Lecture 2: Revelation and Inspiration

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Inspiration

Definition

Revelation

- Revelation is the self-disclosure of God through various means
- It can be natural (e.g. through the cosmic order)
  - "The Creation proclaims the glory of God" (Psalm 19:1)
- It can be supernatural (in Scripture and Tradition through Inspiration)

Notion of Inspiration

- The Church considers the books of the Bible **sacred** and **canonical**. Having been written under the **inspiration** of the Holy Spirit, they have God as their author.
- The word "inspiration" in general comes from the act of Creation of humanity when God "breathed" into humanity's nostrils the "breath of life" or the "living breath." He "**inspired** "
- Supernatural inspiration remains a mystery; a divine-human process

New Testament Definition

- 2 Timothy 3:16-17: "All scripture is God-breathed (inspired by God) and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."
  - "all Scripture" → refers to the Jewish Scriptures
  - "God-breathed" → Scriptures are inspired by God, or God breathes through the Scriptures and also through those who "muse day and night over" them (Ps 1:3)
- 2 Peter 1:19-21: "We have the prophetic word made more sure... First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God."

    - "prophetic word" → Law, Prophets, Writings (TaNaKh) all three divisions of Jewish Scripture
    - "men moved by the Holy Spirit" → sacred writers were "carried" by the Holy Spirit during the writing process

Judaism Definition

- Old Testament
    - Old Testament does not have a clear teaching on the inspiration of Scripture
    - Some books record God telling the author to write (Exodus 17:14, Isaiah 30:8, Jeremiah 30:2, 36:2, Habakkuk 2:2)
    - Isaiah calls his prophecy "the book of the Lord" (Isaiah 34:16)
    - The belief that the origin of the Scripture's books is Divine Inspiration is reflected in later terminology (1 Maccabees 12:9 - "sacred books")
    - In 2 Kings 23, King Josiah adopted the Scripture as "the book of the covenant" - indicating that it is inspired by God, and later on in Nehemiah 8, Ezra read to the people from "the book of the law of Moses which the Lord had commanded to Israel."
- Graeco-Roman Definition
    - Doctrine of divine origin of sacred books continued into the Graeco-Roman times
    - Philo of Alexandria
        - Philo adopted the Greek word for "inspire" to express the divine origin of Scripture
        - Quis rerum 259
    - Josephus Flavius
        - Prophets "who have learned [the accounts of things] from God himself by inspiration"
        - Refers to 5 Books of Moses, 13 Books of Prophets, 4 Books of Hymns
            - He uses the 22 books to symbolically link them to the 22 Hebrew characters
        - Against Apion (1:37-40)
- Babylonian Talmud
    - Rabbis interpreted Numbers 15:31 ("Because he has despised the word of the Lord, and has broken his commandment, that person shall be utterly cut off") to apply to someone who "maintains that the Torah is not from heaven" (b.Sanh. 99a)
    - The "heavenly" Torah was revealed to Moses by "dictation" at Mt Sinai

Church Fathers

- Clement of Alexandria: "sacred writings" written by "divine authors"
- Origen: "sacred book" derived "from inspiration"
- Theophilus of Antioch: "holy Scriptures" whose authors are considered "bearers of the spirit"
- Irenaeus of Lyons: Scriptures are perfect because they have been given by the word of God and the Spirit
- Gregory of Nazianzus: the care of the Spirit is seen even in the shortest scriptural texts

Formulae for Inspiration

Dictation

- Justin Martyr: "Do not think that the prophecies were spoken by the inspired prophets of their own accord, but by the word of God that prompts them"
- Augustine
- Jerome
- Council of Trent: "The truth and rule are contained in the written books and unwritten traditions which have come down to us, having been received by the apostles from the mouth of Christ Himself, or from the apostles by the dictation of the Holy Spirit, and have been transmitted as it were from hand to hand."
- Reformers: Verbal inspiration; God is the author of the Bible
- John Calvin: The Scriptures were "dictated" to human authors who were simple "scribes"

"God, the Author"

- Manicheans
- Augustine: "God, the author of both Testaments"
- Ambrose: unity of OT and NT and one author of knowledge
- Decree of the Jacobites (15th Century): links God as author with inspiration - but not literary authorship to him

Divine Condescension

- Origen: "Accomodation"
- John Chrysostom: "Condescension" - the incarnation of the Word of God, the Logos, is used as an analogy to explain inspiration. Scriptures are written by human authors who occasionally expressed their thoughts in metaphors. Writers are called "co-writers" along with God, the primary author
- The Biblical author hears the murmurs of the Lord (as Elijah did in 1 Kings 19:11-12) and interprets them and writes them
    - 1 Kings 19:11-12 - "Then He said, “Go out, and stand on the mountain before the Lord.” And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the Lord, *but* the Lord *was* not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, *but* the Lord *was* not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, *but* the Lord *was* not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice."

Conclusion

- Inspiration is a synergic process, a divine-human reality through which God the Holy Spirit descends at the level of understanding of the human author. God prepares the human author to become his co-author
- The influence of divine inspiration upon the sacred writer begins with the origin of his life (Jeremiah 1:5)
- Divine Inspiration influences all faculties of the writer: speculative intellect (what to communicate) and practical intellect (how to communicate it)

- From the time of Origen, the sacred writer was moved by God to write, but write on his own free decision. He chose and selected words, utilized images, proposed analogies, but all done with inspiration
- It is not just the ideas of the Scripture that are inspired (under God's direction) but the words themselves as well (without dictation)

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