

Reading Science and Bible: George M Soares-Prabhu's Plea for Creative Science-Religion Dialogue

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Abstract: George M. Soares-Prabhu, SJ, (1929-1995) one of the best known Indian scripture scholars passed away tragically in a road accident twenty-five years ago in 1995. He is well known as a liberation theologian and biblical hermeneut. On his 25th death anniversary, the author wants to reflect his preliminary work on science-religion dialogue in terms of the origin and end of both the world and human beings, which he penned in 1964. We get here a rare glimpse of this great thinker's vision on bringing up a creative dialogue between scientific and theological concerns.

Keywords: George M. Soares Prabhu, SJ, Soares-Prabhu and Science-Religion Dialogue; Soares Prabhu as theologian and hermenut, Origin and End of Universe according to Physics and Bible, Physics-Philosophy-Theology

Introduction

George M. Soares-Prabhu, SJ, (1929-1995) one of the best known Indian scripture scholars passed away tragically in a road accident twenty-five years ago in 1995. He is well known as a liberation theologian and biblical hermeneut. Remembering his 25th death anniversary, we want to reflect on his pioneering role as a theologian who fostered creative dialogue between science and religion, or more precisely between cosmology and biblical hermeneutics, which had been largely forgotten.

Before we explore how George Soares-Prabhu has been indirectly involved in science-religion dialogue, it is apt to contextualize his person and intellectual life. It was after acquiring a BSc in Chemistry- Biology from St. Xavier's College, Mumbai, 1949, he pursued his philosophical and theological studies. During his regency period, it is said that he has taught science for the students of Philosophy at JDV. Then he went on to study theology and was ordained a priest in 1961. The symposium on the Origins of Life and the World was organized in 1964, where his first academic article on science was published. Then he went for his higher studies to Europe in theology and returned to Pune 1969. He started his teaching career at Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, Pune, in 1970.

He preserved his scientific temper throughout his teaching career. The precision and clarity in his articles and essays, so unique to his writings, presuppose a scientific, critical and creative mind. His particular way of writing Endnotes. He does not follow the traditional Western system, but invents his own and sticks to it consistently.

This study is almost exclusively based on the talks Soares delivered at “Origins: a symposium on the birth of the universe, the dawn of life and the appearance of diverse living things,” 1964, just as Second Vatican Council was coming to an end. The proceedings of the symposium were edited by Lancelot Pereira and its contributors are Aloysius Fonseca, John Misquitta, Lancelot Pereira, George Soares.

The editor of the Proceedings informs the readers that the contributors to this symposium on origins belong not to the “either-or” but to the “both-and” school. They are genuinely fond of *both science and the Bible*. (Pereira, 1964: v Emphasis in the original). So upon the more rabid generation of the “either-or” school they are sorely tempted to bestow the indulgent smile reserved for primitive ancestors. Ah! A polemical jibe? Not precisely.

The point the authors are making is that “today the supposedly clear contradiction between the scientific and biblical approaches to the problems of origins has rightly to be considered as an amusing simplification from the past. If one really takes the trouble to make a comparison in depth between what science is actually asserting and what the Bible is rally talking about, knotty points do remain but the frightful oppositions vanish. Now that is precisely the sort of trouble which has been taken, on the reader’s behalf, by the contributors of this books” (Pereira, 1964: v-vi).

Further. it may be noted that the authors do not expect the reader to swallow all that they say. They will be satisfied if they have managed to stimulate accurate reflection on topics which do have a significance for our educated contemporaries. “Above all, they would like to share with their readers that intellectual calm which arises from the recognition that science, philosophy and religion do not operate on the same level of explanation. Each has its peculiar scope, advantages and limitations” (Pereira, 1964: vii)

The first Part of the book deals with : What Science Says and the Second one with what Bible says. In this sense they draw from both science and the Bible, not to compare and contrast, but to enrich themselves.

Soares-Prabhu talks of the origin of the universe, while John Misquitta and Lancelot Pereira write about the origin of life and that of the human person. It is evident that these authors are concerned with the perennial questions of origins of the universe, life and humans. In this paper we shall be limiting to what Soares writes reflects on science and the Bible.

So this article explores Soares-Prabhu’s scientific and creative writings on the origin of the universe. Then it points to the strengths and limitations of science as a discipline that deals with

the material and temporal aspects of life. Then we look into the biblical contribution to the origin of the universe and that of human beings. Finally, he asserts that we need to respect both science and religion, affirm their autonomous status and learn from each other. He also shows that we need to go beyond science to philosophy and theology for a better understanding of the universe and the world.

Let us begin with Soares-Prabhu's exploration of the origin and end of the Universe, remembering that he wrote it before 1964, when the knowledge of scientific cosmology was not well-developed.

1. George Soares-Prabhu: Origin and End of the Universe

Coming to the origin of the universe, he speaks of an immense universe, expanding universe and dying universe.

a. An Immense Universe

Soares elaborately deals with an immense universe with its solar system, billions of stars and is fascinated by it. He explores the star's life-history, the formation of our galaxy, the milky way system and are enamored by it. He further studies the planetary systems in our galaxy, and refers to condensation theory, nebular hypothesis and super galaxies.

Coming to the solar system, he says: "Planetary systems are not the exception but the rule. Hoyle estimates that there should be 10,000,000 planets in our galaxy of which 1,000,000 should be capable of supporting life" (Soares-Prabhu, 1964: 12-13). He adds that these figures (like so many of Hoyle's suggestions) are very conjectural (Soares-Prabhu, 1964: 13).

These interesting sections are amply illustrated with black and white drawing and suggests genuine interest and involvement with the scientific theories on the origin of the universe. He sums up his understanding of the visible universe:

A glowing, rapidly expanding gas of more than two billion galaxies—each of which is itself a swirling gas of about 100,000 million stars—that is what the visible universe is like. "Think of the sun," writes Sir James Jeans, "as a speck of dust, in a large city, and the earth as a millionth part of the speck of dust, and we begin to have perhaps as vivid a picture as the mind can really grasp of the relation of our home in space to the rest of the universe." The universe is truly immense. (Soares-Prabhu, 1964: 14)

b. An Expanding Universe

Drawing from the scientific sources of his day, Soares holds that the universe is expanding. Using the red shift he is convinced that light from the other end of the universe cannot reach us and we will never be able to know with precision what has been happening there. He quotes Arthur Eddington to say that we are "like a runner on an expanding track with the winning post receding faster than he can run" (Soares-Prabhu, 1964: 15)

Galaxies are running away from each other because the universe of “curved space-time” in which they are embedded is steadily growing larger. A *curved surface* is non-Euclidean, elaborates Soares. it is a *two-dimensional non-Euclidean continuum*. In the present scheme of physics, two kinds of curved non-Euclidean space are the only alternatives to flat Euclidean space as the space of the universe. These are *spherical space* corresponding to a *spherical surface* with its closed (or positive) curvature, and *hyperbolic space* corresponding to a *saddle-shaped surface* with its open (or negative) curvature (Soares-Prabhu, 1964: 20)

As regards the models of the universe Soares is convinced that the mathematical cosmologist builds *modds of the universe* not out of wood and plaster, of course, but out of equations which attempt to deduce from the laws of terrestrial physics the structure and properties of the universe as a whole. Now it is a fact that the laws of physics as we know them today (and their best expression is found in the general relativity equations of Einstein) do not allow us to construct a *static* model of the universe (Soares-Prabhu, 1964: 16-17).

He points to the Doppler interpretation of universe which implies the expansion of the universe. This is completely in line with what mathematical cosmology expects. He refers again to the curved space and also the universe of De Sitter, which is based on a static model. At the same time he holds a “dynamic universe made up of matter-in-motion can be derived from Einsein’s equations” (Soares-Prabhu, 1964: 25)

Soares warns that it would be wrong to think of Einstein’s theory as just another attempt at mystification on a grand scale. Rather it is, in one sense, an enormous simplification. Einstein gives us a *universal physics* whose laws will be valid, asserts Soares (Soares-Prabhu, 1964: 18)

c. A Dying Universe

Drawing from the Second Law of Thermodynamics, Soares visualizes a dying universe. Second law of thermodynamics is simple. the entropy of a closed system always increases whenever an energy change takes place in the system. Such energy changes are of course continually. According to the laws of thermodynamics, the *quantity* of energy changed cannot be affected because energy can neither be created nor destroyed. But the *quality* of the energy can be altered. Some of the energy is degraded: it becomes less available for work, less usable, less organized. Now *entropy* is precisely a measure of what Eddington has called “the random element.” What the second law says is that the *entropy* always *increases*, i. e., whenever energy changes from one form to another, it becomes more disorganized and useless for any practical work.

Applying this law to the whole universe, the second law comes to mean is that all the energy in the universe will eventually be degraded into heat energy and the heat will tend to diffuse out evenly. Nothing can reverse the direction of this change. Once organization has been lost, the random movement of molecules will not restore it again – no more than random shuffling will restore the original order of a pack of cards. This implies that the world is heading inexorably towards a “heat death”, towards a state of maximum entropy, of total undifferentiation of matter-energy where all energy has been reduced to the energy of molecules moving at random in a state of dynamical equilibrium. No further energy changes will then be possible. Time will have come to a stop. The universe will be dead (Soares-Prabhu, 1964: 28). Thus the universe will have a definite end!

Though he does not say when that end comes, he believes that the age of the universe is about 10 billion years, close to 13.8 billions that we assume today, about 60 years after he writes. After the study on the origin and end of the universe in general, we shall develop his more precise understanding of the beginning of the universe in terms of Big Bang.

2. . How the Universe Came to Be

This section attempts to explore Soares-Prabhu’s understanding of the Big Bang in the 1960s. It will give us a historical perspective of how he has been able to live with the scientific findings of his day. It will help us focus on his understanding of the relation between science and religion (or the Bible), since he holds that we need to recognize the limitations of science and go beyond it to philosophy and religion.

a. Lemaitre’s Primeval Atom Theory

The best theory of the origin of the world, according to Soares is that sketched out for us by the Belgian priest astronomer, the Abbe Georges Lemaitre of Louvain. It is the most complete and convincing. In a brilliantly original and comprehensive theory about the origin of the world which he proposed in 1927. The red shift had just been discovered by the Americans Milton La Salle Humason and Edwin Hubble, though no one was as yet very sure of what exactly it meant. The Russian mathematician and cosmologist, Alexander Friedman, had shown that satisfactory models for an expanding universe could be derived from Einstein’s general relativity equations. Radioactivity discovered half a century earlier by Becquerel and the Curies in France had revealed an astonishing world of atoms that exploded spontaneously. The mysterious cosmic rays turned out to be streams of powerful radiation and high energy atomic particles raining down on the earth from outer space. And, for Lemaitre, all this added up to his “*Hypothesis of the Primeval Atom*” —an apocalyptic picture of an expanding universe which started off with a bang. The universe, as Lemaitre sees it, derives from a primeval cosmic atom (Soares uses the term “Big Bang” four times in the book) which exploded violently. Its history is the history of this “radioactive disintegration” whose traces are still with us (Soares-Prabhu, 1964: 34). Lemaitre distinguishes three stages leading to the present universe: Explosion, Equilibrium and Expansion.

b. Initial Expansion

Billions of years ago (20,000 million to 60,000 million years according to present estimates), all the matter that exists in today's expanding universe was packed together as tightly as possible into a single cosmic atom which completely filled up all the space then available. Here was matter (or rather, "prematter") at its densest squeezed together so tightly that every trace of structure – molecular, atomic, nuclear – was crushed out of existence. A mass equivalent to 1021 tons was gathered in a volume of space no bigger than the solar system is today. The density of this primeval lump must have been colossal, each cubic inch weighing millions of tons. The superdense, cosmic atom was highly unstable and at once exploded mightily. Its fragments kept on fissioning over and over again until they could fission no more, and the resulting debris contained the atomic nuclei we know. If, for the sake of simplicity, we assume that the fragmentation always resulted in pieces of equal size, about 260 generations would be needed, Lemaitre tells us, to reach "the present pulverization of matter into pieces almost too small to be broken again." Almost too small –but not quite! Some of the largest of these pieces are still breaking up. These are the atoms of the radioactive elements—of radium, uranium and thorium. *Radioactivity* represents the last feeble splutterings of the big bang. At the same time, a great deal of powerful radiation and streams of high energy particles were emitted by the exploding mass and these continue to circle the world as the *cosmic rays* (Soares-Prabhu, 1964: 35).

c. Present Scenario

Then he elaborates the second stage, which is Einstein's Equilibrium Universe. Currently we live in the third stage of expansion towards de Sitter's universe. Already the density of the universe at this third stage diminished a thousand times and its radius increased tenfold since the equilibrium period. Soon the velocity of the flying galaxies receding faster and faster from each other will approach the velocity of light, and no communication between them will be possible. Each will inhabit in splendid isolation the empty universe of De Sitter. "The evolution of the world," writes Lemaitre, "can be compared to a display of fireworks that has just ended : some few red wisps, ashes and smoke. Standing on a well cooled cinder, we see the slow fading of the suns and we try to recall the vanished brilliance of the origin of the worlds." (Soares-Prabhu, 1964: 37)

His scientific mindset makes Soares cautious. After thirty years of the most prodigious progress in theoretical and observational astronomy, Lemaitre's theory remains "the best that relativistic cosmology can offer" (Soares-Prabhu, 1964: 37). No other theory gives us so simple and convincing an explanation of so large an array of facts.

The present day picture of the evolving universe is a much more sophisticated affair than Lemaitre's somewhat naive description of the "super-radioactive disintegration" of a primeval

atom. Still it is not the final answer to our questions about the universe, Soares is convinced (Soares-Prabhu, 1964: 38).

Then he discusses the Steady State Theory of Hermann Bondi, Thomas Gold and Fred Hoyle (Science Encyclopedia 2020), the perfect cosmological principle, expanding universe and the continuous creation of matter. He also talks of testing the two cosmologies (Steady-state and Big Bang), recognizing that cosmology is an infant science!

The study of the origin and end of the universe prepares Soares-Prabhu to explore the limitation of science in order to take us to philosophy and theology.

3. The Limitations of Science

Physical sciences as quantitative disciplines are concerned with the *measurable* aspects of *material* things (Soares-Prabhu, 1964: 48). Soares admits that we can surely be dazzled by all the marvellous discoveries of science and by the vast new vistas it keeps opening up for us. We are naturally impressed by the precision of scientific observation and we admire the vigour of scientific thought. And all the while we forget that the world of science is, for all its rapidly expanding horizons, a strictly limited world marked off by sharply defined, self-imposed limits. Science is interested in *material* things (and so the whole world of spiritual realities and values is a world science knows nothing about), and only in the *measurable* aspect of material things. For instance the whole world of art is a world into which science dares not intrude! (Soares-Prabhu, 1964: 49)

As Sir Arthur Eddington has pointed out, of all the senses with which man is endowed the scientist needs only one. It is enough that he sees—and that too with one eye. Nothing more is necessary, because all science is ultimately a matter of “pointer-readings”, and to read a pointer one eye is quite as good as two. For all its intricate complexity the world-view of science is like that of a man with just one eye. “It may be strictly accurate but is not likely to be complete” (Soares-Prabhu, 1964: 49).

So science cannot answer questions as to what happened before the explosion of primeval atom. According to Lemaitre this is a question which science cannot answer, simply because the primeval atom (scientifically speaking) does not come from anywhere at all. It is the true beginning of the material universe. It has no material antecedent for science to investigate, and the methods of science can, of course, reach only the material antecedents of an event. *Science* stops dead at the primeval atom. If we are to go further, *philosophy* must take over with its category of “creation” through which the Absolute Being who IS existence can call into being a world of contingent things which HAVE existence because they receive it from another (Soares-Prabhu, 1964: 38).

Thus science needs to recognize its own strengths and limitations. For instance, science can never prove or disprove creation. Soares affirms categorically: “we must not imagine that science is ever going to *prove* creation no matter how enthusiastically some simple souls may have

hailed the apologetic possibilities of entropy or the primeval atom. Much less can science disprove creation, since it is beyond its competence. The task of science would, begin with the primeval atom, and all questions of how the atom got there would be outside its scope” (Soares-Prabhu, 1964: 50).

In the same vein science cannot speak of the absolute beginning of the universe. “Even when cosmology posits a primeval atom it has no way that the scientist, like the pilgrims in James Elroy Flecker’s poem, “must go always a little further.” He never knows exactly what lies ahead. He cannot stop at any arbitrary point and say: beyond this there is *nothing*. Perhaps there really is nothing—but he, as scientist, can never be sure that there isn’t. And so while the cosmologist can say categorically (and we shall believe him) that the universe existed at time “t”, he has no right to state categorically that nothing existed at the before the origin of the universe, or $t < 0$ (Soares-Prabhu, 1964: 51)

Two scientifically meaningless questions are relevant here: How did matter come about? When did the universe really begin? Because science is interested only in *material things*, it cannot tell us anything about the *creation* of the universe—creation is a supramaterial reality, a transcendental relation of cause and effect which cannot be fitted into the kinds of physical causality we know. And because science is interested only in *temporal events*, it cannot tell us anything very definite about the *beginning* of the universe, because the beginning of the universe is outside time (Soares-Prabhu, 1964: 53)

Since science cannot even attempt to answer these questions, we need to turn to other sources of knowledge : to *philosophy* which is human reason’s unaided quest for the ultimate meaning of things, and to *theology* which is our attempt to understand the Word of God.

a. Beyond Science: What Philosophy Says

From a purely philosophical perspective, Soares asserts: “The universe is not self-sufficient” (Soares-Prabhu, 1964: 53). It cannot explain its own existence just like clock!

Further, he adds: “Nothing in the universe nor the sum total of all the things in it carries a complete explanation of its existence” (Soares-Prabhu, 1964: 53). In other words the universe in spite of its dazzling and marvelous activities is still contingent and dependent.

As opposed to emanation and dualism Christian philosophy chalks out a third path with its doctrine of Creation through which God wills the world into existence out of nothing. Such a world is “perfectly distinct” and “totally dependent” on God (Soares-Prabhu, 1964: 56).

b. Beyond Science: Theology of Creation in Time

Theology can see deeper into the reality of creation than philosophy because it does not depend on the limited resources of the human intelligence alone. It can draw on the infinite knowledge of God Himself, for theology is the study of and reflection upon God’s word revealed in Jesus

Christ, handed down to us in inspired and inerrant *scripture* and *tradition* (the living teaching of the Church down the ages) and as interpreted for us by the Church's *teaching authority*.

According to Soares, Christian theology teaches us not only that God created the world out of nothing, but that He created it "in time". The world has not existed from all eternity—it has begun to be. , And it is impossible to exaggerate the part played by this idea of creation in time in shaping the Christian vision of the world (Soares-Prabhu, 1964: 59).

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c. Beyond Science: Christian Vision of Man in the universe

For human beings there are issues larger than the scientific ones. For instance, a believing Christian may reflect on the significance of the human body, the need for redemption, the role of time, history and freedom in human life. With regards to evil, Soares is firm: "We cannot call the world evil without calling God evil too. No, the world and everything in it is good – as the Bible repeatedly assures us. Evil is not a metaphysical reality, some thing embedded in the tissue of the world. It is a moral reality, or attitude of a will fixed in wilful opposition to the will of God. The seat of evil is not matter but the heart of man (Soares-Prabhu, 1964: 61)

But we have a sacred responsibility. "Man, if the Bible is to be believed, is entrusted with the material development of the world" (Soares-Prabhu, 1964: 63). So the Christian confronts the world with wonder and respect and his own body with reverence. He is conscious of the meaning and the urgency of time; he has a profound sense of history. He is aware that the world is contingent and realizes the need of science. And all because he believes that the world has been freely created by God out of nothing and "in time" (Soares-Prabhu, 1964: 66).

After recognizing the need to learn from philosophy and theology in general, we move on to study what the Bible can teach us about the origin of the world and of human beings in particular, as elaborated by our author.

4. What the Bible Says on the Origin of the World and Human Beings

After understanding what Science says about the origin of the universe and human beings, the second part deals with what the Bible says about them. Giving the background of the Book of Genesis, Aloysius Fonseca gives instructions on how to read the bible and Genesis critically. Then comes Soares who reflects on the Genesis and origin of the world and human beings. Since he has elaborately written on Bible and biblical hermeneutics, we shall be very brief in this section.

a. Genesis and the Origin of the World

Soares admits that Biblical history is not critical history or historiography, as we understand. Soares talks of the two creation stories in the book of Genesis (P and J) and interprets the story of creation in six days. Then he reflects on the mythology and theology of creation in Genesis.

According to Soars for the Israelites creation is primarily a salvific experience.

The shattering encounter with Yahweh through which the Israelites had become His chosen people, the exodus event, was for the Israelites the dominant fact of their religious history, an experience they were never to forget. Yahweh would always be first and foremost the *Saviour* who had led them out of Egypt, the *Covenant-God* who had made them His people and the *Lord of history* who controlled the destiny of nations and would lead Israel to a final triumph over them all. It was only by reflecting on the marvels that Yahweh had wrought in bringing them out of Egypt that Israel began to realise the extent to which the Lord of history was also the *God of nature*. Yahweh, the saviour God who had mightily redeemed His people, now stood revealed as God the creator who had wonderfully fashioned the heavens and the earth out of nothing (Soares-Prabhu, 1964: 260) . “Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, who formed you from the womb,” cries out Isaias, “I am the Lord who made all things, who stretched out the heavens alone, who spread out the earth—who was with me?” (Is. 44, 24).

Even when Yahweh was stretching out the heavens and making firm the earth Yahweh remained in the eyes of Israel primarily the God who saves. Creation itself was part of His salvific plan. It was the *prelude to salvation*, the setting of the stage on which the drama of salvation would be enacted, the first of those great interventions of God through which He would build a people to whom He could give Himself in the total self-gift of a love freely given and freely returned between persons who are free (Soares-Prabhu, 1964: 260).

Soares traces many lessons for twentieth century men and women (Soares-Prabhu, 1964: 265):.

- *That the world and everything in it has come from God* and depends on Him completely, since it has been “created” by Him.
- *That God is therefore the ONLY God*. There are no quasi-divine or demonic forces that exist independently of Him. A man’s fate is not determined by the stars; nor need he fear the spirits of the dead nor attach much importance numerology or crystals. Everything that is not God has been made by God. Our lives rest secure in His all-controlling hands.
- *That the world which God has made is throughout good*. Six times during the creation story God is said to look at what He has made and to find it good. And a seventh time at the end of it all — “and God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good” (Gen. 1, 31).

It is important to remember that the Bible is interested in creation not because it is the beginning of the world and of time, but because it is the beginning of salvation history. Creation in the Bible is not so much a cosmic as a salvific event.

b. Genesis and Origin of the Human Beings

Soares takes into account the P Story (Gen. 1, 26-31) and reflects on God’s activity of deliberating and creating. Then he explores J Story (Gen. 2, 5-25) on how God makes man and

woman. Then he interprets J Story in terms of Biblical commission, special creation of man and formation of women. This is followed by discovering the meaning of J story in terms of “Dust from the ground,” “The Breath of Life” and “The Rib of Adam.” (Soares-Prabhu, 1964: 269ff)

Soares understand that both the P story of creation and the J story of the fall describe the origin of man, and each does it in its own particular way. In the P story man is the last of the creatures made by God in the ascending series of His eight stupendous works of creation. He appears on the sixth day, the day on which God has already made “all kinds of wild beasts, every kind of cattle and every kind of creature crawling on the ground.” But man is not just one more addition to the list : he is something quite different from everything that has gone before. And to make sure that we realize this the author now adds a new detail to his story—he shows us God deliberating: “Let us,” muses God, “make man in our image and likeness” (Gen. 1, 26).

What does Genesis teach about human origin? As conclusion of his study he proposes the following (Soares-Prabhu, 1964: 284-287)

1. That human being has been created by God and that man, and the whole of man, comes ultimately from God and depends utterly on Him. Man is God’s creature and his destiny rests wholly in God’s hands. “O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter has done,” says the Lord in the Book of Jeremias, “Behold like clay in the potter’s hand so are you in My hand, O house of Israel.” (Jer.18, 6) And what God says of the historical destiny of His people. He could say of the individual destiny of each human being: “In His hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of all mankind.” (Job 12,10)

2. That man has been created in the image of God. Man is a peculiarly privileged creature, unique in this world of ours in that he is a thinking animal with an intellect and a will. Through them man images God’s wisdom and power and rules over the world as God’s representative. God has given him dominion over the beasts and the birds and has entrusted him with the task of “subduing” the earth. “What is man,” asks Psalm 8, “that Thou art mindful of him?” and then goes on in a great shout of grateful joy!

Yet Thou hast made him little less than God,
and dost crown him with glory and honour.
Thou hast given him dominion over the works of Thy hands;
Thou hast put all things under his feet,
all sheep and oxen,
and also the beasts of the field,
the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea,
whatever passes along the paths of the sea.
O Lord, our Lord,
how majestic is Thy name in all the earth ! (Ps. 8, 5-9)

3. That man has been created male and female. God stands at the origin of sex as He does of the world and of man. So woman too has been made in the image of God. She is man’s equal, the

same kind of being that he is, his companion not his slave. She is in fact man's complement, through whom he must find himself, and to whom he is to be joined in the intimate and indissoluble union of marriage in order to "fill the earth and subdue it".

c. Lessons from the Origin of Human Beings

Genesis has two narratives about origins : the P story of creation which tells of the origin of the world and of everything in it; and the prelude to the J story of the fall which speaks about the origin of man. Each bears the distinctive traits of the tradition to which it belongs.

- The P story is a stylised 'hymn to creation' which describes the creation of the world from a primordial ocean-chaos in six dramatic days. God speaks, and by the naked power of His word creates and peoples the different regions of the universe, as the ancient Hebrews imagined them to be. The story originally developed as part of a service of worship and was a way of teaching unsophisticated people living in a strongly polytheistic milieu the basic affirmations of Israel's strictly monotheistic faith. This it did naturally in the cosmological language of its time. But it did not intend to teach any cosmological lesson. All its cosmological details (the order of the successive creations and the six-day scheme among them) are parts of the artificial framework in which the author puts his doctrinal affirmation—Israel's faith in one God who is the Lord of all that there is.
- The J prelude to the story of the fall is a colourful description of the origin of man from "dust" into which God has breathed the "breath of life", and of woman from the "rib" of the first man. Neither the "dust from the ground" nor the "rib of Adam" belongs to the doctrinal substance of the story, but are parts of the elaborate, anthropomorphic imagery through which the story conveys its profound religious lessons about the relation of man to God and of man and woman towards each other.
- So Genesis has nothing to tell us about the mechanisms of the origin of the world or of man. It is interested only in the ultimate question of how man and the world depend upon God and not in how and when they appeared. There can be no conflict between Genesis and any scientific theory of cosmic or human origins— provided that the theory does not transgress the limits of science and make affirmations about the part played (or not played) by the Creator.

After understanding the origin and responsibility of human beings, we are in a position to understand the pioneering and preliminary science-religion dialogue that Soares himself has undertaken in the 1960s.

5. Conclusion: Soares-Prabhu and Science-Religion Dialogue

What is noteworthy historically that even before the Second Vatican Council ended, Soares-Prabhu and companions were very much interested in discussing the relationship between science and religion. They have proposed that both needs to cooperate and complement each others. They also acknowledge the greatness and limitations of science and given a definite opening to philosophy and religion. At the same time one wonders why Soares-Prabhu has not continued this interest in the 1970s and later when he was a full-fledged professor of Sacred Scripture at Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth. This was much bore 1990s when Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth initiated the movement of Science-Religion movement under Job Kozhamthadam.

We must truly acknowledge the masterly and creative ways he has dealt with the scientific findings 60 years ago. We might suggest that in the latter years of his life he has identified the Historical Critical Method as part of the modern scientific enterprise. The rigour with which this method was applied to the Bible is commendable. Though Soares-Prabhu was fluent and successful in this method, he openly acknowledges its limitations. This led him to approach the hermeneutical method to the Bible for the Indian context.

Let me conclude with Soares' own words, where he relates the How of science to the Why of religion or Bible.

“Science tries to find out the ‘HOW’ of the world. It is interested in mechanisms. How did the world begin? How do the stars move? History tries to find out and interpret the sequence of man’s free actions. Which nation was foremost at a particular period? What were the causes of its rise and subsequent decline? But when all is said and done these ingenious constructions by themselves remain in the ultimate analysis “inadequate”, because they miss the meaning behind it all. Why has the world come to be? Whither is it going? What is the purpose of man’s life on earth? This science and history cannot tell us, and it is to the Bible that we must turn. Only the Bible can tell us or the ultimate WHENCE, WHITHER and WHY the origin, the destiny and the meaning of the wonderful mechanisms and the impressive interplay of liberties in an evolving, marching world” (Soares-Prabhu, 1964: 284-233).

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