

AN ASIAN BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS: PERSPECTIVES AND PROSPECTS

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1. PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS

1.1 A Need of Time

Nobody in Asia will disown the relevance for a biblical hermeneutics for this vast continent. There may not be difference of opinion that the Word of God as a consuming fire (Jer.23:29) has not yet touched the soul of Asia. That may be why the majority of its inhabitants remains unaffected at the so-called proclamation of the message of Christ. The Asian Church as a whole does not seem to have made a heart and soul venture towards giving form to an effective method of biblical interpretation, which takes into consideration the existential situation with all its dimensions of the Asian folk. This study does not claim to present such a hermeneutics. The author only wants to invite the attention of the Church leaders to certain foundational factors, on which an authentic Asian hermeneutics can be built.

1.2 An Integral Hermeneutics

Out-rightly I would like to point out that Asia needs an integral hermeneutics, which takes into consideration both the spiritual and material realms. Thus a merely materialistic or political or economic or feminist reading of the Bible cannot satisfy the Asian mind, which basically maintains a spiritual bend. At the same time it is wrong to concentrate only on the so-called spiritual or charismatic sense of the Word of God. An authentic hermeneutics will necessarily challenge the Asian folk to dedicate themselves to work for the integral development of the continent in relation to God and the society in which they live.

1.3 Some Biblical Insights

1.3.1 A Growing Word

The specific nature of word of God consists in this. It is a growing word.¹ Once it is uttered, it grows and grows till eschatological times, when the world is transformed into Word. Take for instance the first word of God spoken in human history: "Let there be light" (Gen.1: 3). Wherever there is darkness in whatever realm – physical, material, intellectual, psychological, spiritual, political, economic, cultural or cultic – the voice of God will be heard, "Let there be light," – the light of freedom, peace, prosperity, health, joy, love, truth, justice, compassion, forgiveness and forbearance. God is the source, fullness and reservoir of light. He is the light itself, and is clothed with splendour and majesty; He wraps himself in light as with a garment (Ps.104: 1-2). In the Indian terminology one may call Him *advaitarūpan* (one who is of undivided nature), in whom there is no division. He is bliss, love and joy. The reality of division (*dvaita bhāva*) reflects darkness. God the good One (*nanmasvarūpan*) has created everything as the living images of His goodness. It was sin, the symbol of darkness, which sowed the seed of division, fragmentation, alienation and subversion. God the *nanmasvarūpan* will never compromise with the personifications of evil. The *prakasarūpan* will not allow the symbols of darkness to dominate over the images of light in the world. His word of light will enter into every realm of darkness and dispel it. Bible gives articulation to such attempts.

The characteristics of the Word can be thus summarized: it is a living and active word; it is a speaking word, an event, a growing word, everlasting and an effective word. A genuine Asian hermeneutics shall take into full consideration such a nature of the word of God.

1.3.2 Profane as Sacred

In the biblical vision everything is beautiful. The whole creation, as God's handiwork, radiates the divine beauty. There is nothing,

which can be labelled as profane or secular. The so-called categorical distinctions between matter and spirit, temporal and eternal, earth and heaven, etc. of the Greek philosophy and Scholastic theology, are invalid from the biblical perspective. With the coming of Christ, the humans live on a new heaven and a new earth (Rev. 21: 1). The earth is the aureole of heaven. The matter is permeated with the spirit. The terrestrial realities reflect the divine presence. The Lord bestowed on Abraham three blessings, land, progeny and the divine presence. The patriarch has to experience God's presence in his life through the medium of possessing land and having children. Thus land and progeny were not merely material blessings. Abraham has to find his God in and through them. Likewise the divine presence from the biblical perspective is not simply a spiritual phenomenon. It is bound with the so-called material realities. A genuine biblical hermeneutics for Asia should be founded on this vision. Thus the body and the world are to be held in deep veneration, since they are the temples of God ((1 Cor.3: 16,17; 6-19; 2Cor.6: 16).

1.3.3 Contextual Dimension

The word of God enters human history as a dynamic event, and becomes historical or contextual. Here comes its hermeneutical relevance. The word of God has to be 'expressed,' 'explained' and 'translated' in the present Asian context.² The Asians have to read the text of the Bible in their context. They have to start from their existential situation, and in that light look to the text in order to find out its message for them. After finding out the meaning of the text for their life-situation, the readers have to return to the context and look at it from a new perspective, which I will call biblical. This context-text-context dynamics will provide the Asians with the existential Asian meaning of the word of God. It will induce them to give concrete expressions to it, and make the horizon of the Asian world of understanding meet and merge with the horizon of understanding in the original text.³ Only when this

phenomenon of being carried across takes place, the word of God can incarnate in the Asian culture.

2. THE PRESENT SITUATION – AN OVERVIEW

The main Asian hermeneutical studies may be conveniently classified under six headings: Post-Colonial perspective, Liberation perspective (Socio-political perspective, Socio-economic perspective, Subaltern perspective, Feminist perspective), Multi-faith Perspective, Intercultural perspective, Scriptural perspective and Spiritual perspective. Of course these are not clear-cut and mutually exclusive divisions. A comprehensive presentation of all the positions escapes the scope of this article. Thus all the Asian authors cannot be mentioned in this study. As the literature is vast, selective works are cited.

2.1 Post-Colonial Hermeneutics

R.S. Sugirtharajah from Sri Lanka stands out as the pioneer voice from the margin, who assiduously champions the cause of an Asian biblical hermeneutics. His contributions in the field will ever remain as the basic tools for research for the present and future generations. He has coined new phrases and expressions, which can provoke and even entice the Asian audience. He finds biblical texts as a vehicle of emancipation.⁴ The author challenges all to make a radical reading of the Bible within the margin, and advocates a peoples' appropriation of the Bible. An indigenous reading will produce "irruption within the irruption." One has to disentangle and depatriarchalize the text. He proposes a *dalit* hermeneutics, women's reading and liberation hermeneutics.

Sugirtharajah has done a further service for the Asian people. He has collected and edited some of the important contributions of other scholars, and published it under the title, *Voices from the Margin, Interpreting the Bible in the Third World*.⁵ It includes articles from India, South Korea, Hong Kong, Pakistan, Philippines, Japan, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Indonesia. Sugirtharajah adds a postscript to these studies under the title "Achievements and Items for a

Future Agenda." He thus classifies the achievements: Repossession of the Bible by ordinary people, solidarity and performative interpretation as ways of overcoming the hermeneutical gap, the underprivileged as the hermeneutical focus, fruitful fusion of struggles and scholarship, the importance of social location and exposure of 'value-free' reading, setting goals - transforming the world. The author proposes the following items for a future agenda: re-oralizing and re-casting the message, multi-faith hermeneutics, Blacks and biblical antiquity, networking and talking to each other.

After going through the works of Sugirtharajah I, a humble minister of the Word of God, remain puzzled. If I understand the author correctly, he seems to be preoccupied with the so-called colonial and post-colonial perspectives. I do not understand how one can confine the word of God, which has to bring an integral liberation of the whole creation, to a single aspect. If the Bible shows us the way of union with God, how can one connive at its spiritual orientation? Who can call this kind of venture an authentic biblical hermeneutics? One should not forget that we are speaking to the Asians, who are very religious in their hearts. Of course, I join Sugirtharajah in rejecting the colonial hermeneutics, even though I am not happy with that label. According to me, such jargons do not help the Asians to build up an authentic hermeneutics, relevant to the present Asian context.

The ISPCK publications, New Delhi seems to follow this post-colonial trend of Sugirtharajah. Many of their Books seem to advocate this trend. Just to cite some works: C.I. David Joy, *Revelation: A Post-Colonial View Point*, 2001; David Kawang-sun Suh...(ed), *Charting the Future of Theology and Theological Education in Asian Contexts*, 2004 (this book concentrates on curricula of Theology and Philosophy from a contextual and intercultural perspective); Kenneth Fernando, *Rediscovering Christ in Asia*, 2003.

2.2 Liberation Hermeneutics

Although the promoters of liberation hermeneutics do not openly deny the spiritual dimension and union-with-God aspect, they are more occupied with its secular sphere. Thus they rarely speak of spiritual liberation. These authors are more concerned with socio-political, socio-economic, subaltern and feministic perspectives. As a general study of the Bible from the liberation perspective, one can cite the article of George M. Soares-Prabhu on Jesus the teacher.⁶ According to the author the pedagogy of Jesus is non-elitist, transforming, prophetic, dialogical, critical, and in one word liberative. A survey of different aspects of liberation hermeneutics is given below.

2.2.1 Socio-Political Perspective

Ahn Byung-Mu of South Korea champions the cause of the Minjung, the people who are politically oppressed, socially alienated, economically exploited and kept uneducated in cultural and intellectual matters. His study, "Jesus and the Minjung in the Gospel of Mark"⁷ provides an example for reading the Bible from the socio-political perspective. Archie C.C. Lee of Hong Kong tries to bring out the socio-political meaning of the David-Bathseba incident for the contemporary world.⁸ His study goes beyond the traditional literary and grammatical methods and uses resources of one's own culture to unravel the meaning of the biblical text. As an evaluation I would point out that these two studies, although pertinent, might create an impression that the biblical texts enjoy only a socio-political dimension. The periodical *Voices from the Third World* published by the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT) is devoted to develop a liberation hermeneutics, especially from the socio-political perspective. Just to cite an example, see the article of Kim Yong-Vock from Korea, "Critical Signs of the Times: All Living Beings in the Cosmos are Groaning under the Regime of the Global Empire and Market"⁹ draws the idea from Rom.8: 20-22. This study lacks biblical depths

and tends to over-simplification and sloganization. Unfortunately most of the contributions exhibit this trait.

2.2.2 Socio-Economic Perspective

Helen R. Graham of Philippines makes use of socio-economic analysis to understand the reign of King Solomon in order to analyse the contemporary Filipino social, economic and political situation.¹⁰ George M. Soares-Prabhu tries to interpret the poor in the Bible as a social class.¹¹ He looks at the poor in the Bible as a sociological, dialectical and dynamic group.

2.2.3 Subaltern Perspective

Felix Wilfred defines subaltern hermeneutics as the one that emerges from out of the lowly, inferiorly or marginally placed situation of any group in society.¹² According to him such an interpretation is hermeneutics of earthliness, where hermeneutics shifts from the cognitive realm as interpretation and meaning to an interpreted experience of the world and society. This subaltern perspective advocated by the author is indeed fascinating, and must invite the attention of the biblical hermeneutics. Unfortunately nobody has yet made any serious and detailed study of biblical texts from the subaltern perspective. An important drawback of such subaltern hermeneutics seems to be its disregard for the spiritual dimension.

2.2.4 Feministic Perspective

Feministic hermeneutics was a need of time when the field of biblical interpretation was dominated by male authors who often maintained a lamentable prejudice towards women characters in the Bible. As a reaction to such an injustice there originated the so-called feministic hermeneutics, whose proponents try to defend every female character in the Bible. Because of such pre-occupations one is tempted to forget that the Bible is the word of God, which is the story of God in the company of human beings. We do not have yet well known authors of this feministic perspective in Asia. I would like to point out two attempts.

Christine Amjad-Ali of Pakistan has tried to interpret 1Cor. 11:2-16 from such a perspective.¹³ Sugirtharajah includes in his book *Voices from the Margin* a drama by an Asian Group Work on the Exodus event from an Asian Feminist perspective.¹⁴

2.3 Multi-Faith Hermeneutics

Since Asia is a continent of religious pluralism, the scholars naturally tried to build up a multi-faith hermeneutics. This is indeed a commendable venture. Unfortunately because of over-enthusiasm and over-concern to please the partners from other religions, some of their attempts fell into the trap of over-simplification at the risk of denying the uniqueness of Christ. I cite some authors who are being engaged in multi-faith hermeneutics. The article of Stanley J. Samartha may serve as an introduction for inter-faith hermeneutics.¹⁵ According to him the task of Asian hermeneutics in the context of claims and counter-claims for the supreme authority of one scriptural text, is to work out a larger framework of neighbourly relationships within which the insights of different sacred texts can be related to each other for mutual enrichment, without denying their particularities.

D.S. Amalorpavadass tries to read Bible in the context of Indian religious and cultural traditions.¹⁶ According to him each Indian Christian should experience within himself/herself two streams (of Bible and Indian scriptures) flowing and merging into one. These two streams do not flow in parallel lines as two separate streams, but both merge at the depth of our being as a single river and become an ocean of single experience. Bible is to become universal because it resounds with the Word of God in the Scriptures of other religions. Bible needs to permeate all actions for justice and peace; it has to make a critique of all ideologies denouncing and announcing. The biblical Word has to become most interiorised at the core of the being; it has to become resounding in the entire universe. The position of the author in this article is very Christian, as it exposes a comprehensive vision

which takes into account not only interior realities but also social transformations.

Kwok Pui Lan of Hong Kong takes a radical position.¹⁷ He questions the rigidity of a biblical canon and its universal truth-claims, and offers a proposal for interpreting Bible in a religiously plural world and from a woman's perspective. Also Sugirtharajah stands for an inter-faith hermeneutics.¹⁸

2.4 Intercultural Hermeneutics

S. Wesley Ariarajah from Sri Lanka opts for an intercultural hermeneutics.¹⁹ He finds fault with the terms such as indigenisation, comparative religion and theology of religions. He proposes an intercultural hermeneutics, which provides a theory and method of interpretation and understanding across cultural boundaries. Here one needs to be truly open to other cultures; one has to be ready to abandon absolutist claims for one's interpretations, and to be led to the new and the unexpected and to the multiplicity positions on a given issue. Ariarajah provides three examples of intercultural hermeneutics. The first example is the dialogue between Buddhists and Christians in Hawaii in the 1980s, the second is the ideas of Raimon Panikkar on Cosmotheandricism, and the third is the theology of Aloysius Pieris. Reflecting on these three studies the author makes certain observations. Intercultural hermeneutics can be originated only from experience, out of the need to make sense of an inter-religious reality, and out of the struggle to find meaning in the midst of and with the help of the religious-cultural realities in which one finds oneself. I do not make here a detailed critique of this theory. Every new attempt to enter into dialogue with other religions in Asia is to be welcomed. But it has to be deeply rooted in faith, and has to contribute to the growth of a genuine and comprehensive Asian hermeneutics.

2.5 Scriptural Hermeneutics

Asian authors have made attempts to read the Bible through the eyes of Asian Scriptures. Seiichi Yogi of Japan examines the 'I' sayings of Jesus from a Buddhist perspective.²⁰ According to him Christian tradition might use the lens of Japan tradition to see the truth in a new way. Christians have to move beyond both inclusive and understandings of Jesus, without denying the uniqueness of Christ or Buddha. Maen Pongudom of Thailand tries to re-interpret the creation of man in Genesis in the light of Northern Thai folktales.²¹

I would like to add to this list the Indian reading of Is. 44: 9-20 by George M. Soares-Prabhu.²² In the beginning the author tries to describe what Indian Mind means. It is Cosmo centric and visual which is more interested in "seeing the divine image than hearing the divine Word." It has a radically polytheistic consciousness that offers a complementary alternative to the biblical concept of anionic monotheism. According to Soares-Prabhu the intensely visual, pluriform, inclusive, Cosmo centric Indian mind is the polar opposite of the word-oriented, exclusivist, and anthropocentric mind-set of the Bible. With these introductory observations the author tries to interpret Is. 44: 9-20 from an Indian perspective. The prophet's satirical taunt song against idolatry is offensive to Indian sensibilities, which look at 'idol worship' as a normal and edifying religious practise. I tend to agree with the author's perception of the so-called Indian idolatry. But he seems to poke fun at the biblical text itself; he seems to find joy in attacking even some of the New Testament texts; he attributes to the Bible an anti-Gentile bias and a nationalist monotheism. His observation seems to originate from looking at the Bible from a mere human perspective, and does not take into account Bible as the Word of God.

2.6 Spiritual Perspective

No one can deny the spiritual dimension of the Word of God. The ultimate aim of every kind of hermeneutics is to lead humans to God-realization. But this has to be attained through the medium of man-realization. Thus a reading of Bible, which purposefully disregards the material dimension of human life, cannot be called a genuine hermeneutics. It is wrong to use Bible merely for 'spiritual' entertainment or intellectual gymnastics. The following two examples do not belong to the above-mentioned category. They provide models for a spiritual hermeneutics in a good sense. Sr. Vandana contributes substantial studies in this field. Just to cite one example, her article entitled "Water –God's Extravaganza: John 2:1-11,"²³ makes use of Indian *dvani* method, and stresses the 'evocative,' the beauty of the biblical text and its emotive grip on the audience. R. I. Raja in his booklet, *The Marginalized with the Marginalized*²⁴ provides a profound biblical spirituality based on the Gospel of John to those who voluntarily work for and live in solidarity with the downtrodden. The author creates a picture of the marginalized Jesus in the company of the marginalized, such as women, the sick, the sinners, the Samaritans. He calls the Johannine community, the 'Little' community, who suffered marginalization by both Jews and Romans.

2.7 Résumé

This overview of the contemporary situation tried to draw attention to the present trends of Asian biblical hermeneutics. I have classified them into six perspectives, which provide partial, imperfect, and sometimes distorted views. What Asia needs is an authentic and comprehensive hermeneutics, which takes into consideration both the spiritual and material, earthly and heavenly realms, and the body and soul of the common man. The Bible needs to be presented in the Asian context, and it has to inspire and challenge the folk.

3. TOWARDS AN AUTHENTIC ASIAN HERMENEUTICS

3.1 The Asian Context

Asians have to read the Bible in the Asian context so as to make the word of God the Asian Scripture. The Asian societies nurture the economics of affluence, politics of oppression and exploitation, and a static and triumphant religion – the triple structure of Egypt, which was rejected and invalidated by Yahweh. Most of the people spend their lives in appalling conditions of abject poverty without basic amenities. At least some of the countries have contracted enormous debts, which have mortgaged their future for decades to come. Structural marginalization has the upper hand in this continent. Asia provides the fertile ground for all kind of social evils. A substantial percentage of population lives below the poverty line. Many people spend their lives in pavements. The evil of bonded labour has become a well-recognized phenomenon. The rich, who are few in number, systematically exploit the poor. Health and educational facilities are mostly the privilege of a handful of the upper-strata of the society. Education is embedded in the capitalistic politico-economic structure. Thus it fails to bring out a qualitative and structural change in the Asian society. Political parties subtly play on the religious passions of the uneducated folk for their egoistic purposes. There flare up alienation, segregation and fragmentation among the Asian people. Communalism, regionalism, fundamentalism, fanaticism, corruption and discrimination are rampant in Asian societies. The religious leaders generally take the side of the political authorities and use religion as the opium of the people. Some radical, extremist and militant groups are active on the Asian scene.

At this inhuman and non-divine situation the Asian soul groans inwardly and waits in agony for the liberating action (cf. Rom. 8: 22-23) of the ever-powerful Word of God (cf. Is. 55: 10-11). The marginalized masses look at the text, the Bible and its minister, the Church, expecting that she will release the irrupting power of the Word, which will consume the non-divine and inhuman socio-

political and cultic-cultural structures of the Asian society. Thus the Church is obliged to confront the structural evils with the biblical ideal of economics of equality, politics of justice and compassion, and the religion of God's freedom.²⁵

3.2 Bible under a Symbol

What Asia needs is an integral biblical hermeneutics which can address the problems of Asia in a comprehensive way. If possible such a hermeneutics should be articulated under a powerful symbol which calls forth a radical change in the religious, social, economic and political spheres of Asia. The Bible has to be presented from this single perspective. From such a vision the books of the Bible have to be taught in seminaries, catechism classes, discussion groups, charismatic conventions and even retreat sessions.

3.3 Land as a Symbol²⁶

As we have already explained in the subtitle "Profane as Sacred" (see 1.3.2), Bible exhibits an inner vision into the in-depth realm of earthly realities. Thus the material things are intended by God as mediums to lead us to the divine World. There irradiates the face of God in every created reality. The Indian sages were gifted with such a divine vision. Hence they exclaimed *Īsāvāsyam idam sarvam* the seeming dichotomy of matter and spirit results from our ignorance (*avidya*).

The concept of land encapsulates the whole message of the Bible.²⁷ The same way land has an evocative and provocative dimension in India. It stands out as a powerful symbol in the Indian consciousness. The rural people consider land as sacred, as goddess (*bhūmidēvi*). There pulsates the divine presence in the soil/earth. The farmers look at it as the unique medium and the most powerful an effective metaphor of self-realization (*ātma sākṣātkāra*) and God-realization (*Īśvara sākṣātkāra*).

3.3.1 Earth in the Indian Scriptures

In the Indian religious tradition earth is looked at as Motherland. Read the magnificent *Bhūmī sūkta* (Hymn to the Earth) of *Atharva Vēda* XII.1. The Hymn sings praises of the Mother Goddess Earth. She is “the ruling mistress of what has been and what will come to be” (1:1); the “bearer of all things, hoard of treasures rare, sustaining mother” (1:6); “the matrix of all things is Earth” (1:43). The following beautiful prayers addressed to *Pr̥thvī* are worth citing: “Instil in me abundantly that fragrance, O Mother Earth, which emanates from you . . . that sweet perfume that all celestial beings are wont to emit...” (1:23); “impart to us those vitalizing forces that come, O Earth, from deep within your body... purify us wholly. The Earth is Mother; I am son of Earth” (1:24); “O Earth, O Mother, dispose my lot in gracious fashion that I be at ease. In harmony with all the powers of heaven set me in grace and good fortune” (1:63). “May the earth who is to us in the nature of a mother, hold us her sons close to her life – endowing self, protect us” (1). *Bṛhadhāraṇyaka Upanisad* II.5.1 asserts: “This earth is honey for all creatures and all creatures are honey for this earth.”

The basic notions concerning land in the Indian Scriptures may be thus presented.²⁸ *Pr̥thvī* is the foundation, the basis, out of which emerges all that exists and on which everything rests. It is the basis of life. Man is of the earth and earthly. It is part of man himself so that man can no longer live without the earth than he can live without body. The earth is the mother of all humans, an object of worship and not of exploitation, an object of awe and not of curiosity or research. The relationship of humans to *Pr̥thvī* has to be that of experiential, affectional, and devotional orders. One who has not got *Bhūmī* is like one who is illicitly denied the nearness of mother. How that person can find his/her God? Where s/he can live? Thus earth is the necessary medium for *ātma sāṅsātkāra* (self-realization) and *Īśvara sāṅsātkāra* (God- realization). Humans are destined to enjoy the blessings of the earth, because the earth is their home, their own family, and their body.

3.3.2 *Land and the Socio-Political Situation*²⁹

The constitution of India guarantees fundamental right to equality (Articles 14-18), right to freedom (Articles 19-22), right for a place to live, for work, for education, etc. Still India remains a feeding ground for all kinds of inequalities, injustices, and exploitations. In this predominately agrarian and rural society almost half of the population live below poverty line.³⁰ Two third of Indians depend on land for their livelihood.

Concerning the rural folk, land is considered as a fundamental asset. It serves as the primary source of income, security and status. The tribal people look at land not simply as an economic asset, but as a part of their spiritual as well as economic heritage. They build their religious, cultural, social and political life around them. Unfortunately half of the rural families do not possess land. Eighty percent of land is with a twenty percent of the people. Thus a few have taken hold of land, while sixty million rural households remain landless. According to The World Bank Report of 1997, entitled, *India: Achievements and challenges in Reducing Poverty*, landlessness is by far the greatest predictor of poverty in India, even more than caste or illiteracy. One may say, that humanness for the Indian folk means 'landed-ness' (i.e., to live on one's land).

To day the original symbolism of land is almost especially in the urban areas of India, due to unhealthy westernization and blind materialistic tendencies. India is slowly succumbing to capricious struggles to transform it into an industrial and capitalistic country. This has engendered enormous inequalities and outright injustices. The rich get richer at the expense of the poor. "It is nothing short of a paradox that people should be poor while our country is and has been described as a poor people in a rich country."³¹

Acharya Vinoba Bhave tried to encounter this suicidal tendency by giving form to a movement *Sarvodaya Samaj*; which stood for self realization through *bhoodan* (gift of land); *sarvodaya* through

gramdān (gift of village).³² Unfortunately this movement failed to transform India into God's land that considers humanity as God's family in which every one enjoys equal rights and privileges. At this deplorable situation the followers of Christ are challenged by the biblical ideology. It is their duty to make the symbol of land as the 'expression,' 'explanation,' and 'translation' of the biblical word for India.

3.3.3 Land-Dimension in the Bible

Because of the limited scope of the article, the theme is presented here in a concise way.³³

3.3.3.1 Land Symbol in the Old Testament

Bible is indeed the history of land symbol. It begins with the life of the humans in the land of God. Scholars have illustrated the '*ādāmāh*' (which literally means ground soil, dust, earth) motif as one of the powerful sub-theme of Yahwistic account of primeval history (Gen. 1-11).³⁴ History of humans ('*ādām*') is presented in Gen. 1-11 as an interpretation of their relationship to '*ādāmāh*'. '*ādām*' is called to find self-realization as well as God-realization in '*ādāmāh*', on which they are born, live, work, eat, do good or evil and die. They cannot be '*ādām*' without '*ādāmāh*'; one is the echo of the other. Thus land is inseparable from humans.

Because of sin humans were expelled out of the divine land. Salvation history was inaugurated with the call of Abraham. He was promised a triple blessing: land (Gen.15:18; 17:8), progeny (Gen.15:5b; 17:2,6,16,19) and the divine presence (Gen.17:7,8b). The patriarch had to experience God-realization through the medium of land and progeny (see "profane as Sacred," Nr.1.3.2). Thus in the call of Abraham, the Father of the new humanity, humans are called to possess the land, the symbol of the divine presence. In order to realize this divine design, the patriarch was asked to become a 'landless' person, an *agati* (one who has no resources, position, means, and reliance in life), practically meaning, nobody, one who has nothing and one who is nothing. The landlessness

was a necessary condition for receiving the status of 'land-edness' as gift from God.

We can make certain conclusions from the study of the land symbol in the patriarchal narratives. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were destined to possess and live in the land. For them, to be human meant to live in the land, which is offered to them as a divine gift. To be a 'landless' being was a pre-requisite for becoming a 'landed' person. God makes one a 'landed' being so that the recipient shall make others 'land-ed' persons.

In God's vision Abraham stands out as the authentic human being, who becomes a 'land-ed' person through the process of 'land-lessness.' The people of Israel were called to become the children of Abraham in this sense. Thus they had to experience 'land-lessness' in Egypt, where they lived the life of oppressed and exploited *agatis*. Yahweh liberated them from this 'land-less' situation in order to make them 'land-ed' people. The Promised Land has to serve as a metaphor of the divine presence, where they have to make the life a celebration of the divine praises, enjoying the land in the company of the fellow brethren. Thus land has to become a place of service for the unfortunate 'land-less' persons, in order to make them 'land-ed' beings so that they can become authentic humans.

Unfortunately Israel failed to live up to their call. They held the blessing of land as their private property, instead of using it as tenants of Yahweh (Lev. 25: 23). As they forgot their *agati* status and used the land for self-assertion and self-glorification, it was taken away from them. Once more they were reduced to the 'land-less' status in Babylon. The exilic prophets announced a return to Jerusalem and prepared them to become 'land-ed persons in the real sense. The post-exilic prophets foretold the coming of Messiah, who would establish an eschatological Kingdom/land.

One can thus sum up the OT history: in the land-out of the land-to the land-in the land-from the land-to the land-in the eschatological land.

3.3.3.2 Land Symbol in the New Testament

Jesus, the Son of God, who lived in the land of his Father came down to earth in order to take humans to the celestial land. By incarnation he became a 'land-less' person, in order to make us 'land-ed' beings. The person of Jesus, one may say, embodies the biblical metaphor of land. He embraced the lifestyle of a 'land-less' pilgrim, thereby he challenged the worldly ideology of building up a 'land-ed' life on earth. By words and deeds, the prophet endeavoured to make the so-called 'land-ed' people 'land-less,' and the 'land-less' ones of God the 'land-ed' beings. Jesus re-articulated the OT concept of land as Kingdom of God (Synoptic Gospels) and the House of Father (Gospel of John). Even then the symbolic dimension of the OT term remains the same.

The followers of Christ are destined to be the hermeneuts (interpreters) of land. Their very call demands from them a 'land-less' life-style, in order to make others 'land-ed' people. They have to become 'expressions,' 'explanations,' and 'translations' of the 'text' of land in the context of India. The outsiders have to find in the Church the personification of the land metaphor. As a conclusion one may say that the biblical concept of land is the most expressive, explanatory and translatable metaphor of the divine presence on earth.

3.4 'Land' as God's Word for Asia

Whatever we have said about India, is more or less applicable to the whole Asian continent. Land stands out in Asia as the only medium and powerful metaphor of self-realization and God-realization. A genuine biblical hermeneutics demands that Christ, the 'text' should assume that an Asian Church can become Jesus' Church. The land-leaven of Christ has to ferment the Asian land, thus transforming Asia into God's land. In order to realize this

mission, task and goal, the Church has to radically re-organize her teaching method of Sacred Scripture. In the article, "God's Word for the Indian Folk"³⁵ I have presented a tentative methodology for studying, teaching and proclaiming the message of the Bible from the perspective of land symbol. The limitations of the article-form do not allow me to repeat here that thematic outline of both OT and NT books of the Bible. Such an approach may help both the official ministers of the word of God, as well as the ordinary Christians to get conscientized of their vocation and obligation to make Asian land the divine land. Further, it will fill them with an enduring enthusiasm, an inexhaustible inspiration, and a prophetic zeal. Then they will be transformed into untiring missionaries of land, who will be engaged in mercilessly rooting out and pulling down the existing non-divine and inhuman structures of the Asian continent. Nobody can silence them until they build up and plant God's society in Asia. This will convert Asian land into God's land.

4. ASIAN JESUS IN JESUS' CHURCH

How we have to present Jesus the champion of the Kingdom-land in Asia? How should we depict the face of Jesus in Asia? The success of putting into practice the principles of an authentic hermeneutics will depend upon the answer to these questions. Here I will be content with inviting the attention of the Asian theologians to certain orientations.

4.1 A Challenging Question

Jesus himself challenges us with a twofold question: "Who do the people say, the Son of Man is? . . . But you . . . who do you say I am?" (Mt. 16: 14,15). While Simon Peter spoke up, the other disciples remained silent. While the Latin American theologians speak up³⁶ we, the Asians keep silent. Still Jesus continues to fling the same question at the Asian Church. Keshub Chunder Sen (1838-1884) rightly criticizes the Asian Christians: "It seems that the Christ has come to us as an Englishman, with English manners

and customs about him and with the temper and the spirit of an Englishman in him." He asks Christians: "Go to the rising sun in the East, not to the setting sun in the West, if you wish to see Christ in the plenitude of his glory."

4.2 A Problem

Many of us, both Asians and the Europeans are not fully aware of the fact that Jesus was born in the western part of Asia. The images of Jesus, which the Western missionaries had taught us, are still imprinted in our minds. The Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Church in Asia* of Pope John Paul II has stressed the Asian roots of Christianity. Since the work of European missionaries during past centuries has effaced Jesus' Asian face, we have to rework from the beginning in order to identify His authentic face.

4.3 Different Portraits

Before proposing a portrait of Jesus, which can attract and appeal to the Asian mind, and can guide them in their struggles to transform Asia into a continent of God, I would like to invite the attention to the discoveries of the past Asian seekers of the face of Jesus.

- Jesus as Supreme Guide to human happiness – Rajah Ram Mohun Roy;
- Jesus as true *Yogi* and Divine Humanity- Keshub Chunder Sen;
- Jesus as *Jivanmukta* (one who has attained liberation while alive) – Vivekananda;
- Jesus as the Son of Man, seeking the last, the least and the lost – Rabindranath Tagore;
- Jesus as the Supreme *Satyagrahi* (lover and fighter for truth) – Mahatma Gandhi;
- Jesus as *Advaitin* (one who has realized destiny with Brahman/God) – Swami Akhilananda;
- Mystic Christ – Radhakrishnan;

- Jesus as *Prajapati* (Lord of creatures) – K.M. Banerjee;
- Jesus as *Cit* (consciousness) – Brahmobandhav Upadhyaya;
- Jesus as *Avatara* (Incarnation) – A.J. Appasamy, V. Chakkarai;
- Jesus as *Adi Purusha* (the first person) and *Shakti* (power/strength) – P. Chenchiah;
- Jesus as Eternal *Om* (Logos) – S. Jesudasan.³⁷

Looking at these past discoveries, one may note that almost all the faces are connected with religious sphere of orthodox Hinduism, and thus they have nothing to do with the concrete and existential situations of the Asian people. Thus these classical and so-called Brahmanic faces do not meet the exigencies of the common folk, the marginalized and outcast who are undergoing systematic oppression and exploitation. This defeats the very purpose of incarnation, God becoming human being in order to raise the humanity to the status of the children of God. Also it fails to articulate the face of the Old Testament God, Yahweh who, out of love for the poor and the needy, has designed to become one with them. Unfortunately the discoverers of these faces of Jesus were the representatives of the upper class of Indian society, and they had merely academic and speculative interests.

Most recently *Dalits* and the tribals are capturing the attention of the Asians scholars. Hence the portrait of Jesus as *Dalit* may find market especially in contemporary Indian society. No serious study has yet made from this perspective. Anyhow such a Jesus cannot address the whole Asian society, which is comprised of the poor and the rich, upper and lower classes. Further, the *Dalit* Jesus may be interested only in social issues, thus disfiguring the historical face of the biblical Jesus.

4.4 An Attempt

I would like to make an attempt to discover the integral face of the biblical Jesus from the Asian perspective. This presentation

remains in the explorative level, and needs further reflections and critical evaluation.

4.4.1 The Divine Design

The figure of Jesus, which emerges from the Gospels in the light of the OT background, is that of a prophet. One can describe the biblical prophet as a person, who by word and deed, proclaims judgment – whether condemnatory or salvific, about the present day realities in the light of God's future for cosmos, God being the norm, source and authority of this critical proclamation.³⁸ The biblical prophet lives in the world of God, and through His eyes looks at creation. God has a dream for the entire universe. He, who is the source of goodness, has created everything as good, in His own image and likeness. He wants them to live on earth as his living reflections and loving extensions. Disharmony, chaos, disorder and evil are foreign to the divine design. Human beings, together with the whole creation was supposed to make their life a celebration in company with God, converting the world as paradise where reigns *ēka bhāva, nāda, raga, tala* and *laya*. The cosmic beings were destined to love a life of being turned-to-others, which reflects the very life of the Triune God. They were meant to be beings-in-relation, humans related among themselves, humans related to God, humans related to animal, vegetative, mineral and celestial kingdoms.

4.4.2 The Prophetic Role

Unfortunately this dream of God was disturbed and shattered by the coming of sin into the world, which brought disharmony, disorder, chaos, evil, hatred, oppression and exploitation. Bible tells the story of God's various endeavours to destroy this distorted situation and to restore and recreate the original harmony. God called the prophets, who participated in the divine dreams and visions concerning the whole creation. In that light these seers dedicated their lives to re-create God's future for humanity and for the entire cosmos. They looked at the

contemporary realities from the divine perspective. They evaluated everything – whether social or political or economic or cultural or religious realities, in this light. They raised their voices against any trace of disorder or disharmony in any sphere of life. The prophets attacked, rejected, de-legitimized and proclaimed invalid the non-divine and inhuman structures of the society. They not only uprooted, tore down, destroyed and overthrew, but also tried to build up and plant a new society (Jer. 1:10).

4.4.3 Jesus, the Prophet

The incarnated Son of God totally fulfilled and completely realized the call of the OT prophets. He was a seer, who could see the face of his heavenly Father in every cosmic face, and hear the divine voice in every voice. He uninterruptedly enjoyed the divine union. He and the Father were one (Jn. 10:30); He was in the Father and the Father in Him (Jn.14:11); He did only what he saw His Father doing (Jn. 5:19); the Father who sent Him was with Him (Jn. 8:29).

Such an intimacy and union with God appeals to the Asian mind, which finds not only human beings but also the entire cosmos as part of God: *Isavasyam idam sarvam; aham Brahmasmi; Tattuamasi*. This vision of unity is the very core of the Eastern thought. Thus the portrait of Jesus, as presented in the Bible reveals his Asian face. At the same time this is that of a prophet, who has dedicated his life to re-illuminate the disfigured divine faces of human beings as well as those of the entire creation. Jesus personified the mind of God; God spoke through him, and he could reveal the divine will to others. Here Christ resembles the Indian *rishis* and *sannyasins*, to whom the people flock in order to know their future, to get advice and to receive divine blessings. Jesus the prophet served as Gods messenger who communicated the divine desires and decrees to human beings. Like the OT prophet he corrected those who erred, reproached and threatened those who strayed from the right path. He conscientized the world and human beings of "sin, righteousness and judgment" (Jn. 16: 8-11)

With the zeal for his Father's house (Jn. 2:17) Christ entered this world to realize God's vision for this universe.³⁹ This meant first of all the extirpation of the huge dragon (Rev. 12), as symbolized by the evil socio-cultic, politico-economic structures of the society. Jesus, by word and deed, virulently attacked, totally rejected and thoroughly de-legitimized stratified evils of the time, which he labelled as inhuman and non-divine. He took up the lifestyle, cause and struggle of the marginalized, the outcast and the *dalits* of the society.

Paul describes Jesus' pedagogy of opting for the life of the outcast and the untouchables: "For your sake he made himself poor though he was rich, so that you might become rich by his poverty" (2 Cor. 8:9). The poverty of Jesus, however, needs qualification. He does not refer to a state which condemned him to lead a life of utter alienated dependence. Rather, Jesus enlisted himself as a "slave of justice" (Rom.6:18-19), a person wedded to the cause of justice who could call out: "stand erect, hold your heads high, your time of liberation has come" (Lk. 21:28). The Son of God embraced a lifestyle which proclaimed his unwavering solidarity with the marginalized of the society. He was homeless wanderer (*sadhu, parivrajaka*) (cf. Mt. 8:20), who defined his mission as a dedication for the release of the helpless victims of socio-economic and politico-religious structural prisons (cf. Lk. 4, 16-21).

The wretched of the earth who suffer physical, psychological, moral, intellectual, economic, social, cultural, territorial, political and religious alienation, deprivation, exploitation and oppression (Lk. 6, 20-23; Mt. 5: 3-12; 25: 31-40) are held by Jesus as the highly favoured (Lk. 1: 28) or blessed ones of God, His "cherished possession" (Ex. 19:5) and "the apple of His eye" (Dt. 32:10). Jesus opted them as his dearest sheep and shepherded them into to rich pastures of the Kingdom (Ps. 23). These disoriented (Mk. 6:34), hungry (Mk. 8:2), harassed and helpless (Mk. 9: 35-37) folk encountered in him the leading (Jn. 10:3-4), feeding, teaching and healing (Mt. 14:6) Messiah.

These liberation acts involved a sharp critique of the structural hypocrisy of the society, which cultivated pious numbness towards these social evils. The marginalized are proclaimed 'blessed', who will be privileged to enjoy the social benefits of the coming era of salvation (Mt. 5:3-12). Reversal of social hierarchies (Mt. 20:26; Mk. 8:35; 9:35; Lk 9:48; 14: 7-14; 1:51-53; I Sam. 2:4-8) is the sign of the irruption of the Kingdom with the downfall of Satanic structures (Lk. 10: 17-21) of arrogance and accumulation, might and money, consumerism and hedonism, security and self-complacency. And Jesus welcomes the dawn of the Kingdom with the hymn of jubilation.

Jesus the prophet by his words and actions attempted to *marginalize* the affluent and arrogant politico-religious power structures of his time. The populace was conscientized against their opium-like influence. The authorities who subtly manipulated religion as a tool to perpetuate the socio-economic injustice (e.g., Mk. 7:9-13; Mt. 23:24-25) are mercilessly condemned. He rejected all forms of cult or religious practices which were divorced from justice (e.g., Mk. 12:40; Lk. 11:42). This amounted to the crucifixion of the true God in God's children. Here Torah was so interpreted as to make its practice almost impossible and utterly miserable for the simple people (e.g., Mt. 23:4). This social critic raised his voice against imposition of subtle forms of class distinctions based on affluence and authority in the structure of the society (e.g., Mk. 12:38-39). Woes and curses were hurled at the custodians of these evils who personified the huge dragon (Mt. 23:13-36). What emerged from the heart of these people, such as murder, greed, deceit...had contaminated the society (Mk. 7:14-23). The desire for wealth and craving for other sorts of comforts had choked the word of God from their hearts (Mk. 4:18-19). These doers of the will of mammon had already closed their minds against God, and excluded themselves from the fellowship with Christ (cf. Mk. 3:35; 10:23), hence are condemned to meet the divine indignation (cf Mk. 3:5) and the fire of Gehenna (Mt. 23:33).

The temple which then symbolized static and triumphal religion would be left to utter destruction (Mk. 13).

Jesus violently dashed against the devotees of Mammon and the promoters of capitalistic ideology. He could see there the signs of steady resurgence of ancient exploitative hierarchical Canaanite power structures at the expense of egalitarian covenant community ideal. "You can not serve God and Mammon" (Mt. 6:24) - the embodiment of greed - this categorical statement rules out any possibility of compromise or co-existence between these rival camps. Either one has to re-create himself on the image and likeness of the idols of affluence, avarice and arrogance (cf. Ps. 115:4-8) and now himself to possession, self gratification and dominance, or to enter into the liberating bondage of God, which frees him to risk himself, like his Master in giving himself to the cause of the downtrodden. An analogous challenge is flung down in Lk. 14:25-27. "If any one comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yea, even his own life, he cannot be my disciple." To be radical rejecter or 'traitor' to one's socio-religious milieu is the cost of discipleship. It consists in "non-conforming yourself to this age" (Rom 12:2) of the wealth god. Jesus never hesitated to besiege, by words and actions, Mammon's fortifications. Jesus violently destabilized the profit-making institutions (Jn. 2:13-16). He disgustingly separated himself from the property disputers of the wealthy class (Lk. 12:13-14). He predicted the destruction of the royal city which practiced the politics of oppression and exploitation and a static and triumphal religion (Mt. 23:37). This prophetic critic disdained the threat of the political power who wanted to reduce him to silence (Lk. 13:31-33).

To conclude, the biblical face of Jesus for Asia is that of a prophet. He meets the exigencies of Asian soul. In Him we find the meeting and merging of spiritual and material, heavenly and earthly spheres. He challenges the Asian Church to have a creative and liberative vision of this world. In the person of Jesus

the living God of the Bible wants to come down to the Asian society, to liberate it from the inhuman and non-divine structures, and build up the Kingdom in which “love and faithfulness meet together, *dharma* (righteousness) and *mangala* (*shālôm*, ‘peace’) kiss each other” (Ps. 85:10). Jesus, the eternal *vac* (*dābār*, word) eagerly waits for the Asian prophets to make it blow wherever it wills’ (Jn. 3:8). He wants to transform the Asian society into his new covenant community, where he can reign as Asian Jesus in Jesus’ land.

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

This attempt to find out the authentic face of the Asian biblical hermeneutics remains on a preliminary stage. The study does not claim to be an exhaustive and comprehensive one. While an Asian biblical hermeneutics is a need of time, one has to avoid temptations to blindly imitate the Western materialistic and ‘atheistic’ trends. A genuine Asian biblical hermeneutics should take into consideration the basic spiritual aspiration of the Asian soul. At the same time it should not connive at the radical structural injustices and evils – social, political, economic, cultural and religious – which prevail in the society. A genuine Asian biblical hermeneutics should reflect the vision of Yahweh in the OT and Jesus of the NT. The study tries to present the biblical message under a single symbol, land, which is a metaphor that which comprehends both terrestrial and celestial dimensions. It grows into the NT concepts of the Kingdom of God and the House of the Father. The author believes that such a symbol can ‘express’, ‘explain’ and ‘translate’ the biblical vision into the Asian context. The portrait of Jesus the prophet will serve as an effective model for transforming Asia into Jesus’ land.

Endnotes

¹On the nature the word of God see Paul Kalluveettil, “The Inner Soul of the Word” (Malayalam), *Bible Bhashyam*, September 2003, pp.7-15; December 2003, pp.8-22; March 2004, pp.40-51; June 2004, pp.9-14; “The Liberating Word,” pp.48-59.

²According to R.O. Palmer, *Hermeneutics: Interpretation Theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer*, Evanston: North Western Univ. Press, 1969, Hermeneutics exhibits three basic directions of meaning: expression, explanation and translation. I find this theory a comprehensive and adequate one.

³The term translation is derived from the Latin *trans* and *latus*, "having been carried across."

⁴R.S. Sugirtharajah, *The Bible and the Third World, Precolonial, Colonial and Postcolonial Encounters*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2001; *Asian Biblical Hermeneutics and Post colonialism*, Sheffield Academic Press: Sheffield, 1998; *Vernacular Hermeneutics*, Sheffield Academic Press: Sheffield, 1999.

⁵The Book *Voices from the Margin* is published by Orbis Books: Maryknoll, 1991.

⁶George M. Soares-Prabhu, *A biblical Theology for India*, (Collected Works, Vol. 2), Jnana Deepa Vidyapeeth, Pune, 1999, pp.141-155.

⁷R.S. Sugirtharajah (ed.), *Voices from the Margin*, pp. 85-103.

⁸Archie C.C. Lee, "The David-Bethseba Story and the Parable of Nathan," in *Voices from the Margin*, pp. 189-204.

⁹*Voices from the Third World*, Vol. XXIX, No.2, December 2006, pp.112-119.

¹⁰Helen R. Graham, "A Solomonic Model of Peace," in *Voices from the Margin*, pp. 214-226.

¹¹M. Soares-Prabhu, "Class in the Bible: The Biblical Poor a Social Class" *Voices from the Margin*, pp. 147-171.

¹²Felix Wilfred, *Asian Dreams and Christian Hope at the Dawn of the Millennium*, ISPCK: New Delhi, 2000, pp. 249-268.

¹³Christine Amjad-Ali, "The equality of Women: Form or Substance (1Cor.11:2-16)," in *Voices from the Margin*, pp. 205-213.

¹⁴*Voices from the Margin*, pp. 267-279.

¹⁵Stanley J. Samartha, "The Asian Context: Sources and Trends, in *Voices from the Margin*, pp. 36-49.

¹⁶D.S. Amalorpavadass, "The Bible in Self-renewal and Church-renewal for Service to Society," in *Voices from the Margin*, pp. 316-329.

¹⁷Kwok Pui Lan, "Discovering Bible in the Non-Biblical World," in *Voices from the Margin*, pp. 299-316.

¹⁸R.S. Sugirtharajah, "Inter-Faith Hermeneutics: An Example and Some Implications," in *Voices from the Margin*, pp. 352-363.

¹⁹S. Wesley Ariarajah, "Intercultural Hermeneutics – A Promising for the Future?" *Voices from the Third World*, Vol. XXIX, No.1, June 2006, pp. 87-103.

²⁰Seiichi Yogi, "I in the Words of Jesus," in *Voices from the Margin*, pp. 330-351.

²¹Maen Pongudom, "Creation of Man: Theological Reflections Based on Northern Thai Folktales," in *Voices from the Margin*, pp. 361-371.

²²George M. Soares-Prabhu, "Laughing at Idols," in *A Biblical Theology For India*, pp. 272-293.

²³*Voices from the Margin*, pp.117-128.

²⁴Published by NBCLC: Bangalore, 2002

²⁵These terms are borrowed from W. Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, Fortress Press: Philadelphia, 1977.

²⁶This presentation is mainly based on the Indian Scriptures and realities, since this Indian author wants to speak from the concrete and existential context in which he lives. He hopes that the concepts of the exposition can be applied without difficulty to other Asian countries.

²⁷W. Brueggemann, *The Land*, Fortress Press: Philadelphia, 1977.

²⁸Raimundo Panikkar, *The Vedic Experience: Mantramanjari*, All India Books : Pondichery, 1983, pp. 120-122.

²⁹For details, see Paul Kalluveettil, "God's Word for the Indian Folk, Towards Exploring the Indian Milieu of Biblical Hermeneutics, *Journal of Dharma* 30,3 (July-September 2005), 321-336.

³⁰Charles Irudayam, "Land: The root of Poverty in India," *Vidyajyoti* 69 (2005), 340-354; 486-499.

³¹K.K Dewett, G.C. Sing, and J.D. Varma, *Indian Economics*, Delhi, 1973, p.123.

³²Acharya Vinoba Bhave, *From Bhoodan to Gramdan*, Tanjore, 1957, pp. 5,6,9,63-67,74-77.

³³For details see Paul Kalluveettil, "God's Word for the Indian Folk," pp. 328-332.

³⁴Patrick D. Miller, *Genesis 1-11*, The University of Sheffield: Sheffield, 1978, pp.37-42.

³⁵*Journal of Dharma*, Vol.30, No.3 (2005), pp.333-336.

³⁶Jose Bonino, *Faces of Jesus – Latin American Christologies*, Orbis Books: Maryknoll, 1985.

³⁷Michael Amaladoss, *The Asian Jesus*, ISPCK: Delhi, 2005, has collected some further portraits of Jesus: the Sage, the Guru, the Dancer and the Pilgrim.

³⁸Paul Kalluveettil, "Social Criticism as the Prophetic Role: A Biblical Prolegomenon," *Jeevadhara*, Vol.XIX, No. 110, March 1989, pp.133-160.

³⁹For a detailed exposition of Jesus' activities as a prophet, see Paul Kalluveettil, "Social Criticism as a Prophetic Role," pp. 142-144, 152-158.