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Editorial

George Soares-Prabhu, SJ (1929-1995) was one of the stalwarts of Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth. He exercised enormous influence on his students and colleagues, challenging them to rethink Christian faith in a way that would bring it alive in the Indian context, especially the context of the poor. He was a biblical scholar, and his theology was "distinctly a biblical theology of liberation seen through Indian eyes."[1] It is that sensitivity to the Indian context that led him coin the phrase "dharma of Jesus". The Sanskrit word *dharma* has many meanings and is used in the Indian religions of Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism, besides that family of religions known as Hinduism. Coming from the root *dhr*, meaning 'to hold' or 'to support' it might be taken to mean as 'that which upholds'. Roughly it can mean the 'metaphysical basis of religion', 'cosmic order', 'ethical code of conduct', 'teachings' of a guru, and so on. With such rich meanings, it becomes immediately clear as to how apt the word *dharma* is for describing what Jesus taught, and, above all, lived. In grateful memory of Soares-Prabhu's contributions, Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth organized a seminar in October 2014. The essays in this issue were presented at that seminar.

The presentation of the essays is done in a centrifugal fashion, beginning with the thought of Soares-Prabhu himself to extensions of his thought in different directions done by the authors of the individual essays. Thus the very first essay "The Dharma of Jesus"[2] is a summary of a well appreciated course that Soares-Prabhu used to offer at Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth. It traces Jesus' dharma to his experience of God as unconditional love, often known as the *Abba* experience of Jesus. The experience of God's unconditional love becomes the fountainhead of the freedom he enjoyed in reaching out to all, especially

those in the periphery of society. This experience gave him the security to stand in solidarity with the poor and confront injustice, which, in turn, led him to the cross and the divine affirmation of his life and death in the resurrection.

In the remaining essays we turn from Soares-Prabhu to his students, colleagues, successors, and others. Joyce Kaithakottil, one of his students who turned out to be a biblical scholar himself, delivered the keynote address at the conference. He detailed how the dharma of Jesus is a response to the two questions asked by God in the Book of Genesis to human beings: "Where are you?" and "Where is your brother?" The first refers to our relationship with God and the second to our relationship with fellow human beings. The last book of the Bible (Revelation) is seen, then, as the Church's responseto these questions in the concrete context of the Roman Empire; it challenges contemporary Christians to respond similarly in their own situations. The essay by the well known theologian George Pattery deals with the implicatons of Soares Prabhu's understanding of the dharma of Jesus for Indian Christian theologizing. He argues that (1) the foundational experience of Jesus invites us to make religious experience as the starting point of theology, and (2) Jesus' own life and praxis invites to embrace his 'endangering spirituality' and engage in the mission of liberation.

The next two essays are by Scaria Kuthirakkattel, SVD, who is not only a biblical scholar who was enormously influenced by Soares-Prabu, but also a student, friend and colleague. His first essay "Experience and Context: the Basis of Jesus' Dharma" explores how concrete contexts influenced Israel's understanding of God. It traces five phases God's self-revelation in the history of Israel, beginning with the patriarchs and culminating in the *Abba* experience of Jesus. The essay ends with some reflections

on God's self-revelation in the context of India with its dehumanizing poverty, oppressive caste system, and pervasive religiosity. The second article on prophetic theologizing traces the tradition of prophetic theologising in the Old Testament and in the symbolic deeds of Jesus and concludes by pointing out instances of prophets and prophetic theologizing in the contemporary Church, especially in India, instances drawn from his personal experience.

Helen Dantis, in her contribution, provides a feminine perspective on the Dharma of Jesus. She provides a panoramic view of the dharmic basis for taking a feminist perspective. The basis includes the Trinitarian relations, Jesus' own praxis, and Church teachings. She argues for a capability approach to empowering women. The essay by Denis Lemos focuses on the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew's presentation of the Dhrarma of Jesus. After giving it a cosmotheandric interpretation, he draws the implications of the Sermon for pastors.

The next two essays provide original extensions of the dharma of Jesus that are only remotely connected to the teachings of Soares-Prabhu. Beginning with a rather detailed understanding of *dharma*, Stephen Jayard provides a philosophy of science perspective and argues that the dharma of Jesus can enrich our understanding of science. George Karuvelil takes the etymological meaning of dharma as foundations and goes on to provide an original interpretation of the foundational experience of Christian faith in terms of "person-mysticism" or the experience of the divine in the human person of Jesus. Here we see a clear shift in the understanding of foundational experience: Soares-Prabhu deals with the foundational experience of Jesus (the *Abba* experience); Karuvelil deals with the experience of the disciples of Jesus.

George Karuvelil, SJ
Chief Editor

Notes:

1 Francis X. D'Sa, S.J., "The Concerns of George M. Soares-Prabhu, SJ" in Francis X. D'Sa (ed.), Theology of Liberation: An Indian Biblical Perspective, Collected Writings of George M. Soares-Prabhu, S.J., Vol. 4 (Pune: Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, 2001), xi.

2 This was first published in Scaria Kuthirakkattel, SVD (ed.), BiblicalSpirituality of Liberative Action, Collected Writings of George M. Soares-Prabhu, S.J., Vol. 3 (Pune: Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, 2001), 3-12.

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The Dharma of Jesus

George Soares-Prabhu, SJ†
Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, Pune

Abstract: Beginning with Jesus' own foundational experience of God as *Abba*, as unconditional love, the author narrates how this experience becomes the source of his dharma. It enabled him to be free from internal and external conditioning, to be totally free for God and the people. His solidarity with the marginalized of society is incarnational and he was able to withstand the ensuing conflict even to the cross, and ultimately to the resurrection.

Keywords: *Abba* experience; freedom; agape; justice; solidarity; conflict and the cross

Every religious tradition begins with an originary experience of the Absolute Mystery that we call God. The Christian tradition begins with Jesus' experience of God. This is the starting point of the dharma of Jesus understood both as the dharma which he practised (Jesus' dharma) and the dharma he preached (Christian dharma).

The God-Experience of Jesus

Jesus experienced God as unconditional love. He did this, probably, at his baptism by John, at a moment when, in a great act of solidarity, he identified himself with sinful Israel (Mk 1:9-11). The experience irrupted into his life, shattering (as all such call experiences do) the ordinary patterns of existence, and impelling him to adopt the life of an itinerant charismatic preacher who announced in deed and in word (in miracle and in parable, in table fellowship with outcastes and in controversy with the leaders of his people), the imminent coming of God's Rule, that

is, of God's long awaited definitive act of salvation. His God-experience allowed Jesus to address God as *Abba* (loving Parent), a name which, like all names for God, is an invocation rather than a description; and which therefore tells us more about our own alienated situation and the way to redeem it, than it does about the absolute mystery that is God. *Abba* is the usual invocation Jesus used to address God in prayer (Mt 11:25; Mk 14:36; Jn 11:41), and 'my/your Father' is the standard expression he used to speak about God (Mt 5:45, 48; 6:1-9; 7:21; 10:32; etc.). In a religious tradition which stressed the transcendence of God to such an extent that God's name was never uttered, this usage of Jesus was absolutely unique. God is never directly addressed as 'Father' in the Hebrew Bible; God is addressed as 'Father' with a qualification ('Our Father in the heavens' or 'Our Father our King') in rabbinic texts of the time of Jesus. But nowhere in Jewish tradition is God ever addressed simply as 'Father', much less by the far more informal and intimate locution *Abba*. The language of Jesus, then, is unique and points to a unique experience of God.

Like every great religious teacher, Jesus shares his God-experience with his not always receptive followers. "No one knows the parent but the child," he says "and those whom the child has chosen to reveal the parent" (Mt 11:27). Jesus claims to 'know' the Parent. In biblical language to 'know' means to 'experience', 'to enter into intimate relationship with' – a relationship as intimate as that between man and woman in the closeness of the act of love (Gen 4:1). Jesus therefore experiences God as a loving parent; and he gifts this experience to those who follow him.

Indeed to be a follower of Jesus means precisely to share in this God-experience of his. What makes a person a Christian is not professing certain beliefs, nor practising particular rituals,

nor undergoing an initiation rite, nor belonging to a recognizable social group, nor even confessing the name of Jesus, though all these are inevitable stages in the evolution of a religious tradition. To be disciple of Jesus means to experience God the way that Jesus experienced God. That is why one can say 'Lord, Lord' and prophesy in the name of Jesus, or cast out demons in his name or do many mighty works in his name, and still not be acknowledged by him as his follower (Mt 7:21-23); and one may not have known Jesus at all and yet be recognized as one of his own, because one has fed the hungry, given shelter to the homeless, clothed the naked, cared for the sick and visited those in prison (Mt 25:31-46). The routinization of charisma, inevitable in the development of any movement, has transformed the community of disciples which Jesus gathered around him into a crowd of competing (often squabbling) churches, defining themselves in terms of doctrine (*homoousios* or *homoiousios*), ritual (communion under one species or under two), or forms of organization (monarchical papacy, collegial episcopacy or 'democratic' presbyterate). In the process we have perhaps forgotten that the one thing necessary for Christian self-definition, is the experience of God's love which impels us to love in return and to reach out in effective compassion to those in need. But Jesus has not forgotten this. His fellowship is not limited to the churches which carry (and too often profane) his name. It reaches out to the many who will "come from east and west, and from north and south and sit at table in the kingdom of God" (Lk 13:29).

The Freedom of Jesus

The God-experience of Jesus liberates him. For love experienced always leads to a freedom from inner conditioning, that is, from the compulsions and fears that hold us in bondage.

Are not such bondages, after all, always the result of an absence of love? Is not the concupiscence of the eyes (our consumerism) and the concupiscence of the flesh (our eroticism) ultimately compensation mechanisms through which we strive to make up for the emptiness caused by the absence of love in our lives; and is not the pride of life (our macho assertiveness and craving for power) ultimately a defence mechanism through which we try to cover up the absence of self-worth we experience because we lack love? Is not the poverty of our people the result of our greed and of the structures of exploitation that greed engenders? Is not their social rejection on grounds of race, caste or gender, and the profound psychic scars this leaves, a result of our 'patriarchy', our urge to dominate, and of the vast structures of domestic and societal oppression it creates? Does not our unfreedom make others unfree? Does not Mammon (personal bondage) generate and is it not generated by Satan (structured evil)? Love leads to freedom (to personal freedom and ultimately to structural freedom) because it frees us from the constraints and fears, the doubts and compulsions that paralyse us.

Jesus, who has experienced God as love, was supremely free. We marvel at his freedom. He was driven by no demons of greed or ambition. "The Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head" he said (Lk 9:58), describing the state of religious indigence that he had freely chosen. "The Son of Man has come not to be served but to serve and to lay down his life as a ransom for many," he announced (Mk 10:45), offering a pointed and moving summary of his life and mission. In a society that was politically colonized, socially patriarchal, and religiously conservative, he moved around with absolute freedom and authority.

The freedom of Jesus is all the more remarkable because he lacked position and power. Jesus could claim no religious prestige; he was not a priest born into a priestly family. He enjoyed

no intellectual status: he was not a recognized theologian who had been trained in a scribal school (Jn 7:15). He commanded no political power. He did not enjoy the privileges of wealth. Yet he taught with *authority* in word and in deed. "The crowds were astonished at his teaching," we are told on the occasion of the first miracle he performed (Mk 1:27); and of the first 'sermon' he delivered (so Mt 7:28). They were astonished because "he taught as one having authority and not as the scribes" (Mk 1:22). The scribes of course had authority because of their patiently acquired knowledge of the Torah and of the oral traditions which had grown up around it. But the authority of Jesus was not like theirs. It was not 'legal' authority based on learning and institutional sanction. It was charismatic and prophetic authority derived from his experience of God. The authority of Jesus, as he will explicitly affirm when challenged to justify his 'cleansing' of the Temple, is associated with his baptism by John (Mk 11:27-33). It derives from the foundational experience of God, given to him (as we have seen) at this baptism[1]

This authority of Jesus enables him to confront the religious, social and political establishment of his people with sovereign freedom. He re-interprets the Law with an authority which seems to parallel the authority of God himself. "It was said to them of old" (that is, 'God said to our ancestors'), he announces, quoting not just rabbinic interpretations of the Law but the written Law itself (Mt 5:21, 27, 31, 33, 38); and then goes on to correct this with his "but I say to you" (Mt 5:21-48). No prophet has ever spoken like this. The prophets spoke in God's name, with God's authority, communicating God's message. "Thus says the Lord" was the prophet's way of speaking; but Jesus says: "I say to you". Even if these antitheses of Matthew's Sermon on the Mount may be editorial compositions formulated at a time when Jesus was already

interpreted as the founder of the New Israel standing over and against the formative Judaism of Jamnia which stood for the old, they carry the memory of the remarkable authority that Jesus must have shown in his interpretation of the Law.

Such authority is very evident in the Sabbath controversies which were a conspicuous feature of Jesus' ministry, attested to in all the Gospel traditions (Mk 2:23-28; 3:1-6; Lk 13:10-17; Jn 5:1-18; 9:1-34). Jesus breaks the Sabbath whenever human need demands it, justifying his infringement of the sacred law of Sabbath rest with the radical principle that "the Sabbath is made for the human person, not the human person for the Sabbath" (Mk 2:27). Every human institution or law (no matter how sacred) is thus subordinated to human need.

The pervasive law of purities, which so restricted every aspect of Jewish life, is abrogated by Jesus in the single striking observation that "nothing which enters anyone from the outside can make the person unclean; it is what comes out of the person that makes him or her unclean" (Mk 7:15). All purity laws are thus abolished at a stroke. Cleanness or uncleanness is not a matter of ritual purity, but of the disposition of the heart. "Nothing in itself is unclean," as Paul rightly understands Jesus to have said (Rom 14:14). No places are of themselves holy, for God is to be worshipped not in Jerusalem or in Gerizim, but in spirit and in truth (Jn 4:21-23) – wherever, that is, a community assembles in sincerity and love. No person is more sacred than another, for there is only one Parent, God, and all humankind are brothers and sisters (Mt 23:8-10). There is here a radical de-sacralisation of the cosmos, a radical de-hierarchisation of society (that is, a radical affirmation of the equality of humankind) and a radical shift from an ethics of observance (ritual or legal) to an ethics of love ('the heart').

In a patriarchal society where women were numbered with children and slaves as 'minors' with diminished responsibility, and a restricted role in worship and in public life, Jesus admits them into his movement as helpers and disciples. Not only do women follow him to take care of his needs (Lk 8:2), but Mary who sits at his feet listening to what he teaches (and so assuming the role of a disciple) is commended for having chosen "what is best" (Lk 10:42). Even in a tradition which has suffered heavy editing, coloured by patriarchal biases, the role of women in the Gospels is striking. Three conspicuous incidents in the ministry of Jesus, each heavy with theological significance, feature women (Jn 4:4-42; Lk 7:36-50; Mk 14:3-9). In all these the women are not only occasions of significant teaching, but emerge favourably in comparison with their male counterparts. The spontaneous testimony of the Samaritan woman, who after conversing with Jesus proclaims him as the Christ to her people (Jn 4:28-30), contrasts with embarrassed silence of the disciples who do not dare to question Jesus (Jn 4:27). The moving love shown to him by the woman who 'had lived a sinful life', but shows by her loving actions that she is now a forgiven sinner who has experienced God's forgiving love, is contrasted by Jesus with the indifference of Simon the Pharisee, whose unloving behaviour shows him to be the real unforgiven 'sinner', one who cannot love because he has not experienced forgiveness. The sensitive loyalty shown to Jesus on the eve of his passion by a woman at Bethany contrasts sharply with the ideological fixation of the disciples and the disloyalty of Judas. This contrast is carried a great step further in the stories of Passion and Resurrection, where the women disciples of Jesus are found at the cross and at his tomb, when the male disciples have all abandoned him and fled (Mk 15:40-41, 47; 16:1-8).

So like all genuine freedom the freedom of Jesus was

born of love (his experience of God as *Abba*) found its fulfilment in love (in his passionate concern for people). Where the Pharisees (the Jews of strict observance) and the Sectarians of Qumran tried to renew their society through a rigorism that sought to enforce the observance of the Law as strictly as possible, Jesus opted for a radicalism which sought to realize as perfectly as possible the spirit of the Law, which he saw embodied in love (*agape*), that is in interhuman concern.

The Love (Agape) of Jesus

That is why Jesus could sum up his ethic in a love commandment (Mt 22:34-40) which he formulated by joining the great text of Judaism, (Deut 6:4-5 ("The Lord your God is one God and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind") to a little known text from the Holiness Code of Leviticus, Lev 19:18 ("You shall love your neighbour as yourself"). As understood by Jesus this commandment does not ask us to love God *and* neighbour as if these were to be two different objects to our love. Rather Lev 19:18 is meant to be an interpretation of Deut 6:4-5. The content of Deuteronomy ("You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart") is spelled out by Leviticus ("You shall love your neighbour as yourself"). The love command of Jesus therefore reads: "You shall love the Lord your God will all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind, this means, you shall love your neighbour as yourself". To love God means, concretely, to love neighbour. The one commandment that Jesus gives us as the 'great commandment', one that founds and includes all the others, is, therefore that we love God by loving neighbour.[2]

"Who, then, is my neighbour?" Is not this for Jesus a question as significant as that other Christological question he will ask, "Who do you say I am?" In defining 'neighbour' Jesus allows no distinctions of caste, race, gender or class (Lk 10:

30-37). For the love with which we love our neighbour is not a human disposition (determined by human prejudices or preference) but it is the reflex of the experience of God's love for us. To the extent we experience God's love, we love our neighbour the way God loves us. But God loves us unconditionally. His love is not a response to our goodness. "God does not love us because we are good," as Augustine has somewhere said, "we are good because God loves us." God loves because God *is* love. God's love is not a reaction but an action. God loves the way the sun shines – because it must. That is why our love for neighbour, which issues from (1 Jn 4:4) and images (Mt 5:43-48) God's love for us, can make no conditions and put no limits. It reaches out to the unrewarding, undeserving, even those hostile to us (Lk 6:32-36).

But by 'love' Jesus does not understand primarily friendship, or fellowship or erotic passion – all these (more or less correctly) are understood as 'love' today. The *agapç* which the New Testament uses as its own very special term, stands rather for an active, effective concern. It is best understood perhaps as the attitude of those who, because they have experienced God as Parent, experience (and not merely talk about) their fellow human beings as brothers and sisters, and so respond spontaneously to their needs. Like the Buddhist attitude of 'mindfulness' the Christian attitude of *agapç* is thus an existential attitude, deriving from a change in one's being. The change is not (normally) a sudden, once and for all transformation as a 'conversion' is often understood to be, but a life-time process of growth. Christian life is a life-long lesson in love.

Agape then is effective love. The New Testament defines it as "doing good to" (Lk 6:35; 1 Thess 5:15) and understands this (as the parable of the Good Samaritan shows) as responding effectively to the real needs of the people we encounter. Love

implies an effective response to the whole spectrum of needs that we observe around us. Because it is increasingly evident that the effective response to many of our most urgent needs is necessarily a structural one, justice understood as a change of structures is an inescapable dimension of love.

Jesus and Justice

Jesus may not have been as aware as we are today of the structural origins of the evils of the society in which he lived. But he was committed to justice and to structural change because his proclamation of God's Rule implied the vision of a new society. The Rule of God that he announced was the realization of the 'alternative community' previsioned in biblical history at the Exodus, where Israel was liberated from bondage in Egypt that it might become God's people (Ex 6:2-7); and frequently invoked by the prophets who appear precisely when the monarchy has reversed the thrust of the Exodus (1 Sam 8:6-18; 1 Kings 5:13) to protest against the perversion of the community that Israel was meant to be (Is 3:13-15; Am 2:6-8; Mic 2:1-11). The proclamation of God's Rule by Jesus is both a promise and summons. It looks forward to the ultimate realization, through the dialectical interaction of God's grace and human effort, of this alternative community, which is best depicted in the core metaphor implicit in all the teaching of Jesus, wherein humankind is imaged as 'the family of God'.

As part of the realization of this vision, Jesus (who shares the apocalyptic worldview of the time) sees the coming of the God's Rule as end of Satan's reign. Satan is the "prince of the world" (Jn 12:31), ruling the world through demons and demonic people. Satan stands, as we would say today, for structured evil, organized might (the 'legion' of Mk 5:1-20). It is this Satanic power-structure that Jesus combats through his controversies and

his healings and exorcisms. The miracles of Jesus are therefore not to be taken as isolated actions of compassion (relief work). As such, the thirty or so healings and exorcisms that Jesus performed would not have amounted to very much. Rather they are an indication that God's Rule has dawned and that Satan's rule has ended. "The strong man has been bound and his goods taken away" (Mk 3:27). The Satanic power structure has been destroyed. The miracles of Jesus are the subversion of a power structure and so manifestations of a structural change. They invite us to our own subversion of the Satanic structures that we see hindering the coming of God's Rule in our world today.[3]

So the love exercised by Jesus in a loveless world necessarily leads to conflict. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness tries to overcome it (Jn 1:5). Such conflict is not a negation of the absolute universality of God's love. God loves every person and all things. But though it is universal in its object, God's love is differentiated in its action. So while the *agape* of Jesus reaches out indeed to all, it affects different people in different ways. The same love which prompts Jesus to say "Blessed are the poor" leads him to announce "Woe to you rich" (Lk 6:20-27). The concern he shows when he identifies his mission as the proclamation of the good news to the poor (Lk 4:16; Mt 11:5) is paralleled by the concern implied in his warning that "it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for the rich to enter the kingdom of God" (Mk 10:25). In an unequal world where class, caste, and race and gender conflicts exist, love must take sides. For nothing, it has been said, is more unjust (or more unloving) than to divide equally among unequals, or to treat oppressor and oppressed alike. The love of Jesus leads him to make (as the God of Bible makes) an unambiguous option for the poor and the outcast, because they are, as the Bible sees them, always victims of oppression.[4]

Because of this self-defining option, the life of Jesus is lived out in the twin dimensions of solidarity and conflict..5 These are the complementary expressions of his God-experience. The Gospels show Jesus living a life of progressive identification with the poor and of growing conflict with those who oppress them.

Solidarity with the Poor: Incarnation

Born into what we call a lower middle class family belonging to the *petite bourgeoisie* (the class of artisans, who own the tools of their trade), Jesus de-classes himself becoming an itinerant religious beggar with nowhere to lay his head (Lk 9:58). He breaks with his family to join the family of God made up of all those who do the will of God, which is to love (Mk 3:31-35). He abandons himself wholly to God's provident care (Mt 6:28-34) depending for his livelihood on the casual help provided by sympathizing friends (Lk 8:1-2). A well known religious teacher, he associates with outcasts, becoming an untouchable with the untouchables. He touches a leper (incurring ritual uncleanness) to welcome him back to human fellowship (Mk 1:40-42). He dines with the ritually unclean and socially ostracised tax collectors and sinners, incurring the hostility of the religious elite (Lk 15:2; Mk 2:16), and demonstrating without any possibility of doubt that there are no 'outcasts' before God.[6]

Conflict with the Powerful: The Cross

The solidarity of Jesus with these victims of economic, social and political oppression is not merely a passive solidarity which assumes and endures their lot. It leads to a confrontation with the religious and political establishment which oppresses ultimate sources of oppression. Jesus confronts the theological

establishment (the scribes) to free people from a burdensome interpretation of the ritual and moral law (Mk 2:1-3:6); the religious establishment (the chief priests) and their misuse of the Temple, to protest against the exploitation of the people in the name of religion (Mk 11:15-18); and the political establishment (Herod) whose threat to kill him (a clear sign of the political impact of his ministry) he dismisses with contempt (Lk 13:31-33). The life of Jesus is thus riddled with conflict. Indeed conflict spills over even into the Gospel narrative of his infancy (Mt 2:1-23; Lk 1:27-32), and finds its resolution only with his death on the cross.[7]

The Cross is therefore no arbitrary intrusion into the life of Jesus. It is the natural outcome of a life of solidarity with the poor and the outcast and of confrontation with the powerful who oppress them. Conflict with the rich and the powerful leads inevitably to the fatal confrontation which could only end with a foreseen and freely accepted death. And this death becomes the appropriate fulfilment of a life lived out with and for the poor and the outcast. For on the cross Jesus is wholly poor and totally outcast. Identification and confrontation have here reached their furthest possible limits. Jesus is one with all the marginalized and all the martyred victims of the earth. The journey from the centre to the periphery which, as Kosuke Koyama reminds us, was the basic movement of his life now reaches its goal.[8] A life of freedom and love expressing itself in a radical identification with the poor and the outcast and a resolute confrontation with all the oppressive powers of the world arrives at its paradoxical outcome baffling all human calculation, where "God's power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor 12:9); and where "the foolishness of God is (shown to be) wiser than the human wisdom and the weakness of God stronger than human strength" (1 Cor 1:25). For the

Cross shows forth not just the death of Jesus but announces his resurrection as well.

The Goal of Life: The Resurrection

The Resurrection of course escapes the net of history. Unless it is conceived as the resuscitation of a corpse it is not an observable, locatable event which can be grasped by the historian's empirically oriented tools. It is however accessible through the two past historical traces it has left (the empty tomb and the appearances of Jesus to his first disciples), both of which can be reached (though not easily) through the confused, sometimes contradictory and not easily decipherable stories about them in the Gospels. But above all, the resurrection is accessible to us in our present experience of the living Jesus, which assures us that Jesus is alive. "The Resurrection is not a doctrine that we try to prove or a problem that we argue about," Thomas Merton has said, "it is the life of Christ himself in us by the Spirit".[9]

Rooted in the past event of Jesus, made actual in the present experience of his living presence among us, the resurrection grounds our hope for the future, turning, as Leonardo Boff would say, all our *utopias* ('nowheres') into *topias* ('somewheres')[10] But this faith experience which grounds our hope is only available to us in a life of love. Because it anticipates the end of history, the resurrection of Jesus, which is God's overwhelming answer to our cry for life, "can be understood only through a praxis that seeks to transform the world."[11] Indeed the mystery of Jesus can be grasped only through praxis, because Jesus is essentially the way. It is not in constructing theoretical models about his being that we 'understand' Jesus (these alienate us from him), but in following him in the life of solidarity and conflict that is his way of life. We understand Jesus and his dharma when we begin to practise it.

Notes:

1 G.M. SOARES-PRABHU, "Jesus the Teacher: The Liberative Pedagogy of Jesus of Nazareth", Jeevadhara 12 (1982), 243-256.

2 G.M. SOARES-PRABHU, "The Synoptic Love-Commandment: The Dimensions of Love in the Teaching of Jesus", Jeevadhara 13 (1983), 85-103.

3 G.M. Soares-Prabhu, "The Miracles of Jesus: Subversion of a Power Structure?" in: S. Kappen (ed.), Jesus Today (Madras: AICUF, 1985), 21-29.

4 G.M. SOARES-PRABHU, "Jesus and the Poor", in: J. Murickan (ed.), Poverty in India: Challenges and Response (Bangalore: Xavier Board, 1988), 261-290.

5 G.M. SOARES-PRABHU, "The Spirituality of Jesus as a Spirituality of Solidarity and Struggle", in: J. Vattamattom and others (eds.), Liberative Struggles in a Violent Society [Forum Series 1], (Hyderabad: Forum Publications, 1991), 136-161.

6 G.M. SOARES-PRABHU, "The Table Fellowship of Jesus: Its significance for Dalit Christians in India Today", Jeevadhara 22 (1992) 140-159.

7 G.M. SOARES-PRABHU, "Jesus and Conflict", The Way 26 (1986), 14-23.

8 K. KOYAMA, "'Hallowed be Your Name'", International Review of Mission 69 (1980), 275, 280-282.

9 T. MERTON, *He is Risen* (Niles, IL: Argus, 1975), 10.

10 L. BOFF, *Jesus Christ Liberator: A Critical Christology for Our Time* (New York: Orbis Books, 1978), 135.

11 J. SOBRINO, *Christology at the Crossroads* (London: SCM Press, 1978), 259.

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Dharma of Jesus:Crossroads of Philosophy andTheology

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Abstract: In his keynote address Joyce Kaithakottil provides a dharmic reading of the first and last books of the Bible. He sees God asking human beings two crucial questions in the Book of Genesis, one about their rootedness in God and the other about their relationship to one another. The dharma of Jesus is the response of Jesus to these two questions. The Book of revelation is read as the continuing response of the Church to the same questions in the historical context of persecution in the Roman Empire.

Keywords: Book of Genesis; Book of Revelation; God's questions; Jesus' response.

1. Introduction

At the outset I appreciate the courage of Dr. Selva Rathinam, President of JDV, in asking me to deliver the key note address to the distinguished members present here for the seminar. I am really honored and I thank the president for the trust he has placed in me and encouraging me to take up this honorable task.

Most of my years as a priest, I was walking with the youth, especially in the peripheries. But there are two reasons for me to take up this task: one is my personal relationship with George Soares Prabhu and the other is my ever growing passion for the dharma of Jesus. I had the rare privilege of writing my BTh paper under the guidance of Soares. During this period of work, I did not develop any special affection for him as such, but his personality, his life style and theological reflections began to

challenge me personally. His classes were for me a source of energy and challenged me to examine my own value system and the value systems of the church in India. I should say, as a result of a serious reflection of the challenges he raised, four of us from the Papal Seminary decided to go and live outside the seminary in a semi-slum area in Vadagonsery. The "dharma of Jesus" challenged us to dialogue with the context and the text. Social context changed our perspective of reading the text: it demolished certain pseudo traditions, made us develop a new way of understanding sin, and so on. Since we were staying outside, we used to attend the Mass celebrated by Soares at noon in De Nobili College. Those masses gave me a glow of the foundational experience of the dharma of Jesus, that is, the experience of God's unconditional love for every human person.

Standing at the cross roads of dharma of Jesus as proposed by Soares-Prahbu, I am trying to situate the theme in the context of the Book of Genesis and the Book of Revelation. It is my humble opinion that there is a thread running through the whole Bible beginning from the Book of Genesis till the Book of Revelation. I do not go into a detailed description of the same here. The dharma of Jesus is framed by the first and last books of the Bible.

2. Book of Genesis: God's Two Great Questions

As we read the first two chapters of Genesis we realize that humans are in perfect harmony or rather they are in communion with God, with one another, with oneself and with nature. But in the next chapter we understand that humankind has shunned God's words and listened to the words of the serpent. They have slipped away from God's protective presence and started journeying on their own path. But Yahweh confronts them and asks them a very pertinent question, the first question of

God in the Bible: "Where are you"? It is evident that it was not a geographical question but clearly a theological one. "Where do you stand in relation to me?" It is a call to return to the experience of God's unconditional love and put their trust in the caring God of creation and rediscover the experience of freedom they enjoyed. God does not stand away from the human situation. He seeks a response from the fearful and ashamed human beings. The people who walked with God (Gen 3:10) began to run away from him. They began to fear God and consider other beings as a threat. Having lost their oneness with nature, they begin to feel a sense of insecurity and shame. Our fundamental, biblically informed, insight is that our worth and security are grounded in the unconditional love of God. Moving out of God's caring love has led humanity to dissonance in inter-human relationships, between humans and God, between human and non-human world, and dissonance within self.

One of the intentions of the temptation is to question the mental image of God. God is portrayed as an enemy than a loving parent. The method is to twist and misquote God's words with regard to prohibition. God is presented as cruel. This is what the serpent implied by distorting the words of prohibition. But both God's permission and prohibition are issued from his sheer goodness and love. The primordial experience of humanity in the Garden of Eden is the experience of oneness with God, with others with himself and with all of God's creation.

According to T.E.Fretheim, a biblical theologian, the key phrase that leads to the eating of the fruit is "God knows". ("God knows that when you eat of it, your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Gen 3:5). It is true that their eyes are opened but they see the world differently and each other differently, entirely through their own eyes. On the other hand, it highlights the fact that God has not told them the full

truth. The question then arises is whether God could be fully trusted, because God has kept something beneficial from the humans. The issue of knowledge at its deepest level is an issue of trust. Can the humans trust God even if they do not know everything? Can they trust that God has their best interests at heart? The primal sin, therefore, may be defined as mistrust of God and God's unconditional love, which manifests itself in disobedience and other behaviors.[1] God's first question to the humankind is left unanswered.

We could see a movement from a vertical crisis (Gen 3:1-24) to a horizontal crisis of relationship in the following chapter. The loving relationship is broken and it has taken a violent turn. The text does not explain why God treats Cain and Abel differently. But in the prophetic literature God's reason for rejecting a sacrifice or an offering was that religious ritual had become a substitute for obedience and holy living. In the story of Cain and Abel we find a movement from creating life to destroying life; from intimacy to anger and resentment; from invoking the name of the Lord to lying to God; from living in the presence of God to alienation from God. Cain brutally kills his own brother Abel. God encounters the humankind in the person of Cain, which raises the second question of the Bible: "Where is your brother?" This is a call to declare one's stand in relation to the neighbor/brother sister. But God did not receive an answer to this question either. Instead, Cain questions God. God has not lost interest in the murderer (see 1 John 3:11-18). God marks Cain with a mark signifying both shame and security. The mark that God placed upon Cain is a sign of God's grace. This incident of God protecting Cain raises questions about the appropriateness of later eye-for-eye legislation (see Ex 21:23-24). The issue of the brother/sister is the ultimate theological crisis. God is waiting for an answer to his second question in the Bible.

The whole of Old Testament is to be seen as God's search for an answer to these two questions: "Where are you" and "Where is your brother"? He sent prophets to call people to answer these questions. It is clear from the twofold prophetic critique of the society, namely, religious and social, that the effort of the prophets was to make people answer the two questions asked by God. The first one is about their relationship with Yahweh and second one is about their broken relation with their own people. Prophets call Israel not to "forsake Yahweh for other gods" (Jer 2:20-28; 18:13-17; Ezek 6:1-7). In the words of Soares, "she is not to abandon her experience of the God who is utterly free and turn to the legitimizing gods" and thereby "turn Yahweh into an idol" (2001, 18). The prophets criticize social injustice and the exploitation of the poor and the oppression of the widows and orphans. The foundational event of Exodus had given them "a new experience of God and a new vision of society". The prophets are agents of this "alternate vision" and they also empower the listeners to recreate an alternate community[2] But the community failed to respond and give a definite answer to God's questions.

But God did not give up. He wanted a definite answer. Therefore, God takes initiative again, just as he had taken the initiative in the calling of Abraham, in liberating Israelites from their slavery in Egypt, in delivering them from exile, etc. This time the divine initiative is becoming human in the person of Jesus. The experience of freedom, love, and joy are to be reestablished by humankind because God's purpose of creation is destroyed by humanity. Here begins the new phase of salvation history and God's next attempt to find answers for his questions. How Jesus answered God's two questions is the point of our concern.

Jesus' experience of God as unconditional love has given him an alternate vision of society which is seen in his

proclamation of the Kingdom of God in word and deed. In the temptation narratives given by Matthew, Jesus categorically says: "Away with you, Satan". "Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him" (Matt 4:10). He rejects outrightly the compromise with the ungodly culture of worshiping Satan. I think that the temptation narratives could also be taken as the symbolic representation of Jesus' confrontation with the religious, social and political establishments of the society of his time with an inner freedom. Jesus' experience of God as *Abba*, probably at his baptism, made him a supremely free person. Jesus' experience of God's unconditional love made him fearless and he could say that "I am with my Father". Jesus answered the first question of God by his total trust in God's unconditional love. Soares presents this as the foundational experience of the dharma of Jesus[3]

How did Jesus answer the second question? While Cain shed the blood of his brother, Jesus shed his own blood on the cross and manifested his relation to the other. He revealed his love through his death and said: "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends" (Jn 15:13). Jesus gave his answer on Calvary. Disobedience of Adam to God's command led all to death (Rom 5, 12-19). Christ's acceptance of death was his ultimate 'Yes' to God and to humankind. The love for the neighbor is the "reflex of the experience of God's love for us" (Soares 2003, 8).

Jesus' experience of oneness with the Father, with others, with himself and with all of God's creation is in fact the primordial experience of humanity in the Garden of Eden. The radical freedom they enjoyed in God's presence is now seen in the person of Jesus. Jesus invites everyone to this experience through his proclamation of the kingdom of God, which is his vision of a new society born out of his experience of God as *Abba*. Jesus doesnot give any blueprint for the new society. But the two pillars of the

kingdom of God are the experience of God's love and our response to that love in loving our neighbor. This has been realized in the life of Jesus through his response to the two questions God has raised in the first book of the Bible. From these two answers of Jesus are derived the two commandments: Love of God and Love of neighbor, the two pillars for the building up of the Kingdom of God. This is practicing the dharma of Jesus.

3. Book of Revelation: Response to the Questions

How does the church give testimony to this dharma in the world in which she finds herself? We shall look at this question by turning to the Book of Revelation. There are a few reasons for me to turn to the last book of the Bible. The first reason is that the final vision of the Book of Revelation is the full consummation of the Kingdom of God and thereby the final and total destruction of evil in the world. Though we do not find the term "kingdom of God" frequently used in this book, the rule of God is its central concern. Secondly, we find a prophetic discernment of the historical situation of the church and the society in the Book of Revelation. According to P. Guttesen, a biblical scholar, there is always a contrapuntal tension between the heavenly reality (an alternate vision of society) and the earthly actuality. Finally, we find the dialectic between the expected future and the shaping of the present existence[4]

The Book of Revelation offers us no neutral perception of the context. It challenges us to adopt either the heavenly perspective, with an "alternate vision of society" born out of an experience of the divine or adopt the ideology of Rome, reconcile with the hegemony of imperial power, a kind of peaceful coexistence through compromise.

The imperial power of Rome is a system of violent oppression maintained by a system of political tyranny and

economic exploitation. John presents the demonic system through two symbols. Political and military power of the Empire is presented as the "Beast" or "Sea monster" (chs 13-17) and the economic exploitation of the imperial Rome is presented through the symbol of the Harlot of Babylon, Great Prostitute (chs. 17-18). These two are intimately related (Rev 17:3; R. Bauckham 1993, 35-36). John presents through these symbols what the world is. But he does not stop with the critique of the present. "Come out from Babylon, my people" (18:4) is John's call "against culture". He presents a vision of a radically new counter-definition of reality through the construction of a new symbolic universe which presents what the world should (will) be. While Babylon's economy is centripetal, privileging the central elite at the expense of those who occupy the periphery, the flow of goods in the New Jerusalem is centrifugal, the river of life flows from the throne, feeding the sap of trees that heal those battered by history (22:1-2).

The readers of the Book of Revelation, the persecuted Christians, are caught up in the conflict of sovereignties: Universal worship of God or worship of the Beast; Sovereignty of God or sovereignty of the Emperor. What is the dharma demanded of the Christians living within the idolatrous context? The choice of exclusive loyalty to the values of the kingdom would inevitably bring social hostility and political harassment. They are experiencing a crisis of values. According to Bauckham, another Biblical scholar, if only they adopt the standpoint of prophetic resistance to evil, in which faithfulness and endurance to the point of death are required, will the Christians share in the Lamb's victory. In other words, John of Patmos presents the role of Christians in this book in terms of an alternate vision of society to be accomplished in the world1. The Book of Revelation, according to M. Gilbertson, "has the effect of locating the present

earthly experience of the reader within a framework of ultimate reality. It also, however, refocuses back to the hard realities of earthly experience, now seen in the light of that ultimate perspective"[6].

It is in the light of the ultimate perspective that the story of the two witnesses in the Book of Revelation (chapter 11) is to be read. It represents the witnessing activity of the church in the world. It is the story of the prophetic witness of the community of believers in the hard realities of earthly experience but they have an alternate vision of society. The testimony of the church is meant to create a New Jerusalem. The presence of the prophetic witnesses is a counter presence to the presence of the dominant and oppressive culture of the time. Their presence is a presence of resistance and of involvement. The ministry of the church is inherently polemic and prophetic. The prophetic witness of the church, to create a New Heaven and New Earth in the midst of the hostile forces, "culminates not in the annihilation of their opponents but in their own martyrdom" (Koester, 109). That is the logic of the Bible. Jesus conquers not through domination but through sacrificial death. The central Christological symbol in the Book of Revelation is pointing to this victory: slaughtered Lamb standing. Jesus is called the faithful witness.

The Church in the world is taking over this dharma of Jesus. Through the faithful witness of the church, what is true in heaven becomes true on earth. They are modeling their lives after the life of Jesus, the faithful witness par excellence. There emerges a New Heaven and a New earth through the faithful witness of the church in the world. Christ has fulfilled the purpose of God through his sacrificial death and uncompromising faithful witness to the world. The church in the same way has given faithful witness in the world in order that the world may be converted and become part of God's people. The early Christians carried forward the

definite answer given by Jesus through his life. They answered the first question by accepting God's sovereignty and resisting the sovereignty of the imperial power. They refused to compromise with the ungodly culture of imperial Rome and its oppressive and exploitative ways. They responded to the second question by shedding their blood for the values of the Kingdom, for they loved not their lives unto death (Rev 12:11). Babylon, symbol of economic exploitation and oppression drank the blood of the saints and the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.

The critique of the present scenario of the church in India I shall leave to the impressive audience here present. We can ask whether the church has lost the sense of faithful witness. It will tell upon both the personal and social dimension of the prophetic witness. Perhaps the church in India is playing a very good role of "systematic distraction" from its role, what Pascal called "divertissement". Have we lost Dante's vision of that "love which moves the sun and the other stars"?

4. Conclusion

Let me conclude by using an imagery of a tree. If the Christological stem is the dharma of Jesus, its theological roots are the two theological questions in the first book of the Bible and ecclesiological branch of the dharma of Jesus is the faithful witness of the Christians moving towards the creation of New Heaven and New Earth in the last book of the Bible. The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of God as the divine throne descends from heaven to the earthly realm in which no trace of the old order will be found (Rev 21:8, 27; 22:15). And then we will hear a voice: Behold the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them" (Rev 21:3). This was the first experience in the Garden of Eden. This is the experience Jesus had reestablished

for humanity. This is the experience that the Jesus-community has to maintain throughout its troubled history.

Post script: "Synod Assemblies are not meant to discuss beautiful and clever ideas, or to see who is more intelligent. They are meant to better nurture and tend the Lord's vineyard, to help realize his dream, his loving plan for his people". (Pope said in the homily during the opening Mass for the Synod).

Notes:

1. Cf. T.F. Fretheim, "The Book of Genesis" in *NIB* Vol. I, p. 361
2. Cf. George M. Soares-Prabhu, *Theology of Liberation:An Indian Biblical Perspective*, Collected writings of George M. Soares-Prabhu, Vol. 4, (ed.) Francis X. D'Sa, JDV, Pune, 2001, p. 18-19.
3. Cf. George M. Soares-Prabhu, *Biblical Spirituality of Liberative Action*, Collected writings of George M. Soares-Prabhu, Vol. 3, (ed.) Scaria Kuthiralkkattel, JDV, Pune, 2003, p. 3-4.
4. Cf. Guttesen, Poul. F., *Leaning into the Future: Kingdom of God in the Theology of Moltmann and the Book of Revelation*, (Princeton Theological Monograph series 117), Pickwick, Eugene, 2009, p. 5-10.
5. Cf. Richard Bauckham, *Theology of the Book of Revelation*, Cambridge University Press, p.45-47.
6. Michael Gilbertson, *God and History in The Book of Revelation: New Testament Studies in Dialogue Pannenberg and Moltmann*. SNTSS 124, Cambridge 2003, p.108

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'*Dharma* of Jesus' for Indian Christian Theology Today

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Abstract: This essay focuses on the implications of Soares-Prabhu's understanding of the dharma of Jesus for Indian Christian theologizing. Beginning with a brief introduction to the concept of dharma as understood by Soares-Prabhu, the foundational experience of Jesus (God as abba) is placed into the context of the three cycles of divine-human engagement in the Bible. This experience that led to the fearless mission of Jesus invites the Church of today to follow in his footsteps, to engage in liberative action on behalf of the poor and the outcasts, and also on behalf of an interconnected, holon universe. But embracing such 'endangering spirituality' becomes possible only when the agents of liberation work out a pedagogy to attain their own inner freedom.

Key words: Indian Christian theology; mission; liberation; abba experience; radical concern.

At the start of this article, allow me to pay my homage to two very courageous people of our time – Satyarthi and Malala (Nobel Prize Winners) who are really dharmic people, in their life of witness.

A second introductory note may be in place. It is about the scholarly discussions of the Muslim scholar Reza Aslan. He has established himself as a scholar on historical Jesus and has been quite persuasive in presenting a genuine portrait of Jesus of history distinguishing from Jesus of faith. He argues that three facts are undisputable in Jesus: i) that he was a Jew and preached within Judaism; everything around him was of Jewish context; ii) that he initiated a movement of the kingdom that was so different from other movements; iii) that he was crucified for sedition and he died as a condemned. All this happened in a turbulent period

of Judaism dominated by the Romans and controlled by the rich religious aristocracy.[1]

I am sure Soares whose contributions on '*Dharma* of Jesus' we are discussing, would have approved of these findings; If I were to redo my article, I would do it as a conversation between Aslam and Soares. May be such a study is in place in the context of the unrest in the world around us on religious issues.

Let me add another introductory note. The wisdom traditions of the universe subscribe to many traditions of *dharma,* biblical included. How do they fit in with other traditions such as science, philosophy and literarature? Can they also be considered as forms of *dharma?* Or is *dharma* an exclusively religious notion? These questions require larger treatment and we shall not attempt it here.

The development of the paper progresses in three parts: first, without being exhaustive, I try to highlight what I consider the salient features of the dynamics of '*Dharma* of Jesus' in Soares-Prabhu's thinking. Based on them I will point out certain features of an Indian Christian theology emerging from his thinking. The concluding section will dwell on some critical remarks.

1. Dynamics of Dharma of Jesus.

In the fourth volume of the Collected Writings of George Soares Prabhu (CWG), we find a treatment of the term '*dharma*'. Quoting Kuppuswamy, he says that *Dharma* stands for religious observance, righteousness, justice, conformity in law, conformity to custom, obedience to the social order, sense of duty etc. This means that the term *dharma* has religious, moral, ethical and legal significance. Further on referring to Kane, he says that *dharma* refers to ordinance, usage, duty, right, justice, morality, virtue, religion, good works, and thus the term is all comprehensive and has legal and juridical significance, while Dandekar calls it

precepts that help material and spiritual sustenance and growth of individuals and society.[2]

Dharma is what I believe (e.g., Hindu-Dharma, Christian-Dharma); it is also what I am supposed to do – my family or caste obligations (*kula-dharma*, or *jati-dharma*). Traditionally *dharma* has been identified with *varnashrma-dharma* referring to the four castes and the four stages of life. *Dharma* is the organization of social life through well-regulated social classes/ castes and organization of one's life within those classes into various stages. In the Gita, there is insistence of *sva-dharma* which is often considered as specification of *varna dharma*. Soares seems to prefer a more radical understanding of *sva-dharma* as doing of action that inheres in one's own nature; i.e. individual finding his *sva-bhava* and developing accordingly. Ideally therefore *dharma* should spring from the inner depths of one's personal spontaneity. "In practice it is too often the result of interiorized values which function as an 'eternal law taken into the psyche' and so enable a dominant minority to control the community through 'hegemony' by means of a permanently organized consent."[3] Internal values should in fact liberate exigencies of human freedom rather than domesticate it.

The real *sva-bhava* in the humans is being the child of God; one acts and behaves from that *sva-bhava* considering one's own identity and that of others as children of God. Accordingly, for George Soares, *dharma* of Jesus is the complex way that consists of religious insight and ethical concern (of experience, world-view and value) which determine the life-style that Jesus proclaimed and practiced, which has been concisely formulated for us in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5-7). It represents a pattern of behavior appropriate to a follower of Jesus; Sermon on the Mount is the authentic *dharma* of Jesus – the pattern of existence he lived by and proclaimed.

Dharma of Jesus emerges from the core experience of Jesus as the beloved of his *abba*; it unfolds itself in three cycles of Yhwh, of Jesus and of the mission. It finally demands three fold *sva-dharma*: i) of freedom, ii) of sonship and of iii) radical concern. Let us elaborate on this unfolding.

2. The NT Core experience.

The core experience of Jesus, according to Soares, is recognizing himself and of being acknowledged as the beloved of his Father. This experience of God as the Father - *abba* - symbolized at the baptism, defined Jesus' self, vision and mission.[4] Abba is goodness. This is the foundational and original moment. Jesus was so deeply rooted in the self of his Father, that he felt total belonging to his *abba*. He so identified with Abba's vision and mission that he entrusted himself for his reign and his realm. This provided him with total inner freedom; a freedom from all disordered attachments to people, power, position and things. He grew into the radicalism of this inner freedom progressively and intensely, as he fearlessly confronted the powers that contradicted his Abba's vision and mission and courageously befriended the needy and the outcast with the profound concern of his father. This fearless confrontation and the courageous identification marked his life and led him paschal way.

He was appalled to see the grip of Satan, the power of evil around. The little ones and the poor – the *anawim* of Yhw— were crushed under the weight of discrimination by the religious and political powers, especially the religious burden of narrow legalism. They suffered from diseases and disorders of all kinds. The healing and nature miracles were powerful symbols of his intent in confronting the oppressive powers and in identifying with the outcasts. He became a friend of the poor, the crippled, the marginalized, and the sinners, and engaged in table fellowship

with them as a sign of his Abba's rule[5] The disfigured, the diseased and the outcast received a new dignity and identity as children of God, to the displeasure of the religious and the political powers that controlled them.

3. Three Cycles in divine-human engagement

This core experience is expanded to include, review, and interpret the Biblical accounts in three cycles of Yhwh, of Jesus and the mission. Soares encases them into three cycles. He uses the term cycle, not stages, indicating that the divine pedagogy follows a cyclic pattern. What Yhwh accomplished with Israel remains true always, and is carried on in Jesus. What Jesus accomplished in himself and in his mission is true of God's ways with us always and is carried forward in mission. It is rather intriguing that Soares does not qualify the third phase as the cycle of the Spirit; instead he calls it cycle of mission. Does it show a rather weakened theology of Spirit in him? Is it because he wants to give greater role to ourselves in this cycle, invited to take the mission forward? It may be both.

3.1. *Cycle of Yhwh*

Soares sees the dynamics of the gospels as the continuation of the divine pedagogy right from the beginning of time: chaos is turned into order in and through creation, sin and slavery is transformed into liberation, and exile is responded with wholeness and harmony – this is the story of Israel. Each of these phases has a moment of liberation from chaos, sin and exile, and each has a moment of salvation/ wholeness – in creation, exodus and return. The low points in human journey are met with high points of divine response of forming and deepening covenant in an ever-widening movement of divine-human engagement.

God creates and recreates continuously. By liberating

them from slavery in Egypt, Yahweh desired to form them into a people, a contrast community, living in righteousness and compassion. Israel refuses to become a contrast community according to Yhwh's mind; it chooses to imitate neighbouring nations and worship their gods in order to become like them. Yhwh beckons them back through the prophets –criticizing them for domesticating YHWH, and for imitating other nations who rely on the might of their armies. Israel disowns the prophets and walks the way of 'pagans', letting the prophets die the death of a suffering servant. The pattern of the cycle of Yhwh continues in history with the two tendencies: to image Yhwh in one's own image, and to project 'nations' as models of power and success.

The biblical revelation is viewed in a linear movement from chaos to creation to sin; from sin to the re-constitution of the people of Israel to exile; then from exile to Jesus to the New Heavens.

3.2. *Cycle of Jesus*

Rooted in the core experience of being the beloved of his Abba, Jesus proclaims, inaugurates, enacts and accomplishes God's reign. He was absolutely sure that God's reign is not accomplished through coercive power, or through political machinations, or through magical works or by moral establishments. As a failed messiah, standing in the Jewish prophetic tradition, Jesus made it absolutely clear, according to Soares, that God's reign is the revelation of effective love.[7] Emerging from the baptismal waters of Jordan and strengthened by the affirmation as the beloved of Yhwh (Mk 1: 9-15), Jesus announced the kingdom of God and elaborated on it in the Sermon on the Mount. It is the new pedagogy of the new people of God founded on the compassionate love of the Father, defying the logic of the old order.

Soares explains the Sermon on the Mount in three *sutras*: i) Sermon on the Mount is not law but love; ii) Sermon on the Mount is not Law but Gospel, ii) Sermon on the Mount is a goal with directive norm.[8]

The first *Sutra* implies that one needs to interiorize the shift from external observance to interior intention and simplification of multiple precepts into unity of the fundamental Christian attitude – namely obedience to the love of God and radical concern of love for neighbor.

The second *sutra* means that the love to which Sermon invites us, is not a virtue among other virtues, but the total attitude resulting from the exposure to the divine love as experienced in Jesus. It is the natural life-style of a Christian gripped by the proclamation of the kingdom and the unconditional acceptance of God in Jesus.

The third *Sutra* indicates that we are urged on with power from within, welling up from an experience of the unconditional love of God, to produce 'fruits of love', rather than getting busy with 'works' under the goad of greed and guilt.

Sermon on the Mount is grounded on the experience of God's unconditional love. Jesus' own life is determined by his foundational experience of God as *abba*, the experience associated with his Baptism (John 1.32). His life and ministry was a sustained attempt to evoke this experience in his disciples, and in the people around through word and deed, through parables and healings. Sermon on the Mount is not just a law but an attitude, a perspective of seeing the world and looking at the world from the experience of unconditional love.

This new commandment of love is radical and innovative in that Jesus combines the well-known text of Dt 6:5 (to love God with all your heart and mind) with less known text of Lev

19:18 (to love one's neighbor) and makes it incumbent upon believer to live it. The combining of the two texts was an original and radical insight of Jesus. According to Soares no one except Jesus would have dared to put this obscure text of Lev 19:18 on to a level with the *shema* in Dt 6:4-5 – the great confession of Israel's faith. Thus the love commandment brings together in a unique manner the love of God (Dt 6:5) and love of neighbor (Lev 19:18) – arguing persuasively that one rests upon the other. Soares never gets tired of repeating this innovative and provocative teaching of Jesus.

For Soares, "Effective love (*agape*), then, will respond to the needs of the exploited and oppressed neighbor by engaging in action for the removal of structures that are responsible for such exploitation and oppression. In an unjust society, agape inevitably becomes a struggle for justice: it strives to set free the oppressed' (Lk 4:18).[9] Incidentally 'effective love' appears as the constant theme in the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius.

3.3. *Cycle of Mission*

Mission is to enter into the process of the reign of God and further its movement towards an end-time community. Gaudium et Spes (Vat II) speaks of the Church as a new human family by becoming a symbol and servant of God's reign; hence the primary task of the church, according to Soares, is to lead humankind and cosmos into God's reign. Soares is very clear in stating simply and forcefully that mission is to 'make God's love present'; it should be an effective love. It will not have any semblance of 'conquest or sale'. Hence Soares warns us not to identify mission with church growth; it is to impoverish it or distort it; church as institution should not be primarily concerned about itself.[10] Church as a community should be a living community making visible the primacy of God and primacy of God's reign; its horizon must be as big as the cosmos. The vision of the kingdom

implies ultimate freedom and liberation for all; this is how Father's heart and mind become real in terms of prophetic justice and equality for all.

Mission of Jesus implies shaping **a community of radical freedom** (from both internal compulsions towards greed and ambition, and from external constraints of a servile bondage to ritual and law), and a **community of radical universalism** (seeing all human beings as brothers and sisters because they are children of Abba and hence no discrimination at all).

This vision of the reign of God enabled Jesus to identify with the outcast and sinners and to confront the powers that are: the theological, religious and political establishments represented by the Pharisees, the Chief Priests and the Herods who burdened the poor and the lowly. This brought about conflict that led him to the death on the cross which is the ultimate revelation of the effective love of Father and the Son.

Soares argues from within the logic of the Mathean gospel, that 'Mission Command' in 28 (Mt) should be read in the light of Mt 5:13-16. Mission includes life of witness, act of healing, and formation of community etc. It is an invitation to be and to do 'good'. It is a radical orientation; an invitation to live the discipleship as the light and salt of the earth. This is the essence of discipleship and it is the dharma – the be-attitude. [11] According to Soares this 'Be-attitude discipleship' marked the early Christian community.

So the early church which grows out of the community of Jesus as a tree grows out of its seed, has no special places of worship (no temple, no synagogue, no church); no special cult objects to give physical expression to the deity (no murti, no ark of the covenant, no tabernacle); no special liturgical language (worship and instruction are in the common language of the people

– Aramaic in Palestine, Popular Hellenistic Greek in the Hellenistic world); no sacral priesthood (for the ministers of the community are never called sacred persons (hieris) in the New Testament, where Jesus alone is the one mediator and the one priest).

Then he asks: "If such typical 'religious' elements have crept into the later church as part of its 'inculturation' into the 'Hellenistic' world, may it not be because the followers of Jesus have not always found it easy to live up to the radicalism of their Master?"[12]

4. Three Qualitative Features of the Mission Cycle (Dharma of Jesus)

4.1. *A Dharma of Freedom.*

Jesus developed his *dharma* in opposition to Jewish legalism; the early Christians experienced their 'new sect' as *dharma* of freedom, liberating them from the oppressive burden of the Law (Mt: 11:28-30; Lk 11:4-15). Jesus proposes a new understanding of law that is more radical and liberating than the formal legalism of the Pharisees as described in the NT (Mk 2:23-28; 7:9-13; Mt 23:23). Jesus radicalizes law in terms of effecting true love. We need law because we are not yet at the fullness of eschatological existence; yet we are freed from the constraints of law because we live in the light of the resurrection. (Gal 5:1) Christ has set us free.[13]

4.2. *A Dharma of Sonship*

Soares says: "Ultimately it is this experience of sonship which is the heart of the dharma of Jesus". (p.206). Jesus' liberated attitude towards law originated from his experience of God as *abba*. This experience of love as totally unconditional calls for *'radical obedience'*; it is not an external obedience of law but an interior obedience of the heart at the service of the Father's

love.[14] Such obedience is radical and fulfilling and it constitutesus as humans.

4.3. *A Dharma of Concern*

Sonship in the New Testament is closely related to 'brotherhood' since to experience God as *abba* is to experience *human* as brother (and sister). Hence *dharma* of Jesus inevitably leads to *dharma* of concern (agape). Mt 5:43-48; 7:12; and indeed it is evidenced throughout the NT (Mt 22:34-40; Jn 13:34; Rm 13:8; 1 Cor 13: 1-13; 1 Pt 4:8; 1; Js 2:8; Jn 3:23; 2 Jn 5.)

Soares argues that Mt 22:34-40 urges us not so much to love God and neighbor, but to love God by loving neighbor. Acceptance of sonship is not a matter for bargaining, (we have no claim on God Lk 17:7-10) but to live out this sonship in love, joy, peace, gentleness, patience, faithfulness, self-control, and goodness. (Gal 5: 22ff). These fruits of the Spirit are the unmistakable marks of 'sonship', marks of *dharma* of Jesus. Not striving for works, but we are urged on by a power from within, welling up from God's unconditional love, and producing 'fruits of love' in return. 'Fruits' –the spontaneous outcome of our *svabhava*, of what we truly are, (every good tree produces good fruit – Mt 7:17), and not works, action strained after under the goad of guilt or of greed, ('no one will be justified by the works of law – Rm 3:20) are what the dharma of the Sermon on the Mount requires of us. [15] Concern for the neighbor is central to the *dharma* of Jesus; it must be universal - to all who are in need (Lk 10:29-37); and it must be gratuitous, without expecting any reward. (Lk 6:32). Eucharist is the act in which the community is created symbolically by sharing the bread and wine.

We shall conclude this description of Soares' *dharma* of Jesus with an account of his faith in Jesus·

> The man who reads the Gospels critically, with the freshness of its first hearers brought to them, does indeed meet Jesus in all his strangeness and fascination. He finds himself face to face with this man who fits no category and yet belongs to all, who is gentle yet strong, patient yet violent, conscious of his towering authority yet spending himself in service, so tolerant towards sinners yet so adamant against sin. He finds a Jesus utterly like us in his doubt and suffering and anguish, yet awesomely remote in his consciousness of his mission (for he knows that it is in his words and deeds that the rule of God comes), in his relationship to the Father (for which Jew would have dared to address God as Jesus did, as 'abba', 'dear Father'?), in his claim to absolute commitment (for what man could dare to say with Jesus 'he who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me'?). He meets Jesus dying on a cross, only to rise again, and there he learns to accept a life that is always threatened, and finds the courage to be.[16]

5. Implications for Indian Christian Theology

5.1. *Experience as the starting point of theologizing*

The scripture scholar in Soares traces Jesus' life back to its foundational moment as evidenced in the Gospels. The baptism of Jesus is depicted as the originating experience of his self-understanding and of his mission.

This is very significant for theology, especially for Indian Christian theology. In the classical Indian tradition, *Brahmajijnasa*, if followed in earnest, should lead to *anubhava* – an experience of God. The popular Indian tradition, rather than discussing God experience, try to lead people into God experience. Theology is challenged to start from experience and

to articulate that experience in a way that leads to such experience. Experience is often described as something subjective, emotional and inner and not 'objective' and rational. It is often contrasted with encounter or revelation that is 'verifiable' to some extent. However, in the true sense of the word, an experience is an encounter with Reality; that which takes me beyond me, that which relates me to the other, and thus fulfills me. In a genuine experience, the encounter with the reality draws me out of myself. It is this encounter – drawing me out of me – that makes experience the *sine qua non* of 'theology'. It is like the ek-sistence in Heidegger – something that stands out. This encounter takes place in actual, worldly, secular living. Experience is not in the narrow sense a privatized sensory moment, but an opening to the larger world and reality.

Experience is neither innerly (purely subjective) nor outwardly (purely objective); experience is in the relationality, in the relatedness of the self to reality. In Husserlian terms neither in phenomenon nor in noumeon but in their inter-relatedness.

As Landon Gilkey explains we need to avail 'limit experience' to encounter the reality. We are truly encountered at the 'limit' points either of joy or of pain and sorrow. Those limit moments enable us to encounter the Other, the opening up of horizons.

Jesus is drawn into the *abba* – his world and vision; that is starting point of his mission and self. This encounter takes place in the Jordan waters; it is an immersion into the waters of Jordan so that heavens are opened. This is the challenge for Indian Christian theology: to be immersed in the waters of the land so that an encounter takes place that takes us beyond ourselves, onto the beyond. God encounters in the sanctuary of our experience – taken in the comprehensive sense. This is a radical statement. We are encountered in us, we are led from within; in

the light of that encounter we become our own measure in the genuine sense of the word.

Unfortunately, we are accustomed to distrust our experience, we don't value our encounters, we are so alienated from ourselves that we look elsewhere for God. We have not devised ways and means of leading people to ek-xperience, we have not developed tools to value and analyze our experience, we are disappointing the Spirit working within us.

5.2. *Dharma of radical freedom as India's perennial quest for liberation.*

Soares elaborates on the dharma of Jesus for radical freedom. Freedom from any and every internal compulsion, and freedom to free others, especially from the bonds of law, disease and sin. Jesus is calling us for radical freedom which is a dangerous freedom because it brings us into conflict. 'Liberation' has been the perennial theme of Indian search. This has been interpreted in an exclusive other-worldly fashion. Jesus challenges us to take this notion to the world and people – to liberate them from every kind of oppression - internal and external.

We are not in conflict because we are not free, we don't risk the road of freedom: we want to be comfortable in our (false) security. The 'endangering spirituality' of Jesus has been domesticated by philosophical jargons and theological niceties. We escape into them because we do not want to travel the road less travelled – the road to freedom – confronting ourselves radically and thus getting empowered.

We have not worked out pedagogy to realize the inner freedom; we are so much dictated by our fears, attachments, mind-set and ego; we are the dictators of ourselves. Our theological teaching and learning has not enabled us to free ourselves from the dictates of our mind-set and our fears. We

talk about liberating others when we are slaves to our egos. This is where Indian theology is challenging us. Without engaging in a personal liberative process,theologizing is not possible.

5.3. *Mission as dharma of radical concern.*

Soares emphasizes much on the radical concern of Jesus. It is a radical concern for brothers and sisters because they belong to the same *abba* father. It invites a radical commitment to the other and radical universalism beyond all religion, caste and nationalities.

Often our radicality begins and ends with fighting for minority rights, with the protection of rights and privileges of individual churches' Rites, arguing for religious rights in order to protect our resources. The radical concern of the Gospels is domesticated into safeguarding the rights and privileges of the community. The universalism of the gospel breaks down all the borders. It is an ever-widening circle where no one is excluded.

Today we need to expand that universalism beyond the human family to radical concern for nature and the cosmos. *'Vasudev kudumbakam'* excludes no one and nothing. It is the prophetic tradition of Jeremiah asking Israelites to befriend the exile, to pitch their tent in Babylon rather than hoping for return to Jerusalem to worship. Kingdom of God is a relational reality: right relationship with YHW and with each other and with the cosmos. It is holon pattern inter-related, inter-connected, and inter-dependent. In this there is no false polarity between the universal and the particular. In a holon perspective the universal is in the particular and the particular is in the universal. Every culture, language, tradition and people contribute to the whole, and each has a value and existence of its own and each one is open to the whole. Radical concern of the Gospels calls for attending to the part and whole at the same time.

5.4. *Symbolic structure of Reality*

Soares was keen on developing the *dvani* interpretation of the scriptures according to the best of the Indian tradition. His work in developing a course on the *dharma* of Jesus testifies to that. Supporting this approach, Francis D'Sa worked on a philosophical basis for such *dvani* interpretation referring to the symbolic view of the world.[17] The universe is experienced as entirely pervaded by the Lord (Isa Upanishad I). The universe is the reflections of the radiance of Brahman (Mundaka Upanishad (II.ii 11-13). World is experienced as the symbol of the Absolute, having an aura of the numinous and a dimension of depth. This symbolic structure of reality invites us to develop a theology of the ordinary, a perspective of everything, a different way of seeing, a holon perspective – that we are divinely related and dependent. This has far reaching implications for Indian Christian theology. Everything is as Francis D'sa says is the expression of the inexpressible, the manifestation of the unmanifest. This symbolic structure of reality grounds *dvani* interpretation, according to D'Sa. In this perspective, every part is related to one another and to the whole. This means that individual liberation is not an isolated event, but is closely related to the liberation of all.

We are living in a field of compassion with regard to everything and everyone. We walk on this earth gently and reverentially; we relate with one another respectfully; because in all these we are related with the Whole. *Dharma* of Jesus is inviting us to develop a *sadhana* of Jesus where we grow in a new kind of filial relationship with God our *abba* which calls for a radical way of living with everyone and everything. A new depth dimension emerges in and through us.

5.5. *An attitude of research and intellectual depth originating from and leading to praxis.*

Soares invites us through his writing to be men and women of research and intellectual depth, to take interest in the issue of our times, to engage them in the light of the Gospels and to read the Gospels in the light of the issues, to be passionate about Jesus and his Gospels. May be Pope Francis is exemplifying that for us: To act according to the demands of the Gospels, then to theorize on it, and theologize on them rather than start from theories. 'Wash the feet of a Muslim woman, marry those living together, not to condemn the gay people' – and then theorize on them and makes doctrines. That was the gospel pedagogy, that was the style of Yhwh – engage in liberating people and through that act reveal the self of God.

6. Critical Remarks

Soares was very critical in his scholarship; hence it is but natural we offer critical view on him. Twenty years later when we read Soares, we still feel the passion and depth of his research. However, twenty years also give us space to locate him and evaluate.

1. One of the major criticisms meted out against him (by D'Sa and others)[18] is that he focused too much and too exclusively on the core experience of Jesus. I find this criticism rather misplaced because the insistence on the core experience is not for reducing everything into it, rather to show that his teaching, ministry and his person flow out of the core experience. The latter enables one to see everything in perspective. Secondly, core experience does not mean a magical, dramatic and momentary experience though the Gospels do portray certain drama into the narrative as at the baptism scene at Jordan. Core experience was the 'font' out of which unfolded the story of his

life and ministry. Not a magical moment.

2. In the context of the recent scientific scholarship on evolution and eco-system, I find that in general Soares' theological thinking is too anthropocentric. Perhaps he is justified in this for two reasons: the de-humanizing situation of India (then and also now) demanded an anthropo-centric response based on the values of the kingdom. Secondly much of the modern scholarship in NT was highly anthropo-centric and Soares belonged to that generation. However, the emerging scientific understanding of the universe as holon reality – as inter-related and inter-dependent reality – perhaps calls for a new hermeneutics of the kingdom. Perhaps the heaven-opening, the immersing in the waters of Jordan, the dove above, the people around – all these implied a cosmic dimension that we have neglected even in interpreting the baptism scene as the symbol of the core experience. Entering into the waters of Jordan is to be incarnated in the life and struggle of the people. Similarly, 'water' is a cosmic element along with sky and the bird.

3. Soares emphatically mentions that kingdom is a relational reality. However, in elaborating that relationality, he is not defining relationality as constitutive of the person. Rather he seems to be guided by the Greek notion of 'person' as subsisting substance, and perhaps is unable to assert that relatedness constitutes the person. If so, we are related not only to one another but to every element in the universe, hence we are cosmic being. Hence kingdom is to be understood as a cosmo-theandric reality (to borrow from Panikkar) and not confined to anthropo-theism.

Having said these in terms of some critical remarks, let me add that George Soares Prabhu was an event, rather than an individual scholar, theologian, and writer. This event was constituted by his remaining loyal to his teaching in devotion to

his students, by committing himself to be a meticulous scholar critiquing the establishment – the church and the civil society and also the Society of Jesus, by presenting himself as a colleague who would engage his companions in enlivening dialogue, by remaining a true religious making huge demands on himself. We can celebrate that event, not by remembering him, but by enacting what he did.

Notes:

1 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7VOMFjQfJ8w

2 Collected Writings of George Soares-Prabhu, (Vols 1-4), Jnana Deepa Vidyapeeth, 199: Pune; (henceforth cited as CWG) CWG: Vol.4 p.153ff.

3 CWG: Vol.4. p.154.

4 CWG: Vol.4. pp.190 ff.

5 CWG: Vol.3. pp.28-29.

6 CWG: Vol.1. pp.5.ff.

7 CWG: Vol.1. p.11.

8 CWG: Vol.4. p.162.

9 CWG Vol.4. p.168.

10 CWG.Vol.1. p.12.

11 CWG. Vol.1. pp.20ff.

12 CWG: Vol.4. pp.144.

13 CWG: Vol.4. pp.14-5.

14 CWG: Vol.4, pp. 165ff.

15 CWG: Vol.4, pp. 166 ff.

16 CWG Vol. 2, pp 120-121.

17 D'Sa. "Dharma as delight in Cosmic Welfare: A study of Dharma in the Gita", Bible Bhashyam, 6. 1980, pp.355-357.

18 CWG: Vol.4. Introduction xxxiii.

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Experience and Context: The Basis of Jesus' Dharma

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Abstract: The Bible's presentation of the progressive, ever-profound disclosure of God is such that humans experience God in specific historical contexts. In the context of the Patriarchal transition from a wandering pastoral community to a well-settled farming community, God revealed himself as *'El Shaddai* (=God of the hills) who promises them descendants and 'land' (symbolizing peace and prosperity, joy and freedom). In the context of the enslavement of the people of Israel, God discloses himself as *Liberator* to the enslaved people in the Exodus-event. During the prophetic period God discloses himself as *Inspirer*. Their understanding of God as Lawgiver and Judge undergoes a radical change in God's self-disclosure in Jesus; God is the *Abba*, Loving Parent and Jesus, his unique Son. This experience of God as unconditional love ushers in freedom, fellowship and justice, symbolically expressed as the Kingdom (reign) of God.

Keywords: Experience and Context; Jesus' *dharma*; God's love; *Abba*-experience; freedom; fellowship; justice.

Introduction

A careful reading of the writings of Fr. George M. Soares-Prabhu, SJ, according to the chronological sequence (cf. D'Sa, *The Dharma of Jesus,* 469-479) shows a shift both in the method and in the content of his writings. In his writings from 1970-1977 he consistently used historical critical method. For his Ph.D. dissertation (*The Formula Quotations*, defended in 1969 and published in 1976) he applied historical critical method with meticulous precision. But from 1978-1979 onwards till his death in 1995, one notices a shift both in method and in content. In 1981 he published a thoroughly researched and well reflected critical essay ("The Historical Critical Method") in which he

persuasively argued that historical critical method in its origin, nature, function and purpose is inadequate to understand and to interpret the Bible, a religious text. Why such a disenchantment with historical critical method?

It was not so much a personal dissatisfaction with the historical critical method as the paradigm shift in biblical interpretation and in hermeneutics. Biblical interpretation has undergone a radical paradigm shift during the last six decades: it moved from author-based historical criticism to a text-based literary criticism and then from literary criticism to reader-response criticism. As a consequence, the focus of the hermeneutical interest also shifted from author-meaning, namely, what the author intended to say (the focus of redaction criticism) to the text-meaning, namely, what the text means whether the author intended it or not (the focus of structuralist analysis and rhetorical criticism) and then to the reader meaning, namely, what the reader understands (the focus of reader-response criticism). The latter is imaged as a fruitful 'conversation' between the text and the reader in which the reader plays a decisive role. These two paradigm shifts were known in exegetical and theological circles. Soares-Prabhu was well acquainted with these paradigm shifts.

But why do his writings from 1978-79 mark the beginning of the paradigm shift? Was it a quick, unreflected decision? Or was it the outcome of a prolonged, well reflected discernment which culminated in such a final decision? Those who were closely associated with him from 1975 would agree with me that certain challenging convictions were moulding his vision and mission. I mention his very significant convictions. (1) He was convinced that the duty and commitment of an exegete, for that matter any genuine follower of Jesus, demands service to the people of his/her constituency. In his case, the people of India, a nation

characterized by three dialectically interrelated factors of stark and widespread poverty; pervasive and pluriform religiosity: and, brutal and oppressive caste system. (2) Similarly he was convinced that an Indian exegete/theologian should be sensitive to and give deserving place to Indian worldviews and values. (3) He was also convinced that these convictions cannot be implemented without a deep religious experience (a profound personal experience of God) as well as an active and effective identification with the oppressed people in our country. (4) And he was strongly convinced that to realize these three convictions he had to undergo a challenging, demanding and, at the same time, extremely fulfilling transformation in his life-style, in his options, in his priorities and in his values. The creative, illuminating, thought-provoking articles and essays he has authored are, in fact, the collective and spontaneous expression of these fourfold convictions.

In other words, these fourfold convictions highlight that according to Soares-Prabhu experience in its rich, profound sense and context in its multifaceted, challenging circumstances constitute the basis of Jesus' *dharma*. In this paper I intend to explore this perspective of Soares-Prabhu from a broader angle.

The Bible presents the progressive, ever-profound disclosure of God in human history in such a way that humans experience God in a specific context. In this process the following phases are significant because they constitute decisive turning-points in the relation between Patriarchs (i); his self-disclosure to Israel through Moses (ii); his self-disclosure to the people of Israel and of Judah through the prophets (iii); his self-disclosure in a prolonged crisis (iv); the definitive self-disclosure through Jesus (v); and, the ongoing self-disclosure to us in the Indian-Christian context (vi).

I. God's Self-Disclosure to the Patriarchs

God revealed himself as *'El Shaddai* to the Patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob). *'El Shaddai* means the God of the hills which is often rendered as God Almighty (cf. Gen 28:3; 35:11). Abraham was probably an eponymous figure (that is, a person whose name is taken for a people) to whom God promised land (Gen 12:1) and multitudes of progeny (Gen 15:5). Isaac was the fulfilment of God's promise (cf. Gen 17:15-21; 18:10-15) and land was promised to him as well (Gen 26:2-5). Jacob was assured of land and plenty of descendants (Gen 28:13-15). His name was changed from Jacob to Israel (Gen 32:28; 35:10) – the name Israel means that his struggles with God. Jacob had 12 sons: six from his wife Leah; two from his beloved wife, Rachel; two from Rachel's maidservant, Bilhah; and two from Leah's maidservant, Zilphah (Gen 35:25-36). In course of time Jacob's sons settled down in the land of Canaan.

In brief, God in the self-disclosure as *'El Shaddai* guides, leads and protects Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the transition from a wandering pastoral community to a well settled farming community. He promises them plenty of descendants and land. 'Land' does not primarily mean a piece of property but it has a profound symbolic significance – it means peace and prosperity, joy and freedom.

II. God's Self-Disclosure to Israel through Moses

The core of the faith of the people of Israel (Deut 26:5-9) is based on an extraordinary religious and social revolution mythologically narrated in the book of Exodus. Their escape from bonded labour in Egypt, their perilous journey through the desert to Sinai and their settling down in Canaan, a relatively fertile land, usher in a new experience of God and a new vision

of society. The main content of this experience may be stated in a nutshell: God is experienced as Liberator and the people of Israel as his personal and sacred possession (cf. Ex 6:2-9). Their mission has a specific liberating thrust as well: they should function as a contrast community with an alternative vision, namely, there should be no poor among them (Deut 15:7-17). This specific aspect of the mandate was respected about 250 years, that is during the rule of the Judges (Othniël, Ehud, Deborah and Gideon). But Solomon's reign put an end to this vision.

To sum up, God discloses himself as *Liberator* to the people of Israel in and through the liberating act of the Exodus-event and they are his personal, sacred possession. Unlike the neighbouring city States, they should not be exploitative and oppressive. Above all, they should be genuinely concerned about fellow-Israelites in such a way that there should be no poor among them.

III. God's Self-Disclosure through the Prophets

After the key OT event of God's self-disclosure as Liberator in the Exodus-event, the next important self-disclosure occurs through the prophets. The ministry of the prophets is confined to the divided kingdom. Therefore, a brief survey of the era between the last Judge, Gideon, and the beginning of the prophetic ministry is called for. This leads us to the rule of the kings (Saul, David, Solomon).

The Bible presents Samuel as the link between the pre-monarchical age and the prophetic era. He was a leader in whom prophetic, judicial, military and priestly roles were combined (cf. 1 Sam 7:3-17). As Samuel was aging and his two sons were not competent to judge, the leaders of Israel requested Samuel for a king to govern them just like other nations. In making such

a request they discarded a basic tenet of their covenantal relation with Yahweh that Yahweh and no one else should be Israel's king. Samuel, after discerning Yahweh's will, solemnly warned them of the consequences and disadvantages of the rule of a king (1 Sam 8:11-22) and then granted their request. He anointed Saul as their king in a private ceremony (1 Sam 10:1) and later people also acclaimed him as their king (1 Sam 11:15).

Saul failed to obey Yahweh's instructions communicated through Samuel. So Yahweh rejected Saul as king (1 Sam 15:10-23) and then Samuel anointed David as king (1 Sam 16:13). Later the people of Judah also acclaimed David as their king (2 Sam 2:4). By means of political manoeuvre in course of time, he became the king of the whole of Israel and chose Jerusalem as the capital of his kingdom.

Solomon, David's son by Bathsheba, succeeded him. Cutting across the old traditional boundaries he created administrative districts for political consolidation. He was vigorously engaged in international sphere – particularly in trade and commerce. According to 1 Kings 11:3 Solomon had 700 wives and 300 concubines – some of his wives and concubines were obviously foreign women. Solomon's reign marked the peak of Israelite success in political sphere. However, it also marked the beginning of religious degeneration – notably due to religious syncretism and influx of foreign religious practices.

Moreover, Solomon had three political enemies. Hadad, an Edomite prince who had escaped to Egypt when David and his commander, Joab, killed every male Edomite. So he hated Solomon, David's son (cf. 1 Kings 11:14-22). Rezon of Zebah had become king in Damascus and he was a lifelong adversary of Solomon (cf. 1 Kings 11:23-25). Jeroboam of Israel rebelled against Solomon (cf. 1 Kings 11:26-33).

A critical assessment of Solomon's reign underscores that religious degeneration within and political threat from outside (the three political enemies mentioned above) characterized his reign. He was not able to cope with the political turmoil and religious degeneration. So after his death, political situation became precarious and volatile. As a result, the country was divided into two: Israel and Judah. Jeroboam became the king of Israel in 931 and in the same year Rehoboam became the king of Judah. At this critical juncture Yahweh called prophets to fulfil his design for his people.

Because in the first two parts of the paper, "The Role of Prophetic Theologizing in Jesus' *Dharma*", I have highlighted some key features of prophetic theologizing, here I briefly mention a few salient points that were not mentioned there. (1) Prophets are classified into two groups: pre-classical and classical prophets. To the pre-classical group belong Elijah, Elisha, Nathan, etc. and to the classical prophets belong the three major prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel) and twelve minor prophets. In this paper I deal with classical prophets only. (2) Among the fifteen classical prophets only two (Amos and Hosea) prophesied in Israel and the rest (thirteen) prophesied in Judah.

(3) Amos preached during the reign of Jeroboam II (783-743). Under his reign the Northern Kingdom expanded and grew wealthy. But the rich exploited the poor and the expensive and attractive liturgical show disguised true religion. Against this background Amos' prophecies couched in direct, rough language condemn corrupt city-life, social injustice and deceitful consolations of insincere ceremonial. (4) However, Hosea has a very different background. Hosea's failed married life (due to his wife's unfaithfulness) enabled him to depict God's relationship with Israel in terms of marriage – a metaphor most boldly chosen

and passionately expressed with immense affection and fiery anger. It is the first time that relation between Yahweh and the people of Israel is depicted through the imagery of marriage.

(5) Depending on the historical context and the fluctuation of Israel's faith in Yahweh, each prophet has a unique experience of his call and exercised his mission in a unique manner. Yet certain common features are decipherable in the ministry of all the prophets. The main common features are the following. (a) They intervene in situations of crisis and major turning-points of the nations' history such as the threat of Assyria, the ruin of the Northern Kingdom, the Babylonian exile, etc. (b) The dominant features of the prophetic ministry are in tune with the rest of the OT, namely, monotheism, morality and future salvation. (c) The prophets emphasized the distinguishing mark of the people of God, that is, they have to be a contrast community. This feature originated from the covenantal relationship. This, in fact, constituted a basic feature of the faith and religiosity of the people of God.

It is instructive to note that God inspired the prophet in such a way that the prophecies are ultimately God's words. Thus God discloses himself as *Inspirer* to the people of Israel and to the people of Judah.

IV. God's Self-Disclosure in a Prolonged Crisis

After Solomon's politically glamorous reign, the Jews of Israel and of Judah faced a very painful and prolonged crisis at four levels: religious, political, cultural and economic. Assyria conquered Israel in 723 BCE, transplanted the population (at least the upper and intellectual strata), and enforced their cult as the State religion. As a consequence ten tribes were uprooted. In 586 BCE Judea was conquered by Babylon, Jerusalem was destroyed and the upper stratum of the population was deported

to Babylon. Babylon also enforced its religion on the conquered people

Those in exile, though were forbidden to continue the temple cult, held fast to the Law of their God and observed the commandments of Sabbath and circumcision – signs by which Jews distinguished themselves from other peoples. This was conducive in creating an intellectual and spiritual precondition that made possible for a new beginning after the exile.

The turning-point came with the victory of the Persian king Cyrus who conquered Babylon in 539 BCE. Unlike Assyria and Babylon, Persia did not force largescale re-settlement nor did Persia insist on one State religion for all. "Persia ... was an empire under a Great King whose central government maintained its rule over large areas through military power, even though various provinces (*satrapies*) retained their cultural and religious independence" (Koester, I, 3). King Cyrus also issued a decree ordering that the house of God in Jerusalem should be rebuilt and the furnishings that Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple should be restored (Ezra 6:3-5). The decree of Cyrus was implemented by Darius who "decided to launch a more serious drive to recolonize Judah as a strategic military and political salient on the frontier with troublesome Egypt" (Gottwald, 430). Accordingly a large immigration of exilic Jews returned to Judah in 520 BCE with Zerubbabel as civil commissioner and Joshua as high priest. The temple was rebuilt in 520-515 BCE. Again the king sent another mission to Palestine headed by Nehemia and then Ezra. Nehemia undertook to surround the city of Jerusalem with walls and made the Jews to promise that they would not enter into any marriage with the members of the alien neighbouring tribes. Ezra compiled a lawbook in the beginning of the 4th cent. BCE. Thus "the combined political authority of the Persians and the religious authority of the exilic Jewish

reformers succeeded in establishing a body of traditional legal materials as the binding law of the province of Judah" (Gottwald, 437). Thus Israel's law served as Persian law for the land of Jerusalem and Judah.

Although the Jewish community was reorganized under Nehemia and Ezra, both socio-politically (i.e., the province of Judah under the superpower, Persia) and religiously (i.e., a cultic and law-abiding community) the relationship between Jews and Samaritans continued to worsen. The strict Jews of Nehemian reform considered Samaritans as aliens and they were not permitted to have access to the temple of Jerusalem. The Samaritans, the proud sons of Joseph tribes, would not tolerate such a second rate treatment. Nor would they accept that the true Israel was the restored remnant of Judah. Above all, they held that Yahweh could be worshiped not only in Jerusalem; and so they built a temple of their own on Mount Gerizim.

From the end of the 5th century onwards the political situation in the Persian empire was not only precarious and volatile but also sickening. Darius II was succeeded by Artaxerxes II Mnemon (404-358) whom his own brother Cyrus (the Younger), the satrap of Asia Minor, plotted to assassinate on the day of his coronation. Soon after his accession Egypt rebelled and became independent. Artaxerxes won over the rebellious Greeks by diplomacy. Artaxerxes III Ochus (358-338) ascended the throne over the dead bodies of all his brothers and sisters whom he slew as possible rivals. He was poisoned and was succeeded by a son, Arses (338-336) who was in turn poisoned and all his children slain. The next king was Darius III Codomannus (336-331) in whose reign too the sad state of history continued (For details see Bright, 307-410).

In the meantime Macedonia was emerging as a strong

power. "The victory of Philip II of Macedonia over Athens and its allies at Chaeronea in 338 BCE ... marked the beginning of a new epoch" (Koester, I, 9). Philip was murdered in 336 BCE and then the army proclaimed Alexander, Philip's son, as the king of Macedonians. Alexander continued the conquest and defeated the Persian army stationed in Asia Minor in 334 BCE. The victorious progress of Alexander, the young Macedonian king, had a cataclysmic effect on the Semitic population of Syria and Palestine. The victory at Issus in November 333 BCE demonstrated the military superiority of the 23 year old Alexander and his small army.

He continued his conquest: the Phoenician cities (except Tyre) surrendered to him. He conquered Tyre in seven months. The orientals discovered not only the superiority of Greek military strategy and technology but also they experienced the brutality and harshness of their foreign conquerors. Alexander put 30,000 survivors – mostly women and children – on the slave markets and had 2000 able bodied men crucified (cf. Hengel 4).

Then he sped southwards along the coastal route of Phoenicia and Palestine. Gaza, the most important centre for Arabian trade, resisted under the Persian commander, Batis. After two months of resistance the city was stormed and as at Tyre the male population exterminated, women and children were sold as slaves. The wounded Persian general was dragged round the city behind a chariot. Gaza was made into a Macedonian fortress. Egypt submitted to Alexander without a battle.

His victory over Darius at Gaugamela on 1st October 331 BCE opened access to the central countries of the Persian realm. In 327 BCE Alexander reached India (modern Pakistan). But before he could advance further his army forced him to return. On June 10, 323 Alexander died in Babylon at the age of 33.

Judea submitted to Parmenio, Alexander's general, without offering resistance. The Jews readily acknowledged the superior power of the new lords and were highly impressed by them. Because the Jews submitted peaceably, the rights they enjoyed under the Persian rule were granted to them and "the Jerusalem community was permitted to continue practising its cult without hindrance" (Lohse, 20).

After the sudden death of Alexander the military commanders disputed about their respective jurisdiction. Alexander's successors (= the *diadochi*) fought among themselves (cf. Koester, I, 12-16). As a result the empire was divided among the generals. Ptolemy, the son of the commander, Lagus, received Egypt and he also controlled Palestine by means of military action. Ptolemies on the one hand refrained from the idea of reunification of Alexander's empire and one the other hand endeavoured to foster political stability and economic progress. The policies of the Ptolemies continued about hundred years. Consequently Egypt became rich and was considered a 'money-making machine'. Palestine also benefited in the progress (cf. Hengel, 23-30).

The Asian kingdom was ruled by Seleucus who defeated Ptolemy V at Paneas. Jews seeing that Seleucids were winning switched their allegiance to them. The Seleucids reciprocated the friendly gesture by arranging for the repair of the temple and granting certain tax exemptions.

The high priest was responsible for enforcing the laws enacted by the Syrian king and for the payment of the tax collected from the people. When Antiochus IV Epiphanes became the king of Syria, Jason bribed the king and bought the high priesthood. Jason on one side advocated cult in the temple and on the other favoured the process of Hellenization. Antiochus having emptied

his own treasury for war replenished it by plundering the temple of Jerusalem, its furnishings, the altar of incense, the seven-branched lampstand, the table of showbread, etc. (cf. 1 Mac 1:20-24).

This offensive act was followed by another: a fanatic Hellenization process. The walls of Jerusalem were destroyed, the Jewish community's indigenous way of life was abolished, and on pain of death penalty the observance of Sabbath and the circumcision of the male children were forbidden. The king's inspectors travelled throughout Palestine to enforce the orders. An altar was erected on the site of the altar of burned offerings and sacrifices were offered there to the supreme god, Olympian Zeus in 167 BCE. Even swines were offered as sacrificial animal.

The residents of the city were on the whole open to Hellenization but those in the villages strongly opposed this irreligious act. Mattathias (an elderly priest) killed the king's official and the one who was offering the sacrifice. This created great sensation. Mattathias and his five sons fled to the hills of Judea and likeminded people joined them. They waged guerilla attacks to destroy the pagan altars and to punish the apostate Jews. After Mattathias' death his son Judas undertook the leadership. He waged large-scale battles against the Syrians. The king, Antiochus, sent his able commander, Lysias, to fight against Judas and his men. But the Syrians were defeated. Then Judas marched to Jerusalem, occupied the desecrated temple and reestablished worship according to the Law. Thus began the Feast of Dedication. Later Jews were granted free exercise of their religion and in turn they acknowledged the sovereignty of Syrians.

Judas was murdered. Then his brother Jonathan became the leader who was an able manipulator. He was murdered in 143. His brother Simon succeeded as the high priest. He was

an able and competent high priest that he became also the field commander. Under him the Jewish community enjoyed privileges. He is much praised in 1 Mac 14:8-15. With him began the Hasmonean dynasty in 140 BCE. Many priests and devout Jews disapproved the rule of Hasmoneans because they came neither from the high priestly family nor from the family of David. So they withdrew into the desert this is probably the origin of the Qumran community. Simon was murdered in 134 BCE. His son John Hyrcanus succeeded him. He was thirsty for worldly power. After his death his son Aristobulus seized power and to be safe he threw his mother and his three brothers into prison. After his death in 103 his wife Salome Alexandria freed the three imprisoned brothers and got married to the eldest. After his death Salome ruled with prudence and wisdom.

Salome died in 67 BCE. Aristobulus and the supplanted Hyrcanus tried to gain high priesthood and kingship. In the meantime Rome intervened. The Roman general, Pompey marched to Jerusalem and entered the temple. He took Aristobulus and his two sons to Rome as prisoners. He allowed temple worship to be carried on as usual. Hyrcanus once again became high priest.

Rome followed a strategy – conquer and divide. Accordingly Palestine was divided by granting independence to Samaria, to the cities in the coastal plain and to the cities east of Jordan. So the high priest's jurisdiction was confined to the cultic community of Jerusalem, Judea, the interior of Galilee and Perea on the east of Jordan.

In the meantime dispute arose between Pompey and Caesar about rulership of the Roman empire. Hyrcanus first supported Pompey but seeing that Pompey was on the losing side, Hyrcanus and Antipater switched over allegiance to Caesar. Hyrcanus was

confirmed high priest and named ethnarch and ally of Romans. Antipater received the rights of hereditary Roman citizenship and was installed as procurator of Judea. Antipater shared his power with his two sons: Phasael became the administrator of Judea and Herod of Galilee.

After Caesar's murder in 44 BCE Hyrcanus and Antipater continued their political manipulation. Antipater was assassinated. Hyrcanus and the two sons of Antipater (Herod and Phasael) were confirmed in office by Antony. But Antigonus, the son of Aristobulus II conquered Palestine. Hyrcanus and Phasael were taken as prisioners: Phasael killed himself and Hyrcanus' ears were cut off so that he is debarred from functioning as high priest.

Herod, the sole survivor, fled to Rome and Roman senate named him king of the Jews (but without a kingdom!). With the help of Romans he captured Jerusalem in 37 BCE. Two features characterized his reign: (1) elimination of anybody who may come on his way and (2) the processes of Hellenization.

First he dealt with hostile forces: (1) those who did not like him; (2) the nobility – 45 prominent men and their families; (3) Hasmonean family for the fear that power would be taken away from him. In the processes he murdered Hyrcanus, Aristobulus (the high priest), his own wife Mariamne and her two sons. Shortly before his death his first born son, Antipater, was also condemned to death.

He treated Jews and Greeks on equal footing. To be safe he surrounded himself with Hellenists and furthered his building activities. He enlarged and rebuilt the temple. He destroyed the city of Samaria and erected a new city named Sebaste. On the coast he constructed Caesarea in a magnificent way. In Jerusalem he built the citadel Antonia from where he could watch over events

taking place in and around the temple. He constructed a strong fortress, Masada, on the western side of the Dead Sea and in Jericho a palace for himself.

Towards the end of his life he divided the kingdom among his three sons: Archelaus was appointed king over Judea, Samaria and Idumea; Herod Antipas got Galilee and Perea; and Philip reigned over Transjordan. Of these three, Archelaus was most hated because he ruled arbitrarily and with much brutality. In 6 CE he was relieved of his office and was exiled to Gaul. His territory was placed under the jurisdiction of a Roman governor. So during Jesus' time Samaria, Judea and Idumea were ruled by the Roman governor (Lk 3:1). Pontius Pilate held the office of governor from 26 CE to 36 CE. His conduct was marked with corruption and violence, ill treatment and numerous illegal executions, unbearable cruelty and intense brutality. He had no regard for the religious sentiments of the Jews.

In brief, in the prolonged crisis that began with foreign occupation and the imposition of alien religion by Assyria and Babylon, the Jews experienced the cruel murder of the male population and their women and children being sold in slave markets, the plunder of the temple and the ban of their religious practices, culminated in the Maccabean struggle. During the long period of crisis (723 – 4 BCE) Jews felt that Yahweh is *Remote* and *Transcendent*.

V. God's Self-Disclosure as *Abba*

God's self-disclosure through Moses and the prophets was based on the understanding that God is Lawgiver and Judge. The same holds good in the prolonged crisis too. This perspective undergoes a radical change in God's self-disclosure through Jesus. God discloses himself as *Abba*, Loving Parent (cf. Mk 1:11; 14:36) and Jesus is his unique Son. So there is very personal, intimate,

loving relationship between the Father and the Son (cf. Lk 10:21-22). Furthermore, Jesus is the *Word* become *Flesh* and humans are Jesus' brothers and sisters. That is why Paul could affirm that humans are God's children (cf. Rom 8:15-17; Gal 4:4-7). We humans belong to God's family. Therefore the discrimination based on gender (male/female), status (slave/free), race (Jew/Greek) and religion (traditional Christians/*Dalit* Christians) is not meaningful for us as Christians.

Jesus' experience of God as *Abba* is expressed through the symbol, the kingdom (reign) of God. The kingdom of God rooted in *Abba*-experience ushers in freedom, fellowship and justice. The kingdom of God is opposed to the kingdom of Satan (cf. Mk 3:23-27). The kingdom of Satan in modern categories would mean structural evil. Structural evil is rooted in national and international mechanisms and policies which aim at exploitation and oppression of the poor. Therefore, it is not enough to undergo *metanoia* (conversion) personally but the unjust structure too must be changed and uprooted.

VI. Ongoing Self-Disclosure in the Indian-Christian Context

Indian situation is characterized by three dialectically related factors: dehumanizing and widespread poverty: brutal and oppressive caste system; and, pervasive and pluriform religiosity. In such a situation Christians, as true followers of Jesus, have the duty to eradicate poverty and to eliminate caste system. These two societal evils can be eradicated only by establishing human communities based on the values of God's kingdom. Values of God's kingdom are in fact genuine human values as well.

Indian worldview is inclusive (not exclusive); primarily cosmocentric (in contrast with anthropocentric worldview of the West); symbolic (based on the metaphor that the world is the

Body of Brāhman); and pragmatic (the quest for liberation in the holistic sense). Conversion to Indian worldview will enable perceiving everything as rooted in God and experience liberation from bondage such as craze for power, money and status.

Religions are commonly grouped into two: (1) messianic/ prophetic and (2) unitive/ intuitive. To the first category belong Judaism, Christianity and Islam. On the other hand, Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism belong to the second category. From the perspective of this paper it is better to focus on Christianity and Hinduism as complementary: two ways of God's disclosure.

Concluding Remarks

1. We have undertaken a rapid survey of God's disclosure to humans from Patriarchs to the present (that is Indian context). From this survey it is clear that God discloses himself to humans in specific contexts. The disclosure is geared to enhance the relation between humans and God and among humans themselves.

2. In the prolonged crisis God is remote and transcendent. This implies that God expects us humans to be compassionate, understanding and serving just as Jesus himself did (Mk 10:45) and love one another to the end (Jn: 31-35).

3. In the self-disclosure through Jesus more depth, new horizon and clear perspectives are highlighted.

4. The brutality and crime meted out by Alexander the Great on various nations are to be condemned. Is he great at all!

5. Christians have much to learn from Indian worldviews and Indian religions.

6. Hinduism, unlike Christianity, appreciates and respects different religions and gives space for their growth.

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The Role of Prophetic Theologizing in Jesus' Dharma

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Abstract: Having experienced freedom from bondage and constituted as Yahweh's own possession, Israel was expected to function as a contrast community that is free from exploitation and oppression, unlike other city States. But when this basic thrust was lost after a mere 250 years, Yahweh called the prophets to carry his mission forward. Their work consisted of two interconnected themes: denunciation of idolatry and a passionate appeal for social justice.

Jesus' prophetic theologizing has a new basis: Jesus' experience of God as *Abba*, Loving Parent. This foundational experience is expressed in terms of the reign of God. Jesus spelt out various aspects of the reign of God through his symbolic deeds followed by clarification of their significance. This prophetic theologizing continues even in our own times – notably by Christian leaders who have a vision in their mission.

Keywords: Prophetic theologizing; Jesus' *dharma*; foundational experience; Jesus' prophetic theologizing; Christian leaders.

Introduction

The readers of *The Collected Writings of George M. Soares-Prabhu, SJ* (Volumes I-IV) will undoubtedly agree that Soares-Prabhu was a creative, insightful exegete and a committed, radical theologian. Those who were closely associated with him will also know him as a prophet. He was a prophet not primarily because he has authored four articles on prophetism (Volume II, 61-67; Volume III, 105-125, 126-135; Volume IV, 14-23) but because his life and ministry had a prophetic horizon.

In this paper I intend to explore his prophetic challenges and insights from a broader perspective. This is done in four

parts. After a few preliminary remarks (I), it deals with the main features of prophetic theologizing in the Old Testament (II). Then the attention is focused in Jesus' prophetic theologizing (III), and, finally, prophetic theologizing in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries (IV). It is concluded with relevant reflections.

I. Preliminary Remarks

My first remark is that the Bible, in spite of its diversity, is one. It is originally written in three different languages (most of the OT in Hebrew, a small section in Aramaic, and the rest in Greek. The whole of the NT is written in Greek). The Bible has also undergone seven cultural influences (beginning with Canaanite and ending with Roman). In spite of such diversity, the Bible is ONE. Why? It is so because its content is God-experience presented in the form of a story.

The biblical story begins with the creation of the heavens and the earth (Gen 1:1) and it ends with the vision of a new heaven and a new earth (Rev 21:1). This story unfolds itself in three cycles: the cycle of creation (from chaos to creation to sin), the cycle of Israel (from sin to Israel and Exile), and the cycle of Jesus (from Exile to Jesus to a new heaven and a new earth). In each cycle God takes initiative: God organizes a pre-existent chaos into cosmos and ushers in order in successive stages; he ensures the emergence of a new people in Exodus; and, the definitive intervention in and through Jesus, leading humankind to salvation (cf. Soares-Prabhu, "Expanding the Horizon", 4-12).

Of the three, it is the second and third cycles that are significant for this paper. By virtue of the liberation of the people of Israel from bondage, they accepted Yahweh as their Lord and God, and they were constituted as Yahweh's own people (cf. Ex 6:5-8). Having experienced bondage in Egypt as well as liberation

from bondage by Yahweh, they were to function as a contrast community, namely, unlike other city States they should not be exploitative and oppressive. This was fundamental to Israel's understanding of itself as Yahweh's cherished possession. However this basic thrust lasted only about 250 years until kingship was introduced. The reign of Solomon was the decisive turning-point. By constructing the Temple, Yahweh – a free and liberating God – becomes a legitimating deity of Solomon. Cutting across the old tribal boundaries he created administrative districts for efficient administration and for effective system of taxation. He enforced forced labour to construct gigantic buildings, conscripted personnel for a standing army. Thus Israel became the master of bonded labour and the tyrannical agent of oppression. At this critical stage of the story Yahweh called prophets to fulfil his mission. The prophets had two basic, interconnected themes in focus: denunciation of idolatry and a passionate appeal for social justice. Thus the OT prophets advocated authentic relation with Yahweh and genuine, interpersonal relation among fellow Israelites, notably in socio-economic matters.

My second remark is that prophetic theologizing is not 100% uniform in the Bible. The root meaning of the noun prophet (Greek prophētēs) indicates this: the Greek noun prophētēs has has two corresponding nouns in Hebrew: nābī' (meaning one who is called) and ḥôzeh (meaning one who sees vision). Why two Hebrew words for the single Greek noun prophētēs? Answering this question requires multi-dimensional considerations of differing geography, social context, linguistic usage, and different historical and cultural settings.

Geographically, there are striking contrasts between the northern and southern parts of Palestine: difference in elevation, climate, rainfall and divergence in the quality of soil. The

combination of relief, climate, rainfall and soil factors favoured the northern part for farming. Moreover, its proximity to Tyre and Sidon, both port cities, and to Damascus, the capital of Syria was conducive for marketing their agricultural products easily. Thus northern part was obviously more prosperous. In contrast, the southern part was rather isolated: sea in the west and the south, and desert in the east. It had very few agricultural products.

Further, the social and linguistic contexts were also different. Historically, both north and south conducted themselves as independent societies: for example, just before the collapse of the Israelite State, Damascus and Israel were allied against Judah and this alliance forced Judah to seek help from the Neo-Assyrian empire. Culturally, two cultic symbols were used: for Judah the imperial cults of the Jerusalem Temple but in north the bulls of Jeroboam functioned as archaic symbols to legitimate its cults.

Due to such differences, *hôzeh* was prevalent in Judah, which functioned as the herald justifying the Judahite theopolitic based on the Davidic covenant. In the mode of divine-human communication vision predominates. In contrast, *nâbî'* was prevalent in Israel and *nâbî'* functioned as a spokesperson of the Mosaic-Sinaitic traditions. In the mode of divine-human communications word predominates (cf. Petersen, 70-75).

Despite the dissimilarities noted above, there is fundamental unity in the prophetic theologizing of both Israel and Judah. To begin with, the Bible does not primarily use scientific or philosophical language but metaphorical, symbolic language. Both the audition model of Israel and the vision model of Judah are set in the form of divine-human communication. Moreover, both are rooted in the covenantal relationship: Davidic covenant in south and Sinaitic covenant in north. Both models of prophetic theologizing required people's approval (at least of the majority) and the needs of the prophets were met by people. So they had

strong basis in society. Moreover, their vocation, though personal and private, was for the betterment of people – namely, authentic relation with God and incessant appeal to be a contrast community. Furthermore, both *nâbî'* and *hôzeh* functioned as prophets whose central concerns were theology and morality in contrast with *rô'eh,* a peripheral prophet. The prophets centered on theology and morality played a key role in the life of Jewish people. The prophets were thus integral part of the Jewish society.

A third remark: the vocation and the ministry of prophets indicate some sort of divine compulsion. Does it not curtail, infringe their personal freedom? Their freedom should not be understood in the sense of the post-enlightenment era (cf. Von Rad, *The Message of the Prophets*, 50-59) because the prophetic vocation and ministry were rooted in the covenantal relationship. So their freedom is to be understood in the sense of fulfilling their vocation as designed by Yahweh. Their freedom and Yahweh's design merge into a harmonious union for the betterment and enhancement of Yahweh's people.

Fourth, Prophetesses (Hebrew *nebi'ah)* played a central role in Israelites' early history. Prophetess Miriam composed a song to celebrate Israel's crossing of the sea (Ex 15:20-21). Prophetess Deborah judged Israel and helped the people to battle (Judg 4:4-10). In a later period Prophetess Huldah was an important religious leader to whom king Josiah sent messengers to enquire of God (2 Kings 22:14-20). In the NT, prophetess Anna recognizes Jesus' Messiahship (Lk 2:36-38).

Fifth, prophetic theologizing is important for the NT. From a historical viewpoint, Jesus is the prophet par excellence. In the early Church prophets were important charismatic persons who were ranked next to apostles (cf. 1 Cor 12:28-29; 14:29; Eph 2:20; 3:5; 4:11). In course of time the three-tier hierarchy (bishops-priests-deacons) probably minimized the role of prophets.

Sixth, a prophet is a poet. A perusal through the prophetic literature in any of the internationally accepted English translations (NJB, NIV, NRSV) would show that prophets' language is primarily poetic and the narrative in prose is on the whole the contribution of the editors, redactors. Poetry affects the heart rather than the head – evoking feelings and reactions which lead to change of attitudes and enhance values. Thus, prophetic theologizing in poetry effects transformation of people and betterment of society. The poetry of the prophets is characterized by rhythm and parallelism.

II. Main Features of Prophetic Theologizing in the OT

One could have recourse to two methods in understanding the main features of prophetic theologizing in the OT: (1) diachronic method and (2) synchronic method. Diachronic method views prophetic theologizing from three interlinked perspectives. First, historical approach to survey persons and events according to the chronological sequence as found in Bright (*History,* 225-273). Second, each prophetic book is investigated exegetically as does Eissfeldt (*The Old Testament,* 301-442). Finally, each prophetic book is explored theologically, specifying new elements in theologically significant turning-points as in Von Rad *(Old Testament Theology,* II, 129-300). A combination of these three perspectives constitutes the diachronic method.

The synchronic method views prophetic theologizing at a glance in order to understand its various aspects in an interconnected manner. Focusing mainly on monotheism, morality and future salvation, it views the present with a flashback as well as with a flashforward. This method is followed in this paper. In four steps, it looks at the present on the basis of the foundational experience (1), challenging the present in view of the future (2), examines how it challenges the leaders (3) and the priests (4).

(1) The Present on the Basis of the Foundational Experience: A careful reading of Is 1:2-17 highlights this theme in a nutshell. Yahweh painfully laments that his very children have become rebellious. An ox knows its owner and a donkey its master's manger (1:2-3). But his chosen ones, his cherished possession, have abandoned Yahweh and despised him. As a body, they are sick from head to foot (1:5-6). Their endless sacrifices of various kinds, their manifold cereal offerings, and their ceaseless prayers are detestable and futile because their hands are covered with innocent blood (1:11-15). They should wash and clean themselves: cease to do evil and learn to do good by practising justice – particularly by defending the oppressed, taking care of the orphans and pleading the cause of the widows (1:16-17). Thus authentic relation with God is inextricably linked with social justice.

This theme is elaborated by various prophets in different contexts. Prophets condemn hypocritical worship (Hos 8:1-14); the religious practice of fasting without genuine social concern is meaningless (Is 58:1-12); and, Jerusalem, the city of God has become the city of murderers (Is 1:21). Finally, through the imagery of unfaithful wife, Israel's unfaithfulness is vividly depicted (Hos 1:2-3:5); and the parabolic narration of the vineyard that produced bad fruits symbolizes injustice and bloodshed (Is 5:1-7).

Furthermore, those who do not conduct themselves according to the values of the contrast community are strongly censured: those who indulge in domestic luxury (Amos 3:15); improper real-estate practitioners (Mic 2:1-5); and, women who adorn themselves with expensive ornaments without concern for the poor (Is 3:16-17; Amos 4:1-3). Finally wealth is deceptive, treacherous (Hab 2:5-6).

In sum, prophets' warning and censure are based on the foundational experience (Ex 6:5-8). The primary purpose of warning and censure is not condemnation but personal conversion and societal transformation.

(2) The Present in View of Future: one of the oft-repeated themes in the prophetic literature is idolatry. Of various texts Is 44:6-23 is considered most radical in this regard. Yahweh is the only God and there is no other (44:6-8) and the uniqueness of Yahweh is again reaffirmed by means of a taunt song which states that idols are nothing (44:9-20). Then the worshipers of idols are exhorted to return to Yahweh (44:21-22) and their return is celebrated in a hymn of jubilation (44:23).

Jer 2:1-37; 3:1-5, 12-13; 3:19-4:4 constitute a continuous poem. First the infidelities of Israel, beginning with Exodus, are narrated in an emotive, experiential, symbolic language (2:1-37). This is followed by a call to conversion in an affectionate, persuasive tone in two stages: 3:1-5, 12-13 and 3:19-4:4. Joel 1: 13-20 exhorts the people of Israel to repentance and prayer; put on sackcloth and lament (1:13), order a fast (1:14) because an invasion of locusts has devastated the country (1:15-20)

In brief, these three texts strongly exhort the audience to turn away from sinful ways and follow the path of fidelity, loyalty which will usher in joy and wellbeing.

(3) Challenges to Leaders: Leaders are supposed to ensure a dynamic, vibrant relation between Yahweh and his people. When they slacken prophets challenge them with conviction and single-mindedness. Unworthy leaders are compared to sleeping dogs (Is 56:10). Isaiah condemns legislators who enact unjust decrees to deprive the poor of their rights and withhold justice from the oppressed by making widows their prey and robbing the orphans

(Is 10:1). In the same way he censures insolent counselors (Is 28:14). The indictment against false prophets (Ezek 13:1-16) and false prophetesses (Ezek 13:17-23) is severe indeed.

(4) Challenges to Priests: Priest is a mediator between humans and God. He/She presents people's aspirations, needs and problems to God and then imparts God's blessings upon them. There are two important texts concerning priests: one bringing charges against them (Hos 4:4-9) and the other condemning them (Mal 2:1-9).

The charges against priests are the following. They should have instructed people about the Law but they did not (4:6). As their number increased, they preferred Baals instead of Yahweh (4:7). Priests obtained substantial portion of what is offered at sin sacrifices (cf. Lev 6:19-22) and at expiatory sacrifices (cf. Lev 7:7). In this way people's sins was to their advantage (4:8). Therefore Yahweh will punish them.

The admonition to priests in Mal 2: 1-9 is based on the covenant between Yahweh and Levi from whom priesthood originated. It was a covenant of life and peace which Levi honoured and respected (2:5). He walked the way of truth and justice and prevented many from stumbling (2:6). Priests as messengers of the Lord should have authentic knowledge of the Law (2:7). But they failed in this and their deceptive teaching caused many to stumble (2:8). Therefore Yahweh has despised and humiliated them (2:9). This was done so that his covenant with Levi would be continued (2:4).

To sum up this second part of the paper: prophetic theologizing is based on the foundational experience of the Exodus and looks towards the future. Those who do not adhere to the values of the contrast community are strongly reprimanded. The leaders of the people – priests in particular – are challenged and admonished. Now we focus on Jesus' prophetic theologizing.

III. Jesus' Prophetic Theologizing

Jesus' prophetic theologizing has a new foundational basis. He experienced God not as Law-giver and Judge but as *Abba*, Loving Parent. Because God is *Abba*, all humans are his children; they become the sisters and brothers of Jesus. This perspective makes division and separation based on racial purity, despised trade, etc., obsolete (Jeremias, 275-283, 303-312). This was seen in the previous paper, "Experience and Context: The Basis of Jesus' *Dharma*". Here we shall deal with Jesus' prophetic theologizing in terms of his prophetic, symbolic deeds followed by his clarification about the significance of those deeds. For this purpose we shall briefly focus on a pericope from each of the Gospels.

1) Luke 4:16-30: This pericope consists of Jesus' prophetic deed (4: 16-20a) followed by the explanation of its significance (4:20b-30). The setting is a synagogue service on the Sabbath at Nazareth (4:16). Jesus unrolls the scroll of Isaiah, chooses Is 61:1-2 and reads it aloud. Unrolling the scroll probably has a symbolic meaning, namely, unveiling the true meaning of the text (cf. Lk 24:32). After reading Is 61:1-2 he rolls up the scroll and sits down (4:20a). Sitting down implies authority.

Luke does not narrate the details of the homily at all. Instead he highlights the reaction of the audience ("The eyes of everyone were fastened on him" - 4:20a) and his enigmatic affirmation ("Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing" - 4:21). What does this puzzling declaration mean? The adverb 'today' (*sēmeron*) has a specific soteriological nuance (cf. 2:11; 19:9; 23:43). The significance of 'today' in 4:21 lies in the fact that Is 61:1-2 provides the basic paradigm for his universal mission to the oppressed. The audience were amazed at Jesus' words (4:22a).

The question of the audience ("Is not this Joseph's son?" – 4:22b) implies that they lack faith in him as the fulfilment of God's promises and then he refers to the theme of rejected prophets (4:23-27). In this context Jesus affirms God's preferential option for the non-chosen, needy people by alluding to Elijah (1 Kings 17:1, 8-16; 18:1) and Elisha (2 Kings 5:1-14). This corroborates the universalism proclaimed in 4:18-19. God's offer of salvation in the prophet Jesus is open to all – particularly the oppressed. Jesus thus continues his journey to God which no one can stop (4:28-30).

2) John 13:1-17: The setting of this pericope is important. Jesus celebrates the Passover commemorating the liberative event of Exodus with his disciples. This setting is found at the beginning of the passion narrative in the synoptic Gospels as well (cf. Mk 14:1a, 12-21 and par.). But in the synoptic Gospels, it functions as a prelude to the key event, namely, the Lord's Supper (Mk 14:22-26 and par.). But John does not narrate the Lord's Supper in this context. Instead, he narrates the symbolic act of Jesus washing his disciples' feet and teaching them about the significance of this event. What is relevant for this paper is mainly 13:1, 3b-5, 12-17. The introduction has a Johannine focus: it is not a celebration of the Passover in the Jewish sense but it is the arrival of *the hour* which is an essential part of his coming from the Father and returning to Him. For John, *the hour* connotes Jesus' passion, death and glorification. Verse Jn 13: ld highlights the depth of his love for his disciples.

The symbolic deed is narrated in 13:3b-5. It is prefaced by means of a key Johannine theme: Jesus comes from God and returns to Him (13:3b). The event commences with an act of movement (Jesus gets up from the table) followed by an act of

preparation in two steps: he removes the outer garment or robe (*himation*) but not *chitôn* (inner garment) and wraps a towel round his waist. The act proper consists of Jesus pouring water into a basin, washes his disciples' feet and wipes their feet with the towel he was wearing. Then he puts on the robe, reclines at the table and explains the significance of the event. He asks his disciples: "Do you understand what I have done for you?" (13:12). "You called me, 'Teacher' and 'Lord', you are right in this" (13:13). "If I your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet" (13:14). "I have given you an example (*hypodeigma*) that you should do as I have done for you" (13:15). "Amen, Amen, I say to you, no servant is greater than his master, no messenger greater than the one who sent him" (13:16).

The significance of this event and the main thrust of the teaching should be seen against the background of the Greco-Roman culture wherein the word servant (*doulos*) did not connote honour and respect. Secondly, the Greek word *hypodeigma* is often translated 'example', – such a rendering is weak. It means a compelling example that must be followed.

3) Mt 21:12-17: A biblical, symbolic prelude precedes Mt 21:12-17. Jesus' arrival riding on a donkey (21:5) is a citation from Zech 9:9. The crowds who went ahead of him and those followed him shouted: "Hosanna to the Son of David ..." (21:9b). It is a quotation from Ps 118:26. As Jesus entered Jerusalem people asked: "Who is this?" (21: 10b). The crowds answered, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee" (21:11).

The content of the prelude is deepened in 21:12-17. This pericope consists of an event (21:12) and exchanges between Jesus and the chief priests and the scribes which throw light on the significance of the event (21:13-17).

Jesus entered into the Temple and drove out those who were selling and buying (21:12a). What did they sell and buy? From history it is clear that they were selling and buying victims for sacrifice. He also overturned the table of the money changers and the seats of those selling doves (21:12b). Those who come from foreign countries brought Greco-Roman currencies along with them. According to the Jewish prescription these currencies were polluted and so they had to be exchanged into Jewish currencies. In the process of the exchange of currency and of selling and buying sacrificial victims, the authorities of the Temple made profit. Jesus disapproved of this by saying, "My house will be called a house of prayer" (21:13a). This is a citation from Is 56:7. "But you are making it a den of robbers" (21:13b) which is again a quotation but from Jeremiah (7:11).

The Matthean addition in 21:14 ("The blind and the lame came to him at the Temple and he healed them") is important. People with defective limbs were prohibited from entering the Temple. But Jesus not only allowed them to enter the Temple but also healed them. This event has Messianic overtones (cf. Is 35:5-6; Mt 11:5). Seeing what Jesus did children were shouting in the Temple saying, "Hosanna to the Son of David". The chief priests and the scribes were indignant because their theological conviction would not tolerate Jesus' action and the children's shout. Jesus in reply said, "From the lips of children and of infants you have ordained praise" (21:16 = Ps 8:2).

The prelude to the event culminates in the saying that Jesus is the prophet (21:11). The exchanges in 21:13-16 (especially Jesus healing the blind and the lame) enable the children to realize that Jesus is the Messiah. In contrast, the chief priests and the scribes reject it outright. The contrast between the unschooled children and the theological experts is striking.

4) Mk 2:15-17: A careful reading of Mk 2:15-17 reveals that Jesus had called Levi, a tax collector to be his disciple (2:14). Levi arranges a fellowship meal in his house for Jesus and his disciples. He had also invited his friends from the same profession (2: 15). The scribes, the experts of the Law, challenge Jesus' fellowship meal with tax collectors (2: 16). Jesus unequivocally affirms that his mission is precisely to call the rejected, marginalized humans into God's family (2:17).

Mk 2:15-17 thus consists of Jesus' table fellowship with tax collectors (2:15) and the confrontation between him and the scribes. He uncompromisingly defends his act. Based on the criterion of multiple attestation Jesus' table fellowship is historical. In fact, Jesus' table fellowship in Mk 2:15-17 was not an isolated event but a common practice of Jesus. This action of Jesus is so radical that no prophet would have dared to do it (cf. Vermes, 224). It is one of the decisive factors that led Jesus to violent death (cf. Perrin, 102-105).

This confrontation is rooted in the understanding of the religiosity and holiness by Jews in one way and Jesus and his followers in a totally different manner. This perspective is treated in the paper, "Experience and Context: the Basis of Jesus' *Dharma*"

Summing up the third phase of this paper, we have chosen a prophetic, symbolic event from each of the Gospels. In these symbolic events Jesus himself spells out the significance of these events. Thus in Jesus' prophetic theologizing his deeds and words are inextricably connected.

IV. Prophetic Theologizing in the 20th and 21st Centuries

It was made clear in the second phase of the paper that prophetic theologizing in the OT has a strong basis in the community. In the third phase it was established that Jesus too engaged himself in

prophetic theologizing in a unique way. Now we ask: Does prophetic theologizing occur in our own time – 20th and 21st centuries? The answer to this question is sought in the fourth phase of the paper and it is based on my personal experiences or from reliable sources.

1) Challenges to Institutional/Social Structure: Have a close look at the picture of Pope Francis on the front page of *JDV Handbook and Calendar,* 2014-2015. Personally experience the genuineness of Pope's action on his face and the stunning reaction of the young Muslim lady seated there. Then look at the cover page of the *Handbook* and read and personalize the write-up: "Rediscovering the maternal womb of mercy" for "understanding, forgiveness and love". Pope Francis says the following about the need to review marriage: "As we begin the Synod on the Family, let us ask the Lord to show us the way forward.... The wounds have to be treated with mercy. The Church is a mother, not a customs office, coldly checking who is within the rules". (*The Times of India,* Pune, Monday, 06/10/2014, p. 14). Similar views regarding gays, abortion, etc.

Bishop George V. Saupin s.j. of Daltonganj was known for his simple life-style. Wearing simple clothing of an average villager of the place he would move around on a bicycle. For a week long missiological seminar at Colombo, Sri Lanka, in 1979 he carried his essential belongings in a shoulder-bag made of cotton. According to me, his simplicity was the peak-point of the seminar.

2) Sacrificing own Life: A.T. Thomas s.j. as a student of JDV, had stated in public forum that the campus houses do not pay just wages for the workers. After his ordination he went to Hazaribagh where he organized the oppressed villagers against the rich farmers and money-lenders. The oppressors killed him by attacking with bows and arrows.

Fr. Arul Doss of Balasore diocese was on a village visit in 1999. While celebrating the Eucharist in the village he was attacked. He ran for his life. But he was chased, attacked with bow and arrow and was killed. The spot where he was murdered has become a pilgrim centre now.

3) Challenges to Academic, Intellectual Theologizing: Peter D'Mello s.j., qualified in law, told the JDV authorities that he can conduct Pastoral Course for the students effectively and in a relevant manner. After his theological formation and ordination he was assigned to a mission in Thalassery on the border between Maharastra and Gujarat. He organized the oppressed people of that area and formed a labour union. The oppressors dubbed him as a missionary in disguise. The Church leaders held that forming a labour union is not within the permissible limit of the Church. He was forced to leave the Society of Jesus and priesthood.

Piazza della Pilotta is a small square in Rome touching three prestigious institutions: Biblical Institute, Gregorian University, and Institute of Spirituality. An educated lady used to shout in *Piazza della Pilotta,* saying: *studiate, studiate e diventate piu ignoranti*! (You go on studying and become more and more ignorant!). Horacio Simian-Yofre s.j, a professor of Prophets at the Biblical Institute told me in an informal conversation that what she says is indeed a prophecy!

4) Mission with a Vision: Fr. Engelbert Zeitler SVD (1919-1999) and George M. Soares-Prabhu s.j. (1929-1995) were Christian leaders who had a vision in their mission. I was closely associated with both for many years: Fr. Zeitler was my superior and provincial and Soares-Prabhu was my close friend and colleague.

Fr. Zeitler had the foresight to establish minor seminaries in the southern States in early 60s and ensured financial viability at the initial stages. Then he directed his vision to national level: All India Seminar (May 14-15, 1969) CBCI and CRI. His name may not be found in the print media. But his heart and generous financial support were behind these national ventures.

Seeing that many priests were leaving priesthood after Vatican II in Europe and USA and that vocations were diminishing, he established National Vocation Service Centre (NVSC) at Pune. It has developed and continues to serve the Church in India and the third world. In 1976 he established Ishvani Kendra (Missiological Institute) for research and planning for the mission of the Church.

Fr. Soares-Prabhu was an exceptionally gifted exegete and a challenging theologian. His exegesis is based on reading the Bible with both eyes (Christian and Indian) but one vision. The essays on poverty and caste system in India are challenging and life-enhancing. He challenges Christians who are prejudiced against the Hindu practice of idol worship. In fact, Hindus worship the deity whose presence is mediated through the idol. He has laid the foundation for a theology of religions in India. The four volumes of his *Collected Writings* bear witness to his exegetical and theological contribution to India.

Of the 65 essays he has authored in the four volumes the most significant and extensively investigated is on poverty in India/ Asia. His death was a symbolic enactment of this favourite theme. His death did not occur on a bed in a famous hospital; he was not attended to by competent doctors and cared for by committed nurses; and, it was not preceded by the administration of the sacraments (except the sacrament of encountering the sacred in the secular). His death occurred while trying to cross the road on a bicycle, the conveyance of the poor in India. He died on a

dusty road where thousands of poor Indians die each year. He poured out his blood there and it remained clotted for many days, a feature common for the poor in India. The first to see his dead body was a stranger, another feature of the life of the poor. Those who were privileged to resonate with the heart of Soared-Prabhu would certainly consider that his death was indeed a prophetic fulfilment of his cherished theme. His death was indeed identification with the poor in India. It was also radical following of Jesus even unto death.

Both Fr. Zeitler and Fr. Soares-Prabhu were good friends and they collaborated wholeheartedly for the Church in India. Both were called to the Lord on the same date and in the same month (July 22nd) to be with Him.

The four models of prophetic theologizing I have narrated above are confined to my experience. Sr. Rani Maria and many others are prophets too. The readers can complement my views with their experiences and insights.

Concluding Reflections

1) Prophets were God's spokespersons for the betterment of the life and religiosity of Jewish people. They intervene in times of crisis preceding or following major turning-points of the nation's history: the threat of Assyria, the ruin of the Northern Kingdom, the ruin of the Southern Kingdom, the departure for Exile, the end of Exile and the Return.

2) Prophets had an immediate experience of God. They were convinced that they were communicating God's will and that they were instruments in guiding his chosen people.

3) Prophetic challenges to Christian leadership is the need of the hour. But how to implement the challenges? Who will take the lead?

4) As followers of Jesus, Christian leaders should strive after combining prophetic deeds with their challenging words. Otherwise, their words would lack credibility.

5) One wonders whether our theological formation is primarily oriented towards academic, intellectual excellence rather than experiential and spiritual growth and transformation of our students. The people of our mother land—notably our Hindu brethren – would undoubtedly expect the latter. Where does JDV stand in its theological formation?

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Dharma of Jesus - A Feminist Perspective

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Abstract: Beginning with the polyvalent meaning of the word *dharma*, the author connects it to the Trinitarian relations on the one hand and the statistically demonstrable dehumanization of women on the other. She make her case for siding with women on the basis Jesus' own approach and the teachings of the Church. She advocates the capability approach as appropriate for empowering women in the contemporary world.

Keywords: Trinitarian roots of dharma; women's marginalization; Jesus and women; women in the Church, capability approach.

Introduction

The inexorableness of addressing theological themes from a perspective, especially from the perspective of those on the underside of history is increasingly evident. This is because the category of the disadvantaged is generally human-made: the underprivileged emerge due to the fact of having been divested of their dignity and shoved into an abject state. The section comprises a large number and the globalized world causes its swift engorgement. Theological reflection on such issues is hoped to generate optimism towards restoring the divested dignity and attaining life in its fullness.

Dignity is understood as not an acquired quality of human being which could be won and lost. Rather, dignity is innate, i.e., human beings are born with dignity. It also means that one is not discriminated against or humiliated on the grounds of wealth, caste, race, ethnicity, religion, disability, or sex. Dignity is further linked to the concept of autonomy, defined in terms of the freedom an individual seeks from multiple structures of domination.

Given the reality of discrimination in our world at various levels and spheres, this paper delves into the theological category of the '*Dharma* of Jesus', linking it to the reality of sexual inequality. In line with the significance of the R*g-Vedic* concept of *dharma*, we investigate Jesus' way of life or his *dharma* in the context of women's marginalization and even exclusion. We conclude with some proposals to reclaim the dignity of women as the children of God, as God's own image and likeness.

1. *Dharma* – Significance

The concept '*dharma*' has been one of the most powerful and influential terms in the Indian thought and society for several millennia, dating from the Vedic times. It is a basic principle around which different religious, social, and political institutions are developed; precisely because of this the concept has been perceived and employed diversely in history of the Indian and the Hindu society. In accordance with our theme, we adhere to and employ the etymological, ethical, and religious sense of the word.

Etymologically, the term *Dharma* derives from the Sanskrit *dhr* meaning 'to uphold', 'to support', 'to carry', 'to sustain', and 'to protect'.[1] The sense supplied by the term '*dhr*' can be understood as providing the ethical significance of the concept of *dharma*. Various sources support this claim. They define *dharma* as ordinance, usage, duty, responsibility, right justice, moral obligation, righteousness, virtue, good works, and function.[2] W. K. Mahony puts it succinctly by stating that the characteristic essence of *dharma* is 'correctness' both in a descriptive (the way things are) and in a prescriptive (the way things should be) sense[3]. This can be taken as a reference to ones' 'being' and 'doing'. As such, *dharma* as a principle upholds and sustains an individual/community/universe in its wholeness, i.e., in cosmic and transcendental dimensions.

The two dimensions, the transcendental dimension in particular, further signifies the religious aspect of the concept of *dharma*. As a matter of fact, the Indic languages translate the term 'religion' as *dharma*. The word 'religion' derives from the Latin *religare*, meaning 'to bind'[4] or to bond. The idea may reflect a concept prominent in biblical literature. Israel was said to be in a 'covenant' relationship with its God (Yahweh). In a sense, the nation was 'covenanted' or 'bonded' to the deity[5]. The binding is two-fold: God bonding or binding Godself to us[6] and we binding ourselves to God.

The bonding emerging by way of our analysis of the religious dimension of *dharma* unfolds several significant facets. Complying with the theme of the paper and attempting to realize its significance, we investigate two aspects, namely, the nucleus of the binding and the object of the binding.

The nucleus of the binding is God. The God to whom we bond ourselves is the Triune God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. According to T. J. Scirghi, the Triune name is an expression of the intimate unity and relationship of the Three.[7] The notion of *perichoresis*, a word roughly translated as 'interpenetration' or 'permeation without confusion', describes the relationship of the three Persons as 'the dynamic activity of exchange in which Persons are who they are because of their relation to each other'. Between the Father and the Son there exists such a dynamic activity of exchange, a love which opens up through the Holy Spirit towards the whole of creation.[8]. In other words, God is never in solitude and never static but engages in an eternal communion. Leonardo Boff explains this divine communion in terms of a mystery of 'inclusion' – the three opening the divine community to the outside and inviting human beings to share in their community and life[9] This concerns God's life with

human beings and human beings' life with each other. In sum, in the mutual relationship of the three persons of the Godhead, we find both the model for a human community and the task to build community.

Binding oneself to God entails an objective, a mission. More specifically, it is a binding in view of those who suffer.[10] Ignacio Ellacuria, a liberation theologian unfolds a related and profound component of the binding, namely, the link between the suffering Christ and the suffering/poor people:

> The reality of the historically crucified people remains constant although the historical forms of the crucifixion are different. That people are the historical continuation of the servant of Yahweh, whose humanity is still being disfigured by the sin of the world, whom the powers of this world are still stripping of everything, taking away everything including his life.[11]

The inflicted suffering did not cow down Jesus, rather he emerged victorious. This is the reality of the Paschal Mystery. Just as Jesus has come out triumphant from his death, so too the suffering people (women) would triumph; their history of suffering provides them great authority. This is because God's own authority is acquired precisely in God's suffering [because of and in fighting against evil powers], in God's crucifixion, in God's sharing the burden and fate of the suffering people and in God's resurrection in and through Jesus Christ. This refers to a more powerful participation in Christ's Paschal mystery, his passion, death, and saving Resurrection.

The analysis of *dharma* from the ethical and religious perspective expounds the fact that *dharma* bonds and sustains an individual and community at the cosmic and transcendental

level, not just physically, but also on the level of 'meaning', which generates a sense of identity. The sense of identity comes into view as one relates to every being in a 'specific manner' and enjoins a 'specific behaviour towards every being'. In other words, one's identity is manifested through the principle of 'being' and 'doing'.[12] The two elucidations – 'being' and 'action' – that emerged from the analysis of *dharma* endorse assuming the responsibility for creating a community of equals by paying attention to the excluded of our society. The Trinitarian analysis of the concept of *dharma* has endorsed and insisted on the necessity of including the excluded. The second person of the Trinity, Jesus, has embodied in himself the task of establishing equality by restoring the dignity of human beings. In other words, he has translated his 'being' into 'action'. Soares-Prabhu – whose reflection on the theological category of the '*dharma* of Jesus' is under consideration– validates this claim by the notion of the '*Dharma* of Jesus'. An analysis of this thought follows.

2. The *Dharma* of Jesus

Soares-Prabhu maintains the *dharma* Jesus as "that complex blend of worldviews and values, of beliefs and prescriptions ... [which] binds and holds together the followers of Jesus, and integrates them into recognizable community".[13] This description enunciates clearly the above analysis – the religious and ethical dimensions of the concept *dharma* or the 'being' and 'doing' of Jesus, the need to heed to the cry of the suffering people, and build community with them. Jesus' life (being) is grounded on and determined by his experience of God's unconditional love. An experience of God as loving father, *Abba* constitutes his foundational experience.[14] His ministry (doing) is a sustained attempt to evoke this experience in his disciples and in the crowd through word and deed.[15] This is because he had realized that the experience of God as Father has as its inseparable

obverse in the experience of human beings as brothers/sisters, as *Nostra Aaetate* states it, "The relation of man and woman to God the Father, and their relation to their fellow human beings, are linked" (*NA*, 5).[16] A profound experience of God as Love, guides Jesus to realize his responsibility towards his brothers and sisters. In the light of our analysis on the Trinitarian dimension of *dharma*, we call it the responsibility of 'inclusion'. In point of fact, the subject of *dharma* comes to the fore in a context of decadence caused by *adharma*. *Bhagavad Gîtâ* asserts that Lord *Srî Krishna* himself takes initiative to re-establish *dharma* by coming to this world.[17]

3. Women as the 'Marginalized' of History

Adharma, decadence, exclusion is an undeniable reality of our world. People are excluded and discriminated on account of wealth, caste, creed, culture, language, and sex. As victims of inequality, they demand building a community of equals. Corresponding to the theme of this paper, we delve briefly on women, a substantial category of the excluded in general and the victims of sexual inequality in particular. A few figures on the reality validate the claim.

The current population of India is 1.27 billion. According to the United Nations Development Report (UNDP) 2014, India ranks 135 in a list of 187 countries. This is because almost half of the total number of her populace is in a catastrophic state, or rather has been shoved into that state.[18] The position of India in Gender Development Index (GDI) is 135 out of 148 countries.[19] In 'State of the World's Mothers (SOWM) 2014', India ranks 137 out of 178 countries.[20] Few more alarming figures further substantiate the claim. The total per capita of India is ₹ 3,708.00; woman's per capita income is 29.1 per cent.[21] Seventy eight per cent of rural women are engaged in agriculture, compared to 63

per cent men. However, the wage gap is dismal: men are paid 103.00 per day, while women are paid 55.00. The male literacy rate in India is 82.14 and the female literacy rate is 65.46.[22] According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), every day 93 women are being raped in India.[23] Presently (2014), only 66/543 of the *Lok Sabha* (Lower House of Parliament) seats are held by women.

The Indian scenario regarding the situation of women can be best expressed by the axiom, 'wasted lives'. Zigmunt Bauman coined it to describe the situation of the marginalized in our world. "The 'excessive' and 'redundant', that is the population of those who either could not or were not wished to be recognized or allowed to stay on in the mainstream"[24]. Feminism as the 'advocacy of women's rights on the ground of the equality of sexes', which entails organized activity in support of women's rights and interests, claims rectification of the situation. It means obtaining full humanity for women and their equality with men. Having blended perfectly well the love of God and neighbour, the excluded in particular, Jesus not only strove towards restoring the dignity of women, he also celebrated their existence.

4. Jesus' View of Women

Jesus' unusual relationship with women ought to be viewed against his setting. The milieu of Jesus was extremely discriminatory and oppressive towards women. Woman had been a property of man, which he could use and abuse at his fancy. As she was totally in his control, a married man could divorce his wife at will and take another woman. Outside sexual relationship, man could hardly imagine any type of adult relationship with a woman. Besides, a man should shun any public contact with women. The attitude towards women can be depicted through a set of references that display the Jewish views of women during the time of Jesus.

"Any iniquity is small compared to a woman's iniquity.... From a woman sin had its beginning, and because of her we all die" (Sirach 25:19, 24). "Better is the wickedness of a man than a woman who does good; it is woman who brings shame and disgrace" (Sirach 42:14). According to Josephus, the Jewish-Roman historian, "The woman is inferior to the man in every way".[25] Contrary to this Jewish setting of his time, Jesus assumed his responsibility for the 'inclusion' of the excluded.

His *Abba* experience guided him to adopt the cause of women in a unique manner. Women were his friends and equal companions. The episode on Mary and Martha (Lk 10:38-42; Jn 11:1-45) depicts this fact powerfully. In accepting women as equals, he addressed an oppressive system of his day – annulling the liberty of man to divorce a woman at his will and take another woman (Mt 5:31-32). He clarified that marriage is mutually binding on both men and women. He negated the idea that only women had to be dedicated to men in and through marriage.

Advancing a step further he openly defended women who had ill-repute as prostitutes (Jn 8:1-11; Lk 7:36-50). His gesture demonstrates that in an act of adultery or prostitution, both the man and woman stand equally accused or equally vindicated. Jesus accepted Mary Magdalene, the converted woman, to to minister to him, despite her past life. She, in turn has evidenced beyond doubt that a woman experiencing equality and dignity is a deeply committed disciple....

He established powerfully a sense of filial and maternal relationship when he entrusted his mother to his disciple (Jn 19:26-27). He also demonstrated remarkable trust in women when he entrusted his apostles to the care of his mother. Having known fully well the capacity and power of women to minister to the needs of the Kingdom of God – especially in and through him

and his band of apostles – he allowed them to follow him (Lk 8:2-3). He transformed the ill-reputed Samaritan woman to be his missionary in the Samaritan village. Thus, he provided a public social space for women. This was certainly revolutionary for his times.

We need to take note of the approach of women towards Jesus in responding to him. In a male-dominated society, women take courage to approach him (Lk 7:36-50). They dare to stand beneath the Cross (Jn 19:25). They involve themselves fully in the process of liberation that Jesus was striving to achieve for them. Their companionship with Jesus has been a liberating experience; it bestowed on them a public social place to live in dignity, self-respect, and a sense of equality. The ability of Jesus to be sensitive to the pain and suffering of others drew them towards him; in his presence, they felt totally accepted, respected, and dignified.[26]

Disaffiliating himself from the conventions of his discriminatory society that even disdained women, Jesus showered on them respect, dignity, equality; he also availed them an opportunity to respond to such a relationship. He crafted a new set of values to challenge the archaic customs, which would liberate women to live in a totally new way – celebrating their existence as God's image and likeness. To be precise, he assumed his responsibility of 'inclusion' in an exceptional manner. In fact, the task has objectively taken place at the incarnation of the Son of God, when God as Trinitarian community entered into human history, making it possible to eliminate the barriers of distinction and to create a community of equals.[27]

5. The Stance of the Church on Dignity of Women

In an attempt to follow Jesus in his footsteps, the Church has asserted the God-given fundamental rights of all human

persons and the human dignity of women. The magisterium has declared it as follows:

> It is obvious to everyone that women are now taking a part in public life ... Since women are becoming more conscious of their human dignity, they will not tolerate being treated as inanimate objects or mere instruments, but claim, both in domestic and in public life, the rights and duties that befit a human person (Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, 41).
>
> True, all men are not alike from the point of view of varying physical power and the diversity of intellectual and moral resources. Nevertheless, with respect to the fundamental rights of the person, every type of discrimination, whether social or cultural, whether based on sex, race, colour, social condition, language or religion, is to be overcome and eradicated as contrary to God's intent. For in truth it must still be regretted that fundamental personal rights are not yet universally honoured. Such is the case of woman who is denied the right and freedom to choose a husband, to embrace a state of life, or to acquire an education or cultural benefits equal to those recognized for men (*Gaudium et Spes*, 29).

It is an undeniable fact that exceptional excerpts such as these, proclaiming the dignity of women, often remain mere assumptions. Pope Francis has taken a few concrete measures to translate them into the action. On 13 September 2014, he appointed Sr Luiza Premoli as the first woman member of the *Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples*. Currently, a greater number of women are members of the *International Theological Commission*. Hailing from diverse locales, vocations, charisms, they constitute sixteen percent of the

Commission's members. He has pointed out that 'the feminine presence in the church has not been emphasized much because the temptation of chauvinism has not allowed for the place that belongs to the woman of the community to be made very visible'.[28] He has underlined that the 'Church leadership and outreach must be rooted in the pursuit of holiness and always attentive to the dignity of each human being'.[29]

However, a woman's role continues to be defined restrictively. During his second Wednesday general audience on 03 April 2014, the Pope said that women's main role in the Church is to communicate God's love. When asked about another controversial topic, the possibility of women cardinals, the Pope was quick to point to the problematic assumption underlying the question: "Women in the Church must be valued, not 'clericalized'. Whoever is thinking (about) women cardinals suffers a bit from clericalism".[30] An assertion of A. Bharti seems to be in place: "Only a leadership that has imbibed a broad vision and a willingness to delve into the root causes of the problems of inequality will be able to solve them permanently".[31] M. Shanti points out that a claim for full humanity and equality for women pre-supposes inter-changeability of roles, i.e., equal access to authority and leadership roles. This means that all members of the community have access to spiritual power, and participation in communal decision-making process.[32] The table-fellowship the early church expressed such an egalitarian relationship among community of believers who consisted of women, tax-collectors, in slaves ... – people otherwise belonging to the category of 'wasted lives'. Having said this, it ought to be noted that the forward and sometimes backward movement by the Church is certainly a profound move toward considerable progress.

6. Feminist Perspective of the *Dharma* of Jesus: The Capability Approach

The ugly reality that women face – discrimination, exploitation, oppression, exclusion, a lack or even absence of full humanity and equality with men – renders a feminist perspective along the lines of the *dharma* of Jesus, not only necessary but also urgent. Martha Nussbaum, a philosopher-feminist from the USA spells out tangible measures in this regard. She articulates a completely new paradigm for establishing new universal human values, which she terms as 'Human Capabilities'.[33] It refers to what people are actually *able to do and to be* – in a way informed by an intuitive idea of a life that is worthy of the dignity of the human being. A feminist perspective of human capabilities can be spelt out in the words of Joseph Gorden Levitt, the star of 'Inception' and several other movies. He asserts, "what feminism means to me is that you do not let your gender define you who you are – you can be who you want be, whether you are a man, a woman, a boy, a girl, whatever. Every person is unique".[34]The following list provides a set of 'Human Capabilities' spelt out avidly and perfectly by Nussbaum:[35]

1) *Life*: Being able to live to the end of a human life of normal length; not dying prematurely or before one's life is so reduced as to be not worth living.

(2) *Bodily Health*: Being able to have good health, including reproductive health; to be adequately nourished; to have adequate shelter.

(3) *Bodily Integrity*: Being able to move freely from place to place; to be secure against violent assault, including sexual assault and domestic violence; having opportunities for sexual satisfaction and for choice in matters of reproduction.

(4) *Senses, Imagination, and Thought*: Being able to use the senses, to imagine, think, and reason – and to do these things in a 'truly human' way, a way informed and cultivated by an adequate education, including, but by no means limited to, literacy and basic mathematical and scientific training. Being able to use imagination and thought in connection with experiencing and producing works and events of one's own choice, religious, literary, musical capacity, and so forth; being able to use one's mind in ways protected by guarantees of freedom of expression with respect to both political and artistic speech, and freedom of religious exercise and being able to have pleasurable experiences, and to avoid non-necessary pain.

5) *Emotions*: Being able to have attachments to things and people outside ourselves; to love those who love and care for us, to grieve at their absence; in general, to love, to grieve, to experience longing, gratitude, and justified anger. Not having one's emotional development blighted by fear and anxiety. (Supporting this capability means supporting forms of human association that can be shown to be crucial in their development).

(6) *Practical Reason*: Being able to form a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflection about planning of one's life (This entails protection for the liberty of conscience).

(7) *Affiliation:* This involves two factors (A): Being able to live with and toward others, to recognize and show concern for other human beings, to engage in various forms of social interaction; to be able to imagine the situation of another and to have compassion for that situation; to have the capability for both justice and friendship. (Protecting this capability means protecting institutions that constitute and nourish such forms of affiliation, and also protecting the freedom of assembly and political speech). (B): Having the social bases of self-respect and non-humiliation; being able to be treated as a dignified being whose worth is equal to

that of others. This entails protections against discrimination on the basis of race, sex, sexual orientation, religion, caste, ethnicity, or national origin.

(8) *Other Species*: Being able to live with concern for and in relation to animals, plants, and the world of nature.

(9) *Play*: Being able to laugh, to play, to enjoy recreational activities.

(10) *Control over one's Environment*: (A) Political: Being able to participate effectively in political choices that govern one's life; having the right of political participation, protection of free speech and association. (B) Material: Being able to hold property (both land and movable goods); having the right to seek employment on an equal basis with others; having the freedom from unwarranted search and seizure. This also involves being able to work as a human being, exercising practical reason and entering into meaningful relationships of mutual recognition with other workers.

Nussbaum maintains that capabilities in question should be pursued in accordance with *each person's capability*, based on the *principle of treating each person as end*. Women have all too often been treated as the supporters of the ends of others, rather than as ends in themselves; thus this principle has particular critical force with regard to women's lives. Moreover, the list that helps to asses gender inequalities has a specifically political conception namely, placing the 'central human capabilities' in the place of constitutional rights. Nussbaum is animated by the question, how governments might move from bestowing empty egal rights to making a real difference in women's lives. This means that central capabilities may not be infringed upon, to pursue other types of social advantage. While the presentation of capability approach includes several aspects, we would like to underline one facet, namely, the challenge it offers to involve actively in

policy-making and policy-implementing at the level of the government and the Church.

7. Relevance of the *Dharma* of Jesus for Women's Situation Today

Nussbaum not only proposes measures to reclaim the divested dignity of women, but also proposes legal measures, i.e., to place the central human capabilities in the place of constitutional rights. We are aware that 'enlightened state policies' alone do not transform the entrenched and dreadful patterns. In other words, we need to admit the futility of mere laws and courts to secure liberty without real change of heart in human beings. Justice Leonard Hand has expressed it vividly: "I often wonder if we do not rest our hopes too much on constitutions, upon laws and upon courts. Believe me, they are false hopes, liberty lies in the hearts of men [and women]; when it dies there is no court can do much to help it".[36] A change of heart or *metanoia*, which includes change of attitudes, is a pre-requisite in the task of restoring the dignity and equality of women, i.e., the task of acquiring full humanity for women.

Chetan Bhagat, a self-declared 'underage optimist' illuminates the subject matter. After watching the film *Mary Kom*, he analyzes the human-made role differentiation between men and women and reacts as follows: "It is time all this changes. ... It is about time we men bring a little bit of Mr. Mary Kom within us. ... If India has to move ahead, we have to optimize our resources". In exhorting the Indian husband to be supportive, he proposes three mantras:

> One, Listen and see your wife as a human being first; not as woman, wife or your parent's daughter-in-law. Your wife is an individual. And Individuals have individual dreams, opinions, motivations, and points of view. You may or may not agree with all of them,

but are you at least aware of them? Your wife may want to reach the heights in her carrier, or she may want to completely be there for the kids, or perhaps she wants a good mix. Do you know what she wants? How are you helping her achieving that? Two, be fair in parenting responsibilities.... Three, strive to make your partner the best person they can possibly be. This need not just be carrier related. ... Is there a role you play in her life for achieving her dreams, even if it is patiently listening to her insecurities? ... A lot of being supportive is intuitive. However, it does take courage for an Indian man to truly be there for his wife. This is because our sexist society mocks men who back their wives, almost implying a sense of weakness in them. However, I hope the new Indian husband will not be so insecure. Being a supportive husband doesn't make you less of a man or hen-pecked or weak. It just makes you a better, cooler human being. And don't forget, any Mr Mary Kom is just as much of a champion as Mary Kom.[37]

While complying with the stance of Bhagat, we would like to underline three points. First, his counsel to 'Indian husbands can be extended to all unequal and oppressive spheres of life and sections of society; second, a demand for equality of women does not suggest wrestling of the marginalized/excluded women with men but rather resisting the history wrought deeply with patriarchy and its perpetuating value system. Third, it assumes a conviction that both men and women are not codified as enemies but are complementary to each other. While reasserting the stance of Bhagat regarding the responsibility of men towards women in the words of a Cherokee proverb, "A man's highest calling is to protect woman so she is free to walk the earth unharmed", it

'seems fitting to underline the task of women towards men throughanother Cherokee proverb, "A woman's highest calling is to lead a man to his soul so as to unite him with source".

Whereas Bhagat proposes remedies concerning sexual inequality at the societal level, Nelle Morton a professor at the Harvard Divinity School devises an imaginatory exercise recommending remedies to the religious arena. Endeavouring at helping people realize how women feel in a sexist profession she asked her audience to imagine how they would feel and understand themselves and theology if the male-female roles were reversed: "Imagine Harvard Divinity School as a school with a long female theological tradition. All the professors except one are women, most of the students are women, and all of the secretaries are men. ... All language in such an institution has a distinctly feminine character'. 'Womankind' means all humanity; 'women' as generic word includes men (Jesus came to save all women). ... If a professor announces a course on 'the doctrine of women' or speaks about the 'motherhood of God', she of course does not want to exclude men".[38]

Women suffer inequality and exclusion at every level – social, economic, religious, cultural sexual.... When seen from the perspective of the suffering of Jesus, their suffering can be asserted as a profound participation in the Paschal mystery. Their affliction offers them the asserted as a profound participation in the Paschal mystery. Their affliction offers them the hope of resurrection. The Trinity offers both a model and the task for including the excluded. Being true to his *dharma*, Jesus has disposed of the systematic distinctions and built community of equals. The task is shared with everyone; it continues.....

Conclusion

A feminist perspective of the *dharma* of Jesus is an appeal to be *dhârmic*, i.e., to dialogue with the otherness of the

other, which pre-supposes an attitudinal change. The lack and even absence of dignity women experience is certainly a crucial issue for discourse. Discounting the plea would amount to reducing the concern to mere indicators and benchmarks, managed and manipulated endlessly especially by the bureaucracy and leadership. Nevertheless, it ought to be noted that the question of full humanity for women and their equality with men, in other words, reclaiming their dignity as having been created in God's image and likeness should not only be a concern of those who are the victims of discrimination and persecution but also of everyone touched by the Dharma of Jesus. It calls for questioning the old foundations, exploring new possibilities and seeing the old problems in a new perspective.

Notes:

1. William K. Mahony, "*Dharma*" in *Encyclopaedia of Oriental Philosophy and Religion* vol. 1, eds. Nagendra K Singh, A P Mishra New Delhi: Global Vision Publishing House,(2005),213.

2. Pandurang Vaman Kane, *History of Dharmasastra* Vol.1,(Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1953, 1; Thomas M. Manickam, "Manu's Vision of the Hindu *Dharma*," in *Journal of Dharma* 1 (1974): 102; Bangalore Kuppuswamy, "A Modern View of Hindu *Dharma*." *Journal of Dharma* 1 (1973): 118; Johannes Adrianus Bernardus Van Buitenen, "*Dharma* and Moksa," in *Studies in Indian Literature and Philosophy: Collected Articles of J.A. B. van Buitenen*, ed. Ludo Rocher Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, (1988) 115; Malur Rangacharya, *The Hindu Philosophy of Conduct: Being Class-Lectures on the Bhagavad Gîtâ*, Vols 1-3, vol. 1, (Madras: The Educational Publishing Company, 1957-1966), 39; Mahony, "*Dharma*," 348-349; Ashok S. Chousalkar, *Social and Political Implications of Concepts of Justice and Dharma* (Delhi: Mittal Publications, 1986), 66-67. Friedhelm Hardy, *The Religious Culture of India* (New Delhi: Foundation Books, 1995) 348-

3. Mahony, "*Dharma*," 329.

4. Joyce Littlejohn, ed., *Collins Latin Dictionary & Grammar* (Glasgow:HarperCollins Publishers, 2005), 184.

5. Gerald A. Larue, *What Is 'Religion'? Well, It's Hard to 'Say Exactly'* (http://www.teachingaboutreligion.org/White Papers/Larue _ whatisreligion.htm, 2003, accessed 10.09.2014).

6. God's covenant with Abraham (Gen 12: 1-3, 17: 5), Isaac (Gen 17: 19), Jacob (Gen 28: 12-15), Moses (Ex 19-24) and Israel (Deut 29: 1- 29) can be said as God's bond with people. In making covenant with people, God adopts people into God's family and treats them as heirs to the family fortune. Like God, Christ strikes a covenant with us at our baptism one that is stronger than blood, one that establishes a divine, everlasting kinship bond.

7. Thomas J. Scirghi, "The Trinity: A Model for Belonging in Contemporary Society," *The Ecumenical Review* 54, no. 3 (2002): 333-342.

8. Boff describes the dynamic activity between the three persons thus: "Each person is open to the other, accepting the other unconditionally, giving the best one has to other and receiving from the other in kind". Each divine person is affirmed by affirming the others, and through surrendering to the others. Leonardo Boff, *Holy Trinity, Perfect Community* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2000), 3. Cf. 1 Pet 1: 1-2.

9. Boff, *Holy Trinity, Perfect Community*, 54.

10. See, Final Message of the 1994 World Synod of Bishops, "Consecrated Life, Expression of Church's Spiritual Vitality," *Origins* 24, no 22 (1994): 373; Chittister, "Vows," in *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, ed. Michael Downey, Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, (1993) 1011.

11. Ignacio Ellacuria, "Discernir el signo de los tiempos," *Diakonia* 17 (1981), 58, cited in Jon Sobrino, *No Salvation Outside the Poor: Prophetic Utopian Essays* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2008), 3.

12. John M. Koller, "*Dharma*: An Expression of Universal Order," *Philosophy East & West* 22, no. 2 (1972): 132.

13. George M. Soares-Prabhu, "As We Forgive: Inter-Human Forgiveness in the Teaching of Jesus," *Concilium* 184 (1986): 57.

14. Jesus' life/'being' was expressed through the following. As 'born of the Spirit' (George M. Soares-Prabhu, *The Dharma of Jesus*, ed. Francis Xavier D'Sa (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books), 13-26), he worked miracles but that was not to show his power but as witnessing to the presence and power of God's Kingdom (Soares-Prabhu, *The Dharma of Jesus*, 133-144). He lived constantly with conflict (Soares-Prabhu, *The Dharma of Jesus*, 164-172), but he never failed to preach love (Soares-Prabhu, *The Dharma of Jesus*, 193-207). He remained free of prejudice (Soares-Prabhu, *The Dharma of Jesus*, 155-163). He insisted on forgiveness (Soares-Prabhu, *The Dharma of Jesus*, 220-228). He survived everything because of his experience of and trust in his *Abba* (Soares-Prabhu, *The Dharma of Jesus*, 208-219).

15. Jesus' ministry/'doing' consists in responding to the challenges of his times by being prophetic and provocative (George M. Soares-Prabhu, "Jesus the Prophet," *Jeevadhara* 21 (1974): 206-217); making the *anawim* aware that the Kingdom of God is theirs (Soarès-Prabhu, *The Dharma of Jesus*, 229-243); questioning the social and religious divisions prevalent during his time through his table-fellowship with sinners and tax-collectors (George M. Soares-Prabhu, "The Table Fellowship of Jesus: Its Significance for *Dalit* Christians in India Today," *Jeevadhara* 22 (1992): 140-159.

16. For details on Soares-Prabhu's illustration of the issue see, Soares-Prabhu, *The Dharma of Jesus*, 184.

17. *Srî Krishna* as the *avatâra* of God teaches humans to be faithful to their *dharma* and act for the sake of *dharma*. He teaches the path of detached action and the path of devotion as the way to respond to his plan to establish *dharma* in the universe

(*Bhagavad Gitâ* 4.7-8; *Bhagavata PurâGa* 9. 24.56; 5.19.5). See also V. Bhave, *Talks on the Gitâ* (Varnasi: Sarva Seva Sangh Prakashan, 1982), 2, 16, 89, 175, 183.

18. The ugly preference for male child has caused the sex ratio to be 940 females per 1,000 males. See, (http://www.indiaonlinepages.com population/india-current-population.html), accessed 25.09.2-14.

19. http://www.downtoearth.org.in/content/india-ranked-135-human-development-report-2014, accessed 20.09.2014.

20. http://www.dailypioneer.com/state-editions/bhubaneswar/india-ranks-127th-for-mothers-safety-study.html, accessed 20.09.2014.

21. "Gender Discrimination in Income: Statiotostics", *The Times of India* 08.28.2014, accessed 25.09.2014. Burundi is an extremely poor country; its per capita income is 600 dollars and women's per capita income is 84.1 per cent.

22. http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2014-04-01 news/29370544_1_literacy-rate-female-foeticide-census-exercise, 30.09.2014.

23. "93 Women Are Being Raped In India Every Day, NCRB Data Show", (http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/93-women-are-being-raped-in-India-every-day-NCRB-data-show/articleshow/37566815.cms), accessed on 30.09.2014.

24. Zygmunt Bauman, *Wasted Lives: Modernity and its Outcasts* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2004), 5-7.

25. Flavius Josephus, *Against Apion Or On The Antiquity Of The Jews*, Book II, Paragraph 201 in Leob Classical Library, trans H St John Thackeray (London: Harvard University Press, 1926), 373; see also W. Forster, *Palestinian Judaism in New Testament Times* (London: Harvard University Press, 1964), 124.

26. Evon Ambrose and R G Lobo, *Social Transformation, How Christ Went About It: A Study of the Methodology of Christ in Effective Social Transformation* (New Delhi: Caritas India,

1993), 84-87.

27. Boff, *Holy Trinity, Perfect Community*, 63.

28. Pope Francis, *On Heaven and Earth: Pope Francis on Faith, Family and the Church in the 21st Century* (London, New Delhi, New York, Sydney: Bloomsbury, 2013), 103.

29. Pope Francis, *On Heaven and Earth*, 27ff.

30. "Women in the Church, Latest News", (http://www.catholicnews agency.com/tags/women-in-the-church/#.VDVAVIZpBnM.mailto), accessed 09.10.2014.

31. Ashok Bharti, "A Perspective on Dignity," in *Defining Dignity: An Anthology of Dreams, Hopes and Struggle*, eds. Mukul Sharma and Sana Das, New Delhi: World Dignity Forum and Heinrich Boll Foundation, (2005) 183.

32. Margaret Shanti, "Women Towards A New Ecclesiogenesis," in *We Dare to Speak: A Critical Appraisal of Women in Religion* eds. Margaret Shanti and Corona Mary, Trichy: Worth (1994) 45-46.

33. It is built on Amartya Sen's concept of 'agency': the ability of a person to participate freely in economic, social, and political actions.

34. "Levitt for Feminism," *Sunday Times of India*, 17.08.2014.

35. See, Martha C. Nussbaum, *Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach*, vol. 3. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 77-80.

36. As stated in A Padmanaban, "Dignity as a Global Concept," in *Defining Dignity: An Anthology of Dreams, Hopes and Struggle*, eds. Mukul Sharma and Sana Das, New Delhi: World Dignity Forum and Heinrich Boll Foundation, (2005) 156.

37. Chetan Bhagat, "Indian Men Should Channelize their Inner Mr Mary Kom," *Sunday Times of India* 21.09.2014.

38. Nelle Morton "The Rising Women Consciousness in a Male Language Structure," in *Women and the Word: Toward a Whole Theology*, ed Jean Crosby and Jude Michaels Berkeley, CA: Office of Women's Affairs of the Graduate Theological Union, (1972) 43-52.

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The *Dharma* of Jesus: *Karma* of Pastors?

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Abstract: The focus of this article is the Sermon on the Mount that is at the heart of the Dharma of Jesus, but given a cosmotheandric interpretation by Francis D'Sa where the cosmos, God and human beings are seen as three constitutive dimensions of reality that are inseparable from one another. Adopting this view, the author goes on to explore its implications in terms of Freedom, Fellowship and Justice, and concludes with some reflections on how these would affect one's pastoral care.

Key words: Sermon on the Mount, Freedom, Fellowship, Justice, Pastor

Introduction

The phrase *Dharma of Jesus* immediately brings to mind the great person of George Soares-Prabhu who was indeed instrumental in studying and speaking about this concept especially from the biblical point of view and from the perspective of the Christian cultural world. After the death of Fr. George Soares-Prabhu, in an edited book entitled *The Dharma of Jesus, Interdisciplinary Essays in Memory of George Soares-Prabhu,* the editor Francis X. D'Sa has made a study on Soares-Prabhu's interpretation of the message of Jesus from within the world of *Dharma.*

With this background of Soares-Prabhu's interpretation of the message of Jesus and Francis X. D'Sa's cosmotheandric interpretation of the *Dharma* of Jesus, I attempt, in this essay, to study the message of Jesus as interpreted by George Soares-Prabhu from within the world of *Dharma* and draw out implications for our pastoral ministry.

1. The Word Dharma

Traditionally, *Dharma* has been identified with *varnashrama Dharma,* the code describing the obligations of the four ideal castes of society (*Varnas*) and the four stages (student, householder, hermit, and wandering ascetic) which should ideally define the life of every individual in each of the three upper classes. Hence, though the word *Dharma* had a comprehensive character, it was limited to two principal ideas, namely the organization of social life through well defined and well regulated classes(varnas) and the organization of an individual's life within those classes into definite stages(ashramas).[1]

However from the time of the Bhagwad Gita at least, this narrow understanding of *Dharma* has been leavened by the notion of *Svadharma* or natural law. As the Bhagwad Gita puts it, "Better one's own *Dharma* (*Svadharma*) however unglamorous, than the *Dharma* of another (*Paradharma*), however well done.[2] Francis X. D'Sa suggests that *Dharma* can be an outcome not of internal values which domesticate, but of the liberating exigencies of human freedom. This, according to D'Sa, is true of the original *Dharma* of the Gita.[3]

The word *Dharma* is derived from the root dhr, which means to uphold, to support, to nourish. *Dharma* has to do with holding, upholding, holding together, supporting, maintaining, sustaining. The Mahabharata, therefore, derives the word *Dharma* from the word *dharana,* that is holding together. *Dharma* is that which holds the peoples together.[4]

2. The World of *Dharma*

The world of *Dharma* is an interconnected, interrelated and therefore interdependent whole wherein whatever exists, exists as interconnected, interrelated and interdependent. Correspondingly, whatever is not interrelated, interconnected and

interdependent does not exist. To exist is always to be part of, to participate in. In the world of *Dharma*, where everything hangs together with everything else, reality is a web of relations wherein every being is what it is because of its unique relationship to the whole.[5]

According to one of the mythic themes of Hinduism, the world is considered to be a cosmic body, the body of *Purusha* (that is *ishwara*, Lord, *Paramatma*). The world is animated by the *Purusha*.[6] We are part of a living cosmos. Accordingly the world-view of *Dharma* has to be understood in the background of a living cosmos where the interconnection and interdependence in the tiniest as well as mightiest aspects of the universe is not mechanical but organic. The parts are what they are because they participate in the Purusha and it is the Purusha that determines the Karma of the parts.[7]

But when the part remains ignorant of its relationship to the whole and thinks it is independent, it develops a false sense of identity (Ahamkara) which in effect is the declaration of independence from the whole. For example, a jaundiced person who perceives everything as yellow and the other, seeing 'double' when one puts pressure with a finger on one of the eyes. The *Dharma* world-view states that such is indeed the case with us and our world. We all are affected by the jaundice of the Ahamkara; we all perceive the world in a jaundiced manner and so are unable to see it as it really is. Ahamkara consists of two forces namely; Raga-Dvesha, that is passion (=attraction) and hatred (=repulsion). Our behavior is determined by them much before reason comes to the scene. Thus we need to allow the previously mentioned 'reasoning' to come into operation rather than allowing ahamkara i.e. raga-dvesha (attraction-replusion) to determine our activity. In the Hindu tradition, we could safely say that our true self is synonymous with being really and fully

free. The relation of the whole accepting the part as a part of itself and of the part knowingly entering into the whole, this is indeed the final fulfillment of the Part which is neither separate from nor identical with but is non-dually (a-dvaita) related to the whole.[8]

3. The Dharma of Jesus

The *Dharma* of Jesus, that is, the complex of religious insight and ethical concern (of experience, worldview and value) which determines the lifestyle that Jesus proclaimed and practiced, has been conveniently formulated for us in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5-7). These three chapters of the gospel of Matthew are widely accepted in the non-Christian India as the essence of Christianity. In a sense they are since they present in a brief and striking way a pattern of existence appropriate to a follower of Jesus, because it is in fact a replica of the kind of life which Jesus himself lived. The Sermon on the Mount gives us the authentic *Dharma* of Jesus - the pattern of existence he lived by and proclaimed.[9]

3.1. The Sermon on the Mount

The Sermon on the Mount was never really preached by Jesus as such. It is an edited collection of the sayings of Jesus made by the early Christian community and then greatly expanded by Matthew. The Sermon on the Mount as we have it now is thus an editorial composition of Matthew.[10] It is, according to Soares-Prabhu, Matthew's presentation of the *Dharma* of Jesus.[11]

3.1.1. Context of the Sermon on the Mount

The sermon on the mount appears as the first of the five great discourses (Mt. 5-7,;10; 13; 18; 24-25). Each of these discourses concludes with a stereotyped formula: "and it happened that when Jesus had finished" (7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1). Their role in

the gospel is indicated in the grand finale with which the Gospel triumphantly ends (28:16-20). The solemn and powerful proclamation of the Risen Lord, in this concluding Christophany, gives us the key to Matthew's theology. Here we are told that Christian existence, as Matthew understands it, means *discipleship* of the Risen Lord.[12]

The Sermon on the Mount is placed by Matthew immediately after his programmatic summary of the Galilean preaching (Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand). Following the proclamation of the kingdom of God, the Sermon spells out concretely what the "repentance" demanded by the kingdom means in practice. The Sermon on the Mount is to be understood, then, as a description of human person's response to the kingdom.[13]

3.1.2. Meaning of the Sermon on the Mount

The Sermon on the Mount as Matthew gives it, is addressed not to a select few but to the crowds at large and so, is not proposed as a counsel of perfection. It is proposed as a way of life which Jesus clearly expects his disciples (all of them) to follow (7: 21-27).

If the sermon on the mount is understood as a new law of Jesus making the old law of Moses obsolete, if Jesus is seen as the new Moses giving a new law to the Christians, it would mean that the new *Dharma* is a new tradition of elders a new set of external laws a new kula *Dharma* of the Christian community. All NT writings carry an awareness that Jesus has brought a new religious consciousness (and with it a new *Dharma*) which runs counter to the legalism of the Pharisees.

Jesus states that he has come not to abolish the law and the prophets but to fulfill it. He adds prophets to the law signifying that just as the prophets came to fulfill the will of God, so too the

law comes to fulfillment in Jesus in a higher way. The law camefrom Moses, grace and truth came from Jesus (Jn 1:17). The new *Dharma* replaces the old one and fulfills it. How does this new *Dharma* of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount fulfill the *Dharma* of OT can be shown by means of three sutras (aphorisms). Together they give us the thrust of the Sermon on the Mount.

3.1.3. Sutra 1: Sermon on the Mount is not Law but Love

The Sermon on the Mount has six antithesis in which Jesus proposes that we go beyond the law of Moses. It is a shift from the external practice of the law to internalizing the its spirit. He simplifies the law to just one precept: be perfect as the heavenly father is perfect. Perfection here means not flawlessness or without imperfection but being wholehearted or undivided in one's love. Being wholehearted and undivided in loving God and neighbor are inseparable in NT for God is undivided in loving us. The Sermon on the Mount therefore is not to be read as a collection of precepts, but as an invitation to, and an illustration of the basic Christian attitude of Obedience (Love of God) and radical concern (Love of neighbor) for in Mt. 22:40 Jesus says that on these two depends all the law and prophets.[14]

3.1.4. Sutra 2: Sermon on the Mount is not Law but Gospel

The Sermon on the Mount is preceded by the proclamation of the kingdom by Jesus. The proclamation calls for repentance. Repent....for the kingdom of God is at hand. (Mt. 4:17). This repentance or metanoia is the total turning of the person to God who has experienced his love through Jesus. John says that we love because he first loved us (1Jn 4:19).

The Sermon on the Mount therefore is a description of the natural lifestyle of a Christian who is gripped by the proclamation and has experienced the unconditional love of God through Jesus.[15]

3.1.5. Sutra 3: Sermon on the Mount is a Goal-Directed Norm

The Christian *sva-dharma* is goal-directed. Christian existence is not a static condition acquired once and for all, but a "way" along which we must walk following Christ. In this sense we are all becoming Christians. The Sermon on the Mount obliges us to move in a particular direction. The law of Christ is concerned not so much with the nature of the action but the quality of the act and the direction in which it is moving.[16]

3.2. The *Dharma* of the Sermon on the Mount

The Sermon on the Mount proposes a distinctive *Dharma*: A *Dharma* of grace and growth, of freedom and concern. The Sermon on the Mount does not lay down a static code of conduct but spells out a pattern of eschatological existence towards which we are to walk in grace. We are to urge ourselves on by a power from within, welling up from an experience of God's unconditional love and producing fruits of love and not just of good works.

The Sermon on the Mount is grounded on an experience of God's unconditional love which was Jesus foundational experience of God as *Abba*. Jesus communicates his *Abba* experience through his deeds towards the marginalized the 'de-communitized', through fellowship with outcastes, etc and tries to evoke this experience in his disciples.[17]

Jesus links these two commandments in the OT in a very creative way (Ex. 6:4 and Lev. 19:18) to bring out a new *Dharma* which equates loving God and loving one's neighbor. These two unrelated OT texts come together in Jesus' *Dharma* as a indissoluble unit. Thus, the *Dharma* of the Sermon on the Mount

which is an authentic expression of the *Dharma* of Jesus shows three features

3.2.1. A *Dharma* of Freedom

The first Christians experienced the *Dharma* of Jesus as the *Dharma* of freedom because it liberated them from the oppressive burden of the law. The understanding of the law which Jesus proposes is more radical and liberating than that of the Pharisees.

Jesus radicalizes the law. Its demands now reach the innermost intentions of the heart. The question now is not what is the legally right thing to do but what is the most loving thing to do and this requires not just negative avoidance of evil (thou shall not...) but a positive whole-hearted and undivided love of God himself.

Thus the "law of Christ" (Gal 6:2, 1 Cor 9:26) of which Paul speaks is the "Law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" (Rom8:2). This law of Christ is not a code of law but a new interior principle of love which in the *Dharma* of Jesus takes the place of law. "Christian law codes are only expressions of this spirit of love and are always subordinate to the spirit they express."[18]

The quality of Christian life is not measured by multiplicity of its observances but to the extent of its conformity to the mind which was in Christ Jesus (Phil2:5). Christian *Dharma* is ultimately not so much a matter of obeying laws as following Christ.

Why, then, do we have laws?

Ideally, law as an external code of conduct should be completely replaced by the spirit, the interior principle of loving action, and those who usher in the eschatological age, Jesus is the end of the law, that everyone who has faith may be justified.

Law belongs to the yet un-Christianized areas of our life for the law was not made for the just but for the unjust (1 Tim1:9). If all were just and completely Christian there would be no need for laws. Law intervenes only to counter existing disorder. To the extent that this disorder disappears and the unchristian areas of our life eliminated by the flooding of the spirit of Love, our dependence on law will diminish.

3.2.2. A *Dharma* of Sonship

The Pharisees viewed God as a just judge who punished those who infringed the law and justified those who kept the law. Jesus on the other hand viewed God as *Abba*, a loving father who loved unconditionally. The just judge cannot love the person he puts on trial. Everything is done on merit and there is no question of forgiveness, graciousness or unconditional acceptance. In this *Dharma*, law takes precedence over love. Law is the mediator between God and man. In such a *Dharma*, man's attitude will obviously be one of formal external obedience. This *Dharma* has no place for the enthusiasm of love. All that this *Dharma* can do is to encourage avoidance of sin (Conceived not as betrayal of love but infringement of law) and performance of good works as prescribed by the law.

The *Dharma* of Jesus is of a different kind. Grounded on an experience of God as *Abba* a loving father who forgives recklessly and justifies the ungodly (Rom 4:5) "the *Dharma* of Jesus proposes as the primary attribute of God not his justice but his love. God's attitude to man is not then conditional approval (I will love you if you are good) but unconditional love." Law is not the mediator between God and man but Jesus who reveals God's unconditional love of man and man's radical obedience to God. Such obedience is not sin-centered, not preoccupied with avoiding sin but God centered, that is, being perfect as the

heavenly father is perfect. To be perfect in this manner is to be undivided, whole hearted and unconditional in our love for others.Such a person is a son/daughter to God who lives out this relationship with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control - fruits of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:22 ff). These are the unmistakable marks of those following the *Dharma* of Jesus.[19]

3.2.3. A *Dharma* of Concern

To experience God as father is to experience fellow human beings as brother and sisters. Hence the *Dharma* of Jesus is the *Dharma* of concern (agape). When Jesus combines Ex 6:4 with Lev. 19:18 he may have been interpreting the first text by means of the second. He means to say that to Love God with all your heart and soul means to loves ones neighbor as oneself. Thus the double commandment of love propounded by Jesus (Mt. 22: 34-40) urges us not so much to love God and neighbor as to love God by loving neighbor. The NT gives a steady stress of clean and powerful directives to love neighbor (Mt. 19:19; Rom 13: 8; Gal 5:14; Heb 13:1; 1 Pet 2:17, 4:8 ; Jas 2:8; Jn 13:34, 15:12; 1Jn 2:7ff, 3:23, 4:21; 2 Jn 5.

So this loving God by loving neighbor becomes the new schema of the community of Jesus. Concern for neighbor is thus central to the *Dharma* of Jesus. To love according to the *Dharma* of Jesus means not only to forgive enemies (Mt 5:23) to accept persons non judgmentally (Rom14:1-4), to be patient, kind, magnanimous and tolerant (1Cor 13:3-7), it means also and indeed primarily to sit at table with outcastes and untouchables (Mk 2:15-17), to give food to the hungry and clothing to those who have nothing to wear (Mt. 25: 36). The first letter of John puts it: "if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need yet closes his heart against him, how does the Love of God

abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or in speech but in deed and truth." (1Jn 3:17ff)

The *Dharma* of Jesus also has a very strong materialist orientation when it looks forward to building up a universal fraternal community of sharing and love. (Acts 2:44ff, 4:32-34) It is such a *Dharma* of concern of the community where no one is in need.[20]

3.3. The *Dharma* of Jesus: A Cosmotheandric Interpretation

When God's offer of love meets with trusting acceptance from the humans, it makes them free inasmuch as it liberates each individual from the inadequacies and obstacles that shackle them. It also fosters fellowship because it empowers free individuals to exercise concern for each other in genuine community; it leads to justice because it impels the community to adopt the just societal structures which alone make freedom and fellowship possible.

Freedom, fellowship and justice are thus the parameters of the kingdoms thrust towards the total liberation of man. Together they spell out the significance of the kingdom and tell us what the kingdom in practice means today.[21]

Freedom, Fellowship and Justice which symbolize the *Dharma* of Jesus have to be interpreted neither anthropocentrically nor cosmocentrically but cosmotheandrically. In a cosmotheandric vision the three dimensions constitutive of of reality - Cosmos, Theos and Aner are integrated. These three indispensable but mobile centers of reality are not separate; whenever one is present the other two are also there. None can exist without the other two.[22] In this vision, reality is neither fully autonomous (that is totally independent) nor fully heteronomous (that is fully dependent), it is ontonomous. Ontonomy is the unique

blend of autonomy and heteronomy and refers to the fact that the complex of relationships of which reality is comprised is such that every being is uniquely related to every other being.[23]

3.3.1. Freedom

The root cause of our fears and insecurities is lack of love. These fears and insecurities caused by the lack of love give rise to compulsions and pressures. We seek to fill this gaping void by grasping compulsively at possessions, positions and power. To be truly free is to be free from these insecurities. The supreme example of such freedom is Jesus.

Freedom has to be understood not merely as freedom from internal and external compulsions but as freedom from spiritual blindness. It is a freedom that is ontonomously holistic. It consists in letting each thing be what it is meant to be and thus contributing to its own growth and the growth of the whole network of relationships. Thus a thing is free only when it can grow fully and at the same time also allows everything to grow fully. Fullness of growth is possible where freedom is ontonomous: the growth of one is such that it promotes the growth of all and vice versa.[24]

3.3.2. Fellowship

Freedom is the door that opens up fellowship. To enter the home of fellowship one has to enter through the door of freedom. The freedom that Jesus brings leads to fellowship and concern for everyone in need. By interpreting the love commandment Soares- Prabhu argues that "To love God with all ones heart means to love one's neighbor as oneself. We love God by loving neighbor. For Soares-Prabhu, agape is radical concern for neighbor which is the same as fellowship.

Fellowship is built on freedom. Where there is no ontonomous freedom, fellowship cannot emerge, much less

survive. Freedom is the space where the home of fellowship is built and because it follows from freedom, fellowship is also ontonomous. Fellowship is the activated openness of being. In the home of fellowship no being is guest and all are family; fellowship is not restricted to the like-minded or to those vibrating on the same wave-length. Ontonomous fellowship does not discriminate but it does differentiate between different modes of being and adjusts itself accordingly.[25] Ontonomous fellowship is not to be identified with 'good feelings' towards others but one has to recognize in it that the reality is ontonomous.

3.3.3. Justice

Fellowship and justice according to Soares-Prabhu go together. Jesus did not just try to convert individuals but attacked unjust structures also.[26] Thus Freedom, Fellowship and Justice are expressions of a new liberating relationship with God and human beings. For Soares-Prabhu these three constitute the *Dharma* of Jesus which is the core of the proclamation of the kingdom. Genuine freedom and authentic fellowship give no quarter to any kind of distortion in our knowing and loving. This being so, the ontonomous order which expresses itself through freedom and fellowship can fully come into its own only with the birth of Justice. Justice is the third member of the ontonomous trinity, it is the thematic realization of the ontonomous order.[27]

Justice is neither an emotional nor a romantic attitude. It springs from a commitment to the ontonomous order. It is not so much a juridical as an ontonomous concept implying the fulfillment of freedom and fellowship. Thus where freedom and fellowship flourish, justice will be the fruit. It is a culmination of freedom and fellowship in that without justice neither of them can reach its fullness.

4. Implications for Pastoral Ministry

As Francis D'Sa puts it, "The karma of the Father is the *Dharma* of Jesus." That is, Jesus' *Dharma* is a reflection of the Father's work. The substance of Jesus' proclamation is God's kingly karma. What the Father does, the son does too (Jn5:19). With this in mind we could now try to draw up the *Dharma* of a pastor for today.

4.1. Beginning at the Periphery

Jesus did not see his mission as one of bringing all people to the baptism of repentance in the Jordan. He decided that something else had to be done especially to the poor, the sinners and the sick. Therefore, the people to whom Jesus reached out were the poor, the blind, the lame, the crippled, the lepers, the hungry. In other words he reached out to those of the lower class, the oppressed and those who remained at the periphery of the social circle.[28]

The pastor should be a person who begins his ministry, like Jesus, at the periphery of society and bring them and make them part of the larger community of Jesus, providing them with self-respect, dignity and a rightful place in the community. This going to the periphery would mean that the pastor is fired with the same mission as that of Jesus, the mission to proclaim the kingdom of God.

4.2. A Builder of Communities

Taking a cue from the first Christian communities (Acts 2: 42-45; 4: 32-37) the basic *Dharma* of the pastor is to be builder of communities based on the principles of Freedom, Fellowship and Justice. The community he builds is not a community which is unrelated to one another which gathers together once a week just for worship but a community which is

together once a week just for worship but a community which is founded on the Love of God rather than on Laws and its structures. The *Dharma* of the pastor is to build a community in which each individual is loved as someone special, an inseparable part of the whole network of relationships that makes the community. He facilitates the growth of the individuals as strong members of the body of Christ.

4.3. A Free Person who makes others Free

Spirit is characterized by freedom. Trying to quench this spirit (1 Thes 5:19) is to do away with love which is the fruit of the spirit.[29] Love as responsibility for one another and for the community must be the beginning and the end, the motive and the final outcome, of all struggles for freedom.[30] A pastor is called to be free from internal compulsions and external pressures by putting on the mind of Christ (Phil 2:5). This will distinguish his ministry from that of a well organized NGO which does good work; he is a liberator after the manner of Christ. He is to be an embodiment of justice, who does not prefer one group over the other but works for a community that is collaborative, co-ordinated and dialogical. He is called to promote just structures in his community without leaving out the poor and the neglected, but like Jesus, reaching out to the least, the lost and the last.

Conclusion

The message of Jesus originates in the Father. The centre of all that Jesus stands for is not Jesus himself but the Father. True, Jesus is the way, the truth and the life but he is the way to, the truth about and the life from the Father. The way is not the goal, the truth is not identical with that which discloses the truth and the life is not the source from which it emerges.[31] All pastoral activity is a reflection of the love of the father shown by the supreme

pastor: Jesus. Rooted in the *Abba* experience of Jesus and the Resurrection experience of the apostles, the followers of Jesus are to go and build contrast communities based on the principles of freedom, fellowship and justice.

Notes:

1. Cf. G. M. SOARES-PRABHU, "The Dharma of Jesus: An Interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount", in F. X. D' Sa (Ed.), The Dharma of Jesus, New York, Orbis Books Publications, 2003, 175 - 176.
2. *The Bhagwadgita* XVIII, 47
3. Cf. FRANCIS X. D'SA, "*Dharma* as Delight in Cosmic Welfare: A Study of *Dharma* in the Gita," *Bible Bhashyam*, 6, 1980, pp. 335-357.
4. Cf. F. X. D' SA, "*Dharma of Jesus?*" in Francis X. D' Sa (Ed.), *The Dharma of Jesus, Interdisciplinary Essays in Memory of George Soares-Prabhu, S.J.*, Anand, Gujrat Sahitya Prakash Publications, 1997, 418- 419.
5. Ibid., 419.
6. Ibid., 420.
7. Ibid., 420.
8. Ibid., 425- 426.
9. Cf. G. M. SOARES-PRABHU, "The Dharma of Jesus: A Interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount", 177.
10. Ibid., 177 - 178.
11. Ibid., 177.
12. Ibid., 178.
13. Ibid, 178.
14. Ibid., 182-183.

15. Ibid., 183.
16. Ibid., 183.
17. Ibid., 184.
18. Ibid., 185.
19. Ibid., 186-187.
20. Ibid., 188-189.
21. Ibid., 64.
22. Cf. F. X. D'SA. *"Dharma of Jesus?"*, 442.
23. Cf. F. X. D'SA. *"Dharma of Jesus?"*, 451
24. Cf. F. X. D'SA. *"Dharma of Jesus?"*, 451.
25. Cf. F. X. D'SA. *"Dharma of Jesus?"*, 453.
26. Cf. G. M.SOARES-PRABHU, "The Kingdom of God: Jesus 'Vision of a New Society," in F. X. D' Sa (Ed.), *The Dharma of Jesus*, NewYork, Orbis Books Publications, 2003, 66.
27. Cf. D' SA. F. X., *"Dharma of Jesus?"*, 455.
28. Cf. A. NOLAN, *Jesus Before Christianity*,Mumbai, St. Paul's Publications, 2010, 43-44.
29. Cf. G. GUTIERREZ , Essential Writings, Ed. James B Nickoloff, B New York, Orbis Books Publications, 1996, 159.
30. Cf. S. KAPPEN, *Jesus and Freedom*, New York, Orbis Books Publications, 1977, 78.
31. Cf. F. X. D' SA, *"Dharma of Jesus?"*, 418- 419.

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Enriching Science with the Dharma of Jesus: A Philosophy of Science Perspective

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Abstract: Beginning with an exploration of the multi-faceted contemporary meaning of *dharma*, the author argues that the dharma of Jesus can enrich our understanding of science. This is done from two perspectives: reasonableness and surrender. Interpreting two parables of Jesus as examples of reasonableness rather than rationality, science is also shown to have moved from the former to the latter. Similarly, drawing upon Jesus' own ultimate surrender to the Father, it is argued that science too needs to surrender to the Supreme Wisdom of Nature (God).

Keywords: dharma; reasonableness, limits of science, surrender, wisdom of nature.

Introduction

Among the many factors that make up the 'Dharma of Jesus', an important one is the emphasis of Jesus on values, his initiative to go beyond the demands of mere rationality so as to reach the level of reasonableness and above all his courage and readiness to surrender to the Supreme Wisdom of his Heavenly Father. This, in my opinion, can enrich science. In fact, developments and researches of science in the recent decades seem to suggest that science also needs to give greater importance to values, to transcend the demands of rationality to reach reasonableness and to surrender to the Wisdom of Nature (God), as it more and more realizes its limits and limitations. In this paper first I clarify the notion of Dharma in general and proceed to explain my understanding of the Dharma of Jesus. Then I explicate how the features of reasonableness and readiness to

surrender that stand out in and through the words, deeds and being of Jesus and how they can be incorporated into the realm of science in order to enrich it. Finally the concluding remarks are made at the end.

Dharma

Dharma in general means the principles that guide one's thoughts, words and actions. The root meaning of the term *Dharma* is, among many others, to *uphold* or *sustain*. So Dharma can also mean those rules and regulations, laws and prescriptions, both human-made and nature-given (or divine) that *operate to sustain or uplift humanity and nature*. They prescribe duties of humans towards others and nature; they pronounce the principles of justice, religiosity, harmony, religious rituals and practical life-style. All these are set down to increase the quality of life for humans and nature. The complexity and the absolute importance of Dharma is brought out in the Mahabharata; when Yudhistira asks Bhishma to explain the intricacies and the relevance of Dharma, Bhishma replies thus: *It is most difficult to define Dharma. Dharma has been explained to be that which helps the upliftment of living beings. Therefore, that which ensures the welfare of living beings is surely Dharma. The learned rishis have declared that that which sustains is Dharma*[1] So, Dharma is a sort of umbrella concept that includes the well-being of every individual and society. It paves the way for the believers to attain moksha.

Dharma also means Cosmic Order. The ancient Vedic concept of *Ritam* (or Cosmic Order) is given as the Dharma of the Cosmos. It is the order in the universe sustained by the natural laws, both at the macro and the micro levels; therefore, the laws regarding the position and the movement of the stars and the planets, and the laws about nature and the functions of the atomic

and subatomic particles are very much part of this Cosmic Order. Everything and everyone is given a certain nature and duty perform according to this Order and that is its/his/her Dharma: "It could be said that it is the Dharma of the Wind to blow, the Dharma of the Sun to heat up the world, the Dharma of the Ice to freeze and melt, the Dharma of Fire to burn. It is the Dharma of the Plants to give out oxygen, and the Dharma of the Animals to give out carbon dioxide".

Dharma can also mean Social Order. As such, it includes all the duties and commitments of human beings as members of the human society. It is the duty of everyone in society to maintain society and to ensure the holistic welfare of everyone.[2] In this sense, Dharma can be divided into many subsections depending on to whom it is applicable and the type of duty that is demanded of them; it shapes their daily lives with the proper instructions of how to live and so on. Thus there is the dharma of an individual, of the family, of society, and of mankind. Then there is *varna dharma*, based on one's caste/profession, *ashrama dharma,* based on the stage of life,[3] and so on. In Buddhism, Dharma (*dhamma* in Pali) refers to the words of the Buddha, the practice of his teaching, and the attainment of enlightenment.

Dharma of Jesus

George Soares-Prabhu coined and popularized the concept of 'the Dharma of Jesus'. According to him, it basically consists of manifesting and living out the fullness of life and love, as presented in the Sermon on the Mount; inculcating a new God-consciousness and a new way of practicing religion based on that new consciousness; realizing the right understanding of freedom and to live it out in order to ensure a healthy relationship with oneself, God, others and nature and finally, in making strenuous efforts to establish a just and egalitarian society, based

on love and justice, devoid of slavery, poverty, violence, oppression and discrimination of any sort.[4] I like to see the Dharma of Jesus as 'giving life and life in abundance' (Jn 10:10), which is expressed in and through his words, deeds and very being of his life. It can, I am sure, enrich science by giving it a human face. I like to look at Dharma of Jesus enriching science from two specific angles: inspiration regarding the role of *reasonableness* and enlightenment regarding the need for wisdom that enables *absolute surrender* to the Divine.

I. THE LIMITS OF REASON AND THE NEED FOR REASONABLENESS

1. Jesus' Insistence On Transcend Rationality

Jesus is very considerate towards the needs and the situations of the people. He uses stories and parables to show how we need to go beyond the minimum requirements of justice to reach the level of love in our dealing with others. I consider this as an effort to be reasonable, not just rational. This message comes out well in his parable where the master goes out to employ workers (Mt 20:1-16). They agree with him for a certain wage; the master, during the day, goes out at different times and employs more people; at the end of the day the workers receive their wages but interestingly those who worked only one hour also get the same wages as those who worked the whole day. When the latter complain against the master's 'unjust' action, the master clarifies that he is not doing anything wrong because he gives the wages to them as it has been agreed and whether to pay the same amount to the latecomers is left to his generosity. Perhaps justice might demand more wages to those who work more. Here I see the master acts 'reasonably' without, of course, denying justice. The master looks at those who came late to work in their holistic context of their responsibilities towards their families, not

being employed earlier for no fault of theirs, as they were ready to work (the master is not going to houses to wake up those who sleep in laziness and gives them the wages), and so on. So the master's concern for the workers is not blind or irrational. By this Jesus shows that God, being LOVE, is very generous; he goes beyond the demands of justice to love people. Though the minimum requirement of love is justice, genuine love can go beyond it.

Another parable that I can think of where the idea of reasonableness stands out is the famous parable the 'Prodigal Son' (Luke 15: 11-32). When the younger son returns after squandering all the money his father out of his extreme love accepts him and this is obviously unacceptable to his elder son. At one point the father tells his elder son, "all that is mine is yours" (verse 31). Usually one might think that he refers to the wealth and the properties, inviting him to enjoy and take whatever he wants. But in my opinion it refers to something else; for, in the verse 12 we find that 'he divided the property between them'. Once he has divided all the property between those two sons and he does not have 'anything as his own'. The younger son lost all his share and the remaining property actually is the share of the elder son. So when the father says, 'all that is mine is yours', he actually refers to the noble and divine qualities of love, compassion, forgiveness and tolerance; he invites his elder son to appropriate these sublime qualities as his own, without which he will not be able to accept his younger brother. This I think is a clear invitation to be reasonable, not just rational. A rational treatment towards the younger son would, perhaps, demand that they chase him away because he owns nothing in the house, neither property nor the rights of his son-ship. The father invites his elder son to 'love' his younger brother, though he may not 'like' him for what he has done. We all know that it is easier to love someone when we have something to like in them, but it becomes very difficult to

love him/her when there is nothing to like in him/her. Precisely this is what we find in God; he may not have anything in us that he actually 'likes about', but still he loves us. Perhaps, we can see that 'liking' operates at the level of rationality while 'loving' at the level of reasonableness.

2. Need for Science to Uphold Reasonableness

By the middle of the 20th century, philosophy of science, with its critical appraisal made humanity realize that the very understanding of science and its nature has to be revisited. Philosophers of Science, especially those belonging to the schools of Historical Realism, argue that even the notion of rationality has to be revised, as there is no one absolute rational framework to be imposed upon the activities of science in order to make it rational. The usual features of rationality don't seem to be sufficient to capture the actual picture of science. Rationality cannot be confined to logical consistency and justification; it cannot be equated to truth and therefore one can act in a perfectly rational way even on the basis of false beliefs.

Scientists have many assumptions that affect not only their beliefs and behaviours but also their scientific activities. A comprehensive understanding of rationality needs to involve in a very essential way *the agent* (the scientist). The role of the agent in the understanding of science is clearly brought out by Henry Harris. A scientist explores a hypothesis in her head first whether to proceed further or not. "Each scientist has his own mental store of facts, theories and associations, and a private set of value judgments about the relative importance of the different elements in that mental store".[5] Scientists also go by faith, imagination, and intellectual bias and they also act like any non-scientist. The understanding of rationality has to involve *the context* as well. Rationality can't be merely a rule-oriented

activity. When we give due importance to the agent and the context in which she acts, naturally rules take the back burner. I agree with Harold Brown in maintaining an account of rationalitywhich necessarily acknowledges the role of judgment. Brown develops a model of rationality in which judgment plays a crucial role.[6] Our account of rationality has to accommodate the role and importance of common sense also. Being rational, in my opinion, can never deny or over-rule common sense. Of course, rationality should not be confined to mere common sense but it should never negate or violate it either. Rationality involves going beyond mere rule-following. Of course, rationality does play a role in science but that is not everything. "Rationality helps", as Henry Harris puts it, "but it is not a prescription for making discoveries".[7] As Putnam asserts, "'Scientific' is not coextensive with the 'rational'. There are many perfectly rational beliefs that cannot be tested 'scientifically'".[8] Popper also shows that "poetic inventiveness" and "the invention of criticisms"[9] are also main component of rationality.

Going along these lines it is more appropriate to see science as a *reasonable enterprise* rather than a *rational enterprise*, in the traditional sense of the term. Its role in science can be seen at three important levels, though they cannot be strictly demarcated, nor that they are exhaustive: Reasonableness at the *personal level* of the scientist (imagination, judgment and intuition); Reasonableness in *scientific methodology* (rejection of zero-tolerance, an enriched notion of objectivity, need for skeptical attitude, and common sense); and Reasonableness in *scientific practice* (embracing pragmatism and the consensus of the scientific community). These features constitute the notion of reasonableness in science. Since these factors also make science what it is, it is more meaningful to speak of 'Reasonableness in Science' rather than 'Rationality in Science'.[10]

II WISDOM FOR THE ULTIMATE SURRENDER

1. Jesus' Surrender to his Father in Heaven

Jesus, in spite of the rootedness in his relationship with his Father, must have had lots of questions within him when he faced rejection and opposition in his life and mission, for instance, when his own people thought of him that "He is out of his mind" (Mk 3:21)... or when he is not accepted in his own hometown (Lk 4:24)... But all through his life he is convinced that the will and wisdom of the Father must prevail in everything and therefore he surrenders to him and invites others as well to do the same.

Jesus, therefore, invites people to trust God. He reminds them of the providential care that the Heavenly Father has for them: "Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds! Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life?" (Lk 12: 24-25). He does not miss any occasion where he could remind and inspire his apostles to have deep trust in the Father. When he sends them on their mission he instructs them to have total trust in the benevolence and divine intervention of the Father and they should not bother about taking bread, or bag, or money for their journey (Mk 6:8). He cautions them not to give into the temptation of losing the focus in their mission by "selling" their spiritual powers for material gains of status or safety. That is why he instructs them "Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give" (Mt 10:8). This trust needs to be continuously nurtured by them with the constant and deep relationship with the Father in prayer. He shows them by his very life of prayer; he prays before taking important decisions in his life, such as his calling of the apostles (Lk 6:12-13); he prays before performing important miracles (e.g. the multiplication of

the bread to feed thousands, Mt 14:13-21; before raising Jairus'daughter ... and Lazarus to life from death, Mk 5:21-43 and Jn 11:1-45 respectively); he prays alone early in the morning (Mk 1:35) or the whole night (Lk 6:12); he prays when he is "disturbed" in his life (e.g. at the Gethsemane garden Lk 22:41-43).

At Calvary, Jesus surrenders himself completely to the Father. The Gospel tells us: "Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit" (Lk 23:46). These words of Jesus have very many lessons for us: **i)** Jesus invites us to be committed to our work and do our best but at the same time to have the serenity to leave the rest to God. That is what he did in his life. All his work seemed to end in a void, but still confident surrenders to His Father, trusting that the Father would not abandon him and his work; **ii)** It is the bold acknowledgement that God knows the best. In spite of all our rational approaches we need to know that God's wisdom can differ from ours. We, being limited in space and time cannot have all the dimensions of our life, but God always has the whole picture. Therefore, St. Paul can say: "For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength" (1 Cor 1:25); **iii)** Most importantly we learn that in the final analysis God's wisdom emerges vindicated. When Jesus was killed on the Cross his own apostles ran away; the beneficiaries of his mission were dumbfounded; those who crucified him were rejoicing. But their laughter did not long last. By raising Jesus back to life on the third day, the Father proved that the life and mission of Jesus, his servant, did not go waste; He saw to it that the truth and justice prevailed. The four letters on the cross of Jesus, INRI, as we know, are the abbreviation of the Latin expression, *Iesus Nazarenus Rex Iudaeorum*, meaning, "Jesus the Nazarene, King of the Jews" (Jn 19:20). I like to see

these letters as a change of acronym: before the Resurrection, Jesus was *Isolated* (as everyone, including his apostles, ran away from him); *Nameless* (though he gave the name and the identity to the downtrodden and the sick in the society, like healing the lepers); *Rejected* (by his own and others) and *Insulted* (by the soldiers, the onlookers and so on). But scenario changes after the Resurrection and the Risen Jesus becomes *Immortal*, *Necessary*, *Radiant* and *Illimitable*. Such a dramatic changewas possible precisely because he at the end totally surrendered to him.

2. Science Realizing its Limits and Limitations

Let us not be misled to think that only matters of spirituality and God are beyond our full grasp. Recent scientific developments teach us that even the material world is beyond our complete comprehension. Science struggles and stumbles in comprehending the world. For instance, scientific realism holds that a scientific theory represents reality as it is, whereas anti-realism holds that scientific theories are like instruments with which we look at reality, such that what we see is determined by how we see. Language generally encounters limitations in expressing our deeper experiential realities. Religions and spiritual traditions have always known this. But now scientists too have come to realize that the situation in science is not very different. They treat scientific theories as 'metaphors': "Language by physicists about the universe as a whole is highly metaphoric... Physics and astrophysics, despite their explanatory mathematics, emerge from a rhetoric and use metaphor-driven models to communicate their insights to appropriate audiences".[11] Similarly, do the models in science give the real picture of science? Far from it! In science, "Models are taken seriously but not literally. They are ... partial and provisional ways of imagining what is not observable; they are symbolic representation of aspects of the world which are

not directly accessible to us".[12]

In spite of great achievements science is still limited in very many ways. Our intellect is not enough to comprehend the world. Physical reality cannot be defined in the limited range of quantifiable categories. In the words of Werner Heisenberg, "The scientific method of analyzing, explaining and classifying has become conscious of its limitation... *The scientific world views have ceased to be a scientific view in the true sense of the word*".[13] Science is confronted by its limits on every side. Some of these limits are: *cognitive* and *epistemological* (limits due to our capacity to experience only three plus one dimensions; our brains have evolved over millions of years in a particular way, which shapes our very thinking, for instance, the way we inductively infer and deductively conclude to arrive at theories); *ontological* (for instance, due to natural laws and constants); *cosmological* (limits in our understanding about the origins, end, nature and structure of the universe and our position in the universe); *practical* (like cost, mathematical abilities, etc); *technological* (our inability to produce very high or very low temperatures for research, for example). Then, there are '*In-principle 'limits* like Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle). Limits of science raise questions about the reliability and the potentiality of science, the reliability of scientific experiments and in the scope of scientific knowledge. There is a realization the process of explaining has to stop somewhere as brute facts, as all the explanations are usually done in terms of something else. In other words, all scientific explanations are incomplete and all the riddles of the material world can never be solved, much less meta-physical riddles like mind-body/ consciousness-brain relationship, for "Consciousness cannot be studied in the same way as things you are conscious of. For as soon as you turn your attention on it, it ceases to be consciousness, and becomes just another thought

or experience".[14] Above all, no discipline can ever answer this perennial question: 'Why is there always something rather than nothing?'

Today scientists are increasingly becoming aware of the intrinsically unanswerable questions in the universe. Some of them, according to Russell Stannard are: the origin of the natural laws, the relationship between space and time, wave-particle nature of matter, the number of actual dimensions available in the universe and why some are curled up and others extended and so on.[15] Matter increasingly becomes 'mysterious' to us. Any discussion on matter is no more just an "ordinary matter". Many scientists are genuinely convinced that matter gets more and more complex and strange as we reach its bottom. We cannot even claim to measure them completely. For, "No matter how much the degree of accuracy is improved, all measurement is still just a way of comparing an unknown relationship with a known standard relationship".[16] It was Einstein who showed that matter (mass) and energy are inter-convertible. Matter itself is a concentrated form of energy, which can be liberated according to the formula $E=mc^2$, where e=energy, m=mass of the object and c= velocity of light. Since the value of 'c' is very high, namely 300, 000 KM per second, even a very small quantity of matter is equivalent to a large quantum of energy. It is calculated that one gram of mass can be converted into 21.5 billion kilocalories,[17] and to produce this amount of energy we need barrels of fossil fuel! In other words, this amount of energy would be equal to the energy of 22,500 tons of TNT (standard measure of strength of bombs). *If matter is so mysterious then how much more mysterious and un-understandable its Creator and his ways would be!*

Further there are several axioms and assumptions at work in science. For instance, the uniformity and the universality of cause-effect principle, the uniformity in nature, the universality of

physical laws, the measurability and knowability of all things, reliability of logic and mathematics etc. All these assumptions and axioms don't have complete justification and yet they have to be assumed for science to proceed. John Brockman has an interesting collection of sort of confessional statements by several scientists about their own necessary assumptions in their research fields; but they openly acknowledge that they cannot prove many of them; their theories emerge from bold assumptions, unconnected pieces of evidence and sophisticated leaps of faith.[18] Mathematics and logic are generally taken to be the most exactand precise disciplines, but even there things are not that final and definitive. For example, the value of π, known as *an irrational number*, cannot be expressed exactly as a common fraction. Its value 22/7, is only approximated to 3.14, as it does not give us permanent decimal representation, not even a repeating pattern. With increasing computational and calculating abilities, in 2013, the value of ð has been found out up to 13.3 trillion (1013) digits. It was done just out of sheer curiosity, as usually science does not need more than forty digits for its calculations.[19] π is also known as *a transcendental number* –a number that is not the root of any non-zero polynomial having rational coefficients. This transcendence further implies that it is not possible to solve the ancient challenge of squaring the circle with a compass and straightedge. Given this scenario it is high time that humanity surrendered to the Supreme Wisdom of Nature (God).

Concluding Remarks

Reading the Gospels we come to know about the life, words, and deeds of Jesus, all of which is value-oriented. He is convinced of the Supreme Wisdom of his Heavenly Father and is always prepared to surrender to it; he constantly invites his followers too to do the same. This attitude and approach of Jesus can, in my opinion, enrich science, giving it a 'human' face. We

have seen that as long as science is an interpretative enterprise, as long as science is a hermeneutical discipline, all that affects humans, their language, their value-systems, beliefs and moral principles, will also affect science principles, will also affect science.

We have more than one reason to be cautious in dealing with nature. We need to respect and value the mere 'age' of the universe. Compared to the age of the universe humans' age is just negligible. In the recent years we hear the experts in Astronomy and Cosmology speaking about the "Cosmic Calendar" that tries to fit in the whole evolution of the universe with the long history of about 13 to 14 billion years into twelve months of a calendar year. The original idea came from a prominent astronomer Carl Sagan (1934 – 1996), who spoke about the 'Cosmic Calendar', in his television series, "Cosmos".[20] If the whole process of evolution since the time of Big Bang is compared to a yearly calendar human beings appear on the face of the earth somewhere just during the last minute of the last hour, on the last day of the year! Still more interesting is that (modern) science appears in less than a second! A 'cosmic' month is equal to about one billion years; a 'cosmic' day is about 40 million years; a 'cosmic' second is about 500 years and our human life of 70 – 80 years is equal to 0.16 'cosmic' second! Because we and our science are very, very young compared to the natural history of about 13 long billion years, we need to be very careful and responsible in our dealing with nature. I don't mean that just because we came late, the other things that came before us are better than us. But age matters. We may be cognitively indispensable,[21] but cosmically insignificant. So it is appropriate that we who are cosmically youngest in the universe listen to it. As one realizes the mysterious nature of life and the limitations of human existence one may spontaneously surrender to the 'Divine' Wisdom of God.

Finally, a word of clarification. If I have equated wisdom of nature with God in this essay it is because God of physics is the cosmic order; many scientists, like most of the quantumphysicists, are satisfied in reaching this stage, but a few scientists go still further; for them the strictly logical and totally impersonal order (of the universe) does not satisfy our innate human longing; so it sounds reasonable for science to look for the cosmic Designer, who is LOVE. We pass through science to unravel the mysteries; so the path does not begin, nor end, with science. According to Paul Davies, "Science offers surer path to God, than Religion".[22] Perhaps, I would add, 'Science, *enriched by the Dharma of Jesus*, offers surer path to God than Religion .

Notes:

1. *Tadrisho ayam anuprashno yatra dharmaha sudurlabaha, Dushkamha pralisankhyatum tatkenatra vysvasyathi Prabhavarthaya bhutanam dharmapravachanam kritam, Yasyat prabhavasamyuktaha sa dharma iti nischayaha.* (*Mahabharatha*, *Shanti Parva*, 109-9-11).
2. See: http://www.hindupedia.com/en/Dharma; accessed on 20 January, 2015
3. See: http://www.hindupedia.com/en/Dharma; accessed on 20 January, 2015
4. For the elaboration of the themes one may look at Francis X. D'Sa, S. J., ed., *The Dharma of Jesus: Interdisciplinary Essays in Memory of George Soares-Prabhu* (Pune: Institute for the Study of Religion, 1997). This particular conference has other papers to explore and interpret the ideas of George Soares-Prabhu and therefore I, taking the clue from him, I move on to my personal understanding of the Dharma of Jesus, and to see how it, if taken seriously, can enrich the world of science.
5. Henry Harris "Rationality in Science", in *Scientific Explanation* ed. A. F. Heath (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), p. 48,

6. Harold I. Brown, *Rationality* (London & New York: Routledge, 1988).

7. Henry Harris. 1981. 'Rationality in Science', in *Scientific Explanation*, ed. Heath. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 46.

8 Putnam, Hilary. 1979. "The Place of Facts in a World of Values". In The Nature of the Physical Universe, ed. Douglas Huff and Omer Prewett, New York: A Wiley-Interscience Publication. p. 115.

9. Popper, K. R. *The Myth of the Framework – In Defence of Science and Rationality*. (ed.) M.A. Notturno, Routledge, London, 1994, 40.

10. However, one can still use the term of 'Rationality' in science, provided that account of rationality includes all these features of reasonableness that are explicated here. Those who are convinced of the short comings of the traditional views of rationality, look for an alternative account of rationality. Philosophers like, Hilary Putnam ('Integrated View of Rationality'), Stephen Toulmin (denial of over--reliance of rationality), Christopher McMahon ('Collective Rationality') and Stephen Nathanson ('Reasonable form of Rationalism') propose alternatives to the traditional accounts of rationality, which captures the notion of rationality in a much more adequate manner. I have elaborated their details and the characteristics of reasonableness in science elsewhere: *Towards a Theory of Rationality in Science – A Plea for Reasonableness* (New Delhi: Global Vision Publishing House, 2012).

11. Stephen Happel, "Metaphors and Time Asymmetery - Cosmologies in Physics and Christian Meanings,", in Robert John Russell, et. al. (eds), *Quantum Cosmology and the Laws of Nature – Scientific Perspectives on Divine Action* (Vatican: Vatican Observatory Publications, 1993), p. 109.

12. Ian Barbour, *Myths, Models and Paradigms – A Comparative Study in Science and Religion* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1974), p. 30

13. Werner Heisenberg, *The Physicists Conception of Nature* (London: The Scientific Book Guild, 1962), p. 29.

14. David Darling, *Equations of eternity – Speculations on consciousness, meaning and the mathematical rules that orchestrate the cosmos* (NY: Hyperion, 1993), p. 16.

15. See: Russell Stannard, The End of Discovery – Are we reaching the boundaries of the knowable? (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

16. Louise B. Young, ed., *The Mystery of Matter* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 7.

17. See: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mass%E2%80%93energy_equivalence; accessed on 24 March, 2015.

18. John Brockman, *What We Believe But Cannot Prove: Today's Leading Thinkers on Science in the Age of Certainty* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2006).

19. See: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pi; accessed on 24 March, 2015.

20. Carl Sagan's ideas and talks can be accessed from various sources as the following; I rely on one such a source: http://visav.phys.uvic.ca/~babul/AstroCourses/P303_BB-slide.htm; http://scienceblogs.com/startswithabang/2011/12/30/the-entire-universe-one-pictur/

21. I say, we are cognitively indispensable. For, with human beings evolution has become conscious of itself. With the reasoning power we can now control the course of evolution at least to a certain extent. All our actions can cause repercussions in the environment and the whole of cosmos. Thus we seem to have become cognitively significant. For more reflections on this, please see my book, *A Book That Cannot Be Titled* (Tiruchy: Ilanthalir Trust, 2015), Chapter on: HUMAN BEINGS: COSMICALLY INSIGNIFICANT BUT COGNITIVELY INDISPENSABLE!

22. See: http://www.iscast.org/events/Faith_Hope_and_Quarks-inverse-colour-6pp.pdf; accessed on 24 March, 2015.

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Dharma of Jesus: Exploring Its Philosophical Foundations

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Abstract: This is an essay in fundamental theology, an attempt to communicate the foundational experience of Christian faith in an intelligible manner to all, including atheists. Beginning with a brief reference to the past attempts to do this task, it is seen that those who start with universal experiences find the specific character of Christian faith problematic and those who start with the Christian experience (the Christ event) make it inaccessible to non-Christians. The author sets out to bridge this gap with the category of "person-mysticism" for which a longer discussion of well known "nature mysticism" paves the way.

Keywords: nature mysticism; natural mysticism; person-mysticism; immanence-transcendence; "wholly other"; Jesus Christ.

1. Introduction

Coming from the root *dhr* ('to hold', 'to support'), dharma was understood as that which upholds, i.e., the foundations. By the Buddhist period, it comes to mean doctrinal foundations [1] For our purpose, dharma refers to the foundations of Christian faith. Pope Benedict spelt out this foundation clearly when he said, "Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction."[2] Further we want to explore this foundational encounter philosophically. Philosophy, in its original sense, is not a set of ideas, but a way of life,[3] a sort of guide map for living in a given world.[4] The word 'given' is important because phenomenologically, the world inhabited by the ancient Greeks or the medieval Europeans is not the same as the modern world or the contemporary world of ours. Therefore, if philosophy is understood as a way life, then

philosophy is bound to change as the world changes; only then will it be able to offer guidance to life.

Friedrich Schleiermacher was the first to realize that such a change was required in presenting Christian faith to the modern world. In keeping with the anthropocentrism of modernity, therefore, Schleiermacher took the experiential turn. Since he sought to address those intellectual elites of his time who were sceptical of Christian faith[5] it is better termed as fundamental theology than theology.[6] Schleiermacher's experiential turn, however, has been subjected to severe criticism, Karl Barth even calling it a betrayal of Christ.[7] Catholic thinkers, led by Karl Rahner also took the experiential turn[8] via mysticism.[9] But against a dominantly introvertive view of mysticism, he gave it a "transcendental" twist, according to which every concrete, limited, thematic experience (like perceiving a pen) involves an implicit, unthematic awareness of the unlimited divine mystery as the horizon or the ground of experience.[10] However, Rahner was not oblivious to the fact that this philosophical foundation of his fundamental theology is in the "most radical tension"[11] with the foundation of his systematic theology, i.e., the person of Jesus Christ.

The basic problem with the experiential turn is that the more universal, philosophical starting point does not do justice to the specific character of the Christian experience in Jesus Christ. If, on the other hand, one begins with the Christian revelation, as in traditional theology, then it remains inaccessible to its "cultured despisers" of religion, those disillusioned with Christian faith. This is the dilemma of Christian fundamental theology in the contemporary world: if it begins with the experience in Jesus Christ, it is not able to reach out to the non-Christians and if it begins with something more universal, it seems to bypass the Christian experience. One could call it the tension between the

identity of the experience and its accessibility to non-Christians, including non-believers. Similar tension can be seen in the scholarly study of mysticism, with the "universal core" of Walter Stace[12] and the "experiences-are-different" approach of Steven Katz.[13]

Situated in this context, the present article advocates an approach to mysticism that seeks to ease, if not resolve, the tension between identity of Christian experience and its accessibility to non-Christians. While endorsing Rahner's concern to maintain the universal accessibility of mysticism, I find his transcendental analysis of ordinary experience problematic. Therefore, I begin with a class of experiences that is acknowledged as mystical, but also universal, since they are relatively independent of prior beliefs and practices. This is nature mysticism. I go on to provide an alternative interpretation of nature mysticism to the one provided by Stace. In the process, it is seen that much of what Christians mean when they talk about God can be understood in terms of nature mysticism. Then I expand the notion of universally accessible nature mysticism into "natural mysticism", an important variety of which is dubbed as "person-mysticism". This helps to provide a preliminary account of the Christian experience in Jesus Christ that is both universally accessible and faithful to the specifically Christian experience. This approach to fundamental theology, however, needs to be complimented by a third requirement of any experiential approach, namely, empirical adequacy.[14] It should also be clear that as an exercise in fundamental theology that seeks to reach out to non-Christians and unbelievers is bound to lack the rich details of Christian faith. If Rahner called his lengthy book on fundamental theology a "first level of reflection",[15] this small article must be considered a preliminary to a first level reflection!

2. Nature Mysticism: Experience and Analyses

The phenomenon of nature mysticism is well known. William James noted long ago that certain aspects of nature have this peculiar ability to induce mystical moods in us.[16] Stace called it "extrovertive" mysticism and Zaehner called it "panenhenic" mysticism, each with a different connotation. The significance of this kind of experience for fundamental theology is that it "may occur to anyone whatever his religious faith or lack of it and whatever moral, immoral or amoral life he may be leading at the time."[17] Even Richard Dawkins acknowledges this kind of experience, although he goes on to claim boldly that it "has no connection with supernatural belief".[18] Given that he comes with his own understanding of "supernatural", we must leave aside his interpretation of the experience just as we must leave aside Stace's interpretation that this kind of experience is only a half-baked mysticism.[19] Leaving such interpretations aside, let us focus on some narrations of experiences. A first, commonly quoted, narration from William Blake is to be commended for its brevity:

> To see a World in a Grain of Sand
> And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,
> Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
> And Eternity in an hour.

Another well known example is from Bede Griffiths:

> One day during my last term at school I walked out alone in the evening and heard the birds singing in that full chorus of song, which can only be heard at that time of the year at dawn or at sunset. I remember now the shock of surprise with which the sound broke on my ears. It seemed that I had never heard the birds singing before and I wondered whether they sang like this all the year round and never

noticed it. As I walked on I came upon some hawthorn trees in full bloom and again I thought that I had never seen such a sight or experienced such sweetness before. If I had been brought suddenly among the trees of the Garden of Paradise and heard a choir of angels singing I could not have been more surprised I came thus to where the sun was setting over the playing fields. A lark rose suddenly from the ground beside the tree where I was standing and poured out its song above my head, and then sank still singing to rest. Everything then grew still as the sunset faded and the veil of dusk began to cover the earth. I remember now the feeling of awe which came over me. I felt inclined to kneel on the ground, as though I had been standing in the presence of angel...[20]

In the light of these narrations, let us consider Stace's interpretation of nature mysticism. For him, "the central characteristic in which *fully developed* mystical experiences agree, and which in the last analysis is definitive of them and serves to mark off from other kinds of experiences, is that they involve the apprehension of *an ultimate nonsensuous unity in all things,* a oneness or a One to which neither the senses nor the reason can penetrate."[21] In order to understand this kind of experience, he suggests a thought experiment. He asks us to imagine shutting out all physical sensations (sight, hearing etc.) from one's consciousness. Then in a second step suppress all images from our minds, and finally, stop all thinking and reasoning. Thus, he says, we get rid of "all empirical content" and arrive at full-fledgd mysticism, which is introvertive. In other words, from the fact that extrovertive mysticism involves the senses, he concludes that they have sensory or empirical content.

The next step in the argument is that since nature mysticism involves sensory content, it is only a "half way house" to mysticism proper, an "incomplete kind of experience which finds its completion and fulfilment in the introvertive kind of experience".[22] This argument is explicit in the reason he gives for dissociating visions, voices and other parapsychological phenomena like telepathy and clairvoyance from mysticism.[23] He writes: "What mystics say is that a genuine mystical experience is nonsensuous. It is formless, shapeless, colorless, odorless, soundless. But a vision is a piece of visual imagery having color and shape. A voice is an auditory image. Visions and voices are sensuous experiences."[24]

This has become the standard interpretation of nature mysticism; it has been so influential that even Paul Marshall, who is more sensitive to nature mysticism than Stace, follows him when he says that such experiences are "not experience of something completely beyond the natural world".[25] Therefore, let us consider the viability of Stace's interpretation. If we look at either of the examples above, there is absolutely no mention of Unity or oneness in them. How, then, does Stace arrive at his conclusion about the nature of fully developed mysticism? He does not claim to have any mystical experience of his own, but relies on the Upanishads, Mandukya Upanishad in particular, for his understanding.[26] Even when he is aware that many instances of extrovertive mysticism, including some instances quoted by him, lack this feature, Stace crudely explains away these counter instances (e.g., from R.M. Bucke, St. Teresa, and Jakob Boehme) rather than face the challenge to his Upanishadic bias.[27] Steven Payne has drawn our attention to this odd procedure adopted by Stace.[28]

Further, it is not difficult to show that Stace's move from sensory involvement to sensory content is not tenable in extrovertive mysticism. When we see a flower, the content of

that experience a flower; when we see a tree the content of that experience is a tree. But the first thing to note about the experiences of Blake or Griffiths above is how different they are from ordinary sense experience. We must assume that this was not the first time that Blake saw a grain of sand and wild flower or Griffiths saw birds and trees. But the experiences they narrate are utterly different from seeing any of these. Blake sees a 'world' in a grain of sand, and a 'heaven' in a wild flower. Similarly, Griffith's experience is so utterly different from ordinary sense experience that he speaks about the "shock of surprise" and the "feeling of awe" that came over him. This is a clear indication that they are not talking about sensory content.

The decisive reason for not following Stace's view is that it would undermine his own argument for the non-sensuous character of introvertive mysticism. This is so because the meditational practices that are the doorway of introversion, begin by focussing on sensations of the body as in vipassana, or on breathing as in yoga, or on the heartbeat as in Jesus prayer.[29] The only difference seems to be that extrovertive experiences are dominated by the visual and auditory senses whereas the introvertive experiences are dominated by the tactile. Now if it be argued that because extrovertive mysticism involves the senses they have sensory content, should it not also be said of introvertive mysticism since they too involve an awareness of bodily sensations? But this would go against Stace's claim that introvertive mysticism is absolutely devoid of sensory content.

Therefore, rather than talk about the sensory character of nature mysticism, Rudolf Otto's expression "wholly other" best fits this kind of experiences. By "wholly other" Otto meant "that which is beyond the sphere of the usual, the intelligible, and the familiar..."[30], "something which has no place in our [ordinary] scheme of reality but belongs to an absolutely different one, and

which at the same time arouses an irrepressible interest in the mind."[31]

That these experiences have a "wholly other" character does not mean that senses are not involved in nature mysticism:Blake does see the sand and the flower. But the content of his present experience is something other than the sand and the flower. Griffiths' experience involves the birds and the trees, but it is as if he experiences them for the first time. How else to explain the awe and the shock of surprise he experienced? Therefore, rather than conclude from sensory involvement to sensory content, we must say that nature mysticism has a twofold character: nature is involved, but something "more" than nature is experienced. As Moustakas puts it, it is as if the natural world of the senses (sensory content) is a covering for the real content that is experienced. Let us consider his narration.

> Many times I have found courage and strength and beauty through loneliness, in an experience with nature. One day I was feeling deeply depressed by the severe criticisms a colleague had received –a person who was living his life in an honest and truthful sense.... Nothing was real...
>
> After the children had gone to bed, I decided to go for a walk. The night was dark, filled with black clouds. Large white flakes of snow fell on and around me. Inside, a surging restlessness replaced my benumbed state. ...Suddenly without understanding in any way, I experienced a transcendental beauty in the white darkness. It was difficult to walk on the glazed, iced surface... Immediately I felt a chill but at the same time I felt the ice being warmed as my fingers touched it. It was a moment of communion, an experience of knowing and understanding, and a

> feeling of complete solace. If felt my inward heaviness lifting, and discovered a new capacity for... facing conflicts which existed around and in me.... We need only reach out in natural covering to come face to face with creation.[32]

It is the non-sensory character of the experience that gives him an extra-ordinary sense of having come "face to face with creation". In the light of these considerations, it seems better to say this kind of experiences take place *in and through nature* but not experiences of nature. Nature is the locus, but not the content or the "object" of experience. The object of experience is something "more" than nature. It is this "more" that gives them their mystical character. It provides to these experiences what William James described as the "noetic quality". In other words, these are not experienced merely as states of feeling but also of knowing. Moustakas speaks explicitly of "knowing and understanding". Later on we will have to take up the issue of an appropriate word for this experienced reality. But let us remain with analysis of experience for now.

The last example explicitly brings out a third characteristic feature of this kind of experiences: an extremely positive valuation of the experience. In some cases this positive valuation is due to a negative situation that is overcome as in the case of Moustakas whose inward heaviness disappears and a feeling of communion and solace, a sense of fresh energy and enthusiasm replace the heaviness. But in other cases, as with the experience of Griffiths, there is no prior negative state involved. Even then the valuation of the experience is similarly positive. Just as an overwhelmed Moustakas exults that nature is only a cover for a deeper reality, so too, Griffiths' experience leads him to say: "We only begin to wake to reality when we realize that the material

world, the world of space and time, as it appears to our senses, is nothing but a sign and a symbol of a mystery which infinitely transcends it."[33]

Closely related to the positive appraisal of the experience is its existential impact on life. The above narration of Moustakas' experience begins by acknowledging the many times he found courage and strength in his experience with nature. This kind of impact is also clearly seen in the case of Griffiths. His experience in nature as a schoolboy had such a profound and lasting impact on his life that he began to rise early in the morning to hear the birds singing, stay up late in the night to watch the stars, and go for walks in the countryside. The Carmodys, in their study of mysticism, consider this to be typical of all mysticism and not only of nature mysticism. According to them mysticism "was extraordinary precisely because it revealed the structures, the depths, the potential of everyday, ordinary events that people normally missed. People went through their routines fairly dully. They did not experience eating, drinking, working or having sex as dazzling revelations of the full meaning of life, of the transcendent depths holding all that is in being."[34]

3. What is experienced? Is it God?

We have noted the twofold character of nature mysticism by drawing the distinction between the *locus* of experience (nature) and the *object* or the content of experience. What more can these experiences tell us about the object of experience than that they are wholly other than the objects of sensory experiences, and that they are positively valued? Can words like supernatural, the Transcendent, God, etc. be used for it? Let us begin with the first question.

A definitive feature of the "more" that is experienced in nature is that it is not anything in space and time. The singing

birds and hawthorn trees and the white snow are in space and time; they are objects of ordinarily experience. What is experienced in nature mysticism is something new, something that is not in space and time. It is such a defining feature of nature mysticism that Zaehner does not hesitate to say that "nature mysticism means to transcend space and time".[35] Any number of experiences can be pointed out to illustrate this point. The following narration he takes from Carl Jung shows the inapplicability of space. The experience is attributed to Karl Joel:

> I lay on the seashore, the shining waters glittering in my dreamy eyes; at a great distance fluttered the soft breeze; throbbing shimmering, stirring, lulling to sleep comes the wave beat to the shore –or to the ear? I know not. Distance and nearness become blurred into one; without and within glide into each other... Yes, without and within are one. Glistening and foaming, flowing and fanning and roaring, the entire symphony of the stimuli experienced sounds in one tone...[36]

Dr. Bucke's experience, as narrated by William James, gives a clear indication of the transcendence of space and time.

> I had spent the evening in a great city, with two friends... We parted at midnight. I had a long drive in a hansom to my lodging. My mind ... was calm and peaceful... All at once, without warning of any kind, I found myself wrapped in a flame-colored cloud. For an instant I thought of fire ... the next I knew that the fire was within myself... Among other things, I did not merely come to believe, but I saw that the universe is not composed of dead matter, but is, on the contrary, a living Presence...The vision lasted a few seconds and was gone; but the memory of it and the sense of the reality of

what it taught has remained during the quarter of a century which has since elapsed....[37]

This narration brings another characteristic feature of the object of experience: a sense of living presence. And he is not making the obvious point that things like trees or birds being alive, but that the whole natural world is alive. In these moments of experience, even those things we normally consider as non-living (such as stones) are experienced as alive. Richard Jefferies, another nature mystic, narrates his experience where he could feel the earth speaking to him.[38] He goes on to say that "It is not a force in the sense of electricity, nor a deity as god... [but]something more subtle than electricity..."[39]

But we also need to note the danger of talking about "living presence". The danger is that those who do not have the experience can easily misunderstand it as the more ordinary space-time presence we are familiar with. This is seen in Wayne Proudfoot. Basing himself on some examples found in William James, like the feeling of an unseen "presence" in a dark room or of someone standing behind me, Proudfoot draws the conclusion that the sense of presence is "a hunch, a thought, an opinion, and it has the epistemic status of a hypothesis..." which may be confirmed or disconfirmed when "I look over my shoulder or turn on the lights."[40] The spatio-temporal character of Proudfoot's understanding of "presence" is unmistakable here. This is understandable because the presences that we know in the natural world are those that involve space and time. It is understandable, but there is nothing mystical about such unseen presence.

Can we use the word "supernatural" for this reality? As a reality that is experienced in nature but an experience of something more than nature, it seems entirely appropriate to do so. But why, then, does Dawkins who acknowledges nature mysticism,

go on to say that it "has no connection with supernatural belief"? It has to do with his definitions. He defines a naturalist as "somebody who believes there is nothing beyond the natural, physical world, no *supernatural* creative intelligence lurking behind the observable universe, no soul that outlasts the body and no miracles..."[41] His objection to the supernatural, then, is an objection to a dualistic understanding that divides up the world into natural and supernatural, body and soul. This is confirmed by his definition of "natural" a few lines earlier as the belief that there is "only one kind of stuff in the universe and it is physical." That he should think of the supernatural in dualistic terms is not surprising when we consider Winston King's claim that the Western view of religion involves a "thorough going separation"[42] of the natural and the supernatural, with not a little help from deistic ideas.[43] Dawkins is right in resisting this idea of the supernatural inasmuch as nature mysticism offers no support for such dualism. Here the more than natural cannot be experienced except in and through the natural.

Similar considerations apply to "transcendence". Modern understanding of transcendence is in terms of God's relation to the world where God stands somewhere outside the world. Peter Berger's view is typical. For him, transcendence means that God "stands outside the cosmos, which is his creation but which he confronts and does not permeate..."[44] Understood this way, transcendence and immanence are mutually exclusive categories where the more the transcendence, the less the immanence.[45] This view of transcendence is more deistic than theistic because in the theistic view God is both transcendent and immanent. In any case, this view of transcendence as a doctrine about God's relation to the world can hardly be an appropriate starting point for a fundamental theology that is addressed to those who do not believe in God. A more appropriate starting point would be

to begin with the experience and explain the concept of God by providing an alternative understanding of immanence and transcendence.

If words like "presence", "supernatural", and "transcendence" are prone to misunderstanding in this manner, how else are we to understand this reality? Our analysis of nature mysticism provides an alternative way of understanding the natural and the supernatural, transcendence and immanence. The analysis in terms of the twofold character of experience makes it impossible to separate the "more" than natural reality from the natural where the former is experienced in and through the latter. While the two are distinct, they cannot be separated in experience; separate the one from the other and it will no longer be an experience of nature mysticism. Let us call the "object" of experience as some kind of "trans-natural" reality.

Our analysis in terms of the locus and the object of experience enables us to see that transcendence refers to this trans-natural reality that is experienced whereas immanence refers to the locus where "more" than natural is experienced. This agrees with the original meaning the Latin word *transcendere*, which literally means to cross the boundary. If we reflect on what provides boundaries to natural objects (trees, birds, etc.), we would see that those boundaries result from being in space and time. Given that our ordinary way of identifying and distinguishing one entity from another is in terms of space and time, the religious significance of transcendence consists in putting a check on this way of thinking. It tells us that we cannot draw the boundaries of the object of mystical experience in the same way as we draw boundaries to other things. This is what makes it an experience of the "wholly other" than the ordinary. Thus, if immanence refers to the fact that this kind of experience takes place within the boundaries of the natural, the ordinary, and the familiar world,

transcendence points to the fact that such experience is not an experience of the natural, familiar world. The natural world is merely the locus in and through which the more than natural is experienced.

While the natural world as the locus of experiencing the supernatural and the transcendent is correct as far as it goes, it still does not help us to conceptually articulate this reality, especially in the light of the fact that words like "presence", "supernatural", and "transcendence" are prone to misunderstanding. How else are we to conceive this reality? Contemporary writers give us some hints in this regard. A first hint is to see it as a further dimension of all reality than the spatio-temporal dimensions. Thus Hick says that it is the fifth dimension;[46] if so, this reality is not one more entity along with other entities. Two analogies help us to conceptualize this dimension. One is a mobius strip.[47] Speciality of this clever contrivance is that not only are its inside and outside inseparable, as it should be, but also that any part of its inside can become outside and vice versa. So too, the natural and the supernatural; the latter can be accessed from anywhere in the natural world. The second analogy is that of a hologram. A surprising feature of holographic images, unlike ordinary images, is that if a holographic image is cut into pieces, each piece will give a view of the entire image in every detail, though with less sharpness. Similarly, it is suggested that the reality experienced in nature mysticism is something that is present in every bit of the natural world and not something that is present in any particular location to the exclusion of others.

Finally, before moving to the Christian experience proper, we must ask the question: Can this reality be considered "God" as understood in the theistic tradition? The answer is a qualified 'yes'. Many of the features that are used to talk about God are already present in our description of the "object" of nature

mysticism. We have seen that this reality is both immanent and transcendent, which is a traditional theistic claim. It is not pantheistic ("sexed up atheism") as Dawkins claims,[48] because pantheists identify the world with God whereas we noted that the locus of experience cannot be identified with the experienced reality. Theists understand God as a person. Given that "person" is a category that has evolved in the Christian milieu, it is not proper at this point to get into the complexities and disputes of that concept now. But something akin to the concept of person is already acknowledged in speaking of this reality as a living presence. This has ecumenical benefits as *cit* (consciousness) is one of the three attributes of Brahman in the Hindu traditions, along with *sat* (being or presence) and *ananda* (bliss). The theistic connotation of this reality is further strengthened by the finding that experience of this reality leaves a positive impact on the experiencer as it comes close to the theistic assertion that God is good. We can find its Indian counterpart is the assertion that Brahman is *ananda*.

God as one (monotheism) can be derived from the observation that this reality is beyond space and time; many of the Omni-attributes of God (Omnipresence, Omniscience etc.) can also be derived from the same. But a small article is hardly the place to argue for any of these. An important description of a theistic God that cannot be directly related to nature mysticism is that of God as creator. But if the doctrine of creation is understood not in terms of the origins of the world but in terms of the asymmetrical dependence of the world on God,[49] then, it would be possible to relate it to nature mysticism. Again, I must let that go.

More than these doctrinal issues, the most stubborn hindrance to theism comes from misunderstanding those paired

words 'natural' and 'supernatural,' 'immanence' and 'transcendence' in the manner mentioned. 'Supernatural' and 'Transcendent', then, becomes one more being or entity alongside other space-time entities, except that it is beyond the world of space and time. Unfortunately, even well known philosophers of religion are not exempt from sliding into such ways of speaking. Thus, in spite of Hick's recognition of spiritual reality as the fifth dimension of all reality, he also tends to speak of God in terms of "an unlimited personal being, so that *in addition* to all the millions of embodied human consciousness there is at least *one further consciousness* which is not embodied..."[50] Similarly Franckenberry says, "For classical theism, the God-question in an age of science is the question of whether, *in addition* to everything else that exists, there also exists an entity..."[51] My treatment of nature mysticism, by providing an alternative to these views, not only helps us to avoid these mistakes but also provides us with a minimal understanding of God that is identifiable ("wholly other" etc.) as well as accessible to Christians and non-Christians,theists and atheists. Having done that, we must now turn to the Christian experience proper. For the purpose, I shall introduce another category: "natural mysticism".

4. Natural Mysticism

Since the term "natural" has varied meanings, let me clarify its meaning in the present context. In the present context it means innate and spontaneous, as opposed to the cultural and the cultivated. Nature mysticism is natural in this sense, whereas introvertive mysticism is cultivated. The difference between nature mysticism and natural mysticism is in the locus of experience. Natural mysticism shares all the characteristic features of nature mysticism, except that it occurs not in nature (understood as environment) but in other *loci* such as the events of life or

interpersonal relationships. For the sake of convenience I shall label them event-mysticism and person-mysticism, two overlapping but not identical categories. Although these have not received the scholarly attention they deserve, there are enough hints of such experiences happening to people. By event mysticism I mean something like what Ian Ramsay described as "cosmic disclosure". He writes:

> it may happen that when we are faced with some major problem as to vocation, or emigration, or the suffering of an aged relative, or marriage, there occurs a complex set of circumstances, too complex and too diversified to be the result of any one man's design, which helps us to resolve the problem as well for those around us as for ourselves. ...A sense of kinship with nature strikes us; the Universe is reliable after all.[52]

Leaving further considerations of event-mysticism aside, let us turn to person-mysticism, the most important kind of experience for understanding Christian faith. The locus of experience in person-mysticism is another human person. Consider the following narration:

> It was late one night back when I was in high school and we had stayed out way beyond when we should have been home, and all we were doing –I swear– was talking. We got into things neither one of us had ever spoken out loud to anyone else, and I know for fact that there were things we talked about that I had not even thought about before. I know my heart was pumping fast, too, and by the time we came to the end of it –more of an arrival than a destination– we were both exhausted, but knew we had been

somewhere special together. I remember the stars that night, the moon, the feel of the air –everything around us was alive and deeply meaningful. It sounds profoundly silly to say these words, but that is how it was. And I'll never forget it because I've spent so much of my life since then trying to get there again. Trying to find that special place where true communication happens.[53]

This narration of an intimate conversation of Goodall Jr. with his twin brother comes closest to illustrating what I mean by person-mysticism. Here the locus of experience is not nature but an inter-personal relation but it has all the characteristics typical of nature mysticism. It has that "wholly other" character in as much as it is unlike his ordinary dealings with his brother. It has a twofold character to the extent the conversation involved a person with whom he has ordinary dealings, but on this particular occasion there is the realization that "we had been somewhere special together". It had such a positive impact that he wants to "get there again". In spite of the spatial metaphor involved, the transcendence of space is clearly indicated in qualifying that space as "special".

Since person-mysticism has not received any scholarly attention,[54] it is not easy to find many such narrations. But narrations of telepathic communications are abundant. Its possibility has even been demonstrated by an international team of scientists. Armed with latest computer technology and advances in neuroscience, their experiment demonstrated that non-sensory communication is indeed possible between people separated by 4600 miles in two different continents.[55]

There are three reasons that prompt me to consider telepathy in the context of person-mysticism. First, telepathy and other paranormal phenomena are often closely associated with mysticism. Second, they exhibit the same transcending of space

(though not time) that Zaehner considered the defining feature of nature mysticism. But the reason that makes telepathy instances of *person*-mysticism is the third one: it involves deep inter-personal bonds. Guy Playfair, the author of *Twin Telepathy* points out that telepathy tends to work best when it is needed and when sender and receiver are strongly bonded, as with mothers and babies, dogs and their owners, and those with the strongest bond of all - twins."[56] There is plenty of anecdotal evidence to suggest that any deep bond of love, including close friendships, can have telepathic impact.[57]

Love as the likely trigger of telepathy forms the basis of what Hick has called "crisis apparitions".[58] He illustrates: An Englishman travelling in India dies in a road accident. His wife in England gets an apparition of the husband, suggesting his death. The actual elements of the apparition suggesting death could vary: it may be that he appears still and dead-like, or he may speak of his death in the apparition, or a coffin might be seen in the background, etc. Hick goes on to explain that the death of her beloved husband has a telepathic impact on her unconscious mind; this information is presented to her consciousness in the form of the apparition, using her memory and her imagination. In this kind of experiences the elements suggesting death are hallucinatory because no physical body is present where she sees one, but the message communicated is true. Threfore, he calls them "veridical hallucinations".

Talk of telepathy, however, should not divert our attention from the main point, which is person-mysticism: the idea that another human person can become the locus an experience that exhibits the characteristic featurs we find in nature mysticism. If such experiences are triggered by love, telepathy is no more than its by product.

5. The Foundational Christian Experience

Our treatment of nature mysticism and its extension to natural mysticism, especially the idea of person-mysticism brings us to the threshold of understanding the Christ event, the foundational experience of Christian faith. It can be understood as an instance of person-mysticism experienced in the human person of Jesus. He is a human person like any other, but a particular person in whom the disciples experienced something more. They expressed this experience variously as Jesus being the Christ, the anointed one, the son of God, and so on.

This understanding of the Christian experience explains why Jesus the messenger of the Kingdom of God becomes the message. In encountering the human Jesus they encountered the divine. This applies not only to how they encountered him in his earthly life, but also to what happens to him at the end. The resurrection narratives, when read in the light of Hick's "veridical hallucinations", seem so very illuminating of the trans-natural reality that is at the core of the Christian experience. This understanding of the Christian experience also explains why orthodox Christianity has always maintained that Jesus is both God and man, with the denial of either his humanity or his divinity considered heretical: it would amount to a denial of the twofold character of the experience.

6. Conclusion

This paper set out to explore the possibiliy of communicating the foundational Christian experience in a manner that is intelligible to those who are not Christians and who may not even consider themselves religious. Analysing nature mysticism that is not specific to any religious tradition (hence, universal), it is found that they enable Christians to provide a preliminry understanding of what they mean by "God". The same analysis

in terms of the locus and the object of experience helped us to speak about person-mysticism, to suggest that the Christian experience can be considered as an instance of person-mysticism, which is in perfect agreement with the Christian doctrine about Jesus Christ. I shall end with a cautionay note that this preliminary account needs to be complemented in many ways: besides the fact that it has said almost nothing about the ressurection of Jesus, it also remains to be shown as to how this account of person-mysticism can make room for the cultural and historical dimensions experience.

Notes:

1. Paul Horsch, "From Creation Myth to World Law: The Early History of Dharma," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 32(1967, trans.2004), 438.
2. Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est* (Mumbai: Pauline Publications, 2006), no.1.
3. Pierre Hadot and Arnold I. Davidson, *Philosophy as a Way of Life : Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*, trans. Michael Chase (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1995).
4. Mary Midgley, *Wisdom, Information and Wonder: What Knowledge Is For?* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989; reprint, 1995), 37.
5. Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Addresses in Response to Its Cultured Despisers*, trans. Terrence N. Tice (Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press, 1821; reprint, 1969); George Karuvelil, "Religious Experience: Reframing the Question," *Forum Philosophicum: International Journal for Philosophy* 16, no. 1 (2011), 139-55.
6. For the difference between theology and fundamental theology, see, George Karuvelil, "To Whom Am I Speaking? Communication, Culture, and Fundamental Theology," *Theological Studies* 76, no. 4 (2015), 675-97.

7. For a brief account, see, James E. Davison, "Can God Speak a Word to Man? Barth's Critique of Schleiermacher's Theology," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 37 no. 2 (1984), 189-211.

8. See, Mary E. Hines, *The Transformation of Dogma : An Introduction to Karl Rahner on Doctrine* (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), 3-5

9. Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, trans. David Moreland (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1979), vol. VII, 15.

10. George Vass, *A Theologian in Search of a Philosophy: Understanding Karl Rahner*, vol. 1 (London: Sheed and Ward, 1985); Hines, *The Transformation of Dogma : An Introduction to Karl Rahner on Doctrine* , 6.

11. Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith : An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, trans. Willliam C. Dych (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1987), 176.

12. Walter T. Stace, *Mysticism and Philosophy* (London, Bombay: MacMillan, 1960); ———, *The Teachings of the Mystics* (New York and Toronto: The New American Library, 1960).

13. Steven T. Katz, "Language, Epistemology, and Mysticism," in *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis*, ed. Steven T. Katz (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 22-72.

14. See, George Karuvelil, "Mysticism, Language and Truth," *Journal of Dharma* 35, no. 3 (2010), 259-75.

15. Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith : An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity* , xi-xii.

16. William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience : A Study in Human Nature*, Centenary ed. (London ; New York: Routledge, 2002), 305.

17. R.C. Zaehner, *Mysticism, Sacred and Profane* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), xv. Stace called extrovertive mysticism "spontaneous" and introvertive mysticism is "acquired". Stace, *Mysticism and Philosophy* , 60.

18. Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (London, Toronto:

Bantam Press, 2006), 11.

19. Stace, *The Teachings of the Mystics* , 17; ———, *Mysticism and Philosophy* , 132.

20. Bede Griffiths, *The Golden String* (London: The Harvill Press, 1954), 9.

21. Stace, *The Teachings of the Mystics* , 15. Italics original; see also, ———, *Mysticism and Philosophy* , 66.

22. Stace, *Mysticism and Philosophy* , 132.

23. For a contrary view, see, Jess Byron Hollenback, *Mysticism : Experience, Response, and Empowerment*, Hermeneutics, Studies in the History of Religions (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996).

24. Stace, *The Teachings of the Mystics* , 13; ———, *Mysticism and Philosophy* , 49.

25. Paul Marshall, *Mystical Encounters with the Natural World : Experiences and Explanations* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 2.

26. Stace, *Mysticism and Philosophy* , 88.

27. Karuvelil, "Mysticism, Language and Truth," 263-67.

28. Steven Payne, "The Christian Character of Christian Mystical Experiences," *Religious Studies* 20, no. 3 (1984), 423.

29. *The Way of the Pilgrim and the Pilgrim Continues His Way*, trans. R.M. French (New York: Quality Paperback Book Club, 1998), 90. I take the practice of Vipassana and Yoga to be common knowledge in India.

30 Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, trans. John W. Harvey (Oxford: OUP, 1923; reprint, 1936), 26.

31. Ibid. , 29.

32. Clark E. Moustakas, *Lonliness*. New York: Prentice-Hall, 1961, 52-53, cited in Louis Roy, *Transcendent Experiences: Phenomenology and Critique* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 15.

33. Griffiths, *The Golden String* , 161.

34. Denise Lardner Carmody and John Tully Carmody, *Mysticism: Holiness East and West* (Oxford: OUP, 1996), 15.

35. Zaehner, Mysticism, Sacred and Profane , 41.

36. C.G. Jung, Psychology of the Unconscious, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1919), p. 198; cited in Ibid. , 38.

37. James (1958) 307.

38. Richard Jefferies, The Story of My Heart (London: Duckworth, 1912), 3; cited in Zaehner, Mysticism, Sacred and Profane , 46.

39. Jefferies, The Story of My Heart , 49-50. cited in Zaehner, Mysticism, Sacred and Profane , 48.

40. Wayne Proudfoot, Religious Experience (Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985)163.

41. Dawkins, *The God Delusion* , 14. Italics original.

42. Winston L. King, "Religion", in *The Encyclopeida of Religion*, ed. Mircea Eliade (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987), vol. 12, 282.

43. Deism is a religious philosophy and movement of the 17th and 18th centuries found predominantly in England. One of its chief doctrines was the belief in a God who created the world but does not intervene in its functioning, either by way of revelation or miracles. See, William L. Reese, *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion : Eastern and Western Thought By* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1980); Peter Byrne, *Natural Religion and the Nature of Religion : The Legacy of Deism* (London: Routledge, 1989), see specially chapter 8.

44. Peter L. Berger, *The Social Reality of Religion* (Hammondsworth, Middlesex: Penguine Books Ltd, 1973), 121.

45. See, William C. Placher, *The Domestication of Transcendence: How Modern Thinking About God Went Wrong* (Louisville, KY:

Westminster John Knox, 1996) pp. 6-7, 111-12, 128-45

46. John Hick, *The Fifth Dimension: An Exploration of the Spiritual Realm*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2004).

47. Diane Hennacy Powell, "Psi and Psychiatry: The Quest for a New Scientific Paradigm," in Sudhir Kakar and Jeffrey J. Kripal, eds., *Seriously Strange: Thinking Anew About Psychical Experiences* (New Delhi: Viking Penguine,2012), 126-151.

48. Dawkins, *The God Delusion* 18.

49. See, for example, Chin-Tai Kim, "Transcendence and Immanence," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 55, no. 3 (1987), 537-49.

50. John Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion: Human Responses to the Transcendent* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1989), 173. Emphasis added.

51. Nancy Frankenberry, "Classical Theism, Panentheism, and Pantheism : On the Relation between God Construction and Gender Construction," *Zygon* 28, no. 1 (1993), 30.

52. Ian T. Ramsey, *Christian Empiricism*, Studies in Philosophy and Religion (London: Sheldon Press, 1974), 123.

53. H.L. Goodall Jr. and Peter M. Kellett, "Dialectical Tensions and Dialogical Moments as Pathways to Peak Experiences," in *Dialogue : Theorizing Difference in Communication Studies*, ed. Rob Anderson, Leslie A. Baxter, and Kenneth N. Cissna (Thousand Oaks, Calif.; London: Sage Publications, 2004), 160.

54. The only other mention of this idea I have come across is in John Caputo when he says, "We are all of us, each for the other, a possible locus of the divine, a potential launching point for transcendence." See, "Radical Hermeneutics and Religious Truth: The Case of Sheehan and Schillebeeckx," in Daniel Guerriere (ed.),Phenomenology of the Truth Properto Religion (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1990), 167-68.

55. See, http://www.smithsonianmag.com/innovation/scientists-prove-that-telepathic-communication-is-within-reach-180952868/?no-ist.

56. Guy L. Playfair, *Twin Telepathy*, 3rd ed. (White Crow Books, 2012), 124.

57. Plenty of cases can be found in Playfair's book. See also, http://psychics.co.uk/blog/telepathy-research/; http://metaphysicalarticles.blogspot.in/2010/03/twin-telepathy-by-guy-lyon-playfair.html. If this is true, wild speculations about the endless possibilities of scientifically exploiting telepathy are likely to disappoint. For such speculations see, the report in *Mail Online*. http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-2747131/Is-proof-humans-TELEPATHIC-powers-Two-men-4-600-miles-apart-send-messages-using-just-minds.html. It is not without significance that the concerned scientists in the recent successful experiment (note 55 above) managed to communicate only "hola" (hello) and "ciao" or that a twenty-year long attempt by the US government to use telepathy for spying had to be wound up. see, Edwin C. May, "PsiSpy: Recollections from a Psychic Spying Programme," in Kakar and Kripal, eds., *Seriously Strange: Thinking Anew About Psychical Experiences* , 87-125.

58. Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion: Human Responses to the Transcendent* , 167.

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