

**Archdeacon Stephen McBride basically challenges
'PLENARY-VERBAL INSPIRATION'
in 'Thought for the Day' 6 February 2014**

In Proverbs 30:5 we read the following

"EVERY word of God is PURE".

The word that is translated "**pure**" means that it is **flawless, without imperfection** – literally, according to The Bible Knowledge Commentary, it means '**purified like the smelting of silver; cf Psalm 12:6**'. The verse of the Psalm referenced there reads "**The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times**".

Then in 2 Timothy 3:16 we read

"ALL scripture is given by INSPIRATION of God"

In his Study Bible notes Pastor John MacArthur writes '**Literally "breathed out by God" or "God-breathed". Sometimes God told the Bible writers the exact words to say (e.g. Jeremiah 1:9) but more often He used their minds, vocabularies and experiences to produce His own perfect, infallible, inerrant Word... It is important to note that inspiration applies only to the original autographs of Scripture, not the Bible writers, there are no inspired Scripture writers, only inspired Scripture**'.

We could therefore summarise the truth of these two portions of scripture as saying that ALL of God's Word is "**pure**" (flawless) because it is "**inspired**" (God-breathed).

In his '**Dictionary of Theological Terms**', Alan Cairns 'fleshes out' this matter of "**inspiration**" on pages 195-196. Here are some excerpts of what Mr. Cairns wrote - first of all this was how he defined '**INSPIRATION**' -

'Inspiration is the work of God, by His Holy Spirit, communicating His word to the writers of the Bible and enabling them to write that word without error, addition or deletion. Thus, though fallible human penmen were employed, the Holy Spirit ensured the production of infallible writings, true in ALL respects, both as to their ideas and their words. Thus, these writings are, in the strictest sense, God's word, and are therefore authoritative, the final rule of faith and practice'.

Mr. Cairns also highlighted **‘Christ’s Endorsement of Inspiration’** by writing –

‘The Lord Jesus Christ evidently accepted the Scriptures as the inspired and authoritative word of God. While critics present their revisions of the text and of the canon, He unhesitatingly received and appealed to the ENTIRE canon of the Old Testament (Luke 24:44), identical to our Old Testament in the books included. He pre-authenticated the New Testament scriptures and gave the promise of the Holy Ghost to guide His apostles “into all truth” (John 16:13)’.

In a section headed **‘Characteristics of Inspiration’** Mr. Cairns identifies 5 areas of **‘Inspiration’** and I want to quote points 3 and 4. Mr Cairns wrote –

‘3. It is PLENARY. The influence of God was sufficient to produce the desired effect – a book inspired and infallible in ALL its parts. The Bible is the word of God; it does not merely contain it.
4. It is VERBAL. It extends to ALL the expressions of scripture, even the words (Matthew 5:18)’.

Let me now move to the subject matter contained in the title of this article. The Radio Ulster **‘Thought for the Day’** was presented on 6 February by Church of Ireland **Archdeacon Stephen McBride** of ‘All Saints’ in Antrim. I didn’t hear it when it was broadcast but it was mentioned to me by a concerned Christian and so I downloaded it from the BBC web site and you can now listen to it on this link –

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NQiUEr8I1c8>

Well, what are we to make of Mr. McBride’s **‘Thought for the Day’** – harmless or harmful? Well, from my perspective I would vote for ‘harmful’ and for these reasons.

Mr. McBride feels that it is quite legitimate for us to use our mind to determine which, if any portions of the Bible can be legitimately regarded as The Word of God. Should we ‘trust’ in fallible human reasoning? **Proverbs 3:5** speaks to that in these words **“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart AND lean not unto thine own understanding”**. In an amiable conversation I subsequently had with Mr. McBride he confirmed that he subscribes to the school of thought that believes ‘the Bible contains the Word of God but is not in its entirety the Word of God’ (see point 3 above made by Alan Cairns).

Mr. McBride sows seeds of doubt over Old Testament factual accuracy by quoting from the PARABLES of Jesus, which we know are not factual but illustrative, and saying for instance concerning the parable of the prodigal son that ‘there was no father with two sons’ etc. Christians know the Lord was not relating an actual incident but that is no basis therefore to doubt factual accounts found in the Old Testament.

In his opening remark about **'do you believe in the Bible?'** he also coupled it with the expression **'are you saved?'** as if the need to be **'saved'** is a questionable assertion. Once doubt, intentional or otherwise, is cast upon a sinful person's need to be **'saved'** then the whole redemptive mission of the Lord Jesus Christ is called into question, a mission that He expressed in these words in **Luke 19:10 "the Son of Man is come to seek and to SAVE that which was lost"** (see also **Matthew 1:21**).

Mr. McBride approaches Bible study with the attitude of **'what is this portion saying TO ME?'** That is not how we should approach Bible study – the attitude should be a simple and straightforward - **'what is this portion saying'** - and when hopefully we have determined what God is teaching we should then pray for God by His Spirit to APPLY that truth to our lives.

In our conversation Mr. McBride also expressed reservations about the make-up of the Bible, feeling very much that man and not God has determined its compilation. Yes, there have been questions raised in the past about the inclusion or exclusion of certain 'books' but again the Bible tells us quite plainly that GOD will preserve His word – earlier I quoted **Psalm 12:6 "The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times"** and the very next verse says **"THOU shalt keep them, O Lord; THOU shalt preserve them from this generation FOR EVER"**.

Christians can have confidence that God has kept His promise and that the Bible can be assuredly viewed as **"The words of the Lord"**.

As I said earlier, the conversation I had with Mr. McBride was amiable and we touched on a few other matters including **'the gospel'** and I took the opportunity, for it seemed right in the light of something Mr. McBride said, to state that many churches view **'the gospel'** as 'Love God and Love neighbour' whereas of course **'the gospel'** is all to do with the life, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ to deal with **'the sin problem'** (1 Corinthians 15:1-4) and the opening words of the Lord Jesus as recorded in **Mark 1:15** are **"Repent ye, and believe the gospel"** – the first word **"repent"** immediately directs the focus to **'the sin problem'**.

Mr. McBride shared with me that he has great admiration for **William Barclay** who wrote many Bible commentaries. I did mention to Mr. McBride that Dr. Martyn Lloyd Jones didn't share his admiration for William Barclay and according to an article many years ago in the Evangelical Times (by Geoff Thomas) Dr. Jones viewed Mr. Barclay as **'the most dangerous man in Christendom'**. Other extracts from that article are worth noting and they are located in the section that is actually headed **'the most dangerous man in Christendom'** –

'What did William Barclay believe? Why must our assessment of him be tempered by other considerations? The problem is not merely that he did not believe in Adam and Eve, the historic fall of Adam into sin, the miraculous parting of the Red Sea, the historicity of Jonah and the whale, and the Mosaic authorship of the first five books of the Old Testament. It was not only that he often explained away the supernatural from our Lord's miracles. More seriously than all of that, virtually every single foundational element of Christianity was rejected by him; **and this was a man whose life's work was to train ministers of the gospel and who confidently communicated his own confusion to the man in the street.** Dr Lloyd-Jones said of him that he was "the most dangerous man in Christendom" (*William Barclay: The authorised biography* p 651 Rawlins). Peter Barnes wrote "Whereas Bultmann has slain his thousands, Barclay has his tens of thousands" (*William Barclay: an appraisal*. Banner of Truth, January 1968, p 25). Such statements were made purely on the basis of what William Barclay wrote. These were his beliefs:

1. **The Nature of God:** Barclay's God is not the Sovereign Lord of heaven and earth who does whatsoever pleases Him. "God needs men" he wrote "God needs me" (*Testament of Faith* pp112, 115). Pain and suffering are not the will of God for His children (ibid p 44). He thought such a suggestion was blasphemous. (Cecil: *The influence of Mr Barclay on Mr. McBride* might explain Mr McBride's uncertainty in dealing with the problem of 'suffering' that I refer to on page 9 of this article)
2. **The Person of Christ:** "In Jesus I see God" said Barclay (ibid p49). But he added "it is not that Jesus is God" (ibid p 49). As a Christ lacking the attributes of omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence (ibid 9 50) how could Barclay's Jesus be God? **Barclay saw Jesus as a good man, adopted by God as His Son** (*The authorised biography* pp 376-383 Rawlins).
3. **The Virgin Birth:** "**I do not think we are intended to take the virgin birth literally.** I think we are clearly intended to take the story of the virgin birth as a parabolic, symbolic, pictorial, metaphorical method of carrying the unique relationship with God back to the very birth of Jesus" (Rawlins, p 547).
4. **The Cross:** In his youth Barclay believed the New Testament's teaching that the substitutionary death of the Lord Jesus propitiates God's wrath and reconciles him to all who trust in the Saviour. **But Barclay shed that view too.** "I began to see the tremendous thing, that fact that Jesus came, not to change God's attitude to men, but to show men at the cost of the cross what God is like" (*Testament of Faith* p 52). The cross in some vague way becomes a great example of God's love. (Cecil: *So William Barclay is yet one more of the many who deny the very heart of The Gospel namely 'penal substitution'* as I outline extensively in my article located on http://www.takeheed.net/Take_Heed_2010/Current_Concerns/Jan_2010/Enemies_of_The_Cross.htm)
5. **The Resurrection of Christ:** **This too is radically reinterpreted by Barclay.** All he will say of the empty tomb is "I am certain that something happened to make Jesus available for all time in all places to those who love him and believe" (ibid p 108). How vastly different is that interpretation from the words of Matthew, John and the apostles concerning the resurrection which they witnessed.
6. **The Deity of the Holy Spirit:** **His views of this truth are equally vague** (ibid p 109) and are similar to the anti-trinitarianism of the cults.
7. **The Destiny of the Disobedient:** Barclay wanted everyone to know that he felt that all men and women would end up in heaven. "In one thing I would go beyond strict orthodoxy - **I am a convinced universalist** – nothing less than a world is enough for the love of God" (ibid pp 58, 61).

Geoff Thomas, in his concluding comments, wrote these words –

'No one else has succeeded on such a scale in popularly presenting religion since the death of Barclay. **He is the modernists "J C Ryle".... But let no one underestimate modernism's vitality and seductive danger to the unwary.** If dead religion is presented interestingly, with a blend of scholarship, reason, psychology and sanctimoniousness, millions will buy its wares and in turn be bought by it.

Another respected Bible commentator, William McDonald also outlined quite clearly his views on Mr. Barclay and you can read what he said by going to -

<http://www.takeheed.info/when-tolerance-is-sin/>

I did ask Mr. McBride if I detected some **Karl Barth** influence in his thinking and he didn't deny it and he also mentioned some other names that were not familiar to me. In relation to **Karl Barth** and what is known as '**Neo-Orthodoxy**' there are helpful sections in the '**Evangelical Dictionary of Theology**' and I want to share some portions from it on these matters. In relation to **Karl Barth** it says –

'**Karl Barth (1886-1968): Perhaps the most influential German theologian of the twentieth century... In 1919 he published the first edition of *Der Romerbrief* ... and is recognized as the beginning of neo-orthodoxy... another theme is the Christocentric Word as the ONLY source of the knowledge of God, Christ is God's Word incarnate; **the Word is in Scripture but the Scripture is not necessarily the Word... The Bible, seen as inspired, unique, to be taken with great seriousness is not to be confused with the Word.** It is a human document **and becomes the Word ONLY as the Holy Spirit testifies to it; thus use of higher and lower criticism is permissible and necessary** (Cecil: As I typed this I thought of how Mormons encourage people to read The Book of Mormon and look for a 'burning in the bosom' to confirm to them that it is God's word). **Although Barth saw Scripture as having authority he did not subscribe to verbal inspiration as the basis of scriptural authority... if Scripture has authority, ONLY as it witnesses to the Word, then it has no authority in and of itself.** Since many evangelicals feel it does have such authority **Barth's view of Scripture is seen to be seriously flawed.'****

Then in relation to '**Neo-Orthodoxy**' the '**Evangelical Dictionary of Theology**' says

'**Neo-orthodoxy: At best it can be described as an approach or attitude... that expressed itself in diverse ways. It began following... World War I... the first important expression of it was Karl Barth's *Der Romerbrief*... the fundamental. Theological concept of the movement is that of a totally free, sovereign God... and how he chooses to reveal himself...**

This revelation is the Word of God in a threefold sense: Jesus as the word made flesh; Scripture which POINTS to the word made flesh and the sermon which is the vehicle for the proclamation of the Word made flesh...

In the second sense, Word as Scripture, it is not intended that the two be seen as one. The Scripture CONTAINS the Word but IS NOT the word...

Neo-orthodoxy is tied to its own *Zeitgeist* (*spirit of the age, spirit of the time*) and thus does not have the popularity it enjoyed earlier in the century... Certain inherent elements have precluded its continuing influence... its view of Scripture **“The Bible is God’s Word so far as God lets it be” (BARTH: *Church Dogmatics*)** has been seen as a rejection of the infallible *Sola Scriptura* of conservative Protestantism... **Perhaps the greatest weakness within the movement has been its pessimism concerning the reliability and validity of human reason. If human reason cannot be trusted THEN it follows that since neo-orthodoxy relied on human wisdom, it COUL NOT be trusted.**

The same Bible that neo-orthodoxy makes subject to ‘human reason’ totally rejects such an approach. Earlier I quoted **Proverbs 3:5** - **“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart AND lean not unto thine own understanding”** and verse 6 continues **“In all they ways ACKNOWLEDGE HIM and HE SHALL DIRECT thy paths”**.

The source of true spiritual light is openly declared in **Psalms 119:130** **“The entrance of THY WORDS giveth light; IT giveth understanding unto the simple”** – no mention there of ‘human reasoning’ and of course that truth was written long before ‘the Word incarnate’ appeared on earth.

The apostle Paul was even more explicit in ruling against any exalting of ‘human reason’ over the Bible when he wrote **“Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world; hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom KNEW NOT God... Because the foolishness of God IS WISER than men”**(1 Corinthians 1: 20-21 7 25).

Earlier I referred to where Alan Cairns, in his ‘Dictionary of Theological Terms’ said in a section headed ‘**Christ’s Endorsement of Inspiration**’ the following - **‘The Lord Jesus Christ evidently accepted the Scriptures as the inspired and authoritative word of God’**. I would like now to invite you to listen to a helpful sermon preached by Rev Ivan McKay that addresses the Lord’s view of God’s word. You can listen to it on this link –

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AjomV3oq7nk>

Again I want to refer back to something I wrote earlier namely – **‘In our conversation Mr. McBride also expressed reservations about the make-up of the Bible, feeling very much that man and not God has determined its compilation.’**

Others who are much more knowledgeable than I in this 'field' have written short but helpful articles addressing this issue. One such can be found on

<http://www.biblica.com/en-us/bible/bible-faqs/how-were-the-books-of-the-bible-chosen/>

and I would like to quote just one portion from that short article - it says –

'By the end of the fourth century the canon was definitively settled and accepted. In this process Christians recognize the providence of God in providing us with his written revelation of himself and his purpose with the universe.'

That statement is very much an acceptance of and belief in what God said in **Psalm 12:7** that I quoted earlier - **"THOU shalt keep them, O Lord; THOU shalt preserve them from this generation FOR EVER"**.

The second article dealing with this issue is located on
<http://www.gotquestions.org/canonicity-scriptural.html>

Again I want to quote a short portion from this article where it says -

"This recognition of God's Word is usually called "canonization." We are careful to say that God determined the canon, and the church discovered the canon. The canon of Scripture was not created by the church; rather, the church discovered or recognized it. In other words, God's Word was inspired and authoritative from its inception--it "stands firm in the heavens" (Psalm 119: 89--and the church simply recognized that fact and accepted it"

The web of uncertainty that Mr. McBride has spun concerning the Bible is nothing new and in conclusion I would like to direct readers to two further sources relevant to this subject, that I hope will maintain complete confidence in the Bible, God's word.

The first resource is a short booklet entitled **'Why Believe the Bible?'**
It was written by **John Blanchard** and copies can be purchased via this link –

<http://www.christianbits.co.uk/product.php?id=0852345593>

The second resource is a series of talks by **John MacArthur** that were broadcast recently called **'Making a Case for the Bible'** and they are located on

Talk 1 on

<http://www.gty.org.uk/products/audio-lessons/90-320/Assorted-Attacks-on-the-Bible>

'Assorted Attacks on the Bible' (1)

Talk 2 on

<http://www.gty.org.uk/products/audio-lessons/90-320/Assorted-Attacks-on-the-Bible>

'Assorted Attacks on the Bible' (2)

Talk 3 on

<http://www.gty.org.uk/products/audio-lessons/90-321/Why-We-Believe-the-Bible-Is-True>

Concerning this particular talk by John MacArthur – in it he quotes what J I Packer wrote concerning the Puritan, Richard Baxter. Whilst the words of the quote are helpful in this context they do serve another purpose and that is to demonstrate the almost ‘schizophrenic’ theological thinking of J I Packer who penned these helpful words. By signing and defending his signing of the 1994 ‘Evangelicals and Catholics Together’ agreement Mr. Packer showed that he didn’t put into practice the doctrine and theology that he claimed to believe –

In essence he has a track record of being ‘a double-minded man’.

Rob Zins has a revealing and helpful chapter on Mr Packer called ‘The Elder Theologian’ in his book ‘On the Edge of Apostasy’ that can be purchased via

<http://www.cwrc-rz.org/store.html>

Talk 4 on

<http://www.gty.org.uk/products/audio-lessons/90-321/Why-We-Believe-the-Bible-Is-True>

This talk by John MacArthur includes quite early on a superb quotation from the writings of John Calvin concerning the ‘relationship’ between ‘human reasoning’ and the ‘enlightening work of the Holy Spirit’. Later Pastor MacArthur shows clearly from Scripture why confidence in the inspiration of the Bible is a work of the Holy Spirit that is never contrary to ‘human reasoning’.

Talk 5 on

<http://www.gty.org.uk/products/audio-lessons/90-322/Why-We-Believe-While-Others-Reject>

A truly marvellous talk by John MacArthur that scripturally (1 Corinthians 1:18 - 2:2) tells why ‘human reasoning’ will NEVER convince anyone of Bible Inspiration.

Talk 6 on

<http://www.gty.org.uk/products/audio-lessons/90-322/Why-We-Believe-While-Others-Reject>

‘Predestined to believe God’s Word’

Talk 7 on

<http://www.gty.org.uk/products/audio-lessons/90-323/The-Bible-Is-Gods-Word>

‘The truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth’

Talk 8 on

<http://www.gty.org.uk/products/audio-lessons/90-323/The-Bible-Is-Gods-Word>

‘Infallible and Inerrant truth’

Talk 9 on

<http://www.gty.org.uk/products/audio-lessons/90-324/Understanding-the-Doctrine-of-Inspiration>

‘True and Unique Inspiration’

Talk 10 on

<http://www.gty.org.uk/products/audio-lessons/90-324/Understanding-the-Doctrine-of-Inspiration>

‘False views of Inspiration exposed by the Lord Jesus Christ’

Perhaps I could finish this article with a form of **PS** and **PPS** as they relate to Mr. McBride's follow-up '**Thoughts for the Day**' on 13 and 20 February 2014. In the first (**PS**) he spoke about '**suffering**' and in it he suggested that 'The Church' cannot adequately explain the presence of suffering in the world and cannot explain why a God who is all-powerful and all-loving **can't do away with it**. He said he found the introduction to the book of Lamentations in **Eugene Peterson's 'translation'** of the Bible '**The Message**' to be of help to him by stating God's 'role' in our suffering in these terms - '**God enters our suffering and is our companion to our suffering**'.

Let me answer the 'dilemma' of suffering and the claim that an all-powerful and all-loving God '**can't do away with it**'. The Bible in the opening chapters makes it very clear as to why an '**ALL-HOLY**' (for HOLINESS is God's supreme attribute) has permitted suffering to be present in the world, now 'fallen', that He created. I would answer it by directing readers to the excellent article on the '**Answers in Genesis**' web site –

<http://www.answersingenesis.org/articles/nab/why-does-creation-include-suffering>

A very telling portion of that article reads

When Adam sinned, however, the Lord cursed the universe. In essence there was a change, and along with that change God began to uphold the creation in a cursed state. Suffering and death entered into His creation. The whole universe now suffers from the effects of sin (Romans 8:22)

I find the claim that '**God enters our suffering and is our companion to our suffering**' echoes very much the false claims that 'Mother Theresa' often made with regard to 'suffering'. 'Suffering' is an 'off-shoot' of the curse that God placed on His creation when sin entered into the world and today, when believers 'suffer', God does not '**enter**' our suffering neither is He a '**companion to our suffering**'.

For a believer, God's presence is a promised reality AS they endure 'suffering' and it is His presence IN THEM that brings comfort AS they perhaps even "**walk through the valley of the shadow of death**" (**Psalm 23:4**).

The only 'suffering' that God entered into was when the Lord Jesus Christ died as a substitute for sinners on the Cross of Calvary and bore the 'eternal suffering' for the sins of His people – Peter wrote in **1 Peter 2:24** that Christ "**bare ours sins** (the eternal suffering and condemnation they merited – punishment [**stripes**] and separation [**forsaken**]) **in his own body on the tree**" and then again in **1 Peter 3:18** he wrote "**For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God**". Paul also wrote in **Galatians 3:13** "**Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree**".

Another point that needs to be made about what Mr. McBride said is that he referred to the **Eugene Peterson's 'The Message'** as a **'translation'** (of the Bible). It is not, it is a **'paraphrase'**; in other words it conveys what Mr. Peterson thinks the text means and so it is in effect the product of Mr. Peterson's **'human reasoning'**. If people think they have **'The Bible'** in their hands when they have a copy of **'The Message'** in them, they are very wrong.

According to an article entitled **'What is The Message in the Message'** by **Noah W Hutchings**, ('Prophetic Observer': March 2005- Vol.12: No.3) Eugene Peterson himself actually and honestly said **'I would NEVER recommend it to be used as "hear the Word of God from the Message"'. It surprises me how many do'**.

Mr. Hutchings in his article cites some 'baffling' phraseology used by Mr. Peterson. For example he writes –

'There are no verse numbers in *The Message*, on purpose, so it will be more difficult to check and compare scripture. But the first five lines in *The Message* on John were comparative, so I read: "*The Word was first, the Word present to God, God present to the Word, The Word was God, in readiness for God from day one*". Will someone please write and tell me what this means? It is evident that Dr. Peterson didn't know what it meant'.

John 1:1-2 are very important verses in challenging the false claims of for example, Jehovah's Witnesses who deny Christ's pre-existent deity before His incarnation and also deny His co-existence as a member of a Triune Godhead. **A A Hoekema** puts it well in his book **'The Four Major Cults'** when he writes (p 239) **'As is well known, Jehovah's Witnesses deny the full deity of Jesus Christ, maintaining that Christ is "a god" but not "Jehovah God", that He is not equal to the Father, and that He is not the Second Person of the Holy Trinity'**. When correctly translated (and not as 'bafflingly' paraphrased by Mr. Peterson) these verses affirm the eternal pre-existence of Christ and His eternal co-existence as a member of the Triune Godhead.

Mr. Hutchings also wrote – **'Next I wondered what *The Message* had done to such passages as "the beatitudes", so I read first from Matthew 5:**

Authorised Version	<i>The Message</i>
v5: "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth".	v5: '<i>You're blessed when you're content with just who you are – no more, no less. That's the moment you find yourselves proud owners of everything that can't be bought.'</i>
v6: "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled".	v6: '<i>You're blessed when you've worked up a good appetite for God. He's food and drink in the best meal you'll ever eat'</i>

v7: “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God”.

v7: ‘*You’re blessed when you get your inside world – your mind and heart – put right. Then you can see God in the outside world’.*

Mr. Hutchings commented – ‘**Other than endorsing narcissism** (‘exceptional admiration for oneself’) **and pantheism** (‘God is all and all is God’) **I get no meaning from Dr. Peterson’s ‘interpretation’ of the Sermon on the Mount’.**

Dr. Larry Spargimino in his booklet ‘**What you need to know about The Purpose Driven Church**’ (Published by Southwest Radio Church Ministries) wrote on page 11 –

‘(Rick) Warren’s favourite translation (if it can be called that) of the Bible is *The Message*. In a later section of this study I present evidence linking Warren with New Age beliefs. At this point, however, I should point out that *The Message* has some clear New Age terminology that is so blatantly New Age that any intelligent pastor would avoid using it – unless of course he wants to teach New Age beliefs. *The Message* for example changes the word “Lord” when used in reference to Jesus Christ, to “Master”, a common New Age designation for transcendence’.

As regards the New Age term ‘**Master**’ being applied to **Jesus Christ** and why it is so inappropriate, **Dr. Eryl Davies** in his book ‘**Truth under Attack**’ has this helpful explanation on page 251 under a heading of ‘**What the New age Movement teaches**’ –

‘**Although they call Jesus ‘a Master’, yet His unique person as God the Son is denied. Their claim is that Jesus was the first one to realise and express the Christ-energy/consciousness. For them Jesus was only a man, while the Christ is the God essence that indwelt Him and all other humans... they prefer to talk about ‘the Christ’ or the ‘cosmic Christ’ rather than the Jesus of history.’**

The Lord Jesus Christ in His eternal deity is essentially ‘**transcendent**’ but in His incarnate humanity He was essentially ‘**immanent**’ and the New Age terminology ‘**Master**’ when applied to Christ would appear to deny that UNIQUE ‘**immanence**’.

Tricky concepts to grasp so perhaps these extracts from definitions in the ‘**Dictionary of Theological Terms**’ by **Alan Cairns** may be helpful –

‘**Transcendence**’: The theological term that emphasises the distinction of God from His creation, and His sovereign exaltation over it.

‘Immanence’: A word used to convey the idea of God indwelling His creation and its processes. It is the counterpart of transcendence... Pantheism is immanentistic: it in fact identifies God with the universe... These are unscriptural and clearly erroneous views of the immanence of God. Still, the idea of God’s immanence is scriptural. It is not antagonistic to his transcendence... The tabernacle, with the pillar of cloud, signified God’s presence or immanence’.

In **John 1:14** we read of how **“the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us”** – **‘The Word’** is of course the incarnate Lord Jesus Christ and the word **‘dwelt’** literally means **‘tabernacled’** and so I believe it is perfectly scriptural to view the incarnate Christ in his humanity as a legitimate BUT unique example of **‘God’s immanence’** – something that the New Age term **‘Master’** (that appears in *The Message*) would reject.

Another excellent resource that identifies major **‘New Age’** problems with *The Message* is the book **‘Deceived on Purpose: The New Age implications of the Purpose-Driven Church’** by **Warren Smith**. If you go to this link and you will see some of what **Warren Smith** wrote – the link is

http://www.crossroad.to/articles2/04/smith-deceived_on_purpose.htm

Later in chapter 14 of his book, **Warren Smith** again makes copious references to the New Age concept that the **‘God essence’** is, as **Dr. Eryl Davies** outlined, supposedly dwelling in **‘all other humans’**. On pages 157-158 **Warren Smith** writes

‘Also, as previously mentioned in chapter 3 of this book, this “immanent” aspect of God is also evident in Rick Warren’s favoured paraphrase, Eugene Peterson’s *The Message*. The notion that God is “in” everything and is “One” with creation is contained in the magical saying “as above so below”. This is the mystical New Age phrase that Eugene Peterson injected in its entirety into the Lord’s Prayer and in its derivative form into Colossians 1:16 – the verse that Rick Warren used to introduce his readers to *The Purpose Driven Life*... Rick Warren, Robert Schuller (under whom Rick Warren studied and from whom Mr. Warren basically plagiarised a number of thoughts and writings but gave Mr. Schuller no credit for them) and Eugene Peterson are all now teaching this immanent aspect of God – that God is “in” everyone’.

For anyone who would like to purchase a copy of **‘Deceived on Purpose: The New Age implications of the Purpose-Driven Church’** by **Warren Smith** you can do so by going to this link -

http://www.lighthouse-trails.com/mm5/merchant.mvc?Screen=PROD&Store_Code=LTP&Product_Code=DP&Category_Code=WS

I believe that Mr. McBride's liking for what Eugene Peterson wrote in *The Message* and his failure to understand or explain the presence of 'suffering' in the world are really the by-products of failing to accept the 'inspiration' of the 'real Bible' in all its fullness preferring rather to subject it to neo-orthodox 'human reasoning'.

Then in relation to the PPS for Mr. McBride's presentation on 20 February 2014 he actually made a good case for making sure that our Christian walks match up to our claims to be a Christian. Unfortunately he then marred it all by giving a quotation (disputed in some quarters) that is attributed to 'Saint Francis' of Assisi to the effect that we should 'preach the gospel at all times – use words if necessary'. Yes of course the lives of Christians should reflect lives that have been transformed by 'The Gospel' – I have no problem with that sentiment. My problem is with 'the supposed source' – 'Saint Francis'. By quoting him Mr. McBride has intentionally or otherwise conveyed the impression that 'Saint Francis' was a Christian who knew the true 'gospel'. Sadly 'the facts' would indicate otherwise.

On this link <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/f.htm> we read this entry – 'Francis of Assisi - Long article on St. Francis, founder, mystic, perhaps the most beloved Catholic saint of all'. Here are some extracts from that article –

'Founder of the Franciscan Order, born at Assisi in Umbria, in 1181 or 1182 — the exact year is uncertain; died there, 3 October, 1226... at length he resolved to embrace a military career... His biographers tell us that **the night before Francis set forth he had a strange dream**, in which he saw a vast hall hung with armour all marked with the Cross. "These", said a voice, "are for you and your soldiers." "I know I shall be a great prince", exclaimed Francis exultingly, as he started for Apulia. But a second illness arrested his course at Spoleto. There, we are told, **Francis had another dream** in which the same voice bade him turn back to Assisi. He did so at once. This was in 1205... One day, while crossing the Umbrian plain on horseback, Francis unexpectedly drew near a poor The sudden appearance of this repulsive object filled him with disgust and he instinctively retreated, but presently controlling his natural aversion he dismounted, embraced the unfortunate man, and gave him all the money he had. **About the same time Francis made a pilgrimage to Rome**. Pained at the miserly offerings he saw at the tomb of St. Peter, he emptied his purse thereon. Then, as if to put his fastidious nature to the test, he exchanged clothes with a tattered mendicant and stood for the rest of the day fasting among the horde of beggars at the door of the basilica. Not long after his return to Assisi, **whilst Francis was praying before an ancient crucifix in the forsaken wayside chapel of St. Damian's below the town, he heard a voice saying: "Go, Francis, and repair my house, which as you see is falling into ruin."**... On a certain morning in 1208, probably 24 February, **Francis was hearing Mass** in the chapel of St. Mary of the Angels, near which he had then built himself a hut; the Gospel of the day told how the disciples of Christ were to **possess neither gold nor silver, nor scrip for their journey, nor two coats, nor shoes, nor a staff**, and that they were to exhort sinners to repentance and announce the Kingdom of God... **Francis took these words as if spoken directly to himself, and so soon as Mass was over threw away the poor fragment left him of the world's goods, his shoes, cloak, pilgrim staff, and empty wallet**. At last he had found his vocation. Having obtained a coarse woollen tunic of "beast colour", the dress then worn by the poorest Umbrian peasants, and tied it round him with a knotted rope, Francis went forth at once exhorting the people of the country-side to penance, brotherly love [↓], and peace... his example even drew others to him...

"This shall be our rule of life", exclaimed Francis, and led his companions to the public square, where they forthwith gave away all their belongings to the poor. After this they procured rough habits like that of Francis, and built themselves small huts near his at the Porziuncola. A few days later Giles, afterwards the great ecstatic and sayer of "good words" became the third follower of Francis. The little band divided and went about, two and two, making such an impression by their words and behaviour that before long several other disciples grouped themselves round Francis eager to share his poverty... the Penitents of Assisi, as Francis and his followers styled themselves, set out for Rome to seek the approval of the Holy See, although as yet no such approbation was obligatory. There are differing accounts of Francis's reception by Innocent III... Innocent, moved it is said by a dream in which he beheld the Poor Man of Assisi upholding the tottering Lateran, gave a verbal sanction to the rule submitted by Francis and granted the saint and his companions leave to preach repentance everywhere... Early in August, 1224, Francis retired with three companions to "that rugged rock 'twixt Tiber and Arno", as Dante called La Verna, there to keep a forty-days fast in preparation for Michaelmas. During this retreat the sufferings of Christ became more than ever the burden of his meditations; into few souls, perhaps, had the full meaning of the Passion so deeply entered. It was on or about the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross (14 September) while praying on the mountainside, that he beheld the marvellous vision of the seraph, as a sequel of which there appeared on his body the visible marks of the five wounds of the Crucified which, says an early writer, had long since been impressed upon his heart. Brother Leo, who was with St. Francis when he received the stigmata, has left us in his note to the saint's autograph blessing, preserved at Assisi a clear and simple account of the miracle, which for the rest is better attested than many another historical fact. The saint's right side is described as bearing an open wound which looked as if made by a lance, while through his hands and feet were black nails of flesh, the points of which were bent backward. After the reception of the stigmata, Francis suffered increasing pains throughout his frail body, already broken by continual mortification... Francis was canonized at St. George's by Gregory IX, 16 July, 1228. On that day following the pope laid the first stone of the great double church of St. Francis, erected in honour of the new saint, and thither on 25 May, 1230, Francis's remains were secretly transferred by Brother Elias and buried far down under the high altar in the lower church. Here, after lying hidden for six centuries, like that of St. Clare's, Francis's coffin was found, 12 December, 1818, as a result of a toilsome search lasting fifty-two nights. This discovery of the saint's body is commemorated in the order by a special office on 12 December, and that of his translation by another on 25 May. His feast is kept throughout the Church on 4 October, and the impression of the stigmata on his body is celebrated on 17 September... A very cursory inquiry into Francis's religious belief suffices to show that he embraced the entire Catholic dogma, nothing more or less... Francis's lightness had its source in that entire surrender of everything present and passing, in which he had found the interior liberty of the children of God; it drew its strength from his intimate union with Jesus in the Holy Communion. The mystery of the Holy Eucharist, being an extension of the Passion, held a preponderant place in the life of Francis, and he had nothing more at heart than all that concerned the cultus of the Blessed Sacrament. Hence we not only hear of Francis conjuring the clergy to show befitting respect for everything connected with the Sacrifice of the Mass, but we also see him sweeping out poor churches, questing sacred vessels for them, and providing them with altar-breads made by himself. So great, indeed, was Francis's reverence for the priesthood, because of its relation to the Adorable Sacrament that in his humility he never dared to aspire to that dignity... Perhaps it savours of exaggeration to say, as has been said, that "all the threads of civilization in the subsequent centuries seem to hark back to Francis", and that since his day "the character of the whole Roman Catholic Church is visibly Umbrian".

Rather than try to list all the reasons why Francis of Assisi is rightly described by the Catholic Encyclopaedia as '**a mystic**' (he clearly had numerous occult experiences in his life) and a zealous (Roman) '**Catholic saint**' I have simply highlighted in red some portions that bring out these truths very clearly and which demonstrate that Francis was no Christian and knew nothing of the true Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

As for Roman Catholic '**Saints**' and the claimed '**Stigmata**' I can do no better than to direct you to the excellent half-hour TV debate that my good brother in Christ, former Roman Catholic, Rob Zins did some years ago. It can be viewed (2-parts) on

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tiooPLellw>

and

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0IXQI2YqUps>

Amiable, polite and respectful as Mr. McBride is, I do fear that he may not be fully-equipped for the ministry that he currently exercises. I believe he needs to set aside his reliance on '**human reasoning**' and to seek rather to be guided by God's gift to true believers, the **Holy Spirit**, for His role is to guide God's people, especially His spokespersons, "**into all truth**" (**John 16:13**).

Cecil Andrews – 'Take Heed' Ministries - 24 February 2014