

# Spiritual Anorexia

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**W**E OFTEN HEAR the question 'How has the Church so little impact in the world?' The answer in many cases can be that its members suffer from 'Spiritual Anorexia', the lack of appetite for spiritual food. Some Christians can spend 3 hours each day watching television and spend only 3 minutes reading the Bible. And that reading of the Bible is due to a habit rather than an appetite for spiritual nourishment. Many Christians today do not read Christian books or Christian magazines and therefore fail to grow in knowledge and understanding.

In some denominations emphasis is given to the way a person becomes a Christian rather than his or her growth. 'What kind of conversion did he have?' 'Was there depth to his conviction of sin?' 'Is he truly born again?' are typical questions, no doubt genuinely made, to ensure there are no false professions of faith.

The Scriptures however, give us little information regarding a person's 'conversion' and much more on the importance of adding to our faith. In both the Old Testament and the New Testament there is little emphasis placed on **how** a person becomes a believer - all the emphasis seems to be on how they

live their lives afterwards.

If we look at how the first 5 disciples of Christ became His followers, we will find sparse details of any significant 'experience'! Andrew and John spent just one day with Jesus, no details given of anything said or done. The only clue of 'conversion' is that Andrew "*first found his own brother Simon Peter and said to him 'We have found the Messiah' "* [John 1:41].

There is nothing recorded of what Peter said when he first saw Christ, but Jesus says to him "*You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas*" [John 1:42]. That's all that Scripture says about John, Andrew and Peter's first encounter with Christ! Later on in [Mat 4:19] we have these disciples called to full time service to be "*fishers of men*".

The 'calling' of Matthew (Levi) is similarly plain and simple. No great experience, just a call "*Follow Me. So he arose and followed Him*" [Mat 9:9]. There does not seem to be any sort of spiritual struggle - despite Levi being in an unsavoury profession!

Then all we are told about Philip is that Jesus "*found Philip and said to him 'Follow Me' "*. In turn "*Philip found Nathanael and said to him 'We have found Him of*

whom Moses in the law and also the prophets, wrote - Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Joseph". Nathanael declares "Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the king of Israel" [John 1:49]. There is nothing dramatic in any of these accounts.

What is important is not the way a person came to faith in Christ but that he **has** come to faith in Christ. It is the **subsequent life** that is the proof of true conversion. Jesus said "By their **fruits** you shall know them" [Mat 7:20]. Going on from commitment to Christ is regularly addressed in Scripture.

The Christian himself must attend to the business of looking after his own spiritual health. Christians are responsible for their own spiritual growth. Peter warned those who had a precious faith to be diligent to **add** to their faith and thus make their "call and election sure" [2 Pet 1:5-10]. Paul urged the Philippian believers to "work out your own salvation" present middle tense [Phil 2:12].

The constant refrain in the epistles is for the Christian to ensure he is building himself up in the faith and growing in grace. Paul reminded the Corinthians that they would suffer loss if they did not build on the foundation of Christ Jesus [1 Cor 3:15]. Jude wrote "building yourselves up on your most holy faith...keep yourselves in the love of God" [Jude 20].

It is God's great desire that His people produce fruit - fruit that lasts! "By this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit",

"I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should remain" [John 15:8,16].

One of the greatest dangers in the Church today is Christians failing to realise the importance of spiritual feeding. And it is their responsibility to feed themselves and to grow in grace and knowledge.

If Christians spend too much time in front of the television and feed their minds on the secular values and ideals of the world, then it is not surprising that they will be spiritually weak. They will be unable to cope with the normal events of life and will faint under the weakest trial. It is sad when Christians have no appetite for the Truth and Word of God. There is something wrong when that is the case.

Christians are to be strong and vigilant, the salt and light of the world, and are to take a lead in all human affairs bringing God's Word to govern every area of life. We will never be able to do this if we do not "desire the pure milk of the Word that we may grow thereby" - "if indeed we have tasted that the Lord is gracious" [1 Pet 2:2].

Christians are called to make this world a better place - they have been created in Christ for that very purpose. We are God's "workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand" [Eph 2:10]

Are you and I feeding our minds on what will strengthen our faith and enable us to serve the Lord in our generation [Acts 13:36]?

# Standing on the Shoulders of Giants

By Michael Bates

(Michael Bates is a former Member of Parliament and prepares 'Thought for the Week' each Monday .More information on [www.ccfwebsite.com](http://www.ccfwebsite.com)  
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" NOTHING THAT is worth doing can be achieved in our lifetime; therefore we must be saved by hope. Nothing, which is true or beautiful or good, makes complete sense in the immediate context of history; therefore we need to be saved by faith. Nothing we do, however virtuous, can be accomplished alone; therefore we must be saved by love." [Reinhold Niebuhr]

It is the modern way to re-write the past, avert our eyes from the future and limit our view to the self, the here and the now. This trait has produced a generation which is ignorant and therefore ungrateful of those giants on whose shoulders we now stand, arrogant in believing this to be the supreme age -the end of history, and selfish in seeing ourselves as consumers of opportunity and wealth rather than their stewards as we seek to hand the world on in better shape than we found it.

As I walked past Embankment in London last week I came across a statue to a remarkable man whose life and example are a

much-needed antidote to the modern way, his name - William Tyndale the Bible translator.

Tyndale was born in 1494 Gloucestershire, England into a period of seismic shifts in the social and spiritual tectonic plates of Europe and the known world. The fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Turks and the flight of Greek scholars to western Europe; William Caxton set up the first printing press in England; Columbus discovered America; The Inquisitor General of Spain would have burned to death 8,800 accused of heresy and tortured and imprisoned 90,000 more, and a young theology professor by the name of Martin Luther nailed his Ninety-Five theses against the Catholic Church to the door of the castle church at Wittenberg.

In considering the life of William Tyndale it is possible to discern at least seven characteristics, which are the hallmark of all spiritual leaders:

(1) **Vision** is common to all great leaders. It is the ability to rise up above the immediate struggles of

a given time and place and to point the way to a better land. Robert Kennedy said "Some men see things as they are and say why. I dream things that never were and say why not." The Bible instruct us, "*Where there is no vision the people will perish*" [Pro 29:18].

Tyndale was first and foremost a visionary. Whilst at Magdalen Hall (now Hertford College), Oxford he was embroiled in an argument with a group of scholars, when one of them said that they would be better off without God's law than the pope's. Tyndale responded with indignation, "I defy the Pope and all his laws, and if God spare my life I will cause the boy that driveth the plough to know more of scripture than thou dost."

It was this pledge, which became the vision around which Tyndale's future life would be shaped. He would not live to see the vision fulfilled, but because his eyes were fixed on eternity he was not discouraged by time.

(2) **Preparation.** Visions remain but dreams without implementation. The essential precursor of implementation is preparation. This is the example, which Jesus showed us when, after His baptism and before He embarked upon His ministry, He went into the Desert of Judea for forty days of prayer and fasting. The children of Israel wandered the deserts for forty years until they were ready to enter the Promised Land. William Tyndale had his vision and now began to prepare,

first by studying the three great languages of antiquity - Greek, Hebrew and Latin, which would be essential in order to fulfil his vision of translating the Bible into English and later he would add French, German, Spanish and Italian becoming fluent in all.

He then went on to study the skill of translation under Martin Luther at Wittenberg University home to the finest libraries of Biblical texts in Europe, where translations of the New Testament and Pentateuch had already been translated into German. Eagerness and a willingness to learn from others are essential to preparation for any great endeavour. A disdain for the wisdom and experience of those who have gone before is a sure way to failure.

(3) **Perseverance.** Seldom does anything worthwhile come at the first attempt and without struggle and hardship. James wrote, "Consider it pure joy when you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish it's work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything." [1:2-4].

The bishops' Convocation at Oxford in 1408 had forbade the translation and certainly the possession of an English version of the Bible. At the time of Tyndale's work of translation Henry VIII was still loyal to Rome in matters of religion and had no hesitation in upholding the ban on translation into the vernacular and supporting

Cardinal Wolsey's brutal repression of those who transgressed. William Tyndale and his fellow translators and printers were harried through Germany and into Belgium, sometimes escaping the King's agents by minutes and needing to start all over again in a new town.

Once the New Testaments were completed they then had to be smuggled into England and distributed. There was even a ban placed on all Flemish and German vessels from entering English ports in an attempt to stem the flow of Bibles into England. Such was the ferocity of this purge against Tyndale's translation that only one complete copy remains today.

(4) **Courage.** It is humbling for anyone who has sought to conceal a Bible on the way to or from church, or, been reticent about reading the Bible in public places, to remember the courage, which was evident in those who first brought us the Holy Scripture in our mother tongue. It was a matter of life and death. Many of Tyndale's friends, most notably John Fryth, were martyred or subjected to torture in order to reveal information about Tyndale's whereabouts. He was frequently betrayed but remained without bitterness.

Tyndale was calmed by the justice of his cause and confidence in its ultimate success calmed him. Courage, said Hemingway, is 'Grace under pressure' Tyndale had pressure and God poured out the Grace.

(5) **Teaching.** It is in our nature to carry with any great work delusions our indispensability and immortality. If a work is truly of God then it will necessarily transcend the capacity of any one individual to bring it to fruition. The mark of a truly great leader is one who invests their knowledge and time in others so that the work begun may continue to completion after they are gone. Jesus called the disciples and taught them being patient and forgiving with their fickleness and mistakes.

William Tyndale was a wise leader in that he spent a significant amount of time sharing his knowledge of translation; two of these men were Miles Coverdale who would prepare the first licensed version of the Bible in English in 1537 and John Rogers, who would later be martyred, completed the remaining books of the Old Testament from Tyndale's translation and these too were published as 'Matthew's Bible' in 1537 again under licence.

(6) **Service.** A man of Tyndale's education would have been much in demand. The printers and publishers of the sixteenth century were the software billionaires of their generation; such was the demand for the new technology of the printed word. If Tyndale had devoted his skills as a translator to the great classical works of Athens and Rome then he would have had been assured of a very comfortable life. But, instead, Tyndale devoted his life to the

service of the ploughman and the maid that they may have access to the inspired Word of God in their native tongue. It was a life of sacrifice and service in the Spirit of Jesus.

Three centuries later the social historian Trevelyan would write of another servant of humanity, William Wilberforce, 'He [Wilberforce] could not have done what he did if he had desired office. With his talents and position he would probably been Pitt's successor as Prime Minister if he had preferred party to mankind. His sacrifice of one kind of fame and power gave him another and a nobler title to remembrance.'

(7) **Prayer.** Eventually the authorities caught up with William Tyndale after he was again betrayed by a friend, this time - Henry Phillips. Tyndale was taken to the Castle of Vilvorde where after sixteen months of incarceration he stood trial and found guilty of heresy. On October 6, 1536 Tyndale was brought to the town square of Vilvoorden (six miles north-east of Brussels) to be strangled and then his body burnt.

When given a final opportunity to recant he instead

offered up a final prayer, "Lord, open the King of England's eyes." Less than one year later the King Henry VIII of England would issue the following injunction to be implemented in every parish in England: "That ye shall provide, on this side of the feast of All Saints next coming, one book of the whole Bible of the largest volume in English, and the same set up in some convenient place within the said church that ye have cure of, whereas your parishioners may most commodiously resort to the same and read it." In case we were tempted to forget-prayer changes things.

#### **Questions:**

- i) What is my vision? What is God's vision? How do these two visions compare? Where do they overlap and where do they diverge?
- ii) Who inspires me and why? In what ways do their lives embody the characteristics of spiritual leadership? What can we learn from their example?
- iii) In what ways are our lives a blessing to others? How are we investing in the next generation? How is my time contributing to eternity?

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## **Lord Shaftesbury - the Fruit in 1884**

"...in no period in the history of the world was there ever such a movement among the most degraded, the most miserable, and apparently the most abandoned and hopeless class of the community towards a knowledge of the Word of God as there is at present...I should hardly have thought it possible if I had not seen it with my own eyes...that hundreds and thousands of these poorest of the poor should be brought to such a desire for the knowledge of the gospel".

# Fearful Definitions

By Jill Carattini

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**A**T AN INTERNATIONAL film festival, actor Sean Penn amused his audience with a political quip worth examining. To a crowd of filmmakers, directors, actors, and actresses, he said, “We now have a president who thinks in terms of good and evil, and that comes from watching too many Hollywood movies.”

But why is it we are comfortable using the word “evil” in our movies but not in our worldviews? Why can “good” and “evil” comfortably classify our villains and heroes in Hollywood, but neither president nor preacher can use the title without objection?

Understandably, September 11th pointedly marked the re-emergence of the word “evil” into public arenas. For many, there was no word more appropriate to describe the cowardly actions of terrorism. But for many others, even in light of these perilous times, the word “evil” is a word to be avoided at all costs. So when our nation’s leaders admit its existence out loud, an awkward gasp is heard throughout the land. The word “evil” has ironically become evil!

C.S. Lewis explains this phenomenon well. A person does not call a line crooked unless they have some idea of a straight line. But

where did they get this idea of “straightness?” he asks. Thinking in terms of good and evil is dangerous business for anyone who has decided that God does not exist. An atheist who wants to remain an atheist, notes Lewis, cannot guard his words too carefully.

The difficulty the modern mind has with “evil” is precisely that it does not want evil defined. The moment evil is admitted, the notion of the absolute can no longer fit under the rug; it is an admission of a moral law and ultimately a moral law Giver.

The conversation in the Garden of Eden provides us with a profound look at the modern mind. The temptation was very significantly worded. The tempter says to Eve, “When you eat of this you shall be as God, knowing good and evil.” Ravi Zacharias explains that what the serpent intends by his words is, “If you eat of this, you will play God, defining good and evil. You will reinterpret the whole arena of ethics, right and wrong.” The key to the temptation was — and still is — the alluring idea of defining good and evil on our own.

Eugene Petersen makes this significant observation about the human experience, a truth that is found from the Garden to

modernity: "The experience of God... is accompanied by a temptation to reproduce the experience as God. The taste for God is debased into a greed to be God." <sup>1</sup>

We enjoy giving life to good and evil forces, to dark sides, and to super heroes and evil villains, because we play God, because the defining is ours.

Let us not confuse the desire in our hearts to know God — "He has set eternity in the hearts of men" — with the desire to be God—"yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end" [Ecclesiastes 3:11].

The defining is not ours. We were created to know the difference between good and evil. The Creator has done the defining.

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(Footnote 1: Eugene Peterson, *The Living Message*, (New York: Harper Collins, 1996), 223.)

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## Are You a Real Servant?

**W**E SERVE GOD BY SERVING others. The world defines greatness in terms of power, possessions, prestige, and position. If you can demand service from others, you've arrived. In our self-serving culture with its me-first mentality, acting like a servant is not a popular concept.

Jesus, however, measured greatness in terms of service, not status. God determines your greatness by how many people you serve, not how many serve you. This is so contrary to the world's idea of greatness. That we have a hard time understanding it, much less practicing it. The disciples argued about who deserved the most prominent position, and 2,000 years later, Christian leaders still jockey for position and prominence in churches, denominations, and parachurch ministries.

Thousands of books have been written on leadership, but few on servanthood. Everyone wants to lead; no one wants to be a servant. We would rather be generals than privates. Even Christians want to be 'servant-leaders', not just plain servants. But to be like Jesus is to be a servant. That's what He called Himself.

Are you available to God anytime? Can He mess up your plans without you becoming resentful? As a servant, you don't get to pick and choose when or where you will serve. Being a servant means giving up the right to control your schedule and allowing God to interrupt it whenever He needs to.

*Rick Warren*

# Congregational News

## INVERNESS

One of the highlights has been the 'Missionary Day' on 21 March, when we had Terry & Kathy Atkinson from Greece, Phil Steed (OMF) and Muriel MacLeod (Stornoway/ Cambodia). Terry preached at the first service and Phil at the second. In the evening we had a 'Missionary Panel', with the four missionaries responding to questions about their work. Hopefully the outcome of this will be a strong and sustained interest in missions.

The congregation is already very supportive of mission-work, but this experience has refreshed us. The Christianity Explored course has begun, and although at its early stages, it is a promising exercise.

The Ladies and the Men's meetings are running near the end of their annual cycle as we lead up to the summer break. The Book Reading Club has continued as a profitable activity.

The structure and meeting arrangements for the Christian Writers group have changed, so anyone who is interested in that should get in touch. The Sunday School at Drakies continues under the persevering commitment of some of the young people. This has been running for a good number of

years, and we value your prayers that the lessons taught will become effective in the lives of the children and also that of their parents.

The Annex which has been under construction for the last number of months is now nearing completion, and by the time you read this, the Official Opening should have taken place. We thank God for his goodness, and the many people who have given prayer and other practical help in so many ways.

We ask that you pray for us that we have wisdom, vision and energy to use in the Lord's service what he has given.

## HARRIS

The congregation looks forward to its Communion on the last weekend of April and to hearing the Revd A M Cattanach. Please continue to pray for those who are still ill in this congregation.

## STORNOWAY

The congregation were deeply affected by the loss of its Precentor, Mr David Mackenzie, who passed away on the last week of February.

David capably led the congregation in praise since its inception in 1989 and is sorely missed. David was well-known in the town and his funeral was attended by very many. We convey our deepest sympathy to his wife Mary.

During the month of March the "Christianity Explored" course officially ended but such was the success of it that an additional two weeks were added so that those taking part could look and listen to what living the Christian life would be like. Please pray for lasting blessing on this venture.

## **DUNDEE**

The 'sharing your faith' course 'Lost for Words' has now finished and we all felt the benefit of it. Thanks to Kevin for the work he put into this course. We have learned that we need to be much more aware of the opportunities God gives us daily to "*testify to the gospel of the grace of God*" [Acts 20:24]. Paul felt his life was not worth living unless he used it for the work assigned him by the Lord, the task of telling others about God's wonderful grace.

The Grotterstone meetings in the home of Kevin and Sine Stirling continues and the interest of the neighbours are maintained. Topics

for discussion are usually left to the minister himself. Please do pray for a deepening work of God's Spirit.

The congregation are still encouraged with the usual regulars coming from the community. Over 20 people from the area came to one of the Saturday Lunches recently. One elderly former Roman Catholic lady entered into a deep discussion with the minister. While she at one time believed the Bible she now said she did not believe in it at all. She was not afraid of death. She lived not far away and hoped to come back again. We pray for her.

The Sunday Club has the usual numbers of 4 to 12 still coming. The 'Drop-in Prayer-time' in the manse on Tuesdays is not large but always stimulates interest, especially as we also look together at 'The Purpose Driven Church' book.

We intend to have a communion on the 11th April and hope that Revd Archie McPhail from Oban will be able to attend.

Please do remember us in your daily prayers. With such a large population here on our doorstep, a door is open for the gospel, but as Paul said about Ephesus, there are many problems. He had human obstacles making life difficult for him, but there are other types of hindrances also.

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"WHAT IS GOD LOOKING FOR in the world? Assistants? No. The gospel is not a help-wanted ad. It is a help-available ad. Nor is the call to Christian service a help-wanted ad. God is not looking for people to work for Him but people who let Him work mightily in and through them. But isn't there something we can give to God? Yes. Our anxieties. [1 Pet 5:7]. God will gladly receive anything from us that shows our dependence and His all-sufficiency." *John Piper*

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# Presbytery News

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**T**HE PRESBYTERY met on Tuesday 2nd March 2004 and was constituted with prayer by the Moderator Revd Roderick MacRae from Edinburgh.

## STUDENTS

Mr Ross McFarlane had preached before the Presbytery as part of the "devotions" at the beginning of Romans 6:23 and was thanked for his well-prepared sermon.

Mr Malcolm Macleod, student, was then examined by the Presbytery when Revd D C Macaskill questioned him on the Autobiography of John G Paton and Spurgeons "Lectures to my Students". Mr William Byers questioned him on the Shorter and Larger Catechisms and Revd A N McPhail questioned him on Scripture.

## PRAYER POINTS

It was agreed that any congregation with particular prayer points, make these known to the Presbytery. Revd John Ross spoke of the situation in Assynt where the Free Church were considering making Assynt a "District Ministry" and that it was possible that Revd Andrew Fraser could become the minister.

Mr John Lister reported that the Annexe to the Kingsview Centre was due to be opened on

**Saturday 27 March** and requested that it be remembered in prayer so that the witness of the whole congregation in Kingsview would be a blessing to the community.

## COMMITTEE REPORTS

### Business:

Mr Kenny Maclean reported on the way that the funds were beginning to get rather low and as a consequence it was agreed, moved and seconded by ministers, that they forfeit their annual increase this year in order to make way for new anticipated salaries for additional ministries.

After much discussion it was agreed that the donation of £250 to The Scottish Churches Housing Agency continue to be paid this year but that the APC representative (Revd R MacRae) request that some sort of Christian literature be enclosed with the goods that are given out to help the homeless.

### Evangelism & Youth:

It was reported by Revd John Ross that a co-ordinated Evangelistic event ought to be held in every APC congregation during the month of October. Each congregation was free to adopt whatever form of evangelism was most suited to their situation and to the congregation's

talents and gifts.

It was also mentioned that anyone who felt led to use an Exhibition Stand to witness or Christian Bookstall should contact the Committee who would encourage and support such a venture.

As costs of suitable venues had risen considerably, it was noted that 25 children would need to be able to commit themselves to a Football Camp and that we should keep this in mind for next year.

The Presbytery was further asked to prayerfully consider if there was any part of Scotland that was particularly bereft of gospel preaching in order that the Presbytery might pursue the

possibility of church-planting.

AOCB

The Presbytery also agreed to send letters of good wishes to Messrs Murdo Ian Matheson in Oban, and Donald MacRae in Laide, assuring them of their prayers for a full recovery from their illnesses.

The Presbytery also met in private to discuss several items regarding the students and the position of a missionary.

NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the next meeting of Presbytery would be on the day as the Assembly viz, Wednesday 12 May 2004 at 2pm.

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## Parenting and How Does Your Garden Grow?

**O**CCASIONALLY I HEAR a so-called liberated parent say, "I don't want to tilt my child toward religion. I want to leave him free to examine the evidence and make up his own mind."

Such comments remind me of an old story about Samuel Taylor Coleridge, the great English poet. One day he was talking with a man who did not believe in giving children any religious instruction. After a while Coleridge asked his visitor if he would like to see his garden. The man said yes, and Coleridge took him into a section of the yard where only weeds were growing. The man looked at Coleridge in surprise and said, "This is no garden; this is nothing but weeds."

Coleridge replied, "Well, you see, I did not wish to infringe upon the liberty of the garden. I was giving the garden a chance to express itself and to choose its own production."

Parents, if you don't plant faith in your children's hearts, the weeds will take over.

*(Bill Bouknight, "Just a Thought," 2/19/04)*

# Restoring Relationships

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**J**ESUS DIDN'T SAY 'Blessed are the peace lovers', because everyone loves peace. Neither did He say 'Blessed are the peaceable' who are never disturbed by anything. Jesus said 'Blessed are those who **work** for peace' - those who actively seek to resolve conflict. Peacemakers are rare because peacemaking is hard work.

Peacemaking is not about **avoiding conflict**. Running from a problem, pretending it doesn't exist, or being afraid to talk about it is actually cowardice. Jesus, the Prince of Peace, was never afraid of conflict. On occasion He provoked it for the good of everyone. Sometimes we need to avoid conflict, sometimes we need to create it, and sometimes we need to resolve it. That's why we must pray for the Holy Spirit's continual guidance.

Peacemaking is also not **appeasement**. Always giving in, acting like a doormat, and allowing others to always run over you is not what Jesus had in mind. He refused to back down on many issues, standing His ground in the face of evil opposition.

Talk to God before talking to the person. If you will pray about the conflict first instead of gossiping to a friend, you will often discover that either God changes your heart or He changes the other person without your help.

As David did with his

Psalms, use prayer to ventilate vertically. Tell God your frustrations. Cry out to Him. He's never surprised or upset by your anger, hurt, insecurity, or any other emotions. So tell Him exactly how you feel.

Sympathise with their feelings. Use your ears more than your mouth. Confess your part of the conflict. If you are serious about restoring a relationship, you should begin with admitting your own mistakes or sin.

Confession is a powerful tool for reconciliation. Often the way we handle a conflict creates a bigger hurt than the original problem itself. Attack the problem, not the person. You cannot fix the problem if you are consumed with fixing the blame.

Emphasis reconciliation, not resolution. It is unrealistic to expect everyone to agree about everyone. Reconciliation focuses on the relationship, while resolution focuses on the problem. When we focus on reconciliation, the problem loses significance and often becomes irrelevant.

We can re-establish a relationship even when we are unable to resolve our differences. God expects unity, not uniformity, and we can walk arm-in-arm without seeing eye-to-eye on every issue.

[Rick Warren on 'Restoring Broken Fellowship' in 'The Purpose Driven Life']

# Wycliffe Translations

From Tyndale to now....

*"there remains very much land yet be possessed"* [Joshua 13:1]

## The work that is yet to be done

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Q. How many language groups in the world have the Bible?

A. Well, of the 6,809 languages in the world, some or all of the Bible is available in 2,303 and work has started in 1,410.

Q. How long will it take until all these language groups have the Bible?

A. In 1999 we calculated that at the current rate of progress by all agencies it could take another 120 years before translation had even begun. After 2,000 years of Christian history this is too long! How can Jesus' followers make disciples of all peoples without the Scriptures? So we committed ourselves to a challenging goal: to change our way of working in order to achieve this by, say, 2025.

Q. How much of this work involves Wycliffe personnel?

A. At present Wycliffe members are working on 1,262

languages spoken by 1.16 billion people, about 18% of the world's population.

Q. So what progress has been made since then?

A. Before 2000, the most new projects started in one year involving Wycliffe members was 25. Since then the annual average has been 54 (66 by all agencies). At this rate, work in all the remaining languages could start by 2045. To achieve this by 2025, we need to increase the annual rate to perhaps 120 by 2010.

Q. And how many languages are there without any of the Bible?

A. According to the latest figures, about 3,000. This is an estimate: over 40% of the world's 6,809 languages need more survey, and that figure is just the number of languages we know about now!

**Now pray!**

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**A**S THE BIBLE WAS ORIGINALLY written using 11,280 Hebrew, Greek, Aramaic words and the average typical English translation only uses around 6,000 words, it is obvious that imperfections in nuances and shades of meaning will occur. It should be remembered that it was only in 1560 AD that the text of the Scriptures was divided up into verses and chapters. Some of the original languages were written without spaces between the words and the Hebrew did not have any vowels. So do please pray for the translators of the Holy Scriptures.

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# Repent and Return

*"Repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, and that times of refreshing may come" [Acts 3:19]*

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ONE WRITER SAID 'Every honest person knows what it is to struggle with sin - to try and fail, to fall and get up again, only to fall again and feel so discouraged.' Paul wrote, *"For the good that I want to do, I don't do; but I practice the very evil that I don't want to do, the thing I hate"* [Romans 7:19].

In the middle of this painful battle we may cry, 'I want to change. I need to change. Can I change?' And the answer is, 'yes!' No matter how long you've been the way you are, trapped in that pattern of sin and defeated, listening to the enemy's accusations, even overcome with sorrow, you need to know that you can change.

But it is not a flippant transaction. If real heart change were easy, everyone would be doing it. Regrettably, we live in a day where people stand behind pulpits and ignore what the Bible says and give little surface patterns for change that only end up frustrating the sincere people of God.

So my word to you today is, 'You can change.' The accusations can be silenced, the lies can cease, the chains can fall off, and the bondage can be broken. But listen, there is only one way, and that is

God's way, and God's way is **repentance**. I was surprised to see how common the thread of repentance is in Scripture certainly in contrast with how common it is preached in the pulpit today.

The prophets of God stood before the people of God hundreds of times with a one-word sermon: REPENT! Ezekiel 18:30 is a good summary, *"Repent and turn away from all your transgressions, so that iniquity may not become a stumbling block to you."* As one writer said, "Sin trips us up. You've got to break those chains and leave them behind. The way to do that is repentance."

John the Baptist proclaimed, *"Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand"* [Matthew 3:2]. Luke 15:7 tells us that *"there is joy in heaven over one sinner who repents."* Peter preached it to the early church in Acts 3, *"Repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, and that times of refreshing may come."* Oh, we need those times of refreshing. But they can only happen when repentance comes first. The role of church leaders, pastors, and teachers is to call people to repentance, *"with gentleness correcting those who are in*

*opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance” [2 Timothy 2:25]. “God Himself is not willing for any to perish, but that all should come to repentance” [2 Peter 3:9].*

The great A. W. Tozer said, ‘We are a sinful people, ladies and gentlemen. Until that knowledge has hit us hard, until it has wounded us, until it has gotten through and past our little theology department, it has done us no good. Lots of us believe in the total sinfulness of man who have never been wounded with the knowledge that we have sinned. Repentance is a wound I pray we all will feel.’

So what exactly is repentance? Literally it means, ‘rethinking, a change of mind.’ Repentance involves our **emotions and will**, but it begins with a change of **mind**. All sin has wrong thinking in it and we try and justify it. For instance we may have said, ‘Just this once.’ ‘I can handle this.’ ‘I can escape the consequences.’ ‘This is the way I am.’ ‘I’ll just do it, then ask God to forgive me later.’ ‘It’s not wrong.’ ‘I’ll hide it.’ That is what goes on in our hearts when we choose sin. Repentance is taking all those ugly lies and putting them on the table and calling them what they are. When I sin, I deceive myself. When I repent, I turn my mind from that deception.

When repentance happens, it leads to two things. **1 confession**. *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” [1 John 1:9].* As I have said

many times now, the word ‘confess’ means ‘to say the same thing.’ When I confess my sin, I say what God says about my sin so that begs the question, am I really confessing my sin?

One writer said, ‘In order to understand confession, I have to see sin the way God sees it. Confession is far more than flippantly admitting, ‘Oops, I did it again. You’re right, God, it’s sin. Forgive me and I’ll be on my way.’ That is such a far cry from biblical confession, it’s no wonder we wallow in sin the way we do. Our fellowship with God is restored only through real confession.”

**2 Restitution.** What follows genuine repentance is restitution. Zacchaeus would be a good example of this [Luke 19:8]. The repentant person immediately moves not only to being right with God through confession, but to being right with other people through restitution. When I lie, I tell the truth. When I injure, I ask forgiveness and much more. I do whatever I can do to make it right on the horizontal level after it is right between me and God. That’s restitution.

Confession and restitution are easy to understand and terrifically difficult to do.

So I bring you this word of warning. *“Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your heart” [Psalm 95].* You don’t know how many opportunities you’ll have. ‘Well, how long is too long?’ I don’t know; the Bible doesn’t say. But I

want to tell you, if you're asking yourself, 'I wonder if I've waited too long?' you have. I don't know where the line is, but one thing is for sure, I do not want to go over that line and I certainly do not want sorrowful reflection saying, 'I wish I hadn't rebelled that one last time.' Today is the day of repentance.

Do you need the courage to believe that real, lasting change can take place? Yes? Well let's pray together and in his grace change together.

'Lord, what is it that you are looking at that is so offensive? Spirit of God, put your hand on that thing or the things of which I need to repent. Forgive me for sitting here, thinking only of the person I wish could hear this message. Lord it's for me. Forgive me for my silly surface approach to dealing with my sin. I need the deepest work of Your grace in my heart. In the quietness of this moment, Lord, please put Your hand specifically upon what needs to change - my heart! Amen.'

# HIGHLAND PREACHING CONFERENCE

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Balnafettack Road, Inverness**

**Thursday & Friday 6 & 7 May 2004**

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Woodland Presbyterian Church, Mississippi

**Dr Jamie Grant**

Highland Theological College, Dingwall

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- (B) Preaching on the OT from the NT (Dr Alistair Wilson, HTC)
- (C) Communicating the Message: NT Models (Mike Parker, Evan. All.)
- (D) A Theology of Preaching (Revd Donald C Macaskill, Dundee)

**Contact: Malcolm McInnes 01463 716843  
mmacinnnes@btinternet.com (Subject: Preaching Conference)**

# Desert Island Castaway

Alias - Jim Cromarty

Desert Island Castaway is an interview written by Catherine MacKenzie and will appear from time to time..

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**O**UR CASTAWAY on the Desert Island for this issue is Jim Cromarty. Jim is a well-known Christian and author from Australia and has had several titles published by a variety of publishers. At the moment he has a biography published on J.C. Ryle for Christian Focus Publications, 'It is Not Death to Die'. We join Jim as he begins to tell us a bit about his life as a young boy in the Southern Hemisphere.

My brother John and I grew up on a farm, which meant we had many jobs to carry out, but growing up in the country was wonderful. We had our horses, swam in the river, spent time fishing or rowing about in the rowing boat. Many nights we camped out overnight, cooking our sausages over an open fire. There were times when the countryside was covered with deep, muddy floodwater. The floods caused a great deal of damage to our farms, but for John and me it meant no school! The school bus could not get us to our boys secondary school, and we had time to swim and enjoy ourselves.

**It is obvious that you love books. How did this come about?**

TV was far in the future, but we listened to the wireless - the

Argonauts, The Adventures of Biggles, Mo McKacxy, World Famous Tenors and then The Goon Show. One of my daughters has 'borrowed' all of my Goon Show tapes. Maybe her sense of humour is like mine!

Books played a big part in our life. In one room of our house there was a wall of bookshelves filled with a great variety of books. Many were scriptural - I can still remember a big set of Matthew Henry's Commentaries on the Bible, but we had our special favourites - Biggles, The William Books, Treasure Island, Robin Hood, Coral Island and many more. Our mother was the local town librarian for some years and we had a constant supply of reading material brought home.

Mum read Pilgrim's Progress to us at night, after our prayers, in serial form. I can remember crying when we came to the death of Faithful at Vanity Fair. We used to receive Joy Bells, which was a Sunday School magazine for children living some distance from churches. Mum ran a Sunday School each Sunday for children living on farms in our area. We used Joy Bells which proved a very sound magazine.

We had our Bibles - the Authorised Version - which we read. Parts made me very frightened of meeting God. Once John and I thought the Lord was about to return. We had a dust storm and the sky was glowing a brilliant red. We set out for school on our bicycles wondering if the Lord would return before school concluded for the day. We knew what the Book of Revelation said! As a family we attended worship each Lord's Day.

**Tell me something about your conversion.**

After graduating from Teachers' College I was appointed to a one teacher school in the outback of New South Wales. It was there that the man of the house in which I was to live, told me I was not to bring a 'Protestant' Bible into his home. He was a Roman Catholic, and for the first time in my life I began to study my Bible to discover why he should say such a thing. The Lord used this as a means to convict me of my sins and sent me searching for a Saviour.

It was after my transfer from Iron Pot Creek to another one teacher school at Repentance Creek that the truth of the gospel burst open to my understanding. I still have a book I purchased from the book table at the small Baptist Church where some missionaries were holding a time for worship and teaching. The book was 'Sacrifice - A Challenge to Christian Youth' by Howard Guinness and in my handwriting I can still read: 'The night of the Nixon Team at Lismore. 9th August, 1958.' I had then written

'Jesus Christ for me!'

From that day on I became aware of the Holy Spirit changing my character and making me a citizen of the kingdom of heaven. I married my College sweetheart and together we conducted family worship and attended worship in the areas where I was sent teaching. Val won a book prize at College and when asked what book she would like, said, 'A Bible!' In our College days we were unconverted, but read our Bibles.

**So now that you are on this deserted island what kind of book would you like to bring with you?**

My brother and I, in adult life, spent many days, fishing out on the ocean. We took with us our Bible and metrical Psalm book just in case the engine wouldn't start and we were forced to spend some days isolated, while a search was made for us. Our plan was to have good reading and singing material if our motor failed and we couldn't return to shore for some time. Those two books would be my first choice.

Would you want to take anything else with you? You're allowed The Pilgrim's Progress with you as well as a copy of the bible. I'd pack the sermons of Douglas MacMillan - 'The God of all grace'. Then I'd have 'The Sovereignty of God' by Arthur Pink and 'Trusting God, Even When Life Hurts' by Jerry Bridges. I'd give Pilgrim's Progress a miss as I have read it several times. I'd find it difficult to exist without my books. In my study

I have several thousand books which have proved their worth over the years.

**Life on the desert island is going to be lonely – no human contact at all. Can you tell us then about someone who was a great spiritual influence on your life? Someone you will look back on and remember fondly as you make use of all that extra thinking time on the island.**

My grandfather - my dad's father. He had a bushy moustache and chewed plug tobacco. He was totally deaf and with grandma lived on the farm with us. Both were godly people, but grandfather had a special place in my life. His relations lived on the coast and often he took my brother and me on the one sulky day trip to visit them.

He'd stop at many places and ask questions of his friends and relatives, who wrote their news on paper for him to bring home. He could lip read what we were saying, but only because we were his constant companions. He taught us to eat oysters and enjoy outdoor life. He read his Bible and loved the Lord. Eventually, he fell ill and was confined to bed. I clearly remember the day - I was about 12 years old - when knowing his death was near, he called us one by one to his bedside as he had something to say to us individually.

Alone with him he spoke to me about the Lord he loved and his prayer that I would find Christ as my Lord and Saviour. He urged me to

read my Bible and pray. He spoke of the day when, if I became a disciple of Christ, we would meet again in Paradise. He prayed with me, and then called for the next family member. That night we gathered about his bed where he told us that he was about to die - in fact he became unconscious that night and died several days later. Standing about his bed we sang Psalm 23, someone read the Scriptures and prayed. It was a sad gathering, but what grandfather said to me has never been forgotten. I praise God that he answered his prayers for my brother John and me. I long to see him again in glory.

**You enjoy books and are a writer yourself Jim. What started you writing books?**

I always wanted to write books. I even took my typewriter with me on my honeymoon, but didn't write much! I taught for 27 years and had little time to write. The nine years in the ministry left little spare time, but my forced retirement due to ill health, gave me much spare time. The end of my ministry as Pastor of a congregation centred upon Newcastle in New South Wales (Australia) was a great distress.

I was well aware of Romans 8:28, but could not see any purpose in what had happened to me. We returned to our own home in the small country town called Wingham, where I went through a period of depression and further illness that resulted in the doctor finding a tumour on my parathyroid gland. That very nearly brought my life on

this earth to an end.

When I recovered, my wife, Val suggested a computer be purchased and I commence writing. My dream became a reality, and the Lord blessed my work. This was 1993. My books have circulated the world, some even being translated into Russian and Romanian. Again I felt useful in the Lord's service, despite my daily medication which includes morphine.

I write with my dog Wags at my feet (Wags was the result of Val suggesting that some pet therapy might be useful for me.) Val, with Elizabeth, my sister-in-law, and Lindy, our Pastor's wife proof read my writings.

**On the desert island you'll have a lot of free time to spend in reading and thinking but Jim, in your opinion do people today spend much time reading?**

No. Television and computer games have bred a generation that is largely disinterested in literature. It is difficult for publishers to compete with the colour and excitement of the TV programmers. Publishers of Christian books must produce the best possible reading material, but too often illustrations are just black and white. Research has discovered that it is usually women who purchase books and that the books that sell best are those with ample red colour on the cover.

Considering the number of

read? What was the last good Christian book you read? When was the last time you spoke to your children about salvation in Christ? How much have you spent in the last 12 months on Christian literature for your children? Give Christian books as birthday gifts and pray for the young people of the Congregation and those living near to you, that in the due course of time they might find salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ.

**So as you contemplate a possible future on a desert**

**island would you say that books have a future in our lives?**

Yes! The written word cannot be replaced. You can read material on your computer, but to study it you need a written copy. The problem today is that only a few people read. TV has replaced reading. Catherine, what was the last Christian book you read?

You'll have to wait until another issue when I interview myself to get the answer to that. I'm off to a desert island!

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## The Church & Society

"TODAY'S CHRISTIAN Church finds itself on the margins of society. But if churches take on the mind-set of the consumer society, seeking maximum personal satisfaction, we deserve to be on the margins.

But that mind-set is not what Christ taught His disciples nor what the Apostles taught the early Church. They taught us that we are here to love God, to love our neighbours and, through that, to change society for the better.

Paul told the Corinthian church, which preferred preachers trained in rhetoric to his own plain teaching, "*The kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power*" [1 Cor 4:20]. The Church is here to serve the community, as Christ served His and earns the right to be heard by showing love, as Christ did, in a selfish and cynical world."

[Fred Catherwood in 'It Can Be Done' ISBN 0 7188 3003 2]

## Ministry Training Fund

Congregations are reminded of the six-monthly collection for the Ministry Training Fund to be taken in **April** and October. Please take this up on whichever Lord's Day in April best suits your local situation.

And continue to pray that the Lord would raise up and equip those who would proclaim the glorious gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

*"And how shall they hear without a preacher?"* [Rom 10:14b] Please give as the Lord enables.

KM

# The Demise of Common Sense

IN A RECENT GALLOP POLL, 70% of those interviewed said they believed 'there are no absolutes when it comes to good and evil'. Fortunately God doesn't share their opinion. Listen to these sobering words:

'Today we mourn the passing of an old friend - Common Sense. He devoted his service to schools, hospitals and churches; he got jobs done without fanfare and foolishness. For decades, silly rules and frivolous lawsuits didn't affect him. He cultivated practices like...sharing with others...teaching kids spiritual values...living within your means. He survived the Industrial revolution and the Great Depression. But he couldn't withstand the ravages of declining moral and spiritual values. He watched as leaders became corrupt, and good people became apathetic. He saw the Ten Commandments outlawed in public buildings, prayer banned from the classroom and criminals enjoying more rights than their victims. He watched in despair as teachers who needed parental consent to administer an aspirin, couldn't tell a parent their child wanted an abortion.. Common Sense was predeceased by Truth, Trust, Responsibility. His funeral wasn't well attended - few realised he had gone!'

*"Don't move back the boundary lines" [Pro 22:28]. God established them for our protection and guidance.*

*Bob Gass*

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Congregations can, if they so wish, charge for their own distribution of the magazine, or give them away free.

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