

Theological Education as Matthean Mission: Challenges from the Indian Context

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Abstract

The teaching authority is a unique element in the Matthean Christology. When all the gospels relate authority to the ministry of Jesus in general and even includes civil and religious authorities (Mk. 13:34; Lk. 12:11; Jn 19:10) under the same category, the Gospel of Matthew uses the term authority only to the ministry of Jesus. Moreover, Matthew never connects authority and power together as the way Luke does (Lk 9:1; 10:19). In fact Matthew describes the authority in teaching without getting it connected to the miracles. Matthean Jesus allows the disciples to share the same teaching authority as they involve in mission. This paper proves that contemporary theological education is in continuation with the Matthean mission.

Key words: Authority, Mission, Formative Judaism, Theological Education, Community

Introduction

Scholars who deal with the Matthean mission generally deal with Matthew's particularity or universality.¹ More than this divide, one can identify theological education as a major mission motive in the Gospel of Matthew. In order to identify this mission motif, an analysis of post-seventy periods and its theological conflict on Matthew's community are to be identified as the fabric of Matthean teaching. Within such a framework, this article proposes that Matthew's emphasis on the transmission of the authoritative teaching of Jesus is to be considered as the Christian mission. It is the presumption that theological education suitable to the context does justice to Matthean mission.² The first part of this article is the post-seventy historical setting of the Gospel of Matthew. The second part, an exposition of Matthew 7:28-29 and 28:18-20, is to identify the teaching as Matthew's mission. And the third part is theological education as the mission in the Indian context.

¹ David E. Aune, Ed., *The Gospel of Matthew in Current Study* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001); Herman Waetjen, *Matthew's Theology of Fulfillment, Its Universality and Its Ethnicity* (Edinburgh: T &T Clark, 2017); Warren Carter, *Matthew And the Margins: A Sociopolitical and Religious Reading* (New York: Orbis Books, 2000).

² In my definition, theological education is a systematic learning of theology. In general sense, theological education includes all affairs of God, and in a particular sense, theological education deals with the teachings of the Church. It is a means to equip a person to the service of the church. Thus, the task of theological education is to penetrate Christ into all dimensions of life.

Authority in Teaching

The common theme in Matthew 7:28-29 and 28:18-20 is the teaching authority of Jesus. Thus, it is better to know as to what is authority. The English word authority comes from the Latin *auctoritas* which in turn derives from *augere-* to increase-, has little to contribute towards clarifying and solving our contemporary problems.³ The meaning of the term “authority” changes according to the context such as the absolute power, the right or ability to do something, might, legitimate use of power, and so on.⁴ The Hebrew scripture portrays God as the ultimate authority. Authority of human offices, such as king, priest, prophet, and judge is derived from God alone, for such individuals were representatives of God. There is an inherent authority on every human being by virtue of being created in the image of God (Gen 1:26-27).

The rabbis of Judaism received their authority to teach the scripture from the traditions they belonged to. And no sermon of any scribe had any authority or value, without *a tradition* or *the wise men say* or some traditional oracle of that nature.⁵ However, it is also said that rabbinical authority is the power or right of deciding the Law, in dubious cases, interpreting, modifying or, amplifying, and occasionally of abrogating it, as vested in the Rabbis as its teachers and expounders.⁶

What is the uniqueness of the authority in the Gospel of Matthew? In one way or other, all the Gospels witness to the authority being exercised in the ministry of Jesus. However, the concept of authority is not unique to Jesus alone in other Gospels. They use the term in a wider dimension including civil and religious leaders under the concept of authority (Mk. 13:34; Lk. 12:11; Jn 19:10). The Gospel of Luke usually connects the term *authority* with *power* (Lk 9:1; 10:19) whereas Matthew never connects the authority and the power together. Matthew describes the authority in teaching without getting it connected to miracles.

Matthew describes the unique authority of Jesus over against the other teachers of the law. The Gospel of Matthew also makes an indirect comparison between Jesus’ authority and the authority expressed in the Old Testament. The antithesis, “I” Sayings, *elthon* (I came) sayings, etc., point to the supreme authority of Jesus over against the authorities of the scribes, the prophets, the priests, the Kings, and even

³ Hans Waldenfels, “Authority and Knowledge,” *The Teaching Authority of Believers*, edited in the English language by Marcus Lefebvre, in *Concilium* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark Ltd, 1985), 31.

⁴ W. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, A translation and adaptation of the 4th revised and augmented edition of Walter Baur’s *Griechisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments und der übrigen urchristlichen Literatur* (Chicago, Illinois: The University Chicago Press, 1957), 277.

⁵ Hillel the Great taught, ‘...but, although anyone discoursed of that matter all day long, ‘they received not his doctrine’, until he said at last, so I heard from Shemaia and Abtalion.’ John Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica Matthew-1Corinthians* vol. 2 (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995), 159.

⁶ Kaufman Kohler, “Authority, Rabbinical,” *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, edited by Isidore Singer, vol. 2 (New York: Funk And Wagnalls Company, 1925), 337.

Moses.⁷ Matthew also presents Jesus as constituting a new authority alongside the Old Testament.⁸ That is, Jesus' authority is not derived from the revelation alone that had gone before, but even completes and transcends it.

Therefore, the theological definition of the term authority is very important. As per J. Jeremias, authority presupposes the possession of the Spirit and victory over Satan.⁹ The authority of Jesus, according to Rudolf Schnackenburg, denotes his fullness of power and his relation to the Father.¹⁰ The Evangelist perceives divine authority and power as the mighty revelation of God in Christ in order to advance his Kingdom (G. S. Shogren)¹¹. C. H. Dodd comments: 'the divine authority of Christ is inferred from his power to enable men to see God'¹² also, Jesus' inner life possessed a unique moral perfection, which would account for the unique authority. What could be the reason Matthew introduced the authority of Jesus with respect to his teaching. The socio-political milieu of the Matthean community in the post seventy, as it is the writing period, clarifies this aspect.

Historical Background: Formative Judaism and Matthean Community

The author of the first Gospel was a member of a Jewish Christian community which had left Judea before the Jewish war and settled in a predominantly Gentile area, probably Syria. The addressees of the First Gospel were sometimes linked with Christians in Galilee¹³, others link it to Antioch¹⁴ and Jerusalem.¹⁵ However, Richard Bauckham is of the view that individual Gospel writers wrote it for the whole church, not particularly for a community.¹⁶ Though there is no unanimity on the origin of the community, most agree on the date of composition between 80 to 90 CE.

⁷ See John P. Meier, *The Vision of Matthew: Christ, Church, and Morality in the First Gospel* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), 63-64; George Mangatt, "The Public Ministry of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew," *Bible Bhashayam* 26/1 (March, 1990): 25.

⁸ Ned B. Stonehouse, *The Witness of the Synoptic Gospels of Christ* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1979), 210.

⁹ J. Jeremias, *New Testament Theology* translated by J. Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1971), 94

¹⁰ Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 80.

¹¹ G. S. Shogren, "Authority and Power," *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, edited by Joel B. Green, Scot Mc Knight and I. Howard Marshall (Leicester, England: IVP, 1992), 53.

¹² C. H. Dodd, *The Authority of the Bible* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1929), 293; 240-41.

¹³ J. Andrew Overman, *Matthew's Gospel and Formative Judaism. The Social World of the Matthean Community* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990)

¹⁴ Graham N. Stanton, "Revisiting Matthew's Communities," in Society of Biblical Literature 1994 Seminar Papers (ed. E. H. Lovering; SBLSP 33; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994), 9-23.

¹⁵ E. E. Ellis considers that this Gospel was written in Jerusalem as the Gospel of the mission of James, the brother of Jesus, sometime before he was killed in A.D. 66/67, when the leaders of this mission fled to Pella at the beginning of the Jewish Revolt. Cf. Earle E. Ellis, *The Making of the New Testament Documents* (BIS 39; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 288-92.

¹⁶ Richard Bauckham, ed., *The Gospels for all Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audiences* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998). Reference for Bauckham's critics: cf. Philip P. Esler, "Community and Gospel in Early Christianity: A Response to Richard Bauckham's *Gospels for All Christians*," *SJTh* 51

Matthew's conceptual world is primarily identified as Jewish.¹⁷ Christianity originated as a reform movement or a sect within the second temple Judaism nevertheless, it retained a few differences as its chief traits.¹⁸ According to W. D. Davies, Jewish Christians participated in Synagogue worship and remained in the broader framework of Judaism prior to the Jewish revolt. Judaism after the destruction of the Temple went through some turbulent period till it consolidated in the second century CE as Rabbinic Judaism. The process of Judaism in its fluid state, acquiring the social and the religious definition until its consolidation is known as Formative Judaism. The most prominent group survived after the destruction of the Temple was the Pharisees. The beliefs and organizational structure of the Pharisees made them the most viable option for acceptance among many of the Jews after 70 CE.¹⁹ The sages of Yavneh under the leadership first of Yohannan ben Zakkai, and later Gamaliel II, began the process of rebuilding of Judaism against other groups of the Second Temple Judaism including Christianity.²⁰ After the Yavneh council, Jewish Christians were no longer able to join with other Jews in a synagogue.²¹ There was a wide variety of opinions about the relation between the Matthean community and their parental community.²²

On the one hand, the Matthean community had a mission to their parental community, which seemed to be difficult because of the opposition from the formative Judaism, and on the other hand, they had a mission towards the Gentile community which seemed to be more successful.²³ Everybody in the Matthean community did not agree with the new directions that they had taken at their juncture. Some emphasize faithfulness to the Law, even to the smallest letter; others claim to have the Spirit

(1998): 235–48; David C. Sim, "The Gospels for all Christians? A Response to Richard Bauckham," JSNT 24 (2001): 3–27; Margaret M. Mitchell, "Patristic Counter-Evidence to the Claim that 'The Gospels Were Written for All Christians,'" NTS 51 (2005): 36–79.

¹⁷ Laurence Culas, *Goodnews Amidst Crises: Antioch and the Gospel of Matthew* (New Delhi: ISPCK, 2010), 2.

¹⁸ Burkett notes, "Many people today do not think of Christianity as a sect of Judaism but at the beginning that is precisely how it was regarded, both by those inside and those outside." Delbert Burkett, *An Introduction to the New Testament and the Origins of Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 57.

¹⁹ The Pharisaic group got the upper hand by centering on the household by the careful study of the Torah and its interpretations. Their oral law supplemented the written law. Tithing, purity rules, Sabbath and holy day observances, Torah interpretations were the essential features of the Pharisees. Jacob Neusner, *A Life of Yohanan Ben Zakkai Ca. 1-80 CE*, 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1970), 198.

²⁰ Cf. Asish Thomas Koshy, *Identity, Mission and Community: A Study of the Johannine Resurrection Narrative* (New Delhi: Christian World Imprints, 2018), 43f.

²¹ W. D. Davies, *The Setting of Sermon on Mount* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), 274–75, 315.

²² For a better understanding of the debate and varying positions of Matthean scholars such as G. N. Stanton, J. A. Overman, A. J. Saldarini, D.C. Sim, B. Repschinski, refer John Thachuparamban, *Jesus and the Law in the Matthean Community* (New Delhi: ISPCK, 2011), 135–222.

²³ The particularism and universalism of Matthew's Gospel are examples of this aspect. Cf. Culas, *Good News*, 126–133.

through whom they perform miracles.²⁴ With his remarkable pastoral care, Matthew prepares the way for reconciling, forgiveness, and mutual love within the community.

Thus, the Matthean community faced two major problems in the post seventy periods. First, a serious threat from outside as the leaders of "Formative Judaism" excommunicated Jewish Christians from the synagogue worship. The rabbinate was introduced as authoritative interpreters of the Law. Matthew tried to defend his community against the Jewish theologians of his day and their use of scripture. Second, a problem from within as the conservative Jewish Christians was critical of the new developments because of the incorporation of Gentile Christians into their community without circumcision. Therefore, the authoritative teaching of the community from Jesus had to confront on both fronts.

Exegetical Exposition

Two passages are selected for the exegetical study. Matthew 7:28-29, comes as a conclusion to the Sermon on the Mount, explains the meaning of the expression "authoritative teachings" (of Jesus) within the post-seventy periods, and Matthew 28:18-20 explains the delegation of authority to his disciples as they engage in mission work and particularly to the theological education to all nations.

1. Matthew 7:28-29

These two verses should be seen as a summary statement of the first discourse of the Gospel of Matthew. From the beginning until the end of the sermon, Matthew focuses his total attention on Jesus alone. The crowd is silent and passive. Jesus speaks without any break. There is a great silence on the side of the audience till the end of the sermon. Thus focusing the attention on Jesus alone, Matthew implicitly highlights the great authority of Jesus.²⁵ At the end of this passage, Matthew openly reminds his readers of the response of the crowd toward Jesus' teaching.

Kingdom Teaching

The Sermon on the Mount in Matthew is a collection and meaningful arrangement of the sayings of Jesus.²⁶ In 7:29, Jesus' teaching ($\deltaιδασκων$) or the Kingdom teaching is used as the subject of 'having authority' ($\epsilon\xiουσιαν \epsilon\xiων$). The term "his teaching" is again repeated in 22:33 as the object of the crowd's amazement. When the synoptists

²⁴ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (New York: Orbis Books, 1991), 58.

²⁵ W. D. Davies and D. C. Allison, *The Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, vol. 1, ICC (London: T&T Clark, 2000), 725.

²⁶ The content of Jesus' teaching is given in 4:23 and 9:35 ("preaching the good news of the Kingdom"). In chapters 5-7, Jesus is presented as the teacher and herald of the Kingdom. G. Bornkamm, G. Barth, and H. Joachim Held, *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew* (London: SCM Press, 1963), 246; John P. Meier, *The Vision of Matthew*, 62.

speak of teaching ($\deltaιδαχη$), of Jesus, they do not mean a particular dogmatics or ethics, but his whole *teaching* is his proclamation of the will of God.²⁷ Rengstorf comments that “when it ($\deltaιδαχη$) is linked with the name of Jesus, the term enables us to see to what extent the New Testament or its authors recognized that it is finally the God who speaks in the teaching of Jesus...”²⁸ As it is explained, the Kingdom of God is to be understood as the reign of God in the coming of Jesus.

What are the peculiarities of Kingdom teachings? Jesus calls people to repentance (Mt 4:17). The imperative ‘repent’ indicates that God can be encountered either as the judge or as the savior (Jer 4:1-10; 7:5-34; 17:24-27). Matthew depicts Jesus as the savior (Mt 1:21). Therefore, the imperative ‘repent’ called people for a new relationship with God.

Kingdom teaching has concerns for marginal groups. The beatitudes address towards the poor, the mourning, the meek, the hungry, and the persecuted (Mt 5:3-12). True happiness comes through the acceptance of the Kingdom. Jesus is considerate and sympathetic to the suffering of the people.

The crowd astonishes because Jesus teaches with authority. This authority shows first in his teaching; it will be shown in his deeds in what follows (chapters 8-9). Jesus, as herald and instrument of God’s reign, exerts the “authority” of God in the proper sense of God’s right to rule the universe.²⁹

Antithesis

It refers to the central section of Matthew’s Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5:20-48), which records the teacher’s frontal assault on the casuistry of the men of learning.³⁰ Jesus as Fulfiller of the Law gives six examples of his eschatological fulfillment in the six antitheses (Mt 5:21-48).³¹ In six instances of Pentateuchal law, Jesus contrasts what God said to the wilderness generation of Israel at Sinai with what Jesus himself says to his disciples now.

The Messianic authority of Jesus was manifested through these solemn teachings introduced by the “I” formula.³² It can also be understood as Jesus’ consciousness of being the Son, as reported in 3:17 and 17:5, is expressed in this “I” sayings. In the “I” Sayings Jesus makes an impression of God’s own authority and Matthew portrays

²⁷ Rengstorf, “ $\deltaιδαχη$ ”, *TDNT*, edited by G. Kittel vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), 164.

²⁸ Rengstorf, “ $\deltaιδαχη$ ”, 164.

²⁹ Richard J. Dillon, “As One Having Authority” (Mark 1:22): The Controversial Distinction of Jesus’ Teaching,” *CBQ* 57/ 1 (January, 1995): 98.

³⁰ Richard J. Dillon, “As One Having Authority”, 96.

³¹ John P. Meier, *The Vision of Matthew*, 63.

³² George Mangatt, "The Public Ministry of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew," *Bible Bhashayam* 16/1 (March, 1990): 25.

that Jesus stands where God stands. In a Jewish or Jewish-Christian context, a higher status could not be imagined than this. There is no parallel to these sayings in any of the ancient writings in the Jewish circle.

Not as their Scribes

Many commentators explain an essential difference between Jesus' Spirit-endowed Charism (Mt 3:16-17) and the hereditary, derivative scholarship of the scribes.³³ Another difference is that the source of Jesus' teaching is from heaven and their Scribes are from human tradition (Mt 15:3, 6). And Jesus is empowered by the advancing reign of God, whose eschatological moment is now fulfilled (Mt 4:17). By contrast, the Scribes are spokesmen of the old and bygone (Mt 9:16-17). Therefore, as per the evangelist's sense, they possess not lesser authority but no authority at all.³⁴ In a sociological sense, all these teachings make perfect sense when one reads as part of the conflict within Judaism after A.D. 70.³⁵ Matthew presents Jesus' teaching as the authoritative interpretation of the Torah and rejects his rivals and their interpretation.³⁶

In this section (Mt 7:28-29) Jesus expressed the authority through his words. It is concluded that the authority of Jesus is in the content and the expression of the message. Here the teachings of Jesus known to be the Sermon of the Mount is the foundation of the Kingdom of God. In contrast to John the Baptist, the proclamation of the Kingdom reaches a new phase in the teaching of Jesus. This superiority of Jesus and his message over against his contemporary Jewish rabbis and equality with God are mentioned as 'having authority.'

2. Matthew 28:18-20

As Jesus started his ministry in Galilee, Matthew culminates the ministry of Jesus in Galilee as the disciples were commanded to go to Galilee (28:16). The angels (Mt 28:1-8) and the risen Jesus (Mt 28:9-10) informed the women to go to Galilee along with other disciples. As Jesus delegated the disciples to carry out the mission in Israel (Mt

³³ In 5:20, Matthew contrasts the superior lifestyle of his community members with the justice of "scribes and the Pharisees." Warren Carter, *Matthew And The Margins*, 33, 195.

³⁴ Among the attacks on scribes and the Pharisees in Matthew, chap 23 stands out as most polemic. There are three levels of attack: first, Jesus differentiates the practices of the community of disciples from the illegitimate practices of the Pharisees (Mt 23:1-12). Second, Jesus addresses a series of seven woes or curses against the Pharisees for their improper and sinful practices (Mt 23:13-36). Third, Jesus mourns Jerusalem's rejection of him and anticipates a future positive welcome. On the whole, Matthew adds eleven references to "Scribes" of which ten are negative. Richard J. Dillon, "As One Having Authority," 103; Culas, *Good News*, 141f; Richard J. Dillon, "As One Having Authority," 103.

³⁵. Two reasons could be cited for Matthew's polemic against the Jewish religious leaders: first, Gentiles were incorporated into the Matthean community without circumcision; second, the emergence of Pharisaic leadership after the destruction of Jerusalem created problems for Matthew and his community. Culas, *Good News*, 142f.

³⁶ Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 110-111.

10:1), now Jesus commissions his disciples to carry out the mission to whole nations. The ongoing ministry of Jesus through the Church is a special theme in the Gospel of Matthew.

All Authority (28:18)

When they gather together, Jesus does not rebuke their doubt but he begins with a vitally important prelude to the formal commissioning of the disciples, namely, the assertion of his authority: “To me given all authority in heaven and on earth”. In comparison to 11:27a, it evokes Dan. 7:13-14, where God gives “dominion and glory and reign” to one “like a son of man.” Here the dominion (*ἐξουσία*) is everlasting. Therefore, Jesus receives “all authority” (*πάσα εξουσία*) from God as God’s beloved son or agent faithful to God’s purposes (Mt 3:17; 17:5).³⁷ And Jesus participates in God’s reign over all things.³⁸ Charles H. Giblin says about all authority as the fullness of power that has been given to Jesus and remains his.³⁹

All authority in heaven and on earth, according to Donald Hagner, is the sovereign authority of God, who now sends out his disciples on the mission to evangelize the world. Matthew pictured both earthly Jesus and the risen Lord as acting in the place of God (Mt 9:1-7; 25:31-46; and the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit appear in the same scene-3:13-17). Now Jesus became the cosmocrator, with all authority to establish his universal reign by a universal mission.⁴⁰

All the nations (*πάντα τα ἐθνη*-Mt 28:19) is a phrase that denotes all nations including Israel.⁴¹ This is to provide them in turn with authority and supply them with confidence as they go. The authority of the risen one is not categorically new but now depends upon a new basis—the arrival of a new stage of salvation history.⁴² Now the disciples are entrusted with God's own authority in mission.

Matthew has strong universalistic missionary interests. The disciples have “two different assignments: on the one hand, they are to gather Israel around Jesus as the messianic shepherd; on the other hand, they are called to integrate the nations into their own community as disciples of the Son of Man.”

³⁷ In a strict sense the comparison of Dan. 7:14 and Mt. 28:18b is not possible because the identity of the one like the son of man in Daniel is not clear. In Mt. 28:18 it exclusively talks about Jesus by Jesus himself.

³⁸ Warren Carter, *Matthew*, 551.

³⁹ Charles H. Giblin, “A Note On Doubt and Reassurance in Mt. 28:16-20,” *CBQ* 37/1 (January, 1975): 75.

⁴⁰ John P. Meier, *The Vision of Matthew*, 38.

⁴¹ Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew*, 595; John P. Meier, “Nations Or Gentiles In Matthew 28:19?” *CBQ* 39/1 (January, 1977) : 94-102.

⁴² Hagner, *Matthew* 14-28, 886.

Abiding Presence (28:20)

As God promised his divine presence to the people liberated in the exodus from Egypt (Deut. 31:23) and from exile in Babylon (Isa. 41:10; 43:5), disciples are promised with His abiding presence to carry out their mission. In other words, Jesus assures his disciples the way Yahweh assured his people in the Old Testament.⁴³ Jesus does not promise that the teaching of his commands will mediate his presence to those who obey, but that his presence will be with those who go and make disciples by baptizing and teaching.⁴⁴ Now the disciples are given authority not only to baptize but also to teach.

The abiding presence of Jesus is already promised at the beginning of the Gospel (an *inclusio* with Mt 1:23) and wherever two or three gathers in his name (Mt 18:20) and in the mission of the Church (Mt 1:23; 10:40; 13:37; 16:18; 17:17; 18:5,20; 26:29). Moreover, the Matthean Jesus does not ascend. His last words are a promise of his continuing presence during the church's mission.

Matthew 28:18-20 comes as a conclusion to the whole Gospel of Matthew. As the people of Israel were promised of God's presence (Gen 26:24; Deut 20:1; 2Sam 7:3), Jesus promised his presence to be with the disciples. Thus Matthew portrays the authority of Jesus neither derived from nor delegated by a secondary source but the same as that of God's.

“Teaching them...”

The teaching authority is a unique aspect in this passage. Till the Easter event, disciples did not participate in the teaching authority of Jesus (Mt 7:29), although they had participated in the other aspect of Mission (Mt 10:1). As the disciples participate in the mission of God (by making disciples), they can experience the same sovereign authority to teach as that of Jesus exercised as narrated in Matthew 7:29.

Matthean Jesus seems to be extremely didactic. The “teaching” along with the preceding “baptizing” appears to be the real content of disciple-making in Matthew’s mission.⁴⁵ For Matthew, teaching is by no way a merely intellectual enterprise. Teaching doesn’t involve inculcating the precepts of the Law and obeying them as contemporary Judaism interpreted it. Jesus’ teaching is an appeal to his listeners’ will, not primarily to their intellect. It is a call for a concrete decision to follow him and to submit to God’s Will. What the apostles should teach the new disciples is to submit to God’s will as revealed in Jesus’ ministry and teaching.

⁴³ Gundry, *Matthew*, 597.

⁴⁴ Gundry, *Matthew*, 597.

⁴⁵ Bosch, *Transforming*, 65.

Teaching Authority of Believers

Throughout the history of the Church, the teaching authority is linked to the concept of the *magisterium* and hence referred exclusively to the authority of the pope and bishops. Correspondingly, the faithful were seen more as objects of the hierarchy's pastoral concern and teaching.⁴⁶ The dominant model was that of the Church as superintendent: the hierarchy teaches, theologians explain and defend the teaching, and the faithful listen (and obey). Matthew brings out the words of the risen Jesus authorizing all his disciples to teach are in contrast to the teaching of scribes and Pharisees of the post seventy periods. The Church becomes more dogmatic if the believers are not aware of the word of God. Similarly, the clergy become more authoritarian if believers are not aware of their rights.

Teaching and Mission

The authority of Jesus and his delegation of authority to his disciples to teach or educate are intrinsically related to the mission work. Matthew uses different terminologies to set out the missionary practice of Jesus and the disciples. The terms include, "send," "go," "proclaim," "heal," "exorcise," "make disciples," "make peace," "witness," "teach," etc. The road of the mission is open on the basis of the earthly ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus.⁴⁷ Mt 28:16-20 can be considered as a mission charge of the risen Jesus towards his disciples. The phrase "all the nations" (*παντα τα ἑθνη*) includes both Jews and Gentiles.⁴⁸ The disciples are called to proclaim the ultimate victory of Jesus over the powers of evil, to witness to his abiding presence, and to lead the world into the love of God. In Matthew's view, Christians find their true identity when they are involved in the mission.⁴⁹ Therefore, Arulsamy tells that the Church which was a missionary by her nature was called to carry out his mission.⁵⁰ The application of Jesus' command is the need of the hour in India. The goal of theological education in India is imparted not as a career formation but particularly the curriculum is designed for mission and ministry. Thus, theological education in India takes the command of Jesus into the application.

⁴⁶ Johann Baptist Metz/Edward Schillebeeckx, "The Legacy of the Council," *The Teaching Authority of Believers*, edited in the English language by Marcus Lefebure, in *Concilium* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark Ltd, 1985), ix.

⁴⁷ Bosch, *Transforming*, 83.

⁴⁸ John P. Meier, "Nations or Gentiles in Matthew 28:19," *CBQ* 39/1(January, 1977): 94-102; Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church under Persecution*, second edition (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994), 595-96.

⁴⁹ Bosch, *Transforming*, 83.

⁵⁰ S. Arulsamy, "Leadership," 185.

Mission in the Indian context

India is a country where four religions—Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, and Jainism—have originated. The Anthropological Survey of India in 1991 reports the existence of 4635 people groups in India. It has been reported that about 4000 people groups do not have worshipping churches. These statistics seem to be from old sources but the fall of the Christian population to 2.3% as per the 2011 census reiterates the old records.⁵¹ These statistics help Christians to understand the need to pray for more workers and to reach out to the Indian population with the love of Christ as Jesus encouraged his disciples to pray for the laborers in the harvest (Mt 9:35-38).

In this context, the Matthean portrayal of the authority of Jesus and the purpose of the delegation of authority is to be remembered. The Matthean understanding of authority is not the authority of a dictator. But it is God's own authority available for the spread of the gospel. The proper expression of authority is given, as in Mt 20: 25-28, not to rule over the community. In relation to the presence of oppression, Jesus' authority radically questions and criticizes the ruling authority. The Church should make use of her authority for the transformation of society with a servant attitude.

What are the ways by which Indians come to know Jesus Christ? It is mostly through the activities of a Church. Then the question comes, what does the church stand for? It is to worship God and to empower the church members to witness Christ in various modalities. Theological education trains the clergy and in turn empowers the members to live a life for Christ in humility and in service.

What is the mission of the Church in relation to the Kingdom of God? The Kingdom of God points to Jesus' vision of a society, which is characterized by freedom, fellowship, and justice. Charles Van Engen defines mission as:

The mission is the People of God intentionally crossing barriers from church to non-church, faith to proclaim by word and deed the coming of the Kingdom of God in Jesus Christ, through the Church's participation in God's mission of reconciling people to God, to themselves, to each other, and to the world, and gathering them into the Church through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ by the work of the Holy Spirit with the view to the transformation of the world as a sign of the coming of the Kingdom in Jesus Christ.⁵²

In order to carry out the mission of God, the Church has to be equipped. As Jesus sent his disciples after training for more than three years, believers must be trained and equipped to train others.

⁵¹ www.census2011.co.in/religion.php

⁵² Charles Van Engen, *Biblical Foundations of Mission* (Pasadena: Fuller Theological Seminary School of World Mission, 1996), 139.

Theological Education as Mission

As per the final command given in the Gospel of Matthew, whoever engages in the Christian mission has the authority of risen Jesus. Jesus commanded his disciples to teach the nations what he taught them. Therefore, theological education, which is an initiation into a transformative process, is the task of the Church, inclusive of able and disabled, marginalized and neglected, men and women, youth and children, emigrant and immigrant, educated and uneducated, and rich and poor. Theological education is education towards discipleship. It is a process of transformation into Christ's likeness. The objectives of theological education are twofold: understanding and strengthening responsible faithfulness to the Gospel and deepening commitment to the praxis of discipleship.⁵³ It is oriented by love, justice, forgiveness, reconciliation, and so on. The framework of theological education is contextual and ecumenical. Therefore, theological education crosses all boundaries and barriers to the mission.

Theological education in India got various problems. First, most Indian churches do not consider theological education as the means of mission. Therefore, except for a few churches, most of the churches do not 'own' theological education. None of the theological colleges in India is self-sufficient; neither is it income generative. For this reason, some churches consider theological education as a burden to venture upon. Some church leaders give recommendations for candidates at the most and disown the students. Yet others ask candidates to "somehow" complete the theological education by individual initiative and join with the churches after completion of the course. Because of the above factors, some individuals have taken the initiative to start theological education as an individual enterprise and run it independently.

Second, theological education in India looks at the western world and tries to imitate the western scholarship. In the west, theological education is one of the branches of studies in a university set up for those who are interested to learn theology as a professional course. Since no Government recognized universities in India (under UGC) offers theology as a major branch of study, only those who are called to mission work engage in theological education. The ultimate aim is not a theological degree but training to be equipped. K. C. Abraham while speaking on "theological education" points out that imagination and passion are two essential components of an 'empowering-others -for-mission.' Such an education model is rarely operative in many of our colleges. Instead, many of our present programs are characterized by a concern for a cool, dispassionate, neutral, and objective (*whatever it means*) scholarship.⁵⁴ Our need for theological education in India is not to consider theological

⁵³ D. R. Sadananda, "Theological Education and Ministerial Formation: Training the Ministers of God," *Theological Education: Facilitating the Mission of God* (Bangalore: BTESSC, Study Series No. 7), 3.

⁵⁴ Quoted by James Massey, "Present State of Theological Education in South Asia: Response of SSC and BTESSC," *Partnership between Churches and Theological Institutions* (Bangalore: BTESSC/SATHRI, 2010), 15.

education as a professional degree but as a means to equip the Church to witness and serve the community.

As a result of the above factors, it is a common saying in churches that theologically non-trained pastors are more “successful” than theologically trained pastors. Those “successful” pastors connect more effectively to the needs of people and more appealing to the masses. The aim of Theological education is to connect theological candidates easily to the context and needs of the people.

The Task of Theological Colleges

Theological colleges train the candidates and equip the whole church in carrying out the mission. Traditionally, the theological curriculum gives a scientific study of religions or religious phenomena in general and the historical origin of Christianity in particular. The scientific study of religious phenomena as an academic subject is not sufficient in the Indian context. Apologetical study of the existence of God is not the need in India because Indians generally believe the existence of God in various forms. There is no strict divide between “secular” and “sacred” in India. Ministerial formation and academic studies are not exclusive to each other. Ravi Tiwari points out that “theological colleges are meant to educate the entire people of God so that authentic Christ-centered communities are formed.”⁵⁵ Ministerial formation of the candidates suitable to the Indian context is the need of the hour. Men and women are to be exposed to Indian realities and thoroughly be trained to take up the ministerial task and missional activities.

Theological colleges are not mere training centers but are directly involved as servants of the Church in the mission and ministry. Ravi Tiwari continues, “Theological colleges, therefore, need to involve the whole church, and have to become instruments of the Church, in equipping the believer to be an active agent of the liberating mission of God through witness, service and teaching.”⁵⁶ In the field of theological thinking, the colleges must *stimulate* the church, must be *with* the church, and *ahead* of the Church. In one of the old reports of the BTESSC, it is made clear as follows,

...the college must understand the meaning of *pioneer theological thinking*. Christ the Logos is at work in the world today rescuing men from many kinds of bondage, and it is the task of theology to make clear to the Church and the world how He is acting to redeem, to heal, to lead, to reconcile. Theology is not a mere academic discipline but has reference to the world today, and the

⁵⁵ He was the Registrar of the Senate of Serampore College, which is the largest theological enterprise in India, and has 52 colleges affiliated with. Ravi Tiwari, “Theological Education in Context: Serampore Model,” *Partnership between Churches and Theological Institutions* (Bangalore: BTESSC/SATHRI, 2010), 1.

⁵⁶ Tiwari, “Theological”, 1.

college's theological activity must demonstrate this to the students of the Church.⁵⁷

Conclusion

The authority of Jesus according to the Matthean presentation has enormous importance for the Indian Church. There is a gross misunderstanding of the concept of authority in Indian society. Throughout history, human authorities used their power to exploit people groups and nations for their own vested interest. It was tyrannical, oppressive, and subjugating. Jewish, Greek, and Roman nations were examples of the same. During Jesus' time, it reached its zenith. The present scenario is also not much different. The Matthean presentation of the authority of Jesus finds various expressions in the Indian social, ecclesiastical, and personal level. The right use of authority finds its expression in the service and becoming an alternative model and vision to the Indian society. Reinstating the subalterns into the mainstream of the society has a close parallel to Jesus' expression of authority in terms of teaching, forgiveness, and healing in first-century Palestine. As part of the extension of the Kingdom, Indian Church has to come together irrespective of doctrinal differences for the mission. The mission of God calls people to conversion from all sorts of social, political, and economic oppression. Matthew's teaching emphasis is to be noted for such an integral mission. Christians are called to use the teaching authority to fight against the evil and for the establishment of the Kingdom. The teaching authority of Jesus finds its expression in the dynamic Christian community's mission activities. Theological colleges in India have an enormous role in training and equipping the people of God for the mission.

⁵⁷ *Theological Education in India: Report of Study Programme and Consultation 1967-68* (Board of Theological Education of the National Christian Council of India and Senate of Serampore College), 10