NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA

FACULTY OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES

COURSE CODE: CRS213

COURSE TITLE: SNYNOPTIC GOSPELS

COURSE GUIDE

CRS213
SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This course is CRS213: The Synoptic Gospels. It is a two hour credit course offered in the second year, first semester, to the undergraduate students, of Christian Theology. This course has fifteen student units. You are not required to take other courses before you study for this course. The course has been developed with appropriate examples suitable for the Nigerian audience.

The course guide is for distance learners enrolled in the Undergraduate Programme of Christian Theology of the National Open University of Nigeria. This guide is one of the several resource tools available to you to help you successfully complete this course and ultimately your programme.

This study guide provides you with very useful information about the entire course, such as the aims and objectives, course material and structure, available services to support your learning, information on assignment and examination. You will also be guided on how to plan your time for study; the amount of time you should spend on each study unit and your tutor-marked assignments.

Go through this course study guide carefully. Before you begin the study of this course, complete the feedback form at the end. You must return the feedback to your tutorial facilitator along with your first assignment. It is my hope that this study guide will answer most of your questions. I advise you to contact your study centre if you have further questions.

I wish you all the best in your learning experience and successful completion of this course.

2.0 COURSE AIMS

This course aims at helping you gain more knowledge about the first three gospels of the New Testament. You will have a full grasp of why the first three gospels are being referred to as the synoptic gospels, as well as what constitute the synoptic problems and their solution. The course will guide you on the authorship, date, sources, purposes and special features of these gospels among others.

The approach adopted in this course acknowledges the import of biblical context and contents to our understanding of the gospels. It is hoped that this approach will properly situate you in the world of the gospel writers; help you avoid over spiritualization of the gospel messages and treating the gospel out of context.

The above aims of the course shall be achieved by:

- Introducing you to the concept of the Gospel, the Synoptic Gospels and the Synoptic problems and proposed solutions.
- Exposing you to the worlds of the gospel writers, their personalities, date, purpose and special features of each gospel.
- Leading you to analyse the different approaches and methods of studying the Synoptic Gospels through the efforts of various scholars.
- Identifying the unity and interconnection of the Synoptic gospels and the purpose of atoning death of Jesus Christ.
- Explain the universalism of the gospel message as presented by the Synoptic writers.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

To achieve the aims enumerated above, this course has the following overall objectives. This course is designed in such a way that each unit has specific objectives which you will find at the beginning of each unit. Before you start each unit read them carefully and study the unit with these objectives in mind. After you have completed each unit go back to the objectives again to make sure you have achieved the objectives of that unit.

Below are the over all objectives of the course. If you meet these objectives then you have achieved the overall aims of this course.

When you have successfully completed this course you should be able to:

- Define and explain the subject matter of Gospel and the Synoptic Gospels.
- Analyze the different approaches and methods to the study of the Synoptic Gospels.
- Trace the history and development of the sources of the Synoptic Gospels.
- Identify the influence of Jewish as well as Graeco–Roman practices on the Synoptic Gospels.
- Explain why differences occur in the narration of the Synoptic writers.
- Give account of the extent of universalism in the synoptic gospels.
- Compare different accounts of various schools of taught on the synoptic problems and solutions.

WORKING THROUGH THE COURSE

To successfully complete this course, you must read all the study units and the other materials provided by the National Open University of Nigeria. There are self-assessment exercise for each section of the unit and tutor-marked assignments at the end of each unit. Make sure you do all your home work and submit them when required. These are very important for your course assessment. There is also going to be a final examination at the end of the course.

COURSE MATERIALS

The major components of the course are:

1. Course Guide
2. Study Units
3. Textbooks
4. Assignment File
5. Presentation

Study Units

This course has three modules and fourteen study units as can be seen below:

MODULE 1: General Introduction and the Gospel of Mark

UNIT 1 Preliminaries

UNIT 2 The Synoptic Problem

UNIT 3 The Composition of St. Mark

UNIT 4 The Purpose of the Gospel of St. Mark

UNIT 5 Special Features of Mark.

MODULE 2: The Gospel of St. Matthew

UNIT 1 Preliminaries

UNIT 2 The Sources of Matthew

UNIT 3 The Purposes of Matthew

UNIT 4 Special Features of Matthew's Writing

MODULE 3: The Gospel of St. Luke

UNIT 1 Preliminaries

UNIT 2 The Sources of Luke's Gospel

UNIT 3 The Purposes

UNIT 4 Major Themes in St. Luke

UNIT 5 The Universalism of Luke's Gospel

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READINGS

Bauckham, R.(2006) *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses* Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans.

Carson, D.A.; Moo, Douglas J. (1992). *An Introduction to the New Testament*. Morris, Leon. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

David Aune, (1987). *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment* (Philadelphia: Westminster.

Donald Guthrie, (1990). *New Testament Introduction* Leicester: Apollos.

Dunn D. G. James, (1977*). Unity and Diversity in the New Testament* Philadelphia: Westminster.

Martin, Ralph P. (1975). *New Testament Foundations: A Guide for Christian Students.* Volume One and Two. Grand Rapids: William Eerdmans Publishing Company.

Tenney, Merrill. C. (1972). *New Testament Survey.* Grand Rapids: William Eerdmans Publishing Company.

William David. (1969). *Invitation to the New Testament.* Garden City:. Doubleday.

Wood, D. R. W , (1996) *New Bible Dictionary* Leicester: Inter Varsity Press.

Walton John, H. (1989). *Ancient Israelite Literature in its Cultural Context: A Survey of Parallels between Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Texts.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

ASSIGNMENT FILE

One of the components of this course is the Assignment File which will be mailed to you later from the office of the national Open University of Nigeria. The file contains assignment that you must submit to your tutor for making. These assignments will be marked and recorded. The marks you obtain from these assignments will count towards your final grade. The entire course has more than thirty assignments. These assignments cover every unit.

ASSESSMENT

This course has two aspects of assessment. The first one is the Tutor-Marked Assignment, while the second is a written examination. These assessments are based on the information, knowledge, and experience you gathered during the course which you should apply when attempting these assessments. All of these must be submitted to your tutor in accordance with the deadline stated in your Assignment File. All of these will be 30% of your total course marks. At the end of the course there will be a two hour final examination.

TUTOR – MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMAS)

There are fifteen tutor-marked assignments for this course. You must do all and submit them to your tutor. At the end of the course the best [i.e. the highest three] will be counted. Each assignment is worth 10 marks when the three assignments are put together then the tutor-marked assignment will be 30% of your total course marks.

SUMMARY OF THE UNITS

As could be seen from above, this course has fourteen units.

Module 1 introduces you to the Synoptic Gospels in general and the gospel of Mark as the acclaimed first gospel to be written. Module 2 deals with Matthew as the second gospel to the written. It analyzes the sources, purpose as well as special features of the gospel. Module 3 looks at Luke's gospel, his sources, purposes, major themes and its universal concept.

Each study unit consists of one week's work and should take you about three hours to complete. It included specific objectives, guidance for study, reading materials, self-assessment exercises, and tutor-marked assignments. All these are to assist you achieve the stated learning objectives of the individual study units of the course.

COURSE OVERVIEW

This course is designed to cover 15 weeks. You are expected to complete the assignment for the unit at the end of every week and submit to your tutorial facilitator. See the table below for the study plan.

UNIT	TITLE OF THE STUDY UNIT	WEEKS ACTIVITY	ASSIGNMENT
	COURSE GUIDE	1	Course Guide Form
Module 1	General Introduction and the Gospel of Mark		
1	Preliminaries	2	Assignment
2	The Synoptic Problem	3	Assignment
3	The Composition of St. Mark	4	Assignment
4	The Purpose of the Gospel of St. Mark	5	Assignment
5	Special Features of Mark.	6	TMA to be submitted
Module 2	The Gospel of Matthew		
1	Preliminaries	7	Assignment
2	The Sources of Matthew	8	Assignment
3	The Purposes of Matthew	9	Assignment
4	Special Features of Matthew's Writing	10	TMA t o be submitted
Module 3	The Gospel of Luke		
1	Preliminaries	11	Assignment
2	The Sources of Luke's Gospel	12	Assignment
3	The Purposes	13	Assignment
4	The Universalism of Luke's Gospel	14	Assignment

5	The Universalism of Luke's Gospel	15	TMA to be submitted
	Revision	16	
	Examination	17	
	Total	17	

How to Get the Best from this Course

In distance learning the study units replace the university Lecturer. This is one of the great advantages of the distance learning system. You can read and work through specially designed study materials at your own pace.

Each of the study units follows a common format. The first item is an introduction to the subject matter of the unit and how a particular unit is integrated with the other units and the course as a whole. Following this is a set of learning objectives. These objectives enable you know what you should be able to do by the time you have completed the unit. The objectives should guide your study. After studying the units must cross check whether you have achieved the objectives. If you adhere strictly to this art of checking whether the objective is achieved or not, you will definitely improve your chances of passing the course.

The main body of the unit guides you through the required reading from other sources. This will usually be either from your set books or from a "Reading" section. Whenever you need help, don't hesitate to call and ask your tutor to provide it.

1. Read through this Course Guide thoroughly.

2. Plan your study schedule. You should refer to the 'course overview' for more details. Find out the time you are expected to spend on each unit and when and how to turn in your assignments.

3. Stick to your study schedule. Don't allow anything to get you distracted from your study schedule.

4. Turn to Unit 1 and read the introduction and objectives for the unit.

5. Gather the study material you need. All you need or a unit is given in the 'Overview' at the beginning of each unit. The study

unit you are working on and one of your set books should be on your desk at the same time.

6. Work through the unit. The content of the unit has been arranged in a sequential order. Instructions would be given on where to read from your set books or other articles. Use the unit to guide your reading.

7. Review the objectives for each study unit to confirm you have achieved them.

8. Don't proceed to the next unit, until you are sure you have achieved the objectives of the unit you are working on.

9. Don't wait until your assignment is returned before working on the next unit. Keep to your schedule.

10. When you complete the last unit, you can be preparing for exams. Be sure that you have achieved the unit objectives (listed at the beginning of each unit) and the course objectives (listed in this Course Guide).

Tutors and Tutorials

There are 8 hours of tutorials provided in support of this course. The dates, times and location of these tutorials, together with the name and phone number of your tutor will be communicated to you. This will be done as you are allocated to a tutorial group.

Your tutor will mark and comment on your assignments, keep a close watch on your progress and on any difficulties you might encounter and provide assistance to you during the course. You must mail your tutor marked assignments to your tutor well before the due date (at least two working days are required). They will be marked by your tutor and returned to you as soon as possible. Do not hesitate to contact our tutor by telephone, e-mail or discussion board if you need help. The following might be the circumstances in which you will find help necessary. Contact your tutor if:

- You do not understand any part of the study units or the assigned readings.
- You have difficulty with the self-tests or exercises, and

- You have a question or problem with an assignment, with your tutor's comment on an assignment or with the grading of an assignment.

You should try your best to attend the tutorials. This is the only chance to interact with your tutor by asking questions which are answered instantly. You can raise any problem encountered in the course of your study. To maximize the benefits of the course tutorials, it is advisable that you prepare a question list before attending them. When you participate in the discussions your intellectually life will be deeply enriched.

Summary of the Course

This course is designed to help you understand the gospel in general and the synoptic gospels in particular, under selected topics. In the course of your study, you will be exposed to the origin of the gospels, the synoptic gospels as well as the emergence of Christian Writings.

Your will also see the literary relationship between Matthew, Mark and Luke. The Materials of this course cover the personalities and authorship of the Synoptists, the date, the purpose of writing as well as the special features of each synoptic writer, the universal aspect together with the effects of Graeco-Romans and Jewish Cultures on the Synoptic gospels shall equally be examined. The course will attempt to motivate you by relating the *there and then* to the *here and now.*

On successful completion of this course, you will be able to answer questions such as:

1. What bring about the synoptic problem?
2. What are the original sources for the gospels?
3. Which of the gospels is the first to be written?
4. What are the sources available to Matthew and Luke?
5. What is the full rendering of the source called Q?
6. What aspects of the Synoptic Gospels would Q explain?
7. What is the type of history reflected in the synoptic gospels?
8. Who is usually adopted as the author of the Gospel of Luke?

The questions you will able to answer should not be limited to the ones above. The Synoptic Gospels is a course you will find revealing and invigorating.

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MODULE 1 General Introduction and the Gospel of Mark

UNIT 1 PRELIMINARIES

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction

The course, Synoptic Gospels introduces the students to the first three gospels of the New Testament of the Bible. The word "synoptic" is derived from two Greek words *so* and *optonomia* which means "with the same eye" or "seeing together." Matthew, Mark, and Luke present the basic story of Jesus in similar ways, including the order of the material, the stories told, the sayings of Jesus, even using many of the same words in parallel accounts. For this reason they are called the Synoptic Gospels. The course equally examines the Synoptic Problem which is not really a "problem" in the normal sense of the term. It is simply a way to refer to questions and possible explanations about the literary relationships between the first three New Testament Gospels.

In this unit, we shall examine what the gospel is all about, the primary sense of the gospel and its use in early Christianity. We will equally explore the origin of the Gospels as preserved in oral tradition and as

used by the gospellers. The concept of our course ‘’synoptic gospels’’ is also analysed in order to know the appropriate well of the title from the outset. Finally in this unit, we look at what brought about the emergence of Christian writings during the 2nd half of the 1st century A.D.

2.0 Objectives

By the end of this unit you should be able to:

- Define the word ‘gospel’
- Discuss the origin of the gospels
- Explain what the synoptic gospels is all about,
- Examine what brought about the emergence of Christian writings.

3.0 Main Content

3.1 The Meaning of the Gospel

We have used the term "gospel" mainly to refer to a type of written document, such as the first four books of the New Testament. But this is really an extended meaning of the term. That use became prevalent in the church only during the latter part of the second century. The primary sense of "gospel" was "to proclaim good news." The term conveyed sacred meanings in first century Greek vocabulary because it was used in the Imperial cult, (a Greco-Roman pagan religion which worshiped Caesar) to refer to the birth of an emperor god.

It means '"to bring good news" and was used in the Jewish scriptures to refer to the naming of a king (1 Kings 1:42), the birth of a son (Jer. 20:15), and victory in battle (1 Sam. 31:8-10). The servant songs of Isaiah celebrated the anticipation of the coming of the Servant of God who would "proclaim the good news" of deliverance and of the introduction of the new age, the restoration of the kingly rule of God (Isa. 40: 1-5; 52:7-10).
With this background the implications were very profound and far-reaching when early Christians used the term "gospel" to summarize the preaching of Jesus.

> Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying. '"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel "(Mark 1:14-16 ;)

In other words, the concept appears to have had its origin in the public ministry of Jesus. But the early Christians expanded, interpreted reapplied, and adapted the Jesus traditions. They did not

intend to confuse or deceive anyone. Although they changed the stories, they were faithful to what they regarded as their Spirit-endowed perception of how those traditions interacted with their specific needs and problems. ·Even when they engaged in the Spirit-inspired formulation of new words of the Lord it was not intended as a subterfuge. It was a legitimate expression of their continuing response to the living Lord of the church.

In the process of the transmission and development of the oral tradition it was neither practically possible, nor appropriate for the first Christians to maintain careful distinctions between Spirit-inspired community constructions and authentic historical reminiscence. It is unfair and insensitive for us to expect early Christians to have valued and passed on exactly those traditions which are of special interest to our contemporary curiosity. It is equally unfair for us to expect them to have preserved classifications of Jesus traditions governed by criteria which had not been defined until the post-Enlightenment development of modern historiography. Yet that is exactly what we demand when we want to know of a particular tradition: "Did Jesus really say this?"

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Explain the term Gospel and when its use became prevalent in the Church.

3.2 Origin of the Gospels

The authors of the Gospels in our New Testament drew heavily on the fund of anecdotes about Jesus which had been preserved in oral traditions. They used these stories as building blocks to construct written narratives spanning the entire career of Jesus. The oral traditions they used still retained some of their features as oral forms. They also frequently display evidence of some of the changes and adaptations that took place in the process of oral transmission.

The stories about' Jesus were adapted yet once more. As the Gospel writers included the traditions in their narratives they also introduced changes. Some of the changes were literary changes. They were necessary to incorporate the story smoothly into the flow of the extended narrative. The evangelists introduced other changes" so that the traditions in their Gospel narratives would explicitly support theological ideas they thought were important. They also made some alterations so that the stories of Jesus clearly spoke to the troublesome issues with which the evangelists' own communities were struggling.

Once these oral traditions were committed to writing they became relatively stabilized. They were "fixed" in written form, which is not nearly so susceptible to changes as verbal materials.. Yet, we need to note two qualifications registered against that observation. First, the oral stories continued to be used after the Gospels were written. They continued to be adapted to other new life situations and to develop concurrently with the use of the written Gospels. Second, the stabilization of the oral traditions in written form was not so rigid or immediately so sacrosanct that Matthew and Luke hesitated to change Mark. To that extent we must still reckon with continued change in the stories the church told about Jesus. That change stopped only when the four Gospels in our New Testament came to be regarded by they church as authoritative and normative.

A major task which confronted Mark as the first evangelist was the construction of a continuous story out of the many single stories and brief blocks of Jesus traditions which were in circulation. Here it is clear that "gospel" does not mean a book nor even does it mean the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. It means the announcement of the in breaking of the new age of God's rule. '

The early Christian community did not materially change the content of that announcement when, on the conviction of its Easter faith, Christians proclaimed *Jesus* as the mediator sent by God to establish that new age. But they broadened the term significantly. It referred specifically now to the death and resurrection of Jesus. The message of Jesus raised from the dead was "gospel." Words about Jesus as living Savior were "gospel". To preach the gospel meant to testify that Jesus was the Messiah whom God had vindicated by raising him from the dead and through whom he was continuing to work salvifically. It was "good news" that in Jesus' death and resurrection the inbreaking of the new age of God's rule had begun.

The gospel of the early church focused primarily on the proclamation of the death and resurrection of Jesus. It urged the hearer to believe the claim of God. If the listener received it faithfully and trustingly, it accomplished salvation. This is the dominant sense in which Paul used the term "gospel" It occurs some sixty times in the literature of the Pauline corpus (see especially Rom. 1:1-5, 16; 1 Cor. 1: 17-24; 15: 1-5). But later Christian writers also frequently used it in this sense (see Mark 13:10; 14:9).

Mark, however, also used the term, "gospel" in another way. He introduced his composition with the words, "the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (Mark 1:1, italics added). In that instance he used the term to refer not just to Jesus' death and

resurrection, but to the entire public ministry of Jesus which culminated in the Passion narrative.

Mark shared Paul's conviction that the cross event was the central focus of the Easter faith. His use of the term "gospel" to refer to the whole of his narrative implied that in his view the earthly ministry traditions were to be understood in a subordinate position to the Passion narrative. What does that mean? Mark felt that the stories out of the ministry of Jesus were not comprehensible unless they were heard on the presupposition of the crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus. "The earthly work of Jesus is narrated as illustration of the message of Christ". It may be identified with the term "gospel" in so far as it illumines and clarifies that central "gospel" content.

Mark was not disassociating the term "gospel" from the core content of the Easter proclamation. By redefining the boundaries of what the term encompassed he was refocusing the term and inviting further development. Others were quick to take advantage of that. So Matthew's phrase "the gospel of the kingdom" refers primarily to the collected teachings of Jesus (Matt. 4:23; 24: 14). In Luke it is not Jesus' death but his life and ministry which provide the pattern for Christian discipleship. In his second volume, Acts, pivotal components of the ministry of Jesus were duplicated in the missionary careers of Peter and Paul.

It was not until the second century gave way to the third that we find the use of "gospel" as a designation for a book (Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 1:136:1). Other evidence of the technical use of the term as a designation for a type of literature is found in the numerous apocryphal (literally "hidden," but then the word came to mean "non-canonical") gospels produced by second, third, and fourth Century Christianity. These include such works as the Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of Peter, the Gospel of Philip, the Gospel of the Egyptians, the Gospel of the Twelve, to name only a few.

We should note that when each of the canonical Gospels were written the author meant for his document to be used by itself, and not supplemented by other gospels. "The formation of the four-gospel Canon is an historical and theological development of the second century which was neither intended nor foreseen by any of the Evangelists".

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Trace the history behind the origin of the Gospel.

3.3 The Synoptic Gospels

The synoptic Gospels are the first three Gospels in the New Testament: The Gospel of Matthew, the Gospel of Mark and the Gospel of Luke. They display a high degree of similarity in content, narrative arrangement, language, and structure both in sentence and passage. These gospels are also considered by Biblical scholars to share the same point of view. The fourth canonical Gospel, the Gospel of John, differs greatly from these three, as do the Apocryphal gospels. There is interrelatedness between the first three Gospels that John does not share. That interrelatedness is due partly to similar theological views and beliefs. The similarity between the three is Gospels so pronounced that scholars have grouped Matthew, Mark and Luke together as the "Synoptic" Gospels. They may be set side by side and "viewed together" (that's what "synoptic" means) in a comparative way. These three Gospels are the primary concern of this study.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Explain the concept of the synoptic gospels

3.4 The Emergence of Christian Writings

Christianity began in a culture which was predominantly oral. People ordinarily communicated with one another verbally. This being the case, Christians were more inclined to pass the stories about Jesus on by word of mouth rather than to record them in writing. Other factors helped to retard the production of documents about Jesus. Hand-written books composed on hand-made paper were very expensive to produce. So were duplicate volumes of the same work. Scribes tediously copied them by hand. Apart from this during the early years of the church most Christians were convinced that Jesus was going to return from heaven in a very short while. They thought they were living in the last days of the present order. The world as they know it would shortly come to an end. They had more pressing work to do in the brief span of time left; such as preaching, rather than writing books that soon no one would need anyway.

We should not imagine, however, that no writing was being done by Christians. Paul, of course, wrote frequent letters to Christian communities with whom he had worked as a Christian missionary. At least thirteen of his letters have been preserved in the New Testament. But Paul did not intend to write "Scripture" that Christians would read for centuries when he wrote those letters. He meant for them to substitute for his own presence as he gave advice for problems in those communities. He would have preferred to be with them himself. But

since he could not be there, writing a letter was the next best thing. Even then, since it was an oral culture, Paul anticipated that his letters would be read aloud so that the whole community could hear them. Other early Christian missionaries such as Philip or Barnabas may have written similar documents.

Some pressing short term needs prompted the composition of brief collections of the stories of Jesus. Christians wrote them to use in worship, or teaching, or missionary preaching, and so on. But, so far as we' know, no one before Mark tried to compose a continuous account of the entire career of Jesus. Circumstances were changing in early Christianity which caused Christians to begin writing down the Jesus traditions in these brief collections. Those same changing circumstances eventually worked to encourage Mark and the other evangelists to compose their Gospels.

The group of apostles and eyewitnesses who had accompanied Jesus during his ministry was diminishing. They were the primary suppliers of the stories about Jesus. They were also the only dependable authorities to correct distortions. If there was uncertainty about a story or even a detail of a story people could ask them. “What really happened?" But in just a few years some were already dead and others were getting old. If scholars are correct in dating the composition of the Gospel of Mark in the late sixties then at least two and possibly more of "the Twelve" were dead by then (Peter, James, the son of Zebedee, maybe his brother) as well as the Apostle Paul.

At first most Christians expected Jesus to return quickly. As time went on and he did not, their anticipation of the Parousia (his second coming) lost its preoccupying vividness. Accordingly the Christian Community became much more interested in preserving the' Jesus traditions. By recording them they were more readily available as a resource to assist the church. It used them to re-examine its own life in the light of the postponement of Jesus' return. Collections of Jesus stories also were consolidated and preserved for use in instructing new Christians. As Christian missionaries succeeded in persuading new adherents to the Christian faith, the converts required training in its beliefs and practices. Collections of Jesus traditions served as resources for that educational task. The church also had to begin to reckon with the need to indoctrinate the next generations of Christians.

The worship requirements of early Christian communities had stimulated the' writing of some traditions for liturgical use. Early Christians read and reread the same stories during worship, and particularly at major cult rituals and festivals. Christians do something very similar today when they, for example, read and reread the nativity

stories during the Christmas season. Or, they return again and again to Paul's account of the institution of the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:23-26) when they observe that worship ritual. The growth and expansion of Christianity produced differing versions of Christian belief and behavior. Such diversities of religious opinion could lead to serious disagreement and even open conflict. At first the apostles and the elders of the Jerusalem Christian church served as authorities to whom appeal for resolution of arguments could be made. As Christianity spread into new areas the Jerusalem authorities were less accessible. When the size of that ground dwindled Christians began to feel the need for some alternate standard for determining acceptable Christian faith and practice.

Some stories of Jesus proved particularly supportive and encouraging to Christians who were being persecuted. As the incidents of persecution increased in number and in severity Christians circulated tracts relating stories to sustain those who were suffering. Anecdotes in which Jesus was remembered to have target about steadfastness in the face of persecution served this purpose So did the recollections of Jesus' submissive obedience to the will of God as he suffered his own martyrdom.

Early Christians were concerned with resolving the problem of their relationship to Judaism. Christianity began as a sect within Judaism. At that stage, its appeal to Jewish religious traditions, its use of the Jewish Scriptures, and its adoption of certain Jewish: religious customs and practices were understandable. As the distance between Christianity and Judaism widened and the rift between them became more obvious, Christians were challenged by their use of element of the Jewish religion. As the church worked out its self-identity, written collections of relevant Jesus traditions were helpful In some stories Jesus scolded Jewish religious leaders for being hypocritical. In others he urged a deeper and fuller grasp of the real significance of Judaism than his religious Jewish contemporaries had attained. Such stories helped early Christians both to understand and to explain to others the relationship between Christianity and Judaism.

There is yet another reason why the writing down of the stories about Jesus became imperative in early Christianity. As much as early Christians loved those stories which they had heard and told so often, that very love began to corrupt the Jesus traditions. For all of the stories that were handed down about Jesus there were still gaps in his life which those stories did not cover. Further, some of the stories ·were too short to fully satisfy the eager curiosity of early believers. These led to the additions to the traditions.

As fascinating as those additions to the more ancient stories about Jesus were, early Christians soon became concerned that they not be accorded the same authority as the older apostolic stories. As long as the stories of Jesus were deposited only in the oral traditions it was difficult to distinguish between early recollections and recent accounts. By recording the earliest stories about Jesus in writing, the· early church was then able to set them in a class apart from the other popular pious stories. It thereby provided the means for protecting them from distortion and addition.

Being influenced by the general changes occurring in early Christianity each evangelist had his own special reasons for writing a Gospel. Each author had his own particular theological interests and insights. Each was influenced by the specific needs and troublesome problems which were disturbing his own community. Each was concerned to advance the spiritual well-being of his community by helping to speak to those needs and those problems. It was these burning issues and these theological insights which make each Gospel distinct.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4

What necessitated the writing of the gospels?

4.0 Conclusion

The factors we have just considered above stimulated early Christians to gather some Jesus traditions into brief collections. The authors of the Synoptic Gospels undoubtedly were affected by many of these considerations. They drew on those abbreviated collections as sources for their longer documents. They also included other Jesus stories which they obtained from the oral tradition.

In order to appropriate what synoptic gospels is all about, there is the need to fully understand the terms: gospels, its origin, synoptic gospels and what brought about the written gospels. This is done in this unit with the intention that such understanding will aid the student in critical appreciation of the course.

5.0 Summary

The following are the major lessons learnt in this unit:

- "Gospel" has been used mainly to refer to “good news about Jesus Christ” as contained in the first four books of the New Testament.
- The gospels originated from oral tradition.

- The synoptic gospel is about the interrelationship between the first three gospels.
- Writing down the gospels provided the means for protecting them from distortion and addition.

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignments

1. Why do we call the first three gospels synoptic?

2. Evaluate the reasons for the emergence of the written gospels.

7.0 References/Further Readings

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UNIT 2 THE SYNOPTIC PROBLEM

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction

In the last unit, we were introduced to the title of our course. We equally looked at the emergence of Christian writings. This unit is now taking us to the heart of our course title-the synoptic gospels. Having been familiar with what the synoptic gospels are in unit one, we shall now see what really constituted the so called synoptic problem which is not really a problem that could not be solved. In this unit, we shall examine the relationship between the first three gospels that is, what made them synoptic, look at the problems as well as the solution to the synoptic gospels.

2.0 Objectives

By the end of this unit you should be able to:

- Relate the interrelationship between the first three gospels.
- Critically evaluate the synoptic problem,
- Identify the proposed solutions to the synoptic problem.
- Examine early Church’s solution to the problem.

3.0 Main Content

3.1 The Literary Relationship of Matthew, Mark, and Luke

The Synoptic Problem is not really a "problem" in the normal sense of the term. It is simply a way to refer to questions and possible explanations about the literary relationships between the first three New Testament Gospels. The word "synoptic" means "with the same eye" or "seeing together." Matthew, Mark, and Luke present the basic story of

Jesus in similar ways, including the order of the material, the stories told, the sayings of Jesus, even using many of the same words in parallel accounts. For this reason they are called the Synoptic Gospels. On the other hand, while the Gospel of John sometimes resembles the other three Gospels, it tells the story of Jesus in significantly different ways, including a different order of events, different perspectives and points of emphasis, and with its own unique vocabulary and style. Those differences can be understood in no terms other than literary relationships between the Gospels, this account for the omission of John which is the reason John is not included in the Synoptic Problem.

To someone who has never studied the Gospels closely, or who has assumed certain logically constructed theories about the nature of Scripture apart from looking at the actual biblical text questions about the literary relationship between the Gospels may be unnerving at first. It is easy simply to reject them as scholarly speculations and academic conjecture. Yet, these questions arise from the biblical text itself questions obvious to anyone who takes the time to examine the biblical text closely. If we are honestly to hear and understand Scripture on its own terms, we will have to come to terms with this issue in ways that go beyond simply denying that there is any issue because of a certain theology or ideology about Scripture.

On the other hand, we need to concede at the beginning that there is no final answer to this "problem." There are various perspectives, hypotheses, and theories based on the evidence of biblical texts as well as what we know about the process of writing. But there is none "correct" answer. That simply suggests that while we need to take this issue seriously as part of what we see in the biblical text as we have it, it is not a matter of faith one way and academic on the other. Rather, it is simply being honest with the biblical text and not trying to make it say what it did not say or be what it is not. It is also acknowledging that we do not have the answers to our logical questions before we can accept the Bible as Scripture for the Church. The issue is not a matter of believing or not believing the Bible; it is a matter of believing, and then seeking to understand as best as we can that which we believe. It is ("faith seeking understanding.

So, you may ask why you should bother with the issue at all if there is no "correct" solution to a "problem" that is not an essential matter of Christian Faith. Here we return to a simple principle that grew out of the Protestant reformation, the principle of *sola scriptura*, "only Scripture." This principle, as one of the cornerstones of the Reformation, held that Scripture should be the first and final authority for the faith and practice of the Church, and that it should be allowed to stand in judgement over all human creeds, doctrines, and traditions.

As that principle worked out in the history of the church in the centuries following the Reformation, it meant a rigorous honesty with how Scripture was studied. The goal was to hear the Bible as Scripture for the church, neither in isolation from the traditions of the faith nor captive to them. This allowed the development of critical methodologies for the investigation of Scripture that included a careful and detailed reading of the biblical texts for what they actually said apart from the doctrines that told people what they should mean. This did not deny the authority of the Bible as the inspired word of God. In fact, it affirmed it even more strongly. But it did allow the biblical text to be seen as something more than a repository of timeless and unchanging truths written by the finger of God.

While not always as successful in objectivity as envisioned, these critical methods allowed the tremendous diversity of the biblical text to emerge, a diversity that had been masked for many centuries by dogmatic and doctrinal approaches that sought to harmonize any differences in the biblical text. The rich texture of the biblical traditions emerged as the witness of various communities of faith over many centuries to God's self-revelation in their history came to light. Like an elegant tapestry, the Bible could be viewed on a broad scale as a marvelous record of God's dealing with humanity, the story of God in striking panorama. Yet, on closer inspection, the tremendous complexity of the fabric and the threads that created the larger picture could now be seen. Biblical study then turned to the careful examination of these strands as a way to help understand the larger picture.

SELF ASSESMENT EXERCISE 1

Explain in details the reasons for calling the first three gospels synoptic

3.2 The Problem

The Synoptic Gospels share a great deal of material and features. There are differences between them in many areas, some more pronounced than others. Yet, all the questions about the differences arise precisely because of the otherwise close parallels between the Synoptics. While we might be able to answer some of these questions about differences as a matter of context, culture, personality, or purpose, the parallels are not as easily explained. The questions that arise about the literary relationships between the Synoptic Gospels concern both the differences as well as the similarities, although the similarities really focus the questions. So, the Synoptic Problem is the way that serious students of the Gospels attempt to understand the origins and interrelationships of the first three Gospels that will explain both the similarities and the differences between them.

So, an understanding of the "synoptic problem" is a crucial first step in any detailed study of the Gospels and their testimony to Jesus the Christ, simply because it allows us to begin with the witness of the biblical text itself. That will not assure a student of the New Testament that everything s/he concludes will be unbiased and objective. But it will encourage us to listen to the text, to take it seriously even in all its diversity, and will constantly warn us against a too easy and perhaps unconscious manipulation of Scripture for any particular theological agenda.

SELF ASSESMENT EXERCISE 2

What constituted the problem of the synoptic gospels?

3.3 Proposed Solutions

There are many suggestions and still more variations that attempt to explain the relationship between the Gospels. Even with these, ranging from simple to complex, they can basically be seen in terms of four basic approaches. These are not specific proposals, but categories under which the various proposals can be grouped for convenience. (Since the issues are complex, specific textual evidence will not be given for any of the proposals; consult a good book on New Testament Introduction, such as Raymond Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, Doubleday, 1997).

3.3.1 Oral Tradition

This approach suggests that all of the differences in the Gospel tradition can be explained in terms of a pre-existing Aramaic oral tradition. The early preaching of the gospel was quickly reduced to a selected set of core traditions that soon evolved into a rather fixed form in the church because it was repeated so often. The differences arose because the core tradition was preached in different circumstances that required adaptation of the tradition.

While this reflects the second stage of the formation of the Gospel tradition outlined above, it does not take seriously enough the specific similarities and parallels of the written Gospel accounts in Greek. A preexisting oral Aramaic tradition simply does not explain how the lrst documentary hypothesis is a proposed solutions here and write briefly on them indicate that they would be discussed fully under the sub-sectors in which they later appear.Gospels could be so similar in the Greek text, This weakness probably explains why few people hold this position today.

3.3.2 Interdependent

This approach suggests that in some way the later Gospels are more or less dependent on one or more of the previous Gospels. That is, there is some sort of sharing of material between the Gospels. While there are many variations of the specifics of this approach, usually it assumes that Mark was the first Gospel written, and that Matthew and Luke used the written form of Mark. This also generally assumes that Matthew and Luke wrote independently of each other for their own purposes.

3.3.3 Proto-Gospel

This approach generally assumes that the Gospels were composed from a hypothetical written source that no longer exists. Again, there are variations of this approach, but they generally revolve around two basic suggestions, either that all of the Gospels were dependant on a posited original Aramaic Gospel, perhaps an Aramaic version of Matthew, or that they used a proposed collection of sayings (*logia*) of Jesus.

3.3.4 Fragmentary

This approach suggests that the Gospels used various hypothetical sources that were available to them in the early church. These would have been various collections or summaries or short accounts of Jesus' actions and teachings that were preserved in various forms and places in the church. For example, there may have been a collection of miracle stories, or parables, or accounts of the crucifixion, or even a collection of the sayings of Jesus. The various Gospel writers, who could have had access to different documents or different versions of the collections, then used these to compile their accounts

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Examine various attempts to explain the relationship between the Gospels.

3.4 The Early Church Approach

3.4.1 The Priority of Matthew

The specific formulation and study of these issues as "the Synoptic Problem" is a relatively recent endeavor, dating to the 18th century and the rise of the analytical study of Scripture as a result of the Enlightenment. Yet, there had been previous observations about the relationship of the Gospels and "traditional" conclusions had been reached about them.

One of the earliest traditions comes from Papias around AD 125, preserved in the writing of Eusebius. Papias concluded that the Gospel of Mark was an interpretation (or perhaps translation) of the preaching of Peter. He also observed that Mark was not a follower of Jesus but of Peter, and that he wrote accurately but not in order. Only slightly later, Justin in the mid second century referred to Mark as "Peter's memoirs."

Papias also observed that Matthew was written in a Hebrew style (*dialektô*). Some have taken that comment to mean that Matthew was originally written in Hebrew or Aramaic and only secondarily translated into Greek, a theory that persists to date.

From the order in which Papias treated the Gospels, we could infer that he thought Mark was written before Matthew. Clement of Alexandria writing around AD 200, also preserved in the writing of Eusebius, commented that the Gospels with genealogies, presumably Matthew and Luke, were written first. By the fifth century, the traditional order of Matthew, Mark, and Luke had been established. Augustine writing around AD 400 asserted that each Gospel was dependent on those previous, with Mark simply an abbreviation of Matthew, Luke drawing on both Matthew and Mark, and John using all three.

There have been some modifications to this basic view, such as J. Griesbach's suggestion that the order should be Matthew, Luke, and then Mark (called the Griesbach Hypothesis, 1783). This was an attempt to explain some of the unique features of Luke as well as to explain why Luke should be written at all if after Mark's abridgement of the tradition. He also concluded that Mark was not just an abridgement of Matthew, but actually a conflation of both Matthew and Luke. Strauss and Baur (c. 1835) continued to support a variation of the Griesbach Hypothesis, only proposing a late date for the writing of all the Gospels (early to mid-second century) and assuming that they were non-historical.

This basic view of the priority of Matthew as the first Gospel written has remained the popular traditional view well into the 20th century. It still has defenders among scholars who have posited a very complex matrix of sources to explain the relationships between the Gospels based on the assumption of Matthew's priority. Still, the main argument for the priority of Matthew is the almost unanimous voice of the early church tradition that places Matthew first.

3.4.2 The Rise of Analytical Study: A Proto-Gospel

However, with the rise of more analytical investigation of Scripture in the 18th century, the problems with the traditional order of the Gospels as well as their relationship became more apparent. Without as many

constraints of dogma and tradition concerning authorship and the order of the Gospels, historians and biblical scholars of the late 18th and early 19th century began to look more closely at the Gospels themselves. They began to discover the features that pointed to a more complex relationship between the Gospels.

The first attempt to address this issue was to posit a primitive version of the gospel traditions. There are two basic directions in which this proposal developed: early proposals that saw a no longer extant Aramaic original, and much more recent variations that propose various non-canonical (apocryphal) gospels that have been discovered as the original source.

3.4.3 An Aramaic Original

In some ways, Augustine's idea of the priority of Matthew used as a source by the Gospels written later was the first formulation of the idea of an original Gospel. But the first real analytical proposal that attempted to trace sources beyond the canonical Gospels was toward the end of the 18th century. G. Lessing (1784) proposed that all of the Gospels were dependant on an original proto-gospel (*Urevangelium*, original or primitive gospel). He thought that this pre-canonical gospel was likely written in Aramaic and was used by the Synoptic writers. J. Eichorn (1794) refined Lessing's proposal and suggested that the original Aramaic Gospel was a full account of the life of Jesus, and existed in four slightly different versions, which would explain the differences between the Synoptics.

There is still discussion today of the possibility that the Gospel of Matthew might have been originally written in Aramaic. However, the idea that the entire gospel tradition originated from a "master" Aramaic original has few supporters.

3.4.4 Apocryphal Gospel

With the explosion of interest in the Ancient Near East in the 19th century, there were many new archaeological discoveries that included hoards of ancient manuscripts. Some of these proved to be various early Christian writings that included epistles and Gospels that were not accepted into the canon of the New Testament. At first these apocryphal or pseudigraphical Gospels (pseudipigraph = a document written under the name of a well-known person, such as *The Gospel of Thomas*), were viewed as interesting historical documents, but were obviously different from the canonical Gospels.

However, in recent years, there has been renewed interest in the apocryphal gospels as a source of information about the formation of the gospel tradition. M. Smith (1973) and H. Koester (1983) have proposed that *Secret Mark*, a second century writing preserved in only small fragments, was actually the original written form of the gospel tradition. J. D. Crossan (1985) has suggested that both *Secret Mark* and an early version of the *Gospel of Peter* were the original sources of all four canonical Gospels. These are all variations of the idea of a proto-gospel, although none of these proposals has gained acceptance.

A much more popular suggestion revolves around the idea of "Q" (from the German word *quelle*, "source," J. Weiss, 1890). This is a designation given to a hypothetical document thought to be a collection of various sayings of Jesus from which the Gospel writers compiled at least parts of their Gospels. There are various proposals for both the content of Q and how it fits into the formation of the Gospels with some suggesting a larger role than others. Some scholars have attempted a reconstruction of what Q might have contained, although there is disagreement on the details

The discovery of the Coptic *Gospel of Thomas* in 1945 lent support to the idea of a Q document. *Thomas* is a collection of various sayings of Jesus without any connecting narrative. About one-half of the 114 verses of *Thomas* have no parallel in the canonical Gospels, and another one-third only appear in rough correspondence. Yet the number of similarities between *Thomas* and the Synoptics gives some support to the idea of an independent collection of sayings of Jesus that could have been a source document for the Gospels. Of course, the date of writing of *Thomas* is an important consideration. Some suggest that *Thomas* was written much later than any of the Gospels, which would suggest that it used the Gospels as sources rather than being a source for any of the Gospels.

3.5 The Priority of Mark

3.5.1 The Two Document Hypothesis

As scholars worked more with the Gospels, the complexity of the Gospel traditions became more apparent. Many scholars concluded that the questions raised about the relationship for the Synoptics could not be adequately explained by assuming that Matthew was the first Gospel written.

As a result, a new proposal for Gospel formation emerged based on the view that Mark, or some early form of Mark (*Urmarkus*), was the first Gospel written. Weiss, in a series of proposals in which he gradually

refined his view (1838-1856), concluded that both Matthew and Luke were written independently from each other using two basic sources. The early form of Mark that contained material shared by all three Synoptics was supplemented by a separate collection of the sayings of Jesus (*logia*) that contained material shared by Matthew and Luke but not by Mark (the Double Tradition). This became known as the Two Source Hypothesis.

This understanding of Gospel formation continued to be refined and challenged throughout the 19th and early 20th century. The major debates about this theory revolved around how much the posited early form of Mark (*Urmarkus*) differed from the canonical Mark. Hawkins (1899) and Burkitt (1906) concluded that they were virtually identical, while Abbott (1901) argued for a later edited version of the canonical Mark (recension) that was used by the other Synoptic writers. Others modified other aspects of the hypotheses, for example R. Gundry (1979; earlier proposed by Holtzmann, 1880) who suggested that Luke also used some material from Matthew, which would functionally yield a three-source hypothesis.

These ongoing debates reveal that not all the details had been addressed, and that the Two-Source Hypothesis could not explain all the features of the Gospels. Still, it remains today the simplest and one of the most widely accepted ways to understand the literary relationship of the Synoptics.

3.5.2 The Four Source Hypothesis

Scholars kept trying to refine the theories to explain more of both the similarities and differences in the Synoptics. That search led B. Streeter (1924) to modify the Two Source Hypothesis by expanding the number of posited sources. He rejected the idea of an early form of Mark, and saw Matthew and Luke using the canonical Mark as a source. Yet, for the material unique to each of those two Gospels, he also posited a separate source that he labeled M for Matthew and L for Luke. In other words, Matthew had access not only to Mark but also to his own M source, while Luke also had access to Mark but also to his own L source. Both Matthew and Luke depended on Mark, but were written independently of each other. He agreed with the earlier Two Document theory that both Matthew and Luke had access to a sayings collection (*logia* or Q) unavailable to Mark, but also posited that the L and Q sources were combined first into an early version of Luke that was later combined with the material from Mark to produce the canonical Luke.

This became known as the Four Source Hypothesis. The four original sources were Mark, L, M, and Q, with Matthew using Mark, M, and Q

while Luke used Mark, L, and Q. Through the remainder of the 20th century there were various challenges and refinements of Streeter's hypothesis, such as Parker (1953) who posited an early version of Matthew (proto-Matthew) as the primary source of both Matthew and Mark, and a Q source used by Matthew and Luke, with Mark also providing material for Luke.

4.0 Conclusion

What is clear from this brief survey of the Synoptic tradition is that there is no certain picture of how the Gospels were formed in terms of sources. There is no single theory of documents or sources that definitively demonstrate how all the similarities and differences in the Synoptic tradition can be explained. Today, most people accept either the Two Document or Four Source Hypotheses as being most reasonable, probably with the majority leaning to the Four Source Hypotheses. Today most allow a role for some form of a Q document, although there remains little agreement on the details of how it was used or what it contained.

But this should not be taken as saying that there is no value in any of this research. What Synoptic studies have shown us is that the Gospel traditions were truly living traditions passed on by a living community of Faith and used in that community. This has tremendous implications not only for how we study the Gospels, but also how we formulate our view of the nature of Scripture. In addition, the Gospels writers did not change the basic truth of the tradition in its testimony to Jesus as the Christ and God's self-revelation of Himself in Jesus. But they did treat its message as a living tradition that could be applied and reapplied in the life of the community of Faith to call people to faithful response to that revelation, and to God. That may be the greatest insight we can learn from the study of the Synoptic Problem, because finally, for most of us, that is still our task today and is the purpose for which we study Scripture

5.0 Summary

The following are the lessons you have learnt in this unit:

- That there is close affinity between the gospels’
- That the problem of the synoptic gospels is on their relationship
- That there is no permanent acceptable solution to the synoptic problem; inspite of various suggestions and approaches.
- That the research is valuable in showing us that the Gospel traditions were truly living traditions.
- Two document hypothesis and four document hypothesis are the most acceptable today.

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignments

1. Explain four various solutions proposed to solve the synoptic problem.

2. Account for the priority of Mark.

7.0 References/Further Readings

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UNIT 3 THE COMPOSITION OF MARK

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction

In the last unit, we examined the interrelationship between the synoptic gospels, evaluated the synoptic problems with the proposed solutions. Now that you have a full grasp of what synoptic gospel is all about you will now be introduced to what the book of Mark is, starting with the authorship, John Mark (the acclaimed interpreter of St. Peter). His literary characteristics, accomplishment and unity shall be examined. We shall discover as well that Mark combined many stories about Jesus into a connected narrative to produce a composite Jesus. He composed his gospel of Jesus with a narrative- simplicity marked by a vivid and refreshing sense of realism. Mark's major literary achievement was that of taking the various types of Jesus traditions and welding them to the church's, preaching. No doubt, having gone through this unit you will be able to situate Mark appropriately.

2.0 Objectives

By the end of this unit you should be able to:

- Relate the argument surrounding the authorship of Mark
- List Mark's Literary Characteristics
- Evaluate Mark's Literary Accomplishment
- Discuss the literary unity of Mark and
- Explain Mark's theological understanding of the end of the world.

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Authorship of Mark

The gospel itself is anonymous, but as early as Papias in the early 2nd century, a text was attributed to Mark, a cousin of Barnabas., who was said to have recorded the Apostle's discourses. Papias' authority in this was John the Presbyter. While the text of Papias is no longer extant, it was quoted by Eusebius of Caesarea: “This, too, the presbyter used to say. ‘Mark, who had been Peter's interpreter, wrote down carefully, but not in order, all that he remembered of the Lord’s sayings and doings. For he had not heard the Lord or been one of his followers.” Peter used to adapt his teachings to the occasion, without making a systematic arrangement of the Lord’s sayings, so that Mark was quite justified in writing down some of the things as he remembered them. For he had one purpose only – to leave out nothing that he had heard, and to make no mis-statement about it.

Irenaeus concurred with this tradition, as did Origen of Alexandria, Tertullian and others. Clement of Alexandria, writing at the end of the 2nd century, reported an ancient tradition that Mark was urged by those who had heard Peter's speeches in Rome to write what the apostle had said. Following this tradition, scholars have generally thought that this gospel was written at Rome. Among recent alternate suggestions are Syria, Alexandria, or more broadly any area within the Roman Empire. In any case, many scholars do not accept the Papias citation as a reliable representation of the Gospel's history, pointing out that there is no distinctive Petrine tradition in Mark. It has been argued that there is an impending sense of persecution in the Gospel, and that this could indicate it being written to sustain the faith of a community under such a threat. As the main Christian persecution at that time was in Rome under Nero, this has been used to place the writing of the Gospel in Rome. Furthermore, it has been argued that the Latinized vocabulary employed in Mark (and in neither Matthew nor Luke) shows that the Gospel was written in Rome. Also cited in support is a passage in First Peter: "The chosen one at Babylon sends you greeting, as does Mark, my son" (1Pet.5:13). In citing this quotation, Babylon is interpreted as a derogatory or code name for Rome, as the famous ancient city of Babylon ceased to exist in 275 BC.

Self-Assessment Exercise 1

Who wrote the book of Mark?

3.2 Mark's Literary Characteristics

Mark wrote with a simple, popular literary style. We do not have list of his sources. (They ordinarily did not add bibliographies to the end of

literary works in those days.) We assume that he had access some brief collections of Jesus traditions. Perhaps he drew from those already in use in his community. Presumably he supplemented those stories with others still being told as independent, self-contained anecdotes.

Mark bound the stories of Jesus which he collected from a variety sources into one continuous, extended narrative. He established the sequence of the stories, often, by the very simple device of using indefinite connectives such as "and, "again." "then, "immediately," "in those days," "then going out" and so on (see Mark 1:9; '13; 3:1, 13, 19, 31, etc.). Since the connectives which Mark used frequently are vague and nonspecific, his narrative sometimes seems tied together.

Mark supplied additional "narrative glue" (what held his account together) by using narrative anticipation. When a major new development or event was impending Mark provided advance preparation for hearers. For instance, in Mark 3:9 the disciples are instructed to a boat in anticipation of Mark 4: 1 when Jesus instructed a large crowd from the boat. Or again, in Mark 11: 11 Jesus briefly visited the temple in Jerusalem in advance of the "cleansing of the Temple" (Mark 11:15-19). A third example: Mark described Peter's attitude in the courtyard of the high priest (Mark 14:54) in anticipation of the "three-fold denial" anecdote (Mark 14:66-72).

When Mark combined many stories about Jesus into a connected narrative he produced a composite of Jesus. Mark composed his gospel of Jesus with a narrative- simplicity marked by a vivid and refreshing sense of realism.

Though acknowledging Jesus as Son of God, Mark is quite candid about his human nature. The moods and emotions which he ascribed to Jesus are richer and more varied than in any of the other canonical Gospels. Jesus becomes angry, tires, hungers, groans, pities, wonders and so on.

Another feature which is characteristic of Mark's Gospel is his preference for the miracle stories. Compared with the content of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, Mark recorded a smaller amount of the teaching traditions of Jesus. He stressed those traditions which described Jesus' extraordinary deeds. We will return to this observation when we consider the purposes for which Mark wrote. The prominence of the miraculous in the Gospel of Mark has prompted some scholars to suggest that there may have been an earlier version of Mark. That version, which has not survived supposedly, contained mostly miracle stories. This suggestion of a more primitive version behind the Gospel of Mark in the New Testament has not won wide acceptance.

We can find abundant evidence in the Gospel of Mark that indicates he wrote his Gospel for the benefit of a Gentile Christian community. When he included Aramaic words or alluded to Jewish customs he thoughtfully provided explanations for these foreign elements (Mark 5:41; 7:3-4, 11, 34; 15:22). On the other hand he simply transliterated Latin words into Greek without any clarification (Mark 4:21; 5:9, 15; 12:15; 15:16, 39). Nor did he explain references to Roman coins (Mark 6:37; 12:42; 14:5) or facets of Roman law, even when it contradicted accepted Jewish custom (Mark 10:12). Apparently Mark could count on his community's prior acquaintance with those things.

But even if they were Gentile, how do we know that Mark's intended hearers were Christian? The cumulative effect of several observations seems to leave their Christian identity beyond doubt. Mark used the term "gospel" as a technical term which he assumed his audience knew (Mark 1:1, 14-15, 10:29; 13:10, 14:9). He introduced unidentified characters into his narrative (John the Baptist in Mark 1:4; Simon and Andrew in 1:16, and frequently elsewhere), expecting his readers to recognize them on their own. In addition, he assumed throughout his entire work that his readers already knew the stories and teachings of Jesus.

Self-Assessment Exercise 2

Account for the literary style of St. Mark.

3.3 Mark's Literary Accomplishment

During the early stages of form criticism some scholars badly undervalued Mark's literary achievement. They simplistically described him as being little more than a collector of the oral traditions about Jesus. His contribution as editor was thought of as mainly that of stringing the beads of the oral tradition into a narrative necklace. Scholars now generally recognize that view to be a serious underestimation of the literary ingenuity and theological investment which Mark brought to his task. As is true with each one of the Gospels the Gospel of Mark must be granted its own autonomy as a theologically informed and motivated religious work. Our acknowledgement and appreciation of the integrity of the composition for its own sake is essential for our interpretive understanding. We misuse the Gospels if we regard them simply as colorless source documents from which we may draw information to construct a composite reproduction of the "real" Jesus. Each Gospel is a distinct, theologically formed portrait of the same' Lord of the church.

Mark's recording of the earlier oral tradition material was not motivated

solely by antiquarian interest. He did not record the stories of Jesus in an extended narrative form just to preserve old folk tales. When he wrote those traditions down he wanted to update, adapt, and apply them to the needs of his community. This observation has both negative and positive implications. Negatively, Mark did not write "his Gospel to "do history." That does not mean he was not interested in Jesus as a historical person. It does suggest that he wrote the Gospel for purposes other than simply passing on informational data.

On the basis of the nature of the pre-Markan forms of the Jesus traditions, it follows that the order of events in the Markan narrative is not a very reliable guide for the chronological reconstruction of Jesus' public ministry except in the broadest, most general terms. Though a few segments of the sequence may have been .established in some of the brief pre-Markan collections the order of the narrative is mainly the product of Mark's own redaction.

With this recognition we discover important clues to Mark's special theological interests. It is in the ordering of the units of the tradition and in the editorial connectives which Mark provided to join them into narrative sequence that we discern most clearly his special theological emphases. For example, geographical references and "messianic secret" motifs, occur mainly in the connective links. The cumulative interpretive effect which the ordering of accounts together can have may be observed in Mark 2:1-3:6. Mark accumulated individual conflict traditions into an extended series of controversies, one following the other. This produced the effect of intensifying the hostility which Jesus' enemies directed toward him. Mark explicitly confirmed his purpose in this section with the concluding verse: Jesus' enemies plot to destroy him (Mark 3:6).

Positively, Mark's major literary achievement was that of taking the various types of Jesus traditions and welding them to the church's." preaching of the crucified and risen Christ. He thereby established controls and set limits for the interpretation of the traditions. He also firmly anchored the church's cross-event proclamation in the history of the earthly Jesus. He was employing the Jesus traditions to provide a broad narrational history which embodied a saving event of eternal dimensions. He described that saving event in the climax to his work the Passion narrative.

We are thereby forced to regard all of the episodes in the public ministry of Jesus as anticipatory prefigurements of the passion. That is, each incident is obscure (and even misleading and deceptive) until it is interpreted from the controlling perspective of the crucifixion and resurrection. We cannot fully understand what Jesus' call of the first

disciples meant (Mark 1:16-20), or his feeding of the five thousand (Mark 6:3-44), or his being anointed with expensive oil (Mark 14:3-9) until we hear these stories in the light of Good Friday and Easter. This is why Mark's as passion narrative is described as a ''passion with an extended introduction''.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3

Why was Mark's literary achievement grossly undervalued in the early days of form criticism?

3.4 The Literary Unity of Mark

Mark composed his Gospel as a single literary work. It was not a collection of stories about Jesus. It was the story of Jesus, the Son of God. Mark intended that it be read in its entirety. When we fail to do so we miss perceiving important features of his story which he developed over extended sections of the narrative. Yet regularly in contemporary worship services Christians read and hear expounded only individual sections from Mark's Gospel. When that occurs they are really being confronted by forms of Jesus stories from the pre-Markan tradition (though they have perhaps been modified by Mark). But they are not hearing the Gospel of Mark.

For example, only when we read the Gospel of Mark straight through, as a single story, do we notice the development of the major groups of characters, the "actors," in the Markan narrative drama. Unless we read the Gospel in its entirety we miss the movement of roles Mark assigned to the religious leaders, the crowds, most important of all, the disciples.
The Jewish religious leaders (Pharisees, scribes, priests, etc.) are the enemies of Jesus throughout. Mark took care to picture them as those whose hostility intensifies from hypercritical resentment (Mark 2:7) to murderous antipathy (Mark 11:18; 14:1-2) and who, finally, are responsible for his unjust execution.

The crowds of people provide sharp contrast to the animosity of the religious leaders (Mark juxtaposes both reactions numerous times: Mark 2:12; 3:1-12; 3:20-22; etc.). They embody popular unreflective enthusiasm, and flock to Jesus, eager for his teaching and captivated by his miracles. The few instances when they respond negatively (5:17; 6:2) anticipate the time when their fickle allegiance shifts to the enemies of Jesus, the religious leaders (14:43; 15:8, 11). The disciples, especially the Twelve, are that part of the crowd who enter into a closer relationship with Jesus. Their initial imperceptiveness about who he really is, and 'what his work is really about deteriorates into purposeful, intentional misunderstanding that culminates in abandonment of the

Gospel at a time. But there is no doubt that Mark must have had compelling reasons which moved him to compose his Gospel. He did not write it simply as a hobby to entertain himself in his idle moments. Neither was he solely interested in gathering together as many facts as possible about the earthly career of Jesus so others who read his work would know more about him. Mark wrote to be of service to his own community.

Self-Assessment Exercise 4

Evaluate Mark's literary unity.

4.0 Conclusion

From this unit we have been able to establish the authorship of Mark through the support of both internal and external evidences. The style of his writing through the sequence of the stories, often, by the very simple device of using indefinite connectives were highlighted. We were able to see as well that Mark composed his Gospel as a single literary work. It was not a collection of stories about Jesus. It was the story of Jesus, the Son of God which he intended that it be read in its entirety. The belief in the nearness of the end of the world provided him with the perspective to help his community cope with the sufferings which threatened them.

5.0 Summary

The following are the lessons you have learnt in this unit:

- That the author of St. Mark was John Mark
- That the literary characters of Mark was simple style
- That Mark did not write his gospel to do history.
- That there is unity in Mark's gospel

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignments

1. Why was Mark misunderstood in the early days of Form Criticism?

2. Evaluate Mark's literary style.

7.0 References/Further Readings

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UNIT 4 THE PURPOSE OF THE GOSPEL OF ST MARK.

Contents

1.0 Introduction

In the previous last unit we examined the authorship of Mark, his literary characteristics as well as Mark's literary accomplishment. In this unit the purpose of Mark's gospel is treated in detail. Mark came out to strengthen his community's faith in Jesus as the Christ, the resurrected Son of God. Earlier, salvation was being presented as something .belonging to the past. Mark's major editorial task was to counteract that effect He did so by presenting Jesus in the narrative as the Saviour. In this unit as well we shall look at Mark's believe in the nearness of the end of the world which provided him the opportunity of helping his community cope with the sufferings which threatened them.

2.0 Objectives

By the end of this unit you should be able to:

- Relate in clear terms the purpose of writing St. Mark
- Critically examine the doctrine of Christ as contained in Mark
- Evaluate Mark's concept of Jesus as the Agent of God.
- Explain Mark's view of persecution and the end of the World

3.0 Main content

3.1 Increase Faith

Mark's primary purpose in writing his Gospel was to strengthen his community's faith in Jesus as the Christ, the resurrected Son of God. He composed his connected story of Jesus out of well-known independent stories about Jesus to evoke a more intense commitment. We should therefore think of the Gospel of Mark in its entirety as one proclamation. It is not a collection of anecdotes about Jesus. It is a unified presentation

of Mark's own faith, whose reading, Mark fervently hoped would call forth strong belief from the reader. As Willi Marxsen has described it, “The evangelist proclaims the One who once appeared as the One who is to come, and who ... is present now and on whom the proclamation is made”.

It is interesting to note that Mark's very act of writing the story of Jesus tended to work against this primary goal when early Christians told stories of Jesus to illustrate their gospel preaching. Mark collected the stories and used them as part of his written story about Jesus. In so doing he removed from them that atmosphere of urgency. He historicized those stories. That is, potentially, salvation was being presented as something .belonging to the past. One of Mark's major editorial tasks was to counteract that effect He did so by presenting Jesus in the narrative as the Saviour who presents God's claim to the reader (or hearer) in the act of reading the work itself.

Self-Assessment Exercise 1

Why did Mark need to increase the Faith of the people of his community.

3.2 The Doctrine of Christ

Mark's understanding of who Jesus was is reflected in the titles which he used to refer to Jesus in his Gospel. The titles which appear most frequently are "Rabbi," "Christ," "Son of man," "Son of God." In spite of the fact that the title "Rabbi" or "Teacher" occurs often, these titles did not carry great theological meaning for Mark. The titles were terms of respect used to address learned persons (in the case of "Rabbi," great teachers of the Jewish law). They did not necessarily indicate any unique, messianic concept. The terms probably appeared frequently as forms of respectful address in the oral stories about Jesus' teachings. Although Mark had great respect for the teaching traditions he preferred to emphasize those stories which described Jesus' miraculous deeds. We'll see why later.

The title, "Christ," is, of course; derived from the Greek translation of the Hebrew "Messiah." A curious thing occurs in Mark with regard to this title. Mark included three traditions in which Jesus was described as speaking the title (Mark 9:41; 12:35; 13:21). But in none of them does he explicitly apply it to himself. Twice when others applied the title to him in his hearing (Mark 8:29; 14:61) Jesus responded with a saying referring to the "Son of man" which appears to be offered as a corrective to the use of the title "Christ." Mark considered the title to be perfectly appropriate when applied to Jesus (Mark 1:1). Mark even seemed to be used to others calling him and his fellow Christians by that name (Mark

9:41). This strongly suggests that though Mark believed that Jesus was the Messiah promised in the Jewish Scriptures: he used the messianic title "Christ" guardedly as against how it was being misunderstood by some in his community.

The title "Son of man'" plays a prominent role in the Gospel of Mark. The title had its roots in the Jewish religious traditions, though scholars are uncertain about the precise stages in its pre-Christian development. Its Jewish heritage made it readily expressive of a more than human figure who will come in power and glory at the end of the world. Mark was familiar with that significance (Mark 8:38;' 13:26; 14:62). But he balanced that meaning of "Son of man" with another “which was very important for him. He used it prominently in the middle section of his Gospel.

Three times Jesus used Son of man sayings not to portray end-time glory but to predict his fate (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34). The Son of man must be rejected, delivered up, must suffer, be killed, and rise again. In Mark's use of "Son of man" the themes of glory and authority converge with the necessity for suffering. Mark wanted it understood that no view of Christ is complete unless both dimensions are present.

Another title far Jesus which Mark emphasized was "Son of God." That it was particularly meaningful for Mark is indicated by his use of it both at the beginning (Mark 1:1) and at the end (15:39) of his Gospel. Again we find the roots for the title firmly embedded in Jewish religious traditions as reflected in the Jewish Scriptures. For Mark the title expressed Jesus' unique relationship to God. The identity of Jesus as Son of God was incontestable. The demons whom Jesus cast out recognized him (Mark 3:11). God himself acclaimed Jesus as his Son at his baptism (Mark 1: 11) and again at the transfiguration (Mark 9:7). Even a non-believer who was present at the crucifixion perceived Jesus' true identity (15:39). The purpose of Mart's Gospel is to argue how much more those confronted with the good news of the resurrection (i.e., Mark's own community) ought to acknowledge Jesus as Son of God-just as Mark does himself (Mark 1:1)

Self-Assessment Exercise 2

Explain different titles being used for Jesus as contained in Mark.

3.3 Jesus, the Agent of God

As we saw earlier Mark placed great emphasis on the miracle stories. He stressed the miracle traditions to present Jesus as the special agent of

God. Behind this aspect of Mark's "Jesus portrait" was the belief common to early Christians (and others) that God and Satan were locked in a massive cosmic struggle. Satan had usurped God's right to rule in his creation. God willed to win it back.

Mark portrayed Jesus as the special agent of God. He was endowed with supernatural power and authority. His mission was to inaugurate God's reclamation of his creation. Through Jesus God was restoring his right to rule over the whole of his created order. When Jesus calmed the storm (Mark 6:47-52), he was· replacing the chaos characteristic of Satan's role with that order which God had once established over the chaotically stormy waters at creation. When Jesus healed or restored to 'life (Mark 5:21-43) he was restoring life-force where there was death or its potential, on behalf of God who created life. When Jesus cast out demons (Mark 1:23-28) he was routing agents of Satan in order that God might once again rule in human hearts. Though Satan did his worst through those over whom he ruled by causing them to kill Jesus. God vindicated him as his agent by raising him from the dead. In Jesus' deeds and in his ultimate fate God showed himself to be the life-giver. He won the cosmic struggle with Satan and his forces of death.

Self-Assessment Exercise3

Highlight Mark's portrayal of Jesus as the special agent of God.

3.4 Persecution and the End of the World

Mark's community was living in turbulent times and Mark wanted them to understand the turmoil theologically. The political unrest stirred by the insurrection of Jewish nationalists against Rome was increasing in intensity. Recently a savage persecution of Christians in Rome had been ordered by the Emperor Nero (Tacitus *Annals* XV:44). News of the martyrdoms of both Peter and Paul was probably fresh in their minds. Now Mark's own community was facing the prospect of persecution. They may have already suffered its initial onslaughts.

Apparently the community was encountering opposition from two fronts. People were not responding with faith to their preaching. Mark pointed out repeatedly that unbelief and hardness of heart in response to their preaching. To him this was extremely serious and would be re-compensed. It was especially true of the leaders of a Judaism which had rejected the gospel and had become more intense in its enmity toward Christianity. Mark's community was also facing (and perhaps already experiencing) persecution from pagan authorities, and Mark was eager to strengthen them in their resolve to stand fast against such suffering.

Mark related the realities of his community's situation to their belief that Jesus would return soon and the world would end. Unrest and wars and persecutions were signs or the impending end (Mark 13:7-9). Mark's community was living in a time impregnated with the quality of end-time urgency (Mark 4:29; 9:1; 12:1-11). But Mark did not want them to go overboard with end-of-the-world fanaticism. Though, the time was near, the end had not actually already begun (Mark 13:6-7, 10, 21-23). No one should allow extreme expectations to disillusion and disappoint them when Jesus' second coming was delayed yet a little while. There was still an interim time before Jesus' return when Christians must remain faithful and alert.

This belief in the nearness of the end of the work provided Mark with the perspective to help his community cope with the sufferings which threatened them. Persecution was one sign of the approach of Jesus' second coming. Christians were to undergo suffering and distress as a prelude to his return. As Jesus had fulfilled his mission through suffering so were they to be supported and strengthened by his example. The first disciples had faced the same perils and hatred which Jesus had known. So must the Christians of Mark's community conduct themselves (Mark 13:9-13). Suffering Son of man set the· model for suffering discipleship (Mark 8:31, 34-38; 10:33-34, 3&-40). Perhaps Mark emphasized the denial of Peter (Mark 14:29-31, 53-72) to encourage some in his own community who had already denied their faith during persecution.

In all of this Mark was not simply hoping that his fellow-Christians would become more accurately informed about what Jesus did before he was killed,' or where he did it, or to whom. "Mark was concerned to teach that the theological meaning of the cross can best be understood by one who has humbly prepared himself for a renunciation of self, for a life of service and, if need be, of suffering and martyrdom.

Self-Assessment Exercise 4

How did Mark illustrate the imminent end of the world in his theology?

4.0 Conclusion

Mark as could be seen from this unit did not just write for writing sake, he wrote because he had a message. The gospel narrates the life of Jesus of Nazareth from his baptism by John the Baptist to the resurrection (or to the empty tomb in the shorter recension), but it concentrates particularly on the last week of his life (chapters 11-16, the trip to Jerusalem), to show him as the special agent of God. Its swift narrative portrays Jesus as a heroic man of action, an exorcist, a healer and

miracle worker. It calls him the Son of Man, the Son of God, and the Christ (the Greek translation of Messiah).

5.0 Summary

The following are the lessons you have learnt in this unit:

- Mark used various titles such as ‘’Son of man’’ to express his concept of Jesus.
- Mark wrote to increase the faith of the people of his community.
- Mark showed Jesus as special agent of God.
- Mark’s understanding of the end of the world gave meaning to the turmoil in his community.

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignments

1. Write notes on the following titles of Jesus:

   (a) Son of Man.
   (b) Son of God.
   (c) The Messiah.

2. Highlight and discuss Mark’s understanding of the end of the world.

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UNIT 5 SPECIAL FATURES OF MARK

Contents

1.0 Introduction

Having looked at the purpose of Mark's gospel in the last unit as well as his concept of Christ, the theology of Mark's gospel is examined in this unit The Gospel of Mark is the second of the four canonical gospels in the New Testament but is believed by most modern scholars to be the first gospel written, on which the other two synoptic gospels, Matthew and Luke, were partially based. This is what actually made for the uniqueness which we shall see in this unit. To him, the personality of Jesus should not be disclosed until he has accomplished his mission. He made his gospel simple for his non-Jewish audience. A controversial aspect of the gospel shall be studied in this unit.

2.0 Objectives

By the end of this unit you should be able to:

- Unravel the mysteries behind the issue of Messianic Secret in Mark.
- Relate the distinctive features of Mark
- Explain the reason for the simplicity of Mark.
- Discuss the problems relating to the ending of Mark

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Messianic Secret

A famous feature of Markan narrative which is only alluded to until now is the "messianic Secret" motif. This motif runs through most of Mark's Gospel Scholars have pointed out a number of traits in the Gospel of Mark through which the recognition or the messianic Identity of Jesus as

the Christ, the Son of God actually seems to be suppressed. For Instance, Jesus repeatedly imposed commands to silence demons and unclean spirits which he exorcised (Mark 1:23-25, 34; 3:11-12). Mark described Jesus as forbidding people whom he had healed from telling others about their good fortune (Mark 1:43-44; 5:43; 7:36). He even prohibited his disciples from telling others about him (Mark 8:30; 9:9). He tried to conceal his presence from others (Mark 7:24; 9:30). Some scholars also point to the private teaching which Jesus limited to his disciples (Mark 4:33-34; 7:17-23; 13:3-37).

These features almost always occur in the redactional material, the narrative connectors with which Mark bound his story together. That would suggest .that most of them were not included in the independent stories of the oral tradition. Mark himself was the one largely responsible for the prominence which the "messianic secret" motif had in his Gospel. Further, the secrecy theme abruptly disappeared when Jesus stood as the accused on trial before the high priest (14:61-62).

The "messianic secret" feature helped Mark deal further with the problem which members of his community were having when they tried to use the stones on Jesus. It was an additional antidote to the potential danger that Gentiles might misunderstand those stories as picturing Jesus as a Hellenistic "divine man."

Through the secrecy motif Mark insisted that the identity of Jesus was not resolved with just one story. A healing did not define the richness of his messiahship. Neither did an exorcism. Not even a heavenly epiphany (The manifestation of the presence of God) such as the transfiguration (Mark 9:2-10) was enough. Only when the portrait of Jesus was completed by including his suffering and crucifixion was he seen to be both Christ of glory and power and suffering Son of man.

The stories about Jesus are partial by themselves. Only when they are heard and interpreted in terms of the cross event do they correctly show his messiahship. Mark was restoring the functional usability of those stories to clarify the gospel preaching.

Self-Assessment Exercise 1

What was Mark indicating with his emphasis on secrecy about Jesus' identity as Messiah (Christ) before the passion?

3.2 The Audience of Mark

The general theory is that Mark is a Hellenistic gospel, written primarily for an audience of Greek-speaking residents of the Roman Empire.

Jewish traditions are explained, clearly for the benefit of non-Jews. Aramaic words and phrases are also expanded upon by the author, for example, *talitha kum*, Mark 5:41; *Corban*, Mark 7:11; *abba*, Mark 14:36.

Alongside these Hellenistic influences, Mark makes use of the Old Testament in the form in which it had been translated into Greek, the Septuagint.

Those who seek to show the non-Hellenistic side of Mark note passages such as "Son of the Most High God"; Mark 7:27; and Mark 8:27–30. They also indicate that the audience of Mark has kept at least some of its Jewish heritage, and also that the gospel might not be as Hellenistic as it first seems.

The gospel of Mark contains many literary genres. Paul's letters were already surfacing around 40–60 and the Gospel of Mark came at a time when Christian faith was rising. This is why Dennis R MacDonald writes:

> …the author of the Gospel of Mark recast traditional materials into a dramatic narrative, climaxing in Jesus' death. It is not clear precisely what kind of book the author set out to compose, insofar as no document written prior to Mark exactly conforms to its literary properties. Its themes of travel, conflict with supernatural foes, suffering, and secrecy resonate with Homer's Odyssey and Greek romantic novels. Its focus on the character, identity, and death of a single individual reminds one of ancient biographies. Its dialogues, tragic outcome, and peculiar ending call to mind Greek drama. Some have suggested that the author created a new, mixed genre for narrating the life and death of Jesus.

Self-Assessment Exercise 2

Who were the audience of Mark’s gospel?

3.3 Characteristic Features of Mark.

The Gospel of Mark differs from the other gospels in content, language, and detail.

The narrative can be divided into three sections: the *Galilean ministry*, including the surrounding regions of Phoenicia, Decapolis, and Cæsarea

Philippi (1-9); the *Journey to Jerusalem* (10); and the *Events in Jerusalem* (11-16).

- Unlike both Matthew and Luke, Mark does not offer any information about the life of Jesus before his baptism and ministry, that is why he did not include the nativity and genealogy.
- Jesus' baptism is understated, with John not identifying Jesus as the Son of God, nor initially declining to baptize him, nor sharing Jesus' vision of the dove and the Father's voice.
- Son of Man is the major title used of Jesus in Mark. Many people who have seen that this title is a very important one within Mark's Gospel, and it has important implications for Mark's Christology. Jesus raises a question that demonstrates the association in Mark between "Son of Man" (cf. Dan 7:13–14) and the suffering servant in Isaiah 52:13-53:12."How then is it written about the Son of Man, that he is to go through many sufferings and be treated with contempt?" (9:12b NRSV). Yet this comparison is not explicit; Mark's Gospel creates this link between Daniel and Isaiah, and applies it to Christ. It is postulated that this is because of the persecution of Christians; thus, Mark's Gospel encourages believers to stand firm (Mark 13:13) in the face of troubles.

Jesus "explained everything in private to his disciples" while only speaking in parables to the crowds. His use of parables obscures his message and fulfils prophecy (Mark 4:10-12).

The Messianic Secret, Jesus' command to unclean spirits and to his disciples that they not reveal his identity, is stronger in Mark.

Mark is the only gospel that has Jesus explicitly admit that he does not know when the end of the world will be (Mark 13:32). The equivalent verse in the Byzantine manuscripts of Matthew does not contain the words "nor the Son" (Matthew 24:36) (but it is present in most Alexandrian and Western text-type).

In addition, the language of Mark is equally characteristic of him. For instance, the phrase "and immediately" occurs nearly forty times in Mark; while in Luke, which is much longer, it is used only seven times, and in John only four times. The word Greek: *νομος* law is never used, while it appears 8 times in Matthew, 9 times in Luke, 15 times in John, 19 times in Acts, many times in Romans.

Latin loan words are often used: speculator, sextarius, centurion, legion, quadrans, praetorium, caesar, census, flagello, modius, denarius. Mark has only a few direct Old Testament quotations:. Mark makes frequent use of the narrative present; Luke changes about 150 of these verbs to

past tense. Mark frequently links sentences with Greek: και (and); Matthew and Luke replace most of these with subordinate clauses.

Further more, the Gospel of Mark makes extensive use of literary allusion to the *Tanakh*, or commentary on the Old Testament. In some cases these allusions exist in the other synoptic gospels as well, but this is generally due to the synoptic gospels sharing a significant amount of text. According to the two-source hypothesis, Mark was used as a source for the gospels of Matthew and Luke. Under this hypothesis, some literary allusions in the Gospel of Mark were lost when the scenes were copied by the other gospel writers. One case of literary allusion in the Gospel of Mark comes from the crucifixion scene, which is crafted from literary allusions to Psalm 22 and Amos 8.

Some Christians consider these to be cases of prophecy fulfillment. Scholars, however, consider these to be cases of literary allusion, where the author used existing passages from the Jewish scriptures to craft the details of the scene and provide sub-textual meaning to the events. The passage from Amos 8 would be relevant after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 and implies that the meaning of the crucifixion according to the author is a justification for the destruction of the Jewish people by the Romans during the Jewish war of 67-72 To a large extent, the narrative of the Gospel of Mark is a running series of literary allusions to the Jewish scriptures.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3

Account for the main characteristics of Mark’s gospel.

3.3 The Ending of Mark

Starting from the 19th century, textual critics have commonly asserted that Mark 16:9–20, describing some disciples' encounters with the resurrected Jesus, was a later addition to the gospel. Mark 16:8 stops at the empty tomb without further explanation. The last twelve verses are missing from the oldest manuscripts of Mark's Gospel. The style of these verses differs from the rest of Mark, suggesting they were a later addition. In a handful of manuscripts, a "short ending" is included after 16:8, but before the "long ending", and exists by itself in one of the earliest Old Latin codices, Codex Bobiensis. By the 5th century, at least four different endings have been attested.

Most likely, the Long Ending (16:9-20) started as a summary of evidence for Jesus' resurrection and the apostles' divine mission, based on other gospels. It was likely composed early in the second century and incorporated into the gospel around the middle of the second century. Mark might have originally ended abruptly at verse 8, the gospel might be unfinished, or (most likely) the original ending might be lost.

Presumably, the ending would have featured Jesus' appearance to his disciples in Galilee.

Irenaeus, c. 180, quoted from the long ending, specifically as part of Mark's gospel. The 3rd-century theologian Origen of Alexandria quoted the resurrection stories in Matthew, Luke, and John but failed to quote anything after Mark 16:8, suggesting that his copy of Mark stopped there. Eusebius and Jerome both mention the majority of texts available to them omitted the longer ending. Critics are divided over whether the original ending at 16:8 was intentional, whether it resulted from accidental loss, or even the author's death. Those who believe that 16:8 was not the intended ending argue that it would be very unusual syntax for the text to end with the conjunction *gar* (γάρ), as does Mark 16:8, and that thematically it would be strange for a book of good news to end with a note of "for they were afraid". Some of those who believe that the 16:8 ending was intentional suggest a connection to the theme of the "Messianic Secret". This abrupt ending is also used to support the identification of this book as an example of closet drama, which characteristically ended without resolution and often with a tragic or shocking event that prevents closure.

Self-Assessment Exercise 4

What made the ending of Mark controversial?

4.0 Conclusion

Important themes of Mark were examined in this unit .e.g. the Messianic secret and the obtuseness of the disciples. In Mark, Jesus often commands secrecy regarding aspects of his identity and certain actions. Jesus uses parables to explain his message and fulfill prophecy. At times, the disciples have trouble understanding the parables, but Jesus explains what they mean, in secret. They also fail to understand the implication of the miracles that he performs before them. It could be seen here too that Mark is believed to be a Hellenistic gospel written for the Greeks. This explains why most of the foreign words were simplified. The question of later interpolation of the ending of Mark was treated in details.

5.0 Summary

The following are the lessons you have learnt in this unit:

- Mark maintained the secrecy of the messiah until the passion.
- Mark is a Hellenistic gospel written for the Greeks.
- Mark explained all the foreign words used for his non Jewish readers.

- The ending of Mark is believed to be a later addition.

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignments

1. Account for why Mark is being referred to as Hellenistic Gospel

2. Enumerate the main characteristics of Mark's gospel.

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MODULE 2 THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

INTRODUCTION

In this second module you shall be introduced into the first New Testament book. The gospel of Matthew is going to be fully treated here bearing in mind the author of the book, date of writing. You shall also be taught the special features of the gospel that is what distinguishes Mathew from other synoptic writers.

This module will inform you of how Mathew made use of his Jewish background to better his theology. Consult the book and journals recommended at the end of each unit for further reading. You can as well make use of bible dictionaries, encyclopaedia and internet materials.

Unit 1 Preliminaries

Unit 2 The Sources of Matthew

Unit 3 The Purposes of Matthew

Unit 4 Special Features of Matthew's Writings.

UNIT 1 PRELIMINARIES

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction

This module is on the book of Matthew the first book in the New Testament. This unit introduces you to the book. You shall find out here that the authorship of Matthew is controversial in view of evidences in support and against Matthew. The traditional view is now being criticised. As regards the place of origin, Syria is still the most likely possibility. On the one hand, an association with Palestinian Judaism and its interpretation of the Law is clearly discernable. One of the concerns within the Matthew text is a conservative approach to the Torah which again accords well with Antioch as well as Palestine The composition of Matthew's Gospel must be dated after 70 C.E. since it presumes, the Jewish defeat by Rome (Matt. 21:41-45; 2?:7; 24:15; 27:25).

2.0 Objectives

By the end of this unit you should be able to:

- Explain who the author of Matthew is.
- Identify the place of origin of the book
- Argue convincingly on the possible date of composition

3.0 Main Content

3.1 The Author of Matthew

The author of the: first Gospel was an anonymous Jewish-Christian whose community was engaged in the Hellenistic Jewish Christian mission. He was well educated and literarily capable. He possessed considerable knowledge of rabbinic traditions and methods.

The identification of the author with Matthew, one of the Twelve is problematic. Only in the first Gospel is the tax collector whom Jesus called to be a disciple named 'Matthew" (Matt. 9:9-13). Both Mark and Luke call him Levi" (Mark 2:13--17; Luke 5:27-32). Nevertheless all three evangelists include a Matthew" in their lists of the Twelve (Matt. 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15; cf. Acts 1:13). Another Matthew'· joined the Twelve after the resurrection according to Luke' (Acts 1:15-26).

There are evidences both in support and against Matthew authorship of the gospel by various scholars according to Herman N. Ridderbos, (1963).

> We can no longer accept the traditional view of Matthew's authorship. At least two things forbid us to do so. First, the tradition maintains that Matthew authored an Aramaic writing, while the standpoint I have adopted does not allow us to regard our Greek text as a translation of an Aramaic original. Second, it is extremely doubtful that an eyewitness like the apostle Matthew would have made such extensive use of material as a comparison of the two Gospels indicates. Mark, after all, did not even belong to the circle of the apostles. Indeed Matthew's Gospel surpasses those of the other synoptic writers neither in vividness of presentation nor in detail, as we would expect in an eyewitness report, yet neither Mark nor Luke had been among those who had followed Jesus from the beginning of His public ministry.

To J. C. Fenton, it is usually thought that Mark's Gospel was written about A.D. 65 and that the author of it was neither one of the apostles nor an eyewitness of the majority of the events recorded in his Gospel. Matthew was therefore dependent on the writing of such a man for the production of his book. What Matthew has done, in fact, is to produce a second and enlarged edition of Mark. Moreover, the changes which he makes in Mark's way of telling the story are not those corrections which an eyewitness might make in the account of one who was not an eyewitness. Thus, whereas in Mark's Gospel we may be only one remove from eyewitnesses, in Matthew's Gospel we are at one remove further still.

Francis Beare notes also that the dependence of the book upon documentary sources is so great as to forbid us from looking upon it as the work of any immediate disciple of Jesus. Apart from that, there are clear indications that it is a product of the second or third Christian generation. The traditional name of Matthew is retained in modern discussion only for convenience.

The author is an anonymous Jewish-Christian. Eduard Schweizer writes about him,

> The Jewish background is plain. Jewish customs are familiar to everyone. The debate about the law is a central question and the Sabbath is still observed. The dispute with the Pharisees serves primarily as a warning to the community (cf. chapters 24-25); but a reference to leading representatives of the Synagogue is not far below the surface. Above all, the method of learned interpretation of the Law, which "looses" and "binds," was still central for Matthew and his community. Preservation of sayings, such as 23:2-3, which support the continued authority of Pharisaic teaching, and above all the special emphasis placed on the requirement not to offend those who still think in legalistic terms (see the discussion of 17:24-27), shows that dialogue with the Jewish Synagogue had not broken off. On the other hand, a saying like 27:25 shows that the Christian community had conclusively split with the Synagogues, even though hope for the conversion of Jews was not yet totally dead.

Self-Assessment Exercise 1

Who wrote the book of Matthew?

3.2 Place of Origin

Schweizer joins most scholars in favour of a Syrian provenance for the Gospel of Matthew As to the place of origin; Syria is still the most likely possibility. On the one hand, an association with Palestinian Judaism and its interpretation of the Law is clearly discernable; on the other hand, a full recognition of the gentile world and the admission of pagans into the post-Easter community are accepted facts. The destruction of Jerusalem plays some role; but it was not experienced firsthand, and the exodus of Christians from Jerusalem is perceptible only in the tradition borrowed from Mark, not in Matthew himself. . . But Syria is suggested by the major role assigned to Peter, especially his authoritative interpretation of Jesus' commands as referring to new situations (cf. 16:9); for according to Acts 12:17 Peter had left Jerusalem. He was certainly in Syrian Antioch, as we know from Galatians 2:1 ff.

Larry Swain has summarized the evidence by which we locate Matthew in Antioch:

Patristic testimony reads Jerusalem, to doubt it has a negative value of demonstrating that Matthew came from no where else except the East. It is doubtful that it would have been accepted so early and so widely unless one of the larger, more important churches sponsored it. Since Rome, Ephesus, Alexandria, and Jerusalem all have very important reasons against them that leave Antioch. Peter's status in Matthew accords with his standing in Antioch, as the first bishop there. Not a strong argument on its own, but it fits the pattern. Antioch had both a large Jewish population as well as being the site of the earliest Gentile mission; Matthew more than the other gospels reflects this duality.

The two texts which seem to refer to Matthean tradition (in the one case to the text of Matthew in the other case possibly to the text, but more likely to M material) are the letters of Ignatius, bishop of Antioch and the Didache whose provenance is also Syria or northern Palestine thus placing Matthew fairly firmly in those areas at the end of the first century.

We know that in the third century there was a school in Antioch which claimed to go back to ancient times which had several OT textual traditions available, if the tradition is true, then this accords with both the Matthean citations of the OT as well as the "Matthean School" tradition; particularly since members of this Antioch school are said to have known Hebrew and Greek, which again points out a strong parallel with the author of Matthew. There are some strong similarities between the Lucianic text of the Hebrew Bible and Matthew's citations of OT texts in some instances. Lucian lived and worked in Antioch and is believed to have worked with an Ur-Lucianic text, i. e. one of the above mentioned OT traditions to which author Matthew had access. One of the concerns within the Matthean text is a conservative approach to the Torah which again accords well with Antioch as well as Palestine

The text also seems to be concerned to react against some of the material coming out of Yamnah, which again places it in an area which Yamnah had some influence, thus northern Palestine and Syria, and Antioch. The community described in Matthew has usually been understood as a wealthy one, which rules out Palestine after the war of 70. To set the *terminus ad quem*, Ignatius of Antioch and other early writers show dependence on the Gospel of Matthew. Dependence on Mark sets a *terminus a quo* for the dating of Matthew, which should be assumed to have been written at least a decade after the gospel upon which it relies. Several indications in the text also confirm that Matthew was written c. 80 CE or later.

Self-Assessment Exercise 2

Trace the place of origin of St. Matthew.

3.3 The Date of Matthew

The earliest evidence which connects the name of Matthew with· a written gospel is the quotation in Eusebius (a fourth century Christian historian) from Papias, who was bishop of Hieropolis in Asia (today's Turkey) around 150 C.E. Papias was quoted as writing, 'Matthew collected the logia [words of Jesus] in the Hebrew language and everybody interpreted them as he could" (H. E. III 29:16). It is unlikely that Papias was referring to the First Gospel since it was written in Greek by someone who was not an eyewitness of the ministry of Jesus but had to depend on Greek documents as sources for the Jesus traditions he used. The composition of Matthew's Gospel must be dated after 70 C.E. since it presumes the Jewish defeat by Rome (Matt. 21:41-45; 24:15; 27:25). If the Gospel of Mark was written around 65 c.f. time must be allowed for it to have been distributed and to be in popular use. Ignatius of Antioch, who wrote a series of letters in 110 C. E. used the earliest existing quotations from the Gospel of Matthew. It must have been written enough earlier to allow time not only for acceptance in Antioch but probably also for it to have become known by those to whom Ignatius wrote. As close an approximation of the dating of Matthew as we can now establish is 85-90 C.E.

J. C. Fenton summarizes the evidence for the dating of Matthew as follows. The earliest surviving writings which quote this Gospel are probably the letters of Ignatius, the Bishop of Antioch, who, while being taken as prisoner from the East to Rome about A.D. 110, wrote to various churches in Asia in Asia Minor and to the church at Rome. Ignatius refers to the star which appeared at the time of the birth of Jesus, the answer of Jesus to John the Baptist, when he was baptized, and several sayings of Jesus which are recorded only in this Gospel (12:33, 15:13, 19:12). It seems almost certain that Ignatius, and possibly the recipients of his letters also, knew this Gospel, and thus that it was written before A.D. 110.

Here we cannot be so certain. But it is possible that we can find evidence that Matthew was writing after the war between the Romans and the Jews which ended in the destruction of the temple at Jerusalem in A.D. 70. See, for example, 22:7: *The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city*; and compare also 21:41, 27:25. Similarly, Matthew's Gospel contains a strongly anti-Jewish note running through it, from the teaching not to do *as the hypocrites do* in Chapter 6, to the Woes on the *scribes and Pharisees* in Chapter 23; and this may point to a date after c. A.D. 85 when the Christians were excluded from the Jewish synagogues. It is

worth noting here that Matthew often speaks of *their synagogues* (4:23, 9:35, 10:17, 12:9, 13:54), as if to distinguish Christian meetings and meeting places from those of the Jews, from which the Christians had now been turned out.

Beare offers the following to date the Gospel of Matthew:

> It is generally agreed that it was written after the fall of Jerusalem to the armies of Titus (AD 70), and the widespread acquaintance with it which is exhibited in all the Christian literature of the second century makes it difficult to place its composition any later than the opening decade of that century. If the Sermon on the Mount can be regarded in any sense as 'the Christian answer to Jamnia, a kind of Christian mishnaic counterpart to the formulation taking place there, this would indicate a date a few years before or after the turn of the century.

Thus, Kummel argues to date the Gospel of Matthew in the last two decades of the first century "Even if, indeed, Mark and Matthew originated in different regions, precisely in his reworking of Mark Matthew shows so clear a development of community relationships and theological reflection that a date of writing shortly after Mark seems less likely than a time between 80 and 100. A date of origin after 100 is excluded by Matthew having been used by Ignatius."

Self-Assessment Exercise 3

How do we arrive at a date between 80 and 100 A.D. for Matthew?

4.0 Conclusion

We could see from this unit that the consensus position on authorship is that the evangelist was not the apostle Matthew. Such an idea is based on the second century statements of Papias and Irenaeus. As quoted by Eusebius in *Hist. Eccl.* 3.39, Papias states: "Matthew put together the oracles [of the Lord] in the Hebrew language, and each one interpreted them as best he could." In *Adv. Haer.* 3.1.1, Irenaeus says: "Matthew also issued a written Gospel among the Hebrews in their own dialect while Peter and Paul were preaching at Rome and laying the foundations of the church." We know that Irenaeus had read Papias, and it is most likely that Irenaeus was guided by the statement he found there. That statement in Papias itself is considered to be unfounded because the Gospel of Matthew was written in Greek and relied largely upon Mark,

not the author's first-hand experience, Syria is still the most likely possibility on place of origin and likely date of writing is between 80 and 100 A.D.

5.0 Summary

The following are the lessons you have learnt in this unit:

- The traditional position of Matthew authorship may not be tenable.
- Syria is mostly favoured place of wring; and
- The likely date of writing is between 80 and 100 A.D.

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignments

1. Argue in support of the traditional view of Matthew authorship.

2. How was the issue of the place of origin of Matthew resolved?

7.0 References/Further Readings

Bultmann, R.. (1963). *History of the Synoptic Tradition*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1963.

Dewey, J. (2004). "The Survival of Mark's Gospel: A Good Story?" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 123.3 (2004) 495-507.

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UNIT 2 THE SOURCES OF MATTHEW

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction

In the last unit you were introduced to the gospel of Mathew. The author of the gospel, its origin and the date of writing were examined. It is the near-universal position of scholarship that the Gospel of Matthew is dependent upon the Gospel of Mark. This position is accepted whether one subscribes to the dominant Two-Source Hypothesis or instead prefers the Farrer-Goulder hypothesis. It is equally an accepted rule that there are some other materials made use of by Matthew, like: ‘’Q’’ and ‘’M’’ the material peculiar to both Matthew and Mark and the material peculiar to Matthew only. Even though it is not possible to establish that Matthew drew his special material from a single document none of these traditions fully represent the gospel of Matthew.

2.0 Objectives

By the end of this unit you should be able to:

- Identify the various sources of St. Matthew.
- Explain how Matthew made use of the Markan source.
- Explain what ‘’Q’’ source is all about
- State the content of ‘’M’’ source.

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Matthew's Use of Mark

An assumption of the two-source hypothesis is that Matthew had a copy of Mark before him which he used to compose his Gospel. As an extension of that assumption, most scholars simply presume that Mark's Gospel was also known by the Christian community to which Matthew belonged. It had used the Gospel of Mark in its worship, its· catechetical

teaching (its oral religious instruction) and its missionary preaching. It had used Mark's Gospel for a long enough period of time to know well the value of that document. But Matthew had also recognized some of its inadequacies in helping his community to respond to the challenges, opportunities, and attacks with which it was trying to cope. The burning issues with which Matthew and his community were struggling were simply not identical with those which had concerned Mark and his church.

When Matthew .is compared with Mark, many of the changes which Matthew made in Mark's narrative are obvious. Those changes provide important clues to help identify the differences in the historical life settings of the Markan and Matthean communities. They also disclose some of the unique qualities which Matthew possessed as an author.The artistry with which Matthew combined and organized the traditions which he gathered from a number of different sources was extraordinary. In the process he also molded that traditional material so that it strengthened the faith of the Christian community to which he belonged, supporting it as it struggled with specific issues related to its life and work. The Gospel of Mark provided the basic narrative framework for Matthew. But he expanded it and reworked it. Matthew's revisions of Mark included alterations in details, condensations and new formulations. The result was both abbreviation and improvement of the literary quality of Mark's narrative. What was subtracted in narrative content was more than replaced by the extensive additions of traditions about Jesus which Matthew included beyond what Mark had used.

Matthew corrected Mark's Greek considerably. Mark was addicted to the use of the present tense. (He wrote the story of Jesus as a child talks: "He comes to the house and gets us and we go to school.") Matthew usually altered such "historical present tenses" (130 of 151 times). In the account of the healing of the paralytic, Matthew replaced Mark's rather crude Greek word for "pallet" (Mark 2:4) with the more polished word for "bed" (Matt. 9:2). Mark's imprecise reference to "King Herod", (Mark 6:14) was corrected by Matthew to "Herod, the tetrarch" (Matt. 14:1).

Where Mark was unnecessarily repetitious in the story of healing many people, Matthew was more concise and vivid. Compare the two passages below:

> That evening, at sundown they brought to him all who were sick ' or possessed with demons .... And he healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons. (Mark 1:37-34a)

> That evening they brought to him many who were possessed with demons; and he cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick. (Matt. 8:16).

By altering the connective links between scenes in the story of Jesus, Matthew considerably improved the narrative flow, increasing the sense of chronological sequence and spatial relation. Matthew's "While he was still speaking to the people" (Matt. 12:46) is much more effective than Mark's "And ... "(Mark 3:31). So is "That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea ..." (Matt. 13: 1) in place of "Again he began to teach beside the sea" (Mark 4:1).

Self-Assessment Exercise 1

Why did Matthew make use of Markan source in his gospel?

3.2 Matthew's Use of "Q"

The Gospel of Mark was not the only source which Matthew used in writing his Gospel. He also drew upon those traditions about Jesus which had been collected in the source or sources commonly designated "Q" which is the abbreviation of the Greek word *Quelle* meaning 'sayings'. It is so designated because it is full of the sayings of Jesus Christ. As we noted earlier it is impossible to reconstruct the contents of that source in precise detail) Nevertheless we may assume that Matthew reworked, revised, corrected, and adapted the material he selected from Q in a manner similar to the way he made use of Mark's traditions. It is interesting to note that the author of Matthew was not the only one who valued the material in Q. Luke also saw its importance and made extensive use of it when he revised Mark's Gospel, too. It is strange that a document such as Q which was so highly esteemed by early Christians did not survive except for its traces discernible in Matthew and in Luke.

Self-Assessment Exercise 2

How do you understand the ''Q'' source?

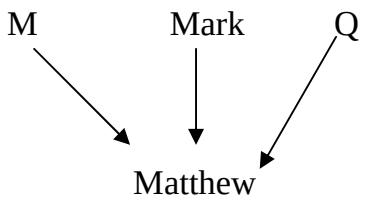
3.3 Matthew's Use of ''M''

When the material from Mark and the Q traditions are combined they still don't produce the Gospel of Matthew in its entirety. There are around 400 verses or verse fragments in Matthew that are not present in either Mark or Q. They are exclusive to Matthew and are not found anywhere else in the New Testament. Where did they come from?

Although some scholars have wanted to propose a third written document they have not been able to agree on what out of Matthew's special material should be included in it. The evidence and, the controls which govern any theory of literary dependency simply aren't present. With the possible exceptions of the genealogy (Matt. 1:2-17) and the "testimony traditions,'" it is more probable that Matthew's special material was drawn from the oral traditions still circulating among early Christians. The possibility that Matthew occasionally may have composed an entire periscope can be either excluded or established.

Besides the genealogy Matthew's special material includes the birth and infancy stories (Matt. 1-2). Unlike Luke's nativity narratives which stress the dimension of the miraculous in the conception and birth of Jesus, Matthew's infancy narratives emphasize the identity of Jesus. That is particularly evident with the description of the name given to him by God (Matt. 1:21-25). It also is implied in the journey narrative from Bethlehem to Nazareth by way of Egypt (Matt. 2:1-23; this passage includes the tradition of the "Wise Men" so familiar to us during the Christmas and Epiphany seasons).

Other special Matthean material includes the appearances of Jesus after the resurrection (Mate 28), a notable number of quotations from the Jewish Scriptures which he understood as referring to incidents in Jesus life, and a large amount of the sayings and teachings of Jesus, most which are included the five great discourses. Also some narrative accounts such as the coin in the fish's mouth (Matt. 17:24-27), the suicide of Judas (Matt. 27:3-10), the dream of Pilate's wife (Matt. 27:19), the guard at the tomb (Matt. 27:62-66, 23:4).
Even though it is not possible to establish that Matthew drew his special material from a single document these traditions are usually represented by the letter "M." In '.this way we can refer to them as a group and more easily distinguish them from the traditions Matthew adapted from Mark and Q. The diagram showing the literary relationships of the Synoptic Gospels and the sources they used,, may be completed for Matthew as follows:



It is worth repeating again that neither M nor Q necessarily represents a single document.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3

How do you trace ‘’M’’ materials in Matthew?

4.0 Conclusion

From this unit we have discovered that, when Matthew .is compared with Mark, many of the changes which Matthew made in Mark's narrative are obvious. Those changes provide important clues to help identify the differences in the historical life settings of the Markan and Matthean communities. They also disclose some of the unique qualities which Matthew possessed as an author. The artistry with which he combined and organized the traditions which he gathered from a number of different sources was extraordinary. In the process he also moulded that traditional material so that it strengthened the faith of the Christian community to which he belonged, supporting it as it struggled with specific issues related to its life and work.

5.0 Summary

The following are the lessons you have learnt in this unit:

- That the gospel of Matthew comprises of many sources.
- That Markan material is the ‘’back bone’’ of St. Matthew.
- That ‘’Q’’ is the material common to Luke and Matthew and
- That the original material of Matthew is called ‘’M’’.

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignments

1. Justify the assertion that without Mark there will be no Matthew.

2. Highlight and discuss the content of ‘’M’’ in Matthew.

7.0 References/Further Readings

Bultmann, R.. (1963). *History of the Synoptic Tradition*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1963.

Dewey, J. (2004). "The Survival of Mark’s Gospel: A Good Story?" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 123.3 (2004) 495-507.

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UNIT 3 THE PURPOSES OF MATTHEW

CONTENTS

1.0 Introduction

You were taught in the last unit the various sources of Mathew and his stylistic use of Markan materials and other sources for his write ups. This unit will describe some characteristic features of the Gospel of Matthew; search out the purposes which evidently motivated Matthew's writing. The main ideas concern the interpretation of the law, his Christology, the church and the community, as well as the universal scope of the gospel. No doubt, Mathew was sensitive to the problem of the application of the law to everyday life. The law has been recorded a long time ago and since then many changes had taken place because people were uncertain about how the will of God as it was made known through the Torah should be applied to their lives. The need for authoritative interpretation had long been recognized in Judaism. Mathew agreed. But he was convinced that Judaism had not provided it. The Jewish leaders simply were not capable to interpret the law, only Jesus was (Matt. 7:28-29) according to Matthew's Christology.

2.0 Objectives

By the end of this unit you should be able to:

- Evaluate Matthew's purpose of writing.
- State Matthew's understanding of the law.
- Discuss Matthew's Christology.
- State the relationship between the church and Israel and
- Discuss Matthew's universal scope of the gospel.

3.0 Main content

3.1 The Purposes of the Gospel

Matthew intended for his version of the story of Jesus to serve two functions. The first was apologetic. By apologetic we don't mean he was trying to apologize in the sense of expressing regret or remorse for Christianity. Rather "apologetic" being used in a special sense to indicate a defense of the Christian faith from those who are indifferent or hostile to its claims. Matthew designed his Gospel as an apology against a hostile militant Judaism. He wanted to help his community to explain and to defend its conviction that Jesus is the Messiah in and through whom the fulfillment of God's purposes was accomplished. His Gospel was intended to be an aid in his community's debate with non Christian Judaism. The second purpose of Matthew's Gospel was directed more to the internal' life of his community. He wanted to teach his fellow Christians. His Gospel helped Christians understand the Jewish origins of their faith and advised them concerning the shape of that disciplined community life which was in harmony with their faith. So it instructed about the ethical implications of Christianity.

3.1.1 The Law

The Mosaic Law had long played a central role in the faith of Judaism. After the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem and the end of the cultic sacrifice, the law assumed an even more fundamental importance. It was reverenced as the inspired revelation of the will of God the heart of Judaism. Matthew agreed with that view of the law. Jesus' teachings were neither corrective nor substitute for the Jewish law. That law had an unconditional validity which was enduring (Matt. 5:17-20). The fault of the Jewish leaders was not in their promotion and defense of the law but, paradoxically, in their refusal to live by it (Matt. 23:1-3).

Mathew was sensitive to the problem of the application of the law to everyday life. The law has been recorded a long time ago. Many changes had taken place since people were uncertain about how the will of God as it was made known through the Torah should be applied to their lives. The need for authoritative interpretation had long been recognized in Judaism. Mathew agreed. But he was convinced that Judaism had not provided it. The Jewish leaders simply were not capable to interpret the law, only Jesus was (Matt. 7:28-29).

The Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5) did mot replace the law but rather radically restated its demands in the light of establishment of God’s kingly rule (“the kingdom of heaven”). Matthew believed that Jesus understood the real nature of the Law of Moses better than the rabbis. He had exposed the heart of the law when he taught that its most

perfects expression was unconditioned love (Matt: 22:36-40 of 5:43-48). Actually the rabbis understood the essence of Torah as love, too as Matthew probably knew. The basic difference between Jesus and the rabbis, as Matthew understood them, was that Jesus embodied as heart of the law by the way he lived and they did not.

Just as Jesus teachings did not replace the law but went beyond it and completed it, so Matthew did not consider Jesus as an opponent to Moses. He had not come to replace Moses but to complete what God began with Moses. His authority surpassed that of Moses; naturally, his teachings were a superior interpretation of the Law of Moses to the teachings of the rabbis. Professor Norman Perrin has well expressed the contrast between Jesus and the rabbis as Matthew saw it. "The rabbis saw the Torah further developed by the teaching of the Mishnah and brought to completion by the Talmud. They saw the Torah fulfilled and redefined in the teaching of Jesus (Matt. 5:17-20) and completed in the teaching function of the church (Matt. 28:16-20, especially verse 20)." The disciplines are charged to continue to provide authoritative interpretation (Matt. 38:20). They, and those in continuity with them (including Matthew and his colleagues) are true scribes trained for the Kingdom of heaven (Matt. 13:52). As counterpoint to his high view of the law, Matthew developed a sharp polemic against rabbinic Judaism. Wherever he refers to "scribes and Pharisees" he has the rabbinic Judaism of his own day in mind.

Judaism was forced to recover and restore itself after its defeat by Titus at the hand of the Roman legions and the catastrophe of the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem (70, C.E). With Jerusalem in ruins the new core around which Judaism was reorganized was a confederation of rabbinical scholars centered in Jamnia, a small town west of Jerusalem near the Mediterranean coast. The fever of nationalistic fervor had burned fiercely for many Jew during the war with Rome. Naturally they were severely disappointed at the complete defeat, which the Romans had inflicted on there. The strain of survival and the stress of radical readjustments in the period, which followed, produced a new air of caution and awareness within Judaism. This affected Jewish attitudes toward Christianity.

Previously, Jewish indifference toward and even tolerance of the Christian movement had fostered confusion in the minds of many outsiders. Christianity appeared to be another one of the numerous sects within Judaism and redefinition provoked a more sharply defensive intolerance in some segments of Judaism. Matthew and his community were struggling to cope with that kind of hostile confrontation.

Matthew addressed the problem of Jewish enmity in his Gospel. He portrayed Jesus as being very sympathetic toward the Pharisees. Because the Pharisees were so devoted to the study of the law they had the potential for great faith (Matt. 23:1-3; of 13:52). All they had to do was understand what the law really was saying about God and how he chose to relate to his human creation. If the Pharisees could be brought to acknowledge God's saving presence in Jesus then it was likely that the rest of Israel would also respond in faith.

Jesus' public ministry was limited by and large to Israel (Matt. 15:24; of 105-7, 23). The Pharisees were that segment of Israel most concerned, with understanding and correctly interpreting the real meaning of the law. They were the experts in Torah. But Jesus was the real meaning of the law. The law was exactly what Jesus bad come to fulfill The Pharisees should therefore be those most openly receptive of him. They should be his greatest supporters. Instead they regularly resent him and are suspicious of him (Matt. 9:34; 12:24), accuse, him (Matt. 9:11; 12; 2; 15:1-2), try to trap him (Matt 19:3; 22:15), and plot against him (Matt. 12:14; 21:45-46; 27:62-63). Accordingly Jesus warns his disciples to beware of them (Matt. 16:6, 11-12). The disciples should heed their teachings but not follow their example (Matt. 23:1-3). Even with their teachings caution must be exercised (Matt. 15:3-9, 12-14). True disciples are to be more righteous than they (Matt. 5:20). Their hypocrisy is obvious (Matt. 3:7-10). Terrible judgment shall be their final lot (Matt. 23).

Although' the Pharisees seemed for a time' to succeed (Matt. 27: 1-2, 20, 41~3), God accomplished his purposes ultimately through the resurrection of Jesus in spite of their opposition. The submissive humility of Jesus in contrast to the vengeful arrogance of the Pharisees provided a model to guide Matthew's church in its struggles with hostile rabbinic Judaism._It should be noted that Matthew's portrayal of the Pharisees was colored by several factors. He must have been influenced by the stereotyped role of opposition which the Jewish religious leaders played in the Gospel of Mark, one of his sources. Undoubtedly his description reflects a Christian prejudice nurtured by repeated experiences of hostility and rejection by Jews. Similar recent experiences resulting from his own community's contacts with rabbinic Judaism reinforced that bias. From a literary standpoint the unrelieved opposition of the Pharisees served as a foil to throw in sharp contrast the acceptance of Jesus by his disciples.

Self-Assessment Exercise 1

How did Matthew address the problem of Jewish enmity in his Gospel?

3.1.2 Matthew's Christology

> Who do men say that the Son of man is?" (Matt. 16:13) "You are the Christ, the Son, of the living God. (Matt. 16:16)

In his account of Peter's confession of faith at Caesarea Philippi and the event following it (Matt. 16: 13-28) Matthew gave the climactic expression, to his, own conviction of the person of Jesus. He is the Messiah,("the Christ") in whom the Jewish figure of the Son of God (cf. Matt. 3:13-17; 4:1-11; 17:1-5; etc.) and the Daniel 7:13-14 prophecy of the end-time Son of man (Matt. 9:6; 10:23; 16;27-28, etc.) are fulfilled. As was frequently the case in early Christianity Matthew expressed his understanding of Christ in terms of functions. What Jesus did revealed, who he was. His marvelous deeds, but above all his authoritative teaching and his suffering martyrdom disclosed his messiahship. God confirmed his identity repeatedly, finally by raising him from the dead. Precisely this Jesus, divinely confirmed and exalted, continues to be present and. to function authoritatively through his church. "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me with you always, to the close of the age" (Matt 28:18-20).

Self-Assessment Exercise 2

Examine Matthew's concept of Christ.

3.2 The Church and Israel

The question of continuity between the Christian church and the people of God described in the Jewish Scriptures gravely concerned Matthew and his community. Why did the historical Israel reject Jesus? Why is it so hostile to the church? Why was Christianity becoming an increasingly Gentile movement?

Matthew sought to respond to these issues by redefining "Israel." Since historical Israel willfully misunderstood its function as God's chosen people it had lost the priority which had been implied in its election. Its aggressive resistance to the unfolding of God's saving purposes resulted in its condemnation. God' has transferred tenancy of the vineyard to others-the Gentiles (Matt. 21:3-3). The historical Israel is no longer the religious Israel.

The church is the true Israel. It does not replace historical Israel but neither are they identical Since Jesus is Messiah, the fulfillment and completion of God's revelation in the Jewish Scriptures, those who believe him to be Messiah are true Israelites. That can include Jews

(e.g., Peter, etc.) but docs not necessarily do so. Jesus defines true Israel. Belonging to Israel is not an accident of birth but the consequence of faith in Jesus the Messiah. Those who accept him as the Son of God are the holy people of God.

Matthew did not make the mistake that he felt historical Israel had made. He did not automatically identify "Israel" with the people of the kingdom. The church is never equated with the kingly rule of God, which is to come. It also will face end-time judgment (Matt.16: 25-27; 19:23-30; 20:16, 24-25). The church is Israel so long as it responds obediently to the abiding presence of its rise and exalted Lord, Jesus the Messiah (Matt, 18:20; 28:30).

Self-Assessment Exercise 3

Why did historical Israel reject Jesus and became so hostile to the church?

3.3 Universal Scope of the Gospel

Since historical Israel is not identical with the people of God, the inclusion of believing persons other than Jews becomes possible even necessary. The Great Commission (Matt28: 18-20) expressed so clearly the universal validity of the work of Jesus and therefore of the gospel preached by the church. It confirms a motif occurring frequently in Matthew's Gospel.

The strong faith of the Canaanite woman gains her across to Jesus healing power (Matt 15:24-26). Gentiles are capable of greater faith than the Jews (Matt 8:10). When they demonstrate superior faith they are representative of the vast geographical area from which will come all of those patriarchs (Matt 8:11). Their admittance to this religious table fellowship will frequently be in place of Jews who should have priority but would not believe (Matt, 8:12). Jesus fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which had anticipated the salvation of the Gentiles (Matt, 12:18, 21; of also Matt, 13:38; 22:9; 24:14; 25; 32; 26:13).

If the gospel was not restricted to the Jews, did it exclude them either? The 'all nations" of the Great Commission included the Jews, too (Matt 28:39 of 25:32). Matthew portrayed Jesus as anticipating that some of Israel would confess him as Messiah at the second coming (Matt 23:39). The in breaking of the kingdom of heaven in the person of Jesus has dissolved the religious distinction between Jew and Gentile. They are on humanity. The significant distinction is no longer ethnic, but is defined in terms of discipleship, which faithfully observes the teaching of Jesus (Matt 28: 19-20;of Matt 13:52; 19: 16-22).

The Jesus traditions, which Matthew included in his Gospel, reflected the widespread Christian expectation of Christ's return, end of the world in its present form (Matt 4:17; 10:23; 16:28; 24:33-34). Matthew was sympathetic to that belief, since he believed that the promises in the Jewish Scriptures concerning the end-time were already being fulfilled.

He held this belief in version with the view that the exact time when the second coming will be delayed for a considerable interval (Matt 24:3-8, 26-27,36-44;25:1-12). There is still missionary work for the church to do (matt 12:36-43; 24; 14 28:16-20). Expectancy may not be abandoned or dolled (Matt: 24:27,42-44; 25:13). But in the interim, advice and rules for regulating the life of the community and the conduct of individual Christians are needed (Matt. 18 of the teaching of Jesus generally, throughout the Gospel). While not contesting a vivid end- time expectation Matthew does redirect concern away from anxiety about when Jesus will return and toward interest in the quality of the Christian life in the interim.

Self-Assessment Exercise

How universal is the gospel of Matthew?

4.0 Conclusion

Matthew believed that Jesus understood the real nature of the Law of Moses better than the rabbis and he tried to show this clearly in his Christology. He had exposed the heart of the law when he taught that its most perfects expression was unconditioned love (Matt: 22:36-40 of 5:43-48). Actually the rabbis understood the essence of Torah as love, too as Matthew probably knew. The basic difference between Jesus and the rabbis, as Matthew understood them, was that Jesus embodied as heart of the law by the way he lived and they did not. Matthew sought to respond to this issue by redefining "Israel." Since historical Israel willfully misunderstood its function as God's chosen people it had lost the priority which had been implied in its election. However, Matthew showed that inspite of their failure, they are not totally caught off in his universalism of the gospel.

5.0 Summary

The following are the lessons you have learnt in this unit:

- Matthew wanted to help his community explain and defend its conviction that Jesus is the Messiah and through him the fulfilment of God's purposes was accomplished.
- Matthew re interpreted the law contrary to traditional Jewish believe.

- That historical Israel wilfully misunderstood its function as God's chosen people and lost the priority which had been implied in its election and
- That the gospel does not exclude anyone.

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignments

1. Evaluate Matthew's purpose of writing his gospel.

2. How do you understand of Matthew's Christology?

7.0 References/Further Readings

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UNIT 4 SPECIAL FEATURES OF MATTHEW'S WRITINGS

Contents

1.0 Introduction

We saw in the last unit Mathew's purpose of writing his understanding of the law and his Christology which is very unique. In this unit you are you are about to study what distinguishes Matthew from other synoptic gospels. In this unit, we shall see how Matthew made extensive use of citations and allusions to the traditions recorded in the Jewish Scriptures. He assumed that his audience was familiar with the Jewish Scriptures. He also assumed familiarity with Jewish customs and expressions. This called for his free use of these. The way he modified the miracle stories he collected should be noted. His humane treatments of concepts and ideas are equally exemplified. His stylistic use of number and his concept of the church should be read with special interest.

2.0 Objectives

By the end of this unit you should be able to:

- Describe what made Matthew different from other synoptic gospels.
- Analyse Matthew's system of relating the miracle stories.
- Account for Matthew's humane treatment of issues.
- Explain the use of numbers in Matthew and
- Examine Matthew's concept of the church.

3.0 Main Content

3.1 The Use of Citations

A conspicuous feature of Matthew's Gospel is his extensive use of citations and allusions to the traditions recorded in the Jewish Scriptures. That is not to imply that Mark was not dependent on Old Testament traditions, too. He was. However, even in proportion to the greater length of his Gospel, Matthew employed them much more frequently. He creatively combined two major religious traditions which were valued by early Christians: the Jewish Scripture and the stories about Jesus.

It is likely that Matthew wrote his Gospel in Greek. Matthew's use of Mark and the written portions of Q, both of which were in the Greek Language, indicate this. Although he frequently cited texts from the Greek translation of the Jewish Scriptures (the Septuagint), he knew them in the original Hebrew, and on occasion preferred his own translation. The fact that Matthew knew Greek does not imply that he was not a Jewish Christian. Remember that Paul wrote in Greek and quoted from the Septuagint yet he was certainly a Jew.

Matthew assumed that his audience was familiar with the Jewish Scriptures. (He also assumed familiarity with Jewish customs and expressions, Jewish oral tradition, and rabbinical interpretation.) His argument sometimes depended on the ability of his hearers to consider the broader Old Testament context in which the texts he cited originally appeared. The methods Matthew applied to accommodate incidents in the Jesus story to Old Testament texts sometimes perplex and even trouble us. His search for an appropriate passage that would conform to an event in the Jesus tradition sometimes led him to quote a passage without regard for its context. "Out of Egypt have I called my son," which Matthew (2:15) applied to the flight of Mary, Joseph, and Jesus to Egypt described originally, in Hosea the Exodus deliverance of Israel from Egyptian slavery (Hosea 11:1).

Jeremiah's lament for Israel which headed to exile (Jer. 31:15) is converted into anticipation of the grief caused by Herod's murder of the male children of Bethlehem (Matt. 2: 16-18). Occasionally Matthew appeals to a Jewish tradition text in such a vague way that the Scripture he had in mind is uncertain, at least to us. "And he went and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, 'He shall be called a Nazarene' (Matt. 2:2). The text that Matthew was citing in that instance shows that he intended a word-play on the Hebrew word in Isaiah 11: 1. It could also mean that he was alluding to: "the boy shall be a Nazarene of Judges 13:5.

There are instances where Matthew modified a particular Jesus tradition so that it conformed to a text from the Hebrew Scriptures. He added additional travel itinerary to Mark's version of Jesus' arrival in Galilee in order to make the trip correspond to a prophecy from Isaiah (Matt. 4:12-16; compare Mark 1:14). Similarly the general term the money" which Judas received from the Temple officials for betraying Jesus becomes exactly "thirty pieces of silver" only in Matthew (Matt. 26:14-15; compare Mark 14:10-11; Luke 22:3-5) so that the conformity of the amount of money to Zechariah 11:12-13 is precise (Matt. 27:9).

In contrast to the freedom with which Matthew often combined the narrative of Jesus and the Jewish traditions he occasionally went to the opposite extreme. A bent toward literalism produced Matthew's strange alteration of Mark's description of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. Matthew described Jesus as riding on two animals (Matt. 21: 7; compare Mark 11:7) because of the double expression in the Old Testament text:

> Lo, your king comes to you;
> humble and riding on an ass,
> *on a colt* the foal of an ass. (Zech. 9:9, italics added)

Such a flagrant disregard of typical Hebrew parallelism (the same thing being said with two different expressions) has caused skepticism about Matthew's Jewish background. Yet rabbinical literature amply testifies that not only extreme literalism but also all of the other interpretive methods Matthew employed with Jewish Scripture were common rabbinic exegetical devices. Such methods were devised to restore interpretive flexibility to ancient texts which had been relevant when they were first written but whose significance had become remote.

Self-Assessment Exercise 1

Why did Matthew make extensive use of Jewish tradition in his gospel?

3.2 The Use of Miracle Stories

Matthew gathered together the miracle stories he found in Mark and his other sources and concentrated many of them in one section of his Gospel (Matt. 8 – 9). In the process he usually altered the Markan versions by making them shorter and more compact. A comparison of the two versions of the exorcising of the demoniac(s) (Matt. 8:28-34 and Mark 5:1-17) or of the healing of the paralytic (Matt. 9:1-8 and Mark 2:1-12) vividly demonstrates Matthew’s fondness for eliminating unnecessary words. His version usually sounds more dramatic and lively as a consequence.

The different ways that Matthew and Mark include miracle stories of Jesus in their narratives are interesting. Mark stressed miracle stories because they proclaimed the present establishment of God's kingly rule in the person of Jesus. He began his account of Jesus' ministry with several miracle stories (Mark 1:21 – 2:12). Matthew, however, was more interested in the portrait of Jesus as the authoritative interpreter of the will of God. He gathered together ten miracle stories into one section (Matt. 8 – 9). But he placed an extended section of teaching by Jesus before the collection of miracle stories – the Sermon on the Mount, the first major discourse (Matt. 5 – 7). By this means he subordinated the miracles to the teaching traditions. They were dramatic actualizations of those mighty supernatural deeds anticipated at the end of the world by the Jewish Scriptures (cf. Matt. 8:17). As Jesus' teachings authoritatively interpret the will of God so his deeds miraculously confirm his teachings.

The miracle collections in Matthew conform to the miraculous mighty acts which were expected at the end of time, the end of the world in its present form: "the blind receive their sight (Matt. 9:27-30) and the deaf hear [this one is lacking], and the dead are raised up [cf. Matt. 9:18-19, 23-25), and the poor have good news preached to them [by Jesus, Matt. 5 – 7; by the disciples, Matt. 10]" (Matt. 11:5; cf. Isa. 29:18-19; 35:5-9). Miracles play the role for Matthew of supporting and substantiating doctrine.

Self-Assessment Exercise 2

Explain how Matthew made use of the miracle stories collected.

3.3 Distinctive Jewish Features

Matthew was confident that his community was well-informed about distinctively Jewish features in the Jesus traditions. This observation implies that a large part of the community either were Jewish Christians or had been exposed to Jewish culture and traditions for an extended period. Whereas Mark gave lengthy explanation about the Jewish cultic requirements for ritual washings (mark 7:3-4), Matthew eliminated the explanation (Matt. 15:1-2). Apparently he felt most of his hearers would understand that. References to cultic cleansing (Matt. 23.25-26), to the Temple tax (Matt. 17:24-27), to phylacteries (leather cubes containing scripture, worn during prayer) and to fringes on prayer shawis (Matt. 23:5) appear without further clarification. Matthew took it for granted that his hearers were familiar with excessive Pharisaic scrupulosity in observing the commandment to tithe (Matt. 23:23), and with the caricatures of ostentatious, arrogant, Jewish piety (Matt. 6:1-8; 23:6). The sharp sarcasm of Matthew 23:24 is clear only to those who know that both insects and camels were ritually unclean and therefore

forbidden as food (cf. Lev. 14:4, 42-43). He assumed that a reference to the exaggerated eagerness of rabbinical Jews to win gentile converts was clear (Matt. 23.15).

The way Mark described Jesus' teaching about divorce (Mark 10:1-12) was modified by Matthew to reflect the Jewish opinion that in the case of adultery only was divorce justified (Matt. 19:3-9). His version also conformed to the Jewish view that only the male partner could divorce. (Mark 10:12, reflecting the more liberal divorce customs of Greco-Roman society, was suppressed). Furthermore, a very high valuation was placed by Matthew on the enduring validity of the Torah, the Jewish religious law (Matt. 5:17:19; 23:2-3).

Matthew's language also reflects a sympathetic awareness of Jewish practice. His modifications of the Lord's Prayer tradition (Matt. 6:9-15, cf. Luke 11:2-4) include typical Jewish liturgical features. Of the many times that the phrase "the kingdom of God" appeared in his sources Matthew changed all but four (Matt. 12:28; 24: 21-31,43) to the phrase "the kingdom of heaven." Barclay (1990) called the phrase "a reverential periphrasis" which conforms to Jewish reluctance to use the actual name of God.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3

Enumerate the Jewish features in Matthew.

3.4 Matthew's Idealized Portraits

Matthew's reverent opinion of the person of Jesus and the role of the first disciples induced him to retouch some of the more human details in Mark's portrait of those persons. He intentionally altered Mark's description of Jesus. He suppressed details that suggested that Jesus was subject to human emotions. He also eliminated those parts of the traditions which expressed opinions about Jesus which Matthew considered insulting.

For example, in the account of the healing of a leper, Matthew omitted the note that Jesus was moved by pity (Matt. 8:2-3; cf. Mark 1:41). In the story in which the disciples prevented the children from being brought to Jesus. Matthew followed Mark's version in describing how Jesus blessed the children but avoided mentioning that Jesus was indignant at his disciples (Matt. 19:14; cf. Mark 10:14). Mark's report that some of Jesus' friends thought that he was crazy (Mark 3:21) was dropped by Matthew.

Similarly, some details of Mark's Gospel which showed the disciples in an unfavorable light were altered by Matthew to give a more

complimentary impression. He softened Mark's suggestion that Jesus thought the disciples were dense (Matt. 13:16-18; cf. Mark 4:13; ⌊Matt. 14:33; cf. Mark 6:51-52). Matthew preferred to ascribe unseemly ambition to the mother of James and John rather than to the ⌋disciples themselves (Matt. 20:20; cf. Mark 10:35). These modifications are examples of Matthew's interest in idealizing the portrayals of his Gospel characters. Careful comparison of the two narratives will uncover other similar instances of Matthew's "corrective" revisions.

Self-Assessment Exercise 4

Describe Matthew's interest in idealizing the portrayals of his Gospel characters.

3.4 Use of Numbers

An intriguing feature of the Gospel of Matthew is' its use of numbers. Matthew often arranged things numerically in twos, threes, fives and sevens. There are two demoniacs (Matt. 8:28), two blind men (Matt. 9:27; 20:30), two false witnesses (Matt. 26:60). Threefold groupings include the temptations (Matt. 4:111), examples of righteousness (Matt. 6:1-18), prohibitions (Matt. 6:19-7:6), commands (Matt. 7:7-20), miraculous healings (Matt. 8:1-15), miracles of power (Matt. 8:23-9:8), parables on sowing (Matt. 13:1-32), and frequently elsewhere. Besides the five major discourses, there are five illustrations of law fulfillment (Matt. 5:21-48). There are seven demons (Matt. 12:45), seven loaves and seven baskets (Matt. 15:34, 37), the sevenfold pardon (Matt. 18:21-22), seven brethren (Matt. 22:25), and seven "woes" (Matt. 23:13-30). The genealogy of Jesus divides into three groups of fourteen, or two times seven names each (Matt. 1:2-17, see especially v. 17). Such use of numbers corresponds to the use of numerical devices in Jewish Scriptures and rabbinical traditions. It served a dual purpose: mnemonic-arranging of items in conveniently memorized groups, and aesthetic-incorporating pleasing symmetrical patterns into the narrative.

3.5 Use of "Church"

The Gospel of Matthew is the only Gospel in the Bible to make explicit use of the term "church" (Matt. 16:18; 18:17). The Hebrew equivalent for the term in the Jewish Scriptures referred to Israel who was the people of God. By his use of the term in his Gospel Matthew testified to his conviction that those whom Jesus saved (Matt. 1:21) now composed true Israel. It was distinct from Judaism though not necessarily exclusive of it.

Matthew clearly had a great amount of admiration for what Mark had

accomplished in writing his Gospel or he would not have used it as the basis for his own. He also shared that same strong conviction in the Easter faith which led Mark to compose his Gospel. Matthew had much in common with Mark.

Matthew would not have changed Mark's version of a particular tradition unless he thought that the changes improved the tradition and made it more effective. Neither would he have added more traditions to Mark unless he felt they enhanced and made more useful the Gospel narrative. It is to the changes and additions which Matthew made to Mark's Gospel that we look first in trying to discover what was of particular concern to him. There we discover indications of major interests and concerns Matthew had which he felt needed to be addressed more directly than the Gospel of Mark had done. We, also discover that some Concerns which seemed vital to Mark did not appear to be so critical for Matthew.

Self-Assessment Exercise 5

How is ‘’the church’’ conceived in Matthew?

4.0 Conclusion

Matthew has his own peculiar way of writing. This has been identified in this unit. He cited extensively from the Jewish scriptures to buttress his points. The miracles collection in Matthew conforms to the miraculous mighty acts which were expected at the end of time. He suppressed details that suggested that Jesus was subject to human emotions. He also eliminated those parts of the traditions which expressed opinions about Jesus which Matthew considered insulting. His language also reflects a sympathetic awareness of Jewish practice. His use of numbers corresponds to the use of numerical devices in Jewish Scriptures and rabbinical traditions. Matthew is the only Gospel in the 'Bible to make explicit use of the term "church" and he would not change Mark's version of any particular tradition unless he thought that the changes improved the tradition and made it more effective.

5.0 Summary

The following are the lessons you have learnt in this unit:

- Matthew cited extensively from the Jewish scriptures to buttress his points.
- He adopted the miracle stories to conform with his own format of writing.
- He suppressed details that suggested that Jesus was subject to human emotions.

- His use of numbers corresponds to the use of numerical devices in Jewish Scriptures and rabbinical traditions.
- It is only in Matthew that the word church is explicitly explained.

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignments

1. Justify Matthew's extensive use of the Jewish scriptures.

2. What made the difference between Matthew's account of the miracle stories and that of Mark?

7.0 References/Further Readings

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MODULE 3 THE GOSPEL OF ST. LUKE

INTRODUCTION

This module is on the third and longest of the synoptic gospels. It will introduce you to the gospel of Luke who was acclaimed a gentile. You shall be taught of the authorship, sources and date of writing the gospel. No doubt, Luke had a purpose for writing; you shall be acquainted with this. Major theological themes of the gospel shall be examined so as to know the extent of universalism of the gospel.

The writer of this gospel, Luke is said to be a historian because of the beautiful presentation of the narrative history. You cannot but enjoy the whole module. The book and journals recommended at the end of each unit should be consulted for further reading.

Unit 1 Preliminaries

Unit 2 The Sources of Luke's Gospel

Unit 3 Luke's Purposes

Unit 4 Major Themes in Luke

Unit 5 The Universalism of Luke

UNIT 1 PRELIMINARIES

Contents

1.0 Introduction

This module introduces students to the gospel of Luke. The Gospel of Luke is one of the Synoptic Gospels, and is the third and longest of the four canonical Gospels of the New Testament. The text narrates the life of Jesus of Nazareth. The author, traditionally identified as Luke the Evangelist, is characteristically concerned with social ethics, the poor, women, and other oppressed groups. Certain popular stories on these themes, such as the prodigal son and the good Samaritan, are found only in this gospel. This gospel also has a special emphasis on prayer, the activity of the Holy Spirit, and joyfulness. Donald Guthrie claimed, “it is full of superb stories and leaves the reader with a deep impression of the personality and teachings of Jesus." The author intended to write a historical account bringing out the theological significance of the history. The author's purpose was to portray Christianity as divine, respectable, law-abiding, and international.
This unit looks at the preliminaries of the gospel with special emphasis on the author, the date as well as the audience. With these, students would be familiar from the outset, with a general overview of the gospel.

2.0 Objectives

By the end of this unit you should be able to:

- Identify the person of Luke.
- Explain who the author of Luke was.
- Relate the date of St. Luke.
- Identify the differences between the audience of Luke and Mark.

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Authorship of Luke

The author of the Gospel of Luke has been identified traditionally as a missionary colleague of the Apostle Paul. The author of Luke was probably a Gentile Christian. Tradition identifies the author as Luke, the companion of Paul, but current opinion is ‘about evenly divided’. Early tradition, witnessed by the Muratorian Canon, Irenaeus (*c.* 170), Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Tertullian, held that the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles were both written by Luke, a companion of Paul. The oldest manuscript of the gospel (ca. 200) carries the attribution “the Gospel according to Luke’’ Early Christian testimony concerning the gospel's authorship is in full agreement, although "some scholars attach little importance to it". The Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles were written by the same author. The most direct evidence comes from the prefaces of each book. Both prefaces are addressed to Theophilus, possibly although not certainly the author's patron, and the preface of Acts explicitly references "my former book" about the life of Jesus. Furthermore, there are linguistic and theological similarities between the two works, suggesting that they have a common author. Both books also contain common interests. Linguistic and theological agreements and cross-references between the books indicate that they are from the same author. Those biblical scholars who consider the two books a single, two-volume work often refer to both together as Luke-Acts. It should be noted that Acts of the Apostles (1:1-2) says:

> In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and teach until the day He was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles He had chosen.

The text is internally anonymous and equally contentious. The contention about the text can be attributed to the attestation of two manuscripts of the book. One of the two oldest surviving manuscripts P^{75} (circa 200), has the attribution according to Luke while P^{4} which 'is probably to be dated earlier than *P75* has no such (surviving) attribution. Tradition holds that the text was written by Luke the companion of Paul but scholars are divided on this issue as said earlier.

Given this, the internal evidence of the Acts of the Apostles concerning its author pertains to the authorship of the Gospel. This evidence, especially passages in the narrative where the first person plural is used, points to the author being a companion of Paul. As D. Guthrie put it, of the known companions of Paul, Luke is “as good as any... [and] since this is the traditional ascription there seems no reason to conjecture any

other." There is further evidence from the Pauline Epistles. Paul described Luke as "the beloved physician", and some scholars have seen evidence of medical terminology used in both the Gospel and Acts. The traditional view of Lukan authorship is "widely held as the view which most satisfactorily explains all the data." The list of scholars maintaining authorship by Luke the physician is lengthy, and represents scholars from a wide range of theological opinion. But there is no consensus, and the current opinion concerning Lukan authorship has been described as 'about evenly divided'. on who the author was.

Nevertheless whoever wrote the Third Gospel made the largest Contribution to the composition of the New Testament of any of its authors. When this Gospel is joined by its companion volume, the Acts of the Apostles, they together make up about twenty-seven percent or a little better than one-fourth of the New Testament. That is more than the entire Pauline corpus.

Self-Assessment Exercise1

Who wrote St. Luke?

3.2 Date of Luke

Some scholars place the date as about 80-90. The *terminus ad que*m, or latest possible date, for Luke is bound by the earliest papyri manuscripts that contains portions of Luke (late 2nd/early 3rd century) and the mid to late 2nd century writings that quote or refer to Luke. The work is reflected in the Didache, the Gnostic writings of Basilides and Valentinus, the apologetics of the Church Father Justin Martyr, and was used by Marcion. Donald Guthrie(1992) claims that the Gospel was likely widely known before the end of the first century, and was fully recognized by the early part of the second, while Helmut Koester states that aside from Marcion, "there is no certain evidence for its usage," prior to ca. 150.

3.2.1 A Date After 70 A.D.

Many contemporary scholars regard Mark as a source used by Luke. If it is true that Mark was written around the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem, around 70AD, they theorize that Luke would not have been written before 70. This view also believes that Luke's prediction of the destruction of the temple could not be a result of Jesus miraculously predicting the future but must have been written with knowledge of these events after the fact. They believe that the discussion in Luke 21:5-30 is specific enough (more specific than Mark's or Matthew's) that a date after 70 seems necessary, if disputed. These scholars have suggested dates for Luke from 75 to 100. Support for a later date comes from a number of reasons. The universalization of the message of Luke

is believed to reflect a theology that took time to develop. Differences of chronology, "style", and theology suggest that the author of Luke-Acts was not familiar with Paul's distinctive theology but instead was writing a decade or more after his death, which point to significant harmonization between different traditions within Early Christianity, had occurred. Furthermore, Luke-Acts has views on Christology, eschatology, and soteriology that are similar to those found in Pastoral epistles, which are often seen as pseudonymous and of a later date than the undisputed Pauline Epistles. The birth narratives of Luke and Matthew are a late development in gospel writing about Jesus. Luke might have originally started at 3:1, with John the Baptist. Marcion circa 144, appears to have used this gospel, but he called it the Gospel of the Lord.

3.2.2 A Date between AD 37 and AD 70

Some scholars have posited earlier dates for Luke's composition. Arguments for a date between AD 37 and AD 61 for the Gospel note that Luke is addressed to "Most Excellent Theophilus," possibly a reference to the Roman-imposed High Priest of Israel between AD 37 and AD 41, Theophilus ben Ananus. This reference would date the original copy of Luke to within 4 to 8 years after the death of Jesus.

Some think that Luke collected much of his unique material during the imprisonment of Paul in Caesarea, when Luke attended to him. Paul mentions Luke, in passing, several times as travelling with Paul. However Guthrie notes that much of the evidence for dating the Gospel at any point is based upon conjecture.

Carson, Moo and Morris opt for a date prior to AD 70 based upon 6 factors. Most prominent in their view is that no event beyond AD 62 is mentioned in the book including the death of church leaders such as Paul or James. They note that there is no mention of the Neronian persecution in the early 60's or of the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

Self Assessment Exercise 2

Argue in support of different dates for the writing of St. Luke.

3.3 The Audience of Luke

Like Mark (but unlike Matthew), the intended audience is Gentile, and it assures readers that Christianity is an international religion, not an exclusively Jewish sect. Luke portrays his subject in a positive light regarding Roman authorities. For example, the Jews are said to be responsible for Jesus' crucifixion, with Pontius Pilate finding no wrong in him. The consensus is that Luke was written by a Greek or Syrian for gentile or non-Jewish Christians. The Gospel is addressed to the author's patron, Theophilus, which in Greek simply means *friend of God* or

(be)loved by God or *loving God*, and may not be a name but a generic term for any Christian. The Gospel is clearly directed at Christians, or at those who already knew about Early Christianity, rather than a general audience, since the ascription goes on to state that the Gospel was written "so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught" (Luke 1:3–4).

Self-Assessment Exercise 3

To whom were the gospel of Luke addressed?

4.0 Conclusion

We could see from this unit that the author of Luke was probably a Gentile Christian. Tradition identifies the author as Luke, the companion of Paul, but current opinion is 'about evenly divided'.Like the rest of the New Testament, the gospel was written in Greek. Like Mark (but unlike Matthew), the intended audience is Gentile, and it assures readers that Christianity is an international religion, not an exclusively Jewish sect. On the date, scholars have suggested dates for Luke from 75 to 100. Support for a later date comes from a number of reasons. For the audience, the intended audience is generally believed to be Gentiles. The universalization of the message of Luke is equally said to reflect a theology that took time to develop.

5.0 Summary

The following are the lessons you have learnt in this unit:

- That Luke was a missionary colleague of the Apostle Paul
- That traditional believe was that Luke wrote St. Luke but now there are diverse opinions on it.
- That between 80 and 100 A.D. has been set as possible date of writing St. Luke.
- That like Mark (but unlike Matthew), the intended audience is Gentile.

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignments

1. Why the controversy on the authorship of St. Luke?

2. What makes the difference between the audience of St. Luke and S. Mark?

7.0 References/Further Readings

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UNIT 2 THE SOURCES OF LUKE'S GOSPEL

Contents

1.0 Introduction

We examined in the last unit the authorship of Luke, bearing in mind the date of writing and the audience of the gospel. In this unit we shall see how Luke wrote fine Greek of all of the authors of the New Testament literature. Only the author of the epistle to the Hebrews was in his class as a literary artist and crafts man. The preface of Luke's Gospel contains the best Greek in the entire New Testament. That is not to suggest that Luke revived the polished style of composition characteristic of the authors of the Greek classical period such as Homer or Sophocles. Rather Luke wrote in the popular, non-literary Greek in common use in the first century, C.E But he had flair for style and a well developed sense of rhetorical sentence proficient in the art of Greek composition. A fascinating aspect of Luke's style was his ability to adopt a Septuagintal (scriptural) tone when it suited his purpose. In effect he was consciously casting his composition into "Bible language". All these were reflected in his use of the various sources available to him as presented in this unit.

2.0 Objectives

By the end of this unit you should be able to:

- Account for the sources of Luke.
- Explain how Luke made use of Mark.
- Relate what source ''Q'' is all about.
- Discuss Lukan use of ''L'' materials.

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Mark as a Source

According to the two-source hypothesis we considered earlier, Luke had a copy of the Gospel of Mark before him. He used it as a major source of material when he composed his own Gospel. It seems reasonable to assume as we assumed with Matthew, that Luke's community was also familiar with Mark's Gospel. If that is correct it suggests that they probably would have made frequent and repeated use of Mark in preaching the gospel to non-Christians, in teaching, and in the worship of their community. They would likely be aware therefore of many of the changes Luke made to Mark's narrative. They would also be alert for any new ideas which Luke invested in his revision of Mark.

Luke incorporated most of Mark-almost seventy percent-into his Gospel. That is less, however, than Matthew who used around ninety percent of Mark. In these Markan sections Luke preserved Mark's narrative sequence with exceptional exactness. However, he did insert some non-Markan traditions. Omitted from Luke's Gospel was the material in *Mark 6:458:27*. Some scholars think that Luke's copy of Mark lacked that section. Others believe Luke purposely left it out because it contradicted his understanding of the geography of Jesus' ministry. No satisfactory explanation for this omission has been given.

Although Luke adopted Mark's outline as the basic framework for his own Gospel he expanded Mark considerably. He added extensive birth and infancy stories to the beginning, and post-resurrection appearance account to the end. In addition to the brief insertions he made into the blocks of Markan material he included two extensive sections of non-Markan traditions. Luke 6:20-8:3 and 9:51-18:14. These are sometimes called the small interpolation and the great interpolation. You will note that the great interpolation accounts for most of Luke's expanded material (Luke 9:51-19:40) and it is usually called the travel narrative. This block surprisingly is the point where Luke diverged from Mark's is on the Passion narrative.

Luke may have had another version of the Passion story from one of his other sources that he preferred to Mark's version. Equally possible is the suggestion that he used Mark's Passion narrative but thoroughly reworked it by changing the sequence of some events and. adding additional features from other sources. No doubt, Luke wrote exceptionally fine Greek. Since Mark's Greek was rather primitive we are not surprised to discover that Luke frequently improved Mark's style. He simplified constructions removed unnecessary repetitions, corrected grammar, and replaced colloquialisms.

Self-Assessment Exercise 1

How did Luke make use of Mark's materials?

3.2 The Use of "Q"

The Gospel of Mark was not the only source, which Luke had in common with Matthew. Both Matthew and Luke also drew on Q for additional Jesus traditions to those they found in Mark. Since Luke incorporated material from the Gospel of Mark in large blocks we would expect him to do something similar with ''Q''. Most of the material Luke took from Q is concentrated in two large sections, Luke 6:20-8:3 and 9:51-18:14. The latter section is, of course, the bulk of Luke's expanded version of the journey of Jesus from Galilee to Jerusalem.

When scholars compare the Q traditions in Matthew and Luke they usually assume that the order of the material in Luke conforms more nearly to that of Q than does Matthew's order. Since Luke preserved the order of Mark's Gospel more carefully than Matthew. It is a likely presumption that he did the same with Q. We have no way to test the extent to which Luke reworked the language and style of the Q material he borrowed Grammatical corrections, linguistic refinement, and stylistic improvement may only be suspected. On the analogy of the manner in which he revised Mark, however, we may suppose that he dealt similarly with the traditions he took from Q.

Self-Assessment Exercise 2

Explain your understanding of ''Q'' tradition.

3.3 The Use of "L"

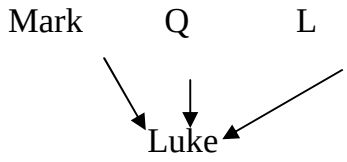
The Gospel of Luke is much longer than the sum of the combined materials which Luke adopted from Mark and from Q. Over one-third of the third Gospel relates traditions which are in Luke alone. Neither Matthew nor Mark tell of the "shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night" (Luke 2:8-20), a scene so evocative of the Christmas celebration. Nor do the first two Gospels know of the Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15: 11-32). Nor do they relate the story of the resurrected Christ walking with two discouraged disciples along the road to Emmaus, who did not recognize their traveling companion until the moment when he broke bread with them (Luke 3-35).

The infancy traditions with which Luke began his Gospel (Luke 1 and 2) are peculiar to him. So also is his genealogy (Luke 3:23-38). (Matthew also recorded a genealogy but it differs from Luke's cf.Matt.

1:1-11). The special material found in the main body of Luke's Gospel greatly enriches our knowledge of ancient Jesus traditions treasured by the early church.

Scholars frequently refer to all of the special traditions which are found only in the Gospel of Luke with the symbol "L." As was the case with "M" (Matthew's special traditions) and with "Q" (traditions common to both Matthew and Luke) we cannot be certain that "L" was only one document. Probably it was not. It is very doubtful that Luke derived all of his special traditions from just one additional written source. Rather he may have gathered some of the "L" material from several other documents. Very likely much of it was borrowed by him from the common fund of oral traditions. The designation "L" is simply a symbol of convenience to indicate traditions unique to the Third Gospel.

The chart for the interrelationship of the Synoptic Gospels for Luke can be completed as follows:



Self-Assessment Exercise 3

1. Analyse the content of ‘L’ material.

4.0 Conclusion

Luke employed a large variety or literary devices to join together the materials he had gathered from his sources. Predictions, which anticipated, summaries, reviewed, and cross references which connected several traditions together all contributed to integrate the separate parts into a whole. Luke was much more thorough in shaping his sources into a literary unity than Mark did.

5.0 Summary

The following are the lessons you have learnt in this unit:

- That Luke used about70% of St Mark in his gospel
- That the literary style of Luke is unique.
- That Luke used another source called “Q”-a material peculiar to him and Matthew.
- That Luke has his own special source called “L” which he used to expand his gospel.

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignments

1. Account for the various source which made up St. Luke.

2. Assess the place of ‘’L’’ in Luke’s gospel.

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UNIT 3 LUKE'S PURPOSES

Contents

1.0 Introduction

You were taught in unit 2 about the sources of Luke. We related his use of Markan materials, ''Q'' and ''L''. Having known his sources, we shall now move to why he wrote his gospel Clearly, Luke had some specific reasons for going to the trouble of writing his two-volume work. As with the Gospel of Matthew, the changes which Luke made as he revised Mark's Gospel provide helpful clues for us as we try to discern what his reasons were. Unlike either Matthew or Mark, Luke announced right at the beginning of his Gospel what he was intending to do. "Many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things which have been accomplished among us… it seems good to me… to write an orderly account… that you may know the truth" (Luke 1:1-4). Luke knew of other accounts already written but, much as he admired them and had learned from them, he considered them to be inadequate. That is implied by his resolve "to write an orderly account" even though many had already "undertaken to compile a narrative." He wanted to do better than they had.

Luke was determined to write better Gospel than any he knew. He intended for his literary composition to replace those other accounts rather than to be used along with them. It is an interesting irony that later the church clustered Luke's Gospel together with several others as complements to each other. At least one in that group of Gospels was one that Luke had intended to supersede-the Gospel of Mark. In what ways did he try to improve on what had been done?

2.0 Objectives

By the end of this unit you should be able to:

- Assess the extent of accuracy in St. Luke.

- Explain how Luke achieved his purpose of persuasiveness.
- Examine the currency of Luke for his community.
- Relate the historicity of Luke’s records.
- Analyse how Luke moulded his gospel as an apologia

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Accuracy

Luke sought to make his Gospel more accurate. He considered himself to be competent to compose "a narrative of the things which have been accomplished. Having followed all things closely for some time past, he wrote an orderly account" (Luke 1:1, 3). Luke was a first century Christian historian. He wanted to write a history of the life of Jesus, the Savior. In his second volume, Acts, he wrote a; history of how the salvation God realized in Jesus was preached by his church in expanding' waves after the resurrection.

Luke did the best he could to write accurate history. Yet by the criteria of modern historical study he fell short of his intent. Before we judge his achievement too harshly, however, there are a couple of moderating observations which are very important for us to consider.

Luke assumed his sources were historical records which contained accurate information. They were at least only one stage removed from the dependable testimony of those who had been present and observed the events which the traditions described. They had been "delivered to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word" (Luke 1:2).

Unfortunately the confidence Luke invested in his sources was excessive. Since Luke used large portions of Mark and adopted the narrative sequence of that Gospel as the framework for his own he apparently regarded Mark as an accurate historical record. The major way he sought to improve Mark was not to correct him (with the possible exception of the Passion narrative). He tried to complete Mark's account by enriching it with important Jesus traditions which Mark lacked. We now are quite certain, however that Mark was not an eyewitness, himself nor was he trying to write a history of Jesus. Many of his geographical designations and much of the chronological sequence of events in his narrative were governed by theological and literary interests are similar historical inaccuracies were likely present in the other sources upon which Luke depended.

The second excusing observation is the difference between what is meant by "history" today and what it meant in the first century. Since

the Enlightenment (a philosophical movement of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries which stressed the power of human reason), historical inquiry has developed a stringent methodology which controls certainty about factual accuracy. It is wrong to think historians of the first century were not concerned for accurate information. They were. But that was not the chief goal of history. History was a branch of rhetoric whose usefulness lay in its interpretation of past occurrences for the illumination they could provide to enrich the meaning of the present and the future. Facts about the past, in and of themselves were not important. What those facts signified were. If the meaning discerned in events could be made more vivid by adding details to the accounts the historian had at his disposal then it was not only acceptable, it was his duty as a historian to provide them.

That was the kind of historian Luke was. He wrote the history of Jesus and of the early church not just to report what had occurred. The history of Jesus and the church was significant because it was a continuation of the biblical history recorded in the Jewish Scriptures, and extended into the present of Luke and Ills community. Luke, the historian, was also Luke, the Christian. His account was at the service of his faith.

Self Assessment Exercise 1

How historical were the records of St. Luke?

3.2 Persuasiveness

Luke hoped his Gospel would be more persuasive than the other narratives which had been composed before his. He hoped to call forth from his hearer confident conviction in the content of Christian preaching by accumulating and attractively presenting a narrative of the Jesus traditions.

> He wishes to recover and reformulate the roots of Christian faith So that the certainty and continuity of Christian faith from the beginning up to the present can be established: from Israel through Jesus to the church.

Luke also sought to make his Gospel more current for his hearers. He wanted to provide his Christian community with resources and counsel which addressed the critical issues with which they were struggling. It wasn't that Mark was wrong. It was just that he had written his Gospel to meet the needs of his community. Those concerns and the concerns of Luke's community did not exactly correspond. Luke made the Jesus

traditions more relevant to the situation of his own community.

It is true that in the preface Luke addressed his Gospel to Theaphilus (Luke 1:3), an unknown Roman official who had already been instructed in the Christian faith. But Theophilus was not the sole intended reader. Luke was addressing himself primarily to his Christian community. He intended that they not just have more accurate knowledge about Christianity: Even more, he was eager for them "to know the truth concerning the things of which [they] have been informed" (Luke I :4). As the result of their hearing the contents of his two-volume work they "should be strengthened in their faith, praise God for the salvation sent to them and take courage, so that the number of believers might continue to increase.

Self-Assessment Exercise 2

Examine the level of persuasiveness in St. Luke.

3.3 Apologetic

Luke moulded his literature to serve as an apologia a defense of Christianity, trained in two directions. In the event that portions of his audience were indifferent to the full claims of Christianity he hoped to commend it to their acceptance. He explained the basis of the Christian faith and promoted the truth of its claims.

That does not mean that Luke anticipated that pagans would read his writing simply out of curiosity. Rather he was looking beyond the internal concerns of his community to its involvement in Christian missionary preaching and teaching. He wanted his work to be a helpful resource to the other Christians as they preached Christianity.

The name of Luke's patron, Theophilus (literally "God-lover"), and it calls to mind a special segment of people in first century Greek society. They were Gentiles who were attracted to the Jewish religion. They associated themselves with the synagogue participated, in its worship and festivals, and adopted many Jewish customs and practices. But without becoming full converts to Judaism. The Jews called them "devout ones," "God-fearers," "God-lovers." Luke may have had that group in mind also. They were a group likely to be receptive to the gospel since they were acquainted already with Jewish traditions about the Messiah.

The second direction in which Luke pointed his apologetic was toward Imperial Rome. The term with which he addressed Theophilus, "most

excellent," was a term commonly used to address high government officials (cf. Acts 23:26; 24:2; 26:25). Possibly, Luke was concerned to correct any misunderstandings Theophilus had about the nature and intent of the Christian movement. Further, Luke was the only New Testament author to name Roman emperors in his writings (Luke 2:1; 3:1; cf. also Acts 11:28; 18:2). He seems to have been sensitive to that segment of the society in which his community lived.

Luke made a considerable effort to exonerate the Roman Empire from any direct guilt for the execution of Jesus (Luke 23:4, 7, 13-16, 22, 47) and for the persecution of the Christian church (a frequent motif in Acts), He was concerned to portray Christianity as an apolitical movement. It was not a subversive sect of revolutionaries intent on overthrowing Imperial Rome. Luke even hinted that since God was at work in the Christian church, governmental authority was incapable ultimately of suppressing the Christian faith.

Self-Assessment exercise 3

Examine the efforts of St. Luke in exonerating the Roman Empire from any direct guilt for the execution of Jesus.

4.0 Conclusion

From the above, we could see that the author of St. Luke intended to write a historical account bringing out the theological significance of the history. The author's purpose was to portray Christianity as divine, respectable, law-abiding, and international. Scholarship is in wide agreement that the author of Luke also wrote the Acts of the Apostles. In fact, "the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles originally constituted a two-volume work." In some editions of the Bible, Luke-Acts has been presented as a single book. Both Luke and Acts are addressed to Theophilus, and there are several theories concerning why as reflected above.

5.0 Summary

The following are the lessons you have learnt in this unit:

- That Luke tried as much as possible to write an accurate report.
- That persuasiveness is a major concern of St. Luke in writing his gospel.
- That Luke was apologetic in his approach.

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignments

1. With the contemporary understanding of history, how historical is St. Luke?

2. Discuss how Luke achieved his purpose of persuasiveness.

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UNIT 4 MAJOR THEMES IN LUKE

Contents

1.0 Introduction

You saw in the last unit the accuracy of Luke's writing and how he was able to achieve his purpose of persuasiveness. He equally show his currency on the contemporary issues of his day and eventually, he moulded his gospel as an apologia This unit deals mainly with the theology of Luke. He starts from Luke's conception of Christ as the expected Messiah. This concept was moulded in his knowledge of the Jewish scriptures. He equally emphasized the works of the Holy Spirit. He envisioned Jesus as been anointed by the Holy Spirit. In fact the Holy Spirit is an important personality in Luke's gospel. In his understanding of Jesus return he modified the current Christian expectation and relaxed the note of urgent immediacy.

2.0 Objectives

By the end of this unit you should be able to:

- Discuss the theology of St. Luke's gospel.
- Evaluate Luke's conception of Christ as the expected messiah.
- Assess the place of the Holy Spirit in Luke's gospel.
- Analyse Luke's modification of the return of Christ.

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Doctrine of Christ

Luke's understanding of the person and work of Jesus was moulded by his knowledge of the Jewish Scripture traditions about the expected Messiah. Jesus is the anointed one sent by God. All three Synoptic authors recorded the tradition of Jesus' teaching in the synagogue at Nazareth (Matt. 13:54-58; Mark 6:1-; Luke 4:16-30). But only Luke

included the text from Jewish Scriptures which Jesus read. It was from the prophet Isaiah:

> The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind; to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the adaptable year of the Lord (Luke 4:18-19; from Isaiah 61:1-2; 58:6)

Then, in Luke's version, Jesus explicitly applied the lection to himself. "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:21). The importance of this passage for Luke's view of Christ is indicated by the prominence he gives it in his narrative. The preaching in Nazareth is the first public act of ministry which Jesus did after he had been anointed with the Spirit of God at his baptism. It follows immediately after the account of his temptation in the wilderness. This is one of the few places where Luke diverged from the order of events Mark followed in his Gospel. Mark's version of the tradition of Jesus' preaching in the synagogue is briefer, less specific, and appears only after Jesus has been engaged in ministry for some time (Mark 6: 1-6).

If Jesus was the Messiah toward which the Jewish Scriptures pointed why wasn't he recognized as such during his life? That was a problem 'With which the early church continually struggled. In Luke's Gospel, even the disciples were able to recognize that Jesus was the promised Messiah of the Jewish Scriptures only after the resurrection when the risen Christ opened their minds to finally comprehend who he was (Luke 24:26-27, 28). Professor Dahl rightly observed, "Luke has retained and even sharpened the idea of the 'messianic secret' which is otherwise much more prominent in Mark.

In one particular instance, Luke takes a markedly different position from the other Gospel writers. The crucifixion of Jesus is not a saving act. It is not a ransom for human sm. It is a murder perpetrated by the Jews. The saving event was the life and work of Jesus, the Messiah of God. God confirmed Jesus' messianic identity and vindicated him over his enemies with the resurrection. Jesus, 'the building stone rejected by the Jewish leaders, was used by God. (The image is from Psalm 118:22, a favorite text of Luke's.) The person of Jesus is unique. His life and work, however, is a model by which the church is to be guided. In Jesus the church sees how it must live now that it also is filled with the Spirit of God.

Self-Assessment Exercise

How did Luke conceive Christ in his gospel?

3.2 The Holy Spirit in Luke

Luke emphasized the work of the Holy Spirit in his Gospel. The nativity and infancy stories which precede Jesus' public ministry contain numerous references to the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:15, 35, 41, 67, 80; 2:25-27). Just after the baptism of Jesus the Holy Spirit descended upon him (Luke 3:21-22) and filled him (Luke 4:1). This same Spirit led him into the wilderness to undergo the ordeal of the temptation (Luke 4; 1-13). It caused him to return to Galilee to begin his public ministry (Luke 4: 14-15). As we have seen, the inaugural event of that ministry was his appearance in the synagogue at Nazareth. There he identified himself as the One anointed with the Spirit of the Lord whom the prophet, Isaiah, had described (Luke 4:16-21).

Luke seems to have envisioned Jesus as anointed with the Holy Spirit in a special way. During the narration of his public ministry he is the only one Luke described as filled with the Holy Spirit. After his baptism Jesus is the sole bearer of the Spirit. John the Baptist anticipated that Jesus would communicate the Holy Spirit to his followers (Luke 3: 16), an anticipation that Jesus himself confirmed (Acts 1:5, 8), and that happened at Pentecost (Acts 2: 1-4). The rest of the book of Acts is filled with references to the activity of the Holy Spirit among the first Christians. But there is an important distinction between the way the Holy Spirit filled Jesus and the way the disciples were filled. Although Jesus was led by the Spirit he had control over the Spirit. The disciples and other early Christians were controlled by the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit was an important factor providing continuity within Luke's understanding of holy history (that is. history by means of which God accomplishes his saving purposes). The leaders of Israel particularly the prophets and the other authors of Jewish Scripture were inspired by the Holy Spirit to testify to the coming of the Savior Messiah. It was by means of the Holy Spirit that Jesus, that expected Messiah, was incarnate, taught and did miraculous works.

The early disciples and later Christians were able by the empowering of the Holy Spirit to testify persuasively and do miraculous deeds. The Holy Spirit guided the church in its missionary expansion.

Self-Assessment Exercise 2

How important is the person of the Holy Spirit in St. Luke’s gospel?

3.3 Delay of Jesus' Return

During the first stages of the formation of the Christian community the expectation that Jesus would return right away was very common. But as months became years and even decades the anticipation that he would return soon was shaken. After all, it is very difficult breathlessly to await an event for an extended period of time.

Luke modified the current Christian expectation of the return of Christ. He relaxed the note of urgent immediacy. *When* Jesus will come again is less important than the conviction that he *is coming* again. The moment of his return bas receded into the indefinite future. Breathless expectation has been muffled.

Luke's modifications of the emphasis on an early return of Jesus served two purposes. First it helped him to cope with the crisis which disappointed expectations fostered. Since the expectation of an immediate return of Jesus was so prominent in early Christianity the truth of the whole gospel message was jeopardized when it did not occur. If Christ's return had not occurred, perhaps the rest of the Christian faith was also wrong. By muting the emphasis on the nearness of the second coming of Jesus Luke helped avert that challenge to the truth of the gospel. Second, the extension of the interim period between the earthly ministry of Jesus and his second coming invited theological reflection. If the return of Jesus was not to be looked for right away, the time prior to his return possibly was more significant than just a lull in salvation history. Luke described it as the time of the church's work and witness in the world. It was an interval in which the spirit empowered agents of God, the church was accomplishing a task which was an integral part of God's saving purpose. Luke was the first of the Gospel writers to develop an extensive theology of the church.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3

How did Luke explain the delay in Jesus return?

4.0 Conclusion

From the above we could see Luke’s theological masterpiece in his treatment of main ideas in his gospel. His conception of Christ was born out of his Jewish scriptures makes it unique. Hardly, could anything be achieved without the assistance of the Holy Spirit which was present in

virtually all activities in the gospel. He deviated from the popular acclamation for the urgency of Christ return and made the people more responsive. This made his gospel different from others in both literary and the theological approaches.

5.0 Summary

The following are the lessons you have learnt in this unit:

- That Luke's theology is distinct from that of Mark and Matthew.
- That his presentation of Christ as messiah is the product of his knowledge of Jewish scriptures.
- That Holy Spirit occupies central position in St. Luke.
- And his understanding of Jesus return lacks the urgency attached to it in other gospels.

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignments

1. Account for the uniqueness of the theology of St. Luke.

2. Why did Luke modify the contemporary expectation of Christ's return?

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UNIT 5 THE UNIVERSALISM OF LUKE'S GOSPEL

Contents

1.0 Introduction

You can easily notice how this module progresses from authorship to sources and to purposes. In the last unit you studied major themes in Luke. These were the distinguishing features of the gospel. In this last unit we shall look at the extent of universalism in the gospel of Luke. Luke was a Christian historian. In the first century, C.E., history was considered important for the meaning it was able to discover in human events. The meaning that interested Luke most was what history disclosed about God's plan to save and restore his creation. That was a theological perspective of history which Luke found affirmed in Judaism's understanding of its history as holy history. The Jewish Scriptures amply testified to that view. Human history, rightly understood, reveals God at work to save 'his creation. This is so because God has chosen to make himself known through human events and historical persons. Salvation history is not identical with secular history. It is possible to know the data of history-people, places, dates, events-and still be ignorant (or even hostile to) God's design of redemption. But secular history provides the context into which God inserts his saving presence. Luke wanted to integrate the story of Jesus' life and the history of the church into comprehensive understanding of God's redemptive history, unfold in secular history. The gospel of Luke is in the forefront among the synoptic gospels on the universal proclamation of the gospel as shown in this unit.

2.0 Objectives

By the end of this unit you should be able to:

- Evaluate the extent of universalism in the gospel of Luke.
- Understand how Luke used his knowledge of History to write

an orderly account of Jesus tradition.

- Show how Luke’s writing reflects salvation that is restricted to the Jews.
- Discuss Luke’s concern especially for the poor, the outcast and women.

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Salvation History

Luke conceived of salvation history as divided into three major parts: the period of Israel, the period of Jesus and the period of the church. Of course, Luke's community was living in the third period, the period of the church. The period of Israel was in the remote past. It stretched all the way to creation (note. that Luke's genealogy of Jesus goes back to Adam whereas the earliest figure in Matthew’s genealogy is Abraham Luke 3:23-38 compare Matt. 1:2-16). It was the time of the revelation of God's purposes that John the Baptist appeared. He belonged to this period (Luke 16: 16). His function was that the prophet who prepared the way for the Messiah (Luke 1:76-77). In that sense, he was "filled with the Holy Spirit” (Luke 56-l7). But when the period of Jesus was ready to begin John the Baptist receded into the background (Luke 3:19-20). The period of Jesus also belonged to a time back in the past. His history was not the end of history in the sense of cessation of God’s revelation. But it was the end of history in the sense that it was the unique, decisive period for the realization of God's saving purpose.

The second period extended from the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus at his baptism (Luke 3:22) until the return of the Spirit to God at Jesus' crucifixion (Luke 23:46). During this period Jesus was the only one Luke described as filled with the Holy Spirit. At its beginning Satan was repulsed (Luke 4: 1-13) and retired from the scene, inactive (Luke 4: 13b). Only near the end of the period of Jesus when the hostility of the Jewish leaders had intensified into a conspiracy to murder him did Satan find "the opportune time" in the person of Judas Iscariot to renew his assault on the Spirit-empowered Messiah (Luke 22:3-6).

This second period was the time of the fulfillment of the promises anticipated in the first period (Luke 4:21; 24:44; and frequently in between). It was the time for preaching the kingly rule of God not as expectation but a least as reality (Luke 16:16). It was the middle point of human time, "the hinge of history in which both the meaning of the past and the course of the future are revealed.

The third period is the epoch of the church. The first and second periods the times of Israel and of Jesus were in the distant past. The period of the church embraces the recent past the present and the future. It began

with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on believers at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4; cf. Luke 3:16; 24:49; Acts 1:5. 8) and extends to the second coming of Jesus and the end of the world. It is the time for mission for proclaiming the good news of what God had revealed as his intent in the first period and has realized in the second period. It is the time to witness to people everywhere in God's creation concerning salvation accomplished (Luke 24:47-48; Acts 1:8). The church is commissioned and empowered to issue the call to repentance, announce the forgiveness of sins, and affirm the promised gift of the Holy Spirit to those who believe (Acts 2:38-39).

It is interesting that Luke described a forty-day period of preparation at the outset of both the second and third periods of salvation history. The period of Jesus began with the forty-day temptation experience in the wilderness (Luke 4: 1-13). The prelude- to the period of the church was a forty-day association of the disciples with Jesus. This interval includes the resurrection and the post-resurrection appearances, a time of instruction, and the ascension of Jesus into heaven (Luke 24; Acts 1:1-11). Is it merely coincidence that the figure "forty" occurs so often in the inaugural traditions of the first period, the period of Israel, as recorded in the Jewish Scriptures (the flood of Noah lasted forty days-Genesis 7:4; Israel wandered in the wilderness forty years-Exodus 16:35; Moses waited on Mount Sinai forty days-Exodus 24: 18)? In Jewish religious symbolism "forty" was a sacred number frequently used to indicate a period of preparation and testing prior to the introduction of a significant new event or stage in salvation history.

Self-Assessment Exercise 1

How do you understand Luke’s division of: the period of Israel, the period of Jesus and the period of the church?

3.2 Gospel to the Gentiles

As far as we can tell, Luke was a Gentile Christian whose Christian community was composed predominantly of Gentile Christians. It is not surprising, therefore, to discover a strong interest in the universal scope of the gospel pervading his writings. God intended to save all of his creation including Gentiles. Redemption was not limited just to the Jews. That had an immediate interest for Luke and his community as well as affecting the enthusiasm with which they did missionary preaching.

We encounter specific reference to the Gentiles early in the Gospel. Simeon recognized the infant Jesus as the embodiment of that salvation of God which was both "a glory to thy people Israel" and "a light for revelation to the Gentiles" (Luke 2:32). Luke's genealogy of Jesus did not stop with Abraham, the Father of Israel, but extended on to include

Adam, the Father of all humanity (Luke 3:23-38). Following the first incident Luke described in Jesus' public ministry, the preaching at Nazareth (Luke 4:16-22), Jesus drew an analogy to the significance of his own ministry by referring the prophets Elijah and Elisha whom God sent to minister to non-Jews (Luke 4:24-27).

Jesus' home-town folk, angered by his analogy, sought to kill him (Luke 4:28-29). That anticipated the rejection by the Jews which culminated in his execution: It was precisely their rejection which gave Gentiles access to gospel salvation. The pattern was repeated often in the second volume. That shift in direction was not simply an "ad hoc" accommodation. The Holy Spirit compelled the universalistic perspective. The church had superseded the Jewish people as true Israel. It was through the disciples and the Jerusalem church that continuity with the salvation history of Israel was maintained unbroken.

Self-Assessment Exercise 2

Why do we refer to the gospel of Luke as the gospel to the Gentiles?

3.3 Lesser Interests

Several other concepts, while not being as important as the ones listed above, figure prominently in Luke's writings.

- Prayer - Luke was fond of describing Jesus and, in imitation of him, also the disciples, in the posture of prayer. He included many more prayer traditions than did the other evangelists.
- Sympathy for the Poor - one of the nativity hymns at the beginning of Luke's Gospel anticipated Jesus' concern for the dispossessed (Luke 1:52-53). Twice Jesus appealed to the preaching of good news to the poor as evidence of his messianic identity (Luke 4:18; 7:22). The parables of the rich fool (Luke 12:16-21), of the dishonest steward (Luke 16: 1-9), of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16: 19-31), and the story of Zaccheus (Luke 19:2-10), all express sympathy for the plight of the poor.
- Women-Luke included several traditions about women that appear in neither Matthew nor Mark. Besides their obvious importance in the birth and infancy stories (Luke 1-2), women are main actors in several stories from Jesus' public ministry (cf. Luke 7:11-17, 36-50; 8:2, 42-48; 10:38-42; 21:1~; 23:27-31; 23:55-24:11). The result is that women playa more prominent role in Luke's version of the life of Jesus than they do in the other Gospels.
- Outcast and Sinners - Luke emphasized the compassion Jesus exhibited toward those whom. Tax collectors, being unscrupulous

exploiters of the people of God were popularly hated as enemies of God. But Jesus not only chose Levi, a tax collector, to be his close associate (Luke 5:27-32), he stayed as guest in Zacchaeus' house in religious Judaism regarded as impious and unacceptable to God Jericho (Luke 19:2-10) and told the story of a tax collector who was more acceptable to God than a "religious" Pharisee (Luke 18:9-14). Similarly Jesus told stories in which hated Samaritans played exemplary roles which faithful Jews should emulate (Luke 10:29-37; 17:11-19).

The force of Luke's emphasis on Jesus' ministry to the despised was to further show the extraordinary mercy of God.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3

Account for Luke’s concern for lesser interest in his gospel.

4.0 Conclusion

Luke was determined to write better Gospel than any he knew. He intended his literary composition to replace those other accounts rather than to be used along with them. It is an interesting irony that later the church clustered Luke's Gospel together with several others as complements to each other.

Luke's style is the most literary of these books, ahead of Saint Paul's epistles. Compared to the other canonical gospels, Luke devotes significantly more attention to women. The Gospel of Luke features more female characters, features a female prophet. Even those whom religious Judaism regarded as impious and unacceptable to God had placement in St. Luke. As could been seen from above, the church had superseded the Jewish people as true Israel. It was through the disciples and the Jerusalem church that continuity with the salvation history of Israel was maintained unbroken.

5.0 Summary

The following are the lessons you have learnt in this unit:

- That Luke was an historian who used his knowledge for the propagation of the gospel
- That universalism of the gospel is a major concern of St. Luke.
- That Luke divided the salvation history into three viz: the period of Israel, the period of Jesus and the period of the church.
- That lesser interest groups had placement in St. Luke.

6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignments

1. How universal is the gospel of .Luke?

2. Write note on the following concept in St. Luke:

-the poor

-the outcast

-women

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