

THE WRITTEN GOSPEL

QN: (a) Why was the gospel spread orally in the first century AD?

(b) Account for the writing of the gospel material in the second half of the first century.

The gospel was put into writing from AD 64 onwards. The first gospel to be written is believed to have been Mark's gospel. Then followed Matthew Luke and John. The following reasons explain why the gospels were later written.

The gospels were written to preserve the original works of Jesus. The written form would keep the gospel better compared to the oral one which would be affected by memory loss.

The eye witnesses of Jesus had begun to die. The danger that these important preachers would die with the gospel necessitated the writing of the gospel.

The delay of Jesus's second coming (parousia) necessitated the writing of the gospel. Jesus had promised the apostles that he would come back soon, but when one generation began to die and he had not returned, it was found necessary to write the gospel.

As time went on, people's memories of Jesus began to fade. To preserve the gospel in its original form, it was necessary to write down the gospel.

The gospels were written to ensure continued spreading of the gospel during the time of persecution. During the reign of Emperor Nero in Rome, many gospel preachers were persecuted and others were killed.

The gospels were written for liturgical purposes. They were used to teach New converts the basic tenets of the Christian religion.

Written gospels were useful during worship, which took place in secret places. It enabled the gospel to be preached even without calling large gatherings.

The gospels were written to counteract the works of heretics who were preaching the false (wrong) gospel. The gospels became a reference point to check the "rightness" of information being preached by any single preacher.

The fact that the church had expanded rapidly made the writing the gospels necessary. It made travelling long distances a bit cumbersome and required the written gospel.

The advent of the literate age also made writing of the gospel possible. A good number of people had been able to read and write, making it possible for the gospel to be preached in written form.

The writing materials had become cheap and affordable to the gospel writers. Hence it became a lot easier to put the gospel into writing.

The church had also grown rich in terms of conversion of literate people. When Paul was converted, the church received a big asset who would help write gospel material.

The written gospel was needed for apologetic purposes. There was need to convince the political authorities that Christianity did not come to overthrow their governments.

The discovery of and agreement that Greek language was widely spoken facilitated the writing of gospel material.

Gospel writing was possible because of conversion of rich Christians whose money facilitated the purchase of writing materials.

The gospels were written because the Holy Spirit had inspired the preachers to write. The spirit guided the gospel writers in the process of putting together the material.

WORSHIP IN THE EARLY CHURCH.

Examine the characteristics of worship in the early church.

Worship was characterised by the following ideas.

- > Believers gathered together for prayer and worship.
- > They preached the Good News of Jesus Christ (gospel).
- > They preached for conversion of non believers.
- > Their worship involved healing miracles.
- > They conducted baptism of those who were converted.
- > They shared holy communion in the process of worship.
- > Worship involved works of charity (alms giving)
- > There was reading of scriptures in the course of worship.
- > Worship involved giving testimonies and confession of Jesus as saviour.
- > Converts confessed their sins and got saved.
- > It was characterised by oral preaching of the gospel.
- > The early believers were persecuted for being Christians
- > The early believers were united/lived in harmony.

- > They carried out catechism regularly
- > The church was characterised by manifestation of the Holy Spirit
- > was characterised by missionary journeys.
- > There was founding of churches in different places.
- > There was general illiteracy among early Christians

Qn: Why was there proper worship in the early church?

Worship in the early church was carried out with love, compassion and care for fellow Christians (giving alms). There were a number of factors that made this possible.

There was proper worship because the christian community was still small and United. The challenges the community faced were shared as members of one family-"one heart and one mind" (Acts 4:32).

It was because the church was still small and easy to manage. This encouraged the growth of the spirit of brotherhood among believers.

Good worship was realised because most of the early converts were eye-witnesses of Jesus. They still remembered Jesus' teachings and practiced them, which minimised disagreement.

Good worship was there because of sharing of property among believers. Believers sold their property and brought the money to the apostles who helped distribute it according to each of their needs.

The good worship was because most of the early converts were Jews who shared a common origin. They understood and appreciated each one's point of view.

There was good worship because believers spoke a common language. The Aramaic language made communication easy and accounted for harmony in worship.

Proper worship was also possible because of exercising of a high moral standard of behaviour exhibited by early believers. They were very highly disciplined.

It was because the church followed a good example set by the leaders of the early church. Peter, John and James were immaculate in behaviour, something that attracted even non believers.

Because of the guidance offered by the early church leaders to the followers. Paul wrote letters which helped direct and promote good worship in churches in Corinth and Galatia.

The good worship was because of the writing of the gospels. It resolved the problem of heretical gospels and allowed Christians to practice proper worship.

It was because of the expectation of the parousia. The fact that Jesus was expected soon made the believers take good care of their moral and spiritual behaviour.

Good worship was there because of the influence of the Holy Spirit. It inspired the believers to have meaningful worship.

Because of appointment of deacons. These were officials appointed to oversee the day-to-day running of the particular churches under their jurisdiction.

There was good and proper worship because most of the believers were humble and simple citizens. They were uncivilized, poor and unsophisticated. Some of them were slaves whose nature was good behaviour.

Qn: Examine the similarities between worship in the early church and that of the church in Uganda today.

What differences do exist between the two?