

Appendix III — Attitudes of Various Denominations Towards the Bible

Please read through the following quotations. On the basis of what you have learned in lessons 1 & 2 of "Faith Builders," determine what in these quotations is accurate and a good approach to Scripture, and what is inaccurate and a poor approach toward Scripture.

"In the New Testament we have the Christian religion, in the Old Testament the preparation for the Christian religion. And the mistake to which I have alluded, that of not recognizing this difference, of placing instructions given to a primitive people centuries before the coming of Christ on a par with instructions given by God incarnate Himself, has led to many distortions of the Christian faith. These distortions become disastrous when it is assumed that every word of the Old Testament was dictated to the writers by God.... The more literal view gained acceptance in the middle ages but it remained for the 16th century reformers to exploit it in their substitution of the authority of the Bible for the authority of the Church. Little did they dream what would happen years later, when such men as Darwin, Spencer, Huxley, and the thousands of scientists who followed them, should raise the clear-cut issue between science and the Bible statements concerning the physical universe. Millions abandoned Christianity in the 19th century because they thought they had to make a choice between science and the Bible "

-- from *Faith of the Episcopal Church*, Frank Damrosch, Morehouse-Barlow, 1964ed., pages 30-31

"Hence there exists a close connection and communication between sacred tradition and sacred Scripture. For both of them, flowing from the same divine wellspring, in a certain way merge into a unity and tend toward the same end. For sacred Scripture is the Word of God inasmuch as it is consigned to writing under the inspiration of the divine Spirit. To the successors of the Apostles, sacred tradition hands on in its full purity God's Word, which was entrusted to the Apostles by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit. Thus, led by the light of the Spirit of truth, these successors can in their preaching preserve this Word of God faithfully, explain it, and make it more widely known. Consequently it is not from sacred Scripture alone that the Church draws her certainty about everything that has been revealed. Therefore both sacred tradition and sacred Scripture are to be accepted and venerated with the same sense of devotion and reverence "

NOTES

We believe that God has given the Holy Scriptures to proclaim his grace in Christ to man. In the Old Testament God repeatedly promised his people a divine Deliverer from sin, death and hell. The New Testament proclaims that this promised Deliverer has come in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. The Scriptures testify of Christ. Jesus himself says of the Scriptures that they "testify about me" (John 5:39).

We believe that God gave us the Scriptures through men whom he chose, using the language they knew and the style of writing they had. He used Moses and the prophets to write the Old Testament in Hebrew (some portions in Aramaic) and the evangelists and apostles to write the New Testament in Greek. We believe that in a miraculous way that goes beyond all human investigation God the Holy Spirit inspired these men to write his Word. These "men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:21). What they said, was spoken "not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit" (1 Cor. 2:13). Every thought they expressed, every word they used was given them by the Holy Spirit by inspiration. St. Paul wrote to Timothy: "All Scripture is God-breathed" (2 Tim. 3:16). We therefore believe in the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures, that is, a word-for-word inspiration. This, however, is not to be equated with mechanical dictation.

We believe that Scripture is a unified whole, true and without error in everything it says, for our Savior said: "The Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35). We believe that it, therefore, is the infallible authority and guide for everything we believe and do. We believe that it is fully sufficient, clearly teaching us all we need to know for salvation, making us "wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 3:15), equipping us for every good work (2 Tim. 3:17). No other revelations are to be expected.

We believe and accept Scripture on its own terms ' accepting as factual history what it presents as history, recognizing a metaphor where Scripture itself indicates one, and reading as poetry what is evident as such. We believe that Scripture must interpret Scripture, clear passages throwing light on those less easily understood. We believe that no authority, be it man's reason, science or scholarship, may stand in judgment over Scripture. Sound scholarship will faithfully search out the true meaning of Scripture without presuming to pass judgment on it.

-- from *This We Believe*, Commission on Inter-Church Relations of the WELS,
Northwestern Publishing House, pages 4-5