

JESUS' MOVEMENT - A HEALING FELLOWSHIP

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Introduction

"A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. So many gathered that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. Some men came, bringing to him a paralytic, carried by four of them. Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus and, after digging through it, lowered the mat the paralysed man was lying on. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, 'Son, your sins are forgiven'.

Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, 'why does this fellow talk like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?'

Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, 'why are you thinking these things? Which is easier; to say to the paralytic, 'your sins are forgiven', or to say, 'get up, take your mat and walk?' but that you may know that the son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins...', he said to the paralytic, 'I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.' He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, "we have never seen anything like this!" (Mark 2:1-12).

A correct and in-depth reading of this episode will provide us the true portrait of the Christian religion and its relationship to the healing phenomena, since this text encapsulates the essential traits of Jesus' religion. As the title of this study illustrates, Christianity is not a religion in the strict sense. What Jesus had in his mind was a movement – a fellowship of people who are like him their Guru, always on the move. Static and inert organization with well-defined laws and regulations,

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which creates a life of peace and ease – was totally foreign to the mind Jesus. As the evangelist Luke depicts, Jesus' life was a journey (*yatra*) towards the heavenly Jerusalem. He called others to become followers of him, who have to be ready to risk everything in their march towards the heavenly Jerusalem. Jesus' community is the fellowship of men and women who are inwardly healed, and are dedicated to the healing ministry, which will create a wholesome fellowship of human beings who, enjoy undividedness and completeness in mind and body. Thereby they become perfect as God, their heavenly Father is perfect (Mathew 5:48). The basic trait of Jesus' community is that it is charismatic, who are born of the Spirit of God, and move, like wind, whenever they will (John 3:8). This study will try to illustrate these ideas and ideals of Jesus in relationship to the healing ministry.

1. The Biblical Life Vision

In the words and actions of Jesus there throbs the life vision of the Bible. Only in that light could we understand correctly and fully appreciate the thoughts, words and deeds of the Son of Mary from the tiny Palestinian village, Nazareth. He was a typical Jew, whose whole person was imbued with the biblical perspectives.

1.1 Creation – A Divine Healing

According to the Priestly account of creation in Genesis 1:1 – 2:4a, the origin of the world and the animate and inanimate beings resulted from 'the words of God: "Let there be light"¹. A mythological background underlies the creation story. According to it God's creative act resulted from a fierce fight with the evil forces who were reigning supreme before the beginning of creation. The sentence: "Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep" (1:2) reflects the reality of these chaotic forces. The words 'formless, empty, darkness' stand for them. Whatever or whoever destroys the form and brings emptiness and darkness is the symbol of evil, the negation of life, light, love, joy, which are the signs of health in various dimensions and degrees. These symbols, one can say, make everything sickly. Now God

¹Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1984, pp.74-177.

enters the scene and commands: "Let there be light". The word 'light' stands for everything that is positive and healthy, like life, love, joy, peace, prosperity, fraternity, truth, justice (*dharma*), knowledge (*vidya*), civilization and bliss. God's word brought all these things into the world. It destroyed every form of sickness, disorder, chaos and evil in all their various aspects. In other words, the creative act of God may be designated as a healing act. God thus becomes the divine physician, the archetype of every true healer.

In the creation of the world, Yahweh (the revealed name of God in the Old Testament) was realising His wonderful dreams for the cosmos. He wanted the created beings to become like Him authentic and genuine persons who participate in His perfection, undividedness (*advaita*), in other words, in His health, thus enjoying harmony and bliss (*ananda*), and making life a celebration in communion and communication with the whole created world and the creator. He envisaged the universe as a family where equality, fraternity, love and joy reigned. In other words, the whole creation had to irradiate the light, transparency and health of God. One may say health in its fullest sense in every sphere, is the true symbol of light, the source and the primordial form (*adirupa*) in God. Jesus, the Son of God, is the incarnation and personification of light (John 8:12). God's purpose to make every created being a child of light or health was accomplished by Christ. By word and deed he endeavoured to make others healthy beings, in body, mind, intellect and spirit. He tried to expel every kind of darkness or sickness from the world, such as hunger, ignorance, sin, possession of devil. Thus he wanted to build a new heaven and new earth (Revelation 21:1) where everyone will be a child of light (Revelation 22:1; Ephesians 5:8). Thus the whole creation is destined, according to Jesus, to become light itself like the creator, God. Then there will be no more tears, deprivation, despair, hatred and curse. The whole cosmos will be transformed into the children of health, the healed ones, like God, the archetype of health and of healer.

To sum up, creation amounts to a radical healing, which annihilates the forms of chaos, disorder, disharmony, all of which can be designated as fundamental sickness. The word 'darkness' encapsulates it. The first

words of God in history, "let there be light" brought forth creational healing and created health.

1.2 Abraham – the Prototype of the Healed Beings

If we understand the concept of healing in its symbolic and sublime meaning, the whole Bible history can be viewed from the perspective of sickness and healing. Our exposition is based on this metaphorical notion of sickness and healing. As we turn to salvation history, we meet the figure of Abraham who is known as the father of the saved ones, or the healed ones. Of course, he was not affected by any physical illness. From the perspective of the world, he was leading an authentic life. But deeper malaise impeded his wholistic growth. One may diagnose it as awareness of security, self-complacency and comfort of religion² - the opiate factors of life. Now comes the divine physician on the stage. He prescribed a radical treatment, which demanded a total break with past life style. Abraham had to embrace the life of a wanderer with its anxieties, risks and threats. As an *agati* he had to surrender himself totally to the hands of God. This self-emptying process transformed Abram (which was his former name) into Abraham – the begetter of many nations in God. He was filled with a divine well being, or in the biblical terminology, he became a blessed person who was called to bestow every blessing he has received, on the fellow human beings. This call is described in Genesis 12:2-3 as "to be blessed by God and to bless others". Thereby Abraham became a healed person, or to use the biblical expression a total and integral being (*tamin*, Genesis 17:1). He became a loving reflection and living extension of God who is the archetype of integrity, totality and perfection. In Abraham we find the call to every human being, to be healed by God and to heal others. In him God's plan for creation was realized, the complete realization (*saksat-kara*) which was effected in Jesus Christ, the son of Abraham (Mathew 1:10)– the first born of creation (Colossians 1:15).

1.3 Exodus Event – Liberation as Healing Act

²Paul Kalluveetil, "Social Criticism as the Prophetic Role", *Jeevadhara* 110 (1989), 133-160, esp.136.

As Israel, the children Abraham, were languishing in Egypt, Yahweh, the divine physician, came down to that country to deliver them from the political, moral and spiritual slavery (Exodus 3:7-10). This people were wounded in both spirit and body, oppressed, crushed, desperate and faint-hearted. In other words, they were mortally sick persons. Yahweh liberated them from the evil structures of the society, such as from the economics of affluence, politics of oppression and exploitation, and the static and triumphalistic religion³ - the factors which condemn the societies to lead a perpetually sick life, the empires of Egypt and Babylon serving as models. At the wretched situation of the Hebrew slaves, the divine healer took concrete steps to take away the cause of physical, moral and spiritual sickness. Through Moses He approached the Pharaoh and demanded him, "let my people go" (Exodus 8:1). These words of Yahweh are equivalent to the first words in creation narrative, "let there be light". It serves as the lasting paradigm of liberation which is the sublime healing act⁴, wherever there is slavery of any type (eg., economic, cultural, cultic, political, ethnic, sexual, moral, spiritual ...), there will resound this liberative command of Yahweh. No power or authority can hold against this order. Those who try to resist will meet the same tragic end of Pharaoh.

The purpose of liberation is clearly stated in Exodus 8:1: "... that they may serve me". The service, which Israel had, to render to Yahweh consists in fulfilling the divine will concerning human kind. We may understand it as becoming the worthy members of God's covenant society with its economics of equality, politics of justice and compassion, and religion of God's freedom. This was the purpose of the liberative act of God. The wholistic healing denotes such transformation. In other words, when one belongs to the household of God, he/she becomes a truly healed person. The covenant formula, "I am your God and you are my people" contains such relationship⁵. The concept of God practically

³Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974.

⁴Bas Van Iersel and Anton Weiler (eds.), *Exodus - A Lasting Paradigm*, (Concilium 189), Edinburgh: T & T Clark Ltd., 1987, pp.xv-133.

⁵Hans Walter Wolff, *Confrontations with Prophets*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977, pp.49-62.

denotes the term 'Father'; the word 'people' stands for 'children'. Thus by the covenant Israel was liberated to the status of God's children, thereby attaining the sublime degree of health. Yahweh's liberation or act of healing was thus oriented towards establishing a covenant relationship with them.

1.4 Life of the Healed Community

The liberative act found its climax in leading Israel to the Promised Land where they were destined to make their life a celebration together with Yahweh⁶. There they are to live the call of Abraham "to be blessed and to bless", or, "to be healed and to heal". The more they participate in the celebrative bliss of God the more they become healed and healing persons.

The laws and regulations of the book of Leviticus⁷ can be understood from the healing perspective. Laws on sacrifice (Leviticus 1:1; 7:38) were meant to bring out total healing to the community. The institution of priesthood (8:1 - 10:20) served to provide God's healers. The bulk of Leviticus deals with uncleanness and its treatment (11:1 - 16:34) and prescription for practical holiness (17:1 - 27:34). Here we find the motto of the book: "be holy for I am holy" (11:44-45; 19:2; 20:26). It practically may sound 'be healthy, as I am healthy'. The covenant community should not then exhibit any traits of sickness or imperfection in any level. Thus unclean people, animals and things⁸ cannot be admitted to the presence of God who is holiness itself. The book provides a detailed chart on unclean animals, diseases and activities, and suggests how to be purified of diseases and discharges. The spirit of the laws and regulations of the book of Leviticus is this: 'God's covenant family should not exhibit any traces of impurity or sickness.' They should get rid of every occasion, which will make them unclean and unfit to stand in the presence of the holy God and his holy community. Minute laws are prescribed to purify those who had incurred impurity. In other words, they had to be healed so that they can live in communion and

⁶Walter Brueggemann, *Land*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977, pp.9-14; 45-89

⁷Gordon J. Wenham, *The Book Leviticus*, Michigan: Erdmans, 1979, pp.15-31.

⁸The word 'unclean' and its cognates occur 132 times in this book

communication with the wholesome covenant members as well as the covenant God.

One may not think that Leviticus deals only with the physical impurity or sickness. Together with the ritual uncleanness the Book treats about immoral impurities such as injustice, crimes and sins. In the Leviticus perspective all these are mortal sickness, which exclude one from the covenant community. Unless one is healed, one is permanently excommunicated from society.

1.5 A Healing Centred Community

The call of Israel, as we have illustrated, was to become a fellowship of the healed and those who heal others. The true identity of an Israelite consisted in his ardent desire to be healed and plead God for it. Healing, of course, refers to different dimensions of life, such as of body, mind, intellect, spirit, etc. The books of Psalms gives articulation to human aspiration to become a wholesome being like his/her God. Thus the Psalmist cries to Yahweh for the healing from oppression, exploitation, marginalization, ostracism, hunger, sickness, death and sin. Not only individuals, but also the entire community come to the sanctuary and pester Yahweh with supplications. Such Psalms are generally enlisted as the lamentation Psalms both of the individual and of the community⁹. To cite some instances: "Heal me, for my bones are troubled" (Psalm 6:2); "Heal me O Lord, and I shall be healed" (Jeremiah 17:14). Yahweh is qualified as the one who heals all the diseases (Psalm 103:3); it is he who heals the broken-hearted and binds up their wounds (Psalm 147:3). The Lord himself promises that he will heal the faithlessness of Israel (Hosea 14:4). The lamentation Psalms usually conclude with songs of thanksgiving and praise. The healed ones give vent to their sentiments of gratitude, and call others, even the whole creation to join them in praising Yahweh.

1.6 Refusal of the People and the Appeal of Yahweh

Here we find the tragedy of the elected people. They were unwilling to be healed, and continuously rejected every move of Yahweh

⁹E.S. Gerstenberger, *Psalms*, Michigan: Erdmans, 1988.

to heal them. Their situation was actually, as Isaiah describes, pathetic: "The whole head injured and the whole heart afflicted. From the sole of the foot to the top of the head there is no soundness – only wounds and welts and open sores, not cleansed or bandaged or soothed with oil" (Isaiah 1:5b-6). The hearts of the people have become callused and their ears dull and the inner eyes were affected by cataract, so that they could not see with their inner eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, result of which was the refusal to turn back to Yahweh and be healed (Isaiah 6:9-10).

Yet Yahweh continued to call them to him. "But the more I called Israel, the further they went from me" (Hosea 11:2). The same prophet depicts the unceasing acts of Yahweh to heal the mortal malaise of Israel. Like a hunter Yahweh throws his net over that fluttering bird (Hosea 7:12). In 5:14 he says: "I am like a lion to Ephraim, like a young lion to the house of Judah; even I, will rent and go away, I will carry off so that none shall rescue." Yahweh wanted Israel for himself alone so that he can make her wholesome. He does everything to attract the sick Israel to himself. "I will be a dew to Israel" (Hosea 14:5). or, even, "like a luxuriant juniper" (14:8). Yahweh threatened the unfaithful people, gave an ultimatum to her, used a treatment by deprivation (2:6f.). Still the unfaithful Israel refused to come back to him and get healed. Yahweh could not bear this type of attitude. He laments: "What shall I do for you Ephraim? What shall I do to you o Judah?" (6:4). He wanted to make use of a different treatment: "I myself will now allure. I will bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her" (2:14). Yahweh is trying to woo the heart of Israel.

The final medicine, which Yahweh applied, was that of love, unconditional love. "I will heal their apostasy. I will love them spontaneously" (Hosea 14:4). The following verses are full love therapy: "I will be like the dew to Israel; he will blossom like a Lilly, like Cedar of Lebanon he will send down his roots; his young shoots will grow. His splendour will be like a Olive tree, his fragrance like a Cedar of Lebanon" (vv.5-6). With this therapy of love Yahweh wins Israel for himself.

Ezekiel presents Yahweh as a surgeon¹⁰ who removes from Israel their heart of stone and gives them a heart of flesh (11:19). He will put a new spirit in them (36:26). These words betray the deepest love of God for human beings whom he wants to save at any cost; he does heart surgery; he removes the stony heart which cannot pulsate according to the whispering of the Spirit, and puts in its place a fleshy young heart, which can easily vibrate with love. Jeremiah speaks of the same reality by making use of different images: "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts" (31:33). According to Ezekiel, Yahweh will recreate a paradise, which will remain ever fresh, green and fruitful, since water coming out from the threshold of the temple will water it; fruit trees of all kinds will grow there. And their fruits will serve as food and their leaves for healing (47:1-12). All these prophesies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel refer to the eschatological age which will be inaugurated by Jesus Christ.

2 Jesus the Divine Physician

Yahweh's vision and dreams concerning creation found its fulfillment in the Son of Abraham and of David (Mathew 1:1). He is the first born of all creation (Colossians 1:15), as well as the first fruit of the resurrection (I Corinthians 15:23). In him and through him and by him the new heaven and the new earth were created, by purifying or healing all kinds of malice, wickedness and evil. He is the new liberator and redeemer who leads the healed community to the heavenly Jerusalem, the promised land. The paradise envisaged by Ezekiel was realized in him. There exists the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of the lamb, down to the middle of the great street of the heavenly Jerusalem. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign forever and ever (Revelation 22:1-6).

¹⁰Walter Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2* (Hermeneia), Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983, pp.248-249.

Jesus is the light of the world (John 8:12), the fulfillment of the first word of God in creation. He dispelled every form of darkness in every sphere of life. He healed the entire creation from the wretched and sick state of darkness, and made human beings children of light. Like Moses he liberated humankind from the slavery of sin and Satan, and from every structural evil of the society. He gave form to a new community of the healed ones who become like God, wholesome, healthy and integral. As God's new covenant community they are transformed into celebrative and blissful beings. They live in communion and communication with God and the entire creation. As a movement of the healed fellowship they dedicate their life to the healing Apostolate. Let us study the life, words and actions Jesus from the healing perspective.

2.1 Words and Deeds of Jesus as Healing Actions

If we understand the concept of healing in its fullest sense and take the term in figurative sense we can interpret the whole life of Jesus as a continuous healing act. His taking the form of a human being itself amounted to a healing remedy for the pride and self-glorification of the fallen or sick humankind. In order to uplift them from the abyss of sin and misery, the Son of God emptied and humbled himself (Philippians 3:6-8). He took upon himself human sins and mortal wounds and died on the cross, in order to liberate humanity from the clutches of Satan, eternal death and nether world. As Isaiah says: "He took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows ... was pierced for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; ... by his wound we are healed" (53:4-5). Thus the very birth and death were actually healing acts. His life style of a poor who did not have any place to lay his head (Mathew 8:20), and had to suffer hunger and thirst, could be interpreted as radical healing therapy for the luxurious and lustful ways of life of the people. We can understand every word and deed of Jesus as healing attempts. Thus his teachings brought remedy to the illness of ignorance. His words of compassion served to heal the inner wounds of the hearts. Utterances of forgiveness healed people from the sickness of sin. Acts of banishing demons effected spiritual health. Deeds of Jesus were evidently healing acts. Thus he healed people from hunger by multiplying loaves (Mathew 14:19; 15:36; John 6:11-12). Opening the eyes was not simply an act of healing

blindness, but also providing spiritual insight (John 9:6-7, 35-38). The healed paralytic was provided with the ability to walk as a free man both physically and spiritually. The lepers were cured of their leprosy of body and soul (Mathew 8:1-4; Luke 17:11-19). The crippled woman was straightened up both physically and spiritually, as a result of which she became a praising being (Luke 13:1-13). The woman suffering from hemorrhage became proclaimer of the salvific acts of God as well as his beloved daughter (Mathew 9:20-22). The man who was possessed by demon was made a follower of Jesus (Luke 8:26-39). By raising the dead girl, the entire family became ardent devotees of the Son of Man (Luke 9:40-42, 49-56). When the young man was restored to life, his mother and neighbours were healed spiritually (Luke 7:11-17). These are some of the instances of the healing deeds of Jesus. Indeed, all the miracles performed by the Son of God, were signs of heavenly kingdom, by which the people were called to become the children of the celestial Father. The healing actions of Jesus exhibit twofold dimension: physical and spiritual. One led to the other. Every healing was oriented towards spiritual restoration. They were not magical acts. Jesus was not a healer in the sense of the world. Wonders were not intended for the self-glory or auto-prestige. Jesus always shunned fame and publicity. He used to accuse the multitude who flocked to him for material advantages alone, and who failed to see in the miracles the signs of the kingdom (John 6:26). He chided the royal official who appealed Jesus to heal his sick child: "Unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders, you will never believe" (John 4:48). But the father put trust in Jesus, which brought the desired healing. As a result the whole household became ardent believers in the Son of Man (John 4:53). To sum up, the healing acts revealed Jesus' glory and induced faith in him (John 2:11).

2.2 Traits of Healing Acts

Here healing is understood in its literal sense. We refer to the texts where the verb healing occurs in the Gospels. Throughout the first three Gospels we find summary statements about the healing activity of Jesus. Thus for example, Mark 1:32-34; 1:19; 6:56; Mathew 4:23; 8:16; 14:15; 15:30; 21:4; Luke 6:5, 17; 7:20. Just to cite one instance: "That evening, at sundown, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with

demons. And the whole city was gathered together about the door. And he healed many who were sick with various illnesses, and cast out many demons ..." (Mark 1:32-34). Three verbs are used to describe the healings performed by Jesus: *hiaomai* means to heal the illness, cure a person of terrible suffering, to deliver him/her from all ills, even from sin and its consequences (Cf. Mathew 13:15; John 12:40; Acts 28:27). It can even refer to the act of consoling the broken hearted (Luke 4:18). Hebrews 12:13; I Peter 2:24; Isaiah 53:5, etc. depict sin as wound and disease which has to be healed. The word for physician *iatros* comes from the same root. Jesus implicitly speaks of himself as physician. Thus when the Pharisees found fault with his joining the company of the tax collectors and the sinners, he said: "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick" (Mathew 9:12; Mark 2:17; Luke 5:31). According to him sin is a sickness which needs healing, and he has come to the world to bring healing to the sinners.

Another verb *therapeuo*, and it primarily means to serve. Only secondarily it can refer to healing. Thus healing activity is a service, which includes the acts of waiting upon and caring for – actions of a servant towards his master. Thus one who treats, assumes the role of a servant who with all care and devotion, waits upon the patient. The verb occurs for instance in Mathew 4:24; 8:7, 16; 10:8; Mark 1:34; 3:2, 10; Luke 4:23. This befits the attitude of Jesus who came to serve and not be served (Mathew 20:28). The third verb *sothesomai* means make whole, restore. The healing activity thus brings out the total restoration of a human person, which affects his/her body and soul. The healed one becomes a whole being who enjoys health in every sphere of his/her personality.

The healing accounts make clear that faith of the recipient, or his/her patron, plays an essential role in it. Thus the paralytic was healed because of the faith of those who brought him to Jesus (Mark 2:4-12). The daughter of Jairus was raised to life because he believed in Jesus' power (Mark 5:23). The epileptic boy was restored to health because his father put trust in Jesus (Mark 9:14-27). Jesus admired the faith of the centurion, which brought about the healing of his servant (Mathew 8:7-8). The woman who was suffering from hemorrhage came up from

behind Jesus in the crowd and touched his cloak because she thought, "if I just touch his clothes, I will be healed", and immediately the hemorrhage ceased (Mark 5:25-29). The sick persons who besought Jesus that they might only touch the fringe of his garment, were healed because of their faith (Mathew 14:34-36; Mark 6:53-56). The blind Bartimaeus who in his faith persisted to cry, received his sight as a reward for his faith (Mark 10:52).

The disciples could not heal the epileptic boy since they lacked even the minimal faith "as a grain of mustard seed" (Mathew 17:19-20). Jesus could not perform any miracles in his own village Nazareth because of the lack of faith of his countrymen (Mark 6:1-6). As the citizens of the capital city did not accept him in faith, he could not heal their spirit. At this he wept over Jerusalem (Mathew 23:37-39; Luke 13:34; 19:41).

Acts of healing usually were followed up by observance of ritual cleansing as the stories of the cure of lepers clearly indicate (Mark 1:4-4; Luke 5:12-16; Mathew 8:1-4). It is interesting to note that Jesus performed many of his healing acts on Sabbath, a day when no work was allowed. At this Pharisees and Scribes found fault with Jesus (Mark 3:1-6; Mathew 12:9-14; Luke 6:6-11; 13:14; 14:1-6). Jesus defended his action since he was doing the very work of his Father in recreating and liberating the body and soul of human beings who are the very images of God. The healing mission of Jesus had a universal dimension. It was not limited to the people of Israel. Syro-Phoenician as well as other gentiles were beneficiaries (Mark 7:24-30; Mathew 15:21-28; Mark 7:31-37; Mathew 15:21-31).

Jesus never put himself as the source of his healing power. He always attributed it to his heavenly Father. Luke 5:17 clearly says: "And the power of the Lord was with him to heal the sick." While the enemies accused him that he cast out demons by Beelzebub, the prince of devils, he made clear that the source of this power was the Spirit of God, and the healing act demonstrated the coming of the kingdom of God on earth (Mathew 12:28; Luke 11:20). Jesus as the incarnated God continues the divine acts of creation and liberation. He brings light into the dark life of the suffering people. He liberates them from the slavery of sickness, hunger, ignorance, sin and Satan. On the Sabbath day in the synagogue

of Nazareth he read Isaiah 61:1-2 which refers to the healing and renewing activity of God such as freeing the prisoners, giving sight to the blind and release to the oppressed, and added: "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:18-21).

Another trait of the healing ministry of Jesus is the importance given to inner purity. While the religious authorities of Jews gave undue importance to ritual cleansing even at the risk of inner uncleanness or sickness, Jesus the divine physician prescribed inner purity. For him what comes from within, out of human hearts, such as evil thought, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly, which make one really unclean and mortally sick and they need radical treatment (Mark 7:1-23).

Jesus, the healer, was very much affected by the sad situation of the sick. Thus he had compassion on the widow whose only son had died, and told her: "Do not weep" (Luke 7:13). He made his own the sufferings and agonies of others. His heart was filled with pity for them and healed them of their infirmities (Mathew 14:14; Mark 8:2-9). At the sorrow of the sisters of Bethany, he was deeply moved in Spirit and troubled, and he openly wept (John 11:33-35).

2.3 Healing Acts: An Illustration

We began this study with the citation of Mark 2:1-12. This text serves as an illustration of the theology of the healing acts of Jesus. Thus it calls forth for a detailed analysis. The narrative introduces Jesus as one who is surrounded by a big crowd. The ministry of healing in all its dimensions, by word and deed, attracted hundreds to him. The name of Jesus the healer was known everywhere. Now he was at home where a large multitude gathered together. In them he saw sheep without a shepherd and he felt compassion for them (Mark 6:34). Then he began his healing activity of teaching.

Now enter four men on the scene. They were carrying a pallet on which a paralyzed man was lying. They could not enter the house through the door, which was already overcrowded. Such an obstacle did not deter their determination to approach the healer. They made an

opening in the roof above Jesus, dipped through it and lowered the pallet with the paralytic. Here the text says: "Jesus saw their faith." The divine physician could read the hearts. What the physical eyes cannot see, the inner eyes can perceive. Jesus sees their unswerving faith, which could move the mountains (Mathew 17:210). He could see the pathetic situation of the paralytic. A person, who was created as free as God, had become the slave of a pallet; he has become its content, and the pallet, his container. Here we find the inversion of the call of a human being. And the divine shepherd felt compassion for this strayed and lost sheep.

He said to the paralytic: "My son, your sins are forgiven." For Jesus sin was the root cause of sickness. Once sin is removed, physical wholeness will follow suit. The divine physician treats the whole person and provides total healing. It was sin that has made their son of God a son of Satan and sickness. Now the Son of Man by addressing him son, reinstates him in his original status.

While Jesus found a conjunction between sin and sickness, his audience could see only disjunction. The bearers of the pallet as well as the paralytic were expecting only physical healing. They were not bothered about the root cause of sickness. And the Scribes found the words of Jesus as an instance of blasphemy. They were looking with their earth-oriented eyes. In the Son of God they could find only a son of man. Conjunction in the eyes of God becomes disjunction in the sight of human beings.

While the Scribes were seeing through their external eyes; Jesus perceives in his spirit. He could read their hearts, understand their questioning within themselves. For him to cure the external disease is easier than to heal the interior disease. Still he performs the more difficult task of forgiving sins as he, the Son of Man, has got authority from his heavenly Father. Then he removes the consequence of sin, the physical sickness. He asked the paralytic to get up, take his pallet and go home.

Immediately there took place the reversal of the roles. The former content of the pallet becomes the active agent; he carries the pallet which was upto now carrying him. The slave becomes the master and free man,

a proper son of God. The pallet gets an additional role. It becomes a reminder of his former pathetic situation, while he was addicted to sin. The son of God could now move freely and go home as a totally transformed person, a saved one, a member of God's household. In this wonderful transformation we could find a paradigm of every healed ones. The story illustrates the purpose of the healing act of Jesus.

The narrative concludes: "They were all amazed and glorified God saying 'we never saw anything like this.'" Every healing act of Jesus is supposed to bring out this effect on the audience. To feel wonder and awe at the saving presence of God in our midst, and glorify God – this makes one a member of God's community who assiduously celebrates the mighty and saving act of God in communion and communication with others.

2.4 To Heal – The Task of the Healed Ones

As we have pointed out the mission of Jesus was to evangelize or proclaim the good news by opting for the poor of the society, such as prisoners, the blind and the oppressed (Luke 4:18-19). In other words he was sent to heal the sick. Hence he prescribes the same task to his disciples. During his life time he sends them to villages with the instruction to heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy and drive out demons (Mathew 10:8; Luke 9:1-2). His final words to the disciples before his departure to heaven had the following ideas and statements. The disciples had to go into the entire world and to preach the good news of God's coming into the earth to heal the wounds of every created beings, and to save those who believe in the divine physician. The traits of the healed one are the following: In Jesus' name they will drive out demons, pick up deadly snakes without incurring any danger, place their hands on sick people and heal them (Mark 16:15-18). According to this vision Jesus' community is a healing fellowship that is daily healed and engage in healing ministry.

Conclusion

Christian religion was not envisaged by its founder as a formal society or an organization. Rather, Jesus had in his mind a movement of

the healed and the healing community, who live in communion and communication with God and his creation. They are destined to be the lights in the world and the liberators of humanity from every kind of slavery. Their call consists in allowing God to bless or heal them, and dedicating themselves to bring God's blessing or healing on others. Thereby they become the children of Abraham. As the healed ones they are supposed to make their lives a celebrative bliss, being engaged in singing the praises of the divine physician. They are sent to heal others and to make the whole humankind children of light and of the new covenant. The more they endeavour to realize this, the more they will become wholesome and perfect beings, and resemble the heavenly Father (Mathew 5:48). Jesus the Son of Abraham and the first born of creation and resurrection stands out as the living and loving paradigm of this sublime call. In order to heal the humankind from their wounds, he was wounded; by undergoing the death, he saved us from the mortal illness of sin and condemnation. The disciples of Jesus have received a call to take up the infirmities of others and carry their sorrows, and through such acts to bring out total healing to the entire creation. Thus they can create a new heaven and new earth in this cosmos.