

## St. Stephen Communicates

By Michael E. Tymn

One night in early 1973, before Thomas and Olive Ashman moved from Sevenoaks, Kent, England to Christchurch, New Zealand, Olive heard Tom speaking in what sounded like Latin while he was sleeping. When this continued on subsequent nights, Olive began recording the words, which turned out to be profound spiritual teachings.

As Ashman, who was a non-practicing Jew, could not identify with most of the teachings, they did not seem to be coming from him. As it was soon discovered, Ashman had the gift of mediumship and quickly developed into a trance medium.

Early in 1974, a small group of religious friends began gathering periodically at the Ashman's modest home in Christchurch. "We would reverently pray for protection, and be silent," says the Rev. Michael Cocks, an Anglican priest from Christchurch. "Tom would sit upright in a chair, relaxed. After two or three minutes he would begin to pale and to breathe deeply. Then his body would give a slight jerk as Stephen seemed to take over."



Michael Cocks

The "Stephen" referred to by Cocks is St. Stephen, the Christian martyr of nearly 2000 years ago. In effect, Ashman was entering an altered state of consciousness as his body was being "taken over" by the entity called Stephen, who would then speak to the group using Ashman's vocal cords. Stephen would dialogue with the group, which, in addition to Cocks and Olive Ashman, also included a liberal Catholic priest, a Buddhist, and other curious observers.

Cocks states that normally Stephen spoke through Ashman in a "rather curious English," but that he occasionally spoke in an ancient Greek dialect, which apparently was for the purposes of confirming his identity.

"For myself, I do not speak [English] and I never have," Stephen related in one of the sittings. "I activate these words that are in Thomas's memory and are known to him. Occasionally there is a little 'magic,' when I join together sounds and symbols that are in Thomas's mind so that words may be spoken that are not known to Thomas."

After one of the early sittings in which Stephen spoke in Greek, Cocks consulted a lecturer in Greek at the University about Stephen's Greek words. "She reported my request to the then bishop, who called me for a chat," Cocks recalls. "To him, I denied being interested in spiritualism, as was definitely the case in those days."

It was not until 2005, with the publication of a book titled *The Stephen Experience or Teachings of Stephen the Martyr*, that Cocks decided to tell the whole story. The appendix of the book presents the results of Cocks' extensive research into Stephen's Greek and how he confirmed that

it belonged to the first century A.D., the Koine dialect spoken in Jesus' day, and could not have come from the mind of Ashman, who knew no Greek, modern or ancient.

"The facts were that Thomas was allowing himself to be displaced by Stephen deliberately, after prayer, and as an act of obedience to God," Cocks writes, pointing out that Thomas, in his trance state, was not always aware of what was going on or what Stephen was saying.

Stephen told of his early life in Ancyra, now modern Turkey, mentioning that his actual name was "Stenen" and that he was 14 years old when Jesus was crucified. He stated that his death by stoning is reported "quite accurately" in the Bible, but stressed that he was not communicating to tell about his life but rather to help them understand their own lives. On several occasions, Christ spoke through Thomas. "The task of your servant Stephen is that of a messenger and he speaks with great authority," was one such early communication from Christ.

Stephen pointed out that he was no longer the Stephen of the Bible, that he had given up his separateness "to be one with the Whole," but that to be of service to the Father and make those with whom he is communicating comfortable he had to "put on again the clothes of Stephen." When asked if he felt like "Stephen" or "The Whole," or even a figment of Cocks' imagination, the response came: "For if I speak that I am Stephen, I must first create Stephen, and be he. For I cannot be nothing. For once I decided I was nothingness, then I have learned nothing of nothing."

"The good things about Stephen were his love, his lack of judging, his balance, his thinking in terms of science, experience, and emphasizing the positive aspects of Christian belief," Cocks remarks. "He seemed to help in the letting go of the rubbish in our thinking."