

Dear friends yesterday in the Lesson-one i have posted about the origin, manuscripts and translations of the Bible. I hope everyone got a chance to read and go through it. And in today's lesson- two my topic is "the bible is divinely inspired book- Why and How?" I hope everyone will make a time to read and reflect on this topic. You all have a great day.

LESSION 2

The Bible is a divinely inspired book– why & how?

The Bible is a true and trustworthy account of God's revelation to man, written down under the impulse and guidance of the Holy Spirit. In other words, it is an inspired book. St. Paul writes, "All scripture, inspired of God, is profitable to teach, to reprove, to correct to instruct in justice" (II Timothy 3:16). And St. Peter adds that "prophecy came not by the will of man at any time, but the holy men of God spoke, inspired by the Holy Spirit" (II Peter 1:21). Christian Tradition from the beginning believed in the divine origin of the Scriptures. St Augustine speaks of the Scriptures as "God's handwriting" and adds: "Letters have reached us from that city apart from which we are wandering; these letters are the Scriptures which exhort us to live well." The Second Council of Constantinople (AD 553), added to the Nicene Creed the clause that the Holy Ghost "spoke through the prophets," thereby defining the inspiration of the sacred writers. Vatican I (AD 1868), defined that all the books of Scripture are sacred and canonical for the reason that, having been written under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, they have God for their author. In his Encyclical on Sacred Scripture "Providentissimus Deus," Pope Leo XIII (1893), writes: "By supernatural power He (the Holy Spirit) so moved and impelled them (the sacred writers) to write - He was so present to them - that the things which He ordered, and those only, they first rightly understood, then willed faithfully to write down, and finally expressed in apt words and with infallible truth." Hence, "it is absolutely wrong and forbidden, either to narrow inspiration to certain parts only of Holy Scripture, or to admit that the sacred writer has erred. The system of those who restrict inspiration to things of faith and morals cannot be tolerated. All the books which the Church receives as sacred and canonical are written wholly and entirely, with all their parts, at the inspiration of the Holy Ghost."

Nature of Inspiration: The Holy Spirit, as Principal Author of Sacred Scripture, influenced the sacred writer in three ways: 1) Illuminated the mind of the sacred writer. This enabled him to make correct use of his faculties, aided him in the gathering of materials, so that he correctly conceived in his mind all that God wished him to write. 2) Moved the will of the sacred writer. After the sacred writer had, under inspiration, formed in his mind an idea of the book and of its contents, the Holy Spirit moved the sacred writer's will to write freely, though infallibly, what God wished. 3) Aided the sacred writer in the work of composition. Finally, the Holy Spirit assisted the sacred author in carrying out his project, by watching over him and, when necessary, by positively directing him, lest he add or omit something and lest he fall into error. Secretaries and editors also were inspired collaborators. Human authorship: Although God is the Author of the Bible, He did not write it with His own hand; neither did He create it out of nothing by His almighty word. Nor did He dictate it to the human author. He employed sacred writers and inspired them to write what he wished. Hence, while God is the Author of the Bible, the sacred writers, too, were authors, in a sense, of what they wrote. This human authorship of Sacred Scripture has been recognized at all times, as is evident from the following three considerations: first, Our Lord and the Bible itself speak of the sacred writers as authors: "Moses spoke of Me," "Isaiah said," etc.; second, Oral Tradition from the very beginning spoke, for example, of St. Matthew's Gospel and of St. Paul's Epistles - expressions which recognize the human authorship of the Bible; third, each book is characterized by the language and style of its human author - facts which show that the sacred writer was not a passive tool of the Holy Ghost but really the author of his book.

The Protestant arguments defining the Bible's Inspiration: 1) It "inspires" me. It is "inspirational." If that is inspiration, then Shakespeare's works are also "inspired". Besides, parts of the Bible, including several whole books of the Old Testament, cannot at all be called "inspired" in the "inspirational" sense.

2) Bible itself says that it is inspired. This is a subjective argument. There are not many places where such a claim is made even elliptically, and most books in the Old and New Testaments make no such claim at all. In fact, no New Testament writer explicitly claims that he himself is writing at the

direct command of God, with the exception of John, the author of Revelation. In addition, the Muslim scriptures and the Hindu scriptures make the same claim.

3) "The Holy Spirit tells me the Bible is inspired." "Seek the help of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit has been given to illumine the scriptures and make them alive to you as you study them. Yield to His enlightenment." ("Radio Bible Class"). This is also a purely subjective argument. If the same Holy Spirit of truth is inspiring readers, how can there be more than 40,000 Protestant denominations giving different interpretations to the same Bible text?

4) When we read the Bible we are "convicted" that it is the word of God, and we get a positive "feeling" that it is inspired, and that's that. This argument is also subjective and personal.

The Catholic position is the only one that proves conclusively the divine inspiration of Scripture, the only one that can satisfy a person intellectually. On the first level we argue to the reliability of the Bible in so far as it is history. From that we conclude that an infallible Church was founded. And then we take the word of that infallible Church that the Bible is inspired. Without the existence of the Church, we could never know whether the Bible is inspired. The Church infallibly teaches that the Old Testament books are also inspired because Jesus and His Apostles believed in them as inspired books and taught that truth. The New Testament books are the recorded and inspired history of Jesus and his Church.

The Catholic method of proving the Bible to be inspired is this: The Bible is initially approached as one would approach any other ancient work. It is not, at first, presumed to be inspired. From textual criticism we are able to conclude that we have a text, the accuracy of which is more certain than the accuracy of any other ancient work.

Abundance of ancient manuscripts: Sir Frederic Kenyon, in *The Story of the Bible*, notes, "For all the works of classical antiquity we have to depend on manuscripts written long after their original composition. The author who is the best case in this respect is Virgil. But the earliest manuscript of Virgil that we now possess, was written some 350 years after his death. For all other classical writers, the interval between the date of the author and the earliest existing manuscript of his works is much greater. For Livy it is about 500 years, for Horace 900, for most of Plato 1,300, for Euripides 1,600." Yet no one seriously disputes that we have accurate copies of the works of these writers. However, in the case of the New Testament, we have parts of manuscripts dating from the first and early second centuries after Christ, only a few decades after the works were penned. Not only are the biblical manuscripts that we have older than those for classical authors, we have, in sheer numbers, far more manuscripts from which to work. Some are whole books of the Bible, others fragments of just a few words, but there are literally thousands of manuscripts in Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Coptic, Syriac (Aramaic), and other languages. This means that we can be sure we have an authentic text, and we can work from it with confidence.

The Bible as Historical Truth: Next we take a look at what the Bible, considered merely as a history, tells us, focusing particularly on the New Testament, and more specifically the Gospels. We examine the account contained therein of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Using what is in the Gospels themselves and what we find in extra-biblical writings from the early centuries, together with what we know of human nature (and what we can otherwise, from natural reason alone, know of divine nature), we conclude that either Jesus was just what he claimed to be—God—or he was crazy. (The one thing we know he could not have been was merely a good man who was not God, since no merely good man would make the claims he made).

We are able to eliminate the possibility of his being a madman not only from what he said but also from what his followers did after his death. Certainly if Christ had not risen, his disciples would not have died horrible deaths affirming the reality and truth of the resurrection. The result of this line of reasoning is that we must conclude that Jesus indeed rose from the dead. Consequently, his claims concerning himself—including his claim to be God—have credibility. He meant what he said and did what he said he would do. Further, Christ said he would found a Church. Both the Bible (still taken as merely a historical book, not yet as an inspired one), and other ancient works attest to the fact that Christ established a Church with the rudiments of what we see in the Catholic Church today—

papacy, hierarchy, priesthood, sacraments, and teaching authority. We have thus taken the material and, purely historically, concluded that Jesus founded the Catholic Church. Because of his Resurrection we have reason to take seriously his claims concerning the Church, including its authority to teach in his name. This Catholic Church tells us the Bible is inspired, and we can take the Church's word for it precisely because the Church is infallible. Only after having been told by a properly constituted authority—that is, one established by God to assure us of the truth concerning matters of faith—that the Bible is inspired can we reasonably begin to use it as an inspired book. Note that this is not a circular argument. We are not basing the inspiration of the Bible on the Church's infallibility and the Church's infallibility on the word of an inspired Bible

Is this not a Spiral Argument? This is not a circular argument because the final conclusion (the Bible is inspired) is not simply a restatement of its initial finding (the Bible is historically reliable), and its initial finding (the Bible is historically reliable), is in no way based on the final conclusion (the Bible is inspired). What we have demonstrated is that without the existence of the Church, we could never know whether the Bible is inspired. The advantages of the Catholic approach are two: First, the inspiration is really proved, not just "felt." Second, the main fact behind the proof—the reality of an infallible, teaching Church—leads one naturally to an answer to the problem that troubled the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:30-31): How is one to know which interpretations are correct? The same Church that authenticates the Bible and that attests to its inspiration is the authority established by Christ to interpret his teaching.

Summary of the Catholic teaching on the nature of Inspiration: The Holy Spirit as principal author of Sacred Scripture influenced the sacred writer in three ways: 1. He illuminated the mind of the sacred writer. The Holy Spirit enabled him to make correct use of his faculties, aided him in the gathering of materials, so that he correctly conceived in his mind all, and only, that which God wished him to write. 2. The Holy Spirit moved the will of the sacred writer to write freely, though infallibly, what God wished. 3. The Holy Spirit aided the sacred writer in the work of composition. The Holy Spirit assisted the sacred author in carrying out his project, by watching over him and, when necessary, by positively directing him, lest he add or omit something and lest he fall into error. If certain writers made use of secretaries, and if these secretaries were instrumental in choosing the language and determining the mode of expression, they too were inspired collaborators. The editors who compiled the Old Testament books and the secretaries of NT writers were also influenced by the Holy Spirit.