INTRODUCTION

1.1. Preamble

Of all the books of the Bible, the Gospels, being the seed and the sower in one, achieve the loftiest epiphany continuum through their various literary genres and the person Jesus of Palestine. The seeds in a good soil generate creative power reflecting the faith of the sower. Likewise the Gospels, the word of God, received in an honest and good heart generate a transformative power reflecting the Sower, Jesus’ faith in the human spirit of openness to the divine.

The transformation demands a conversion from the old Adam in us to the ‘New Person’ in Jesus. The conversion is the release of one’s self from the prison or pride of the egoistical self, that is foundational to the realisation of the Gospel truth that makes one totally free. The resulting ‘free self’ would naturally get manifested in all social dimensions, enthusing the spirituality of the Gospel-made person to become ‘socially’ oriented and the person to be eligible for the Kingdom of God on earth.

Prodigious and worthy scholarship has studied the Gospels; and various perspectives such as religious, philosophical, historical, political, scientific and linguistic have been adopted. The present study veers to a literary person’s angle in amalgamating the symbolic language, the metaphoric processes, the homely images and the richly evocative stories of the Gospels. Such a literary approach would, it is hoped, be the most appropriate for interpreting the Gospels’ symbolic presentation in the multi-cultured and the religiously pluralistic society in India. The texts
hermeneutically interpreted would, therefore, be stressing their contemporary relevance to everyone, including agnostics and atheists.

This dissertation tries to focus on the reality of the Gospels' contemporary relevance that could be established by emphasizing the need for blending of spiritual progress and social development as Jesus said and did. This blending is to be experienced in the quality of human response to the prevailing human situations in order to achieve a spiritually meaningful and socially purposeful human destiny, after the pattern of the life of Jesus, the model new person. Therefore, as the title would suggest, the Gospel-made new person is epiphanized in the total transformation of one's self to true freedom, and in the merger of the free self and social spirituality in all human conditions and actions.

A brief explanation of the procedures adopted in the dissertation may be appropriate here. The references are given in parentheses after each quotation or idea taken from the Gospels, using accepted abbreviations: Matt. for Matthew, Mk for Mark, Lk for Luke and Jn for John. The references to the other books of the Bible (using the accepted abbreviations) and the works cited in the bibliography are given in the Foot notes under respective pages serially numbered for each chapter separately.

The word 'Gospels' in plural is used whenever the text is referred to, and the 'Gospel' in singular refers to the message of the goodnews. When the word is used as an adjective the lower case, 'gospel' is used. As the study focuses mainly on the humanistic aspect of Jesus and the sociological dimension of his Gospel, the human name Jesus is used or
referred to mostly in the dissertation, whereas the functional aspect of 'Christ' is used whenever the theological genre of the Gospel or the spiritual milieu of faith is given emphasis.

The chapter Five may seem a diversion, but is found necessary as the negative perspective of self-complacent spirituality, at least by negation declares the positive power of social spirituality that was conspicuously absent in the elitistic and proud group of the Jewish community.

Though the study attempts to focus the evolution of the 'new person' to be the objective of the Gospels' ephiphany, it has not been focused in the title, mainly for two reasons. First, as negatively looked at, the word 'new' does not convey any absolute sense; secondly and as positively looked at, the phrase 'Free Self' brings out the true sense of the total transformation that is expected to be an ever on-going human phenomenon (Incarnation and Immanuel mysteries symbolize only this truth) for realizing the human destiny, as it has been envisioned by Jesus in the Gospels.

1.2. The Gospels as Didactic Literature

The Gospels form a unique literary genre with the teachings of Jesus and stories about him. In modern times religion or spirituality is looked at from a variety of angles, the main being a fresh reading of some central religious texts. Christian spirituality depends very much in this process of fresh reading of its Scriptures, especially the Gospels, which presenting the eternal Word-God become human in history, form the essence of the Bible. Bible means books. It takes its root from the Latin word 'Biblia' that corresponds to the Greek word 'ta Biblia' meaning
books and in old English the word is spelled 'bibul' and 'bibil'.

As the 'art of words' constitutes literature in books, it is the 'art of the eternal Word-God' that constitutes the Bible, the Book. It is rightly acknowledged by all that the Bible has been a valuable treasure in world literature having incorporated into it all possible literary genres. Consequently it is approached and analysed as a 'work of art' in religious literature in the academic and literary circles. New schools of Biblical interpretation view the Bible as a masterpiece in literature, since they could find 'surplus of meaning' in the texts like any literary classics and the same has been pointed out by scholars like Gadamer and Ricoeur. Jesus, presenting himself to be a great visionary, a fundamental quality of a perfect artist, is seen in the Gospels to be an artist par excellence. His vision naturally looks beyond space and time, to the absolute Reality, the God-Real as the Real Father. His message therefore has been seen by many as the literary revelation of the cosmic religion of global responsibility.

The nature and goal of the gospel message as a faith revelation of the early Christian communities inspire the reader's imagination to look deep at reality in order to reach the deepest truth. According to Keane, Professor of moral theology "imagination might help us to more accurately assess how we become virtuous and how we act concretely on the basis of our virtue." The Gospels as didactic literature are the product of both ethics and imagination. The gospel ethics is basically a

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3 Keane p 16.
vision of the true way of life. Imagination helps this vision, to see properly and the literary skill of the imaginative bent of thinking is this extraordinary seeing. The absence of it in the people made Jesus say "this is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, hearing they do not hear...." (Matt. 13:13). On another occasion when Jesus says that the eye is the lamp of the body, he refers to the revelatory function of the eye that helps the imaginative thinking. The absence of this revelation is pointedly stated by Jesus thus, "If the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness" (Matt. 6:23). The light of the gospel revelation, through its symbolic stories by and statements of Jesus produces Tyndal effect (named after John Tyndal, it refers to the visible path of light passing through a system of particles) illumining the hitherto unnoticed particles of dust in our life and kindles also an inner light of our human spirit illuminating the egocentric darkness in any responsible reader.

The Gospels as didactic literature kindle the creative and ethical imagination for the inspirational thinking, for instinctive feeling and for intuitively deciding the nature and function of the moral human being. The creative imagination and action on the part of the intellectual beings would help work out each step in every sphere of human activity towards the society's progress. It is applicable also to the moral imagination that helps the human to think, to feel and to decide rightly so that every moral concern settles satisfactorily the social issue at hand for the overall human self-fulfilment and social development.

A critical reading of the Gospels should help the reader's creative imagination serve the didactic purpose of contributing to the personal
transformation that should in turn be manifested in all social dimensions; because what could be the main focus of individual transformation except for its manifestation in every social structure that the individual belongs to. To attain this goal, the symbolic language and metaphoric process of the text become highly purposeful and pragmatic. For instance, the cross of Christ, the chief Christian sign, becomes a great symbol demanding human transformation both in the vertical and horizontal planes towards God and neighbours respectively. This transformation requires painful commitments in as much as Jesus goes as far as the cross in his humanity. It is indicative of the imperative on our part to be human for other people to the point of our own total break-down. Symbolic language and metaphoric process indeed call for a genuine creativity on the part of the interpreter. Keane points to Ricoeur's observation that "metaphor confronts the reader with something which is logically absurd, something the reader must strive to assimilate and relate to meanings which the reader already possesses . . . the reader must find something which is familiar in the strange." 4 The gospel narratives are abundant with such confronting situations that the readers must strive to assimilate.

When a responsible reader of the gospel narratives finds the details to revolve around the twin commands of love towards God and neighbour, he or she cannot easily overlook the spiritual sense of the text. Augustine insists on the priority of such spiritual sense of the text. He insists on the priority of such spiritual praxis as the necessary context for the "rule of faith, that is, the living tradition of the community of Christians is the context for the responsible reading of the Scripture." 5 Thus the context

4 Keane p 57.
of the living tradition giving contemporary relevance to the gospel text makes the hermeneutic approach very effective on the reader's understanding and interpretation of the Gospels' various literary genres.

1.2.1. Literary Hermeneutics

There are now a number of interpretative approaches to the Biblical hermeneutics that help the readers develop contemporary methods of reading. Many Biblical scholars have contributed significantly to various methods of Biblical interpretation and the one by Robert Morgan and John Baston emphasizes the need to take literary approaches to the scriptures very seriously, and they suggest in their book Biblical Interpretations thus: "a literary framework, which includes the results of historical and linguistic research is more promising for the study of religion and for theology than the historical framework."6 This concern has also been reflected by George Lindbeck who has suggested that a "literary reading of the Bible is the most adequate approach, and he calls for theology that uses explicitly Biblical imagination to shape contemporary religious praxis."7

The nature and function of literary approach to our Biblical interpretation would aim at understanding the texts as works of religious literature first by examining the structure and methods of its communication, which are symbolic in presentation and metaphorical in process; and secondly by expecting effects of such literary interpretation serving didactic purpose in order to reflect upon the changing condition in our contemporary social milieu. This could be termed literary

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6 Jeanrond p 161.
7 Jeanrond p 162.
hermeneutics, in which we tend to be critical of ourselves (such self-critical accounts are abundant in the Gospels) and of the world in the light of our understanding of the text. Thus the contemporaneity of the text is established. The stories and symbols in the Gospels help the readers comprehend Jesus' creative imagination that is 'behind' the text. The readers also become creative imaginers themselves, looking at the present context that is in 'the front of' the text.

What the renowned critic T.S. Eliot remarks about critical reading of any great work of literature is rightly applicable to our reading of the Bible, especially of the Gospels. Reminding us that criticism is as inevitable as breathing, he says "we should be none the worse for articulating what passes in our minds when we read a book and feel an emotion about it, for criticising our own minds in their work of criticism." Such a hermeneutic approach to the gospel texts focuses them to be 'the criticism of life' for responsible and responsive readers of the Gospels. It is pertinent to quote what Jeanrond has succinctly stated, "the task of hermeneutics ultimately points to a very large subject matter, namely to the understanding of life itself."

Religion is believed to perform absolute functions of life and in religious literature, the presentation of symbols and images serves such functions, because the symbols signify the meaning or essence of a reality on one side and on the other signal to the quality of life on the part

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8 Jeanrond p 18
10 Jeanrond p 52.
of the reader. Thus the reality and the quality are thrown together by the symbol. The Greek word 'symbolon' means 'thrown together'. Moreover ideas that belonged to the inner realm of higher consciousness could be summoned only through the faculty of creative imagination and be manifested to our understanding only in symbolic representation. The Gospels both in their parts and in the whole, performing a 'hermeneutic arc' by mutual enriching of the whole and the parts of the text, are permeated with such ideas belonging to the inner world of higher consciousness. The Gospels behave like a 'symbol' throwing together the essence of human reality and the expected quality of human response to such reality. It is true that the reality is often misunderstood and the quality misrepresented due to diabolic promptings in the world. It is interesting to note that the 'diabolic' is the etymological opposite to symbolic, as the Greek word 'diabolon' means 'throwing in between'. Christ Jesus, the person and personification of the gospel message stands above all a grand symbol, revealing the reality of God's dealings with humanity, and the quality of the human response to God's dealings in actual history.

1.2.2. Theological Genre

Literary interpretation alone cannot make our understanding of the Gospels complete as their teachings and the teacher shed light on our understanding of God's will for us and His living presence in our world. Such a theological genre of communication is, by its very nature, a hermeneutical exercise since it deals with a tradition mediated by written texts and their interpretation. Augustine insists in his De Doctrina Christiana (On Christian Doctrine) that "the Scriptures are human texts which refer to God ... they need to be used by the Christian reader as guides to
the proper attitude towards God, towards him or herself, and towards reader's fellow human beings".\textsuperscript{11} Hence the theological perspective of the Biblical text has the objective of making the interpretative task a praxis-oriented hermeneutics, by which the text becomes potentially meaningful. It is expected of our gospel reading, as with any great classics in literature, which can have true living character only when it enjoys the contribution of our input because "through the input of our gaze, it continues to imitate the world"\textsuperscript{12} of the contemporary milieu. While doing so, the reader chooses to adopt any of the hermeneutical thinking in order to reflect upon the prevailing human conditions. Here the reality of the text and the reality of the reader meet. Moreover the hermeneutical thinking fosters human fulfilment or social wholeness. For such fulfilment and wholeness and for having given freedom to the human beings, God's participation in deciding the future of humanity by himself taking on the human form becomes imperative. We find Jesus initiating the process by his proclamations of the kingdom of God. In this kingdom, the humanity becomes 'the people of God' that constitutes the witnessing by the Church; and the Bible, with its essence in the Gospels, becomes the kingdom's ever living document, the living word of God.

The Gospels do not present the biography of Jesus. All the four gospel writers' silence about the long span of thirty years of Jesus' pre-public life, except for a single detail of the boy Jesus being lost in the temple (Lk 2: 41-51), is a proof of the non-biographical genre of

\textsuperscript{11} Qtd. in Jeanrond p 22.
the Gospels. Besides had the Gospels been just biographies, they could have been titled the "Life of Jesus", or the "Book of Christ", similar to the titles of some of the books of the Bible, like "The Book of Isaiah", "The Book of Jeremiah" and so on.

Jesus, in his functional milieu of Christ is experienced, as it were, a 'moving centre', of faith. The word milieu literally means 'in lieu of the middle' (centre) referring to both the centre and the atmosphere around the centre (in Latin mi=medius or middle+lieu=in lieu of). Likewise the new person made by the Jesus message is also expected not to be on his or her own centre, that is, not to be centred or prisoned to self of one's own ego, not to be exclusive but to move beyond his or her genetic (centre) limitations to embrace freely and become inclusive of the universal humanity. It is possible due to the realization of responsible human self in making right use of free choice in all social situations. Such a moving centre of one's self, after the model of Jesus is termed 'Free Self' in this study, as the use or misuse of FREE choice, a quality that the human beings alone are endowed with depends very much on the responsible or irresponsible functioning of the human SELF in deciding to do good or evil things in life.

The relevance of such faith in the 'moving centre' of Christ to the contemporary world is in the hands of responsible readers. Finding the Gospels to be the faith experience of communities, the reader approaches them with hermeneutic thinking so that he or she is able to find a relation between the life from which the faith of the early communities sprang up, and the contemporary understanding to which it gives rise. Such an understanding helps interpreting the reader's contemporary
world. Reading the gospel message should make us experience something in our consciousness, the knowledge of which helps us in our moral evaluations. Thus in the readers' development in the art of making moral decisions, such texts get revitalized interpreting the contemporary human existence and the theological genre of the Gospels gets interpreted hermeneutically. Such hermeneutic thinking can be understood from what Wilhelm Dilthey says, "as the life of the mind only finds its complete, exhaustive and therefore objectively comprehensible expression in language, explication culminates in the interpretation of the written records of human existence."13

1.2.3. Hermeneutical Communication of the Gospels

One can discern the possible connection between a contemporary Biblical interpretation and many current Christian experience. The proclamation of the Gospel involves the readers for human self understanding by imaginatively relating oneself to the interpretative quality of the text; consequently the reader is able to re-create the text's meaning, all of which the author could not have foreseen but which explains the doctrine of 'unconscious creation' on the part of the author. While understanding the text we interpret not the incidents in the text that belong to a specific space and time, but the principles and philosophies that are beyond space and time, that is their universal application. "Ricoeur says that the purpose of theological interpretation is to return us to experience"14 similar to a player's experience while playing. Accordingly the theological communication of the Gospels open up a

13 Jeanrond p 189.
new world in front of them, where true interaction with the reader and true appropriation by the reader are made possible. When the readers learn to have a varied comprehension and appreciation of images and symbols represented in the stories and statements in the Gospels, their imagination is bound to lead them to a larger focus pointing to the contemporary milieu. Moreover, recovering the author’s (here, Jesus’) genius and intention articulated in the Gospels is the proper goal of textual interpretation.

Jesus’ genius and intention were basically to bear witness to God’s living presence, implicit in his main proclamation of the ‘Kingdom of God’, explicit in his first utterance as recorded in the Gospels "I must be in my Father’s House" (Lk 3: 49), and the last utterance on the Cross "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit" (Lk 23: 46). This God-experience-in-Jesus made him search for the last, the least and the lost that was radically different from the religious praxis prevailed at that time. The religious leaders being proud of their self-righteousness, could not be humble to search for or to identify with the least ones in their society. This idea is well echoed by Tagore who sings: "Pride can never approach to where thou walkest in the clothes of the / humble among the poorest, and lowliest and lost".15 Hence naturally the poor, the sinners and the outcasts found Jesus’ message to provide them with transforming power in their lives and his message liberating them from every bondage of injustice and oppression. A responsible reader of such a goodnews must take seriously his or her own critical involvement in the very reading process and respond to the contemporary human

conditions. Such hermeneutic exercise is the science and theory of interpretation and whose object is to explain a text proceeding from its features, both objective and subjective (the author's intentions).\textsuperscript{16} It is evidently required of a responsible reader of any literary work of classical nature. This activity is observed "wherever people reflect upon their ways of understanding"\textsuperscript{17} which is fundamentally a literary merit. Such a reflection by Jesus upon his ways of understanding the truth of God and the world, and the people's need to respond to them makes his message relevant to the contemporary society.

1.3. Jesus, the Paradigm of a Perfect Person

Christ Jesus is the name that has been most heavily loaded with the burden of human history. His is, in Paul's words, "above every name",\textsuperscript{18} calling up various images. The images kindle the human imagination accentuating all aspects of human personality and the understanding of human self and society. The Christ in human Jesus, as portrayed in the Gospels, is experienced to be the very centre of our understanding human freedom and our realizing a responsible social wholeness as the milieu for genuine spirituality, and thereby helping us know the Spirit-God as God-with-us (Immanual), as Our Father. The inner relatedness of the human person to the spirit of Christ of the Gospels is possible only through the common character of freedom in God and in man. This freedom must be rightly used by the human self in its three functional faculties of thinking, feeling and deciding so responsibly that the human personality (self) that gets developed through

\textsuperscript{17} Jeanrond p 12.
\textsuperscript{18} Phil. 2:9 (All Biblical quotations are from the Revised Standard Version).
the human intellect, emotion and will achieves proper self-fulfilment and human wholeness.

It appears that the purpose of creation and the human life is made known in Christ, the Word-Incarnate that "brings together the Hebrew concept of the divine Word active in the world and the Greek concept of Word (logos) as rationale Principle." It has been succinctly acknowledged by the Second Vatican Council Fathers thus: "The truth is that only in the mystery of the incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light." This human truth that is revealed in the life and teachings of Jesus as presented in the Gospels is the focus of the study attempted here by trying to explicate the literary characteristics of the gospel message so that the Gospel, simple and profound as it is, gives rise to an interpretation that is relevant to the contemporary man, moment and milieu. It is indeed realized that Jesus emerges from the pages of the Gospels the real representative of humanity, the true Son of Man.

It appears evident that much of the modern Biblical literature does not focus on Jesus directly but on the new humankind in the contemporary age. Jesus is taken as a model or the paradigm of a perfect person to drive home the point that the modern writers want to make. It was only the thematic value of Jesus' life and teachings that had been the primary and predominant concern of the original writers of the Gospels. It is believed that the Gospels sprang from the life of faith of the early Christian communities in the historical Jesus of Nazareth. Similarly the Gospel's thematic value and the model person Jesus must lead us to

19 Barbour p 176.
20 Documents of Vat II (New Delhi: St Paul publications, 1966) p 192.
"Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World", page 22.
the transformation of our own selves in order to discover (or rediscover what the early Christian communities experienced) the epiphany of the milieu for identifying the New Person in each of us and consequently for facilitating such a transformation in every social structure which we belong to.

The Gospels provide with a brief account of what Jesus said and did in the three years of his public life. They must have been only the translation of what he had been truly imagining about himself, his mission and his vision of new humanity. It made him visualize God as a deeply loving and the most compassionate father-figure, and all persons to be His children and in doing so perhaps he had no difficulty in finding himself to be God in 'flesh and blood:' taking flesh in incarnation and shedding blood in crucifixion and to be the "flesh-embodied Truth".21

Seeing Jesus thus in every possible dimensional view, the study of the Gospels has been critically pursued and projected in different angles by people belonging to different walks of life. Consequently, Jesus is portrayed as a realist, a social scientist, a humanist, a utopian, a communist or at least a quiet revolutionary, an itinerant preacher or a teacher, a God-man and so on. Seemingly Jesus possesses every image that human imagination could inspire on the human self for learning and experiencing the true human identity and dignity, the identity of all being God's children and the dignity of all becoming equal for realizing globally responsible spirituality. Jesus was determined to teach humanity about its essence, and transform the persons as the

21 Countee Cullen, "Judas Iscariot", Color (New York: Alfred Knoph, 1925) (pp 90-94) p. 90
persons-for-others. It is symbolized in his first miracle of turning plenty of water into its essence, the properous wine for the peace of the guests, especially the latecomers like the poor and the ordinary to the wedding feast. Accordingly Jesus, the Son of Man, permeating the whole Gospel is realized to be the essence or the perfect paradigm of the new person and the evolution of human wholeness. Thus it is hoped to draw from the Gospels great confidence in the long cherished faith and doctrine of the human person, by inculcating the higher and unique consciousness exemplified by Jesus in the maturing human mind.

1.4. Methodological Proposals

An integral reading of the Gospels, that is, reading the text wholly through, helps focus the study on the uniqueness, the literary beauty and the overall meaning of the text and their claims on the human person. These claims and their impact on society have directed the methodology of the interpretative study here, taking into active consideration both the literary and theological genres of the Gospels and their hermeneutical understanding by the responsible reader. The chief claims point to the Gospels' key concepts of 'conversion' and the 'commandment' of love. These spiritual demands must be fulfilled through the proper use of Free choice by the responsible human Self, whose impact should help establish on earth 'the kingdom of God'. The spiritual (moral) concern should translate the social issues so that the social establishment of the earthly 'kingdom' would be spiritually oriented belonging to the eternal order 'of God'.
Any challenging Christian experience whether it is social or individual, religious or lay, is seen to be a willing attempt to respond to the new kinds of initiatives enunciated in the Gospel's chief proclamation of the kingdom of God to be established in human history. It is quite significant that earthly kings and their kingdoms have since then been slowly vanishing. The law of this heavenly kingdom is to carry out the will of God, and as in any kingdom the king's will is carried out, the will of the God-king, the will to 'love' must be carried out in God's kingdom. Though so many things are meant by the term love in its different kinds and degrees, the love command of the Gospel is community oriented and universal including enemies. This orientation necessitates a change of heart that is religiously termed 'conversion'. It becomes an essential pre-requisite for every individual to carry out the will of God.

All the statements of and stories by Jesus strive to explicate only these three concepts; the kingdom of God, the law of love and the need for conversion. To help establish the methodology, these concepts and their claims are considered in our context to have social implications through the responsible functioning of the human free self. The individual's conversion and love-praxis must help realize God's kingdom to be a social reality. Proper comprehension and interpretation of these concepts must help those who desire to know and live Jesus and his message. It must help us for taking appropriate moral decisions and for making the individual's spirituality alive and vital to the present society.

Thus the whole of the Gospel is in a way placed faithfully within the triangle formed by these three issues of love, conversion and God's
reign and their hopeful claims on the individual transformation, and his or her impact on the contemporary social structure.

1.4.1. Free Self for a Phenomenal Socio-Spiritual Synthesis

The core and crux of the Gospel is that Jesus unifies moral issues with social concern and the social issues with moral concern, as a result the person made by the Gospel succeeds in phenomenally synthesising both social and moral issues by the responsible use of his or her self in making the right use of free choice to do things for the highest good that the situation requires. Freedom denotes 'endless' creativity on the part of the human faculties of intellect, emotion and will which must function responsibly for promoting social concern in every issue of human existence. The absence of this freedom (one's bound self) ends the human in a cul-de-sac, as it was evident in the life of the Jewish leaders and their attitude towards the universality of Jesus' liberating message and ministry. Whereas the gospel spirituality is expected to germinate in the soil of every existing social structure and likewise the human self displaying responsible freedom becomes a social phenomenon signifying the birth of the new person who would be aware of the true meaning of sin that would necessitate the ongoing and daily conversion in one's life. It is the mark of the spiritual rebirth of the new person.

The person made by the Gospel develops a spirituality which does not consist in the person having any extraordinary thing, but doing very ordinary things in an extraordinary way. This faculty is basically an art, as any art consists in looking at or thinking of ordinary things in an extraordinary way. It is the outcome of the creative imagination by which a new attitude or free disposition of mind is developed within oneself.
towards ordinary things of life and society. In other words, by doing ordinary things in an extraordinary way, the person lives a new way of life, and the person, a new being. The exalting of the ordinary to the extraordinary level is significantly explicit throughout Jesus' life: his birth being first announced to shepherds, who were considered below ordinary human beings; Jesus' choice of his followers was to be from very ordinary, illiterate fishermen when prophets and kings had longed to be in this place, and we find Jesus thanking God for this (Lk 10:21); Jesus' Resurrection was made known first to women, when they were considered non-persons, and their witness was not honoured valid; ordinary children were exalted to be the extraordinary philosophers of men; and finally the cross, the symbol of execution became the sign of redemption.

The free self facilitates the person to fulfil the first demand by Jesus that is repentance. This is change of heart. As one's heart normally imprisons one's self, the change of heart does naturally facilitate one's 'freeing' of self, a new birth as it were, manifesting to the world the indwelling spirit of Jesus.

As a child in the womb gets its form and life feeding from its mother's blood, the person born anew gets developing his or her form and life from the spirit indwelling, and indeed analogically Jesus' blood shed for giving us eternal life becomes meaningful and purposeful. Consequently the transformed person inculcates new character and virtues that are important for socially moral accomplishments. Virtues are the means for moral reasoning or judgment. It is not like mathematical or metaphysical reasoning but a practical reasoning of lived experience.
Such sound judgment arises from clear thinking which is in fact inspired by good and creative imagination, or the extraordinary 'seeing'. The light of faith (spiritual) in the risen Christ makes us see the earthly (social) life of Jesus in the proper perspective, as it is evident from the gospel tradition. His imagination translates his ideas into his word. When the Gospels are read and interpreted by us, his words reveal his ideas explicating his imagination for us. It is noticed that the lasting beauty of humanity envisioned in the imagination of modern person’s mind is seen to coincide with the deeply cherished qualities of the human envisioned by Jesus two thousand years ago.

Imagination must help the readers focus on the way the teachings of Jesus could be grasped and on the way such grasped knowledge could be related to the specific moral dilemmas in the social conditions. According to Keane, imagination would certainly help us make accurate assessment of the way our virtues should form the basis of our actions in concrete circumstances. It is true that the reader’s creative imagination seizes infinite meaning in the finite text when it is sensibly and sensitively studied. It was the insensitivity of Jesus’ opponents to the social issues that made them miserably miss their messiah in Jesus. Thus the Gospels with Jesus’ creatively imaginative stories, parables, allegories and metaphors readily open up a textual or literary hermeneutics. When the reader’s mind is set in this focus he or she is sure to see spirituality to belong to the world’s business also, and the social problem to belong to religious side also. In other words, every moral issue would be viewed at as a social problem. This is what the parables of the generous

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22 Keane p 16.
Employer, the unjust (enterprising) Steward and the Prodigal Son, and Jesus' association with sinners and his pardoning a woman sinner, try to depict though they all appear illogical or illegal at the outset. Thus a genuine approach to any moral issue will reveal the implication of social concern or psychological dimension to it. Accordingly any religious or spiritual exercise (experience) has to essentially be a social experience (exercise).

1.4.2. Social concern of the Spiritual command 'love'

The Goodnews begins with incarnation, an Event long awaited but the manner of its happening was quite unexpected as the Son of Man was "(B)orn... in a litter of scorn", a grand reality adequately manifesting God's identity with the last and the least, the poor and the weak. God's love for humanity has been manifested to be so real and practical that he thus got involved into the factual human history as the poorest of the poor, hence the entry point of the whole mission of Jesus has been undoubtedly love and its practical concern for humanity. This love was not an abstract feature but one of condescending, coming down to others, especially to the low in the social stratum.

The proverbial dictum, 'love is blind', is very much true as it is not legal, logical nor rational, but reaching out to the practical needs of the time. Every unit of the Gospels tries to explicate this fact mainly. That is why Jesus' association with repentant sinners and his table fellowship with the tax collectors were not acceptable for the 'legalistic' elders of the Jewish community; the celebration taken in honour of the returned younger prodigal son by the father was not appreciated by the

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'logical' elder brother; treating the late comers to the employment in the same manner by the generous employer was questioned by the 'rationalistic' early comers and so on. Hence the love preached in the Gospels and practised by Jesus is godly, universalistic and all-embracing with the divine bias of preferential treatment to the despised, the late comers and so on. Matthew who wrote the accounts of the Gospel mainly for the Jews was a tax collector, despised by them. The greatly erudite Saul turned Paul, the significant contributor to the New Testament is a conspicuous late comer to the Christ's mission.

1.4.3. Social implication of the Spiritual demand 'conversion'

Even when a moral issue is viewed socially, one tends to stress the personal aspect of the issue. The issue 'conversion' is viewed at in this way. But when different kinds of people approached John the Baptist who was preaching for conversion asking them to show some evidence that they meant to reform, he was exhorting them on practical and concrete terms, according to their social positions (Lk 3:10-14). When such a social impact was very much manifested in the spiritual mission of Jesus, we learn, that the disciples of John the Baptist left him and joined Jesus who stressed the society oriented repentance or conversion on the part of every one.

The term 'conversion' that means 'turning around' explains the human necessity and possibility to regain one's higher and original state of God's child as the human was created in the image of God, the spirit. This regaining of original state, being born again of the spirit underlines the need for spirit-oriented transformation, for becoming a new person, not only for personal sake but also to perform social
functions for the sake of the other children (images) of our God. This is truly the new human spirit, hence godly spirit. This kind of transformation could be identified as a 'higher' form of conversion, that is effected by the free choice of the human self. This higher form is the greater need of the time than the 'lower' form of conversion which is a mere change into another religion or faith, that could be effected by so many external factors, sometimes not by free choice at all. By the right use of free choice, one's self is liberated for the sake of others and this self in the freed state grows into higher consciousness towards total liberation and final salvation. A concrete example of such a conversion performing social obligations can be found in the personal encounter of Jesus with Zacchaeus in the gospel narrative (Lk 19:2-10). Zacchaeus' conversion having direct social implication is to be dealt with in detail in an appropriate section of this study.

1.4.4. Social perspective of the Spiritual concept "God's reign"

The kingdom of God is a term that is absolutely crucial to the whole of Jesus' ministry. Gospel means goodnews. Jesus says, "I must preach the 'the Goodnews of the kingdom of God' to other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose" (Lk 4:43). What is the goodnews? In the beginning of his ministry, Jesus embraces his mission as prophesied by Isaiah\textsuperscript{24} "... to preach goodnews to the poor ... release to the captives ... recovering sight to the blind ... liberty [to the] oppressed" (Lk 4:18). When the two statements are read in juxtaposition, the importance of the poor, the captives, the blind and the oppressed in the kingdom of God is made significant. There are many instances in the Gospels to substantiate this objective.

\textsuperscript{24} Isa. 61:1-2.
The term kingdom in worldly connotation evokes a sense of authority. But God as king is not presented by Jesus as an authoritative person in his communicating with us, instead as a loving and compassionate father-figure. It is here the kingdom having the qualification of God is fundamentally different from the kingdom known in human history. Hence the eschatological sense of God’s reign incorporates within itself the social sentiments, of father-children, not king-citizen nexus of the worldly milieu. Again the kingdom does not mean here any territory as such, but the persons and the terms poor, captives, blind and oppressed should be interpreted according to the contemporary social conditions.

Moreover if the kingdom refers to the possession of power, then the kingdom of God is bound to refer naturally to the empowerment of the poor and the weak, thereby safeguarding their human dignity and right. Such an empowerment would establish a glaring difference between the present and the future, between what is ‘already’ and what is ‘yet to be’, implying God’s reign to be a hope both in the moral and social phenomena.

1.5. Objectives of the Gospel Summons

The Gospels speak not just about doctrines of theology, but also about ‘doing’ theology. When Jesus once asked his disciples ‘who do the people say that I am’, he learnt that people, having found many outward similarities between Jesus and other Biblical personalities, had thought of him to be either John the Baptist or Elijah or one of the old prophets risen. They failed to recognize the new person, the new Adam, in him. But when Jesus asked his chosen ones "who do you say that I am" we find Peter acknowledging Jesus to be ‘the Christ of God’
(Lk 9:18-20) which means 'the annointed one of God'. This recognition of Jesus as the new person, the annointed one of God is proclaimed by many persons in the Gospels, such as Nathaniel (Jn 1:19), Martha of Bethany (Jn 11:27) and Thomas, one of the twelve (Jn 20:28). Jesus, in the beginning of his ministry, quoting Isaiah lists the bounden duties of the annointed one of God. He says that "the spirit of the Lord ... has annointed me" to take care of "... the poor ... the captives ... the oppressed ..." (Lk 4:18). Carrying out the duties of the annointed one in the contemporary social milieu would establish the new person's doing theology and the human eligibility to God's kingdom.

In order to realize such transformed interpersonal relationships a responsible reader must apply vital hermeneutical reflection and fulfil the critical service for understanding and interpreting both the text and the world, because "the latter provides the context in which the former works, and the former participates in the establishment of the latter". This is what Ricoeur defines to be the interpretative aim, when he says, "the sense of the text is not behind the text, but in front of it ... something disclosed. What has to be understood is not the initial situation of discourse, but what points to a possible world ... to understand a text is to follow its movements from sense to reference; from what is says to what it talks about". The text has to be related to the contemporary world that is in front of it now. Thus texts can open up new existential possibilities, new worlds, and new human living conditions for the responsible human selves. Paul Ricoeur, Jürgen Habermas and others have "emphasized the significance of hermeneutical reflection for

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25 Jeanrond p 137.
26 Qtd. in Jeanrond p 73.
the development of the individual human being as well as for the emancipatary discourse of society as a whole.²⁷

1.5.1. Free Self for Human newness (New personhood)

The Gospel tradition provides with a new way of life for its responsive readers by prompting them to make right use of the human free choice in order to realize a commitment to a more inclusive centre of all embracing humanity. The way Jesus exercised human freedom in his dealings with people is given due emphasis in the Gospels. Freedom, like God, remains a mystery, but the human faith in the responsible human self directing the free will, helps us understand both. The belief that God is a free creator is foundational to the Christian understanding of God. The greatest human activity of creativity, the character of God, requires freedom. By a responsible use of our freedom we strive to bear testimony to the gospel summons of the human free self and its various manifestations through human intellect, emotion and will which will result in the evolution of the new person in us.

The human newness is possible only by opening up the third eye, 'the inner eye of love'. By this 'new seeing', the human consciousness grows and as Archbishop Fernandes observes, "when the consciousness of one person is raised, the whole humanity is raised ... [as] increased vitality in one cell vitalizes the whole body".²⁸ The new seeing provides with a link between personal experience and its communication with fellow-beings, due to one's free and conscious decision. To acquire and develop such consciousness, one needs transformation broadly in four

²⁷ Jeanrond p 165.
levels. This change is first of all from the pride of life, a release from the prison of 'one's self; secondly it takes away the perversion in us to be the greatest or to occupy the first 'place of honour' which John and James brothers aspired for, but instead develops love for the last place or love for those in the last; thirdly it transforms us from having trust in the perishable worldly wealth that is a heavy liability on the road to freedom or salvation; fourthly it leads us forward to become really open-hearted, a free self like children to whom the kingdom of God is ascertained. This child-image or metaphor signifies the birth, a re-birth in spirit and in truth, as Jesus taught an ordinary Samaritan woman, who had a real rebirth changing her sinful living, signified in her leaving the empty pot near the well. The life of the Samaritan woman prior to her encounter with Jesus is a typical case of the misuse of the free choice by an irresponsible human self, that could find no worthy meaning in life. Whereas after her encounter she returned a new person having decided to responsibly use her self for taking the right decision in the use of her free choice. The episode tells of the impact of her spirit on her society too. Likewise the evolution of the human spirit (born anew of the spirit) through the freedom of one's self must be realized in the right use of free choice in the social situations to which the Gospels summon us. Thus the free self becomes the essence of the person born anew.

1.5.2. New Person, a Social phenomenon

A careful reader of the Gospels becomes aware of a truly existential meaning in Jesus' message, and a new outlook on life emerges from the various ways Jesus got involved for inculcating awareness in his society. This awareness would lead one to the growth of consciousness
with due impact on the society. The nature and growth of such consciousness point to us that the human society should no longer be believed to get evolved only by ‘the Grace of God’ but by the ‘Collective Consciousness’ of the human community. Hence the truth of the ‘spirit of evolution’ depends upon the survival of the spirit of community, or the human collective consciousness. The individual transformation of Zacchaeus, and of the Samaritan woman in the gospel narratives depict such a growth of consciousness and its impact on their respective societies. The characters of Zacchaeus and the Samaritan woman provide with a typical case of positive study of comparison as to the way the new person evolves and emerges into a social phenomenon. On the other hand, the character of the teacher, Nicodemus appears to be a case of negative perspective with no impact on his elitistic society.

The Gospel-made person is expected to bear testimony to such collective consciousness, and look forward hopefully to the last judgment day, not as an event that closes everything but as one that opens up to a promise, like any judgment, for initiating a new reality. This content of hope permeates the entire New Testament and we are invited to live in the world not as aliens but as free children of the Father-God. This hope is not subjective but objective, centred on social and political equality, in the reconciliation of all beings and things as Paul observes in many of his letters. It is also made probable that "...ethically and politically we move beyond what the law imposes to what the promise proposes".29 Jesus’ ministry reflects such ethics and every literary genre in the Gospels behaves as model for rediscovering this hopeful reality,

which, in Ricoeur’s phrase, is to "reshape human experience at least along its temporal features".\textsuperscript{30}

1.5.3. The Gospel’s Spirituality of Global Responsibility

Genuine spirituality is foundational to a true human community. It awakens the consciousness of responsibility rooted in our experience of the divine and our response to his call in the society. Spirituality has become synonymous with the deep life of faith that co-ordinates the contemplative love of God in the vertical plane and the political love of the neighbour in the horizontal plane effecting a community’s ultimate harmony.

The gospel spirituality demands transformation of our being fundamentally in three aspects towards social action, namely the simplicity of life, selfless service and prophetic call to social justice, effecting a social and global transformation in the process. Such transformation is bound to reveal our outgoing spirituality in various levels. First of all our growing collective consciousness will affect our understanding of human identity and life in society; secondly this consciousness helps us realize our true potentiality towards knowing God as our Father-King and also reminds us of our accountability to him; thirdly the accountability might demand the earthly ego-dominated values to be turned upside down, so that the dispossessed possess, and the have-nots have. Thus in the community of the Gospel, the rich, being ‘poor in spirit’ choose to stand along side the poor, and the greatest, having the chance to serve many becomes the servant of all, and in this way the effect of the Gospel’s outgoing spirituality is manifested in the regeneration of

\textsuperscript{30} Ricoeur p 42.
the human person, whose radical transformation gets reflected in the behaviour, character and actions in the world.

The Christian movement rooted in the Gospels feels that the world dimension is an obligation for the believers of Jesus' Gospel, though many are wont to think that the Gospel is not concerned with the world and its progress, and that it is about a spiritual order, not social. Paul's teaching on 'the new person', as he says "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation" has social implication. It has been affirmed by Paul thus: "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself ... and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation". The Gospel's social teaching emphasizes in more than one way that in one's living, devotion to one's temporal calling is an integral part of living a holy or spiritual life. Jesus' discourse regarding the 'parental care' and 'paying taxes' emphasizes the world dimensions of genuine spirituality.

The gospel proclamation necessitates active participation as Jesus communicated throughout his ministry. His communication of the infinite mercy of God for all, especially the divine preferential option for the weak and the lost is beautifully presented in the triple parables of Lost Sheep, Lost Coin and Lost Son (Lk ch.15) that reflect his declaration that "the Son of man came to seek and to save the lost" (Lk 19:10). The conscious awareness of the world reality makes explicit the need of one's true self to have social involvement. It demands enduring a painful transformation process, in which the believer's 'loving' witness and 'doing' service become inseparable. The absence of this co-ordination

31 2 Cor. 5:17.
32 2 Cor. 5:19.
is the figure of the young rich ruler, who approached Jesus in search of eternal life, asking him "what should I DO?" (Lk 18:18, capitals for emphasis). Though Jesus did not consider his riches to have been acquired by unlawful means and though the rich ruler was 'keeping' by loving all the commandments of God, Jesus could not find a human face in the ruler. The ruler's insensitivity and his reluctance to DO anything to alleviate the problems of the poor became liabilities in the journey of his self towards true freedom.

The Gospels summon us to reckon with the realities of human conditions and to unravel the conundrums of contemporary consciousness by analysing the symbolic and metaphoric language in them with the help of our reflective reasoning and aesthetic understanding. The Gospels do evoke such a new perception of reality by their symbolic representations, as symbols more than any other media, help us mediate between the 'reality' of a situation that is perpetual, and the 'quality' of life required of us, which is one of rarity. Thus "the question of what is worthy of man had become the basic question of what is essential to mankind".

Being witnesses and participants of the social system, we are impelled to strive for achievement of the objectives of the under-privileged. It is the prophetic role by the new person made by the Gospel to join hands with the causes of the weak in their fight against poverty and injustice. The economical discrimination (poverty) and social inequality (injustice) have made, among other things, women and children to be non-persons.

33 Kuncheria Pathil, "Theology of the role of Laity" leevadhara (July 1996) p 255.
or non-entities. Women's economic slavery to men, the problem of child labour and similar things make poverty and injustice the stark realities in our society. It must be redeemed from such injustice by the prophetic role of the new persons. The prophetic role refers to not just foretelling but forth-telling, that is the present events being interpreted in the light of the word and will of God. Tracy views at the prophetic role thus: "the prophetic call to social justice is at the heart of genuine spirituality". When forces like political, social, educational, economical, scientific and others have failed to motivate human person in this direction, the inner spirit of the Gospel pertaining to our moral nature and human dignity brings about the inward transformation of human motives and objectives in this direction.

Jesus' concern and respect for women and his exaltation of children find a unique significance in the Gospels which urge for an introspection into the attitudes we show to the women folk and children in the patriarchal society. Jesus speaks with equal enthusiasm about theological matters of "spirit and truth" to a woman, a Samaritan and a notorious sinner of the city as he would do to Nicodemus, a Pharisee and a ruler of the Jews. This is a clear indication that Jesus considered women equal and in effect more equal than men in his mission, as we find the Samaritan women-sinner not only realizing her need for transformation but also playing an instrumental role to bring her city people to Jesus. Thus the whole of the Gospel makes global responsibility imperative to any genuine spiritual life, which, unlike the Jewish exclusive religiosity, must be inclusive of the universal humanity.

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34 Qtd. in Fernandes, *VITR* (Jan 1996)
1.5.4. Futility of Self-complacent Spirituality

The biblical response to the structure of domination has been uniformly and radically negative. A simple incident (Mk 10:35-45) narrating a very cautious approach by two apostle brothers, John and James requesting Jesus to grant them sit, one at his right hand and another at his left, in his glory reveals this truth. The desire to gain the places of domination was not only with these two disciples. We learn further that when the other disciples heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John. It indicates that they all might have nurtured the same desire in their minds. But even after getting a positive reply from the two that the ‘cup’ that Jesus drinks they will also drink and the ‘baptism’ with which he is baptized, they will also be baptized, which means their readiness for ‘suffering and sacrifice’, Jesus could not grant them seats of domination, instead rules out structure of domination in God’s reign, where, all are equal. He exhorts them further that the great must be the servant and the first must be a ‘slave’ of all, and that the self-righteousness for its own sake would prove to be futile.

What the aforesaid disciples aspired for, the leaders and elders of the Jewish religious community, namely the Pharisees, the Saducees and the chief priests practised in their religious observances. Hence we find Jesus vehemently attacking the self-righteous leaders of his community and both plainly and parabolically pointing out to the futility of their self-complacent spirituality.

In the present world too people experience modern pharisaism in the different social structures. It is witnessed both in the micro level, within a society or a region, and in the macro level in the national and
international planes. We do witness exploitation in all its forms and degrees around us and sometimes we are ourselves part of such an exploiting system. Are not the luxuries, civilization and progress of the so called rich countries built on the blood of the third world countries? What are these and similar innumerable things around us except the modern pharisaism practised and honoured? An observation made by I.K.Gujral, a former Prime Minister of India, on the attitude of the developed countries echoes a kind of modern Pharisaism in the macrolevel. He said, "the so called developed countries are not interested in developing countries like India coming up. But", he asserted, "every denial was turned into an opportunity".35 Such 'denial' by the developed Jews, "was turned into an opportunity" for Jesus' mission to become completely catholic, that is universal in character and application.

1.6. The Gospels, the grand Epiphany

Any responsible reading has got a transformative power as the dictum 'reading maketh a man perfect' indicates. A proper hermeneutic thinking in one's reading of the Gospels may very well provide with an adequate starting point on the road to transformation of the human person generating a 'new humanity'. The Gospels' revelation on the challenging experience of Jesus' followers and other characters in it, and many of the self-critical sections in the narratives help the readers look at the realities of things and life in new perception. In brief, the Gospel is a grand epiphany of the milieu for the evolution of the new person through the transformation of his or her self to true freedom.

How does a reader or a reading, especially of the religious text like the Bible become responsible? The reader must engage his or her creative imagination to bring out the author’s intention revealed in the author’s use of signs, symbols and metaphoric language, because recovering the author’s genius and principles, not incidents, has been the proper goal of textual interpretation, otherwise the reading sees a history and may not have adequate attraction. When the readers learn to appreciate the images, symbols represented by the stories and statements in the Gospels, their imagination is bound to have a larger focus pointing to the present milieu. In this intuitive approach, the imaginative reader through interpretation of the religious ideas, can understand the relationship between the religious faith and the intellectual life of the society. Moreover imagination can enhance our understanding of moral principles, and assist us in the application of these principles to arrive at adequate approaches to social issues seriously. Thus a literary endeavour helps us consider theology also to have social dimension.

One of the central principles of learning is that experimental learning is greater than logical learning that is defined in terms of rules and legality. Such learned experience appears central to productive imagination that has profound impact on the faculty of human mind or idea that in turn is outpoured in words. In the Gospels it is more the lived experience of Jesus than the Pharisees’ rules and the Saducees’ legalism that was central to his imaginative output of the Goodnews. As it is the art of words more than anyother arts in the world that would kindle human imagination, the literary genres of the Gospels must be a grand epiphany to the readers’ creative imagination enhancing the human mind and human ideas.
While delineating the various genres of the Gospels with their preaching, precepts, proclamation and the person Jesus, the gospel literature is realized a grand Epiphany, that is defined thus: "a literary work or a section of it presenting, usually symbolically a moment of revelation or insight into or intuitive perception of something of a reality or essential meaning of something, usually initiated by some homely or common place occurrence or experience". From every point of this definition, the Gospel is witnessed to be the Epiphany par-excellence, in the true sense of all its features as it provides with a fertile and conducive milieu for the realisation of the epiphany of free self and social spirituality in the responsible reader’s interpretative study of it.

1.6.1. Manifestation of Free Self

The phenomenology of human life consists in both ‘external’ and ‘inner’ human being. Externally one feels that he or she has not fulfilled what one had been essentially hoping for in everything: in shaping the world, in friendship, in love and in one’s own personality growth. It is for good. In the experience of our limits, something meaningful occurs, which is the development of the ‘inner being’, which is the responsible self. Thus the true personhood or mature being is born only in the midst of all kinds of aforesaid disappointments in life. This necessitates the true transformation of the human self in making right use of the free choice for doing good things in life. This transformation is possible only when one is humbly open hearted to learn from the experience of disappointments in life. Probably, it was this humility and

open-heartedness that made the gospel characters Zacchaeus and the Samaritan woman use their freedom rightly and get transformed.

The Gospels make the human great not in anything else but in the fact that the human sins have been forgiven, and that the humanity has been redeemed and freed from its inhumanity. It must foster in us the need of transformation of one's self because the human sins are nothing but the revelation of the irresponsible use of the free choice by the human self. The self is the seat of sin. The inclination of the human mind (self) to seek and strive for various appetite-fulfilment and pleasure induces the wrong or the false use of the human will (free choice) that keeps the person in bondage to falsehood. It is like a corrupt person becoming a slave to corruption itself. Such persons cannot feel free. The situation would be rather worse if a person is bound to his or her own self-righteousness that develops the sin of self pride causing all kinds of social injustice. Whereas the self freed from all bondage paves way for an integrated life of truth. The real living is witnessing to this liberating truth. The true liberation is not just being the citizen of a free country, an external factor that the Jews were proud of, being the children of Abraham and having never been slaves to anybody, when Jesus told them of the truth that would make them free (Jn 8:34).

On scientifically acknowledging that we too are among the created (finite) beings and like them death is inevitable to us, death, denying us this world once and for all, cannot be shocking at all; but then as a being with the awareness of creative (infinite) consciousness, uniquely higher than other beings, death or denial of life (losing) could constantly be practised in our daily living condition in society. It is possible by
constantly losing (freeing) ourselves for the sake of society and truth. It is in losing (freeing) one gains life (self), a sort of regeneration. Moreover we 'are' always in the measure in which we are 'for others', that explains the 'intention' of our 'being' or consciousness that is not in the empty 'we are' or 'I am'. This phenomenon is pointed out by Paul Ricoeur thus: "the understanding of the self is always indirect . . . the content of consciousness always consists of intention, the self takes shape in its way of giving shape to the world which appears in consciousness".\(^{37}\)

Therefore one's self is symbolic of sharing by freely giving and taking, by interacting with the world around. The self becomes what one has freely given to the world, which perhaps echoes Coleridge's poetic observation that "we receive but what we give".

1.6.2. Realization of Social Spirituality

What is spirituality? One cannot give just a glib answer or definition to it. It is a basic vocation to the newness of life which is a sort of freely pouring out one's self in order to enhance others in society. Hence this vocation to new life lies in residing in communion with God in the community. Spirituality in brief can be said, in Christian phrase, a baptismal realization, a sacrificial life. Sacrifice is an integral and important aspect of serving the social organization, whether a family or a community. The brief and pointed details of what happened to Jesus after baptism substantiate it. The details of the temptation scene lead us to learn that Jesus who came 'to serve' did not succumb to the temptation "to be served", by anything in the universe: the inanimate, the animate and the spirits. His, he knew, was not a powerful Autocracy but a suffering

\(^{37}\) Ricoeur pp 9-10.
Servocracy. It is the true baptismal realization, which the genuine spirituality demands from everyone born anew.

Spirituality is the impulse of the human spirit that helps us make right moral choice. Making a moral decision is not logical or intellectual but is an art to be enriched by one's imaginative creativity. Such moral decision, like imagination, goes beyond the ordinary and the obvious to the deeper human meanings. The Gospels' symbols and stories do articulate a moral imagination more distinctly than all the rules and laws. Such a moral imagination is also a vital force within a person for being creatively and constantly alive to the world around him or her.

In the love commandment, by uniting the two 'loves' (the marriage of spiritual love of God and social love of the neighbour) Jesus has made the neighbour, like God, universal by removing all limits to "who is my neighbour" in the popular parable of 'the Good Samaritan'. It is noteworthy that the victim on the road, in the parable, is said to be a 'man', a common noun standing for the entire humanity. The limitlessness of this nature of love has not even left out enemies. Hence the love of the neighbour in the absolute and practical sense bears the characteristic love of God, His infinite and universal quality. Practically speaking the neighbour and the enemy get merged in the modern living conditions. Do we not consider our individual neighbour or neighbouring nations our potential enemies? The basic question of 'who we are' (spiritual or moral dimension) has real and full answer only in 'what we do' (social dimension), explicated in the popular parable of the Good Samaritan, who, like the Good Shepherd's model concern and care for the weak one in his fold, stands as a model for social responsibility to manifest
spatial dimension. For Jesus asks us to "go and do likewise" in order to gain eternal (spiritual) life.

1.7. Summing up

The principal purpose of the study is to make a comprehensive understanding of who the person made by the Gospel is (Free Self) and why is it so important that such person's spirituality should get reflected in social dimension (social spirituality). Accordingly the study is divided into five sections as given hereunder.

Freedom is one's birth right as the Biblical creation story affirms. But freedom becomes bad when one's self appetite is towards evil choice, and good by the self's right choice. It is true that when freedom is responsibly used, it enjoys human fulfilment or wholeness. The wholeness is the human spirit of God or Christ's spirit in us. It is the image of God as Jesus truly was or as the human was originally created. Hence in the next section (second chapter) it is proposed to examine how the truth of the freed human self is embodied in the Gospel-made person, who after 'putting on Christ' as Paul would put it, turns out to be not an ego-centred individual but a social phenomenon that is dealt with subsequently in the third chapter.

In the fourth chapter, the way that the newly gained human phenomenon with intrinsic value and dignity is to be translated into action, to love to serve the fellowmen especially the needy, and thus manifest a socially responsible spirituality, is analysed. It is understood that the creator's original purpose for the human to do such revelatory functions did not enjoy the co-operation of the elitistic group of Jesus'
own Jewish religious community, whose spirituality was thoroughly self-centred making the group proud of its own self-righteousness. This is given, as stated in the preamble a separate treatment in the fifth chapter.

The final section deals with the way the lost human character, represented in Adam's myth, begins to get manifested in the promised person's proclamation of the Goodnews. Our faithful understanding of Jesus and his message reveals the true way of life fulfilling the crowning purpose of the human newness and the humanity's wholeness. It must truly be the evolutionary goal too. What and how did Jesus contribute to the awareness of this life of truth (truth of life) in actual history (what should one hope for?); and how do we find his way to be hopefully relevant today (what should one do?); and accordingly how do the Gospels behave a grand epiphany of a conducive milieu to realize the goal of the evolution of the new person are delineated in this concluding chapter. The Gospel being God's 'personal' communication in history, has to have an absolute and therefore independent existence. It is to be lived empirically in the collective consciousness of the human community. For inculcating the new way and truth of human life the Gospels greatly contribute to an epiphany continuum for perpetually providing with the milieu for the 'evolution' of the new person with the 'mutation' (transformation) of one's own self to freedom (free self) after the 'extinction' of the ego-centred bound self (self-complacent spirituality) in order to undergo the 'adaptation' of one's spirituality to enhance the society (social spirituality) the person born anew belongs to.

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38 Immediate heritable (noticeable) changes in the living beings are known as 'mutation' in Biology.