Lecture 1: Two Covenants, One Bible

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What is the Hebrew Bible?

- Collection of writings written and edited by members of Hebrew/Jewish community between 1250 BC (time of Moses) and the Christian era
- Contains prose, poetry and prophetic (elevated prose) genres
- Mostly written in Hebrew, some parts in Aramaic
- "The Old Testament" is a Christian term designating the first scriptural collection as opposed to the New Testament

One Bible, Two Covenants

- "The Church units in one volume the Law and the Prophets with the writings of the evangelists and apostles, from which she drinks in her faith" - Tertullian
- The Hebrew Bible is unique because it belongs to two distinct religious systems: Judaism and Christianity
- The Old and New Testament Scriptures are held in unity by the unique Jesus-event
- Unity in diversity due to the continuities and discontinuities between the two testaments

Early Usage of Hebrew Scripture

- Jesus-Event (His incarnation, upbringing, ministry, death and resurrection)
- Kerygma: Proclamation of the Gospel of Salvation
- Inscripturation (Mark, Matthew, Luke, John)
- Use of Hebrew Scriptures in Greek Translation (Septuagint) as "proof" of Jesus' Messiahship (Disciples of Emmaus, St Justin the Martyr)
- Use of the Old Testament in defining dogmas (Christology, Trinitarian Theology, Mariology, etc.)
- Use of the Old Testament Liturgically (e.g. Psalms)

Unity in Diversity: Continuities and Discontinuities

Continuities

- Monotheism (One God)
- Creatio ex nihilo ("creation out of nothing")

    - From beginning to the end of OT (e.g. Genesis 1, 2 Maccabees 7)
- Centrality of humanity within God's creation
- Bodily resurrection
    - Unique to ANE
    - Daniel 12
    - Christ raises

Discontinuities

These should be taken in a relative way

- Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Logos Incarnate
- Trinity
- Disregard of the Law
    - Starting with the Apostolic Council

Early Attitudes toward the Old Testament

- Rejection and Underestimation: Marcionites, Gnostics, Manichaeans
    - God of the Old Testament is the "lesser" God of the Jews and the creation of the world
    - Old Testament proclaims violence and should be rejected
- Overestimation: Judaizers (Jewish Christians), Ebionites, Pelagians
    - Imposing Circumcision (and the whole Jewish Law) to Gentiles embracing Christianity
- Supersessionism
    - The middle way of holding the two Testaments in "one volume" as the early Christian Church in her wisdom considered appropriate
    - Marcionite tendencies that underestimate the relevance of the OT for Christians
        - "OT is a piece of history with no substance, served the purpose to pre-announce the events of the NT and to offer the background for where Christ would be born, live and die" - disguised Marcionism
        - "If the OT has value, it lies exclusively with the messianic prophecies"
            - This reduces the complex relationship between OT and NT as a hermeneutical scheme: "Prophecy-Fulfillment"

The Old Testament's Relevance to Christians Today

Theology

- Creatio ex nihilo (Genesis 1:1, 2 Macc 7:28)
- Humanity is created in the image of God (Gen 1:26-27)
    - Unlike the other ANE stories of creation of mankind to be subject to the gods, here humanity is created as a "god" itself (e.g. having dominion) and being a representative of the Highest
- Revelation of God's Personal Name (YHWH) (Exodus 3)
    - Revealing your name in ancient times meant vulnerability; other ANE gods would never reveal their real name to their believers

- Prophetic Monotheism (Isaiah 45:5, Exodus 20:3)
  - "I am the Lord, and there is no other god." (Isaiah 45:5)

Liturgy and Spirituality

- Psalter
  - Reciting the psalter is central to our Liturgical mechanism
- Old Testament Lectionary
- Old Testament themes in hymnography and iconography

Ethics

- The Decalogue (Exod 20:1-17)
- The Shema (Deut 6:4-9)
- "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Lev 19:18)
- Steadfast love and knowledge of God are better than all sacrifices (Hosea 6:6)

Messianism

- "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14 NRS)
  - The etymology of the Hebrew word for "young woman" is derived from a verb meaning "to be strong" or another verb "to hide, conceal"
  - The New Testament supports this etymology in calling Mary "betrothed" (hence, concealed, veiled) at the time of Jesus' conception
  - If this etymology is correct, then the Septuagint "virgin" does not contradict, but complements it with more information... the "betrothed" one was a "virgin"
  - The Hebrew and Septuagint are complementary readings

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