

HTJ, Vol.3, Issue No.1

HIMACHAL THEOLOGICAL JOURNAL

Published by

**Berachah Institute of Higher Education and Research
Palampur, HP**

Introduction

The Himachal Theological Journal (HTJ) fetches various articles from the seminarians who are under God's tutelage. The journal is committed to upholding godly principles and fostering spirituality and scholastic excellence. The multi-discipline lettering expounds appropriate biblical knowledge, mends Christian character, and nurtures spiritual life. The views expressed in the contribution to HTJ are the views of the writers and not necessarily those of the editorial board or publisher. © Author, 2024.

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HTJ

Vol.3, Issue.1

ISBN: 978-81-956277-4-5

Subscriptions

The Journal is published twice in a year. To subscribe please contact editor or email info@biher.education, The annual subscription rate is Rs.120/

Address all Correspondence to:

The Chief Editor
Himachal Theological Journal
Berachah Life Centre, Rajher P.O, Palampur, 176061 (HP)
Email: info@biher.education, dean@biher.education
Mob: 8883308330

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Editorial Note....

Dear perspective readers, as you go through this HTJ, you will find a poly-perspectival thought with various scholastic ideas. The beauty of this academic fragment displays articles with biblical, missional, theological, and practical features. This issue focuses on the zoomorphic genre in the book of Revelation, the concept—Mother of God, Pauline leadership, the study of *agape* and healing in mission of Jesus.

Understanding the Bible is a vital phenomenon for a believer in life. The book of revelation is one of the difficult books in terms of bringing out the real and accurate meaning of the passage. It has to do with understanding the usage of genre in it. Zoomorphism is one of the styles that has centralized throughout the passages of the book of Revelation. The importance of zoomorphism has been highlighted in this writing. In the diversity of understandings, Mary is regarded as the mother of Jesus. This has been discussed under the concept of *Theotokos*.

Christian mission has its variety model, but the enduring model of Pauline leadership stands as unique. In this an importance of the love of God in a believers' life highlighted with the study of 1John. When we look at the present scenario of Christian mission, healing has been one of the important ministries as people are in need. Healings have been dramatically commercialized by different healers in Christian missions. But Jesus' intention of healing people is to glorify God and establish the kingdom of God. It was to build people's faith in general. I hope this will give you great perception as you go through this journal.

Dr. Amruta Bag
Chief Editor, HTJ

Johannine Use of Zoomorphism¹ in the Book of Revelation

by Mr. Mordicai Phaomei, he has done his Master of Divinity from India Baptist Theological Seminary, and Master of Theology in New Testament from Hindustan Bible Institute, Chennai. He is one of the teaching faculties of Berachah Institute of Higher Education and Research.

Abstract

The article, entitled “Johannine Use of Zoomorphic in the Book of Revelation,” examines the symbolic use of animal metaphors, or zoomorphism, within Revelation, highlighting how these images, deeply rooted in apocalyptic symbolism, convey layered theological meanings. Drawing from the rich traditions of the Old Testament, Jewish apocalyptic writings, and influences from Greco-Roman culture, these metaphors reveal profound insights into divine nature and cosmic conflict. Key symbols, such as the Lamb, the four living creatures, and the two beasts, each serve distinct roles: the Lamb represents Christ’s sacrificial love and redemptive power, the living creatures embody divine attributes like omniscience and sovereignty, while the two beasts depict forces of evil that stand in opposition to God’s will. Collectively, these symbols perform multiple functions they bring the narrative to life through vivid, descriptions (known as *ekphrasis*), offer reassurance to early Christian communities facing persecution, and instruct, motivate audience towards a particular goal or action on divine truths through familiar,

¹ Zoomorphism is a literary style refers to the attribution of animal characteristics or qualities to gods, humans, or objects that described with animal like attributes to illustrate specific qualities. Stephen G. Dempster, “Zoomorphism,” *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, edited by Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit, and Tremper Longman-III (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1998), 977.

relatable images. Additionally, the animal metaphors carry concealed messages of resistance against oppressive authorities, encouraging resilience and loyalty to God amidst hardship. Ultimately, this zoomorphic imagery in Revelation goes beyond mere symbolism to communicate powerful messages from God, stirring believers from spiritual complacency and imparting hope, resilience, and assurance of God's triumph, especially during times of crisis and uncertainty.

Key Words

Bear, Frogs, Flying eagle, Lamb, White Horse, Red Horse, Black Horse, Pale Horse, Locusts, Red Dragon, Serpent, and Leopard

Introduction

Animal metaphors are essential in apocalyptic literature, especially in the book of Revelation, where they are widely used. These metaphors are particularly prominent, appearing throughout much of the content in Revelation. The use of animal metaphors in apocalyptic texts involves connecting earthly realities with spiritual truths. Therefore, the task of the interpreter is to grasp both the function and the meaning of a symbol within its specific context. To fully understand a symbol, one must discern both the concept it conveys and the image it represents.² When studying animal metaphors in the books of Revelation, scholars have debated the origins of these images. Some propose that the sources of apocalyptic imagery may include Babylonian iconography, the Babylonian myth *Enūma Eliš*, *VAT 10057*, *Shumma Izbu*, and the Old Testament. Furthermore, questions arise as to why animal language

² Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity, 1991), 228.

is prevalent in apocalyptic literature. This leads to important inquiries, such as: animal metaphor in Revelation. Why did the author choose to use an animal metaphor?

In examining metaphors in Revelation, this article will explore the use of metaphors in the book of Revelation, focusing specifically on animal metaphors. It will examine the origins of these animal metaphors, as well as their various functions within the text. These functions include *ekphrasis* (vivid description), *didactic* and *parenetic* (moral and instructive) purposes, parabolic (illustrative) usage, and their role in converting the manuscript. Additionally, the article will explore into the theological significance of animal metaphors in Revelation, offering insights and concluding reflections.

Rationale behind Zoomorphism

After exploring the functions of Zoomorphism (animal metaphor) in the book of Revelation, it is important to also consider the reasons behind its use. This section will examine three key purposes or reasons for the inclusion of animal metaphors in the book of Revelation.

Symbolism: An Integral Characteristic of Apocalyptic Works

The use of animal metaphors in the book of Revelation is in symbolism, and it defines a feature of apocalyptic literature. When examining the characteristics of apocalyptic writings, symbolism plays a central role in conveying deeper meanings and truths. David Syme Russell mentions, five characteristics such as, ‘some general marks of apocalyptic,’ ‘esoteric in character,’ ‘literary in form,’ ‘symbolic in language,’ and ‘pseudonymous in authorship.’³ Among the five characteristics, ‘symbolic in language’ is one of the prevalent

³ David Syme Russell, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia, Pasadena: The Westminster Press, 1964), 104-139.

characteristics in Revelation. Besides the other imagery, animal metaphor is another dominant language as mentioned above and apocalyptists make great use of animal figures of all kinds to symbolize men and nations.

For example, 1 Enoch uses several animal imageries such as bull as the symbol of the patriarchs from Adam to Isaac (1 Enoch 85-86); sheep or lamb language as the righteous figures such as Moses and Aaron (1 Enoch 89.16, 18); sheep and ram language as David and Solomon (1 Enoch 89.45, 48); and lamb as Messiah (1 Enoch 90.38).⁴ Similarly, Revelation as apocalyptic writing it has numerable languages, such as four living creatures (Rev. 4:6-11), lamb (Rev. 5:6-14), four horsemen (Rev. 6:2-8), eagle (Rev. 8:13), dragon (Rev. 12:3), and other animal metaphors. It incorporates animal symbolism. Consequently, the use of animal metaphors reflects a key characteristic of apocalyptic writing.

Sources of Animal Symbolic Language

It is important to explore the origins of numerous instances of animal metaphors in Revelation that are found in symbols. This section will examine the origins of animal metaphor in apocalyptic literature such as Daniel and Revelation.

Zoomorphic Symbols in the Book of Daniel

Scholars have proposed five potential sources for the animal metaphor in Daniel. The first source is Mesopotamian iconography, suggested by Martin Noth,⁵ who claims that metaphors of Daniel chapter 7 should be viewed in this context.⁶ However, this

⁴ David Syme Russell, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic*, 126-27.

⁵ Martin Noth, *The Laws in the Pentateuch and Other Essays* (London, UK: SCM Press, 1966), 210-12.

⁶ Martin Noth, *The Laws in the Pentateuch and Other Essays*, 210.

perspective lacks broad scholarly support. The second source connects the metaphor to the Babylonian myth *Enūma Eliš*.⁷ Following Herman Gunkel's analysis, scholars like A. Bentzen⁸ and E. Heaton⁹ have supported this view.

The Assyrian text VAT 10057 has been proposed as a source for the animal imagery in Daniel chapter seven, with H.S. Kvanvig suggesting strong similarities between the two.¹⁰ However, Lucas disputes this, arguing that the similarities are either insignificant or absent. He notes that, unlike in Daniel chapter seven.¹¹ Where the beasts symbolize empires, in the Assyrian text they represent gods, and there is no resemblance to the 'Ancient of Days' in Daniel chapter seven.

Another argument for the source of animal metaphor in Daniel is *Shumma Izbu*. P. A. Porter argues that the imageries in Daniel chapter 7-8 are visible in *Shumma Izbu*, a Mesopotamian mantic wisdom tradition.¹² One of Porter's arguments is based on similarity. For instance, he states, "Common to both are references to animals raised on one side, multiple headed animals, animals with multiple horns, animals with displaced eyes, horned animals with claws, animals with horns of unequal length, and unicorns."¹³ In

⁷ Ernest C. Lucas, "The Source of Daniel's Animal Imagery," *Tyndale Bulletin*, vol. 41/2 (1990): 162.

⁸ A. Bentzen, "Daniel," *Handbuch zum Alten Testament* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1952), 2.

⁹ E. Heaton, "The Book of Daniel: Introduction and Commentary," *The Bible Commentary* (London: SCM Press, 1956), 5.

¹⁰ H.S. Kvanvig, "An Akkadian Vision as Background for Daniel 7?" *Studia Theologica* 35 (1981): 85-9.

¹¹ Ernest C. Lucas, "The Source of Daniel's Animal Imagery," *Tyndale Bulletin*, vol.41/2: 170.

¹² Paul A. Porter, *Metaphors and Monsters: A Literary-Critical Study of Daniel 7 and 8* (Toronto: CWK Gleerup, 1985), 15.

¹³ Paul A. Porter, *Metaphors and Monsters: A Literary-Critical Study of Daniel 7 and 8*, 18.

response to this, Lucas argues that the beasts in Daniel are the author's imagination. So, it is not necessary that it is dependent on *Shumma Izbu*. Another argument for the animal imagery in Daniel is its connection to the Old Testament, where animals like lions (Jer. 4:7), eagles (Eze. 17:3), rams, and goats appear frequently. Lucas notes that this provides sufficient background for the animal imagery in Daniel.¹⁴ After considering various perspectives, it is clear that Daniel, a Jew immersed in Mesopotamian culture, was likely influenced by both Babylonian and Jewish traditions. In other words, the animal metaphors in Daniel draws from both Babylonian and Old Testament sources.

Zoomorphic Symbols from the Book of Revelation

Konrad Huber suggests that the animal imagery in Revelation is primarily influenced by the Old Testament and Jewish apocalyptic literature, drawing from various traditions and socio-cultural contexts.¹⁵ Huber's statement is supported by the various echoes and allusions found throughout the book. Steve Moyise also observes the Revelation's use of Daniel, Ezekiel, and Isaiah,¹⁶ which indicates them as the source of its animals' imagery. For instance, Moyise suggests that the beast from the sea (Rev. 13:1-8) is modelled on the four beasts in Daniel chapter seven.¹⁷ Besides, before the imageries of the Old Testament were included in Revelation, they were used in the Jewish apocalyptic writings such as 1, 2 Enoch, 4 Ezra, and 2 Baruch. Apart from the Old Testament and Jewish

¹⁴ Paul A. Lucas, "The Source of Daniel's Animal Imagery," *Tyndale Bulletin*, vol. 41/2: 184.

¹⁵ Konrad Huber, "Imagery in the Book of Revelation," *The Oxford Handbook of the Book of Revelation*, edited by Craig R. Koester (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 59.

¹⁶ Steve Moyise, "The Old Testament in the Book of Revelation," *The Oxford Handbook of the Book of Revelation*, 87-92.

¹⁷ Steve Moyise, *The Oxford Handbook of the Book of Revelation*, 90.

apocalyptic writings, it also has similarity with the ancient Near Eastern, Greek myths, Greco-Roman concepts, and imperial cult. For instance, the dragon language (Rev.12) is an ancient mythic pattern.¹⁸ Languages such as two beasts (Rev.13) and the seven heads (Rev.7:1-18) depict the Roman religious-political situation.¹⁹ In addition, the author draws from the vision he received from the Lord. Therefore, the animal imagery in Revelation is shaped by the Old Testament, Jewish apocalyptic literature, Greco-Roman influences, and his divine vision.

Metaphorical Use of Animals in Apocalyptic Literature

Apocalyptic literature contains a vast array of languages in metaphor. There are several metaphorical languages are found in the book of Revelation.²⁰ Since the focus of this article is on animal metaphor, so this section examines the use of animal metaphor in the books of Revelation.

Depictions of Animals in Revelation

The four living creatures are among the earliest symbolic figures introduced in the book of Revelation 4:6-11. They are depicted as being covered with eyes in front and behind (Rev. 4:6).

¹⁸ Konrad Huber, *The Oxford Handbook of the Book of Revelation*, 59-60.

¹⁹ Steven J. Friesen, "Myth and Symbolic Resistance in Revelation 13," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 123 (2004): 309-10.

²⁰ They such as artefacts (Rev.5:1, 8; 6:2, 5), buildings and furnishings (Rev. 3:8; 1:18; 3:12; 13:6; 21:14), climatic phenomena (Rev. 1:7, 14, 16; 8:5; 4:6; 3:1; 2:28), colours (Rev. 1:14; 6:4, 5, 8; 8:7; 12:3; 17:2, 4), commerce (Rev. 6:6), animals (Rev. 4:6; 5:6), clothing (Rev. 15:6; 9:9; 19:8), religious objects (Rev. 1:12; 8:3; 6:9; 13:14), precious materials (Rev. 4:3; 21:19), metals (Rev. 1:17; 3:18), numbers (Rev. 6:8; 11:3), people (Rev. 2:14, 20; 3:7; 4:4), places (Rev. 9:1; 1:18; 11:8), time periods (Rev. 8:1; 11:2; 13:5), and weapons (Rev.1:16; 2:12, 16); Paul Fahy, "A Key to Symbols used in the Book of Revelation," *Understanding Ministries*, 1-11, <https://www.understanding-ministries.com/docs/Symbols Revelation.pdf>, accessed on 26/09/24.

The first creature resembles a lion, the second a calf, the third has a face like a man, and the fourth is like a flying eagle (Rev. 4:7). Simon J. Kistemaker notes that this animal metaphor is drawn from Ezekiel 1:5-6. Kistemaker suggests that “the four faces of the cherubim symbolically represent qualities such as boldness and courage, strength and determination, intelligence and wisdom, as well as quickness and agility.”²¹ Indeed, the characteristics mentioned reflect those of the Cherubim (Rev. 4:8).

The second animal metaphor is that of the lamb, depicted as having seven horns and seven eyes and being slain (Rev. 5:6). In the context of John’s writings, the term ‘lamb’ signifies Jesus (John 1: 29, 36). In Jewish tradition, the number seven represents completeness. Kistemaker notes that “the repeated use of the number seven highlights the symbolism of completeness concerning the Lamb.” Seven horns connote all authority to rule; seven eyes connote perfect eyesight to observe all the things in the universe; and seven spirits connote the fullness of the Holy Spirit.²²

The third symbolic use of animal metaphor refers to the four horses: the White horse (Rev. 6:2), the Red horse (Rev. 6:4), the Black horse (Rev. 6:5), and the Pale horse (Rev. 6:8). Grant R. Osborne notes that this imagery is derived from Zechariah 1:7-11 and 6:1-8.²³ Some scholars view the white horse as Christ; while others view it as the satanic force.²⁴ Koester considers ‘human

²¹ Kistemaker, “Exposition of the Book of Revelation,” *Black’s New Testament Commentary*, vol.20 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2001), 190-191.

²² Kistemaker, *Black’s New Testament Commentary*, vol.20, 207.

²³ Grant Osborne, “Revelation,” *Baker’s Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 274.

²⁴ William Hendricksen, *More than Conquerors: An Interpretation of the Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1967), 113-117; George Eldon Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 99.

conquest’ as the most plausible view.²⁵ The red horse (v. 4) symbolizes the terrible bloodshed and slaughter to be wrought upon the world. And the black horse signifies “the sorrow and mourning caused by the famine and suffering that follow war.”²⁶ The pale horse “accompanied by Hades stands for pestilence, earthquakes, destruction, death, hunger.”²⁷ These languages represent the judgment that will be coming upon the earth.

The fourth animal metaphor is the eagle. John heard an eagle’s pronouncing woe to the earth (Rev. 8:13). The Greeks and the Romans perceive eagle as the messenger of gods. In the Old Testament, an eagle was considered an unclean bird (Lev.11:13; Deut. 14:12). According to Osborne, “the eagle stands for grandeur, power, and a harbinger of judgment” in the Apocalypse.²⁸ When the eagle issues a sharp warning, everyone will understand the warning and take it seriously.²⁹ In this context, the eagle acts as God’s messenger, delivering a pronouncement of woe. *The fifth symbolic image is the locusts* (Rev. 9:3). In the Old Testament, locusts symbolize darkness as an expression of God’s judgment (Exod. 10:15; Joel 2:10), and in this case, they also signify divine wrath.

The sixth use of animal metaphor refers to the plague horses (Rev. 9:17-21). John portrays the horses by saying, “the heads of the horses are like lion’s heads; and fire, smoke, and brimstone come out of their mouths” (Rev.9:17 NASB), symbolizing intense destruction.

²⁵ Craig R. Koester, “Revelation: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary,” *Anchor Yale Bible*, vol. 38A. London: Yale University Press, 2014.394.

²⁶ Grant Osborne, *Baker’s Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, 279.

²⁷ Blaise Gundu Gabaden and John Joshua Oyedemi, “Animal Imagery in the Apocalypse,” *International Organization of Scientific Research- Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, vol.19/8, (2014): 100.

²⁸ Grant Osborne, *Baker’s Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, 359-360.

²⁹ Craig R. Koester, *Anchor Yale Bible*, vol. 38A, 454.

Kistemaker compares this depiction to ancient tales of dragons breathing fire, highlighting its destructive nature.”³⁰ It represents the ferocious destructiveness of the demonic beings. The seventh metaphor is the red dragon “having seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads were seven diadems” (Rev.12:3 NASB). G. K. Beale deliberates that dragon in Old Testament term for “the evil sea monster that symbolizes evil kingdoms who oppress Israel. Often the wicked kingdom of Egypt is portrayed by this emblem.”³¹ Here, it is also used to depict the evil kingdom, to which the devil is the head (Rev.12:9; 20:2, 10). Seven is a literary technique in Revelation that denotes a whole set. The seven heads here indicate the seriousness of the threat.³² Besides, the seven diadems in the head represents “the devil’s false claims of sovereign, universal authority in opposition to the true ‘King of kings and Lord of lords.’”³³ Serpent is another metaphor (Rev. 12:14-15). This imagery traces back to the Edenic narrative where Satan, in the form of serpent, deceived the woman (Gen. 3:1-13). This term emphasizes the act of deception in this context, further supporting the idea that the serpent’s river symbolizes deceit. The serpent attempts to deceive the woman through a flood of words, much like he deceived the first woman with his words.

The ‘two beasts’ is another language that is evident (Rev. 13:1-18). One beast is depicted as coming from the sea (Rev.13:1) and another beast is depicted as coming from the earth (Rev.13:11). Its description such as leopard, feet like a bear, and mouth like a lion (Rev. 13:2) resemble the vision of Daniel. Concerning the former

³⁰ Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Book of Revelation*, 298.

³¹ G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 632.

³² Craig R. Koester, *Anchor Yale Bible*, vol. 38A, 545.

³³ G.K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 635.

beast. The beast from the sea has frequently been understood in historical terms as the Roman governor.³⁴ The ten horns represent the ten rules of the Roman Empire. The number seven carries the idea of completeness, so the seven-headed beast with seven diadems portrays the “symbol for ultimate enemy of the believing church.”³⁵ The beast from the earth represents the false prophet, speaking for the dragon, promoting idolatry (Rev.13:14). The frog metaphor is depicted as “three unclean spirits like frogs” (Rev.16:13). The frog symbolizes the uncleanness (Lev.11:10). While the white horse in Rev. 6:2-8 refers to the satanic force/human conquest, the metaphor of white horse in Rev. 19:11-16 refers to Jesus Christ, the just and righteous King.

Functions of Animal Metaphor

Having explored the origins of animal metaphors in apocalyptic literature in the previous section, it is now important to examine their function. Imagery in the Apocalypse serves various purposes, and this section will focus on discussing the roles of these symbolic representations.

Function as *Ekphrasis*

The first function of the language is *ekphrasis*. This is proposed by recent scholar like Robyn J. Whitaker.³⁶ *Ekphrasis* is one of fourteen rhetorical techniques in Progymnasmata. Aelius Theon described *ekphrasis* as “descriptive language, leading what is

³⁴ David E. Aune, “Revelation 6-16,” *World Biblical Commentary*, vol.52B (Dallas, Texas: Word Books, 2002), 733.

³⁵ Robert H. Mounce, “The Book of Revelation,” *New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 189.

³⁶ Robyn J. Whitaker, “The Poetic of Ekphrasis: Vivid Description and Rhetoric in the Apocalypse,” *Poetik und Intertextualität der Johannesapokalypse*,” *Biblical Interpretation*, vol. 346, edited by Stefan Alkier, Thomas Hieke, and Tobias Nicklas (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 227.

exhibited vividly before the eyes.”³⁷ In that sense, it is verbalizing of the visual. Although its definition emphasizes visual arts, the subjects of *ekphrasis* includes people, places, events, and times, which encompasses almost anything.³⁸ Besides, Whitaker states, “The goal of *ekphrasis* is to allow the reader to visualize and emotionally engage with it. *Ekphrasis* works as part of an appeal to *pathos* or emotion.”³⁹ Simon Goldhill also describes that *ekphrasis* is “a rhetorical weapon to get around the censor of the intellect, to cut the listener off from the facts, to leave him not just ‘as if a viewer at events,’ but with the destabilizing emotions of that event.”⁴⁰

Huber also considers it helpful as the text discusses the significance of the apocalyptic language in the category. The visions are believed to be literary devices that play a crucial role in the author's rhetorical strategy. They play an essential feature of John's persuasive argument. He further suggests that “it seems clear that the visionary imagery in Revelation is designed to be evocative and to have a persuasive function.”⁴¹ Andrew Ryan Guffey also argues that “John's goals in using such animal language were the same goals as ancient *ekphrasis*: to evoke pathos, enhance ethos, and most importantly to make the divine world and its machinations virtually present for his audience.”⁴² Noting the similarities between *ekphrasis* and imagery, it is fitting to suggest that one of the functions

³⁷ Aelius Theon, “Ecphrasis,” *Progymnasmata*, translated by George A. Kennedy (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 45-46.

³⁸ Ruth Webb, *Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion in Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Practice* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate Publishing, 2009), 62.

³⁹ Robyn J. Whitaker, *Biblical Interpretation*, vol.346, 230.

⁴⁰ Simon Goldhill, “What is *Ekphrasis* For?” *Classical Philology*, vol. 102/1 (2007): 6.

⁴¹ Konard Huber, *The Oxford Handbook of the Book of Revelation*, 62.

⁴² Andrew Ryan Guffey, “Unseeing the Shown, Showing the Unseen: The Images of John's Apocalypse and the Visual Culture of Ancient Asia Minor” *A PhD Dissertation* (University of Virginia, 2014), 226-249.

of the imagery is *ekphrasis*, where the author's aim is to persuade readers through vivid descriptions.

Didactic and Paraenesis Function

Another purpose of metaphor in the Apocalypse is *parenetic* function which means, “exhortation” or “advice,” refers to a form of moral instruction or exhortation intended to encourage or guide people in their behavior.⁴³ Huber contends that the imagery in Revelation serves a significant *paraenetic* and comforting role. He also considers that the purpose of presenting God, the heavenly realm, or the risen Christ so vividly and repeatedly in the narrative is to provide prospects of the eschatological completion of God’s people, particularly during plagues and catastrophes. Furthermore, depicting the opposing forces in such a grotesque manner exposes their true nature and aims to inspire readers to remain resolute in their faith and persevere through their current struggles, providing them with both courage and solace.⁴⁴ Through the use of diverse imagery, these elements work to change how people perceive their surroundings, encouraging them to challenge the constraints of reality through creativity and imagination. As one navigates through a sequence of images, their worldview can shift, leading to a symbolic transformation of the world itself.⁴⁵ Therefore, animal language serves as guidance and reassurance for the readers.

Parabolic Function

Another function of metaphor in the Apocalypse is the parabolic function. Beale suggests that “the symbols have a

⁴³ Victor P. Furnish, *Theology and Ethics in Paul* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2009), 45.

⁴⁴ Konard Huber, *The Oxford Handbook of the Book of Revelation*, 63.

⁴⁵ David L. Barr, “The Apocalypse as a Symbolic Transformation of the World: A Literary Analysis,” *International*, vol.38 (1984): 39–50.

parabolic function and are intended to encourage and exhort the audience.”⁴⁶ The symbols used in a particular context have a distinctive parabolic function. They aim to inspire and motivate the audience towards a particular goal or action. They are designed to convey a message of encouragement and exhortation in a powerful and impactful manner, leaving a lasting impression on the audience.⁴⁷ By using images familiar to them, the author seeks to encourage the readers to align their thoughts and behaviour with God-centred standards.⁴⁸ As parables teach unfamiliar concepts using a familiar idea or object, the parabolic function of imagery indicates that imagery is used to explain the transcendence reality, which involves the supernatural world.

Function as Covert Manuscript

Animal metaphor also functions as a “Covert Manuscript.” The term “covert manuscript” or “hidden transcript” is borrowed from James C. Scott. Scott states, “The hidden transcript represents discourse-gesture, speech, practices-that is ordinarily excluded from the public transcript of subordinates by the exercise of power.”⁴⁹ In social contexts where certain groups are subjected to oppression or marginalization, it is not uncommon to observe a public display of compliance or submission to dominant power structures. However, behind closed doors, individuals belonging to these groups may engage in conduct, conversations, or expressions that challenge or

⁴⁶ G.K Beale, *A Commentary on Greek Text*, 69.

⁴⁷ Leonard Thompson, “Mapping an Apocalyptic World,” *Sacred Places and Profane Spaces: Essays in the Geographics of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, edited by Jamie Scott and Paul Simpson-Housley (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991), 120.

⁴⁸ G.K Beale, *A Commentary on Greek Text*, 69.

⁴⁹ James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 27.

oppose these power dynamics.⁵⁰ In other words, “hidden transcript” is the language of the insiders that the outsiders do not understand; it is mainly used to express their socio-political oppression of the oppressed.

The apocalyptic literature was written in specific socio-political setting. Four various time frames were proposed as to when was the book of Revelation: the reigns of Claudius (41-54 CE), Nero (54-68 CE), Domitian (81-96 CE), and Trajan (98-117 CE).⁵¹ Among these views, contemporary scholars hold either the reign of Nero or Domitian.⁵² In either case, the book addresses the issue of historical crisis faced by the church. One crisis which the church faced was the religious-political crisis to which believers were compelled to imperial cult (Rev. 13:7-10, 15) and their declaration of the sovereignty of Christ as disloyalty to the emperor (Rev. 1:5).⁵³ In this situation, it was not safe to speak against the Roman Empire directly, doing so would lead them to greater suffering. So, they used imageries/symbols as the code words to describe their situation so that only the insiders would understand. Thus, animal imagery functions as a hidden transcript.

Theological Intent and Significance of Zoomorphism

Another reason for employing animal metaphor is its theological significance, particularly in the book of Revelation, where these visions represent the author's divinely inspired direction from the Lord. The phrase “write this down” or variations of “write” appear fourteen times in Revelation (1:11, 19; 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7,

⁵⁰ James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*, 114-115.

⁵¹ D. A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo, and Leon Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 473-74.

⁵² David E. Aune, “Revelation 1-5,” *World Biblical Commentary*, vol. 52A (Dallas, Texas: Word Books, 1997), lvii.

⁵³ G.K. Beale, *A Commentary on Greek Text*, 5.

12, 14; 10:4; 14:13; 19:9; 21:5), highlighting the divine origin of these visions. This suggests that God intentionally selected these images to communicate His truths. In terms of theological significance, animal metaphor serves to shock and awaken believers. Beale asserts that such imagery can effectively motivate individuals to take action, especially when it conveys crucial warnings.⁵⁴ It achieves this by expressing truths in symbolic or metaphorical forms, which can rouse individuals from their spiritual complacency and apathy. This intention is clear in both Daniel and Revelation, where the authors seek to awaken their audiences. Moreover, Beale contends that symbolic messages encourage individuals to confront uncomfortable realities they might typically overlook, inspiring them to take active steps toward change.⁵⁵ In this manner, animal metaphor is crucial for inspiring individuals to pursue growth and transformation.

While animal metaphor shocks and awakens the readers, it is also used to communicate divine messages. Beale comments that the employment of symbols in the Book of Revelation serves to convey divine messages that necessitate a thorough interpretation. It emphasizes that animals are essential in conveying God's message to His people. Therefore, the theological purpose of using animal language is to deliver the divine message to the audience, prompting them to view it as a warning to lead a God-centered life.

Animal metaphor in apocalyptic literature holds deep theological meaning, often symbolizing various aspects of divine authority, judgment, and cosmic forces. For example, in Revelation signifies power and authority. In Daniel 7:2, the lion specifically

⁵⁴ G.K. Beale, "The Purpose of Symbolism in the Book of Revelation," *Calvin Theological Journal*, vol.41 (2006): 59.

⁵⁵ G.K. Beale, *Calvin Theological Journal*, vol.41: 59.

represents the Babylonian kingdom.⁵⁶ In Revelation 4:7, the lion symbolizes royal power and the strength of wild animals. Additionally, other animal metaphor like the bear, leopard, dragon, and lamb represents different qualities. For instance, the lamb symbolizes the Lamb Christology, referring to Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God who was sacrificed (Revelation 5). Furthermore, the beast historically represents the Roman emperor, the adversary of believers. Although these images have specific historical meanings, the author used insider language to communicate theological truths. Through this imagery, the author aims to encourage believers and offer them hope in the midst of their suffering. Therefore, animal metaphor carries significant theological importance.

Inferences and Final Thoughts

Animal metaphor (zoomorphism) plays a major role in apocalyptic literature, particularly in the book of Revelation. The use of familiar metaphors, particularly from nature or cultural contexts, helps to explain spiritual, divine, or future oriented truths that might otherwise be difficult to grasp. For example, in the book of Revelation, common images of animals are used to represent profound spiritual and cosmic realities. This method appeals to the imagination and emotions of the audience, making complex spiritual concepts more understandable and relatable. By using imagery that the audience can recognize, these abstract or mysterious messages become more vivid and engaging, which helps in conveying their deeper meanings effectively.

This article has explored animal metaphor that are presented, beginning by identifying key animal symbols and explaining their meanings in the book of Revelation. It has considered various views

⁵⁶ S. R. Miller, "Daniel," *New American Commentary*, vol.18 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 197.

on the sources of these metaphors in both Daniel and Revelation. For Daniel, it discusses influences such as Babylonian art and mythology, including the *Enūma Eliš*, VAT 10057, *Shumma Izbu*, and the Old Testament. For Revelation, the Greco-Roman context and the Old Testament are examined. The article further explored the functions of animal metaphor by explaining that it can serve multiple purposes, including vivid description, offering comfort or exhortation, teaching through animal metaphors, and conveying hidden messages. It also discusses the reasons behind the use of animal metaphor, noting that it is a typical feature of apocalyptic literature and serves important theological functions. The theological significance of these metaphors was to encourage believers and offer them hope in the midst of their suffering.

In conclusion, the animal metaphors in Revelation serve as a vital communicative tool that aligns with the genre of apocalyptic literature. These metaphors are not only symbolizing earthly realities and cosmic struggles but also convey profound theological truths. The sources of these metaphors are varied, drawing from the Old Testament, Jewish apocalyptic writings, Greco-Roman influences, and divine visions received by John. Their functions whether *ekphrastic*, *parenetic*, or parabolic serve to persuade, comfort, and inspire believers, urging them to remain faithful amid suffering and to align themselves with God's sovereign plan. Through animal metaphors, Revelation communicates divine messages in ways that evoke emotional responses, deepen theological understanding, and shape the faith community's worldview.

Entitlement of *Theotokos* to Mary

by Mr. Gaiphiugang Gonmei, he has finished his Master of Theology in the discipline of Systematic Theology from Evangelical Theological Seminary, Hosur, Tamil Nadu, India. Currently, he is serving as a Faculty of Berachah Institute of Higher Education and Research, Palampur, Himachal Pradesh.

Abstract

The authors of the Bible are fond of putting title. Similarly, the church, from the day of Pentecost to till date, enjoy the taste of title in relation to such people and title. For example, the word *apostle* or *Reformer* or *Protestant* is used by the church even today. Why because the title play very important roles in the church Tradition. When it comes to Mary, how should the church address her? Mary? Yeah, there is no wrong in addressing her with her respective name, and it should be of no offence. The word *Christ* is the title for Jesus which means *the anointed one*. When we refer Jesus with the title *Christ*, there is meaning in it by knowing who he is and what he has done. When it comes to Mary, what is wrong in calling her *theotokos*, meaning *God-bearer*? Was the child she bore not of the same substance of the Father? Yes, he is of the same substance with the Father. Then why not calling Mary, *theotokos*? As the title is important to address to the appropriate person with the appropriate title, so also the title of *theotokos* should be addressed to the Mother of Jesus, Mary.

Key Words

Theotokos, God-bearer, Mary, Nestorius, Cyril of Alexandria, *Christokos*, Roman Catholic, *Deipara*, Protestant, Greek and Latin Fathers, Mother of God.

Introduction

Can an Evangelical Christian call Mary the *Mother of God*? Or can any Protestant Christians call Mary as the Mother of God (God-bearer, *Theotokos*.)? Some would agree and some may not. Different people has different perspectives and thoughts about this doctrine. Because there is a very high chance people might consider Mary as mother of God in the sense of God's substance. And I agree with that. But what could be the reason the Fathers promote for this doctrine? There must be some interesting concept on itself. Wherefore, this question will be answered in this article. To get the answer, I will analyze the topic by tracing back where this doctrine was originated and I will attempt to find out how they have understood the concept. In doing so, I will attempt to provide some of the view of Nestorius, Cyril, Roman Catholic, also their theological ground on the so-called *Theotokos*. In doing so, I will also provide some challenges on calling, *Mary, the God-bearer*. And finally, I will conclude the article with my own conviction on the matter. This article is not interested outside of Christianity, but simply to survey how different Christian denominations think on the word *Theotokos* (God-bearer). It is only for the purpose of studies and academic understanding.

Meaning of *Theotokos*

The word *Theotokos* comes from two Greek words, *θεός* (*Theos*) meaning *God* and *τόκος* (*tokos*) meaning *parturition or childbirth*. When this is translated literally, it would mean “God-bearer” or “the one who gives birth to God.” This literal translation leaves out so much that needs to be understood about Mary as the Mother of God. This explains why the literal translation is less appreciated and the liturgical use of *Theotokos* is often left untranslated, or paraphrased as Mother of God. However, by

Theotokos, it is meant, the Mother of God.¹ Henry Newman puts in such a beautiful way in regards to the doctrine of *Theotokos* to prove that Mary is fully, the mother of Jesus:

Mary was no mere instrument of God's dispensation. The Word of God did not merely pass through her as He may pass through us in Holy Communion. It was no heavenly body which the Eternal Son assumed. No, He imbibed; He sucked up her blood and her substance into His Divine person. He became man from her and received her lineaments and her features as the appearance and character under which He should manifest Himself to the world. He was known, doubtless, by His likeness to her, to be her Son.²

In this sense Mary is the Mother of God, does not in any way exclude aspects of Motherhood. In relation to Jesus, she was fully a Mother. For centuries, Christians have honored, revered, and even venerated Mary as the *Theotokos*, meaning *God-bearer* or *the Mother of God*. The description of Mary as *Theotokos* appeared early in Christian writings, perhaps as early as the second century.³ Nestorius taught that the Son of God and the son of Mary were two different persons. This was a heresy that struck at the root of the work of redemption by Christ; because, according to this notion, it was the son of Mary only, a mere man, who died upon the cross.

Therefore, the infinite value of the atonement was destroyed. This was the error that the General Council of Ephesus had to guard against the heresy to maintain that the very person who was born of Mary was also the Son of God, and, therefore, God. They did this by calling her *Theotokos*, the exact meaning of which is, she who brought forth him who was truly God. This was then the whole

¹ Anthony Kanu, *Mary as the Mother of God*, (12 Memudu Aremu Street, Ikate: Hansel Communications, 2018), 11.

² Anthony Kanu, *Mary as the Mother of God*, 12.

³ Philip Andrew Dancy, "Nestorius and Rejection of Theotokos: His Political and Social Condemnation," *Fides Et Historia*, vol. 37/2 (fall, 2005): 151–163.

meaning and intention of the term; and in this sense it is held and approved by all orthodox Protestants.⁴

View on *Theotokos* by Nestorius of Constantinople

Nestorius was the outstanding bishop of Constantinople who stirred up a new and even bitterer controversy in the Christian history. He held that the divine Word or Logos dwelt in the man Jesus somewhat as God dwells in a temple, or as he dwelt in the Old Testament prophets, or as he dwells in all Christian believers.⁵ He was a devout, learnt, and eloquent monk, was presbytery of the church of Antioch, and in 428 was made patriarch of Constantinople. He found many erroneous expressions and modes thought current in the church. Especially offensive to him was the term, “Mother of God,” applied to Mary. He declared that if this representation were true, the heathens were right in representing their gods as having mothers. Mary did not bear God, but the man (Jesus) who is the organ of the deity.⁶ He questioned, was she turning into a goddess? He argued that a creature cannot give birth to the creator, he insisted, only to the man or mother of Christ (*Christokos*). Thus, he walked into a fight with Alexandria. A war of words broke out, each single-mindedly holding the understanding of Christ that meant so much to them. Nestorius insisted that Mary bore Jesus the human, not God. Likewise, it was the humanity of Christ that thirsted, suffered and died; God cannot die. So, the emperor called a council to meet in St Mary’s in Ephesus in 431, to decide between Alexandria, and Constantinople and Antioch. Nestorius’ Antiochene supporters arrived nineteen days late to find that Cyril had already condemned

⁴ William Blood. “Adoring Images: The Mother of God,” *The Catholic Layman*, vol. 2/20 (Aug, 1853), 93–84.

⁵ Earnest Trice Thompson, *Through the Ages: A History of the Christian Church* (Virginia: The CLC Press, 1965), 75–76.

⁶ Albert Henry Newman, *A Manual of Church History*, vol. 1 (Chicago: The American Baptist Publication Society, 1933), 337.

and deposed him, so they had their own council next door, condemning Cyril. So, the churches excommunicated each other. And finally, the Antioch agreed to compromise with the Alexandria in 433 and condemned Nestorius.⁷

Nestorius's view of the relations of the Human and Divine in Christ: (a) that in Christ the two natures remained distinct, yet are closely joined together and harmonious in will. (b) That only by accommodation can Mary be spoken of as Mother of God (*Theotokos*). We may venerate the human on account of its close connection with the divine, but we must beware of confounding it with the divine. (c) Nestorius explained by this theory all those passages in the Gospels in which Christ is represented as being subject to temptations, wants, sufferings, etc.⁸

After his condemnation, Nestorius retired unto a monastery, and was later banished from the empire. Nestorianism, however, continued to spread. It was welcomed in Persia, then seeking to revive its ancient glories. Nestorianism was not tolerated in the Roman Empire; however, it penetrated the Far East and reached the furthestmost parts of China. Centuries later, the Nestorian church was the largest Christian body in the world. Today, Nestorius' teaching is believed to be existing mostly in Syria and in some parts of India.⁹

View on *Theotokos* by Cyril of Alexandria

Cyril of Alexandria was an unpleasant, extremely equivocal man, who exhibits to us a man making theology and orthodoxy the instruments of his passions. During his life span he had many negatives works but he was also the most zealous and the most

⁷ Stephen Tomkins, *A short History of Christianity* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2005), 64–65.

⁸ Albert Henry Newman, *A Manual of Church History*, 337-338.

⁹ Earnest Trice Thompson, *Through the Ages: A History of the Christian Church*, 76.

influential champion of the anti-Nestorian orthodoxy at the third ecumenical council. He believes a striking proof that orthodoxy and piety may coexist with an unchristian spirit. He was a man of vigorous and acute mind and extensive learning, and is clearly to be reckoned among the most important dogmatic and polemic divines of the Greek Church. He had a zeal for the honor of Mary as the virgin-mother of God. Aside from his biased excesses, he powerfully and successively represented the important truth of the unity of the person of Christ against the abstract teaching of Nestorius.¹⁰

Nestorius' opponent was Cyril, bishop of Alexandria. Nestorius was condemned by the third ecumenical council which was met in Ephesus in the year A.D. 431, on the ground that he proposed Jesus as wholly two persons, not one.¹¹ The Alexandrian wholly accepted the phrase 'mother of God.' To Alexandrian, Mary is the mother of Christ, Christ is God, and so Mary is the mother of God. Cyril ruled Alexandria like a king, with the help of armed confrontation with the civil authorities. Cyril accused Nestorius of separating the humanity and divinity that joined perfectly together in Christ. Cyril believed that whatever is true of the Son of Mary is true of the Son of God, 'we must not split the one Lord Jesus Christ into two sons.'¹²

After some correspondence with Nestorius, Cyril presented twelve propositions, with anathemas attached for his acceptance. They are for substance as follows: God is in truth Immanuel, and on this account the holy virgin is mother of God, for she brought forth carnally the Word of (proceeding from) God become flesh. The Word (proceeding) from God the Father is in the flesh one in essence, and Christ with his own flesh is one and evidently at the

¹⁰ Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. iii, 942-948.

¹¹ Earnest Trice Thompson, *Through the Ages: A History of the Christian Church*, 75-76.

¹² Stephen Tomkins, *A Short History of Christianity*, 64-65.

same time God and man. Hence, after the union, the natures in the one Christ are not to be distinguished, nor is it to be said that they are merely joined together in dignity or power. Rather they have come together according to natural unity. The application of certain facts and expressions in the New Testament to the human as unworthy of the divine nature, and of others to the divine as too exalted for the human, is condemned. Christ is not to be called a *theophoric* (God-bearing) man, not rather God in truth, as one Son by nature. Neither is it to be said that the Word, which from God the Father, is God or Master of Christ, but rather that he is at the same time God and man. It must not be said that Jesus as a man was energized by the Word of God, and that the dignity of the only begotten was bestowed, as being another apart from himself. It must not be said that the man having been assumed is to be worshiped and glorified together with God the Word, and is to be called God in a sense not involving a recognition of him as Immanuel. It must not be said that the one Lord Jesus Christ was glorified by the Spirit, using through him (the Spirit) a power foreign to himself, but rather that the Holy Spirit is his very own and is used by him. The Spirit of God actually became flesh according to the Scripture, and he offered up himself not for himself, but rather for us alone. The flesh of the Lord is life-giving, as being an integral part of the Word of God himself. God the Word suffered in the flesh, was crucified in the flesh, tasted death in the flesh.¹³ In concluding, Cyril wrote, “I am amazed that there are some who are entirely in doubt as to whether the holy virgin should be called *Theotokos* or not. For if our Lord Jesus Christ is God, how is the holy Virgin who gave Him birth, not God-bearer (*Theotokos*)?”¹⁴

¹³ Albert Henry Newman, *A Manual of Church History*, 338–339.

¹⁴ Anthony Kanu, *Mary as the Mother of God*, 21.

He, therefore, confirmed the title of the Blessed Virgin Mary, by these words, she is therefore, holy and mystical Trinity, who gathered us together in this church of Mary, the Mother of God. Hail Mary, Mother of God, most venerated treasure on all earth, inextinguishable light, crown of virginity, scepter of true doctrine, indestructible temple, dwelling place of him who cannot be contained, virgin and mother, through whom we have been given him who is called *per excellence*.¹⁵

View on *Theotokos* according to Roman Catholic

The Roman Catholic believes that, *Theotokos* is not the word that would have been used by persons who spoke the Greek language to express what the Church of Rome now means by “*Mother of God*.” Although, the origin and intention of the term *Theotokos* is well known today.¹⁶ According to Roman Catholic Church, Mary is a model for all—a model of motherhood and a model of discipleship in her own right. For the Catholic, she is viewed as having special influence with God. Located up there between the saints and Christ himself in the chain of ascendance toward God, if anyone can put in a good word for us, it is Mary. Over the ages, Mary has been a special inspiration to the downtrodden, oppressed, and discriminated against. She offers an example of the creative power of women and is a hope to all those living at the margins of society.¹⁷

The Roman Catholic declared that, once for all, and to have it settled in readers’ minds, whether Roman Catholics are right or wrong in styling the Blessed Virgin, “Mother of God.” They cordially confess and fully believe that He whom she bore is God of

¹⁵ Anthony Kanu, *Mary as the Mother of God*, 21–23.

¹⁶ William Blood. “Adoring Images: The Mother of God,” *The Catholic Layman*, vol. 2/20 (Aug, 1853): 93–84.

¹⁷ Chloe Breyer. “A Meditation on Mary, Mother of God,” *Journal of Religion and Health*, vol. 42/ 2 (Summer, 2003): 139–142.

the substance of the Father, begotten before the world, and man of the substance of His mother, born in the world, and in that faith, they hope to die, and to meet Him at His coming. But the question is, if this be not enough; or if it be necessary for true Catholics further to give to Her that service and duty and obedience which some Roman Catholics say that God Himself must owe and render to His own Mother. The Roman Catholic clarify that, they approach this subject without passion or prejudice. Many of the Greek Fathers called the Blessed Virgin *Theotokos*; many of the Latin Fathers called her *Deipara*. The Catholic have no dislike to either of these terms, save that they are sought to be perverted, and Roman Catholic should be quite willing to use either or both of them in the same sense in which the Greek and Latin Fathers in old times used them. But, after carefully examining the facts and the evidence, the Roman Catholic affirms, that “Mother of God” is not the true or proper English translation of the Greek *Theotokos* or of the Latin *Deipara*. That though individual bishops may have used the word at and before the Council of Ephesus, that general council did not adopt the word *Theotokos* nor decree that the Blessed Virgin should be called *Deiparas*.¹⁸

The Roman Catholic argue that, if the Greek Fathers had intended to express what is now intended by *Mother of God*, they would obviously have used the words *Θεος μητηρ* (*Theos-mater*), which are the true and proper Greek for *Mother of God*, and the Latin Fathers would as obviously have used the words *Dei Mater*. But the Greek Fathers did not call her *Θεος μητηρ* (*Theos-mater*). Sooner than call her so, they invented a New Greek word, *Θεοτοκος*, which word was never heard of before. Sooner than call her *Dei Mater*, the Latin Fathers invented a new Latin word, *Deipara*. The fact of their

¹⁸ “Θεοτόκος, Deipara, Mother of God.” *The Catholic Layman* 6/66 (1857): 65–66; <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30066681>. Accessed 6 Nov, 2024.

inventing new words shows that they considered the existing words of their language unsuitable to express their meaning. The fact is a striking one, which both Greek and Latin Fathers shrunk from applying to the Blessed Virgin those terms of their languages which would literally express *Mother of God*.¹⁹

According to Roman Catholic, it is clear that the Council of Ephesus never had any idea of using the term in any such sense as this; and it was such awful abuses and perversions of the term in later times, that led to the term itself being dropped by Protestants, although they hold firmly all that the term was at first intended to express and defend—namely, that he who was born of Mary was truly God.²⁰

Challenges on Use of *Theotokos*

The idea of Mary as the *Mother of God* can lead to a misunderstanding of the relationship between Mary's Motherhood and Jesus' divinity. The question that sometimes arises is: If Mary is the *Mother of God* (i.e.-Jesus Christ), is she also the Mother of His divinity? The use of the phrase *Mother of God* needs to be understood by the person employing it, as not referring to Mary as Mother of God *from eternity* but rather only with reference to the birth of Jesus, that is, God's birth on earth in the flesh. The Church declared that both Divine and human natures were united in the person of Jesus, the Son of Mary. Hence, Mary is the Mother of God since the Son she bore according to the flesh; Jesus is truly one of the Divine persons of the Most Holy Trinity.

The entitlement of *Theotokos* for Mary is really a Christological statement, affirming that the Second Person of the

¹⁹ “Θεοτόκος, Deipara, Mother of God.” *The Catholic Layman* 6/66 (1857): 65–66. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30066681>. Accessed 6 Nov. 2024.

²⁰ William Blood. “Adoring Images: The Mother of God,” *The Catholic Layman*, vol. 2/ 20 (Aug, 1853): 93–84.

Most Holy Trinity, who was born into history is fully human and fully divine. On the other hand, Christians believe that the *Son* of God is begotten (born) of God the Father *from all eternity*, but is born *in time* of Mary, the title: Mother of God, therefore, refers to the incarnation, when the Divine Person of God the Son took on human nature in addition to His pre-existing divine nature, this being made possible through Mary's cooperation, where Luke 1:38 shows us, "Behold the maid of the Lord, let it be done to me according to your word."²¹

What precisely did Mary give Jesus in the act of Motherhood? First of all, let us establish what she did not give Jesus. Mary did not give Jesus His divine nature, nor did she give Him His divine personhood. Both of these aspects of Jesus, in His divinity, existed from eternity. What Mary gave Jesus was a human nature identical to her own. This gift of nature is given through the process of conception, growth or gestation, and birth. So, the fruit of motherhood is the whole child, the entire person and not just the physical body. Mary was the mother of someone, the mother of the person Jesus, who was an incarnate, humanized Divine Person, who subsisted and existed in the historical human nature of Jesus of Nazareth.²²

Another possible misinterpretation of the *Theotokos* is the understanding of Mary to be the Mother of the Three Divine Persons of the Most Holy Trinity. Mary is not the mother of God, the Father and God, the Holy Spirit. She is rather the Mother of God the Son, who became flesh and dwelt among us. The title is understood as referring only to Mary's maternity of Jesus. This relates to the previous possible misunderstanding of her maternity as including the divinity of Jesus. For her to be Mother of God the Father, the Holy

²¹Anthony Kanu, *Mary as the Mother of God*, 16–17.

²²Anthony Kanu, *Mary as the Mother of God*, 17–18.

Spirit and of Jesus' Divinity, she must be eternal and in fact, existed before God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The title *Theotokos* specifically excludes the understanding of Mary as Mother of God the Father and the Holy Spirit. Universally Christianity believed that God is the cause of all, with neither origin nor source, and thus without mother.²³

Conclusion

Having laid out the argument lines of Nestorius, Cyril, Roman Catholic and the challenges and having been studied the subject and based on the above different views, we may come up with many concepts or conclusions. If we just depend on human intelligent and wisdom, we might conclude that Mary cannot be *Theotokos*, because human cannot bear God, which is also true for Nestorius and Today's Nestorian. Also, if we fully believe that Mary as the *Mother of God*, in the sense of her divine essence, we might end up worshipping Mary. But there are also very good explanations on this matter, which is of Cyril. If we don't call Mary as the *Mother of God* then what can we call her, whom she brought forth Christ? This stand does not mean that Mary as divine but in the sense of Christ's incarnation, or human's biology. Legally speaking Mary is the mother of God. Because Christ is God. Also, *Theotokos* was never used in the salvific or eternal sense. The church felt that this was necessary so that there was no question about Jesus' divinity or humanity. Personally speaking, there is no issue or wrong in calling Mary, *Theotokos*. It is proper to call Mary, the God-bearer or the mother of God, in the sense of the above arguments. Mary is the mother of God because whom she bore was God not mere human, but one of the Divine persons of the Most Holy Trinity—the second person of the Holy Trinity, who was born into history is fully human

²³ Anthony Kanu, *Mary as the Mother of God*, 19–20.

and fully divine.²⁴ She is the mother of God because her son was of the same substance with God. The God-ness is there in Jesus as of the Father and of the Spirit. As mentioned in above, Mary is not of the same substance with God but in a simple way, that is: since she gave birth to God and she carried God in her womb for months, in this simple sense, we can call Mary as the mother of God, the *Theotokos*.

²⁴ Anthony Kanu, *Mary as the Mother of God*, 16.

Visionary and Transformational Influence in Paul's Enduring Model of Leadership

by Dr. Parakulathu Abey Thomas serves as the Principal of Berachah Institute of Higher Education and Research (BIHER). He holds a diverse range of academic qualifications, including an M.B.A, P.G.D.M, M.Phil, M.Div, M.Th, and a D.B.A in Marketing Management. In 2014, he authored a book titled Time Management from a Christian Perspective. Dr. Thomas resides in Palampur, Himachal Pradesh.

Abstract

Transformational leadership emphasizes inspiring and empowering individuals to achieve beyond their personal limits while focusing on their development, which closely mirrors the leadership style of Apostle Paul. Paul's leadership in the early Christian community was transformational, as he consistently guided followers towards spiritual growth, integrity, and service. His teachings, mentoring, and missionary efforts reflect a commitment to both improving follower performance and nurturing their long-term spiritual development. Paul express visionary leadership by presenting a clear and compelling vision for the future of the church, focused on spreading the Gospel and uniting believers. Paul's leadership influenced individuals like Timothy and Titus, mentoring them into becoming leaders themselves, and empowering the early church to endure and grow despite persecution. He led with integrity, creating a model of leadership excellence that resembles with the modern principles of transformational and visionary leadership. His forward-thinking, inclusive approach to spreading Christianity, coupled with his emphasis on faith and grace, laid the foundation for Christianity's global impact. This study explores Paul's unique combination of transformational

and visionary leadership and also to demonstrate the Apostle Paul's leadership model in contemporary contexts, leading to improved organizational performance and effectiveness. By integrating faith-based principles with leadership strategies, Paul's model provides insights into creating environments of innovation, trust, and dedication. His example continues to inspire leaders in both spiritual and organizational contexts, demonstrating how leadership rooted in moral integrity, purpose, and vision can drive lasting change.

Keywords

Transformational Leadership, Visionary Leadership, Leadership Excellence, Christian Leadership, Organizational Growth, Spiritual Development.

Introduction

Leadership, whether in business, sports, or education, is about empowering others to achieve goals they couldn't reach alone. Formal titles don't always define good leaders, as influence often comes from actions rather than positions. True leadership is demonstrated by inspiring, guiding, and uniting people toward common goals, built on trust and dedication.¹ It appears across diverse areas like business, politics, religion, and community, where effective leaders are known for making thoughtful decisions, setting clear objectives, and equipping their teams to succeed. Leadership development is a path of personal growth that pushes individuals beyond mental and emotional boundaries, making them more effective. Transformational leadership, in particular, nurtures

¹ Antonakis, John, and David V. Day. "Leadership: Past, Present, and Future," *The Nature of Leadership*, edited by John Antonakis and David V. Day (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2018), 3-26.

accountability, ownership, and autonomy within organizations, encouraging innovation and preparing them for future challenges.²

Leaders who model integrity and foster strong organizational cultures create environments where creativity and initiative thrive. Transformational leaders play a vital role in guiding organizations through change by empowering employees to think creatively and take the lead in problem-solving.³

This leadership approach focuses on creativity, innovation, and ownership among employees, setting the stage for visionary leadership. Transformational leadership lays the groundwork for visionary leadership by motivating teams to align with a shared, long-term vision.⁴ By inspiring trust and empowering individuals, transformational leaders create the environment necessary for visionary leadership to thrive.

A visionary leader drives change, motivates teams, and encourages growth, trusting employees without micromanagement and valuing their input.⁵ These leaders excel in communication, build strong relationships, and embrace fresh ideas and new technologies. They guide diverse teams and ensure that flexibility, transparency, and communication are key to leadership success.⁶

² Nazeriani, Mohammad Ali. "Transformational Leadership Style in Organizations." *Journal of Nafte-Pars*, (2011): 5-6.

³ Khorshid, Sara, and Amin Pashazadeh. "The Effect of Transformational Leadership on Organizational Learning Capabilities with Respect to the Mediating Role of Organizational Intelligence," *Journal of Change Management*, vol. 6/11 (2014): 7.

⁴ Bernard Bass, "Theory of Transformational Leadership Redux," *Leadership Quarterly*, vol. 6/4 (1995): 463–78.

⁵ Marshall Sashkin, "The Visionary Leader," *Charismatic Leadership: The Elusive Factor in Organizational Effectiveness*, ed. Jay A. Conger and Rabindra N. Kanungo (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1988), 122–60.

⁶ Stephen J. Zaccaro, Carrie Kemp, and Paige Bader, "Leader Traits and Attributes," *The Nature of Leadership*, ed. John Antonakis, Anna T. Cianciolo, and Robert J. Sternberg (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2004), 101–24.

Apostle Paul focuses transformational leadership by guiding early Christian communities, encouraging spiritual growth, and challenging believers to live out their faith with integrity and purpose. His letters inspired individuals to take ownership of their spiritual journey and use their gifts for the church's growth. As a visionary leader, Paul spoken a clear, compelling vision for the church's future, centered on spreading the gospel and uniting believers. His leadership inspired others to stay committed to their mission, even in the midst of persecution, blending both transformational and visionary elements to create a model of This study aims to explore and investigate the Apostle Paul's transformational influence and visionary leadership, examining the essential elements, impact on individual and organizational growth, and how his enduring model can inform and inspire leadership excellence today, while also analyzing how transformational and visionary leadership combine to inspire and motivate others, drive commitment and dedication, and achieve leadership excellence through innovation, trust, and adaptability.

Paul's Style of Leadership

The leadership of the Apostle Paul has been the subject of numerous studies, with scholars examining his approach through the lens of situational and transformational leadership and analyzing the diverse roles he played throughout his ministry. Recognized as an important figure in shaping Christianity, Paul's influence on Western civilization is profound, even beyond what he could have anticipated.⁷ Despite the monumental impact of his work, Paul remains an exemplary model for modern leaders, offering insights into leadership that reflect even in the 21st

⁷ E. Castelli, *Imitating Paul: A Discourse of Power* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 112–13.

century. His leadership, marked by humility, sacrifice, and conviction, provides an unparalleled example that many consider among the greatest in history. To regard Paul's leadership as truly great, three aspects must be considered: his significant accomplishments, his prudent use of limited resources, and his steadfast protection of the values of those he led.⁸ First, Paul's mission centered on promoting Jesus Christ and establishing churches grounded in this belief. His leadership laid the foundation for Christianity's exponential growth, from a fledgling movement in the 1st century to a global faith practiced by billions. Second, despite having scarce resources, Paul achieved extraordinary results, often relying on the support of others for basic needs like food and shelter. His ability to accomplish so much with so little underscores his leadership strength, far surpassing many leaders with greater resources at their disposal. Finally, Paul's commitment to Christian values, even among persecution, demonstrated his unwavering dedication to the principles of peace and faith, which he upheld without compromise.⁹

Paul's letters, written to both small groups and broader audiences, address key leadership traits that remain relevant today. Through these writings, it displays the qualities which is essential for leaders: compassion, self-awareness, righteousness through faith, commitment to growth, and the importance of building a strong, united community.¹⁰ Paul's appeal for unity and compassion, especially in his efforts to help the poor, reflects the heart of his leadership one that inspires followers to give their best.

⁸ A. D. Clarke, "Be Imitators of Me: Paul's Model of Leadership," *Tyndale Bulletin*, vol.49/ 2 (1998): 360.

⁹ F. F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977), 23-30.

¹⁰ Robert K. Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership* (New York: Paulist Press, 1977), np.

His self-awareness and deep understanding of his role in God's plan allowed him to lead with purpose and clarity, recognizing that true leadership involves aligning oneself with a higher calling. Additionally, Paul emphasized the need for righteousness by faith, teaching that while none are perfect, faith in Christ justifies and empowers individuals to lead others effectively.

Apostle Paul also exhibited a strong commitment to personal and spiritual growth, encouraging leaders to strive for improvement in their leadership roles and to offer themselves fully in service to others. He believed that leaders should nurture the growth of those they lead, improving both individual and collective development.¹¹ Paul also emphasis on building community highlights his understanding of the importance of unity, both within the church and in broader society. He saw the church as a body, with each member playing a important role, and he urged leaders to develop this sense of interconnectedness to ensure that the community thrives as a whole. Paul's leadership style was not only effective in his time but continues to offer invaluable lessons for today's leaders. His achievements, resourcefulness, and protection of core values demonstrate that great leadership is defined by one's ability to inspire, unite, and lead with integrity, compassion, and purpose.¹²

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership was first introduced in 1973 through Downton J. V.'s sociological study, *Rebel Leadership: Commitment and Charisma in the Revolutionary Process*. Later, James McGregor Burns popularized the concept in his 1978 book

¹¹ Charles C. Manz, *The Leadership Wisdom of Jesus: Practical Lessons for Today* (San Francisco: Berrett Koehler, 1998), np.

¹² Abraham Zaleznik, "Managers and Leaders: Are They Different?" *Harvard Business Review* 70 (1977): 106–15.

Leadership. In 1985, Barnard M. Bass developed a formal theory of transformational leadership, which included behavioral models and factors.¹³ Following that, in 1986, Noel M. Tichy and Mary Anne Devanna authored *The Transformational Leader*. Over the years, numerous research studies, doctoral dissertations, and publications have contributed to the development of transformational leadership, establishing it as a significant modern leadership model.¹⁴

Transformational leadership is grounded in transactional leadership principles, but, as James McGregor Burns “what is needed today is not the old transactional style but the new transformational approach.” Barnard M. Bass compared the two styles, highlighting key distinctions. According to Bass, transactional leaders define the tasks required for followers to achieve personal and organizational goals, providing support to boost their confidence with minimal effort.¹⁵ On the other hand, transformational leaders inspire followers to exceed their own expectations by increasing the perceived value and importance of tasks, encouraging them to prioritize the interests of the team, organization, or community over personal interests. While transactional leadership involves a straightforward exchange of work for compensation, transformational leadership requires visionary and inspiring leadership to drive meaningful change.¹⁶

¹³ Bernard Bass and Paul Steidlmeier, "Ethics, Character, and Authentic Transformational Leadership Behavior," *Leadership Quarterly*, vol.10/2 (1999): 161–163.

¹⁴ Bernard Bass and Paul Steidlmeier, "Ethics, Character, and Authentic Transformational Leadership Behavior," *Leadership Quarterly* vol.10/2 (1999): 173–175.

¹⁵ Bernard Bass, *Leadership, Psychology, and Organizational Behavior* (Portsmouth, NH: Greenwood, 1973), np.

¹⁶ James M. Burns, *Transforming Leadership: A New Pursuit of Happiness* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2003).

The Apostle Paul is regarded as one of the most influential figures after the death of Jesus due to his significant impact on Christian theology. He employed a transformational leadership style to inspire change in his followers. This leadership approach involves working collaboratively to identify necessary changes, creating a vision to inspire and guide those changes, and implementing them with the help of dedicated colleagues.¹⁷ A transformational leader understands the importance of being a role model, knowing that others are observing and learning how to influence others effectively. It is about serving with integrity, adhering to one's values, and motivating others to reflect on their beliefs and convictions in their work, service, and daily lives.¹⁸ Consequently, Paul transformed many individuals, as recorded in the New Testament.

Transformational leadership is distinguished by the ability to inspire and bring about change in people not only in their actions but also in their mindset and core values.¹⁹ Paul exemplified this type of leadership:

Life-Changing Impact- Paul's influence was transformative, prompting followers like Timothy, Titus, and many others to radically change their lives. His teachings empowered them to become leaders and serve their communities.

Empowering Others-Paul was dedicated to developing new leaders who could continue his mission. He mentored many,

¹⁷ Jay Conger and Rabindra Kanungo, *Charismatic Leadership in Organizations* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1998), np.

¹⁸ Rezazadeh, Ali, and Gholam Hossein Azizi. "The Impact of Transformational Leadership on Entrepreneurial Orientation of Organizations (Case Study: Representatives of Insurance Companies of Yazd Province)," *News in the World of Insurance* 172, (2012): 32.

¹⁹ James M. Burns, *Leadership* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), np.

developing their spiritual growth and leadership skills, highlighting a key element of transformational leadership empowerment.²⁰

Visionary Leadership and Enduring Legacy

A progressive leader plays a crucial role in a company's success, particularly during its initial growth phases. Visionary leadership involves steering an organization towards positive transformation and improved productivity by making strategic, thoughtful decisions.²¹ Understanding the traits of visionary leaders helps cultivate the necessary skills for innovation and enhancing business performance. The significance of visionary leadership lies in establishing a clear sense of purpose and direction for teams and organizations. This leadership style is future-oriented and motivates others to work towards a shared vision. Visionary leadership emphasizes long-term planning, with leaders who possess a strong sense of where the organization should head.²² These leaders communicate their vision effectively, fostering collaboration and teamwork among employees.

Visionary leadership shares similarities with other styles, such as pacesetter, where leaders push teams toward ambitious goals, and transformational leadership, which combines innovation

²⁰ A. D. Clarke, *Serve the Community of the Church: Christians as Leaders and Ministers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 241.

²¹ Arabiun, Ali, Ali DehghanNajmAbadi, Ali Rezazadeh, and Ali Haji Fathali. "Investigating the Effect of Entrepreneurial Orientation on the Relationship Between Transformational Leadership and Organizational Performance." *Journal of Research in Educational Administration*, vol.5/1 (2014): 50-53.

²² Avolio, Bruce J., and William L. Gardner. "Authentic Leadership Development: Getting to the Root of Positive Forms of Leadership." *The Leadership Quarterly*, vol.16/3 (2005): 305-15, [https:// doi.org/10.1016/ j.leaqua .2005.03.001](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2005.03.001).

with detailed planning.²³ By improving creativity and collaboration, visionary leaders build a culture grounded in core values like integrity and discipline. They encourage team members to develop their individual skills and contribute to workplace morale. Visionary leaders hold a clear understanding of the future and create actionable strategies to bring their vision to life. They can be found at all levels of management and in any industry. These leaders often bring creative problem-solving abilities and a forward-looking perspective, applying their ideas to benefit the overall growth and success of the organization.²⁴

Paul's visionary leadership is evident in his ability to see beyond the present challenges and envision a vibrant Christian community united in faith. He was able to articulate this vision in a way that inspired and motivated others, guiding them towards a common goal. His missionary journeys, letters, and teachings demonstrated strategic planning, persistence, and innovation—hallmarks of a visionary leader.²⁵

Moreover, Paul's leadership was characterized by adaptability and inclusivity. He embraced diverse cultures and peoples, preaching the Gospel to both Jews and Gentiles. This forward-thinking approach was transformative, opening the door for Christianity to spread globally. His leadership also encouraged collaboration, as he worked with other apostles, local leaders, and new believers to strengthen the Church's foundation. Paul's focus on core values such as faith, love, and grace was central to his

²³ Barling, Julian. *The Science of Leadership: Lessons from Research for Organizational Leaders*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199757015.001.0001>.

²⁴ Gary Yukl, *Leadership in Organizations*, 4th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2006), np.

²⁵ Charles R. Swindoll, *Paul: A Man of Grace and Grit* (Nashville, TN: W Publishing Group, 2002), np.

leadership.²⁶ These values fostered unity and discipline within the early Christian communities, much like visionary leaders today who build organizations around strong ethical principles. His ability to inspire others to take ownership of the mission, while empowering them to develop their own gifts and talents, made Paul a dynamic and transformative leader.²⁷ The Apostle Paul's leadership legacy endures not only because of his theological insights but also due to his strategic vision for the future of the Church. His ability to balance the immediate needs of the growing Christian community with a long-term vision for its global impact serves as a model for visionary leadership in any context.

Differences between Transformational and Visionary Leadership

Transformational leaders are primarily task-oriented, often using incentives to motivate their followers toward specific goals. This leadership style thrives on a give-and-take relationship, where leaders offer rewards in exchange for desired actions, thereby fostering a strong bond with their team.²⁸ The transformational leader is deeply involved in driving significant changes by inspiring followers, not through material rewards, but through their values, passion, and commitment to the organization's mission. This style is characterized by qualities like charisma, individualized attention, intellectual stimulation, and motivation through a

²⁶ Bruce Avolio, *Full Leadership Development* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1999), np.

²⁷ Larry C. Spears, *Insights on Leadership: Service, Stewardship, Spirit, and Servant-Leadership* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1998), np.

²⁸ Bernard Bass, Bruce Avolio, Dong I. Jung, and Yair Berson, "Predicting Unit Performance by Assessing Transformational and Transactional Leadership," *Journal of Applied Psychology*, vol. 88/2 (2003): 107–18.

compelling vision. As a result, followers not only contribute but become deeply engaged with the leader's ideals and objectives.²⁹

Visionary leadership, often associated with transformational leadership, stands out by emphasizing the future. Visionary leaders are adept at crafting and communicating a long-term vision that links the present to a future state. This vision energizes their team and fosters commitment toward long-term goals. For visionary leaders, success depends on their ability to clearly articulate their vision, motivating followers to adopt it as their own.³⁰

Transformational leaders focus on personal connections and encourage followers to exceed their self-interests for the collective good. They excel in confused times when swift changes and adaptability are needed. These leaders often increase followers' awareness of the organization's mission and encourage self-management, driving them to fulfill higher-order needs such as self-esteem and self-actualization.³¹

Both leadership styles, transformational and visionary, have their place in organizational and individual success, but they differ in their scope and approach. Transformational leaders focus on short-term changes that lead to immediate improvements, while visionary leaders emphasize long-term goals and strategic planning. Visionary leaders tend to delegate more and inspire through the

²⁹ Marshall Sashkin, "The Visionary Leader," *Charismatic Leadership: The Elusive Factor in Organizational Effectiveness*, ed. Jay A. Conger and Rabindra N. Kanungo (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1988), 120–26.

³⁰ Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis, and Annie McKee, *Primal Leadership: Realizing the Power of Emotional Intelligence* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2002), np.

³¹ Nazeriani, Mohammad Ali, "Transformational Leadership Style in Organizations," *Journal of Nafte-Pars* (2011): 7-9.

power of their foresight, whereas transformational leaders are more hands-on and engage directly with their teams to initiate change.³²

Visionary vs. Transformational Leadership

Visionary leaders inspire and unite their followers around a shared future vision. They are often better at long-term planning and foresight. However, they may sometimes struggle with day-to-day management, and their grand vision can lead to miscommunication or neglect of immediate needs. Additionally, visionary leaders may face resistance from those who are unprepared for change, and their leadership can sometimes lean toward an autocratic style, stifling creativity.

On the other hand, transformational leaders excel in creating positive changes in both individuals and organizations. Their focus on relationships and trust-building makes them effective in encouraging innovation and creativity. However, the transformational approach may lack long-term strategy if leaders do not communicate a clear vision. Both leadership styles have their strengths: visionary leaders shine in times of crisis and uncertainty, providing stability and direction, while transformational leaders are highly effective in developing positive, democratic change and building a motivated, self-managed workforce.³³

³² Amitai Etzioni, "Dual Leadership in Complex Organizations," *American Sociological Review* 30 (1965): 653–60.

³³ Francis J. Yammarino and Alan E. Dubinsky, "Transformational Leadership Theory: Using Levels of Analysis to Determine Boundary Conditions," *Personnel Psychology* 47 (1994): 787–811.

Paul's Model of Transformational Influence and Visionary Leadership

In the context of church ministry and mission, leadership plays an important role. Effective leadership, particularly in a church setting, inspires members' commitment to the vision and goals of the church. Over time, various leadership theories have emerged, among which transformational leadership stands out for its deep impact.³⁴ In Christian communities, leadership is not merely a role but a divine calling to reflect Christ's life and engage in God's mission for the world. God equips Christian leaders with spiritual gifts, enabling them to lead effectively. As stewards of these gifts, leaders are called to influence people towards God's purposes. Visionary leadership is essential in carrying out this mission, where leadership involves influencing followers to achieve a higher calling.³⁵ In Christian leadership, this higher purpose is God's mission, guided by the Holy Spirit and empowered through spiritual gifts.

Transformational leadership, particularly, is about mobilizing people to God's agenda, improving societal transformation through the power of divine love. The Bible provides numerous models of leadership, beginning with God Himself. God's leadership is transformational, as demonstrated in the creation narrative, where He brings order and purpose to the formless earth. His vision for humanity includes sharing this leadership model, empowering humans to exercise dominion and stewardship. Jesus Christ continued this legacy of transformational

³⁴ Christoph Stenschke, "The Leadership Challenges of Paul's Collection for the Saints in Jerusalem: Part I-Overcoming the Obstacles on the Side of the Gentile Christian Donors," *Verbum et Ecclesia*, vol.36b /1 (2015): 8-9.

³⁵ Christoph Stenschke, *The Leadership Challenges of Paul's Collection for the Saints in Jerusalem: Part II-Overcoming the Obstacles on the Side of the Recipients and of Paul*, vol. 38/1 (2017): 7-9.

leadership by calling ordinary individuals like Peter and transforming them into leaders with spiritual impact. His ministry constantly worked towards changing worldly characteristics into Godly ones.³⁶

Apostle Paul exemplifies this model of transformational leadership. In his letter to Titus, Paul mentors a younger co-worker, addressing pastoral leadership within the church in Crete. Although the letter is personal, it outlines Paul's leadership philosophy. Paul's authority, as he describes, is divinely given. He introduces himself as both a servant of God and an apostle of Christ, indicating his dual responsibility of obedience and authoritative teaching. His leadership, rooted in servant hood, aims to transform believers through the truth that leads to godliness. Paul's transformational leadership focuses on guiding the church towards spiritual health. He provides Titus with a clear plan for addressing leadership challenges, including appointing qualified leaders and addressing doctrinal issues. Paul's leadership aims not only at solving immediate problems but also at shaping future leadership structures. His visionary leadership sets strategic directions for the church, ensuring its alignment with God's mission. Transformational leadership in a church context seeks to elevate both leaders and followers by aligning human purposes with God's. It fosters spiritual growth, moral development, and the progressive conformity of the church to Christ's image. By motivating and empowering others, transformational leaders like Paul enhance the effectiveness of church ministry, contributing to the overall mission of advancing God's kingdom.³⁷

³⁶ F. F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 33-38.

³⁷ A. D. Clarke, "Be Imitators of Me: Paul's Model of Leadership," *Tyndale Bulletin*, vol.49/2 (1998): 278.

Impact of Paul's Visionary and Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership has made a profound impact on church leadership, influencing both the direction of congregations and the lives of leaders. In August 1999, Noel Tichy, a prominent theorist and teacher of transformational leadership, spoke at the Willow Creek conference, the largest annual gathering of church leaders in the evangelical world.³⁸ His presence highlighted the growing recognition of transformational leadership in church contexts. However, the concept had been introduced to church leadership a decade earlier by Lyle Schaller, who described the transformational leader as one driven by a vision for a new tomorrow, capable of winning followers for that vision, and transforming the congregation in the process. At its core, transformational leadership involves a relational process that raises the motivation and morality of both the leader and the followers.³⁹

This model is grounded in a shared vision and a genuine concern for the needs of followers, where leaders exhibit five key characteristics: modeling beliefs and values, appearing competent to followers, setting goals with ideological and moral tones, holding high expectations for followers, and motivating them through affiliation, power, and esteem. These characteristics enable transformational leaders to inspire people to exceed expectations and achieve greater outcomes. Transformational leadership focuses on two central aspects: improving follower performance and

³⁸ Louis W. Fry and John L. Whittington, "Spiritual Leadership Theory as a Source for Organization Development and Transformation," *Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Academy of Management*, Honolulu, HA, 2005.

³⁹ Robert J. House, Paul J. Hanges, Mansour Javidan, Peter W. Dorfman, and Vipin Gupta, *Leadership, Culture, and Organizations: The GLOBE Study of 62 Societies* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2004), 23-25.

nurturing follower development.⁴⁰ This directly relates to Apostle Paul's leadership style, where his transformative influence was aimed at both empowering individuals and encouraging their spiritual growth.

Follower Performance: Paul consistently emphasized the importance of living a life that reflected Christian values and principles. He guided the early Christians through his teachings, letters, and personal example, encouraging them to grow in faith, integrity, and service. His missionary journeys, where he spread the message of Christ and established churches, show his dedication to improving the performance of believers by helping them understand their spiritual responsibilities and how to live out their faith.⁴¹

Follower Development: Paul's leadership was also visionary in that he was concerned not just with immediate outcomes, but with the long-term spiritual growth and development of his followers.⁴² He mentored and nurtured leaders like Timothy, Titus, and others, teaching them to lead, guide, and care for the congregations. His letters, particularly those to the Ephesians, Philippians, and Corinthians, are filled with counsel on how followers could develop in their faith and character, transforming into mature Christians who could, in turn, lead and support others. Paul's transformational and visionary leadership was therefore not just about organizational or church growth but deeply about the personal and spiritual development of each follower, aligning

⁴⁰ Jackson, Todd A., John P. Meyer, and Xueli H. Wang, "Leadership, Commitment, and Culture: A Meta Analysis," *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies* 20/1 (2013): 84-106.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1548051812466919>.

⁴¹ Bruce F.F., *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1977), 13-15.

⁴² Howson J.S., *Scenes from the Life of Saint Paul* (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1909), 12-14.

closely with the key concerns of transformational leadership today. Transformational influence with visionary leadership is also demonstrated through four main components: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration.⁴³

Idealized influence, often equated with charisma, involves leaders acting as strong role models that people aspire to emulate. These leaders maintain high moral standards, inspire deep trust, and provide a clear vision and mission for their followers. In turn, followers often express feelings of pride and confidence when they are associated with such leaders. Paul exemplified this in his life and ministry. He served as a role model for early Christians, encouraging them to "imitate me, as I imitate Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1). His strong moral character, deep faith, and unwavering commitment to spreading the gospel established him as a figure of trust and reverence. His influence was not just through words but through a life that embodied Christ-like values, inspiring others to follow the same path.⁴⁴

Inspirational Motivation⁴⁵ is another crucial element, wherein leaders promote commitment to a shared vision. They use symbols, language, and emotions to unite their teams and create a sense of collective purpose. These leaders inspire followers with high expectations and cultivate a sense of team spirit, helping individuals find deeper meaning in their work. Paul consistently

⁴³ Brown, Michael E., Linda K. Treviño, and David A. Harrison. "Ethical Leadership: A Social Learning Perspective for Construct Development and Testing," *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, vol.97/2 (2005):127-34. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.obhdp.2005.03.002>.

⁴⁴ Christoph Stenschke, "The Leadership Challenges of Paul's Collection for the Saints in Jerusalem: Part I--Overcoming the Obstacles on the Side of the Gentile Christian Donors," *Verbum et Ecclesia*, vol.36/1 (2015): 13-15.

⁴⁵ Nazeriani, Mohammad Ali. "Transformational Leadership Style in Organizations," *Journal of Nafte-Pars* (2011): 10-11.

motivated his followers by uniting them under the mission of Christ. Through his letters, Paul exhorted the early churches to live with purpose, pressing toward the goal of their heavenly calling (Philippians 3:14). His ability to inspire collective action towards a shared goal was critical in establishing and expanding the early Christian movement.

Intellectual Stimulation encourages creativity and innovation. Leaders challenge assumptions, promote critical thinking, and support followers in generating new ideas and solutions.⁴⁶ This open approach develops a culture of creative problem-solving within the organization. Paul's leadership also challenged the mindsets and assumptions of his followers, encouraging them to grow in wisdom and understanding. He called for transformation through the renewal of the mind (Romans 12:2), urging believers to think deeply about their faith and apply it in new ways to their lives. His letters were often full of theological teachings that required reflection, encouraging innovation in how the early churches addressed challenges.

Individualized Consideration is the hallmark of a transformational leader's care for their followers. These leaders listen attentively, provide personalized coaching and advice, and work to help individuals reach their full potential. Depending on the needs of the follower, a leader may be directive at times or engage in deeper relationship-building to support their development.⁴⁷ Apostle Paul demonstrated care for his followers, addressing their individual spiritual needs, encouraging personal growth, and mentoring leaders like Timothy and Titus. His personal letters, such as those to Philemon and Timothy, show his

⁴⁶Nazeriani, Mohammad Ali. "Transformational Leadership Style in Organizations," *Journal of Nafte-Pars* (2011): 18-19.

⁴⁷Awwad Johnny, "From Saul to Paul: The Conversion of Paul the Apostle," 32 *Theological Review* (2011): 1 -14.

attentiveness to the unique circumstances and growth of individuals, emphasizing both relational leadership and spiritual guidance.

Transformational leadership within the church, however, requires more than just skill and strategy. It must be rooted in biblical reflection and spiritual formation. While church transactions may not always demand theological depth, it is essential that transformational leaders maintain a lifelong commitment to spiritual disciplines. This foundation not only protects the church but also guards the soul of the leader, ensuring that their influence is grounded in faith and moral integrity. For Apostle Paul, however, leadership was not only about motivating and guiding others but was deeply grounded in biblical reflection and spiritual formation.⁴⁸ His leadership was rooted in his commitment to Christ, sustained by prayer, and guided by the Holy Spirit. He maintained a constant awareness that his authority came from God, not himself, and therefore lived with humility and integrity, ensuring that his transformational influence was always with God's will.

Role of Leadership in Driving Excellence⁴⁹

Achieving excellence in any organization depends on numerous factors, such as the industry it operates in, its core strengths, and the quality of its workforce. Each organization faces unique challenges shaped by these variables. However, one consistent, overarching element that drives success across all

⁴⁸ Judge T. A., and Piccolo R. F. "Transformational and Transactional Leadership: A Meta-Analytic Test," *Journal of Applied Psychology*, vol. 89/5 (2004): 755–768.

⁴⁹ Bass B., and Avolio B. J, "Transformational leadership and Organizational Culture," *Public Administration Quarterly*, vol.17/1 (1993): 112–121.

organizations is effective leadership.⁵⁰ Research consistently demonstrates that strong leadership is central to improving performance, retaining top talent, satisfying customers, driving innovation, and fostering sustainable growth. In short, leadership is the foundation upon which excellence is built.

At the core of every organization's ability to thrive is its leadership's ability to inspire and engage its employees, aligning them with a larger vision or transformative purpose. The best leaders are not content with merely meeting expectations. Instead, they set higher goals, striving to create a lasting leadership legacy that resonates far into the future. This ambition cannot be achieved with a disengaged or dissatisfied workforce. True leadership success depends on the talent and capabilities of the individuals supporting the leader⁵¹. The first task for any leader is to build a team of skilled professionals whose expertise can propel the organization forward. But the real challenge begins after the team is assembled leaders must continuously engage and retain their talent. A leader's ability to keep employees motivated and committed directly impacts the organization's success. Achieving excellence requires much more than simply completing tasks; it demands a culture of engagement and high performance.⁵²

Effective leaders understand this and work to create an environment that fosters employee engagement. This doesn't mean competing with other companies on every benefit or superficial aspect of the workplace. Instead, it involves adopting simple,

⁵⁰ Bass B., Avolio B. J., and Goodheim L, "Biography and The Assessment of Transformational Leadership at the World-Class level," *Journal of Management*, vol.13/1(1987): 10–19.

⁵¹ Ford L, *Transforming leadership*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1991.

⁵² Francis J. Yammarino and Alan E. Dubinsky, "Transformational Leadership Theory: Using Levels of Analysis to Determine Boundary Conditions," *Personnel Psychology* 47 (1994): 77–81.

effective strategies that help maintain a motivated and productive workforce. Leadership excellence is not about the perks but about creating a culture that values and empowers employees to contribute their best efforts.⁵³ Leaders who excel in this area create a legacy of innovation, productivity, and growth, and their influence extends far beyond immediate results, shaping the future success of the organization.

In the context of church ministry and mission, Apostle Paul illustrates a model of leadership that aligns deeply with the principles of excellence.⁵⁴ His approach to leadership, characterized by transformational influence and visionary foresight, serves as a timeless blueprint for Christian leaders who seek to guide others toward God's higher purpose. Leadership in the church is not just a functional role; it is a divine calling to reflect Christ's life and mobilize followers toward God's mission for the world. Paul's enduring leadership model continues to inspire because it centers on equipping believers through spiritual gifts, grounded in biblical reflection and spiritual formation.⁵⁵

Apostle Paul's transformational leadership was evident in his ability to influence and inspire early Christian communities. Through his ministry, he demonstrated how leadership goes beyond authority it is about empowering followers, guiding them to grow in faith, and helping them discover their full potential in Christ. Paul's commitment to excellence in leadership is evident in the way he mentored emerging leaders like Timothy and Titus, offering them not only practical guidance but also a vision for long-term spiritual health and growth within the church. His letters, filled

⁵³ Bradley Y., "Servant leadership: A Critique of Robert Greenleaf's Concept of Leadership," *Journal of Christian Education* (1999): 42, 34–35.

⁵⁴ Bass Bernard M., *Leadership and Performance Beyond Expectations* (New York: Free Press, 1985), np.

⁵⁵ Burns James M., *Leadership* (New York: Harper Collins, 1978), np.

with theological depth and personal counsel, show how transformational leadership develops both individual and organizational development. For Paul, leadership was not about solving immediate problems alone but about laying a foundation for the future of the church that aligned with God's purposes.

Through visionary leadership, Paul helped the church see beyond its present struggles to the greater mission of advancing God's kingdom.⁵⁶ He consistently motivated his followers to live with purpose, creating a shared vision that united the early Christian movement. His emphasis on living a life worthy of the heavenly calling demonstrates his ability to cast a compelling vision that inspired believers to rise to their highest potential. By encouraging intellectual stimulation, Paul challenged assumptions and fostered creativity, urging believers to renew their minds and embrace transformation. His leadership wasn't just about maintaining the status quo it was about guiding the church into a deeper understanding of Christ and developing innovative solutions to the challenges they faced. Paul's individualized consideration also set him apart as a leader. He was attentive to the personal growth of each believer, understanding that the strength of the church depended on the development of its members. His mentorship of leaders like Timothy and his personal letters to various churches reflect his deep care for each individual's spiritual journey. This personal attention helped to develop a culture of excellence in leadership, where followers were empowered to lead others and contribute meaningfully to the body of Christ.

Paul's model of transformational and visionary leadership remains highly relevant for those who seek to lead with excellence

⁵⁶Ritscher J.A. Adams J.A, "Spiritual Leadership," *Transforming Leadership* (Miles River Press, Alexandria, 1986), 64 -66.

today. By aligning leadership with spiritual disciplines, moral integrity, and a commitment to biblical principles, Paul's example continues to shape leaders who not only guide others toward organizational success but also toward spiritual transformation.⁵⁷ Ultimately, leading with excellence, as exemplified by Apostle Paul, is about serving with humility, influencing with integrity, and inspiring others to fulfill God's mission with unwavering faith and commitment.

Conclusion

Apostle Paul's leadership remains an example of how transformational influence and visionary leadership can achieve lasting impact. His leadership style expresses how individuals can be empowered, mentored, and nurtured for both personal and organizational growth. Through his deep commitment to biblical principles, spiritual formation, and a forward-thinking vision, Paul demonstrated that leadership is not merely about authority but about inspiring others to fulfill their highest potential in faith, integrity, and purpose.

Paul's transformational influence develops the spiritual growth, accountability, and innovation, encouraging his followers to take ownership of their journeys while remaining united in their shared mission. His visionary leadership guided early Christian communities through challenges, ensuring they were united with a greater purpose beyond immediate concerns. This combination of transformational and visionary leadership made Paul not only a leader for his time but also an enduring model for leadership excellence today. In modern contexts, Paul's leadership principles serve as a blueprint for those seeking to lead with integrity, inspire

⁵⁷ Christoph Stenschke, "The Leadership Challenges of Paul's Collection for the Saints in Jerusalem: Part I--Overcoming the Obstacles on the Side of the Gentile Christian Donors," vol. 36/1 (2015): 19.

innovation, and cultivate environments where trust and creativity flourish. As leaders strive to balance short-term challenges with long-term vision, Paul's example of blending influence with vision provides a roadmap for advancing organizational success while developing individual growth. Ultimately, Paul's legacy demonstrates that true leadership is about empowering others to become leaders themselves, creating a ripple effect of transformation that endures through generations.

A Critical Analysis of ἀγάπη in 1John for Contemporary Christians

by Mr. Emmanuel Basumatary, he has done his Master of Divinity (M.Div), Master of Social Work (M.S.W) and currently pursuing his Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D) in Martin Luther Christian University. He is a lecturer in Berechah Institute of Higher Education and Research.

Abstract

The concept of ἀγάπη (love) in 1 John has its theological significance for all the centuries of the Christian community. The book provides various aspects of love and explores their practical implications for believers today. The writer used the term ἀγάπη 45 times in 23 verses, writing categorically the difference between negative and positive forms of love, as evidenced in 1 John. The book discussed negative love, which includes the warning against loving the world and the consequences of such worldly affection. Conversely, the positive love emphasised, highlighting a call to love one another as the Christian identity and new covenant community. John strengthens his argument that loving one another within the covenant community is the evidence of God dwelling in the heart and a born-again Christian. On the other hand, hating brethren is the spiritual consequence of walking in darkness.

Key Words

love, *agape*, hate, world, Christian

Introduction

In a Christian theology, love is a fruit of the Holy Spirit and the practice of love is the evidence of born-again Christian. Within the New Testament corpus, the First Epistle of John presents profound explanation of love, by using single Greek term ἀγάπη

(agape). The First Epistle of John provides a crucial theological framework for understanding God's love and believer's reflection of divine nature to one another. The author had repeatedly used the term ἀγάπη which is not merely as a theological concept but as the fundamental characteristic of God's nature, and it's evident of authentic Christian life. The book explores the dualistic idea of positive love, which is loving God and loving one another within brothers and sisters in Christ, and negative love, which the writer strongly portrayed as walking in the darkness and not knowing God. This dualistic idea is the reflection of individual connection to the two spiritual worlds: the light and the darkness.

Methodology

The proposed study will utilize a comprehensive textual analysis to explore the concept of ἀγάπη (love) as presented in the Epistle of 1John and its implications for the contemporary Christian community. This will include a careful examination of the text, considering to understand John's concept of ἀγάπη and various nuances as the writer presented in the book.

I will analyse, compare and contrast the uses of love within 1 John. This will help in understanding how the word love is portrayed and applied within 1 John corpus. Building upon the textual analyses, the methodology will then focus on an exegetical on given passages in 1 John. This will include the findings of the concept of love as presented in 1 John. In analysing, careful attention will be given to various verses that distinguish between negative and positive love, as well as the consequences of loving the world and the evidence of loving one another. The spiritual condition of those who do not exhibit ἀγάπη, as described in 1 John, will also be critically examined. Finally, the article will then focus to the practical application of the 1 John understanding of love for the contemporary Christian community.

Etymology

The English word love had been used in Greek with different words with varied meanings. They are: (1) ἀγάπη (agápē) sacrificial love (2) φιλία (philía) brotherly love or affectionate love (3) ἔρως (érōs) physical love or sexual love (4) στοργή (storgé) natural love within the family members (5) μανία (manía) obsessive love toward lover which is not good (6) πράγμα (prágma) practical love that is based on duty, obligation, or logic (7) φιλαυτία (philautía) self-love, how a person feels about her/his own body.¹ “In the Old Testament, the thought of love is both profane or immanent and religious or theological. The former usage relates primarily to the mutual relations of the sexes, then to parents and children, then to friends, to masters and servants, and to society generally.”²

In the pre-biblical Greek, primarily three Greek words were used for love: ἔραν, φιλεῖν and ἀγάπαν. The ἀγάπαν means to be satisfied with something, to receive or to greet or to honour in terms of external attitude. In inward attitude the meaning is, seeking after something, desiring someone or something. Sometimes the character of ἀγάπαν is to prefer or to set one good or aim above another or to esteem one person more highly than another. Therefore ἀγάπαν may be used as preference of God for a particular man. Besides, the verb is often used as regard or friendship between equals or sometimes sympathy.³ Thus, the ἀγάπαν is a love which makes distinctions,

¹ n.a. 8 *Greek Words for Love that will Make Your Heart Sour*, <https://www.dictionary.com/e/greek-words-for-love/> (Accessed on March 28, 2024).

² Gottfried Quell, “Love in the OT,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, edited by Gerhard Kittel and others (Michigan: WM B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1964), 23.

³ Ethelbert Stauffer, “The words for Love in Pre-biblical Greek,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* edited by Gerhard Kittel and others (Michigan: WM B. Eerdmans, 1964), 35-36

choosing and keeping to its object, is a free and decisive act determined by its subject, relates for the most part to the love of God, to the love of the higher lifting up the lower, elevating the lower above others, it is translated as to show love, giving, active love on the other's behalf.⁴ Nevertheless, ἀγάπαν is imprecise, its individuation still tentative and interchanged with ἔραν and φιλεῖν. In this case ἀγάπαν is synonym which is set alongside the other two for the sake of emphasize or stylistic variation. In conclusion, ἀγάπαν is completely lacking in pre-biblical Greek.⁵

In the New Testament, the Greek word ἀγάπη and φιλία is commonly used. The noun agape appears 116 times, and the verb *agapao* appears 137 times in the New Testament. Besides, *Philia* appears 25 times in the New Testament. The terms *philio* and agape are used interchangeably in the New Testament, e.g., John 5:20; 16:27; and Titus 3:15; 1 Corinthians 16:22; John 20:2; 21:20; Revelation 3:19. This is supported by F. H. Palmer: “*Philio* is the alternative word to *agapao*, overlapping of usage between the two words.”⁶

In First John, the word agape appeared 45 times in 23 verses, which means sacrificial love. This agape is used in both positive and negative senses throughout the book. In First John, the word agape appeared 45 times in 23 verses, which means sacrificial love. This agape is used in both positive and negative senses throughout the book. Ethelbert Stauffer clarifies ἀγάπη masterfully, it is condescending love, or rather a heavenly reality, which in some sense descends from stage to stage into this world. This reality is the

⁴ Ethelbert Stauffer, “The Words for Love in Pre-biblical Greek,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 37.

⁵ Ethelbert Stauffer, “The Words for Love in Pre-biblical Greek,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 37.

⁶ F. H. Palmer, “Love, Beloved,” *New Bible Dictionary*, edited by J. D. Douglas and others (Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1962), 711.

interrelation of divine work and humans. The world of light and life is expressed in this world in the form of love. Therefore, John emphasize active character of ἀγάπη both in the life of Christ and in that of Christians. John writes that love for God is overshadowed by love for the brethren, which has its origin in God and its example in Christ. John cantered around fellowship with brethren, which is not of this world, but the love of God is the final reality for the life of this fellowship, and abiding in His love is the law of its life.⁷

Today, in the Christian circle, the word *agape* is solely acknowledged as divine love because this word is used as God's love for the world. However, it was also used to describe romantic love. For example in 2 Samuel 13: 1, the LXX translated from Hebrew: καὶ ἐγενήθη μετὰ ταῦτα καὶ τῷ Ἀβессαλωμ υἱῷ Δαυιδ ἀδελφῇ καλῇ τῷ εἶδει σφόδρα καὶ ὄνομα αὐτῇ Θημαρ καὶ ἠγάπησεν αὐτὴν Ἀμων υἱὸς αὐτοῦ (*Kai egenēthē meta tauta kai tō Abesalōm huiō David adelphē kalē tō eidei sphodra kai onoma autē Thēmar kai ēgapēsen autēn Amnōn huios David*). The Greek word ἠγάπησεν (*ēgapēsen*) is used in the Aorist Active Indicative 3rd Person Singular to express Amnon's love for Tamar in this line. This poetry excerpt demonstrates the variety of meanings that may be derived from the Greek noun or verb love.

Therefore, the term cannot be simply taken as being used only to refer to divine love; rather, it must be understood in light of the context in which it was employed by the authors of the Old and New Testaments. While the term *agape* in 1 John refers to selfless love for the world (John 3:16), the word *agape* in 2 Samuel 13:1 refers to romantic love. Christ-followers are therefore expected to exhibit the same kind of selfless love for others (1 John 3:14-16).

⁷ Ethelbert Stauffer, "The Words for Love in Pre-biblical Greek," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 53.

Do not Love the World (1 John 2:15-16)

The Greek sentence *μὴ ἀγαπᾶτε τὸν κόσμον μηδὲ τὰ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ* (*mē agapate ton kosmon mēde ta en tō kosmō*) which is translated in English Bible as “do not love the world nor the things in the world. The word *μὴ ἀγαπᾶτε* (*mē agapate*) is used in present tense in imperative mood which should be translated as stop loving the world and things in the world. This indicates ceasing continuous love of the world and the things in the world. Archibald Thomas Robertson also agree that the present active imperative of *agapo* must be translated as if any keep on loving the world.⁸

The word *kosmos* appears 23 times in 1 John, with its meaning varying depending on the context. It can refer to the natural world, the place where people live, worldly values opposed to God, or the unbelieving world people under the power of Satan. Kruse sees four different uses of *kosmos* in 1 John, suggesting that it represents the system of values, priorities, and beliefs that unbelievers hold that exclude God. In John's time, the world was under Satan's domain.⁹ According to William Barclay, “the world was nothing other than the society of the Roman Empire with its false values and its false gods.”¹⁰ John R W Stott has provided two ways of explaining it: (1) the world ruled by Satan and evil system should not be loved (2) selfish love of participation which is to share his sin therefore world should not be loved.¹¹ Zane C Hodges

⁸ Archibald Thomas Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Michigan: Baker Book House, 1933), 213-214.

⁹ David B. Cutis, “Loving the World,” https://www.bereanbiblechurch.org/transcripts/john-epistles/1john_02_15-17_loving-the-world.htm (Accessed on 14 July, 2019).

¹⁰ William Barclay, *The Letters of John and Jude* (Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 2009), 63.

¹¹ John R W Stott, *The Epistles of John* (Michigan: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1974), 90.

suggests the Greek word *kosmos* as an entity hostile to God.¹² Warren W. Wiersbe have beautifully mentioned in his commentary, there are four reasons why Christian should not love the world.

1) Because of what the world is: Satan system, opposing the work of Christ on earth.

2) Because of what the world does to us (1John 2:15-16): worldliness is the matter of heart. Anything in a Christin's life that causes him to lose his enjoyment of the Father's love or his desire to do the Father's will is worldly and must be avoided.

God has given certain desires, and these desires are good. Hunger, thirst, weariness, and sex are not at all evil in themselves. There is nothing wrong about eating, drinking, sleeping, or begetting children. But when the flesh nature controls them, they become sinful "lusts." Hunger is not evil, but gluttony is sinful. Thirst is not evil, but drunkenness is a sin. Sleep is a gift of God, but laziness is shameful. Sex is God's precious gift when used rightly; but when used wrongly, it becomes immorality.¹³

3) Because of what a Christian is (1 John 2:12-14). He is a child of God.

4) Because of where the world is going (1:17)

John is contrasting two ways of life: a life lived for eternity and a life lived for time. A worldly person lives for the pleasures of the flesh, but a dedicated Christina lives for the joys of the spirit. A worldly believer lives for what he can see, the lust of the eyes; but a spiritual believer lives for the unseen realities of God (2 Cor. 4:8-18). A worldly minded person lives for the pride of life, the vainglory that appeals to men; but a Christian who does the will of God lives for God's approval. And he abideth forever.¹⁴

¹² Zane C Hodges, "1 John," *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, edited by John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Hyderabad: G.S Books, 2010), 891.

¹³ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Expository Commentary: New Testament Ephesians- Revelation* (Secunderabad: O.M Books, 2021), 495.

¹⁴ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Expository Commentary: New Testament Ephesians- Revelation*, 495.

Consequence of Loving the World

The Greek sentence οὐκ ἔστιν ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ Πατρὸς ἐν αὐτῷ (*ouk estin hē agapē tou Patros en autō*) is translated as *love of the Father is not in him* (2:15). The Greek word τοῦ Πατρὸς (*tou Patros*) is used in Objective Genitive case which shows Father is the object of love. This means a person has lost the enjoyment to obey the commandment of Christ. Jesus said, “if you love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15). This shows simultaneously, a person cannot love the Father and the world. If he loves the world, he cannot love the Father. Thus, the idea is to love God is to hate the world. This can be illustrated from the story of Demas who choose worldly attraction over the spiritual commitment (2 Timothy 4:10).

The Love of God

God is love. The attribute of God is love. He has manifested his love by sending his only begotten son into the world that people may live through him. This is Johannine style of writing. In the Gospel of John 3:16, the same author had already introduced “for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, and whosoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life.” This is echoed as in 1 John 4:9-11, “By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. In this is love—not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”¹⁵ The term ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ Θεοῦ (*hē agapē tou Theou*) is used in subjective genitive, showing God’s love for sinner and to propitiate for the sin of the whole world (2:2). For John, looking at Christ on the cross is a demonstration of love and compassion. God’s love is unique in terms of loving the unloveable,

¹⁵ NASB Translation.

rescuing sinners, and giving eternal life. The love of God cannot be compared with the temporary; rather, it's eternal.

Marks of Authentic Love

The fruit of the Holy Spirit is love. John provides a clear illustration of who is genuinely a Christian or who has been baptised by the Spirit into the body of Christ. Loving others is a sign of a true Christian. John has clearly explained in his letter the evidence of a born-again Christian by looking at the fruit of the spirit. This does not imply that showing love to others has earned salvation or allowed one to pass from death to life without acknowledging and believing Jesus as the Son of God. However, the Spirit is the source of neighbourly love.

Born of God

John writes, “beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that love is born of God, and know God”¹⁶ (1 John 4:7). John clearly declares those who are born of God are those who love one another. Loving one another is the sign of born again Christian. William Barclay writes, “we cannot see God, because he is spirit; what we can see is his effect. We cannot see the wind, but we can see what it can do. We cannot see electricity, but we can see the effect it produces. The effect of God is love. It is when God comes into an individual that person is clothed with the love of God and the love of other people.”¹⁷ P. G. Matthew writes, “The apostle has been careful to insist throughout this epistle that a Christian can be recognized by his orthodox faith, obedience, and love. Regeneration precedes love: everyone who loves has been born of

¹⁶ John 4:7; KJV.

¹⁷ William Barclay, *The Letters of John and Jude*, 110.

God and knows God.”¹⁸ John Calvin writes, “no one can prove himself to be a child of God without loving his neighbours; the true knowledge of God necessarily produces love in us.”¹⁹

God Indwells in Us

John writes, “no man had seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwells in us, and his love is perfected in us”²⁰ (4:12). John used the third class conditional clause- ἐὰν ἀγαπῶμεν ἀλλήλους (*ean agapōmen allēlous*) which then the apodosis is probable that God abides in us. The probability is that we can love others when a person regenerates through the Spirit of God, and the result is that God abides in a person's heart. Though the writer used a third-class condition, the probability will take place. Loving one another is strong evidence that God dwells in a believing person because it is the fruit of the Spirit of God. “Since love comes from the Spirit of God, we cannot truly and with a sincere heart love one another unless the Spirit gives us his power. In this way, he testifies that he lives in us. God is remaining in us. On the other hand, whoever boasts that he has God and does not love his brothers, his falsehood is proved by that one thing, because he separates God from himself.”²¹

With the Holy Spirit within each believer's life, Christians can love one another. Their love reveals that God himself is present and that they are partaking of the divine nature. Believers' love for God grows stronger when they see its results in their loving actions towards each other. As their love develops toward maturity and completeness, his love is made complete in

¹⁸ P G Matthew, *An Exposition of the First Epistle of John* (Secunderabad: OM Books, 2005), 224.

¹⁹ John Calvin, “1 John,” *1,2,3 John*, edited by Alister McGrath and J.I. Packer (Illinois: Crossway, 1998).

²⁰ King James Version.

²¹ John Calvin, “1 John,” *1,2,3 John*, 82.

his people. When believers love one another, the invisible God reveals himself to others through them, and his love is made complete.²²

The Greek phrase- ἡ ἀγάπη αὐτοῦ ἐν ἡμῖν τετελειωμένη ἐστίν (*hē agapē autou en hēmin teteleiōmenē estin*) is a result of Spirit transforming heart and producing love for one another. This does not mean that an introverted person who is not able to connect people has the problem; rather, within that boundary of an introvert extending love to whomever a person is able to express love by God's power.

Abiding in God

John writes, We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who remains in love remains in God, and God remains in him (1 John 4:16-17).

Glenn W. Barker writes:

The sequence of that is this: First, we must know and rely on the fact that God loves us. Second we come to realize through relying on his love that in his very nature God is love. Third, we discover that to live in God means to live in love. The fellowship we have with the Father and with the son (1:3), the fellowship in which he lives in us and we live in him, is perceived as nothing other than a fellowship of love.²³

Continuing in the love is continuing in God, and the result is that God continues to stay in the heart of the person. This shows that if God continues to stay in the heart of an individual, the result will be loving others, and this is the evidence that God dwells in the person's heart.

²² Bruce B. Barton and others, "1 John," *Life Application Bible Commentary*, edited by Grant and others (Illinois: Tyndale House Publisher, 1998), 96.

²³ Glenn W Barker, "1John," *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, edited by Frank E. Gaebelein and others (Michigan: Zondervan Publishing, 1981), 345.

Passed from Dead to Life

John strongly writes, “We know that we have passed out of death into life because we love the brothers and sisters. The one who does not love remains in death” (1 John 3:14). The theological question of who is born again or a regenerated person is answered clearly by John. He gives strong evidence that those who are regenerated are the ones who produce the fruit of the spirit, that is, loving God and loving others. Glenn writes, “This conviction is not based on self-judgement or self-justification but on the certainty that love is the basis for life in the believing community. Love will not cause the passage to spiritual life but will give evidence of it. Conversely, to be unable to love means that a person is without life from the father and remains in death.”²⁴ John R W Stott argues, “love is the surest test of having life, as it has already been shown to be the test of being in the light (ii: 10). The contrary is also true: *he that loveth not his brother abideth in death*, just as he is ‘in darkness’ (ii: 9,11). In the vocabulary of John love, light and life belong together, as do hatred, darkness and death.”²⁵

Spiritual Condition of Failing to Love Brethren

Failing to love one another is the result of walking in darkness, not loving God, and being considered a liar. John has explicitly portrayed the spiritual condition of failing to love another. These results are theological, and they reflect in action. These results will be discussed thoroughly from the 1 John corpus in the following:

²⁴ Glenn W. Barker, “1John,” *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 335.

²⁵ John R W Stott, *The Epistles of John* (Michigan: WM. B Eerdmans, 1968), 141.

Cannot Love God

John strongly provides evidence that if a person does claim to be regenerated yet the fruit of loving God and loving people is not displayed, a person cannot love God. For he writes, “For the one who does not love his brother and sister whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen (4:20).” John has already stated that no one has ever seen God (1 John 1:18) and it’s echoed the Torah that no one has seen God (Exo. 33:20). To love this unseen God is impossible without loving whom we have seen in the body of Christ. Paul has illustrated beautifully in his letter to the Corinthians that we are the body of Christ and fitted according to the wish of the Holy Spirit as the members of the physical body. It is impossible that the physical body hates each other members and survives and progresses life, so also in the body of Christ: Jews, Greeks, and Romans cannot hate each other because of the ethnic differences but stay united and love and care for one another. This expression of love and care for one another shows a person is in the body of Christ and does love God.

Does not Know God

John continues to state, “The one who does not love does not know God, because God is love (4:8).” John makes another sweeping statement that a person who does not practice love cannot know God because God is love. In other word, if a person know God, love other. John Calvin points, “there is no knowledge of God when there is no love. God is the fountain of love, this effect flows from him and is diffused wherever the knowledge of him comes. When anyone separates faith from love, it is as if he attempted to take away heat from the sun.”²⁶ Thus, in Calvin words faith and love goes hand

²⁶ John Calvin, “1John,” *1, 2, 3 John*, 79.

and hand. The true love from God spread the human heart through believing Christ.

Abide in Dead

We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers and sisters. The one who does not love remains in death (3:14). The writer includes himself with the readers by stating ‘we’ have passed out of death into life. The writers and readers have passed from death to life because they are born again Christian and the sign is, they love each other. John R W Stott states, “becoming a Christian is nothing less than a resurrection or quickening ‘out of’ (*ek*) spiritual death ‘into’ (*eis*) eternal life.”²⁷ And the evidence of having life is loving brethren. In contrast, not loving brethren remains in death. John had in his mind that the unregenerated person who does walk in darkness and continue in sin are the enemy of brethren and they cannot love brethren. John substantiate this idea by stating- For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another; not as Cain, who was of the evil one and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brothers were righteous (1 John 3:11-12).

Consider as Liar

John writes, “If someone says, I love God and *yet* he hates his brother or sister, he is a liar; (4:20).” John R. W Stott beautifully portrayed:

Love for God does not only express itself in a confident attitude towards Him, devoid of fear, but in a loving concern for our fellow Christians (ii. 14). The perfect love that casts out fear, casts out hatred also. If God’s love for us is made perfect when we love one another (12), so is our love for God. John does not mince his words. If what a man is contradicts what he

²⁷ John R. W Stott, *The Epistles of John*, 141.

says, *he is a liar*. To claim to know God and have fellowship with God while we walk in the darkness of disobedience is to lie (i. 6, ii. 4). To claim to possess the Father while denying the deity of the Son is to lie (ii. 22, 23). To claim to love God while hating the brethren is to lie also. These are the three black lies of the Epistle, moral, doctrinal and social. However, loudly we may affirm ourselves to be Christian, our habitual sin, denial of Christ and selfish hatred expose us as the liars we are. Only holiness, faith and love can prove the truth of our claim to know, possess and love God.²⁸

The word *hate* was commonly used in the Secular Greek which was recorded in the writing of Homer to Mandaean writings. For example Zeus disliked the idea that Patroclus should fall prey to the dogs of his enemies.²⁹ The Old Testament and LXX used the term when men are at enmity (Gen. 26:27). This term was also used to refer killing man with hatred (Deut. 4:42; 19:4,6, 11), man hating his wife and leaving her (Isa.54:6), political enemy, and God hating evil and alien worship (Deut.12:31). On the other hand, the opposite word for *μισέω* is always love.³⁰

In the New Testament the word hate is used for both believers and unbelievers. For example- unbelievers hatred toward believers and persecuting (Matt. 10:22), the disciple of Christ must hate (in this context it is not hating rather renunciation or rejection) his own life and the family members and committed exclusively to Christ alone.

When John was writing 1 John, he was distinguishing the hate and love concept so clearly: hating brethren is hating light and hating brethren is dwelling in darkness (1 John 2:9, 11; 3:15; 4:20). “To hate the brethren is to live in the sphere of darkness rather than light. Hate becomes a demonic metaphysical power.”³¹ Thus, John concludes,

²⁸ John R. W Stott, *The Epistles of John*, 170.

²⁹ Michel, “Misew,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, edited by Gerhard Kittel and Others (Michigan: WM B. Eerdmans Publishing), 683, 685.

³⁰ Michel, “Misew,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 685-687.

³¹ Michel, “Misew,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 692.

hating brethren is theological³² issue rather than mere psychological and social dimension.

Implication to the Contemporary Christian

In Christianity, love is not just a mere psychological or cultural practice for coexistence; rather, it's a theological reflection of a truly born-again Christian. Christians who are genuinely regenerated are those who practice love for one another. Love is the fruit of the Spirit; therefore, love is not compelled to produce. Though believers are asked to love one another (a commandment), yet the Spirit produces genuine love for one another. Thus, love is not tryingness to show concern or love to other fellow believers, but love is the expression from believers' hearts that the Spirit produces. This requires willingness to hear the Spirit and complete surrender, which can be called walking in the Spirit or filling in the Spirit. God, who is love and kind, spreads his love to the regenerated heart, and its kind is produced among the believers.

This does not mean that believers will not have arguments on certain doctrinal issues and disagreements; nevertheless, in spite of all shortcomings, love will overflow from a genuine believer. This becomes the evidence of a truly born-again Christian and the evidence of God dwelling in a person's heart. The coexistence and correspondence become so easy because of God's kind of love produced among believers. This is the heavenly shadow of love on earth for the forthcoming reality of love in New Heaven and New Earth. Believers express and experience truly heavenly love toward one another. The Church must realise this fact in the midst of privatisation and individualistic society: to love another. As Jesus

³² It is theological because God is light and love (1 John 1:5; 4:8, 16). This means: believers' relationship with God ties with relationship with brethren, the nature of God is love and therefore believers are expected to produce God's nature, hating brethren indicates walking in darkness hereby separated from God.

said, “This is my commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you (John 15:12), a new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this, all men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another (John 13:34–35).

Conclusion

The word ἀγάπη can refer to either unselfish or passionate love, depending on the situation, but in the corpus of 1 John, it refers to God's altruistic love for His people and His people for each other. In 1 John, the practical theology is that God is love and the source of genuine love is God. Love is the evidence of a regenerated person, and God dwells in him. It is also evident that a person has passed from death to life and walks in the light. On the contrary, the unregenerated person loves the world, hates brothers and sisters in Christ, cannot love God, abides in death, and is considered a liar.

Intention of Healing in the Mission of Jesus

by Dr. Amruta Bag, he has a Master of Divinity (M.Div), Master of Theology (M.Th), and has earned his Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D) in theological studies with specialization in mission from the Ebenezer Theological Seminary. He has published numerous articles in national and international journals and presented in conferences and published a few books in Indian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (ISPCK). He is the Dean of Academics and Assistant Professor at Berachah Institute of Higher Education and Research.

Abstract

Healing ministry of Jesus serve as one of the key factors in his mission. In the Judean agrarian society when people are affected with various incurable diseases and unable to afford. In such period of time the healing of Jesus to blind, lame, dumb, lepers and contagious diseases affected ones finds a hope in their despair situation of life. The divine miraculous healing provision of Christ made well and life meaningful to many. He did not commercialise the healing aspect during the course of his mission. His divine is crystal clear with glorifying God, invitation to the kingdom of God, establishing salvation stands an ever invaluable in the history of mankind. Healing by Jesus for the recognising the value of kingdom of God and glorifying heavenly father by the followers. The divine healing is available for the better humanity who trust in God. It is the reality in the mission of Christ. This is to intensify and reconsider the ongoing healing ministry in the light of Jesus' mission. I have concentrated the Markan understanding of the healing in Christological and missional perspective.

Keywords

Healing, anthropological, humanitarian, reconciliation, kingdom, salvation

Introduction

Healing is understood as curing, redeeming, delivering, individuals getting complete relief from pain. Healing became a viability to come to the lord. In Jesus' healing is not of medicinal treatment rather it is by a process of divine tangible occurrence. Ministry of healing in the mission of Jesus shows the sovereignty of God. It benefited the people of Galilee, Capernaum, and in the province of Judea. The continuity of this missional act is practically understood in today's context. This article determines and elaborated the importance, purpose, necessity, and intention of Jesus' healing in the gospel of Mark. The gift of healing phenomenon and its utilisation for the kingdom of God are articulated in this writing.

Necessity of Healing

The necessity of healing, in the context of Jesus' ministry and more broadly, is understood from several perspectives. Healing is necessary to alleviate physical and emotional suffering. In Jesus' ministry, he healed the sick, blind, lame, those possessed by demons, providing relief, and improving their quality of life. Healing demonstrates compassion and empathy for those in need. It shows a willingness to address human suffering and extend care to others.¹

¹ God's miracles will be a spectacular triumph to make a real wonder. A divine miracle is an operation executed by God that makes a visible distinction that confirms His work. Supernatural healing is the action of God through Jesus, who brings a new life into every man's destiny. We recognize the Glory of God has manifested from natural to supernatural. Jesus's healing is available for anyone

In religious contexts, healing had been seen as a manifestation of divine power. It serves as evidence of God's ability to intervene in the world and provide hope to the afflicted. Healing carries spiritual symbolism, representing the restoration of a person's relationship with God.

Jesus' healings symbolize the spiritual healing and forgiveness of sin that he offers to humanity. Healing often requires faith on the part of the person seeking healing. It is a catalyst for faith and a way to teach important spiritual lessons about trust, belief, and the power of God.² In the case of Jesus, his healings confirmed his identity as the Messiah and the Son of God. They provided evidence to support his claims and teachings.

Healing contributes to the well-being of communities and societies by enabling individuals to participate fully in social and economic activities.³ Healthy individuals can contribute more effectively to the betterment of society. In a broader sense, healing is necessary for the overall health and survival of individuals and populations. Advances in medical science and healthcare are vital for addressing illnesses and diseases. Healing is considered necessary for various reasons, including the relief of suffering, the demonstration of compassion,⁴ the revelation of divine power, and the promotion of spiritual and physical well-being. It serves both practical and spiritual purposes in different contexts.

who believes in the name of the Lord and received by faith today; Daniel Kazemian, *Healing Miracles of Jesus* (np: New Harbor Press, 2020), 2-3.

² John R. W. Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press 1975), 84.

³ John R. W. Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, 85.

⁴ Herbert W.W. Bateman IV and Benjamin I. Simpson, *Understanding the Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2017), 32.

Purpose of Healing

The purpose of healing by Jesus as per Mark's record reveals many purposes. His healings served as tangible demonstrations of his divine authority and power. They were intended to show that he was the Son of God and the Messiah, capable of performing miraculous acts. Jesus had deep compassion for those who were suffering physically and emotionally. He healed the sick, blind, deaf, and those possessed by demons out of love and a desire to alleviate their suffering.⁵ Through his healings, he often conveyed important spiritual truths. They were not just physical cures but also symbolic of the spiritual healing and forgiveness that he offered to humanity.

Jesus' healings provided evidence to support his teachings and claims. They authenticated his message and mission, convincing many that he was the promised Messiah. His healings sometimes challenged the religious authorities of his time, who were critical of his actions. His ability to heal, raised questions about their own authority and understanding of the Scriptures.⁶ His healings often required faith on the part of the person seeking healing or their friends and family. They served as invitations to trust in him and his message. Overall, the healings in the Gospel of Mark were integral to his ministry, revealing his identity as the Messiah, expressing his compassion, teaching spiritual truths, and calling people to faith and transformation. The intention of Jesus' healing mission during His earthly ministry can be understood through several key aspects. Jesus' primary intention in His healing mission was to demonstrate God's compassion and mercy toward those who were suffering

⁵ Daniel Kazemian, *Healing Miracles of Jesus* (np: New Harbor Press, 2020), 3.

⁶ Daniel Kazemian, *Healing Miracles of Jesus*, 4-5.

physically and spiritually. He cared deeply for the sick, the disabled, and the marginalized, and He sought to alleviate their suffering. Through His healing miracles, Jesus revealed His identity as the Messiah and the Son of God. He showed that He had divine authority and power over sickness, disease, and even death. These miracles were signs pointing to His unique role in salvation. Jesus often emphasized the importance of faith when performing healings. He intended to strengthen people's faith in Him and in God's plan of salvation.

The act of seeking healing through faith was a powerful lesson in trust and reliance on God. Jesus used healing incidents as teaching moments. He would often accompany a healing with a lesson or parable that conveyed important spiritual truths. For example, the healing of the blind man led to a discussion about spiritual blindness and enlightenment.⁷ Jesus' healing mission was part of His larger mission to prepare people for the coming of the Kingdom of God. Healing was a tangible expression of the kingdom's values, where suffering and brokenness would be ultimately healed and restored. Through His healings, Jesus showed that it was God's will to bring healing and wholeness to His creation. This intention aligned with God's plan to reconcile humanity to Himself. Beyond physical healing, Jesus' mission aimed at transforming lives spiritually. He often told those He healed to "go and sin no more," emphasizing the importance of repentance and a changed life. The intention of Jesus' healing mission was multifaceted.⁸ It encompassed compassion, revelation of His divinity, faith-building, teaching, preparation for God's Kingdom,

⁷ In John chapter 9.

⁸ John Hargreaves, *A Guide to Mark's Gospel*, 25.

demonstrating God's will, and promoting personal transformation. Ultimately, His healing ministry was a vital aspect of His broader mission to bring salvation and reconciliation between God and humanity.

In the Gospel of Mark, most of Jesus' miracles occur in response to human need. A woman is sick, she is healed. A child is demonised, she is delivered. The disciples are scared they will drown, the storm is stilled. The crowd is hungry, the thousands are fed.⁹ Generally, Jesus' miracles serve to restore the ordinary. Only the fig tree curse is negative in effect (11:12-21) and only the feeding miracles generate an abundance over what is needed (6:30-44; 8:1-10). The Markan miracles also demonstrate the nature of the kingdom which Jesus preached (Mark 1:14-15). The outsiders to Israel, such as a leper (1:40-42), a haemorrhaging woman (5:25-34), or Gentiles (5:1-20; 7:24-37), are included in the new kingdom's sphere of influence.¹⁰ Unlike the kingdom of Israel, protectively bound by the purity regulations of Leviticus, Jesus does not get contaminated by the impurity he touches. Instead, his own holiness and purity are contagious. Lepers are cleansed by him (1:40-42). Evil spirits are overcome by him (1:21-27; 3:11-12). The kingdom Jesus heralds is an inclusive, boundary-crossing, restorative, and victorious kingdom.

The miracles can also be seen as fulfilment of scripture. The Old Testament promises of healing and restoration for Israel (Isa

⁹ The biblical references are taken from Mark 1:30-31; 7:25-29; 4:35-41; 6:30-44; 8:1-10.

¹⁰ Jonathan Rivett Robinson, "Making Disciples by Performing Miracles: A Study in Mark," *Laid Law college*, July 14, 2019, <https://hail.to/laidlaw-college/article/k1J3D96> (accessed on October, 29, 2023).

58:8; Jer 33:6), of inclusion for the Gentiles,¹¹ and of victory over hostile spiritual and temporal forces (Zeph 3:17; Zech 12:7), are fulfilled in Jesus' miraculous actions. There is also a complicated relationship between Jesus' miracles and the faith of the beneficiaries. Often the beneficiary of a healing will be commended for their faith (5:34; 10:52). However, after waking Jesus to save them from the storm, the disciples are scolded for their lack of faith. The father who admits to having doubt is not refused.¹² While faith often initiates miracles, for Mark miracles do not produce faith, rather, fear and wonder are the standard responses (2:12; 4:41; 5:17, 20). Notably, the Gospel of John and Luke-Acts have a very different perspective on this (Luke 5:1-11; John 2:1-11).

It has also been observed that the Markan miracle accounts bear some resemblance to parables. Some miracles mimic parables, for example, the cursing of the fig tree (Mark 11:12-25) and the Lukan parable of the fig tree (Luke 13:6-9). Further, Jesus also uses miracles to teach an object lesson regarding forgiveness (Mark 2:1-12) and Sabbath law (3:1-6). It is possibly significant that of the first four times Jesus is called a teacher (*didaskale*), out of a total twelve times in Mark's Gospel, it is as part of a miracle account (4:38, 5:35; 9:17, 38).¹³ The only time he is called Rabbi (*Rabbouni*) is during the healing of blind Bartimaeus (10:51).¹⁴ In the possibly miraculous episode of provision for a room to celebrate the Passover (14:14),

¹¹ For example, this is in Isa 52:10; 56:3.

¹² Found in Mark 4:40; 9:24.

¹³ Herbert W.W. Bateman IV and Benjamin I. Simpson, *Understanding the Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2017), 35-39.

¹⁴ Jonathan Rivett Robinson, "Making Disciples by Performing Miracles: A Study in Mark," *Laid Law College*, July 14, 2019, <https://hail.to/laidlaw-college/article/k1J3D96> (accessed on October, 29, 2023).

Jesus is also called “the teacher” (*didaskalos*). Six of the thirteen occurrences of Jesus being named teacher in Mark are associated not with teaching per se but with demonstrations of supernatural power.

There is no clear distinction between Jesus the teacher and Jesus the miracle worker, such as we might expect if teaching and miracles were separate strands of tradition.¹⁵ Either there is no strict dichotomy for Mark between Jesus’ ministries of teaching and of miracles, or there is a deeper connection between them. If Jesus is “teacher” even – or perhaps especially when he is performing miracles, what does this mean for the disciples? As those who followed their teacher around, their first role in relation to the miracles was as witnesses.

Divine Provision of Individual Need

Divine provision is limitless. It is beyond one’s understanding of logic. God knows the needs of the people, and as per their sincerity, faith, and hearts, God blesses them as they are connected to God.¹⁶ Healing in the time of Jesus was not just a proclamation of word, but action and provision. The healing mission of Jesus is more about an individual’s faith and their inner attitude toward God.

Of all the works of Jesus, these are the ones which modern thought finds the least difficulty in accepting. The possession of healing power by persons of great physical endowment in our own day, with the acknowledged power upon the mind of contact with a greater mind actuated by courage and hope, are too clear to our

¹⁵ John Hargreaves, *A Guide to Mark’s Gospel*, 49.

¹⁶ Jonathan Rivett Robinson, “Making Disciples by Performing Miracles: A Study in Mark,” *Laid Law college*, July 14, 2019, <https://hail.to/laidlaw-college/article/k1J3D96>, accessed on October, 29, 2023.

modern understanding to allow us to deny such power to so remarkable a personality as was Jesus Christ.¹⁷ The actuality of these miracles in general will be readily granted; but this may be at the expense of their miraculous character and of their power to attest the divine character of the message which Jesus brought. It is therefore necessary, for our present purposes, to consider them as signs, and to ask the question whether, as a matter of fact, they seem to have served the purpose of confirming the revelation made by our Savior. The first effect of these miracles of healing mentioned by the evangelists (Mark 1:23-39) was to call the attention of the people far and near to the new prophet and to give him a great popularity.

From the first Jesus seems to have deprecated this effect. The announcement is made to him by Peter, "All are seeking thee," but this does not please him, or lead to expressions of conviction that now the people were about to accept his message. He replies, "Let us go elsewhere."¹⁸ He actually shuns this multitude which the healings had gathered, as if this one result of the healings was to be regretted. If his work was a spiritual work, if it was his object to introduce the kingdom of God by leading men to the firm belief and active practice of its foundation. Throughout his Galilean ministry, Jesus delivered people from the mostly impersonal forces that exercised control over them, but as he journeys to Jerusalem, the symbolic centre of Jewish religious and political authority, Jewish and Roman leaders will personify this hegemonic power. Jesus warned his disciples to "beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and

¹⁷ Frank Hugh Foster, "The New Testament Miracles an Investigation of Their Function," *The American Journal of Theology* (Michigan): 379.

¹⁸ Herbert W.W, Bateman IV and Benjamin I. Simpson, *Understanding the Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2017), 32.

the leaven of Herod.”¹⁹ Because leaven is a common metaphor for the “evil inclination” in Judaism, Jesus here insinuates their complicity with the inimical powers that oppress the people. In contrast to religious and political leaders preoccupied with their authority and reputation, Jesus is portrayed as one who “served” those in need.

In the context of Jesus’ mission, “divine provision” generally refers to the belief that God provided for the various needs of Jesus and his followers during their time of ministry. The New Testament of the Bible, particularly the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John),²⁰ recounts stories of Jesus performing miracles and providing for people in miraculous ways. The ultimate purpose of Jesus, as understood in Christian theology, is multifaceted and can vary among different theological perspectives. However, there are some overarching themes that are commonly recognized. One of the central purposes of Jesus, according to Christian belief, is to bring about salvation for humanity. Christians believe that Jesus’ sacrificial death on the cross was necessary to atone for the sins of humanity, providing a way for people to be reconciled with God.²¹ Jesus is often seen as the redeemer, who through his life, death, and resurrection, redeemed humanity from the consequences of sin. This redemption is viewed as a restoration of the relationship between God and humanity.

Jesus is considered the ultimate revelation of God in human form. In the Gospel of John, Jesus is referred to as the “Word” that

¹⁹ It is in Mk 8:15.

²⁰ Herbert W.W, Bateman IV and Benjamin I. Simpson, *Understanding the Gospel*, 35-36.

²¹ Donald Guthrie, *A New Testament Introduction* (Hyderabad: Authentic, 1990), 112.

became flesh (John 1:14),²² embodying the divine in a way that humans could understand and relate. Jesus' life and teachings serve as a model for how believers should live. His moral teachings, such as the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) and parables, provide guidance on how to live a righteous and compassionate life.

Jesus often spoke about the Kingdom of God, a divine realm where God's will be fully realized. His mission included proclaiming the arrival of this kingdom and inviting people to participate in it. The resurrection of Jesus is a crucial aspect of Christian theology. It is seen as a victory over death, providing hope for believers in the promise of eternal life.²³ Overall, the ultimate purpose of Jesus, according to Christian belief, is to bring about reconciliation between God and humanity, offer salvation, and provide a way for individuals to experience a renewed relationship with God.

Service in Miraculous Way

The healing service by Jesus to the people in Judea, Caesarea, Galilee, and other regions was miraculous. They were in need of healing from different prevalent diseases, and they were helpless. There was no proper medicine for curing and complete healing. Many blind beliefs related to certain diseases, like leprosy and others, were popular.²⁴ However, Jesus showed his divine service by being a servant in this context. His service demonstrated humanitarian concern and the manifestation of divine power over all the impossible cures.

²² Right H. Gundry, *A Survey of the New Testament* (Michigan: Zondervan, 2003), 168.

²³ Charles Fielding, *Preach and Heal* (Virginia: International Mission Board, 2008), 82.

²⁴ Right H. Gundry, *A Survey of the New Testament*, 69-172.

Those who have heard Mark's story of Jesus performed have witnessed God coming in strength to heal and restore people in his Galilean ministry, and they have traveled with Jesus to Jerusalem where they have seen him falsely accused and executed as an enemy of the Roman order. The "darkness over the whole land" and the rending of the temple veil (15:39) signify God's judgment of those who presided over this religio-political order. The subsequent report that Jesus "has risen" indicates to hearers that neither death nor the autocrats who exercise authority over the people are able to thwart God's purposes or prevail against God's life-giving power.²⁵ More important, by referring the disciples, and hence also the audience, back to Galilee to meet the risen Jesus the resurrection narrative challenges Jesus' followers to evaluate their own commitment to the "way of the Lord." Instead of verifying that Jesus is alive with an appearance story, the narrator engages hearers with an ending that offers neither closure nor reassurance but rather requires them to consider the significance of Jesus' Galilean ministry for their own lives and ministry.

Galilee is the setting of the new exodus in which the people of God were liberated, healed, and sustained by the power of God. Just as these "deeds of power" portended that Jesus would be raised from the dead, so the resurrection narrative echoes the divine power active through his ministry and beckons hearers to return to that place, wherever it may be, to engage with the risen Jesus in God's ongoing work of healing, restoration, and redemption.²⁶ The primary aim of the resurrection narrative is not to convey information but to

²⁵ Raymond Pickett, "Following Jesus in Galilee: Resurrection as Empowerment in Mark," *Currents in Theology and Mission* (October, 2005): 439.

²⁶ Raymond Pickett, *Currents in Theology and Mission* (October, 2005): 441.

impel those who hear the story to become faithful followers of Jesus. Those who have been with Jesus in Galilee and travelled with him to Jerusalem and then Golgotha must decide whether they will set their minds on “divine things” (8:33) and perform the “will of God” (3:35; 14:36) or continue to live as captives of the Greco-Roman social order that co-opted the ruling class of Judea.²⁷

Jesus has shown them the “way of the Lord” in which God’s power was active through him to address the needs of the dispossessed.²⁸ In the resurrection narrative followers of Jesus who have been baptized and endowed with the same Spirit are directed to meet Jesus back in the place of his ministry where that same divine power is active through those who embody the gospel of God by serving and bearing witness.

Revelation of God’s Sovereign Power

Through the healing act of Jesus, God’s sovereign power has been demonstrated over all the sickness.²⁹ His mighty power is revealed by his words, deeds, and behaviours. People were able to see God on earth through Jesus. It is also of importance to indicate, that a whole set of phenomena connected with cases of healing, which have not yet been thoroughly explored by science, are on the same line as many of the gospel miracles. Individuals in different ages have possessed some obscure power-call it physical-magnetic, spiritual, or what we may-whereby cures have been effected even at a distance, in ways quite unaccountable on the ground of ordinary human experience. If any personality can be credited with the

²⁷ Charles Fielding, *Preach and Heal*, 86.

²⁸ Raymond Pickett, *Currents in Theology and Mission*: 442.

²⁹ Raymond Pickett, *Currents in Theology and Mission*: 443.

possession of such power, it is surely one of a stamp so unique, and a moral influence so world-transforming as Jesus Christ.

The first chapter of Mark clearly demonstrates the authority of Jesus. He has authority to call people to repent and believe in order to enter the kingdom of God (Mk 1:15). His authority to call some fishermen to leave their nets and follow him (1:16-20) Then he goes to Capernaum and teaches in the synagogue, and Mark says, "They were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority and not as the scribes" (1:21-22). In the healing mission of Jesus, he used his divine authority to speak forth the truth regarding people, and it was beneficial for the people.³⁰ The preachers must have authority from God. It is delegated authority since it is received at the call of God.

For the Glorification of God

On any healing occasion, Jesus' main intention was to glorify God. It was to prove the act of healing is from God. Man-made attempts at healing others will result in pride in individual lives.³¹ So, Jesus was directing the healed ones to meet the religious leaders to testify that it is from God and for eternal benefits. Indeed, one of the significant aspects of Jesus' healing mission was to glorify God. His miracles of healing were performed with the ultimate purpose of bringing glory to God in several ways: Jesus' healing miracles demonstrated God's divine power and authority. They showcased that God was actively at work in the world through Jesus, emphasizing His sovereignty over all aspects of life, including

³⁰ Ajith Fernando, *Jesus Driven Ministry* (Secunderabad: OM Books, 2002), 129.

³¹ Ajith Fernando, *Jesus Driven Ministry*, 130.

sickness and suffering. Jesus' healings served as powerful signs affirming His identity as the Son of God and the Messiah.³² They were evidence that He was not merely a human teacher or prophet but the divine Savior sent by God. These acts of healing testified to God's compassionate and loving nature. They revealed that God cared deeply for the suffering and sought to alleviate it, underscoring His character as a loving Father. Jesus often required faith from those seeking healing.

This faith-building process encouraged people to place their trust in God and in Jesus as the channel of God's healing power, glorifying God through their belief. Many of them who witnessed or experienced Jesus' healing miracles responded with worship and praise to God.³³ They acknowledged that God had visited His people in a unique and powerful way, glorifying Him in their gratitude and adoration. Jesus' healing acts demonstrated God's will to bring wholeness and restoration to His creation. This aligns with the biblical theme of God's desire to reconcile humanity to Himself. The healings often provided opportunities for Jesus to teach about the Kingdom of God, repentance, and faith. His teachings pointed to God's plan for the redemption of humanity, further glorifying God's wisdom and purpose. Jesus' healing mission was deeply connected to the glorification of God.³⁴ Through His miraculous healings, Jesus revealed God's power, confirmed His divine identity, showcased

³² Herbert W.W, Bateman IV and Benjamin I. Simpson, *Understanding the Gospel, Understanding the Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2017), 39.

³³ Herbert W.W, Bateman IV and Benjamin I. Simpson, *Understanding the Gospel*, 156.

³⁴ Herbert W.W, Bateman IV and Benjamin I. Simpson, *Understanding the Gospel*, 129.

God's compassion, encouraged faith and worship, and communicated the message of God's Kingdom and will. All of these aspects collectively served to bring glory to God.

Human Reconciliation to God

Healing draw people's attention to God through Jesus. The message of Christ and healing action is urgently intended to meet the purpose of God.³⁵ Human response by faith expressed people's thankfulness to God. Indeed, one of the central aspects of Jesus' healing mission was to reconcile humanity with God. Here's how His healing mission contributed to this reconciliation: Jesus' healing miracles often involved the physical restoration of individuals who were suffering from illnesses, disabilities, or other afflictions. These acts of physical healing served as visible signs of His power and compassion, demonstrating God's desire to restore wholeness both physically and spiritually.

In many instances, Jesus coupled physical healing with the forgiveness of sins. For example, in the healing of the paralytic,³⁶ He forgave the man's sins before healing his physical condition. This emphasized the connection between sin and spiritual separation from God, with healing being a means of reconciliation. Jesus' acts of healing were a powerful demonstration of God's love for humanity. They showed that God cared deeply about the suffering and brokenness experienced by people and was willing to intervene to mend that brokenness.³⁷ Jesus often required faith from those

³⁵ Thorsten Mortiz, Mark," *Theological Interpretation of the New Testament*, edited by Kevin J. Vanhoozer, Daniel J. Thriller and N. T Wright (Grand Rapids: Green Press, 2009), 39.

³⁶ In Mark 2:1-12.

³⁷ Mary Ann Bevens, *Mark* (Michigan: Baker Academic, 2011), 42-43.

seeking healing. This faith-building process was essential for reconciliation because it encouraged people to trust in Him and believe in God's plan for their salvation. Healing miracles opened doors for Jesus to teach about the Kingdom of God and the need for repentance and faith. The message of reconciliation with God was closely linked to His healing ministry. Those who experienced healing at the hands of Jesus became witnesses to His power and love.³⁸ Their testimonies could lead others to seek reconciliation with God through faith in Christ. In essence, Jesus' healing mission was a tangible expression of God's desire to reconcile humanity with Himself.³⁹ It addressed not only physical suffering but also the deeper spiritual separation caused by sin. Through His healing ministry, Jesus provided a pathway for people to experience God's love, forgiveness, and restoration, ultimately leading to reconciliation with the Father.

In the Gospel of Mark, the reconciliation of human beings to God through Jesus is portrayed in various ways. The Gospel emphasizes Jesus' identity as the Son of God and highlights his mission to bring about salvation. Baptism by John the Baptist,⁴⁰ during the baptism, the heavens open, and the Spirit descends upon Jesus like a dove. A voice from heaven declares, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased." This event marks the beginning of Jesus' public ministry and signifies his special relationship with God as the Son.

Jesus begins his ministry by proclaiming the message, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and

³⁸ Charles Fielding, *Preach and Heal*, 85.

³⁹ Mary Ann Bevens, *Mark*, 45-46.

⁴⁰ In Mark 1:9-11.

believe in the gospel.” This message calls for a turning away from sin (repentance) and an acceptance of the good news (faith).⁴¹ Through repentance and belief, people are invited to enter into a new relationship with God as participants in the coming kingdom. Throughout the Gospel of Mark, Jesus performs various miracles, including healing the sick, casting out demons, and even raising the dead. These acts of power are seen as signs of the presence of God's kingdom and as demonstrations of Jesus' authority over the forces of sin and death. In the Transfiguration, Jesus is revealed in his glorified state before three of his disciples.⁴² The voice from the cloud declares, “This is my beloved Son; listen to him.” This event reinforces the divine nature of Jesus and underscores his unique relationship with God.

The Crucifixion and Atonement: The climax of the Gospel is Jesus' crucifixion. Mark presents Jesus' death as a sacrifice for the sins of humanity. The tearing of the temple curtain at the moment of Jesus' death symbolizes the removal of the barrier between God and humanity,⁴³ signifying access to God through Jesus' sacrificial death. The Gospel of Mark, while not as explicit in its theological explanations as some other Gospels, portrays Jesus as the means through which humanity can be reconciled to God. Jesus' identity as the Son of God, his proclamation of the kingdom, his miracles, and ultimately his sacrificial death are key elements in this message of reconciliation.

Expansion of God's Kingdom

⁴¹ In Mark 1:14-15.

⁴² In Mark 9:2-8.

⁴³ In Mark 15:21-39.

The intention of Jesus was to save souls, not condemn them, argue and discouraging the spirituality of men. His mission of healing was purely for the well-being of mankind. He came to serve, not to be served.⁴⁴ Various acts are integrated into kingdom-building by drawing man to God in the context. When one considers not only how epoch-making, but how world transforming, was the message and mission of Jesus, he or she cannot deny that unusual works accompanying it would have been in accordance with the fitness of things. The great purpose of setting up the kingdom of light on earth, which is the central aim of the teaching of Jesus,⁴⁵ is equally manifest in his acts, which form a practical commentary to the teaching, each miracle contributing to a revelation of his character and to the establishment of his spiritual kingdom.

The new exodus imagery introduced in the prologue prompts hearers to construe the exorcisms, healings, feedings, teaching with authority, and other deeds of power as the fulfilment of the promise of God's eschatological victory. The numerous echoes and allusions to Scripture indicate that Mark's depiction of Jesus' ministry in Galilee must be understood in the light of Israel's history and hopes.⁴⁶ It begins with a series of conflict stories in which the divine authority and power manifested through him is challenged by other powers that are characterized as working against God's creative and redemptive purposes. In the first act of his public ministry in the synagogue in Capernaum Jesus' authority is contrasted with that of scribes and is also used to exorcise a man with an unclean spirit

⁴⁴ Thorsten Mortiz, "Mark," *Theological Interpretation of the New Testament*, 40.

⁴⁵ Thorsten Mortiz, "Mark," *Theological Interpretation of the New Testament*, 42.

⁴⁶ Charles Fielding, *Preach and Heal*, 94.

(1:21–28).⁴⁷ The use of divine power to deliver those who are tyrannized by demonic forces or marginalized by illness is what gives rise to Jesus' conflict with the Jewish authorities, which intensifies as the plot develops and he heads toward Jerusalem.

Anthropological Concern of God

Christianity is not the only religion in the world concerned with healing and its connotations. Far from it. Healing is part of many, if not all, religions and goes a long way in explaining why tendencies to be religious, and capacities for religious feeling and ideation, seem to have evolved as instinctive parts of human nature. But even in the context of long-standing, worldwide demands for religious healing, Christians have distinguished themselves.⁴⁸ Often borrowing techniques and ideas from other religions and from numerous forms of medicine, Christians have time and again disseminated their religion as a means to healing and eternal good health. Christianity's success as a world religion has much to do with its attractiveness in this regard and with its effectiveness in promoting a whole range of salutary benefits and behaviours. Religious experiences are always related to social life, at least indirectly. The forcefulness and objectivity that Christians have associated with the authority of Christ derive not only from experiences of transcendence, but also from the social relationships that structure religious life and support those experiences of transcendence. Like other forms of religious experience, Christian healing situates people in community and establishes expectations

⁴⁷ Raymond Pickett, "Following Jesus in Galilee: Resurrection as Empowerment in Mark," *Currents in Theology and Mission* (October, 2005): 437.

⁴⁸ John Hargreaves, *A Guide to Mark's Gospel* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2010), 92.

and relationships. Anthropological studies of non-Christian religions have shown, candidates for healing often become symbolic objects in a ritual process of communal integration and group solidarity. In some instances, this process succeeds whether or not the patient recovers.

Like other forms of religious healing, Christian healing stabilizes and consolidate communities through manifestations of transcendence that invigorate people.⁴⁹ Dying people have often conveyed the healing power of Christ to others and become symbols around which communities have gathered. Christian healing can be distinguished from other forms of religious healing in its appeal to Christ as the transcendent source of healing and prime symbol of personal and social integration. As a religious practice, Christian healing has involved many diverse actions, including prayer, pilgrimage, penance, laying on of hands, participating in sacraments, and venerating saints, relics, and icons.⁵⁰ In the context of this diversity, the basic dynamic that begins to explain how Christianity has actually worked to make people feel stronger and find relief and comfort is the personal relationship that believers experience with Christ. As a person embedded in the memories, imaginations, and thinking habits of Christians, as well as more objectively described in scripture, community, liturgy, prayer, song, visual art, and the lives of saints, Christ has motivated countless people to understand themselves in relation to his likeness.⁵¹ Much more than belief is at stake here. The experience or anticipation of union with Christ is a

⁴⁹ Herbert W.W, Bateman IV and Benjamin I. Simpson, *Understanding the Gospel*, 33.

⁵⁰ Raymond Pickett, "Following Jesus in Galilee: Resurrection as Empowerment in Mark," *Currents in Theology and Mission*: 438.

⁵¹ John Hargreaves, *A Guide to Mark's Gospel*, 93.

religious practice and only partly a matter of belief. Christian healing is more about a sense of relationship to a divine person than about doctrine, although doctrine has been important in preserving and stimulating this sense of relationship and defining its boundaries. If many have been healed because they believed, others believed because they had been healed.

Spiritual Development of Individuals

God wanted people to develop the relationship with Him. Jesus was the greatest of idealists, yet he was most eminently practical. He brings everything to the test of experience, “by their fruits ye shall know them.” He differs from others by not only proclaiming a lofty standard of morals, but also by giving it living power to elevate the lives of the common people.⁵² No other teacher has had such mighty influence in moulding the lives and destinies of men and nations, and in setting up the kingdom of God on earth.

In the gospel of Mark, Jesus show how people can enter the kingdom of God. They are to repent and believe in the gospel. Jesus explained it more clearly when he said whoever humbles himself like this child is the greater in the kingdom of heaven (Matt 18:4). His message includes a call to repentance, similar to John the Baptist’s (Mk 1:4). He said to the crowds whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none and whoever has food is to do likewise. He asked tax collectors to collect no more than they were authorized to take.⁵³ He told the soldiers do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation and be content with your wages (Lk

⁵² Thorsten Mortiz, “Mark,” *Theological Interpretation of the New Testament*, 53.

⁵³ Ajith Fernando, *Jesus Driven Ministry* (Secunderabad: OM Books, 2002), 123.

3:7-14). Jesus told the rich young man to sell what he had and give it to the poor and then come and follow him (Lk 18:22-25). Specifics help people to understand what is involved in repentance.

A mere phantom or creation of the imagination of certain credulous Jewish mystics and theosophists cannot account for such effects. Beyond question the historical Jesus was himself far more remarkable than any of the miracles ascribed to him. Yet it cannot be said that those miracles were unworthy of himself or his mission. Healing by Jesus is often seen as having both physical and spiritual significance in Christian theology.⁵⁴ While the immediate effect of Jesus' healing miracles was the restoration of physical health, these acts also carried important spiritual messages. Jesus frequently emphasized the importance of faith when performing healings. Those who sought His healing touch often needed to have faith in Him. This faith-building process can have a profound impact on an individual's spiritual journey. Jesus' healing miracles were powerful demonstrations of His divinity.

They showed that He had authority over physical ailments and the power to forgive sins, emphasizing His role as the Son of God. Jesus' healings also illustrated His deep compassion and love for humanity. His ministry was not just about physical relief but also about showing God's love and care for His people.⁵⁵ This leads individuals to a deeper understanding of God's love and mercy. Those who experienced healing at the hands of Jesus often became witnesses to His power and grace. Their testimonies could draw others closer to faith and spiritual development. Beyond physical

⁵⁴ Graham Stanton, *The Gospels and Jesus* (Oxford: University Press, 2003), 37.

⁵⁵ John Hargreaves, *A Guide to Mark's Gospel*, 49.

healing, Jesus' teachings often included metaphors related to healing and restoration of the soul.⁵⁶ For instance, the parable of the prodigal son illustrates the spiritual healing and reconciliation with God. When Jesus' healing miracles did provide immediate physical relief to individuals, they also had a profound impact on spiritual development.⁵⁷ They served as powerful signs of His divinity, reinforced the importance of faith, and demonstrated God's love and compassion, all of which are central to the spiritual journey of believers.

Preparation of the Body of Christ

The reality of a gift of miracle-working in the apostolic church, and in the case of Jesus himself in whose name his disciples wrought miracles, has contemporary attestation in the epistles of Paul and James; but there are facts of our own time which also go to the authentication of one prominent class of the gospel miracles, viz., those which refer to cases of demonic possession. These cases have been ascribed to some form of physical or psychical malady, such as hysteria, epilepsy, or mania.

The old oriental ideas, originating in early Babylonian, or still more primitive, times, attributed all diseases, and especially nervous maladies, to the influence of demons, and the state of the time in Palestine at the Christian era is alleged to have been such as to cause nervous diseases to be specially prevalent.⁵⁸ But while it is undeniable that such nervous diseases exhibit some features of resemblance to the cases of demonic possession, as described in the

⁵⁶ John Hargreaves, *A Guide to Mark's Gospel*, 51.

⁵⁷ Ben Witherington III, *The Gospel of Mark* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2001), 321.

⁵⁸ Graham Stanton, *The Gospels and Jesus*, 38-39.

gospels, there is trustworthy evidence to prove that certain physical and psychical phenomena exactly corresponding to the descriptions given in the gospels are witnessed in certain parts of the world today.

Conclusion

The healings of Jesus upon others were not just like those of other religious gurus or healers. He was not a magician or sorcerer. His divine authority was so clear in the Galilean context. Many could understand that he is the son of God. He was revealing the power of God on earth and expanding the kingdom of God. His purpose was to save the lost by means of healing. His teaching on healing, exorcism, and doing the work of preaching, teaching, etc. to his disciples was not to gain wealth and position but for the glory of his father. There were healing instances where people were astonished due to the demonstration of Jesus' divinity and human concern for human beings. His compassion, forgiveness, and guidance are integrated into his healing events. His servant attitude in the region is explicitly praiseworthy. Jesus' mission stands as an example of Christian mission. His simple living, relating to all irrespective of colour, race, class, and so on, stands as a great example for today's preachers, healers, and others. His confrontation with religious leaders and condemnation of them in the right way is evident in the scripture. Healing was not his survival, but he displayed the divine provision of physical benefit, which is eternal.

The intention of Jesus healing the sick, blind, lepers, and others is to glorify God alone. In agrarian society, he challenged others, proving God is the ultimate healer and creator. His authority over sickness and disability was well understood by others. The same continuity is expected in his commission. Today's Christian mission must seek the same type of operation when under the divine

authority of healing exercise. Healing plays a significant role in the mission of Jesus, as depicted in the Gospels, especially the Gospel of Mark. Jesus is portrayed as performing numerous miraculous healings, curing various physical ailments such as blindness, leprosy, paralysis, and hemorrhages. These acts demonstrate his divine power and compassion for those suffering. In addition to physical healings, Jesus often connects healing with the forgiveness of sins. For instance, in Mark 2:1-12, Jesus forgives the sins of a paralyzed man before healing him, illustrating the interconnectedness of spiritual and physical well-being. Jesus' healings serve to demonstrate his authority over sickness and demonic forces. His ability to command healing and cast out demons reinforces the idea of his divine authority.

The Gospels emphasize Jesus' compassion for the sick and suffering. He is moved by the needs of individuals, and his healings are often accompanied by a deep sense of empathy for those in pain. Jesus' healing ministry is inclusive, reaching out to people from all walks of life, regardless of their social status, ethnicity, or religious background. This inclusivity reflects the universal nature of his mission. Many healing accounts in the Gospels highlight the role of faith. Jesus often commends individuals for their faith, suggesting that faith plays a crucial role in the healing process. Jesus' healings are often seen as signs pointing to the arrival of the Kingdom of God. They signify the restoration and renewal that will ultimately characterize God's reign. Jesus uses healing incidents as opportunities to teach important spiritual lessons. For example, after healing, he might instruct people to go and sin no more or emphasize the importance of gratitude and faith.

Jesus' healing activities sometimes lead to conflict with religious authorities who question his authority to perform such acts or criticize him for healing on the Sabbath. Healing is a central element of Jesus' mission, reflecting his divine authority, compassion, and the holistic nature of the salvation he brings-addressing both physical and spiritual aspects of human need. The healing ministry of Jesus underscores his role as the divine healer and the embodiment of God's mercy and love. The same essential phenomenon is needed to continually emphasize these days in the mission of Christ.

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Authors who wish to submit their articles for HTJ are expected to read the following guidelines:

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- 2.** The submitted papers are expected to be in broad agreement with the theological position of HTJ.
- 3.** Authors should avoid technical or specialized language(s). Wherever technical terms are used, they must be adequately explained. Non-English text should be transliterated into English and used sparingly. Non-native English writers are expected to have their manuscripts edited by English language experts before submission.
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- 5.** The writers should avoid the use of unsigned and untrustworthy internet materials which are not considered a reliable source for academic research.
- 6.** The successful submission is expected to be ideally of 6000-8000 words excluding endnotes. The author must include along with the manuscript an abstract of 150 words which summarizes the major thesis of the article as well as a short author's biographical note.
- 7.** Manuscript of articles should be submitted in MS Word format, Times of New Roman, double spaced, to the executive (managing) editor at info@hbcs.asia. The author must certify that all citations are accurate, that anything quoted or paraphrased is properly cited, and the article is his/her own original work.
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12. The application of the article must bring cognitive, practical and spiritual improvement in Christian life and mission.

13. Each article will go through the process of review under the editorial board.

14. The areas of examination are overall concept (content), format of writing (methodology) and language and grammar of the submitted article.

15. The writers are requested to circulate the paper one week ahead and present the particular article in HTJ forum prior to its publication. The inclusion of helpful suggestions given by the presentation committee and editorial board is highly esteemed in article.



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