

Jargon, Wordiness, Clichés

Today our eyes and ears are constantly bombarded by politicians, preachers, salespersons, product manufacturers, in fact, anyone wanting to capture our attention and perhaps our money with their "message."

Preachers want to inspire us and some of them do. Politicians try to convince us that their hearts are bleeding for the disadvantaged, unemployed, safety on public transport and, if elected, they'll see to it that we will have no more worries! What ruins this type of communication is that we have heard it all before.

Various trades and professions have their "in house" jargon that frequently succeeds in blinding the hearer or reader with science. We shrug it off with the belief that those who speak such lofty words know what they are talking about even if we don't. Get involved in the world of shorthand texting and you may have a brain seizure!

A respected judge said from the bench that speakers should avoid words that send hearers to the dictionary. Writers, preachers, politicians, medical doctors, lawyers and many others need the same advice. But sadly the judge's advice is too often ignored.

Winston Churchill was a great wordsmith. Speaking of Hitler, he did not refer to him as the incarnation of diabolical forces. No. He simply said: "That evil man over there" and the words came alive.

The Bible has hundreds of instances of very effective word economy. For example, the statement that "Jesus wept" still echoes down the centuries with its original poignancy. Some statements are mini sermons in themselves: "Your faith has saved you. Go! Sin no more." "Let the person without sin cast the first stone."

Another disturbing factor in today's communications is the practice of using clichés such as "put it this way," or "at this moment of time," just to mention two. Business letters and emails are still cluttered with archaic phrases such as "we acknowledge" and "awaiting your reply." The speaker of the house still asks parliamentarians to "resume their seats" instead of saying "will the member for Snake Gully just sit down."

To avoid Christian jargon, use a Bible translation that is easily understood. For example, John 1:18 in two different translations illustrates this: "No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known" is a great translation of the Greek text but "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him" is ambiguous for the average reader.

One of the maxims of the Bible Society for translators is: "It must be understandable." As Christians, let's de-jargonise our faith.