

KNOW YOUR FAITH

The Inerrancy Of the Scriptures

By FR. WALTER
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Since the Scripture are divinely inspired, which means, as we have seen, that they have God as their principal author, it follows that the Scriptures are free from error, or, as the technical language of Bible study puts it, the Scriptures are "inerrant."

The world's libraries contain many books, from the past four centuries especially, arguing all the aspects of that statement. In some ways the Galileo case is still with us. You will remember that Church authorities condemned him for teaching that the earth moved around the sun, since the Scriptures presented a different picture of the movements of the heavenly bodies.

Generally, archeological discoveries confirm historical statements of the Bible, but every now and then an inscription is dug up that contradicts something in the Bible. There have been, and probably always will be, people who jump on these things and give devout believers a hard time.

I like to use this example from the Acts of the Apostles, 17:21, "For all citizens of Athens and the foreigners who lived there like to spend all their time telling and hearing the latest new thing." If you take it literally, you will have to say that the Athenians didn't do any eating, drinking, or sleeping.

Obviously, Luke is using a manner of speaking; he really means that they spent much or most of their time in "telling and hearing the latest new thing," the time when they were up and about, that is.

Thus there will be references to the sun coming up and going down. We today use those expressions, even though we know that scientifically the facts are otherwise. There's the point.

The Bible isn't teaching or speaking scientifically; it is communicating the things about himself and his will that God wishes to communicate. He used the language of the day, just as we still do when we want to communicate things about ourselves or our wishes.

Some very fine minds in the Church have practically knocked themselves out making all kinds of distinctions in this matter. They say, for example, that you must distinguish inerrancy positively and negatively, meaning when something is being taught, or "when truth is at stake," and "in the forestalling of any teaching of error," so that one ends up saying truth need not be positively taught in every part of Scripture, although divine inspiration does completely exclude the deliberate teaching of error.

If you follow all this, you do well: What it comes down to is that if a biblical writer mentions the sun as rising he

is not in error because he is simply limiting himself to sensible perception, to what he sees, and does not go beyond this to make any judgment of an astronomical nature.

I think you can very quickly get an idea of these distinctions by looking through the Psalms. Notice how many times the writer expresses doubts, fears, feelings of frustration, anger, even revenge. Clearly, these are not the feelings of God.

Obviously, what has happened is that God has allowed these human expressions and feelings to be put on the record, as if to say He knows they are there and that is the stuff that is in man.

It's the turning to God, the acknowledgement that we depend on Him, that without Him we can do nothing, but that with Him we can do all things—it is this that God tells us in the Psalms.

There is really no point in raising the question of inerrancy, or truth and error, where the human writer is obviously baring his own soul's feelings or charming us with poetic imagery. The place to bring up the matter of inerrancy is where he starts to tell us what God thinks or says or does.

That observation leads us right to confrontation with the fact that in many parts of the Scripture God does act like a novelist or poet.

Thus, the parables of Jesus are made-up stories. If they have some horrible characters who say some pretty harsh things, like kings who take people's heads off for little or no reason, you don't charge Jesus with evil; he's just putting into the story characters who are appropriate and believable for his hearers.

Parish Worship Committee

By FR. JOSEPH M. CHAMPLIN

Richard Murphy holds a post of assistant to the general president, Service Employees International Union, AFL-CIO. During the week he can be found either working at his desk in downtown Washington, lobbying on Capitol Hill, or talking with hospital workers around the United States.

On weekends, this fortyish husband, father of three, assumes a different leadership role. Murphy, who sings well and reads proficiently, has served as cantor-commentator at Blessed Sacrament Church across the Potomac in Alexandria, Va.

Last fall the Irish-born pastor, Msgr. Martin Quinn, established a parish liturgical committee and Murphy was selected as its first chairman. The group meets on the second Thursday evening of every month in the rectory basement conference room. The night I attended, about 20 were present — the pastor, two associates, three



In today's liturgy, many forms of musical accompaniment are being used as changes occur. (NC Photo)

LEISURE... Learn to Live with It

By FR. CARL PFEIFFER, S.J.

Americans as a whole enjoy more leisure time than perhaps any large nation of people in human history. Although many persons work longer, the average American worker puts in a 40-hour week and some businesses already operate on a 35-hour week.

In addition to a shorter work-week many Americans receive longer vacations and more frequent holidays. With mandatory retirement at 65, many healthy men and women face years of leisure time.

It is a tragic fact that the amount of leisure time acquired by men often far surpasses their capacity for enjoying it. Retirement can be one of the most traumatic of life's challenges. Even a two-week vacation or a long weekend causes uneasiness and tension in many families. Some psychiatrists note that emotional crises are often more frequent and more severe at holiday periods.

Thousands of people are simply bored and are hard put to find new ways to "kill time." Drugs, sex, liquor, countless hours of watching television, do not seem able to fill the void revealed by time off from work.

Most of us have been touched deeply by the attitude that men live primarily to work, to work for work's sake. Have you not frequently heard people judge another person's moral fiber in terms of how well he works? We often hear it stated that if only people would work

hard there would be no more poverty, drug addiction, campus revolts, or racial conflicts.

Hard work is judged to be virtuous in itself. Leisure time is tolerated as necessary in order to work better, but with the caution that "idleness is at the root of all evil."

Leisure time is sought eagerly, yet it is viewed suspiciously because of the primacy of work. A sound Christian understanding of leisure is more straightforward, balanced and wholesome, and may be helpful toward fully enjoying the free time we have.

In the contemporary Christian view of leisure — a view with roots in classical Greek thought, the Bible, and the great medieval Christian theologians — leisure is not only good because it helps man work better, but chiefly because it helps man become a fuller, richer human being. Leisure is good in itself. For St. Thomas Aquinas the capacity for leisure is an aspect of Christian virtue, the opposite of which is *acedia*, sloth.

We think of sloth or idleness as one of the "seven capital sins" and readily consider it to be the opposite of the virtue of hard work. Laziness is normally opposed to diligent and productive work. However, St. Thomas has a surprisingly different explanation. He calls it a sin against the Third Commandment, "Remember the sabbath day and keep it holy" (Ex. 20:9). The Third Commandment forbids work on the sabbath, so

if sloth violates this commandment it cannot simply be the opposite of hard work.

St. Thomas sees sloth as somehow violating, not the value of work, but the deeply human need to find peace of mind and body in celebrating the primacy of God's role in man's life. Sloth, laziness, idleness — *acedia* — is the opposite of a happy affirmation of the meaning and value of life.

In this sense it is the very opposite of the Christian virtue of leisure and actually renders it impossible. We might even define this capital sin as the incapacity for leisure.

Leisure is a quality of the human spirit much more than a quantity of time away from the job. Leisure as an aspect of Christian virtue does not result from increased spare time, but from a person's attitude toward life — toward himself, toward the world and other people, toward God. It is a certain openness or receptivity toward the mystery of life, graced by the presence of a gracious God.

Leisure is closely related to celebration, which is rooted in worship. It is not an arbitrary law that joins leisure and the sabbath rest. For the Christian the Sunday celebration of life graced by God's gracious presence is one of the sources of his ability to enjoy leisure hours because the attitude of mind and heart and body demanded by leisure is a normal outgrowth of the celebration of our life with God.

hogged down, nothing accomplished, all talk, no action pitfalls so common in our meeting-saturated contemporary society; 2) How to educate individual members in the principle of sound liturgy; and 3) How to staff the committee with representative, rotating, and reliable parishioners.

The Blessed Sacrament unit is moving toward a solution of the first problems through a delegation of particular questions to subcommittees and designation of a definite time in each meeting for educational purposes. The final, more general and complicated obstacle appears to demand a gradual, on-going instruction at the parish level.

Two booklets published by diocesan liturgy commissions in recent months should be helpful for parishes seeking to set up successful worship committees like this one in Alexandria. They are "Parish Liturgy Team" (Liturgy Training Program, 5947 N. Manton Ave., Chicago, Ill. 60646) and "Parish Liturgical Committee Handbook" (Liturgical Commission, 320 Cathedral St. Baltimore, Md. 21201).

Three basic difficulties, however, have emerged:

1) How to make sessions productive, avoid the too-long,

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