

other and require a kind of intermediary to bring them together. It is usually some kind of social upheaval, whether political, economic or religious, which evokes the human need for the supernatural guidance. Prophecy is one way of acquiring such guidance.

The Hebrew word for prophet, *nabi*, can have two meanings, one passive and one active. The prophet is both "one who is called" by God and "one who calls" the people. While the call may occur as part of some personal ecstatic experience (it is, after all, a call from God), the prophet's utterance itself must be intelligible for it is meant for people other than the prophet.

True prophecy is always relevant to the moment of proclamation. Since it arises from a particular crisis, its purpose is to address that crisis. It predicts the future only to the extent that that future is a consequence of the decisions of the present. The primary intent of prophecy is to call the people to fidelity to their religious responsibilities here and now, responsibilities that are being challenged by present circumstances.

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## *Ten Questions on the New Testament*

*What does the New Testament  
mean when it speaks of: Messiah,  
Church, Kingdom of God, etc.?*

### WHY DO SOME BIBLES HAVE MORE BOOKS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT THAN OTHERS?

Prior to the Synod of Jamnia in the late 90's AD, there were several "canons" or listings of books in the OT. Two achieved a place of prominence—the Palestinian and the Alexandrian. The former listed the books of the Jewish scriptures which were accepted in Palestine; the latter listed the books accepted by Greek speaking Jews. The difference between these two canons was that the Alexandrian Canon added six books which were originally written in Greek (I and II Maccabees, Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach, Tobit, and Judith along with additions to Jeremiah, Esther and Daniel).

In the early first century, the followers of Jesus began moving into the Jewish communities of the Diaspora, and eventually into predominantly Gentile communities. As a result, it became clear that Christianity and Judaism could not co-exist. Judaism maintained its Hebrew heritage while Christianity adopted much from the Greek world. The division took place at the Synod of Jamnia which prohibited anyone who proclaimed Jesus was son of God from being a part of Judaism. It confirmed the Palestinian canon as normative for Jews in opposition to Christianity which accepted the Alexandrian canon as normative.

By the end of the 4th century, the Christian scriptures were officially defined and were joined to the Greek Old Testament to form the Bible. This Bible was translated into Latin by St. Jerome, and ultimately translated into English at Douay and Rheims.

In the early 16th century, Martin Luther, translated the Bible into German. He realized that the Latin text he was using was a translation of a translation of the original text. He went to the Hebrew text to discover that six books were missing. Therefore, he placed them at the end of the OT as non-canonical books which were edifying.

Later, when Luther's views placed him at odds with the Holy See, he adopted his translation as normative scripture for his followers. In opposition to Luther, the Council of Trent confirmed the Latin text that had been normative for centuries as the official text of Scripture for the Catholic Church. Later, the official English translation among the Reformers adopted Luther's idea.

Today, most Protestant denominations will not accept the six books as 'canonical,' while the Catholic church does. Finally, it should be noted the difference is not denominational; rather it is linguistic. Thus, we do not have a "Catholic" and a "Protestant" bible; rather, we have a "Hebrew" and a "Greek" bible.

#### WHICH VERSION OR TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE IS BEST FOR ME?

To answer the question which translation is most practical, one must first ask what is the purpose for which one is using this text, which will then determine what version is best.

Those with more scholarly inclinations would consider the REVISED STANDARD VERSION (RSV) which appeared in the early 50's. Commissioned by the National Council of Churches in America, it is the best revision of the King James Bible. Taking into consideration the linguistic discoveries concerning Hebrew and Greek grammar, it is faithful to the original languages. However, its strength for the scholar is its downfall for the preacher or the teacher. The text does not proclaim well. Therefore, it is not recommended for liturgy or classroom.

A similar revision of the King James Bible was made in England—the NEW ENGLISH BIBLE (NEB). Its phraseology shows a marked British idiom, and it departs from the original text in some interesting ways. For example, MT 5:3 is translated "How blest are they who know their need for God" in the NEB. The scholar would not find this

version as beneficial as the RSV; however, teachers might prefer it.

In the Catholic tradition, the earliest English translation is THE JERUSALEM BIBLE (JB), a translation of the Bible de Jerusalem sponsored by L'Ecole Biblique in Jerusalem. It appeared in the mid '60's. Its strengths are its extensive system of cross references, and its copious notes which make it possible to thoroughly search any topic in the Bible. Its main weakness is the translation which fails to use contemporary linguistic discoveries. A new revision of the JB is almost complete which, it is hoped, will update many of the more difficult sections in light of these discoveries.

Under the Bishop's Committee of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, the NEW AMERICAN BIBLE (NAB), a translation from the original languages appeared in the early 70's. It provides a balance between scholarship and spirituality. It is one of the best translations for a person who wants an understandable American idiom. In fact, the lectionary chosen by most parishes uses the NAB translation.

The final two versions are "interpretative translations"—THE GOOD NEWS BIBLE, and THE WAY or THE LIVING BIBLE. These texts are written in a "modern" idiom which makes them good for younger readers. When the text is translated into a modern idiom, it also is interpreted. These interpretations have a definite doctrinal slant which is clearly that of the interpreter. Therefore, one has to be careful of biases that are subtly contained in the text which might not doctrinally agree with the accepted understanding of the text in the Catholic Church.

#### WHAT IS APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE?

Apocalyptic literature is a genre of writing that appeared in the post exilic period. An example of this literary genre in the Old Testament is the Book of Daniel, and in the New Testament the Book of Revelation. To properly understand these writings it is necessary to investigate the origin of the literary genre. Contrary to the opinion of many, apocalyptic is not a form of prophecy; rather, it is a further development of prophecy. Prophecy sought to bring the word of God to present events interpreting the present events in terms of God's judgment on his people. Apocalyptic literature seems to interpret the present as a fulfillment of "prophecies" made in the past.

Apocalyptic literature grew out of a milieu of immediate threat or persecution. As a result, the authors had to remain pseudonymous,

i.e. authorship was attributed to some great figure of the past who has "seen" the events of the present; and the writing had to be clothed in forms which would be incomprehensible to the persecutor. To this end several images drawn from Canaanite, Babylonian and Persian literature were employed, some of which were rather bizarre. Also, numerical imagery drawn particularly from Persian sources predominates.

Proper interpretation of apocalyptic works demands 1) a knowledge of the period in which the work was written, and 2) an understanding of the background, the images and the numbers used in the work. Failure to interpret in terms of these will certainly lead the reader to false and bizarre conclusions.

WHY DO SOME PEOPLE SAY THAT DANIEL DIDN'T WRITE  
THE BOOK OF DANIEL OR MATTHEW, MARK, LUKE  
OR JOHN DIDN'T WRITE THE GOSPELS?

To properly answer this question, it is necessary to look at a concept that underlies the question—pseudonymity. Pseudonymous books are those written under the name of a well-known person who really did not write the book. The authenticity of the Bible is not affected by this. When a writer wanted to get the weight of a well known personality behind his writing, he took a pseudonym, a practice that was common in the ancient world especially in the writings of the sages. For example, since Solomon was the prototype of the wise man, penning wisdom writings in Solomon's name was a natural device, e.g. the Wisdom of Solomon, or the Song of Solomon.

In contemporary society, if it can be proven that a book was not written by its author, it loses all credibility. In the ancient world this was not the case. To use the name of a great hero of the time was a compliment to him. In the New Testament, the canonical gospels were attributed to great apostles of the period whose preaching of the events of Jesus' life is accurately presented in them. However, to say that they actually wrote the gospels as we have them is difficult to hold.

Further, the letter of Jude was probably not penned by Judas brother of James; rather it was attributed to Judas to give it the authority of that apostle. Further, some of the later works of the Pauline School are considered pseudonymous; rather than being actual Pauline writings. Recent linguistic and stylistic studies have served to confirm this. If the style of Ephesians is compared with the style of I Corinthi-

ans, differences appear which show that Ephesians shows a stage of development in the Pauline tradition which goes beyond Paul himself.

WHAT IS MEANT BY THE TERM "MESSIAH"?

The term "Messiah" usually refers to Jesus of Nazareth. The term is from the Hebrew verb MaSHaCH meaning "to anoint." In the Old Testament, the term first occurs in reference to the Levitical Priests who were anointed (Lv 4). In the period of the monarchy, the "messiah" was king who has the title "anointed of Yahweh" or "the Lord's anointed" (I Sam 12).

During the reign of David, the monarchy was centralized. The ark of the covenant was brought into the new capital city of Jerusalem, and David vowed to build a house for the Lord (II Sam 7). Yahweh's response is a promise that he will build a "house" (dynasty) for David (II Sam 7:16). The messianic Davidic dynasty was established.

This promise was a source of consolation, yet also would prove to be the downfall of the dynasty. During the time of Isaiah in the late 8th century BC, the city of Jerusalem was spared by the Assyrians. The people felt that their city, their temple and their king were impregnable. They began to become lax following the covenant which was the basis of their existence. In the time of Jeremiah these attitudes proved to be the downfall of the dynasty. Refusing to repent and return to the covenant, the city fell to the Babylonian armies and the people were exiled. The eternal Messianic kingdom seemed at an end.

However, this was not true. There was a legitimate heir to the Messianic throne in exile. After 40 years in 539 BC, limited freedom was granted to the exiles. They immediately rebuilt their capital and their temple. But, they were not allowed to reestablish their monarchy. The messianic heir was placed in the Persian government where he could not claim his royal position in Israel.

The promise to David was now re-interpreted to adapt to the experience of the people. The Messiah became a future member of David's line who would reestablish the kingdom. At the time of Jesus this was the messianic expectation. Thus, it is easy to see why Jesus was misunderstood. He was not a political figure; nor did he come to reestablish the kingdom of David. Rather, he came to announce the kingdom of God. For this reason, Jesus did not accept the title Messiah, or its Greek equivalent Christ. Rather he silences all who address him with that title.

## WHAT DO WE MEAN BY THE KINGDOM OF GOD?

The kingdom of God is linked to the concept of Messiah. The final messianic figure is one who will re-establish the Kingdom. After the exile the concept of kingdom became Yahweh's kingdom (Wisdom 10:10).

At the beginning of the Gospel of Mark, Jesus proclaims the good news that "the kingdom is near" (Mark 1:14-15). At first glance this could be the expected Kingdom of David. However, as the Gospel unfolds it becomes clear that it is not Royal Davidic theology; but rather it expresses the transformation of that royal theology during the Post Exilic Period. Through the Gospel of Mark, this new understanding is proclaimed until the final days when Jesus is presented in messianic terms entering Jerusalem. But now, the image chosen is not the triumphant general, but rather the humble king (Zech 9:9).

In the Passion Narrative, several motifs of the Coronation ritual are woven into the text—the anointing, citations of Psalm 118, the royal references in the trial scene. The climax of the theme is the crucifixion where Jesus is presented as "messiah"—not the triumphant messianic king who will re-establish the splendor of David; but the humble, lonely, "Son of God" who quietly establishes the Kingdom of God for all who would believe.

The meaning of this kingdom is not found in the politics. Rather it is in the community of believers, and the interior spirituality of the individual. Jesus' ministry inaugurated the kingdom, but did it fully establish it? Scholars have debated this question at length. The best resolution to the scholarly debate is that of W.G. Kummel. The Kingdom of God is "already" and "not yet." That is, the Christian is living in a paradoxical tension between what has become already through the action of Jesus and the Church and what is to come at the completion of time.

## WHO ARE THE BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF THE LORD?

In the gospels, we find references to the brothers and sisters of the Lord. In Acts, we have reference to James, the Brother of the Lord. There has been debate on all sides as to the identity of these relatives of Jesus.

On the one hand, several denominations hold that they are blood relatives on the basis of Matthew 1:25. This interpretation is not acceptable given the doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary. Therefore, among Catholic scholars, the interpretation of such passages is

given a wider scope to include relations such as cousins. Thus, the term "brothers and sisters" is a euphemism for relatives.

Both opinions have backing in the Patristic Era. The interpretation of brothers as "relatives" originates with St. Jerome who held that they were cousins of Jesus through Mary's sister, or Joseph's sister, or brother. There are two opinions as to how they could be blood brothers. Epiphanius of Salamis using the tradition of the *Protoevangelium of James* saw the brothers as children of Joseph through a previous marriage. Later, Helvidius argued that they were actual children of Mary, thus "blood brothers."

The thesis of Jerome is supported in the original texts. The Greek word, *adelphos*, can be used in the broader sense of "relative" or "kinsman." In the Septuagint, *adelphos* is used to translate the Hebrew word *ah* in places where the sense of the term has to connote "kinsman" rather than "blood brother."

## HOW DOES THE NEW TESTAMENT VIEW CHURCH?

The term "Church" comes from the Greek *ekklesia* "called out" which in Classical Greek designated a political body which was specifically summoned. It had no religious overtones. In the Septuagint, the word was used to translate *qahal* which was the community of Israel gathered together.

In the Gospels, *ekklesia* appears only in the Gospel of Matthew (16:18; 18:17), clearly referring to the formation of an enduring community of believers centered on faith in the teachings of Jesus.

Acts uses the term in several places to refer to the community of believers upon whom fear descended at the fate of Ananias and Sapphira (5:11), who were persecuted by Paul (8:3), or who experienced peace in the consolation of the spirit (9:31) etc. In Acts, the term is used to denote both the entire Community, and the separate smaller communities which develop in a particular place (11:22; 13:1).

Paul begins many of his letters with reference to the "church" or "churches" which are in a particular place. Paul, thus, either refers to "church" as a particular group in a particular place, or he unites the various communities to whom he is writing into a group similar to the Old Testament chosen community of God's people. In this connection, he employs the term, Church of God. At first it is reserved to the earliest and oldest communities; but, soon, it begins to cross local barriers and takes on the sense of a universal church (I Cor 12:28).

In the Post-Pauline writings, "Church" becomes a transcendent reality. Ephesians speaks of the Church under the headship of Christ as the fullness of Christ who fills the universe (Eph 1:23). This church becomes the new unifying force of humanity. It is no longer localized but rather a universal entity embracing all times and all peoples.

On the other hand, the Pastoral Epistles present a more practical view of Church, the household of God (1 Tim 3:5, 15; 5:15). It is a human organization with needs for order and organization. The tension between these views will ultimately provide the basis for the concept of "church" in the second century.

#### HOW DOES PAUL FIT INTO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE EARLY CHURCH?

The foundation of the Christian faith was laid by Peter and Paul on the cornerstone of Jesus' teaching. In Acts Peter dominates the first half, and Paul dominates the second half of the text.

Paul was a man of impetuous personality, a mover who accomplished much. His conversion experience led him to a radical about face. He turned from a persecutor to an apostle. Paul went from city to city engaging in serious discussion with the leaders of the synagogues throughout the Roman Empire. Each time his message was rejected, he turned to the Gentiles who gladly accepted it and were baptized. As a result, Paul brought great growth to the early community.

Through his preaching efforts and theological reflection, Paul was primarily responsible for giving form to the message of Jesus—a form that not only transcended the historical time and place it occurred in, but also transcended all time to become universal.

#### WHAT IS PAUL'S ATTITUDE TOWARD WOMEN?

The attitude of Paul and the Pauline School toward women has been considered negative based on a few remarks made in the First Letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor 11:5 and 14:34ff) and a passage in the Letter to the Ephesians (Eph 5:21ff). A look at the total Pauline corpus as well as the portrait of Paul in Acts counters this view. During the second missionary journey, Paul meets Lydia of Thyatira whom he baptizes, and with whom he stays while in Philippi (Acts 16:11ff).

At the opening of 1 Corinthians, a report from "members of Chloe's household" is mentioned. Chloe was a woman of means in Corinth who had apparently given her home for a house church and thus had

some influence in the affairs of the Corinthian community (1 Cor 1:11). The farewells to Paul's letters, mention several women—the deaconess Phoebe (Rom 16), Prisca (Rom 16:3, 1 Cor 16:19), a certain Mary of the Roman community (Rom 16:6), Tryphaena, Tryphosa, the mother of Rufus, Julia, and the sister of Nereus (Rom 16).

The negativity in the Corinthian passages derives primarily from "Corinthian" women who were notorious throughout the ancient world in their attitude toward men. The restrictions imposed by Paul were intended to put their minds and hearts in the proper place when involved in liturgical assembly—off men and on God.

Similarly Ephesians 5:21 has been misunderstood. The translation of this passage does a grave injustice to the grammar of the Greek text. The verbal form "be submissive" does not occur in the text at this point; rather, it is supplied from the preceding phrase "be submissive to one another in the fear of Christ." Thus, the wife is to relate to her husband as she does to the Lord, while the husband is enjoined to love his wife as himself (Eph 5:21ff).

All in all it seems that Paul has a positive attitude toward women although that attitude is clothed in the general social custom of his time. Too often we see only the social status and let it bury the true attitude of Paul.