

Anonymous

By [Diane Roth](#)

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I've been reading the New Testament all this summer, reading a few chapters a day and writing about them. I decided to use a version of the Bible I hadn't read before (just to mix it up a little), so I chose the Common English Bible.

Of course, at some point, I also decided that if I'm going to read the whole New Testament this summer, I should get some sort of reading credit for it: the New Testament is a Book, after all, so I posted in Goodreads that I was reading the New Testament, the "Common English Bible." You know who the author of the New Testament (CEB) is, according to Goodreads?

Anonymous.

It's not "God"; it's not even "various." Nope, it's anonymous, which seems somehow an odd thing to say about our holy book. We don't know who wrote it. (Well, actually, anonymous is not quite right: we do know that the apostle Paul wrote some of the letters in the New Testament. But, what do we know about Paul, really?)

Though mostly, when I think about it, it's accurate: we really don't know for sure who wrote most of the New Testament, or even the Bible. Most scholars don't think that Matthew wrote "Matthew or Mark wrote "Mark". And part of me wonders if it isn't somehow embarrassing to trust the contents of a book written (for the most part) by anonymous. No wonder people are skeptical (and more and more people are skeptical these days, if you haven't noticed.)

When I think about it harder, though, it's absolutely fitting that "anonymous" wrote the Bible, embarrassing though it may be. It's fitting given what we say we believe: that God is made manifest not in the proud and the mighty, but in the humble and the ordinary, the anonymous. Bread, wine, water are holy. Ordinary people are holy. Ordinary words are holy.

There's this odd divide in Christianity right now between traditional Christians who believe that the Bible is a divine book, and more progressive Christians who believe that the Bible is a human book. But it seems to me that actually the right answer to the question, "Is the Bible a divine book or a human book?" is "Yes." The Bible is a human book written by anonymous, ordinary people but which somehow reveals God." The Bible is a holy humble book about a God who came to inhabit flesh and blood in Jesus, and who still inhabits flesh and blood today, humble, anonymous, stumbling flesh and blood.

There's something embarrassing about this.

And there's something wonderful, too.

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