THE DIVINE PHYSICIAN: EXPLORING JESUS AS HEALER OF THE PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL DIMENSIONS

Paul SCIBERRAS

University of Malta
paul.sciberras@um.edu.mt

Abstract: The Christological theme portraying Jesus as the Divine Healer, addressing physical and spiritual afflictions, offers theological exploration beyond conventional frameworks. Scholars engage across disciplines like biblical anthropology, soteriology, and eschatology within the context of Jesus' healing miracles. However, reducing Jesus' miracles to mere corporeal healings risks overlooking their broader theological significance in divine salvation. A nuanced analysis uncovers miracles as manifestations of divine authority and a redemptive intent, signalling the inauguration of God's kingdom and holistic well-being restoration. Understanding Jesus' miracles necessitates contextualising them within salvation theology, acknowledging their pivotal role in God's redemptive plan. The name יְהוֹשׁוּעַ, "Jesus", signifies salvation, and associates with his saving miracles. Salvation involves spiritual deliverance and comprehensive freedom, culminating in the restoration of wholeness. The interconnectedness of physical and spiritual healing embodies comprehensive salvation, aiming at restoring humanity to its primordial state of perfection and aligning it with divine attributes.

Keywords: *Miracles, Healing, Salvation, the Name Jesus, creation, biblical anthropology, Sabbath.*

Introduction

The Christological motif depicting Jesus as the Divine Healer, addressing ailments both physical and spiritual, offers rich avenues for theological exploration beyond conventional spiritual theological frameworks. This motif engenders scholarly engagement across disciplines such as biblical anthropology, soteriology, and eschatology, particularly within the context of healing miracles.

Nevertheless, a reductionist view that confines Jesus' miracles merely to corporeal healings risks overlooking their broader theological import within the overarching narrative of divine salvation. An exclusive focus on the physical outcomes of these miracles may obscure their profound theological implications and their integral role within the broader salvific framework.

A nuanced analysis reveals that the significance of Jesus' miracles extends beyond their immediate physiological effects to encompass multifaceted demonstrations of divine power and redemptive purpose. Beyond mere mitigation of bodily afflictions, these miracles serve as tangible manifestations of divine presence and authority, signalling the inauguration of God's kingdom and the restoration of holistic well-being to humanity.

Thus, a holistic interpretation necessitates contextualising these miracles within the broader theological discourse of salvation, acknowledging their pivotal role in elucidating God's redemptive plan and heralding a new era of spiritual renewal and reconciliation through the salvific agency of Christ Jesus. The very appellation itself יְהוֹשׁוּעַ or its shortened form יֵשׁוּעַ 'Jesus', resonates profoundly with the theme of salvation, יְשׁוּעָה, from where the name is derived:

and thereby underscores its manifestations in healing and restorative miracles.

Biblical Anthropology, Salvation and Miracles

Indeed, an analysis of miracles, encompassing corporeal, spiritual, and metaphysical dimensions, necessitates contextualisation within the broader discourse of biblical anthropology and salvation. Central to this discourse is the imperative to avoid dichotomising the human entity into discrete realms of body and soul.

Semitic thought exhibits a lack of distinct categorisation between the corporeal and metaphysical or psychological facets of human existence, thereby leading to the absence of a lexical item in the Old Testament signifying the modern conceptualisation of 'body'[1]. The Hebrew term בָּשָׂר, typically denoting the entirety of the external manifestation of an individual (e.g., Leviticus 13:3; Psalm 109:24), distinct from particular anatomical components (e.g., skin, bones, blood; Ezekiel 37:6.8), generally pertains to the entire living organism and can be used interchangeably with נֶפֶשׁ, denoting the soul.

In contrast, the New Testament presents a more pronounced differentiation between σῶμα, signifying 'body', and σάρξ, denoting 'flesh'. While both may encompass the outward appearance, σῶμα carries a more comprehensive connotation (see Matthew 6:22), pertaining to deceased indi-

[1] For the interconnectedness between body, spirit and mind, see Joel B. Green, *Body, Soul, and Human Life: The Nature of Humanity in the Bible*, Studies in Theological Interpretation (Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, MI, 2008); Patricia Fosarelli, "The Interconnectedness of Body-Mind-Spirit", *Journal of Religion and Health* 41, 3 (2002), 207-229.

viduals (Mark 15:43) and resurrected beings (Romans 8:11). Enhanced emphasis is placed on distinguishing the physical constitution of humans from the spiritual or soul aspect (Matthew 10:28; 1 Thessalonians 5:23).

The term 'body' assumes a distinct significance in relation to Christ, with his crucified form representing God's way of reconciling sinful humanity with himself (Colossians 1:22). Subsequent to this salvific act, disciples and adherents of Christianity become participants in the 'body of Christ' within the community of believers (1 Corinthians 12:27). Within this framework of the community of believers, individuals can partake, in an eminent manner, in the Eucharistic Meal, thereby communally participating in Christ's glorified and perfected corporeal entity (1 Corinthians 10:16)[2].

In this paradigm, it would be erroneous to solely construe Jesus' miracles as mere corporeal healings, thereby neglecting their broader significance within the encompassing divine narrative of salvation. A myopic interpretation that focuses solely on the physical manifestations of these miracles risks overlooking their profound theological implications and the overarching purpose they serve within the salvific framework.

Expanding upon this perspective, the significance of Jesus' miracles transcends their immediate physiological effects, encompassing a multifaceted demonstration of divine

[2] 1Donald R. Potts, "Body," in David N. Freedman (ed.), *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI, 2000), 194; R. Edward Schweizer, "Body," in David N. Freedman (ed.), *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 767-772; Gianfranco Ravasi, *Che cos'è l'uomo?* Sentimenti e legami umani nella Bibbla (Milano: San Paolo, 2011); Giuseppe De Carlo, "In principio Dio creò…", I nuovi inizi di Dio per l'uomo nell'Antico Testamento", *Parole, Spirito e Vita* 66 (2012), 15-38.

power and redemptive intentionality[3]. Beyond their apparent function of alleviating bodily afflictions, these miracles serve as tangible manifestations of the divine presence and authority, indicative of the inauguration of God's kingdom and the restoration of wholeness to humanity in its entirety.

Therefore, to narrowly restrict the interpretation of Jesus' miracles solely to their corporeal ramifications would be akin to missing the wood for the trees, failing to grasp the profound theological depth and transformative potential inherent within these miraculous acts. Instead, a comprehensive understanding necessitates situating these miracles within the broader theological narrative of salvation, recognising their integral role in manifesting God's redemptive purpose and inaugurating a new era of spiritual renewal and reconciliation.

The Semantics and Significance of the Name *Ἰησοῦς*: Exploring Jesus in Linguistic and Cultural Contexts

Within the biblical narrative, Jesus emerges as the principal agent of miraculous acts, a role irrevocably intertwined with the concept of salvation. Consequently, a comprehensive examination of the semantic and cultural underpinnings of his name vis-à-vis the overarching theme of salvation constitutes a logical progression in this inquiry.

The pre-Pauline Christological Hymn in the letter to the Philippians 2:5-11 is considered in its conceptual and content framework by scholars as depicting the kenotic annihilation, together with the glorification and exaltation of Christ Jesus[4].

[3] Jan G. Van der Watt, "Soteriology," in Samuel E. Balentine (ed.), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Bible and Theology* (Oxford: University Press, 2015), 321-332.

[4] See James D.G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (London: T&T Clark, 1998), 281-288; Michael J. Gorman, "Philippians: The Hymn of the Crucified

Literary, structural and thematic evidence suggests that the Apostle Paul likely incorporated this hymnic eulogy, prevalent in early Christian liturgical gatherings, into his letter[5]. Within verses 9-11, Paul articulates this annihilation and glorification in the following sublime words: "Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the *name* that is above every *name*, so that at the *name* of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father"[6].

While employing the phrase "in the name of Jesus," in the name *that is* Jesus[7], Paul proceeds to elaborate on the significance of this name by stipulating that "every tongue should confess: 'Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father'." Consequently, Paul delineates the referent of this appellation or "name", elucidating it as 'Lord Jesus,' Jesus

Lord in the Crucified Community," in *Apostle of the Crucified Lord. A Theological Introduction to Paul and His Letters* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 419-423; 434-439; Gordon D. Fee, "Christology in Philippians," in *Pauline Christology. An Exegetical-Theological Study* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007), 370-401; Stephen O. Stout, *The "Man Christ Jesus" The Humanity of Jesus in the Teaching of the Apostle Paul* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 115-116.

[5] See Gorman, *Philippians*, 434; Bonnie B. Thurston – Judith M. Ryan, *Philippians and Philemon* (Sacra Pagina, 10; Collegeville, MN: Michael Glazier – Liturgical Press, 2005), 77-79.

[6] Italics mine for emphasis. Unless otherwise stated, all Scripture references are taken from *The New Revised Standard Version*, National Council of the Churches of Christ, Oxford 1990.

[7] "In the name of Jesus," ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ (v.10), can be considered an epexegetic construction, with Ἰησοῦ, of Jesus, explaining ὄνομα, as genitive of apposition: the name, that is Jesus: see Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics. An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 79-81, 95-100. For the meaning of the name Jesus, see Stout, "The Man Christ Jesus," 67-68; "Ιησοῦς", in Walter Bauer – Frederick W. Danker – William F. Arndt – F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago – London: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 373-374.

who is Lord[8], signifying Jesus' lordship, before which every created being bows down to worship.

In this context, 'Lord' embodies a title endowed upon the God of the Old Testament, denoting attributes of creator, saviour, and provider, particularly revered by the People of Israel. In the Greek rendition of the Hebrew Scriptures, known as the Septuagint, the appellation κύριος serves as a translation for the sacred and ineffable Name of God, **יהוה** [9]. However, within the New Testament corpus, this same epithet is also attributed to Jesus. The early Christian community perceived and encountered in the resurrection of Jesus an attainment of the divine glory traditionally ascribed to **יְהוָה** in Hebrew Scriptures. This transformative event, wherein Jesus rose from the dead, rendered him worthy of such divine accolades. Consequently, upon resurrection and glorification, the Ecclesial Community was able to bestow upon Jesus the honorific title of κύριος, 'Lord', underscoring his absoluteness, divinity, holiness and perfection[10].

Jesus: the Name of Salvation

From the inception of his earthly existence, the narratives surrounding Jesus, particularly those pertaining to his

[8] See Thurston – Ryan, *Philippians and Philemon*, 94-95.

[9] For a detailed analysis of the Tetragram, see David N. Freedman – Helmer Ringrgren – Michael P. O'Connor, "יהוה", in G. Johannes Botterweck – Helmer Ringgren (eds), David E. Green (trans.), *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1986), 5:500-521. See also Takamitsu Muraoka, "κύριος" and "יְהוָה", in *A Greek-Hebrew/Aramaic Two-Way Index to the Septuagint* (Louvain: Peeters, 2010), 72; 218.

[10] For a detailed analysis, see Gottfried Quell, "κύριος": The Old Testament Name for God," and Werner Foerster, "κύριος in the New Testament," in Gerhard Kittel (ed.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1965), 1058-1081 and 1086-1098 respectively.

naming, underscore the profound significance attributed to his name. In the Synoptic Birth and Infancy Narratives, the Matthean and Lukan perspectives on the selection of the name for the Child to be born are in concomitance: both Matthew and Luke proffer 'Jesus' as the name: "She [*Mary*] will bear a son, and you [*Joseph*] are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins… When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus" (Matthew 1:21.24-25); "you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus… After eight days had passed, it was time to circumcise the child; and he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb" (Luke 1:31; 2:21).

In the Matthean narrative, an interpretive nuance emerges regarding the designation of the name 'Jesus'. A notable discrepancy arises between the directive from the angel to Joseph to name Mary's son 'Jesus' and the actual naming by Joseph, in the subsequent citation by Matthew of Isaiah's prophecy: "All this took place to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: 'Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Ἐμμανουήλ, which means, 'God is with us'" (Matthew 1:22-23). Notably, throughout Jesus' earthly existence, he is never addressed by the name Ἐμμανουήλ. Matthew appears to suggest that through the appellation Ἐμμανουήλ, signifying divine presence among humanity, God's salvific intent for humanity is underscored. This theological connotation is confirmed and reinforced by the etymology of the name יְהוֹשׁוּעַ / יֵשׁוּעַ, signifying 'God

saves[11], reaffirming the mission of the Child to "save his People from their sins" (Matthew 1:21)[12].

The Hebrew lexeme for salvation is יְשׁוּעָה, from where the name Jesus is derived: יֵשׁוּעַ, or Isaiah, יְשַׁעְיָהוּ, or Joshua, יְהוֹשׁוּעַ. The Hebrew lexeme יְשׁוּעָה is based on the roots י-ש-ע. Jesus' name gives a subtle interpretation of the concept of salvation: a leading into a spacious place[13]. The Psalmist groans to God: "For you, O God, have tested us; you have tried us as silver is tried. You brought us into the net; you laid burdens on our backs; you let people ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water; yet you have brought us out to a spacious place" (Psalm 66:10-12)[14].

---

[11] See Stout, "The Man Christ Jesus," 67-68.

[12] Basil the Great comments on the name given to Jesus in his *Homily on Psalm 61:2*: "Now, it is a custom in Scripture to call the Christ of God, salvation, as Simeon says: 'Now let your servant depart in peace, O Lord, because my eyes have seen your salvation.' Therefore let us subject ourselves to God, because from him is salvation. He explains what salvation is. It is not some mere active force, which provides us with a certain grace for deliverance from weakness and for the good health of our body. What then is salvation? 'For he is my God and my Saviour: he is my protector, I shall be moved no more' (Psalm 61:3 LXX). The Son, who is from God, is our God. He himself is also Saviour of the human race, who supports our weakness, who corrects the disturbance that springs up in our souls from temptations," Arthur A. Just (ed.), *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. New Testament III – Luke*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 49.

[13] See Fritz Stolz, "ישע *jshʿ* hi[phil] aiutare," in Ernst Jenni – Claus Westermann (eds) (Italian edition, Gian Luigi Prato [ed.]), *Dizionario teologico dell'Antico Testamento* (Torino: Marietti, 1978), 1:679-684. However, for a linguistic critique of the meaning of spaciousness in the lemma "י-ש-ע *j-sh-ʿ*," see Heinz-Josef Fabry - John F. Sawyer, "י-ש-ע", etc, in G. Johannes Botterweck – Helmer Ringgren (eds); David E. Green (trans.), *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 441-448.

[14] Willem A. Vangemeren, "Psalms," in T. Longman – D.E. Garland (eds.), *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI 2012), 502-509; Luis Alonso Schökel – Cecilia Carniti, *I Salmi* (Italian edition, Antonio Nepi [ed.]) (Commenti Biblici; Roma: Borla, 1992), 969-979.

Salvation extends beyond the confines of the purely spiritual domain, encompassing various dimensions that contribute to emancipation and liberation. This includes not only aspects such as the absolution of sins or deliverance through exorcism but also entails facilitating the individual's emergence into a realm of expansive freedom. Within this context, salvation facilitates the transition from a state of constriction and limitation to one characterised by the full realisation and integration of one's complete identity, encompassing the entirety of their being—body, soul, and spirit. Such holistic redemption culminates in the restoration of wholeness, echoing the divine affirmation articulated in Genesis 1:31, "indeed, it was very good". Consequently, healing constitutes an integral facet of salvation, addressing the totality of the individual's existence[15].

A Physical Healing as sign of Spiritual Restoration

Numerous narratives detailing the miraculous deeds attributed to Jesus, consistent with their literary genre, emphasise the phenomenon of physical restoration as emblematic of spiritual renewal. The narrative depicting the miraculous healing[16] of the paralytic man lowered through the roof in the presence of Jesus (Mark 2:10-12) serves as a

[15] John Navone, *Themes of St. Luke* (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1970), 146-148; I. Howard Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1970), 94-102; Jan G. van der Watt – David S. du Toit, "Salvation," in Joel B. Green (ed.), *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL – Nottingham: IVP Academic – InterVarsity, 2013), 826-832, especially 829-830.

[16] For a detailed and extensive analysis of miracles and miraculous saving actions, see Graham H. Twelftree, "Miracles and Miracle Stories," in Joel B. Green (ed.), *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2013), 594-604.

focal point for elucidating the core concept of universal and holistic salvation. This event serves as a corporeal and physical manifestation underscoring Jesus' authority to address the spiritual infirmities of the afflicted individual: "So that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins… 'I say to you, stand up, take your mat [*a constant reminder of the man's physical disability*] and go to your home'" (vv.10-11). "He stood up, and immediately took the mat and went out before all of them; so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, 'We have never seen anything like this!'" (v.12).

The inquiry immediately arises: what aspect of Jesus' ministry had eluded the bystanding crowds' comprehension hitherto? Notably, the observers had been privy to several demonstrations of Jesus' authority and miraculous power. They had witnessed exorcisms, marvelled at the authority of his words, and at his power that even evil spirits were subdued at his command (Mark 1:21-28). They had observed healings, including the restoration of Peter's mother-in-law to health (Mark 1:29-31). They had witnessed themselves the healing of all those who were sick and the casting out of a number of demons from those who were possessed (Mark 1:32-34) and had followed him, drawn by his teachings (Mark 1:35-39). Even the "cleansing" (καθαρίσαι, v.40; καθαρίσθητι, v.41) of a leper in Mark 1:40-45 had been witnessed firsthand. Yet, it appears that the profound implication, wherein physical healing by Jesus serves as a tangible signifier of spiritual redemption within the salvific ministry of Jesus, had not fully resonated with them. Perhaps, they had not yet discerned that the convergence of

physical and spiritual healing embodies the essence of comprehensive salvation.

Transforming the Whole Person

As a result, the miraculous interventions ascribed to Jesus serve to underscore the dual facets of physical healing and spiritual renovation, encapsulated within the thematic motif of holistic transformation and eschatological salvation.

The account of the woman afflicted with haemorrhage, as chronicled in Luke 8:43-48, accentuates the nexus between salvation and physical healing mediated through faith in divine agency. The woman's conviction that a mere touch of Jesus' garment, particularly the fringe (probably, the tassels – tzîtzît – at the edges of his praying shawl (thallît)[17], denoting his prayer shawl, symbolised a direct conduit to divine healing in an awe-inspiring manner (Luke 11:1)[18], underscores the belief in Jesus as the channel connecting humanity to God, the

[17] For the shawl, see Jacob Neusner (ed.), "Prayer Shawl," in *Dictionary of Judaism in the Biblical Period (450 B.C.E. to 600 C.E.)* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 498; for the fringes, see Kevin D. Hall, "Fringe," in David N. Freedman (ed.), *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI, 2000), 472; Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, vol. 1 (1:1-9:50) (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994), 794; François Bovon, *Luke 1. A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 1:1-9:50*; Helmut Koester (ed.), Christine M. Thomas (trans.) (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002), 338; Gérard Rossé, *Il Vangelo di Luca*. Commento esegetico e teologico; 2nd ed. (Collana Scritturistica di Città Nuova; Roma: Città Nuova Editrice, 1995), 306; I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*. A Commentary on the Greek Text (The New International Greek Testament Commentary; Exeter – Grand Rapids, MI: Paternoster Press – Eerdmans, 1978), 344-345.

[18] See Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, vol. 2 (9:51-24:53) (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996), 1049-1050; François Bovon, *Luke 2. A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 9:51-19:27*; Helmut Koester (ed.), Donald S. Deer (trans.) (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013), 84.

source of wholeness and holistic life[19]. It is noteworthy that upon her healing, Jesus addresses her with singularly specific words, attributing her salvation, not solely her physical healing, to her faith ("Daughter, your faith has saved you [σέσωκέν σε]; go in peace"; Luke 8:48). Jesus singled out her faith that saved, not that healed, her. Her testimony regarding her instantaneous healing upon touching Jesus' garment illustrates her identification of salvation with physical and spiritual restoration, seeing that her haemorrhage also rendered her ritually impure (Leviticus 15:25-31, esp.v.31; Ezekiel 36:17)[20]. Upon Jesus' observation that someone had made physical contact with him and sensed a release of power, prompting inquiry into the identity of the individual, the woman stepped forward, disclosing her actions and offering testimony. She recounted her immediate healing (ὡς ἰάθη, Luke 8:47) upon touching the fringe of Jesus' prayer cloak, thereby associating salvation with her physical healing.

The Greek verb σῴζω, 'to save,' 'to heal' and the lexeme σῶμα, body, are derived with a very strong degree of evidence from the Sanskrit in the root ska, in Greek σῶς, that is at the root of words like: σῴζω, σαόω, I cure, I save; σωτήϱ, saviour, healer; σάος, healthy, integral; σῶος, σῶς, prosperous, saved; σῶκος, strong, in health[21]. Σῶμα probably refers to the *casing*, *covering*, *wrapping* (veil or skin), that protects (and 'saves') the body. Later Greek uses it for an

[19] See Bovon, *Luke 1*, 338-339.

[20] Matthew 9:21 uses σωθήσομαι (*saved*, not healed). See Bovon, *Luke 1*, 338; Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 344; Rossé, *Il Vangelo di Luca*, 306.

[21] See Henry G. Liddell - Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), *ad loc*; also Werner Foerster, "σῴξω, σωτηρία, σωτήρ, σωτήριος," in Gerhard Friedrich (ed.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971), 965-969.

animated body, seeing body as the receptacle of life, as against the soul, the contents ψυχή as in σῶμα ψυχικόν (1 Corinthians 15:44), the spiritual body. Salvation and saviour definitely do not have only to do with the spiritual realm. This elucidation underscores the broader scope of salvation and the role of a saviour, which extend beyond the confines of the spiritual domain to encompass the physical realm[22].

According to the teachings of the Apostle Paul as articulated in 1 Corinthians 12:27, "Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it," believers are characterised as the collective embodiment of Christ, constituting integral constituents thereof. Hence, individuals collectively manifest as the corporeal representation of the salvific entity, Christ Jesus, who brings about healing and deliverance. Consequently, within a Christological framework, believers function as both recipients and conduits of salvation–Saved and Saving Body at the same time–, signifying a dual role as beneficiaries and agents of redemption.

Tying together salvation–and its main agent, Jesus–, physical and spiritual healings and miracles as the main divine goal of eschatological perfection, one has to endorse the fact that within the Gospel narratives, salvation emerges as a comprehensive phenomenon brought about by God transcending mere spiritual transformation, embracing a holistic paradigm. It is portrayed as a multifaceted process wherein divine intervention extends to encompass physical, emotional, and spiritual dimensions, engendering restoration across the entirety of human existence. Salvation, as depicted, involves the divine touch of healing that extends to all aspects of human nature

[22] See Paul Sciberras, "The Church as Body of Christ: Pavel Florenskij's *The Concept of Church in Sacred* Scripture," *Melita Theologica* 69, 1 (2019), 111.

including the body, soul, spirit, emotions, psyche, and will. In essence, salvation entails the restoration of humanity to its primordial state of perfection, evoking divine approval reminiscent of the Genesis narrative wherein God proclaims the goodness of creation: "God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good" (Genesis 1:31)[23]. Salvation encompasses the preservation and restoration of various facets of human existence, including corporeal, cognitive, existential, and evaluative dimensions. It constitutes a process of reintegration, facilitating the restoration of individual integrity and well-being. Central to this conception is the notion of healing, which encompasses both physical and metaphysical dimensions. Moreover, the attainment of wholeness through salvation engenders a state of holiness, mirroring the divine attributes and embodying alignment with the sacred. "Salvation as spaciousness, liberation from restricting, oppressive experiences both physical and spiritual occur frequently in the Old Testament (Psalms 4:2; 18:17-20; 25:17; 31:9; 118:5; Est 4:14). However, there must be the right perspective: everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved, not who calls upon some miracle worker. It is in Jesus who died and who conquered death that we can be healed and heal others. Then, salvation must be seen as the freeing of a person so that such a person can come out to freedom of salvation in Christ"[24]. Salvation is wholeness, healing and holiness.[25]

[23] See Gerald O'Collins – Edward Farrugia, "Salvation," in *A Concise Dictionary of Theology* (New York/Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1991), 212.

[24] Paul Sciberras, ""All Flesh Shall See the Salvation of the Lord": The Function of Paul's Shipwreck Account in Acts 27-28: A Proposal," *Melita Theologica* 65, 2 (2015), 62.

[25] See the common etymology of the adjectives healed, whole and holy in Charles T. Onions (ed.), with the assistance of George W.S. Friedrichsen-

Proclaiming the Significance of the Name of Jesus

Consequently, another essential facet of healing pertains to the theological concept of salvation, positing that holistic deliverance is contingent upon the proclamatory acknowledgment of Jesus Christ as both Lord and Saviour. The Apostle Paul elucidates this notion in Romans 10:14-15, underscoring the necessity for individuals to invoke faith in Christ, a prerequisite predicated upon acquaintance with his person: "How are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent?" The verse underscores the pivotal role of proclamation in disseminating the message of Christ, thereby facilitating the process of belief and subsequent salvation. Central to this theological framework is the opening of the Word of God (see Luke 24:32.45), as expounded and exemplified by Jesus Christ, the harbinger of redemption. Thus, salvation is conceived as emanating from the invocation of Jesus' name, symbolising his role as the ultimate deliverer, saviour and healer.

Calling on is fruit of faith and "faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17)[26]. Indeed, "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God

Robert W. Burchfield, *The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), and Walter W. Skeat, *An Etymological Dictionary of the English Language* (Mineola, NY: Dover, 2005).

[26] Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans* (The Anchor Bible, 33; New York: Doubleday, 1993), 594-601; Brendan Byrne, *Romans* (Sacra Pagina, 6; Collegeville, MN: Michael Glazier – Liturgical Press, 1996), 323-328; Daniel Harrington, *Romans. The Good News According to Paul* (New York: New City, 1998), 105-107.

raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved" (Romans 10:9-10).

Miracles Unveiled: Recognising the Teacher Within the Miracle-Worker

An intriguingly constituent dimension of miraculous occurrences lies in the recognition of the pedagogical role assumed by the Jesus, the miracle-worker. The Hebrew Scriptures provide unequivocal evidence that the utterance of God possesses creative potency. In the first creation account in Genesis 1, the author iterates the specified phrase on eight occasions: "God said, 'Let there be…' […וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהִי]. And it was so [וַיְהִי־כֵן]" (or equivalent expressions: Genesis 1:3.6-7.9.11.14-15.20-21.24.26-27)[27]. The prophets (the נְבִיאִים) continue in the same line of thought: "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there until they have watered the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it" (Isaiah 55:10-11).[28] In the third division of the Hebrew Canon, the כְּתֻבִים, Psalm 33:6, yet again shows the consequent result of

[27] For the creative power of God's word, see Richard J. Clifford, "Genesis," in José Enrique *Aguilar Chiu, et al* (eds), *The Paulist Biblical Commentary* (New York and Mahwah: Paulist Press, 2018), 15.

[28] See Geoffrey W. Grogan, "Isaiah," in T. Longman – D.E. Garland (eds.), *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI 2012), 6:813; Anne-Marie Pelletier, "Isaiah," in William R. Farmer (ed.), *The International Bible Commentary*. A Catholic and Ecumenical Commentary for the Twenty-First Century (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1998), 992.

God's utterance: "By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all their host by the breath of his mouth"[29].

Therefore, it is unsurprising that Jesus was predominantly referred to as 'Teacher' (διδάσκαλος) during instances of performing healing miracles, as opposed to designations such as 'Healer' (ἰώμενος), 'Physician' (ἰατρός), or even 'Saviour' (σωτήρ). Teaching assumes a pivotal role in the holistic development of individuals, thereby being intertwined with the concept of salvation. The epithet διδάσκαλος carries connotations of authority in teaching and pedagogical activities, notably of διδάσκειν (teaching) and of διδαχή (instruction), or of διδασκαλία (evident in the Pauline Epistles, e.g., Romans 12:7; and frequently in the Pastoral Letters). However, within the narrative framework of Luke's Gospel, Jesus is frequently addressed as διδάσκαλος even in contexts devoid of explicit pedagogical or teaching engagement, such as miraculous occurrences. For instance, in the account of Jairus' daughter's resurrection in Luke 8:40-42.49-56, Jesus is addressed by someone from Jairus' household as διδάσκαλος upon news of her demise, despite the miraculous nature of the event ("Your daughter is dead; do not trouble *the Teacher* any longer" – μηκέτι σκύλλε τὸν διδάσκαλον - Luke 8:49). Similarly, in the context of an exorcism (Luke 9:37-43), a desperate father entreats Jesus as διδάσκαλε to attend to his possessed son (v. 38)[30].

Furthermore, the Pauline corpus, particularly in 1 Corinthians 1:22-23, juxtaposes the proclamation of the Cross by Christians with the demand for signs among Jews, emphasising the centrality of the crucifixion over miraculous demonstrations:

[29] Vangemeren, "Psalms," 317-320; Alonso Schökel – Carniti, *I Salmi*, 581-583.
[30] See Sciberras, "All Flesh Shall See the Salvation of the Lord," 61.

"For Jews *demand signs* (σημεῖα αἰτοῦσιν) and Greeks desire wisdom, but *we proclaim* (κηρύσσομεν) Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles".

The narrative strategy employed by Luke in recounting Paul's journey and subsequent shipwreck in Malta (Acts 27–28) omits explicit verbal proclamation of the salvation by Paul. This narrative choice underscores the transformative power of verbal teaching in manifesting the saving message. From a narrative perspective, Luke does not make any reference whatsoever to Paul announcing the Gospel of Christ Jesus in words in his shipwreck account in Malta (Acts 27–28) but shows that Paul does demonstrate its salvific power in miraculous healing deeds (see Acts 28:8-9)[31].

The שַׁבָּת, Symbol in Time of the Perfection Created by God

The attainment of holistic and universal salvation necessitates a comprehensive metamorphosis of both temporal and spatial dimensions. Consequently, the Sabbath assumes symbolic significance and role as a marker in time denoting the divine perfection instantiated by God, notwithstanding its inherent eschatological orientation towards future fulfilment.

God's proposition, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness" (בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כִּדְמוּתֵנוּ - Genesis 1:26) was only uttered about human beings, and the author commented: "So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them" (v.27). The image and likeness, the semblance and resemblance manifest partially through the subsequent actions and directives of the divine entity. This image (צֶלֶם)

[31] Sciberras, "All Flesh Shall See the Salvation of the Lord," 61.

and likeness (דְּמוּת) are partly seen in the subsequent action and command of God: "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth" (Genesis 1:28).

Male and female were to continue doing, "in his likeness and image", what God himself had initiated. The enhancement of God's magnificence and essence is further enhanced through humanity's participation in the identical magnificence and essence that were delegated and transmitted to humanity. Should God have imparted his magnificence and essence during creation, not solely through the act of creation itself, but also by disseminating such creative magnificence and essence to humanity, then indeed he could: "see everything that he had made and it was very good [טוֹב מְאֹד]" (v.31)[32].

Owing to the original transgression of sin, the unique bond between humanity and their inherent divine likeness was severed, engendering a profound disconnection that elicited feelings of shame and avoidance in Adam and Eve upon encountering God (Genesis 3:7-11). In response to this paradigm, the Apostle Paul introduces Christ Jesus as the exclusive means and agent for reinstating humanity to the profound state of the טוֹב מְאֹד delineated in Genesis 1:31[33]. In

[32] טוֹב מְאֹד: there are no degrees of comparison in adjectives in Hebrew, so טוֹב מְאֹד would mean 'perfect'. Discussing John 5:17 ("My Father is still working, and I am working also") in view of Genesis 2:2-23, Arthur J. Droge, "Sabbath Work/Sabbath Rest: Genesis, Thomas, John, *History of Religions* 47, nos. 2/3 (2007), 128-130, states that: "the 'Sabbath rest' has not yet occurred because creation itself remains unfinished and incomplete" and "What first appears, then, as a violation of the Sabbath in John 5 turns out to be a demonstration that the Johannine hero must continue to work on the seventh day because the true rest for creation has not yet been achieved".

[33] See Gianfranco Ravasi, "Dio vide che era ṭôv", *Parole, Spirito e Vita* 44 (2001), 11-20.

Ephesians 1:9-10, Paul elucidates: "He has made known to us the mystery of his will (θέλημα) [*pertaining to the restoration of cosmic harmony and making everything so good*], according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness (πλήρωμα) of time [*the category of time*], to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth [*the physical extremities of heaven and of earth expressing the whole of creation - the category of space*])"[34]. Jesus is the perfecter of space and time, of all human categories! According to Paul, Christ Jesus serves as the unique agent through which all creation is reconciled with God within the foundational dimensions of temporality and spatiality, corporeity and spirituality. Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel's assertion regarding the Sabbath as both "a time in space" and "a sanctuary in time" thus finds resonance[35].

The Lord of the Sabbath Heals on the Sabbath

The framework of Jesus' role as a healer and rehabilitator of humanity, makes it imperative to delve into the rationale behind his occasional, ostensibly provocative, acts of healing on the Sabbath Day, even in the absence of solicitation for assistance. This disposition appears to contradict Jesus' resolute declaration, as recorded in Matthew 5:17, wherein he asserts, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfil."

[34] "Heaven" and "earth" form a *merismus*, where the parts stand for the whole: heaven and earth, and everything in between.

[35] Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1951), xiii. For a detailed discussion of the origin of the Sabbath, see Thomas W. Martin, *Sabbath*, in Robert L. Brawley (ed.), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Bible and Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 233-237.

During his incarnate earthly life, Jesus, in whom the πλήρωμα of God's θέλημα to save humanity was brought again to its original state (see Ephesians 1:7-10), Jesus approached the observance of the Sabbath in a distinctive manner, not only adhering to its precepts but also imparting to his contemporaries the proper understanding of its sanctity. However, it is crucial to note that certain circumstances permitted individuals engaged in specific acts of divine service to disregard the prohibitions concerning labour on Sabbath without facing censure. "Have you not read in the law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple break the Sabbath and yet are guiltless?" (Matthew 12:5)[36]. By invoking passages from Leviticus 24:8 and Numbers 28:9-10 found within the Toràh, Jesus substantiated his deeds by positioning himself as an emissary of divine eschatological prefiguration. He identifies himself as the harbinger of the forthcoming era, wherein God would intervene to restore his people to ultimate repose (see, e.g., Matthew 12:8). Hence, Jesus' actions on Sabbath are most cogently comprehended within the context of the eschatological significance attributed to the Sabbath, which anticipates the epoch when God would decisively act to realise the aspirations of his people. Additionally, Jesus' Sabbath activities must be construed in light of the Sabbath's role as a special day of divine blessings bestowed upon God's chosen community. These blessings encompass his liberation from bondage as

[36] See Leviticus 24:8 for the changing of shewbread on the Sabbath, and Numbers 28:9-10 for the doubling of the burnt offering on the Sabbath). See also, Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew. A Commentary on his Handbook for a Mixed Church under Persecution*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 223-224.

exemplified in the exodus narrative, his divine presence among his people, and the sanctification of Israel[37].

In the narrative presented in Luke 13:10-17, Jesus undertakes a healing miracle on a Sabbath day while imparting teachings within a Jewish synagogue, whereby he remedies the affliction of a woman who had endured a crippling condition, rendering her unable to stand upright for a period spanning eighteen years. Seizing upon this occasion, Jesus elucidates the genuine essence of the Sabbath, which transcends mere abstention from work to encompass a profound communion with God, fellow beings, and the entirety of the natural world. The Sabbath, as emblematic of both temporal and spatial dimensions, symbolises the eschatological ideal of טוֹב מְאֹד, towards which God endeavours to guide his creation, fostering a collective celebration wherein all facets of creation may extol and exalt him in an increasingly comprehensive manner[38].

The central contention surrounding the Sabbath pertains to its symbolic significance as a day emblematic of divine perfection, initially established by God in the genesis of creation and enshrined within the institution of the Sabbath (see Genesis 2:2). Jesus' acts of healing on the Sabbath are aimed at enabling healed humanity to offer more complete adoration to God. The Sabbath thus serves as a symbol denoting the attainment of a perfected state of creation, or the restoration of perfection subsequent to the disruption wrought

[37] See Michael H. Burer, "Jesus, Sabbath Actions, and Divine Sabbath Work," in *Divine Sabbath Work* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012), 108-109.

[38] See Luke T. Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke* (Sacra Pagina, 3; Collegeville, MN: Michael Glazier – Liturgical Press, 1991), 214-215; Bovon, *Luke 2*. 280-281; Bock, *Luke*, 1216-1219.

by sin, which marred the pristine perfection of God's handiwork. Consequently, on one day out of seven, all hierarchical distinctions among humanity are suspended, affording every individual–including masters, employers, employees, and even animals–the liberty to commemorate their individuality within an egalitarian milieu[39].

Jesus illustrates this principle through the mundane example of facilitating the refreshment of animals on Sabbath, thereby exemplifying how acts of healing, whether for animals through access to water or for individuals through physical and emotional restoration, epitomise the holistic essence of the Sabbath. In this paradigm, the notion of divine rest, as recounted in the Genesis narrative, emerges as the culmination of God's creative endeavour, marked by the attainment of טוֹב מְאֹד across his entire creation.

Conclusion

The principal contribution of this inquiry has underscored the central role of Christ Jesus as the divine agent of salvation, demonstrated through his healing miracles. These miracles are construed as essential instruments aimed at guiding creation towards its ultimate eschatological fulfilment (πλήρωμα), a process already initiated by God's recognition that "everything that he had made... indeed... was very good" (Genesis 1:31).

The significance of the name "Jesus" lies at the heart of salvific doctrine, thereby underscoring its association with healing and transformative miracles. This theological

[39] See Paul Sciberras, "A Duty to Remain Connected: a Biblical Perspective of the Wisdom of the Shabbàt", *The Person and the Challenges* 14, 1 (2024), 172-173.

underpinning finds reinforcement in the etymology of the name יֵשׁוּעַ, denoting 'God saves', thus reaffirming the mission attributed to the Child in Matthew 1:21, where salvation is depicted as deliverance of God's People from sin. Matthew's portrayal further suggests that the name Ἐμμανουήλ, signifying divine presence among humanity, underscores God's salvific purpose for humanity.

Salvation transcends mere spiritual deliverance, encompassing various dimensions contributing to emancipation and liberation. This expansive concept entails not only the absolution of sins or deliverance through exorcism but also involves facilitating individuals' emergence into a realm of comprehensive freedom. Within this paradigm, salvation facilitates a transition from a state of constraint to one characterised by the full realisation and integration of an individual's complete identity, spanning body, soul, and spirit. This holistic redemption culminates in the restoration of wholeness, echoing the divine affirmation articulated in Genesis 1:31, "It is very good." Consequently, healing constitutes an integral aspect of salvation, addressing the totality of an individual's existence.

The profound implication wherein physical healing by Jesus signifies spiritual redemption within his salvific ministry did not fully resonate with the disciples. It is possible that they had not yet discerned the interconnectedness of physical and spiritual healing, which embodies the essence of comprehensive salvation. In essence, salvation entails the restoration of humanity to its primordial state of perfection, evoking divine approval reminiscent of the Genesis narrative wherein God proclaims the goodness of creation (Genesis 1:31).

Salvation constitutes a process of reintegration, facilitating the restoration of individual integrity and well-being. Central to this conception is the notion of healing, which encompasses both physical and metaphysical dimensions. Moreover, the attainment of wholeness through salvation engenders a state of holiness, mirroring divine attributes and embodying alignment with God himself, source of perfection.