

Second Semester Examination

Question One (a): Both the first (Matthew 1-2) and the third (Luke 1-3) Synoptic Gospels refer to the infancy story of Jesus. They share some **similarities**: Both announced the birth of Christ by an angel, who directed that he be called Jesus, for he is the saviour. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit in Mary, with Joseph as his foster (legal) father, who was by the time engaged to Mary, a virgin. Joseph knew before hand the fact and cause of Mary's condition. He was from Davidic lineage and Jesus was recognised as a son of David. The birth of Jesus took Place in Bethlehem in the last days of Herod's reign. His birth was no secret for it was greeted with visits by the magi (Matthew) and the shepherds (Luke). They dwelt in Nazareth after Jesus' birth. However, there are slight **differences of** emphasis in the characterisation (caractérisation) in both. This makes the dating of the birth of Jesus probable (6BC-4BC). The place of birth too differs. In Matthew, it was on a stable while Luke records that Jesus was born in a house. Unnamed Magi came to Visit Jesus in Matthew, while Luke ascribed the visit to shepherd in the field. Star directed the Magi while angels announced it to the shepherds. Both has different account of Jesus' ancestry (genealogy). Only Matthew recorded the massacre of children. How they came to dwell in Nazareth differ slightly. Matthew recorded that they move to Nazareth whereas Luke noted that they returned to Nazareth.

Question One (b): (1). Their presence underlines that Jews and non-Jews are part of God's plan of salvation. (2). Jesus came to save all; the saints and the sinners alike. Mary was not accused of sin, but the other four had some dark sides and yet all find a fitting place in Jesus' history. (3). Raymond Brown speaks of "something extraordinary or irregular in their union with their partners." It is usually a deviation from the current pattern. God used them though to effect his plan. See "*The Birth of the Messiah*"; Warren Carter. *Matthew and the Margins...*(4). Wim J. C.Weren suggests that women are really the protagonists of history. Israel's history would have been cut short prematurely, or would have been completely different, had these women not mapped out alternative paths to the future. See "*Studies in Matthew's Gospel...*",115. (5). Women are seen as marginal in a Patriachal society. Elaine WainWright suggests that God works even on the margins. The margins are not God forsaken or cursed but crucial to God's purpose. (6) Like (5) above, women are socio-economically powerless yet they exhibit a faith in contrast to men who though privileged abuse their powers. (7). They were paragons of virtues. Rabbinical interpretation sees the four women as good just as Matthew presents Mary as equally good. (6). There is a moral side to their presence. Thus, it is fitting that children be nurtured and groomed by both a mother and a father. (8). They show that both men and women are made in the image of God and so are capable of knowing and loving God.

Question Two (a): *Genealogy:* And before he begins the story of Jesus, Matthew tells us that it will be one that traces the line of Jesus back to David and Abraham (“The Book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham”). The concern undoubtedly is to stress the Jewishness of Jesus. This impression is confirmed in the birth narrative that follows (Chapters. 1 and 2). *Fulfillment of Prophecy:* What is perhaps most striking about Matthew’s account is that it all happens according to divine plan, as set forth in the the Jewish Bible. The Holy Spirit is responsible for Mary’s pregnancy and an angel from heaven allays Joseph’s fears. All this happens to fulfill a prophecy of the Hebrew Scriptures (1:23). So does everything else in the narrative: Jesus’ birth in Bethlehem (2:6), the family’s flight to Egypt (2:14) Herod’s slaughter of the innocent children of Bethlehem (2:18) and the family’s decision to relocate in Nazareth (2:23). These are stories that occur only in Matthew, and they are all said to be fulfillment of prophecies. *The Use of Jewish Scripture:* Matthew uses quotations from the Hebrew Scriptures a lot (9:13a=Hosea6:6; 12:40=Jonah1:7; 24:29=Isaiah13:10 among several others). *Jesus, the New Moses:* Matthew presents Jesus as the new Moses (Mt 5:1-7:29) and note the similarities in Jesus’ & Moses’ birth stories with killing of babies. Matthew attempts to balance between the importance of the Law while also including the new interpretation of Jesus (Mt 5:17).

Question Two (b): *Tone of Universalism:* It appeals to the whole human race. Thus, there is emphasis on gentile response to the gospel in the genealogy. It contains gentile names (Ruth and Rahab; 1:5). There are significant references to foreigners: the magi from the East (2:1-12); the Roman centurion (“Truly I tell you, in no one in Israel have I found such faith”; 8:5-13). Some statements also universalise the Gospel: “and in his name the Gentiles will hope” (12:21; cf. Isa 42:4) and “the field is the world” (13:38). Some episodes and parables carry the tone of universalism: the Canaanite woman (15:21-28); the parable of the tenants (21:33-43); and the Roman soldiers' confession (27:54). Jesus says, “And this good news of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the world...and then the end will come”. Added to these is the great commission of 28: 19: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

Tone of Particularism: It also appeals to an elected few, the Jews. Again from the genealogy, it still appeals to the Jews as he traces Jesus ancestry to Abraham, the Father of Jews (1:1-25). Matthew is the only Gospel that records Jesus’ startling words that restrict his and his disciples’ immediate ministry to Israel. According to 10:5-6 (cf. 10:23, “all the towns of Israel...Go nowhere among the Gentiles...” Later in the narrative (15:24), when Jesus himself is entreated by a gentile woman, he not only ignores her request (initially) but responds by saying: “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”