

Who Is Anonymous?

I received an email from an Internet book distributor that I have used in the past. Based on my previous purchases the email listed a number of book offers that their computer thought might be of interest to me. Each offer showed a picture of the book with its title and author. Among the book suggestions were a number of Bibles and in each case the author was listed as: *Anonymous*. I didn't really expect to see "Holy Spirit" or "God" as author, but "Anonymous" suggested that the author of the Bible is unknown. I wonder if this reflects an attitude of many in our society, even religious folks.

On a separate Internet site I noticed a new book offering containing "Four Views" on a passage from the book of Hebrews. Think about the implications; four different writers express their interpretation of a passage of scripture. Can they all be correct? Whatever the case, with book in hand, you, the reader, have the option of believing any one of the views or none at all.

The "four views" book reminded me of how often I've heard people say that *everybody has their own interpretation of Scripture*. In an age where 'tolerance' is sacred, we can all have our own interpretation and still get along. Of course, that ignores the reality that many interpretations are completely incompatible in practice. (At least we are not arguing any more.)

The search for understanding can be challenging, but is often complicated by voices of scholarship. I am referring to the word wrangling over the meanings of biblical expressions. Some modern religious writers have fallen into the trap of applying alternate or rare meanings of Hebrew and Greek terms as 'fresh new insights.' Let me illustrate with a simple English word.

When a husband tells his wife, "I love you," she does not imagine that he thinks of her with the same affection that he has for the family pet.

(He 'loves' the family pet.) Nor does she interpret his love as if she were a chocolate bar. (He 'loves' chocolate bars.)

No one would browse dictionary with its various shades of meaning of the word 'love,' arbitrarily pick a meaning from the listing (menu) and then apply it to the husband's relationship with his wife. Yet, some are doing that with Greek and Hebrew terms in the Bible.

Do you see what is happening?

Our society no longer knows who wrote the Bible. As a result its authority is diminished and its message left up to individual interpretation. Words with real meaning are said to have new or different meanings that then yield new and different conclusions. This phenomenon has led one writer to conclude that Jesus had an affair with Mary Magdalene because the Bible says that he *loved* her. Another writer concluded that David and Jonathan were gay because the Bible tells us that David *loved* Jonathan. To describe these kinds of conclusions as *disrespectful* is an understatement.

Jesus was not an adulterer; David was not gay. The writer of Hebrews did not present *four views* when he wrote. The Bible is not an anonymous document composed of man's thoughts that are subject to a kind of 'pick-and-choose' interpretation by its readers.

Communication is difficult; even when we are careful and patient; even for God. Yet, the problem lies with man, not with God.

No prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God. — 2 Peter 1:20-21