

## BIBLE LITERALISM IN THE CHURCH

The Church regards a book allegedly created by God through men as infallible on faith and morals. That book is the Bible and its words though not dictated by God all the time (though there are many examples of dictation) are regarded as being the same as God's words. Even those who deny verbal dictation hold that even if the Bible is not all the words of God its words in practice amount to the same thing as being God's actual words and that this is God's teaching.

It is said that nobody said the Bible was factually correct and without error until a Protestant book made this claim in the 1600's (page 25, *Speaking Christian*, Marcus J Borg, SPCK, London, 2011). Yet if you read the writings of the Church fathers they all treated the Bible as they would the speech of God. Regardless of what divine inspiration means the important thing is treating the Bible as the speech of God.

It is stated that Luther was not a Bible literalist for he considered dropping the epistle of St James and the Book of Revelation from the Bible (ibid page 25). But that proves nothing. A Bible literalist might think the other books are literally true and could be excising a book or two because they do not belong in the Bible.

Luther is said to have not been a literalist because he refused to take the Bible literally when it spoke of God walking in the Garden of Eden. But if he merely thought this was the authors poetic way of saying God was in the Garden then he was still a literalist. A literalist does not necessarily have to pretend that there is no poetry or symbolism in his Bible. The historical-metaphorical approach is opposed to literalism and is said to be a recent development like literalism is (page 26, ibid).

It is the case that Christianity though it never talked about literalism in practice it was literalistic. Literalism was always the policy. The Church always called the Bible the word of God. Word means communication. By implication, the word is the words of God. Jesus claimed absolute infallibility and spoke of his words as being the unerring message of God in the gospel of John. This gospel calls him the Word of God meaning that as a person he was the word of God because his words were the words of God.