

## ASIAN HERMENEUTICS FROM A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

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The topic may appear a little enigmatic and too wide in scope. The first question that has to be cleared is what one is to understand by hermeneutics. The expression is well known not only in scriptural studies but also in some respect in philosophy and other sciences. Ultimately it concerns with interpretation. Interpretation can be literal or historical understanding of scriptural text or texts. It can also be more than literal and historical. Just as there is the possibility of a symbolic or spiritual interpretation there is also the possibility of a theological interpretation. In this essay we take the last mentioned possibility—spiritual/theological—interpretation of the Word of God revealed in Jesus Christ both through the Old and the New Testaments. In this sense hermeneutics and theology are interconvertible. Having clarified the term hermeneutics we will first speak a word about Asia from the geographical and historic-cultural points of view and then proceed with an overview of the progress of Asian hermeneutics in two parts.

### 1. The Continent that is Asia

The famous Greek geographer Strabo wrote about 20 CE his well-known book *Geographica*, which was the fruit of a lifetime study. It presented to the world of the apostolic Church a better picture of the planet than its people had ever before possessed (cf. Moffett 1998: 4). The apostles and disciples of Jesus Christ who had the master's command, "Go ye into the whole world and preach the gospel" (Mk 16: 15), who became witnesses to Christ "in Jerusalem, in all Judaea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1: 8), had not have read this book nor had any precise idea about "the ends of the earth". Half of Strabo's inhabited world was the continent of Asia, which extended from the Don to the Ganges,

from Arabia to “the land of the Seres”, i.e. China. He divided Asia into two sections, one south of the great ranges of the roof of the world—Himalayas, Pamirs, Hindu Kush, and Urals, the Atali, and Tien Shan mountains—and the other north of them. The southern section was the more familiar territory: Arabia, Syria, and Asia Minor in the far west, Assyria and Parthian Persia, and India to the south-east and China to the east. Four waves of empire that swept across this broad expanse left, like tidal marks on the beach of the first century, four strands of civilization stamped upon its surface: Greco-Roman Asia, Iranian (Persian) Asia, Sinic (Chinese) Asia and Indian Asia (cf. Moffett 1998: 6).

**Greco-Roman Asia** (more or less present Arabia, Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, and Asia Minor) was peopled mostly by Semitic races, hailing from the Caucasus region. No particular Asian imperial power seems to have arisen here. It is the Greeks under Alexander the Great from late 4<sup>th</sup> century BC and the Romans from the second century B. C. dominated this region. On the contrary in **Iranian Asia**, after the Sumerians of unknown race, several Semitic powers rose, one after another, e.g. Akkadians (from 2400 BC), Babylonians (18<sup>th</sup> century BC), the Hittites, the Assyrians, the Chaldeans. From the middle of the 6<sup>th</sup> century B. C. the Aryan (Iranian) Persians under several dynasties established their imperial power in this area, and continued till the rise of the Islamic domination in the 7<sup>th</sup> century CE. It is quite understandable that the vicissitudes of the political hegemony left their cultural marks on both the Greco-Roman and Iranian Asians. However, even though the rulers changed and politics shifted, historians note a continuation of the Babylonian civilization in Mesopotamia and later in the Persian Empire.

In **Mongolian (Sinic) Asia** it is the people of the Mongolian race who established themselves. Originating from central and eastern Asia they spread eastward into China and Japan, and southward into Malaysia and islands of the Pacific, westward into Eastern Europe and Russia. In 221-210 an empire-builder Chin Shih

Huang-ti took the China of Confucius, which was a loose collection of quarrelling feudal states, and hammered into an imperial unity. He secured it against attacks from nomads outside the empire by building the Great Wall and tried to suppress dissent from within by rigid suppression of free thought. The burning of the books in his reign, however, forever stigmatized his name in the annals of succeeding Confucian generations. Nevertheless, his short, harsh Ch'in dynasty (221-207 BC) left to the later rulers of the Han dynasty (206 BC-220 CE) a unified empire, which they proceeded to mould into the shape it was to keep for the next two thousand years.

As early as 128 BC the Han emperor Wu-ti sent an envoy, Chang Ch'ien, called "The Road-opener", to negotiate an alliance with the distant Yueh-chi tribe on the north of what is now Afghanistan. Like a land borne Columbus in reverse, this first Chinese explorer of the western regions returned with marvellous tales of rich lands beyond the barbican steppes. The Chinese, alert and impatient for trade with the newly discovered West, flung open a road across the top of the world for caravans to come from as far away as the Indus River valley in southern Asia and the still farther borders of Greco-Roman Syria. This was about 106 B. C. for the first time in history Asia took on a semblance of continental unity, tied together at last by the long, thin thread of the Old Silk Road. It was the Buddhist missionaries, Kasyapa Matangu and Dharmaratna founded the White Horse Monastery in Loyang about 65 CE. Historically more credible is the reported arrival of a Persian missionary, An Shih-kao about 148 CE.

## **2. Indian Asia**

Excavations at Mohenjo-daro and Harappa in the Indus River valley have revealed that around 2500 BC there flourished in this region a remarkable culture. It has been suggested that these people and the Dravidians in the south are interrelated and were the original inhabitants of India. With the arrival of the Aryans (2000/1500 BC) the Mohenjo-daro/Harappa civilization was

destroyed. The newcomers began dominating north India. The Aryan penetration inside north India and the western Deccan was complete before the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC. Starting from somewhere about 1000 BC the Aryans moved to the south and that movement was more or less complete by 323 BC when Chandragupta began establishing the Maurya Empire. His successor is the great Asoka, (274-36 BC) who made Buddhism a great Indian religion. As said above the Aryan movement to South India was complete by this time. However they were not able to thoroughly assimilate the southern Dravidians into their society and root out their language and transform their peculiar civilization. It was rather a give and take process, the Aryans giving some of their socio-cultural and religious aspects to the Dravidians and at the same time receiving from the latter a lot. There was a Dravidization of the Aryan culture and an Aryanization of the Dravidian.

As far as **religion** is concerned the people of Greco-Roman Asia had their primitive religions and also shared in the religious traditions of Greece and Rome. But it is in this region two great, Semitic religions emerged, Judaism from very early centuries before Christ and Islam in the 7<sup>th</sup> century CE. Absorbing much of Judaism Christianity started in the first century CE to become a world religion. Before and during the Persian period Zoroastrianism was the religion of Iranian Asia till the rise of Islam. In Sinic Asia, two religious movements emerged in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC: Tao Te Ching founded Taoism; Confucius (551-579 BC) founded Confucianism. Buddhism which had originated in India with the enlightenment of Gautama Siddhartha in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC reached China during the time of Asoka (274-236 BC), who was a convert to Buddhism and its great promoters. It emerged as a religion of most of the people of Sinic Asia.

It is well known that in **India** there are many popular primitive religions and the classical Hinduism based on the Vedas and Vedanta. Buddhism declined after the 8<sup>th</sup> century Hindu renaissance. Jainism which was established in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC by

Vardhamana or Mahavira, also had the same fate in course of time. Christianity is believed to have its beginning in India in the first century CE itself. Islam might have its debut in India in the 7<sup>th</sup> century itself but it became great force in India from the 13<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Jews were in India, probably from the first century CE onwards. One of the strong minority religious groups of India is the Sikh community<sup>1</sup>.

We have described a kaleidoscopic picture of the Asian Continent – different peoples, different cultures, different religious traditions, and so on. Christian hermeneutics developed in Asia in this multiplicity of contexts. In this essay we treat this development in two parts: the first part will go up to the end of the colonial period; the second part will describe the current post-colonial scene.

### **Part I: Developments up to the end of the Colonial Period**

After a brief survey of the use and interpretation of the Bible in general an overview will be given of the development from early century to early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

#### **1. Bible: Use and Interpretation**

Christians in Asia had the Old Testament; thanks to their Jewish-Christian roots.<sup>2</sup> But it was the north Mesopotamian or Assyrian biblical scholar and one of the first Syrian theologian and puritan ascetic, Tatian who brought to the Judaic-Christian roots the good news of the written Gospels. It was Justin the Christian philosopher and martyr, the earliest of the Church Fathers to insist that the “memoirs of the apostles” (New Testament) were of equal authority with the writings of the Old Testament prophets. Tatian must have read these memoirs or Greek New Testament at Rome while studying under Justin. When he returned to his home country about 172 CE he might have carried with him a manuscript of the New Testament writings, especially the Gospels.

The Old Testament used among the Hellenistic Christians was the Septuagint, not the original Hebrew text. But the Christians of Asia (the Syrian Churches) used the Aramaic version of the Palestinian

synagogues. This was a paraphrase that added to the text numerous explanations and illustration (cf. Vööbus 1958: 8; 1957). Their New Testament was also different. As we know, in the fluid years of the growth of early Christianity the New Testament did not take shape all at once. The earliest books were probably the Gospel of Mark and some of Paul's Epistles written from about 60 CE. By 100 CE the New Testament was substantially complete (cf. Bruce 1960: 12ff.; Ackroyd & Evans 1970: 332ff.). But it was still not gathered together into a single authoritative whole. It is in the context of the deviations created by Marcion (early second century) and Gnostics claiming different scriptures and strange gospels it suddenly became of extreme importance for the Churches to know which writings contained the real teaching of Jesus and the Apostles. The process of establishing canonical books began about the middle of the second century and was completed in the West by the end of the fourth century. But in the East the process took longer.

When Tatian came back from Rome to his homeland he found the East full of dubious and apocryphal "Gospel" (e.g. *of Thomas*) and "Acts" (e.g. *of Thomas*). He set out, therefore, to produce an 'authentic' life of Christ in Syriac, translated from the canonical Gospels as he had studied them in Rome, a work he may have begun before he left the West. It was not with the four separate Gospels but with Tatian's convenient arrangement that wove together as consecutive history the four parallel accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Tatian's *Diatessaron*, completed about 170 CE is the first translation of a major section of the New Testament into any language (the Aramaic or Syriac) in Asia. Tatian was proud of being an Asian and unashamedly declared in his book, *Address to the Greeks*. "I am an Assyrian". In it he demonstrates the ways in which Asia – the non-Greek world – excelled the Greek world. Tatian took the Gospels out of what he considered to be their imprisonment in the Greek language of Roman Asia and made widely available in the *lingua franca* of the

common people of the villages of Euphrates-Tigris valley.<sup>3</sup> Some writers see Tatian's Encratite emphases in *Diatessaron* and even additions from outside sources, e.g. the Aramaic Gospel according to Hebrews (cf. Vööbus 1954: 5f., 20f.; 1958: 39-45).<sup>4</sup> *Diatessaron* continued to influence the Syrian Churches of Asia for a long time till it was replaced in the 5<sup>th</sup> century by the *Pesitta* version of both the Old and New Testament books. As mentioned above it was rather an interpreted Bible, containing the theological and spiritual insights of the saintly commentators of the Syrian Christians. In the Indian Church of St Thomas the biblical text may have come from the East-Syrian or Persian Church,<sup>5</sup> that too in Syriac language. As the liturgy was probably from the 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> century CE in Syriac language it seems no attempt was made to render it into the local language of the people. Perhaps the ordinary laity learned the texts not so much by reading but by attending to the oral transmission made by priests in their sermons. Hence we may agree with those who state that in India the Bible remained untranslated and rarely read (cf. Fabella 2000: 20).

Christianity entered the Chinese soil at least about 635 CE. Bishop Alopen went to the court of Emperor T'ang or Kao-tsung with his "true *Sutras*' or 'Alopen's scriptures'. These *Sutras*, which depicted the Christian "way", the 'mysteriously spiritual teaching' were translated into Chinese in the imperial library and allowed to have free course throughout the Empire (Inscription on the Hsian-fu pillar erected in 781, cf. Saeki 1916; Moffett 1998: 291-93). The 'Sutras' in question must be the Bible, most probably its Syriac *Pesitta* version. We do not know whether that Bible was fully translated and made available to the people and how long it continued. Sugirtaraja (cf. *ibid.*: 20) says that no full translation was undertaken in China, though there were attempts to incorporate biblical materials in Chinese writings, e.g. *Jesus Messiah Sutra* and *Lord of the Universe's Discourse on Alms giving* (references to passages in Genesis 1-3, Isaiah 53, Acts 1-2, and Mathew 5-7). He adds that

these writings creatively infused Mahayana terminologies with Christian concepts.<sup>6</sup>

Translations of Bible are at the same time also a sort of interpretation conformable to the contexts in which they are done. As has been stated above a modicum of interpretation is found in several translations, e.g. the *Pesitta* and probably in some Chinese renditions. Aloo Osotsi Mojola (cf. *ibid.*: 30f.) states that translations does not happen between languages but is, at the same time, always a process of negotiation and exchange between cultures and their respective power relations. The *Septuagint* translation carried out in Alexandria, a city central to the dissemination of Hellenistic culture and values, incorporated Hellenistic thought forms and categories. The *Vulgate* was to inextricably linked to Caesar and the Church, as well as to Roman culture and ideology. The proliferation of new translations during and after Protestant Reformation reflected a weakening of the Roman Empire, the Church, and one dominant language, and the emergence of new empires and languages. One problem that is involved in translation is that of transforming the categories, concepts, and the textual practices of one language into those of another. There is also the problem of the translators themselves. They are constrained in many ways, e.g. by their own ideology and by what the dominant institutions expect of them. In other words, no translation is neutral, pure reflection of the original text. What happens usually is the hijacking of local gods, religious terminology, and categories and Christianizing them or infusing them with new biblical meanings. In this connection two processes need to be mentioned: domestication and foreignization. What is called contextualization and inculturation are about domesticating the foreign and foreignization used in the context of colonization goes hand in hand with alienation. Hence it is stated that translation is never a neutral tool. It is an instrument of ideological and the logical formulation – within the limits of fidelity and faithfulness to the source text. It operates at the cutting edge of

inventing the terms of theological discourse. It can promote liberation or oppression. In this process translators are active participants in moulding the tools for the expression of the faith.

Translating Bible is the beginning of hermeneutics and of theologizing. Clodovis Boff points out that the starting point of theological construction is the Bible, the memory of what God has said or done in the world (cf. *ibid.*: 200). M. Thomas Thangaraj is right when he says:

Christian theology, right from its beginnings, has been a narrative theology because it is grounded in the narratives of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus the Christ. Yet, as it developed, Christian theology has tended to be dominated more by theologies that operate on a conceptual and propositional level than on a narrative level (Fabella 2000: 153).

The development of theology can thus be considered as the development of hermeneutics, the exegesis of the Bible. Now we enter into the theological aspect of hermeneutics.

## **2. Christian Hermeneutics in Asia by Centuries**

Karl Rahner has defined theology as the conscious effort of the Christian to hearken to the actual verbal revelation which God promulgated in history, and to acquire a knowledge of it by the methods of scholarship and reflect upon its implications. Theology hears the first expression of the Word of God (the original deposit of Revelation) in ever newer and newer contexts of human existence. Hence the fundamental possibility of development, the possibility of speaking of a history and progress of theology and, the possibility of speaking of the pluralism in theology.

To elucidate the point further, theology can be considered the confrontation between the revealed Word of God and man in his individual and social context. It is the encounter between the Word of God and contemporary man's view of life and the world.

Theology thus considered will lead to the following queries: How far do the individual traits of certain theologians affect the development of theology? How far has the form and content of a particular cultural and socio-political situation, a particular thought form or philosophy affected the process of hermeneutics or theologizing? It is not easy to separate each of these elements every time and we shall certainly not attempt to do it. But it is good to remember that these are the main factors which differentiate the theological efforts of one era from that of another. Even a casual look at the various stages of the development of theology in the East and in the West, South and North convinces one of this fact: some centuries were very creative, others stagnant, and yet others almost iconoclastic. The whole development may be broadly divided into three epochs: the patristic periods (1-6/8 century), the scholastic period (11-13c), and the modern period from the 16<sup>th</sup> century to 19<sup>th</sup> century, and a fourth period (19/20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries). The modern and contemporary stages represent not a uniform picture of development but one of various tendencies and movements. In Asia, as is the case in other countries of what is called the Third-World (Asia, Africa, Latin America, Oceania, the Pacific) there is an explosion of approaches to the hermeneutical questions and theological considerations. It is interesting to note the various emerging titles of theologies just in Asia not to say in other continents: Aboriginal, *Burakumin*, Chinese, *Dalit*, Decolonizing, Ecofeminist, Feminist, Indian, Indigenous, Indonesian, Liberation (of various types), Myanmar, Narrative, Taiwanese, Thai, Third World (various), Tribal, Vietnamese and so on. Add to these some others like theology of struggle, theology of the marginalized, etc. (cf. Fabella 2000).

### 3. The Early Centuries

Hermeneutic or theological activity may be said to have started since people who heard Jesus, accepted His teachings and began modelling their outlook and life accordingly. However, at the initial stage there was only a modicum of conscious theological

reflection. Christians were absorbed above all simply in living the Christian life and faith, preaching the Gospel, and sharing in common worship. The creedal formulas, the liturgical instructions and disciplinary regulations, and even the writings of the Apostolic Fathers represent this stage. Interspersed with these practical concerns may be found a few strikingly beautiful insights. For example in *Didache* we find a touching ecclesiology. There the Eucharist is presented as the symbol of the unity of the people of God:

As this broken bread was scattered over the hill and then, when gathered, became one mass, so may Thy Church be gathered from the ends of the earth into Thy kingdom (9: 4)

In the mysticism of St Ignatius of Antioch we can find a combination of the insights of St Paul and St John. His spiritual reflections on the Church and the hierarchy have a freshness and depth as is his mysticism: the Church which is Catholic is the place of sacrifice; the intimate relation of the faithful is explained in terms of the close imitation of Christ, in terms of inhabitation of Christ, in terms of being in Christ, in terms of martyrdom. He tells the Romans:

I am the wheat of God, and I must be ground by the teeth of the wild beasts, that I may become the pure bread of Christ (Letter to Romans 1: 24).

The theology of penitence is beautifully painted in the story of the 'Old Lady' of Hermas, gradually growing younger and more beatific (*Shepherd of Hermas*, section one). Eschatology of these early writings also needs comment. It gives us the impression of the strong attachment to the person of Christ who is still vividly remembered and deeply longed and expected in his second coming, which for them was imminent and is expressed in the words *Maran Atha*, 'Lord Come'. In these reflections we might admire how the Word of God heard or read pervades the whole life and vision of the early Christians. It is good to remember the context; the first

and second centuries are important primarily for the handing down of the traditional teaching, derived direct from the word of God heard or read.

In the second and the third centuries there is a change of context. So far basic Christian tenets were made available to Judeo-Christians and converts from rather uneducated ordinary Greek and Roman people. The second century witnesses a growing number of persons educated in the enlightened Greek cultural tradition accept Christianity. At the same time there is also the growth of aggressive opposition from not only Jews but from the Greek intellectuals as well. The emerging heretical tendencies also posed threats to the existence of Christian communities. There rose a class of Christian writers called the Apologists mostly from the educated converts. For the first time Christian writers boldly and capably made Christian thought to address itself to the outside world of Greco-Roman culture and philosophy. They challenged the widening current calumnies against the Christians, exposed the absurdities and immoral practices so too the myths and the fairy tales prevalent, among Greeks and Romans, showed that the gentile thinkers had failed to attain truth at least in its fullness. They demonstrated that only Christianity had the correct understanding of God and the universe: the unity of God, monotheism, the divining of Christ, the resurrection of the body. Against the Jews the apologists pointed out that Jesus was the Messiah predicted in the Old Testament and expected by the Jewish prophets and patriarchs. Against the Greeks and Romans they argued that Christianity was a religion of truth and antiquity, two arguments which meant a lot to the cultured men of that time. Christianity being the oldest religion antedated the Greco-Rome philosophies and religions, possessed the absolute truth in Jesus Christ, the Logos or divine reason incarnate. All this they tried to establish from their own understanding of the Scriptures. Here we find educated and intellectual Christians entering into a dialogue with the intelligentsia both among the Greco-Romans and Jews.

The Apologists differ in their attitude towards Greco-Roman values of life, culture, and philosophy. There were those who found nothing commendable in pagan religion and philosophy (e.g. Tatian), or even in the antiquity of the Jews (e. g. *Epistle to Barnabas*). Others like Justin were quite aware of the positive values of other religions and Greek philosophy. The negative attitude was the more common and more enduring. This opposition arose not merely from the occasional suggestion of corruption or incompetence. Rather it represented a more basic, radical and devastating position that things of salvation belonged to an order superior to that of the Greek wisdom. In spite of this radical common attitude, which persisted and became great force in the Middle Ages and the colonial era, there were minds from the second century onwards that could not but recognize the existence of certain lofty ideas in Greek philosophy and religion. It was at first suggested that the Greco-Roman philosophers and religious men borrowed those ideas from the Old Testament. A few, prominent among them like Justin (d. c. 165), emphasized that some kind of a presence of the Logos, even before his full appearance in Jesus, was present not only in the Old Testament but also in certain Greek philosophers. 'A seed of the Logos' was scattered among the whole of mankind, and philosophers like Heraclites, Socrates and others carried a germinating seed of the Logos in their souls. The idea of the Logos, from the time of Justin, forms a bridge between Christianity and other religions and philosophies. In recent times, in the atmosphere of the advancement of ideas like contextualization or inculturation and religious dialogue, of Justin's thoughts, though much limited in scope, are becoming very relevant and carried forward.

The heretical tendencies of the second and third centuries, especially Gnosticism, opened the door wide to Greek philosophy, to the myths and legends of the East. Only a small or nominal place was left for revelation and the real Gospel of Jesus Christ. The opposite tendency, the negative attitude to Greek philosophy and

Greek culture in general, already visible in Tatian, Tertullian and others culminated in Montanism. In the two developments one may see the tension between the Church in the world but not of the world, or involvement and detachment, both of which are characteristics of the Church.

The Apologists are sometimes accused of the hellenization of Christianity. The habits of thought, so ingrained in these writers before their conversion, exerted an influence upon their religious outlook. Being children of their ages their terminology reflected this influence. So too the form of arguing followed the norms of Greek dialectic and rhetoric. But the content remained based on the Christian scriptures and tradition. At times the word hellenization evoked the idea of transvesting Christian doctrine, but in the context of modern inculturation and dialogue concepts hellenization has to be understood rather contextualization of the Christian message and its incarnation in the Hellenistic culture. Today we prefer a terminology like Indianization of Christianity rather than Christianization of Indian culture and life situation. From this perspective the Apologists like Justin ushered in an era of active hermeneutics or theologization. It may be noted at a good number of these Apologists belonged to Asia, of course the Greco-Roman Asia. Even Irenaeus who originally hailed from Asia, whose avowed intention was to reset all influence of Greek philosophy, acted against the Gnostics, perhaps unconsciously, from a Greek metaphysical frame of mind. It helped him to arrive at a kind of Christian synthesis around the idea of recapitulation of everything in Jesus Christ, the Logos and the Son of God.<sup>7</sup>

#### **4. Hermeneutic Schools**

Hermeneutic and theological activity attained tremendous growth and entirely a new turn from the end of the second century onwards when the famous catechetical school of Alexandria was established. As more and more educated persons accepted the Christian faith, need arose to enhance the intellectual quality of instruction and hence the need of better qualified instructors. It is

in this context schools of hermeneutics arose. The first of these was in Alexandria, the Hellenistic city par excellence, where persons like Pantaenus, Clement, Origen were both students and teachers. It was later transferred to Caesarea in Palestine where illustrious person like Gregory the Wonderworker, historian Eusebius studied under Origen. Gregory hailing from Asia Minor carried the Alexandrian tradition to Asia Minor and the Capadocean Fathers (Basil, Gregory Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa) came to be influenced by that tradition. The school of Antioch was started only in 312 C. E. by Lucian of Samosata. Its beginnings were rather modest as compared to those of Alexandria. Nevertheless it was the cradle of great exegists. It reached its peak under the direction of Diodor of Tarsa. Its famous pupils and teachers include Theodore of Mopsuestia, John Chrysostom, Nestorius and a number of others. The history of hermeneutics and theology in the Church from the fourth century onwards is the history of the controversies between these two schools until the questions regarding Christology were more or less settled in the fifth century. The East Syrian Christians had several small catechetical schools, the more important being that of Nisibis. This was shifted to Edessa and functioned there for about a century (4<sup>th</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> century) and then shifted back to Nisibis. It is in this school the East-Syrian Christology matured and culminated in the writings of Babai the Great. In Asia Minor the Cappadocian Fathers also gave rise to a sort of school tradition, which was Alexandrian in inspiration but tempered, to some extent, by the Antiochene tradition.

Alexandrian School was dominated by Hellenism, which was a sort of commingling of 'Oriental', Egyptian and Greek cultural elements. In Alexandria Greek thought exercised strongest influence on the Hebrew mind. And Alexandria created the work that constitutes the beginning of Jewish-Hellenistic literature, the Septuagint and it was in Alexandria where lived the great thinker and writer Philo, in whom that literature culminated. Firmly convinced that the teaching of the Old Testament could be

combined with Greek speculation, his philosophy of religion embodies such a synthesis.

This was the environment in which the school of Alexandria developed its distinctive characteristics, predominant interest in the metaphysical investigation of the content of the faith, a leaning to the philosophy of Plato and the allegorical interpretation of the Sacred Scripture. The Greek philosophers had been using their philosophical insights in the interpretation of the myths and fables about gods as they appear in Homer and Hesiod. Jewish scholars started applying this method to the Old Testament from the second century B. C. This process culminated in Philo. The Christian thinkers soon followed suit. Whereas Clement makes abundant use of it, Origen formed it into a system with his theory of the three senses of Bible: the literal/historical, the mystical and moral. The overuse of allegorical or symbolic technique led to indefensible exaggeration and fantasy. This happened despite the high intellectual and mystic dimension he gave to hermeneutics. Nevertheless it is a fact that he developed a theological terminology that had lasting influence on Christian thought. The Alexandrian tradition was carried over to Asia with the establishment of the school of Caesarea in Palestine. Through its illustrious pupil Gregory the Wonderworker the influence spread to Asia Minor, as noted above.

By the beginning of the fourth century the school at Antioch became active. Its approach was just the opposite of the Alexandrian excesses and fantasies of the allegoric method. It gave greater importance to the Palestinian rabbinic tradition of literal and historical interpretation of the Bible. At the same time the down to earth analytical and rational philosophy of Aristotle was a prominent influence. In short, the diversity of method was a diversity of mind that had already made itself felt in Greek thought. While Alexandria's idealism and speculative bend owed inspiration to Plato and Antioch's realism and empiricism to Aristotle, the

former inclined to mysticism, the latter to rationalism (cf. Quasten I 1986: 122).

### **5. 'Golden' Period of Hermeneutics**

This period is identified more or less with the Christological controversies of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries. In these controversies significant roles were played by the schools especially those of Alexandria and Antioch. The problem, which faced the thinkers of these schools, was first how to assert the divinity of Christ and at the same time to keep the integrity of Monotheism. An easier and more rational solution presented itself – a solution, which appeared quite in line with the Antiochene tradition, given as it was to the more rational and natural approach of Aristotelian philosophy. This solution, for practical purposes, averred an economic Trinity in God and verged towards belittling of the immanent Trinity. This tendency led to a heretical position, which is called 'Monarchianism' or 'Modalism' (Father, Son and Holy Spirit rather names or modes of God) downgrading the distinction of persons. This Antiochene explanation assumed various forms depending on the different ways of conceiving the relation of Jesus to the Father. This solution was perhaps quite at home with the Judaeo-Christians with their monotheistic background.

Platonism and other components of Hellenism offered other possibilities of speculation. The Greek mythology, as well as the many varieties of Greek philosophy provided the ideas about intermediaries, especially the idea of the Logos which incidentally had been already consecrated in the Gospel of St John, which was used by Justin for his accommodation approach. The Alexandrians who speculated on the Trinity continued this line and established not a mere economic Trinity, but an economic Trinity which was based on an immanent Trinity. The idea of the intermediaries made it almost impossible for the speculative theologian of the Alexandrian tradition to avoid the so-called subordinationist tendency which, while asserting the divinity of the Son, gave Him

only a place second to the Father. The Son was called the *deuteros theos*, the second God.

Arius, by birth an Alexandrian but by education an Antiochene, appears to have contrived to combine the Alexandrian mystical tradition with the Antiochene rational tradition. There ensued a rude sort of combination and led to the impression that he denied the divinity of Jesus Christ. This led to the great controversy, which finally resulted in the convocation of the first ecumenical council at Nicea in 325. The council defined the divinity of Christ and His equality with the Father by utilizing a philosophical word (*Homoousios*) which Origen had already worked out for the use of theology. But the definition was not acceptable to many, either because they were shocked at the idea of using a philosophical word to articulate faith, or because their philosophical background (Antiochene) was such that they could not digest the terminology. A lot of dialogue had to precede before an agreement. In this dialogue the good offices of the Cappadocian Fathers were of considerable importance. They had imbibed the Alexandrian tradition from the Caesarean school through Gregory the Wonderworker; none the less their natural intellectual milieu was more open to other traditions as well. Culturally they were the products of Athens, not of Alexandria.

Still the divergent approaches of the Alexandrian and Antiochene traditions continued to exist, and then reasserted themselves in the fifth century in connection with the Christological questions. The 'monophysitic' tendency of the Alexandrians and the 'diphysitic' tendency of the Antiochene were characteristics. The Christological doctrine was practically defined in Ephesus and Chalcedon. The council consecrated the word *hypostasis* to explain the union of the divine and the human in Jesus.

The doctrine was defined but the terminology remained somewhat undefined. Perhaps neither Platonism nor any other of the components of the Hellenism of Alexandria was suited for the clear definition of terms. For this, recourse had to be made to the

categories of Aristotle. Boethius dwelt to some extent on the definition of person or hypostasis. Leontius of Byzantium perfected the definition of Christological terminology with the help of Aristotle. But by the time the positions of Antioch and Alexandria had hardened and been embodied in separate Churches, the Coptic representing the Alexandrian position and the Persian representing the Antiochene tradition received via the school of Edessa-Nisibis.<sup>8</sup>

## 6. Syrian Hermeneutics

Two early Syriac texts are the *Odes of Solomon* (late second century) and the *Acts of Judas Thomas*, which incorporate two earlier poems, the *Hymn of the Bride of Light* (i.e. of the Church), and the famous *Hymn of the Soul or Pearl*. Although some of these texts are apocryphal in nature and Gnostic in tendency, rather poetic and romantic in literary form, they are illustration of the early Syrian asceticism and mysticism. This tradition is carried on during the third and fourth centuries and may be said to culminate in the great poet-theologian St Ephrem. Symbolic interpretation of the Bible is quite alive in St Ephrem and others before him. See, for example the interpretation of Aphrates (who called himself a 'disciple of the Scripture') of Gen. 2: 24 and Mt 6: 6: the first on marriage and virginity and the second on prayer.

Ephrem, the poet-theologian, is the foremost representative of Syriac symbolic hermeneutics and pre-monastic spirituality. He abhors all literalism and definitions: these he regards as static and deadening in their effect. He is free from Greek modes of thought. His anti-Greek, typically Asian approach has been hailed as relevant to the emerging Third World theologies. His hymns offer an essentially sacramental view of the Christian life. Everything in Scripture and creation is capable of directing the eye of faith to Christ, the manifestation of God's hiddenness. This is made possible by the types and symbols (*raze*= 'mysteries'), which act as pointers towards God. This analogical process leading the mind to a state of wonder and praise, is itself possible only because God initially descended to meet the human condition, first by allowing

himself to be 'clothed in human language' and in symbols, and then by actually 'clothing himself in a human body'.

Types and symbols, present in both Nature and Scripture are, according to Ephrem means of God's self-revelation. They are mysteries (*raze*) in which the divine presence is experienced by us; they are veiled pointers to God. Therefore they are essentially sacramental. Ephrem's method of scriptural exegesis is not historical and literal but spiritual. He is interested not so much in the historical truth as in the spiritual reality that is the 'truth' for him. Scripture possesses two levels of meaning, the outer historical meaning, and the inner spiritual meaning, i.e. 'the hidden power', as Ephrem sometimes calls it. The inner meaning, or the 'hidden power' can only be perceived by the 'inner eye', and the light, by which that eye operates is the light of faith. To illustrate the idea Ephrem brings in the analogy of a darkened plate of glass, with a whole number of pinpoints, where the glass is clear, thus giving the possibility of vision through and beyond the glass itself. These pinpoints represent Ephrem's *raze* ('mysteries') or symbols and types. They are visible only to the inner eye. This is Ephrem's doctrine of the 'luminous eye' as explained by Sebastian Brock (Brock 1985). Not only Scriptures but the whole creation is full of such types and symbols. Sebastian Brock sees a remarkable resemblance between Ephrem's approach to nature and modern ecologists. He even suggests that Ephrem would make an appropriate patron saint for environmentalists.

The symbolic approach to the Bible continued especially among the Syrian spiritual writers of the 4<sup>th</sup> to the 8<sup>th</sup> century. It gave special emphasis to baptism and the work of the Spirit in souls. The Syriac anthropology was not different from the Greek anthropology: man is composed of body, soul and the spirit. Accordingly a tripartite pattern of the spiritual life perhaps developed by the early fifth century John the Solitary (*lhidaya* in Syriac): the stage of the body (*parganutha*), of the soul (*napsanuitha*), and of the spirit (*ruhamitha*). This pattern became very influential in Syrian spirituality.

Two other characteristics of Syrian spirituality are reputedly individualism and asceticism. One peculiar aspect of Syrian Christianity is said to be the persistence of the anchorite type of monasticism. Another is what is known as the 'Messalian' tendency with an overemphasis on personal religious experience and prayer at the expense of sacraments and more institutional aspects of the Christian life (perhaps roots of modern Pentecostalism are found here). More positively it may be said that Syriac tradition of the solitarily is essentially that of a single-minded person (*ihidaya*) who has set his mind on Christ alone. To be a solitary – to be separated from the world, to be a stranger to it – is a very ancient Syrian ascetic terminology.

Syrian spirituality has been from the beginning, fiercely ascetical. The Syriac New Testament supported the ascetical understanding of the teaching of Jesus. It was the four-fold Gospel (*Diatesseron*) of the rigorist Tatian that Syrian Christians used until the fifth century. In many of the early Christian writings, baptism and sexual abstinence are linked together. Virginity was given great importance. Maybe as the result of Marcionist and Manichaeian influences a more pessimistic view of sin and human nature prevailed among the Syrian Christians. It is possible that some early Christian writers may have associated the body with sin. We see Ephrem in the fourth century, Philoxenus in the fifth and John of Ephesus in the sixth trying to moderate the negative asceticism, to bring it more into line with the Christian affirmation of the goodness of creation.

The link between baptism and virginity is to be explained also from a particular vision of the Syriac writers. The betrothal of the Church to Christ is understood to take place at his baptism. So too Christian baptism is understood as the betrothal of the soul to Christ, the Bridegroom. This helps to explain the encratite slant (characteristic of the Tatian rigorism) of early Syrian Christianity, with its emphasis on virginity, and the ideal of the *ihidaya*, meaning

single, celibate, single-minded, and especially follower of Christ the *Ihida*, the 'Only-Begotten'.

The emphasis on the need for a 'pure heart' (*shafyut lebba*) and prayer are favoured themes of the Syrian writers. *Shafyut lebba* is said to have several connotations impossible to capture by a single English word. It can mean anything represented by such words as lucidity, limpidity, clarity, sincerity, purity of heart. This word can be traced back to the Palestinian Targum or the Aramaic interpretative translation of the Bible (not indeed to the Hebrew or Greek Bible).

In the narrative of the sacrifice of Isaac (Gen. 22), for example – a chapter of key importance for Judaism – where the Hebrew speaks of Abraham and Isaac going up the mountain 'together', the Palestinian Targum draws out the spiritual perfection of the two patriarchs and renders the word 'together' as 'with a lucid heart'. In later Syriac writers 'lucidity of heart' is constantly stressed as the prerequisite for pure prayer: 'One thing really pleases God', says the eighth century writer John the Elder, 'that the heart should be utterly lucid'. Lucidity of heart is pleasing to God above all because it provides the means for his self-revelation to humanity.

The purified heart is compared to the altar on which pure prayer is offered to God as a sacrifice. Aphrates uses a whole series of biblical examples of sacrifices to illustrate the need for purity of heart, if prayer which has now replaced sacrifice, is to be acceptable to God. Later Syriac writers, notably, Sahdona (Martyrius) further develops this idea of prayer as sacrifice. In him we can observe a dramatic internalisation of the Eucharistic liturgy. Instead of the bread and wine offered by the Church, the Bride of Christ, here it is prayer that is the offering, made this time by the individual soul, which also is the Bride of Christ. This offering is made on the altar, not of the Church, but of the heart and since there is no human priest to utter the epiclesis, God himself sends the 'fire of his Spirit' (phraseology reminiscent of St Ephrem's Eucharistic hymns), and

raises the mind up to heaven as the fire received and consumes the offering.

Some East-Syrian writers of the seventh and eighth centuries would appropriate to pure prayer offered on the altar of the heart the same activity of the Holy Spirit as is implied in the Eucharistic epiclesis. Prayer, pure prayer, the product of purity of the heart which can be compared to the 'fiat' of Mary at Annunciation has a theophanic effect. An individual Christian who prays such a pure prayer of the heart will 'conceive' and Christ will shine forth from his or her heart, just as Mary conceived and Christ 'shone forth'.

Syriac scientific hermeneutics developed in two directions. The original Antiochene heritage was established by Diodor of Tarsus and Theodore of Mopsaestia against two Alexandrian tendencies: the allegoric interpretation of Origen and the Logos Sarx interpretation advance by Athanasius. The Antiochene tradition established the two *physes*, two *hypostases* and one *prosopon* structure of Christology. Their concern was to point out the union of Logos and not flesh (they suspected such a union in the Alexandrian Logos-Sarx model), but between real God and real man – the divine nature with its own hypostasis and the human nature with its own. In their thinking a real human nature cannot exist without a corresponding hypostasis; because it was the hypostasis which gives its specific human character, human individuality and identity. That means they did not understand hypostasis in the sense of person that came into vogue from the time the Council of Ephesus. For person they had the term *prosopon*. Thus there were two (*physes*) and two *hypostases* and one *prosopon* in Jesus Christ. The specificity of the divine and human is guaranteed by the *hypostases* and the intimate, ineffable union guaranteed by the *prosopon*. This went on in Antioch till the Council of Chalcedon. But after that the leaders of the Antiochene School like Severus of Antioch (d. 527), Philoxenus of Mabbog and later, in the most organized manner, Jacob Baradaeus turned over to the Alexandrian 'Monophysite' (the 'one incarnate nature')

heritage. The original Antiochene tradition passed over to the school of Edessa and then to Nisibis.

The final development of Antiochene tradition takes place in the Nicene circle. Babbai (of Kaskar) the Great (d. 628) is its classical exponent. He employed the rich Syrian language to clarify the terms *hypostasis*, *physis* and *prosopon*, the equivalents of which in Syriac are *qnoma*, *kyana*, and *parsopa*. Not only he used the word *parsopa* to explain the ineffable unity of the phenomenon that is Jesus Christ but also the relation of the Eucharistic bread and wine to the body and blood of Christ.<sup>9</sup> Recent studies have shown that this interpretation represents the typical Antiochene approach in East Syrian idiom (cf. Chediath 1978)<sup>10</sup>.

## 7. Indian Asia in the Past

So far we have been surveying the development of hermeneutics or theological interpretation of the Word of God in Greco-Roman Asia and the Iranian Asia. Perhaps not much happened in the Mongolic (Sinic) Asia. About India there are no records. What Robin Boyd observes is the conclusion at which many writers arrive at:

It might be expected that the Syrian Church, with its long Indian tradition behind it, would have evolved a distinct type of theology which could be a guide and inspiration to Indian theologians of other, more recent, traditions. It must be admitted, however, that this had not been the case, and that it is only comparatively recently, and under the influence of western theology, that theological writers of note have begun to emerge (Boyd 1975:2).

But a few thinkers have taken a slightly different view. For example, Antony Mookenthottam feels that it is probable that the ancient Church of India had developed some theology of its own and this theology is not written down in books but is implicit in the life, experience and traditions of the community.

Today there is no written pre-16<sup>th</sup> century record of the doctrinal / theological position of the St Thomas Christians prior to their

contact with the West in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Even those books which the Portuguese writers of the 16<sup>th</sup> century examined and used for drawing their conclusions are not available today. Since the Portuguese suspected the presence of errors in the books, they all became casualties in the *auto-da-fe* programme launched by the Portuguese Padroado authorities at the close of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and later. This leaves us without sufficient data to verify whether the Indian Christians had evolved a theology of their own. Recourse then has to be made to other sources of information, namely, "the life, experience and tradition", to form some idea of the pre-16<sup>th</sup> century views of the Christians of India. In other words, we have to find out what theology is reflected in the general outlook and religious mentality of the community, in their life, customs and traditions.

If you examine the social, as well as certain aspects of the socio-ecclesiastical life the Christians of St Thomas had been leading, you may come to the same conclusion as Antony Mookenthottam: "their identification with their socio-cultural milieu implies an implicit incarnational theology lived, an awareness that Christ in becoming man assumed everything human and redeemed all social and cultural values" (Mookenthottam 1978: 24).

Another important factor worth considering is their attitude towards the Hindu community in Kerala and their relations with it. The synod of Diamper of 1599 forbade a number of customs and practices which the Portuguese considered pagan (Hindu). These prohibitions and restrictions imposed by the Synod are a witness to the communal harmony and cordial relations that existed between the Christians and the Hindus. This communal harmony and spirit of tolerance should be considered a typical Indian contribution to the Christian vision (cf. Synod of Diamper Act III, Decree 4)<sup>11</sup>. It is to be noted that the Synod attributed this view, which they call an error, to the contact with their Hindu neighbours. Unlike the Europeans the Indian Christians had already been living for centuries in a positive encounter with the high caste Hindus and

had developed a theological vision of the Hindu religion which was more positive and liberal. Today in the light of modern theological approaches to non-Christian religions one must admit that the vision of the Indian Christians was a more enlightened one than that of their European contemporaries.

The attitude of the Indian Christians towards persons of other faiths and their religions was enlightened and approximates that of modern theology. Their views on a local/individual Church are even more in agreement with those of modern ecclesiology. These ideas are implicit in their communal/ecclesial self-understanding. There are several references in the early Portuguese records to this attitude. The synod of Diamper in Act III, Decree 7<sup>12</sup> gives a clear expression of this vision of the Christians, although it gives a twist to it as another error found among the Christians. Unlike the Western Christians of the time the Indian Christians could never accept the idea that only the Latin form of Christianity was the true form. It is the consciousness of their individual Church which is to be noted when they distinguished the 'law of St Peter' from the 'law of St Thomas' (*Marthoma Margam*). This is a healthy concept of the individual Church, now accepted by all.<sup>13</sup>

It is in contrast to this more pacific and sober hermeneutical vision of the Indian Christians that the approach of the missionaries of the Western colonial period is to be evaluated. The missionary approach has been often called the '**conquista**' theology.<sup>14</sup> It was dominated by a sense of superiority, the characteristic of the conqueror. They regarded their culture and their form of Christianity far superior to those of the Indian Christians. The Western form of Christianity, which was the Roman form, was for them the perfect one not only in matters of faith and morals but in everything else that distinguished a Christian form a person of another faith. Hence every Christian was expected to accept that form. The surest way to achieve this was to bring the Christians under the Portuguese jurisdiction and the Latin Rite.

The conquering conception of the mission of the Church was uppermost in the minds of the Portuguese in general and the missionaries in particular, when they approached other religions. They saw the work of the mission and "evangelism in terms of military operations, lines of defence, plans for attack, as if we were waging war against other believers" (Rogers 1965: 37). The many letters of St Francis Xavier and even some of the polemic treatises of Robert de Nobili are no exception to this. Two mission histories are of special relevance here; one written by a Franciscan in the first half of the seventeenth century, and the other by a Jesuit in the beginning of the eighteenth century. The titles of these books themselves are highly suggestive of their contents, and the spirit in which they were written. The Franciscan, Paulo da Trindade, described his account of the Franciscan missions in the East under the name, *Conquista Espiritual do Oriente* ('The Spiritual Conquest of the East'). The Jesuit writer, Francisco de Sousa was most probably inspired by Trindade's title (perhaps such an inspiration was not needed, the times could suggest the title) when he called his history of the Jesuit missions in the East, *Oriente Conquistado a Jesu Christo* ('The East won over to Christ by the Fathers of the Society of Jesus'). Though the spirit, which moved both, the chronicles and the mentality manifested in both of them are almost the same, it is the Franciscan who employs the *conquista* vocabulary more frequently and more forcefully.

The exceptions to this approach were the movements two missionaries launched in Asia: Matteo Ricci SJ (d. 1610) in China and Roberto de Nobili SJ (d. 1656) in India. Donned in the garb of Confucian literati Ricci when asked why he was in China, used to reply that he had come as an ignorant barbarian to learn from China's fine teaching. At the same time he engaged in learned conversations with scholars on many religious and philosophical topics, while he continued with Chinese studies. His scholarship both in secular and religio-philosophical topics, as well his extraordinary talent for making friendship attracted many scholars

as well as ordinary Chinese to him. He also wrote books, cast in a form familiar to the Chinese. The most important of his writings was *Tianzhu Shuji* ('The True Idea of God'). Two assumptions guided Ricci in writing it: First, the Chinese mind needed to be approached by way of 'natural law'. The second assumption was that the original Confucian teaching, which, he believed, in course of time was distorted by ideas coming from Buddhism and Taoism, had an awareness of a supreme deity derived from early Jewish teaching. In short Ricci believed that theoretical and moral truth could be found in the ancient Chinese writings and, when clarified, purified, elevated and supplemented by a more direct biblical revelation could serve as the Gospel in Chinese. Together with this doctrinal accommodation Ricci and his like-minded Jesuit companions also entertained cultural accommodation. It aimed first at proving that no irreconcilable differences existed between Chinese culture and Christian message, and second at dressing up this message as much as possible in Chinese garb. They looked at the honours paid to Confucius as non-religious ceremonies and ancestral veneration as non-superstitions. Whether Ricci was objective or not in his discernment of Chinese traditions and customs, his landmark effort, despite the fact that provoked serious criticism, has continued to have significance as the first bridge in East-West communication and understanding. The effort reaped rich fruit: many Chinese scholars became Christians during Ricci's life time, and hundreds of converts were also made by his colleagues in many places in the countryside as well (cf. Sunquist 2001: 703-705).

Similar is the method followed by another Jesuit missionary, Roberto de Nobili, in India. He was the first missionary to study the Hindu literature, especially the *Vedas* and *Vedanta*, in its original languages. He adopted the life style of a Hindu sannyasi, including a strict vegetarian diet. He did not hesitate to wear the saffron robe and all other outfits of a Brahmin sannyasi. He encouraged his converts to remain Hindu in every possible way. He established his

*mutt* or *ashram*, in the city of Madurai, the heart of South Indian Hindu culture and religion of his time. His was a highly accommodative attempt, which produced ample result.<sup>15</sup>

These two attempts, though short-lived and severely criticized and even condemned, shine as beacon lights in the modern attempts at inculturation and contextualization. Fortunately the Church, though belatedly, has recognized the positive contributions these two individuals and their movements have made.

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#### Endnote

<sup>1</sup>For this résumé of Asian situation, cf. Reither 1949, Moffett op. cit.

<sup>2</sup>After the compilation of *Diatessaron* there might have been separate Old Testament and New Testament texts dependent on "Western" Greek types of texts. The *Peshitta* the was compilation and reworking of a Old Testament targams of Judeo-Christian tradition and of New Testament translation from existing Greek texts.

<sup>3</sup>This is how some historians present the case of *Diatessaron*. There is also an opinion that Tatian actually composed his Gospel harmony from the Greek text known to him. Translation into Syriac came later. St Ephrem (306-373 CE) quoted from Syriac *Diatessaron* (cf. JBC ). Probably Aphraates (mid-4c.) used the *Diatessaron* for his commentaries.

<sup>4</sup>For many of the statements given above see Moffett 1998: 72-74.

<sup>5</sup>However there is a tradition that St Mathew's Gospel was in India at the end of the second century & discovered by Pantaeus, cf. Mundadan 2001: 65

<sup>6</sup>The author does not give precise dates and contexts of these writings.

<sup>7</sup>For details cf. Quasten 1986, Vols. I and II.

<sup>8</sup>For details see Quasten 1986 (Vols. I and II); Pelikan 1975, I and II; Grill 1975; Norris 1980

<sup>9</sup>Cf. Babbai, *Liber de Unione*, ed. A. Waschalde, in CSCO, scr. sys., 61, Paris: 1915.

<sup>10</sup>Details may be found in Brock in Vellian, *Studies in Syriac Spirituality*, (The Syriac Churches Series Vol. 13); Brock 1985; Murray 1975; Mundadan 1997; Chediath 1978.

<sup>11</sup>Scaria Zacharia 1994: 91

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.: 93

<sup>13</sup>These aspects of more or less 'pure' Indian hermeneutic are further elaborated in Mundadan 1998; 31-49).

<sup>14</sup>See details *ibid.*: 49-60.

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<sup>15</sup>For details cf, Mundadan 1998: 49-61.

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