help us turn towards other religions".<sup>121</sup> Xavier Irudayaraj has written on themes of the Guru in the Indian tradition, inculturation, discipleship, inter-faith dialogue, etc. He proposed a 'soil theology', according to which it is the people of the soil, the poor who give meaning to dialogue and inculturation.

It is in place to note that there were theologians who explored the avenue of mysticism too for Hindu-Christian dialogue. Justin Panakal, who taught at the Pontifical Institute of Philosophy and Theology, Alwaye, was a proponent of Hindu and Christian mysticism as their meeting point. According to him, "there is only an accidental difference between Christian and Hindu mysticism."<sup>122</sup>

There are other theologians like Thomas Manickam, Ignatius Irudayam, T.K. John, Subhash Anand, George Gispert-Sauch, Antony Kalliath, Francis Vineeth, and others who have given us open-ended and dynamic theological reflections on the reality of religious pluralism.

## 10. Moral Theology

Moral theology has been an important area of reflection by catholic theologians. Based on the Social Teachings of the Catholic Church (brought out summarily in the *Compendium of the Social Teachings of the Catholic*

*Church*), moral theology has flourished in its various dimensions. At the regional level, persons like X.D. Selvaraj have taught moral theology, and have involved in struggles of the people for social justice. They have nurtured moral theology not merely intellectually, but also in terms of praxis. At the national level, George V. Lobo (1923 – 1993), stands out through his published works like, *Current Problems in Medical Ethics*, *Christian Living according to Vatican II: Moral Theology Today*, *Human Rights in the Indian Context*, *Church and Social Justice*, which have contributed much to a contextual understanding of Christian moral theology in India in the light of the Second Vatican Council. He taught and wrote on theological understanding of human rights, bio-medical ethical issues, social justice, etc. Concern for social transformation was an integral part of his moral theology. Similarly Felix Podimattam (1934 - ) has contributed significantly to moral theology. There are others as well.

## 11. Worship and Theology

Paul Puthanangady was a pioneer in post-Vatican II liturgical renewal in the Catholic Church in India. He envisioned a dialectical relationship between liturgy and theology so as to evolve an Indian liturgy as well as theology. “Jesus presents His message through images and symbols. For Him the kingdom of God is a celebration, a feast. He calls His Gospel a mystery, that is, the knowledge that is received through personal communication and not through human speculation and research.”<sup>123</sup> And, “Christian faith is not so much an adherence to a doctrinal system, but the celebration of a sacramental presence.”<sup>124</sup> The sacramental celebration, according to Puthanangady, is the place for the epiphany of the risen Lord, whose memory the Church is called upon to remember and celebrate. So, according to Puthanangady, liturgy is the fount of faith, and should become the *locus theologicus* for Christian theology. A theology based on liturgical experience will lead us to understand faith not so much as intellectual assent

as an awareness of the divine; express faith more symbolically and descriptively rather than propositionally and conceptually; guide the community along greater sensitivity to the presence of the Spirit.<sup>125</sup>

## 12. Sociology of Religion with Theological Implications

Sociology of Religion has been one of the important approaches integrated by Indian catholic theologians in their theologising. Paul Parathazham, one of the notable Catholic sociologists of religion in India, observes that sociology of religion can shed light upon: one, the *social determinants*, and the other, the *social consequences / outcomes* of religion. The study even of the social determinants, according to him, is an “essential step in theological self-awareness.”<sup>126</sup> Because, it can “liberate the theologian from what Berger has termed ‘tyranny of the past’, and sensitise her / him to be engaged in the “ongoing reconceptualization of theology;”<sup>127</sup> it can also save theology from ‘possible ideological distortions’. Similarly, the study of the social consequences of religion, can bring to the awareness of the theologian the manifest as well as the latent functions of religion. While the awareness of the manifest functions can give certain validity to theology and the need for theologizing, the awareness of the latent functions, which go beyond the awareness of the theologian, can, once again, help theologian to discern the meaningful way of theologizing and help her / him to realise the possibilities of theological pluralism as operative in different social contexts.

We find several studies being made from this perspective of sociology of religion with its implication for theology. Rowena Robinson, Professor of Sociology, IIT, has done a good number of studies on the sociology of Christianity in India. Her well-known publications include *Margins of Faith – Dalit and Tribal Christianity in India*, *Religious Conversion in India*, and *Christians in India*. The studies of Walter Fernandes are significant in

this regard. His sociological exploration of the emergence of Dalit identity discourse is an insightful one to count. S. M. Michael too has published significant studies within this framework. The well-known works of Stephen Fuchs like *The Rebellious Prophets* is a good contribution for theologising. They are all substantial contributions not merely to sociology of religion but to Christian theology as well. A good number of researchers<sup>128</sup> undertaken at the Department of Christian Studies, at the University of Madras, or at similar secular higher educational settings in India, have thrown much light upon the manifest and latent functions of religion, especially Christianity, in varying social contexts related to the subaltern people of India. They have been a valuable contribution to the process of theologising in India.

Similarly the contributions of social activists in terms of social analysis and involvement have their unique place in theology. Thomas Kocheri, Sr. Alice, and others' work among the fisherfolk, Jesu Marian's work among the Christians of Dalit origin, involvement of others for restoring the tribal rights of the people for their livelihood, involvement of catholic lawyers for creating legal awareness among the poor and marginalised, etc., are great ingredients for theologising in India. A 'Christian Left', a Christian activism, born out of an attempt to bring together Christian faith and a Marxist social analysis, has also been prevalent in the Indian soil, inspiring involvement in social actions and peoples' struggles.

### 13. More Voices on the Horizon

Joseph Neuner taught theology at Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth. He participated in the Second Vatican Council, and had been active in ecumenical and inter-faith encounters. He contributed much to comparative theology by his openness to accepting God's presence in other religions too. "In his view, Christians must stop isolating Jesus, for in Him, 'God with us', all our

human realities, including struggles, agonies and death, are included in God's creative love, to be fulfilled in eternal life."<sup>129</sup>

K.T. Sebastian is a lay theologian, who reflects about the participation of the laity in the mission of the Church. He argued that "The Church can become a catalyst and a corrective force in society only when there is a genuine, committed laity, existing and working along with the hierarchy. The formation of the laity should become an urgent pastoral priority."<sup>130</sup>

Thomas Manickam reflected upon inculturation and eco-theology. Indian theology to be meaningful to Indian people should inculturate itself in the idiom, thoughts and symbolic structure of India, and should take into account the ecological interconnectedness of life-systems with the whole creation.<sup>131</sup>

D. Alphonse brings in a new dimension to Indian Christian theology from psycho-social perspective. Concerned with making theology relevant to the Indian context, he began relating the doctrine of Avatar to Jesus Christ, and now, is engaged in exploring the psycho-social perspective to understanding the personality of Jesus Christ as well as Christian spirituality. He has reflected much on liberatively interpreting for our times the Catholic faith and devotion to Mary.

Kurian Kunnumpuram has contributed significantly on the vision of Second Vatican Council on Church and its mission. He has done yeoman service to theology by authoring relevant books relating to Church and mission, and edited a good number of books on spirituality, Eucharist, priestly formation, religion and violence, etc.

Indian Christian theology is being enriched with other contributors like Errol D'Lima, Jacob Parapally, Ishanand Vempeny, Mathew Vekathanam, Joseph Mattam, Antony Kalliath, and many others.

## 14. Public Theology

Public theology is emerging to be one of the areas of interest among Catholic theologians of India. It is a theology, relating itself to the public sphere and public life. Politics as the process of decision-making for the public life becomes the arena for doing this public theology. Consequently, achieving substantive democracy, an egalitarian participatory decision-making process, becomes the salient goal of public theology. This is not a bourgeois democracy that provides the ambience for neo-liberal free market, but a democracy which intends to achieve economic parity, social justice, inter-religious peace and harmony.

Writing about it way back in 1997, Michael Amaladoss points out to the need of religions relating themselves to the concerns of public life by way of being involved in 'conversations' for common human and spiritual values.<sup>132</sup> These conversations, he avers, will bring to the public the spiritual and religious resources of different religions and help humanity to support their common goals. These conversations will bring up convergences as well as divergences; while being strengthened by the convergences, we should also develop our democratic sense to agree to disagree with differences. But, what is more important about these conversations, according to Michael Amaladoss, is that they result in common commitments or programmes of action for the common good.

Felix Wilfred has published much on the theme of public theology. Two volumes with collected essays, namely, *Asian Public Theology – Critical Concerns in Changing Times* and *Theology to Go Public*, bear the name of public theology, and they explore the methodology and content of public theology. Relating religious studies, especially Christian studies, with social realities in view of contributing to social transformation has been one of the bottom lines of Felix's scholarship. He has argued much for inter-disciplinary approaches to doing theology, and this stance takes him

spontaneously to relating theology to public sphere and public life in our contemporary era of 'public religion'. As done in the global scenario, Wilfred distinguishes between 'public theology' and 'theology of public life': while the former is theology relating to the state and the public sphere, the latter presents theological views on issues of public life.

## 15. Catholic Formation Houses as Theological Centres

The formation houses for catholic clergy in India have been centres of doing theology. *Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth* in Pune, *Vidyajoti* in Delhi, *St. Peter's Seminary* in Bangalore, *The Pontifical Institute* in Alwaye, and the *Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram* in Bangalore are well-known formation houses at the national level, and, *St. Paul's Seminary* in Trichy, *Sacred Heart Seminary* in Chennai, *St. John's Seminary* in Hyderabad, *St. Albert Seminary* in Ranchi, *St. in Nagpur*, *Morning Star Seminary* in Kolkota, *Mary Matha Seminary* in Trichur, *Suvidya* in Bangalore, *Don Bosco Theological College and Oriens* in Shillong and the RTCs (Regional Theological Centres) of the Jesuits are some of the well-known regional formation houses which have been serving as an interface between reflective and pastoral theologies. These institutions have, even while coming out with good theological publications, given a visible meaning to the concept of 'doing theology' by entering into the field to theologize upon the struggles and aspirations of the people at the grassroots levels.

## 16. Associations

*Indian Theological Association* has been a vanguard theological association in the Catholic Church in India. Right from its inception in the year 1976, this association has reflected theologically on such relevant issues as Indian ecclesiology, Indian liberation theology, theology of religions and

religious pluralism, communalism in India, Significance of Jesus Christ for India, Ecological crisis, and so on. Doing contextual theology has been its forte.

### **By Way of Concluding**

While looking at the nature of theological reflections from the catholic fold, what comes to mind is the observation made by M. M. Thomas in his forward to Robin Boyd's *Introduction to Indian Christian Theology*. Taking cognizance of the possible criticism that Indian Christian Theology had not produced any system of theology or systematization of theology, as the West had done, Thomas thought of the Indian context as producing "living theology" which was "often fragmentary and partial in character", and expressed his doubt whether, "the Church in future" would "give the same weight to theological systematization as it did in the past."<sup>133</sup> Thomas' observation is becoming truer, especially in the case of Indian Catholic theology, which, in spite of coming up with both qualitatively and quantitatively substantive reflection, remains 'fragmentary and partial', attuned more to its response to the grassroots reality than to speculative coherence and systematization.

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## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Felix Wilfred, *Beyond Settled Foundations* (Chennai: Department of Christian Studies, University of Madras, 1993), 113.
- <sup>2</sup> Ibid., 114.
- <sup>3</sup> Ibid., 117.
- <sup>4</sup> Ibid., 123.
- <sup>5</sup> Cf. Sr. Vandana, S.R.C.J., *Social Justice and Ashrams* (Bangalore: ATC Publications, 1982).
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- <sup>7</sup> Ibid., 329.
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid., 262.

- <sup>9</sup> Felix Wilfred, *Beyond Settled Foundations – The Journey of Indian Theology* (Chennai: Department of Christian Studies, University of Madras, 1993), 140.
- <sup>10</sup> Kuncheria Pathil, *Trends in Indian Theology* (Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2005), 45.
- <sup>11</sup> Cf. Ibid.
- <sup>12</sup> Michael Amaladoss, *Life in Freedom – Liberation Theologies from Asia* (Anand: Gujarat Sahitya Academy, 1997), 151.
- <sup>13</sup> John C England et al (eds), *Asian Christian Theologies*, vol. 1 (New Delhi: ISPCK, 2002), 259.
- <sup>14</sup> His writings have been brought together by Kurien in four volumes titled as (1) *Jesus – The Relevance of His Person and Message for our Times*, (2) *In Spirit and Truth – Indian Christian Reflections on Spirituality and Worship*, (3) *Nature, Women and the Church – Indian Christian Reflections on Ecology, Feminism and Ecclesiology*, and, (4) *Doing Theology – Indian Christian Reflections on Theologising in India Today*.
- <sup>15</sup> Kurien Kunnumpuram, SJ, *In Spirit and Truth – Indian Christian Reflections on Spirituality and Worship*, Selected Writings of Samuel Rayan, SJ, vol. II (Mumbai: St. Paul's, 2012), 9.
- <sup>16</sup> Kurien Kunnumpuram, *Jesus – The Relevance of His Person and Message for our Times*, Selected Writings of Samuel Rayan, SJ, Vol. 1 (Mumbai: St. Paul's, 2011), 199.
- <sup>17</sup> Ibid. 199.
- <sup>18</sup> Ibid., 206.
- <sup>19</sup> Ibid., 205.
- <sup>20</sup> Ibid. 200.
- <sup>21</sup> Kurien Kunnumpuram, *Jesus – The Relevance of His Person and Message for our Times*, Selected Writings of Samuel Rayan, SJ, Vol. 1 (Mumbai: St. Paul's, 2011), 317.
- <sup>22</sup> Ibid., 234.
- <sup>23</sup> Ibid., Vol. II., 20.

- 24 Ibid., Vol. II. 21.
- 25 Ibid., 21.
- 26 Ibid., 25.
- 27 Ibid., 92.
- 28 Kurien Kunnumpuram, ed., *Nature, Women and the Church – Indian Christian Reflections on Ecology, Feminism and the Church*, Collected Writings of Samuel Rayan, vol. 1 (New Delhi: ISPCK, 2013), 5.
- 29 Ibid., 9.
- 30 Ibid., 12.
- 31 Ibid., 49.
- 32 Ibid., 71
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- 35 Ibid., 5.
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- 37 Ibid. 7.
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- 39 Ibid., 9
- 40 Ibid., 11.
- 41 Ibid., 8.
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- 43 Cf. Ibid., 207–214.
- 44 Ibid., 208.
- 45 Ibid., 209.

- <sup>46</sup> Cf. Scaria Kuthirakkattel, "George M. Soares-Prabhu's Contribution towards an Indian Biblical Theology," in *A Biblical Theology for India* [Collected Writings of George M. Soares Prabhu, Vol. 2], edited by Scaria Kuthirakkattel, svd, (Pune: Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, 1999), xxii.
- <sup>47</sup> George Soares-Prabhu, "Towards an Indian Interpretation of the Bible," in *Biblical Themes for a Contextual Theology Today*, ed., Isaac Padinjarakuttu (Pune: Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, 1999), 215 – 216.
- <sup>48</sup> George Soares-Prabhu, "Jesus Christ Amid The Religions and Ideologies of India Today," in *Biblical Themes for a Contextual Theology Today*, ed., Isaac Padinjarakuttu (Pune: Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, 1999), 198.
- <sup>49</sup> Cf. George Soares-Prabhu, "Expanding the Horizon of Christian Mission – A Biblical Perspective," in *Biblical Themes for a Contextual Theology Today*, ed., Isaac Padinjarakuttu (Pune: Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, 1999), 1–13.
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- <sup>51</sup> Ibid., 22.
- <sup>52</sup> Ibid., 22-23.
- <sup>53</sup> George Soares-Prabhu, "Following Jesus in Mission – Reflections on Mission in the Gospel of Mathew," in *Biblical Themes for a Contextual Theology Today*, ed., Isaac Padinjarakuttu (Pune: Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, 1999), 41.
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- <sup>55</sup> Felix Wilfred, *Beyond Settled Foundations ...* 132.
- <sup>56</sup> Ibid., 133.
- <sup>57</sup> As cited in Ibid., 133.
- <sup>58</sup> Michael Amaladoss, *Beyond Inculturation – Can the Many be One?* (New Delhi: Vidyajoti & ISPCK, 1998), 61.
- <sup>59</sup> Ibid., 62.

- <sup>60</sup> Ibid., 50.
- <sup>61</sup> Michael Amaladoss, *Blessed are the Peacemakers – Theological Reflections* (Chennai: The New Leader Publications, 2012), 193.
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- <sup>64</sup> Felix Wilfred, *From the Dusty Soil – Contextual Reinterpretation of Christianity* (Chennai: Department of Christian Studies, University of Madras, 1995), vii.
- <sup>65</sup> Felix Wilfred, *On the Banks of Ganges – Doing Contextual Theology* (New Delhi: ISPCK, 2002), 24.
- <sup>66</sup> Ibid., 25.
- <sup>67</sup> Ibid., 25-26.
- <sup>68</sup> Ibid., 26.
- <sup>69</sup> Felix Wilfred, *Sunset in the East – Asian Challenges and Christian Involvement* (Chennai: Chair in Christianity, University of Madras, 1991), 257.
- <sup>70</sup> Ibid., vii.
- <sup>71</sup> Ibid., 20.
- <sup>72</sup> Ibid., 151.
- <sup>73</sup> Ibid., 153.
- <sup>74</sup> Cf. Felix Wilfred, “The Struggles of Liberation Theology for a New Paradigm,” *Development & Change*, vol. IV, No. 1, 1999.
- <sup>75</sup> Ibid., 143.
- <sup>76</sup> Felix Wilfred, *On the Banks of Ganges – Doing Contextual Theology* (New Delhi: ISPCK, 2002), 13.
- <sup>77</sup> Ibid., 15
- <sup>78</sup> Ibid., 6.
- <sup>79</sup> Ibid., 7.
- <sup>80</sup> Ibid.

- <sup>81</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>82</sup> Ibid., 19.
- <sup>83</sup> Ibid., 96.
- <sup>84</sup> Ibid., 98.
- <sup>85</sup> Ibid., 98.
- <sup>86</sup> Ibid., 100.
- <sup>87</sup> Cf. Ibid., 104.
- <sup>88</sup> Felix Wilfred, *Margins – Site of Asian Theologies* (New Delhi: ISPCK, 2008), 189.
- <sup>89</sup> Felix Wilfred, *On the Banks of Ganges – Doing Contextual Theology* (New Delhi: ISPCK, 2002), 144.
- <sup>90</sup> Ibid., 147.
- <sup>91</sup> Ibid., 156-57.
- <sup>92</sup> Felix Wilfred, *Asian Public Theology – Critical Concerns in Challenging Times* (New Delhi: ISPCK, 2010), vi.
- <sup>93</sup> Ibid., xxiii.
- <sup>94</sup> P. Arockiadoss, “Apotheosis of Dalit Martyrs: An Exploration into the Faith Dynamics of Dalit Soteriology of Tamil Nadu,” in *Seeking New Horizons*, ed., Leonard Fernando (Vidyajoti & ISPCK, 2002), 158.
- <sup>95</sup> A generic name for the traditional religions of the tribes, mainly in Jharkhand.
- <sup>96</sup> Joseph Marianus Kujur, “Christian Faith and Tribal Culture: Crisis, Negotiations and Convergence,” in *Seeking New Horizons*, ed., Leonard Fernando (Vidyajoti & ISPCK, 2002), 180.
- <sup>97</sup> Cf. Pushpa Joseph, *Feminist Hermeneutics – A Contextual Reconstruction* (Siliguri: Salesian College Publication, 2010).
- <sup>98</sup> John C. England, et. al. *Asian Christian Theologies – A Research Guide to Authors, Movements, Sources*, vol. I [Asia Region, South Asian, Austral Asia] (New Delhi: ISPICK, 2002), 348.
- <sup>99</sup> Ibid., 328.
- <sup>100</sup> Ibid., 348.

- <sup>101</sup> Ibid., 350.
- <sup>102</sup> Raimon Panikkar, *The Fullness of Man – A Christophany* (NY: Orbis; New Delhi: ISPCK, 2006), 10.
- <sup>103</sup> Ibid., 12.
- <sup>104</sup> Ibid., 13.
- <sup>105</sup> Ibid., 15.
- <sup>106</sup> Cf. R. Panikkar, *The Intra-Religious Dialogue* (Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 1978 [1984 – Indian print]).
- <sup>107</sup> Ibid., 9.
- <sup>108</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>109</sup> Ibid., 11.
- <sup>110</sup> Ignatius Puthiadam, “Diversity of Religions in the Context of Pluralism and Indian Christian Life and Reflection,” in *Theologizing in India*, eds. M. Amaladoss, T.K. John and G. Gispert-Sauch (Bangalore: TPI, 1981), 426.
- <sup>111</sup> Ibid., 427.
- <sup>112</sup> Ibid., 430.
- <sup>113</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>114</sup> Ibid., 429.
- <sup>115</sup> Ibid., 430.
- <sup>116</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>117</sup> John C. England, et. al. *Asian Christian Theologies – A Research Guide to Authors, Movements, Sources*, vol. I [Asia Region, South Asian, Austral Asia] (New Delhi: ISPICK, 2002), 268.
- <sup>118</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>119</sup> Ibid., 332-33.
- <sup>120</sup> Ibid., 333 – 34.
- <sup>121</sup> Ibid., 349.
- <sup>122</sup> Ibid., 299.

- <sup>123</sup> Paul Puthanangady, "Liturgy and Theology – The Dialectical Relationship between Liturgy and Theology with a view to a Theology for India," in *Theologizing in India*, eds. M. Amaladoss, T.K. John and Gispert (Bangalore: TPI, 1981), 140.
- <sup>124</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>125</sup> Ibid., 153-54.
- <sup>126</sup> Paul Parathazham, "Sociological Approaches to the Study of Religion: Implications for Theology," in *Religious Pluralism – An Indian Christian Perspective*, ed. Kuncheria Pathil (Delhi: ISPCK, 1991), 18.
- <sup>127</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>128</sup> Researchers done by Vincent B. Wilson, P.T. Mathew, Jose Maliekal, G. Patrick, Kochurani Abraham, Francis Gonsalves, Shalini Mulackal, and James Ponniah at the Department of Christian Studies, University of Madras, are good examples. Similarly, sociological critiques of Christianity made by Ms. Bama, and the anthropological descriptive analysis of popular Catholicism made by Francis Jeyapathy too are good contributions to Christian theology in India.
- <sup>129</sup> John C. England, et. al. *Asian Christian Theologies – A Research Guide to Authors, Movements, Sources*, vol. I [Asia Region, South Asian, Austral Asia] (New Delhi: ISPICK, 2002), 246.
- <sup>130</sup> Ibid., 277.
- <sup>131</sup> Cf. Ibid., 312.
- <sup>132</sup> Cf. Michael Amaladoss, S.J., *Life in Freedom – Liberation Theologies from Asia* (Gujarat: Gujarat Sahitya prakash, 1997), 201.
- <sup>133</sup> M. M. Thomas, "Forward" in Robin Boyd, *Introduction to Indian Christian Theology* (New Delhi: ISPCK, 1994 [1969]), vi.