



Echoes of the Word made flesh

"The Word became flesh..." (John 1:14)

Thank you. Mike, it's a joy each week to make the 70 minute drive up here in order to hear you proclaim the Trinitarian gospel of grace in Jesus with clarity and love. And everyone in Crosswalk, Candace and I thank you for welcoming us into your family, where the love of God is lived out in relationships.

This is the room on the 5th floor of the University of Oklahoma Libraries which holds the Bizzell Bible collection.



Echoes of the Word made flesh

A Christ-centered, Incarnational, Trinitarian appreciation of old Bibles

Why do Bibles from the past matter? Why do we care about old Bibles? Physical copies of Bibles, like the printed Bible you have in your hand, are echoes of the Living Word made flesh. How can we learn to appreciate our Bibles and old Bibles in a Christ-centered, Incarnational, Trinitarian way?

Christ-
centered

One unique story
that leads to Jesus

Drama, narrative, literature;
not a systematic theology

“Then he opened their minds so
they could understand the Scriptures.”
(Luke 24:45)

Our attitude toward the Bible is Christ centered. The story of the Bible is one unique story that leads to Jesus. As Luke tells us, Jesus opened his disciples' minds so they could understand that the Scriptures pointed to him. So the Bible is not a systematic theology. It is a *story*.

~~, a drama, a narrative, much like the Lord of the Rings, which has stories within stories within stories.~~

Christ-centered	One unique story that leads to Jesus	Drama, narrative, literature; not a systematic theology
Incarnational	He came down	He finds us; Not that we find him nor raise ourselves up

“The Word became flesh” (John 1:14)

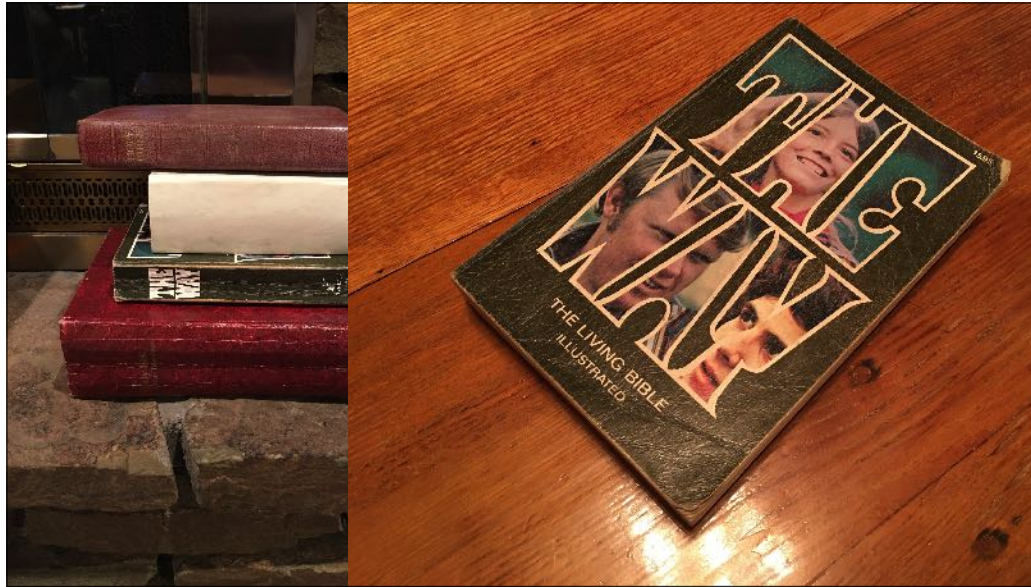
The Bible is Incarnational, about the Word becoming flesh. It all hangs on the fact that Jesus came down to us. God finds us; we could not find him. We could never raise ourselves up to God. God speaks, and he speaks in our human language, or we would never know him.

Christ-centered	One unique story that leads to Jesus	Drama, narrative, literature; not a systematic theology
Incarnational	He came down	He finds us; Not that we find him nor raise ourselves up
Trinitarian	Relationship	Emphasis on Who, not what: Who God really is; Who we really are in relationship with him

Our approach to the Bible is therefore Trinitarian, because through his speech we know him in personal relationship. We learn *who* God really is, and *who* we really are in relationship with him. There are lots of “whats” we may not understand, but the “Who” questions are what really matter. Who is God? God speaks because God is love. He figured out how to get through to us. He is not ashamed to enter our world and use our speech in order to bring us into life-giving relationship with him.



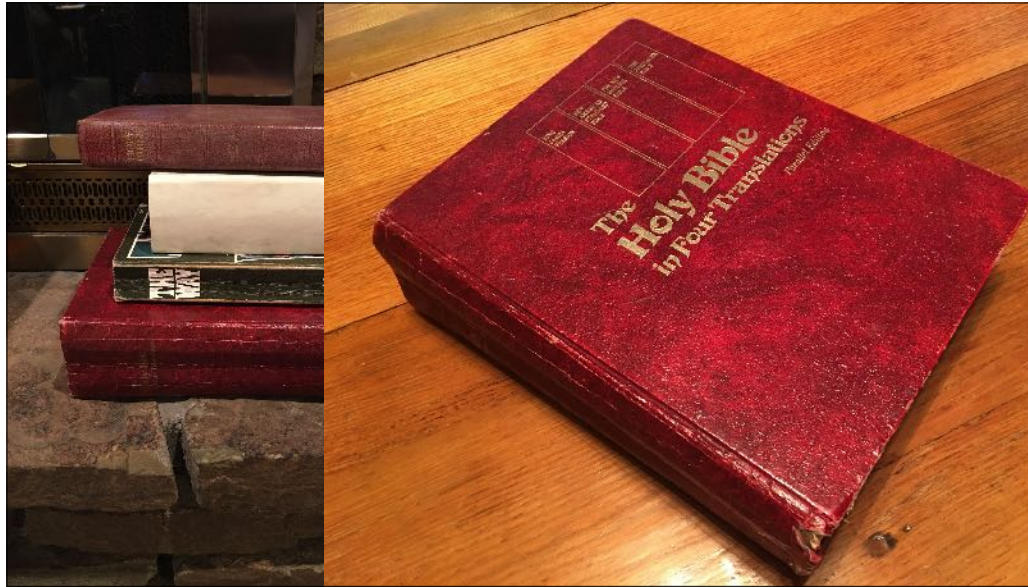
Let's apply all that, for a start, to the Bibles we ourselves own. These are four of my favorite Bibles. How many of you have more than one Bible at home? (Show of hands)



This was the first Bible I read through. Would I mark the same passages now? Probably not. Would I agree with what I wrote in it back then? Probably not. But it's a sign to me of God meeting me and bringing me on the journey to know him, which I'm still on.



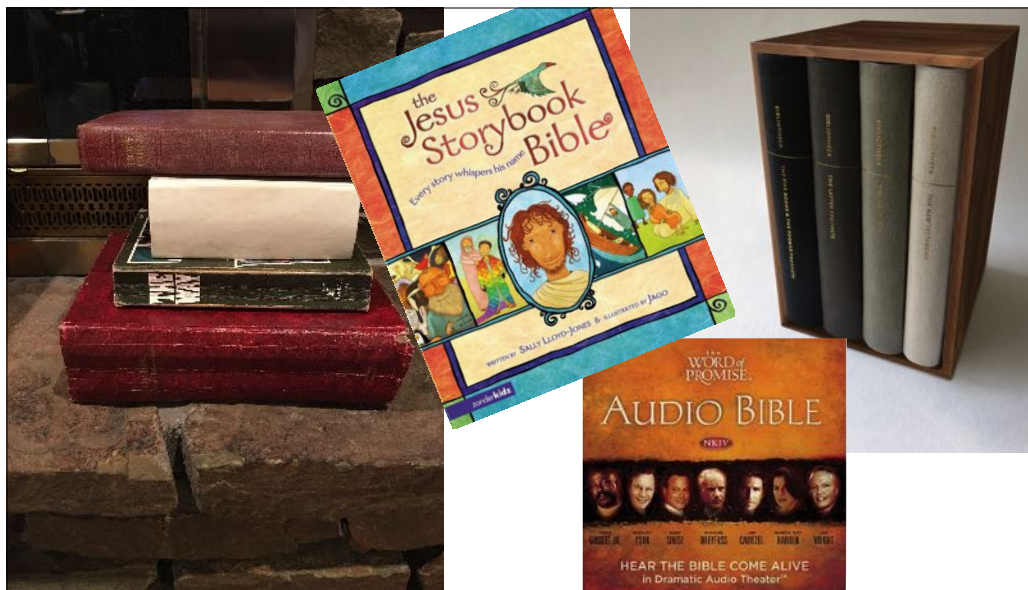
My Dad gave me this Bible. I love it. And tucked inside its pages I keep photos of my wife and kids. :)



This is a seriously heavy Bible. When I was in Junior High, I lugged it to school, because I didn't want to miss any possible free time that might become available to read four different translations side by side. Of course, it was so large teachers could tell if I was reading the Bible when I should have been doing class assignments.



I switched to a digital Bible some time ago, but this is the last printed version of the Bible I've used. Beautiful leather, a single wide column of legible text, ample margins for notetaking. I loved reading this Bible.



Here are three more Bibles we have at home. There are all kinds of Bibles. Do you have any Bibles that you love, that tell part of your story? What stories do your Bibles tell? What makes them appeal to you? Ask each other these questions during the pot-luck today. Let's have a show of hands: (1) How many of you have a Bible at home that belonged to someone else? (2) To an earlier period of your life? (3) A special version of the Bible for kids? (3) In more than one translation? (4) In a non-English language? Cool.

I have hidden your word in my heart...

- “I rejoice in following your statutes as one rejoices in great riches.”
- “My soul is consumed with longing for your laws at all times.”
- “I run in the path of your commands, for you have set my heart free.”
- “How I long for your precepts!”
- “I delight in your commands because I love them. I reach out for your commands, which I love, that I may meditate on your decrees.”

Psalm 119

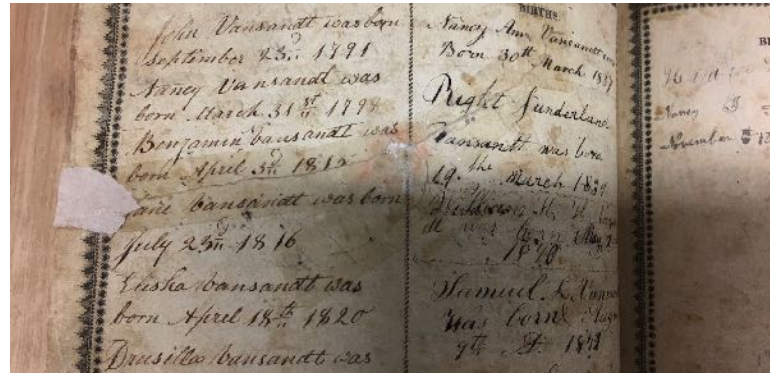
If we think about the Bibles we have, can we say about them what David says about the Word in Psalm 119? (Ask someone to read) Is this how we think of our Bibles? If not, then...



Maybe we are thinking of the Bible as Zeus' Big Book of Rules? As if its purpose is to show us how we are supposed to do religious works to lift us up to God, like perfectly obey the 10 commandments. • Or to play religious games, by making a deal with God. Or by passing blame onto others, trying not to get punished. Trying to satisfy Zeus, avoid his thunderbolts, cajole him to grant us good fortune for a season. If this is what the Bible means to you, then old Bibles won't seem very meaningful, will they?

Trinitarian	Unitarian
Jesus comes down to us	We have to rise up to him
Story of who he is in relationship with us	Zeus's Big Book of Rules
Place where we are invited to participate in that story	Courthouse with conditions and terms of contract
Echoes of the Word become flesh	Reverberations of failure and condemnation; trying to be a good person
Can't wait to hear the word	Don't much like reading the Bible except when we feel we've been pretty good
God's word inscribed on our hearts	Laws inscribed on tablets

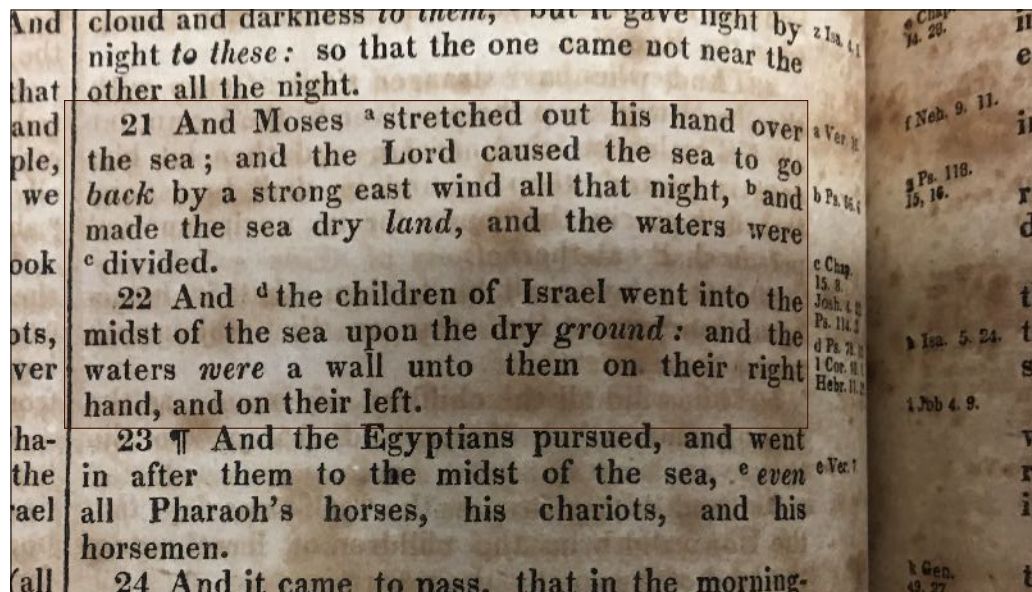
But there's another way. Let's contrast the two approaches to the Bible as the Trinitarian and Unitarian models. The Unitarian model is the one with Zeus. Most of us spend our lifetimes trying to move from the Unitarian to the Trinitarian models. In the Trinitarian model, Jesus comes down to us, whereas in the Unitarian model we have to rise up to him. In the Trinitarian model, the Bible is the story of *who* God is in relationship with us, not Zeus' Big Book of Rules. In the Trinitarian model, the Bible is the place where we are invited to participate in that story; not a courthouse with conditions and terms of contract for maybe getting a pass. In the Trinitarian model, the Bible is an echo of the Word becoming flesh, becoming human like us; it's not about failure or condemnation or trying to be good on our own. In the Trinitarian model, the Bible is something we can't wait to hear, a word of hope we long for, that fulfills the longing of our hearts to be loved and included; on the other model, we don't much feel like reading the Bible unless we happen to think we've been doing pretty good lately. In the Trinitarian model, God wants to give himself to his people in a personal way, so the Bible is the promise of God's word being inscribed on our hearts; in the other model it's just laws inscribed on tablets of stone. Which model we adopt makes all the difference in how we feel about the Bible! About the Bibles we may own, and the Bibles that others have made in history.



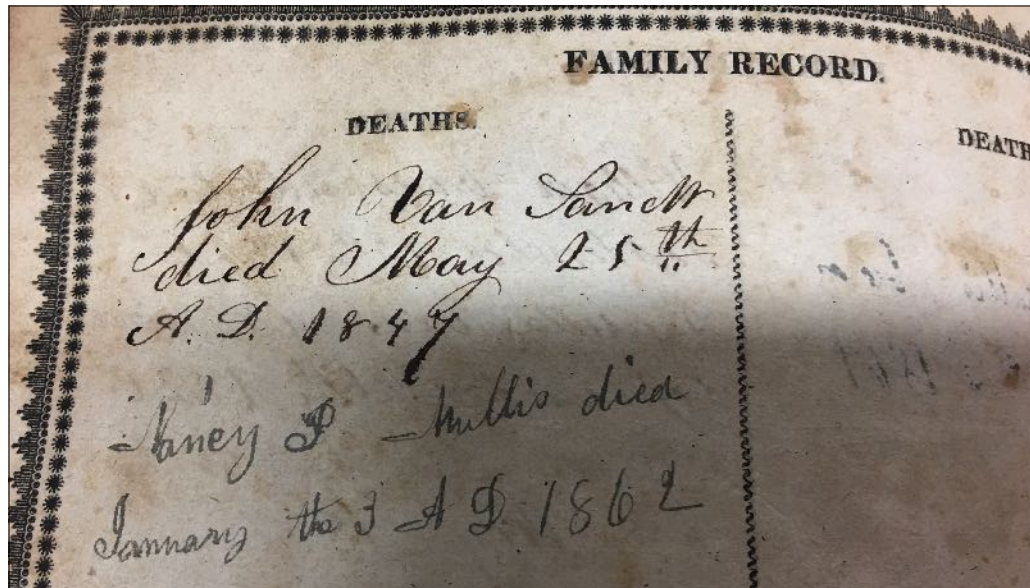
Van Sandt family Bible

“One generation commends your works to another; they tell of your mighty acts.” (Ps. 145:4)

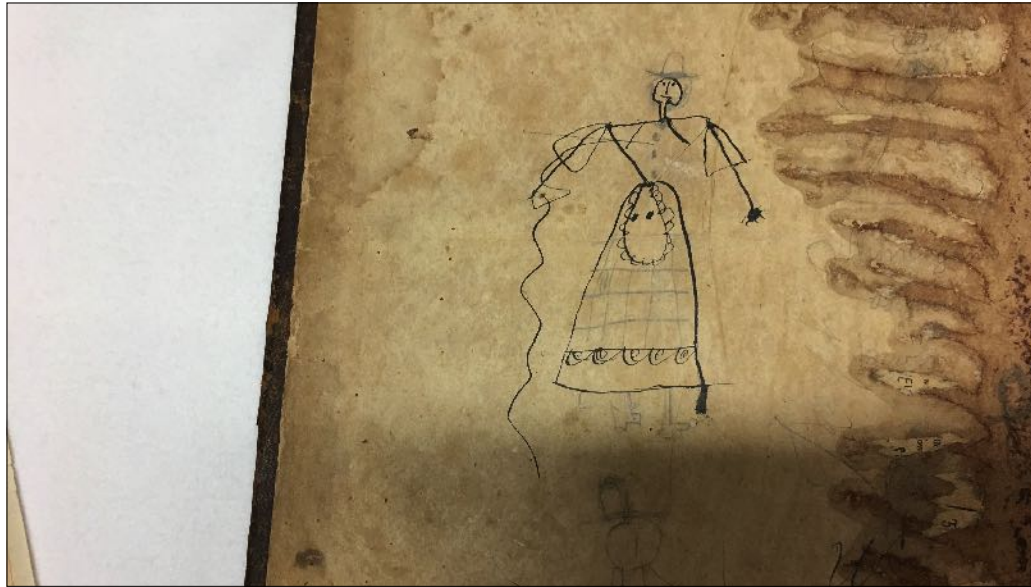
Let's consider a Bible story. This story is particularly for Voices of Hope (raise hands if you're in Voices of Hope). You've welcomed us like family, so this is a story of a family Bible that belonged to the Van Sandt family back in the 19th century. Family Bibles remind me of Ps 145: “One generation commends your works to another; they tell of your mighty acts.”



One of those mighty acts was the Exodus from slavery and bondage through the miraculous deliverance of God, as told in the book of Exodus. It's a story to remember, to pass down from parents to children, from generation to generation. The exodus is an enduring hope for everyone who is oppressed. This story is for every generation: the Truth will set you free, and the Truth is a person, Jesus, the Living Word.



So who is this family that knew the truth of Jesus and the exodus from slavery that he brings? Can you make out the name of John Van Zandt, d. 1847? John married Nancy Runyon. They lived in Ohio where they hid fugitive slaves in the basement of their home. John would then lead the fugitives to the next stop on the Underground Railroad. He was eventually jailed for these activities. He was nearly bankrupted, and had to sell his land and property, when the Supreme Court of the United States ruled that he had to pay restitution to the owners in Kentucky of the slaves he had helped free. So this is the Bible that belonged to that family who believed in the story of the Exodus. They believed that the Word of God is living Truth that sets us free.



Given what we know of them, I'm sure that John and Nancy didn't scold their daughter too much when she drew a picture of her mother on the inside cover of their family Bible. I like to think that the daughter who drew this picture shared this drawing, and the Bible, with the fugitives hiding in their basement on their way to freedom.

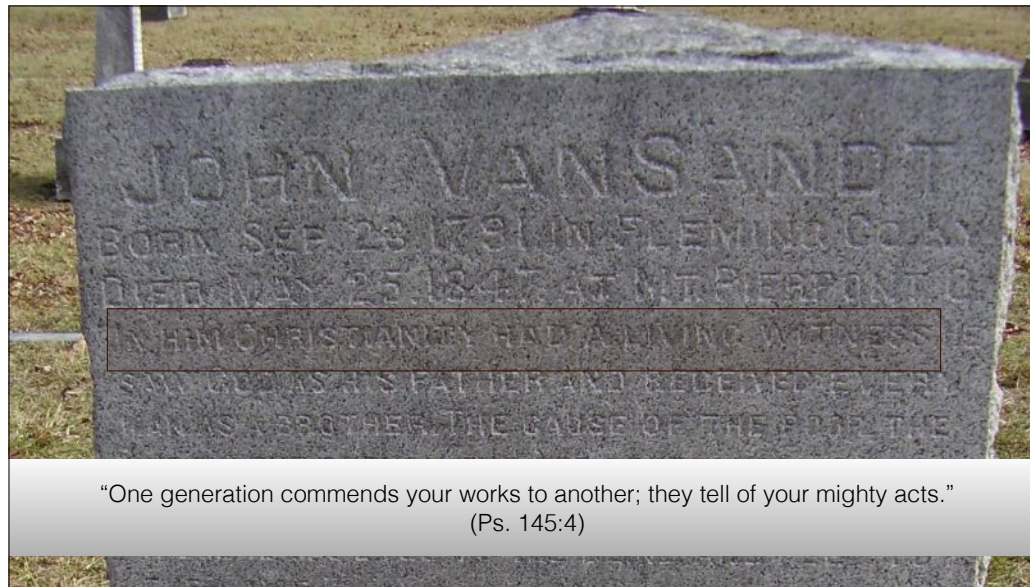


Eliza house

Harriet
Beecher
Stowe

*Uncle Tom's
Cabin*

This is an old photo of the Van Sandt family home, in Sharonville, Ohio, near Cincinnati. It became known as the Eliza house because the real Eliza Harris, portrayed as Eliza in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, was sheltered by the Van Sandts on her journey to Canada. Harriet Beecher Stowe portrayed John Van Zandt as one of the main characters in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (John Von Trump).



The first line of John Van Sandt's gravestone reads, "In him Christianity had a living witness." Through this gravestone and through the Van Sandt family Bible, if we have ears to hear, "One generation commends your works to another; they tell of your mighty acts." (Ps. 145:4)



Eliza house

Do you have an Eliza house? A place where you have experienced the deliverance of God in your own exodus? The Bible is that kind of place, a special place of God's deliverance.

GOD HAS PROMISED TO MEET US



These are two of my special locations, my Eliza houses. Is there a home, an inn, a church, a camp, or a wilderness where you have special memories, maybe where God has drawn particularly close to you? • This is what the Bible is; a place where God has promised to meet up with us. The Bible is not like any other book, it's a living book, because God always shows up. It's like going to meet him at his special place where we know he hangs out.

Childhood home, Lentner church,

The Bible as a meeting place

- Incarnational
Where God comes down to us.
- Trinitarian
The place where the Living Word, the Father, & the Spirit promise to spend time with us and to deepen our relationship with them.



On the Trinitarian model, the Bible is where God comes down. The living Word, the Father, and the Spirit meet us there. As we read the Bible, they show up and spend time with us and deepen our relationship with them. They show us that we have a place in their Story and their life of ongoing love.

God sanctifies our stories and special places where we have been particularly aware of his deliverance, our little exodus's.



Illumination

“for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.” (2 Corinthians 3:6)

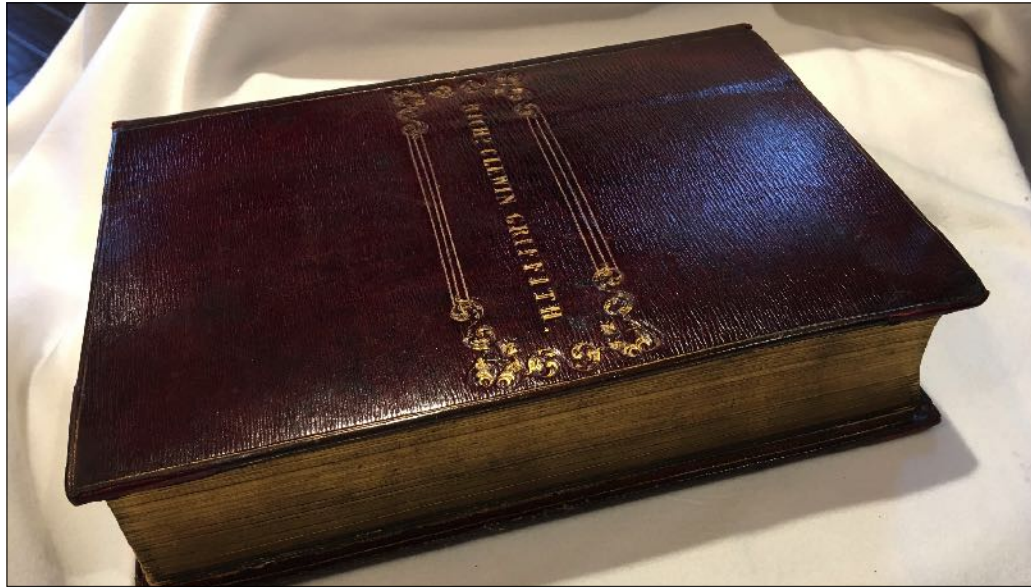
“For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.” All profitable reading of the Bible is by grace, through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit inspires our hearing, our knowing, our words, our witness, our proclamation. The term “Illumination” describes this Spirit-led, Spirit-generated reception of the Word. In old Bibles, illumination is signified by gold leaf. Don’t look at the gold; look through the gold to the active presence of the Holy Spirit who opens us to receive the Word.



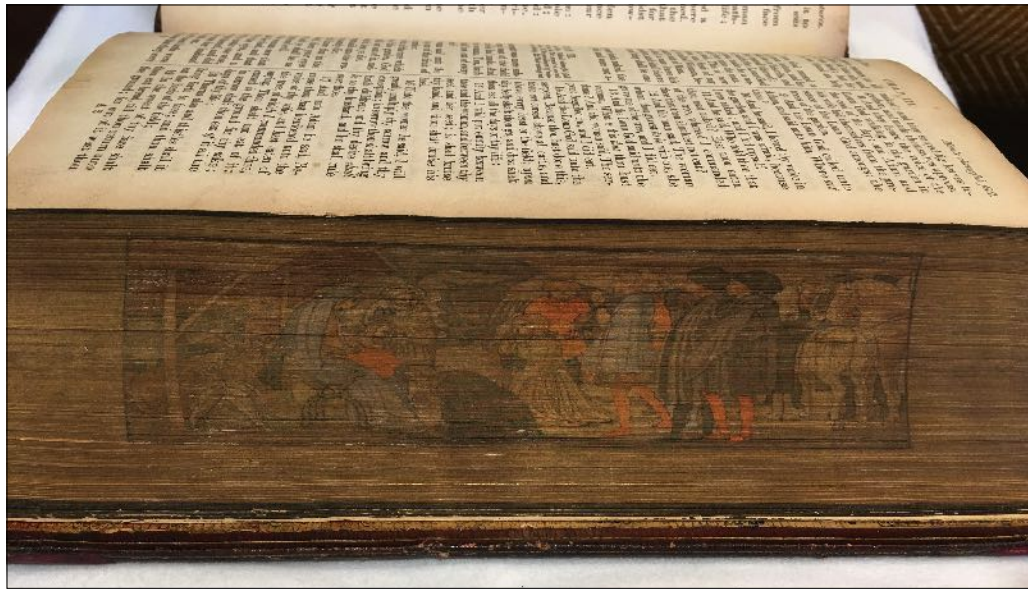
These paintings are from a book of hours we'll examine more closely on the tour.



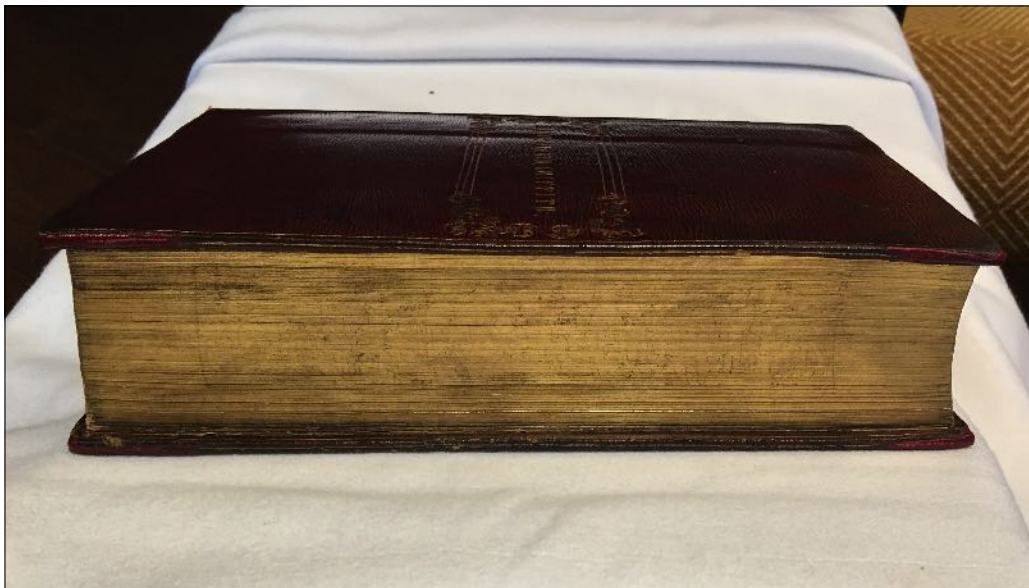
The idea is that the gold leaf will shine directly into the eye of the reader, illuminating the soul. But this only happens during the act of reading. The necessary angle for the light to strike your eye occurs as the page is being turned, in a flash of illumination. Unless there is active reading, the page being turned, there is no illumination.



This Bible is from 1833 and has another way of symbolizing illumination.



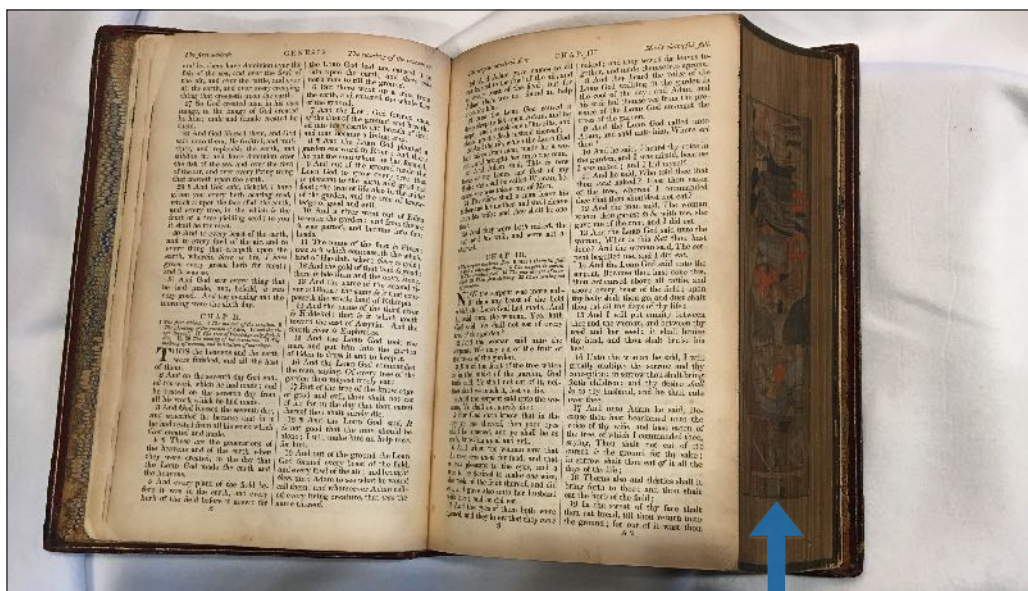
When the Bible is being read, a scene appears as if by magic on the fore-edge of the text block. The scene appears only during the act of reading.



If the Bible is closed, on the shelf or on a table, the scene disappears.



The fore-edge painting shows the Adoration of the magi. They're in European dress in the style of a Reformation painting.



As soon as one opens the Bible, the pages scroll on the right hand side, revealing the fore-edge painting. A closed Bible is speechless; the Holy Spirit will illumine our souls as we take it up and read.



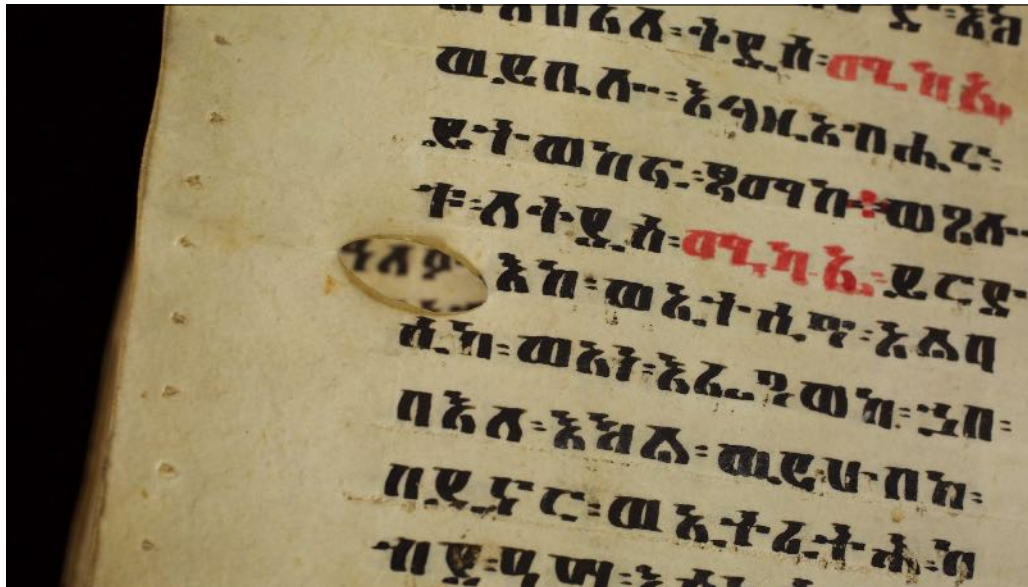
Ethiopian Bible

“The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” John 1:14

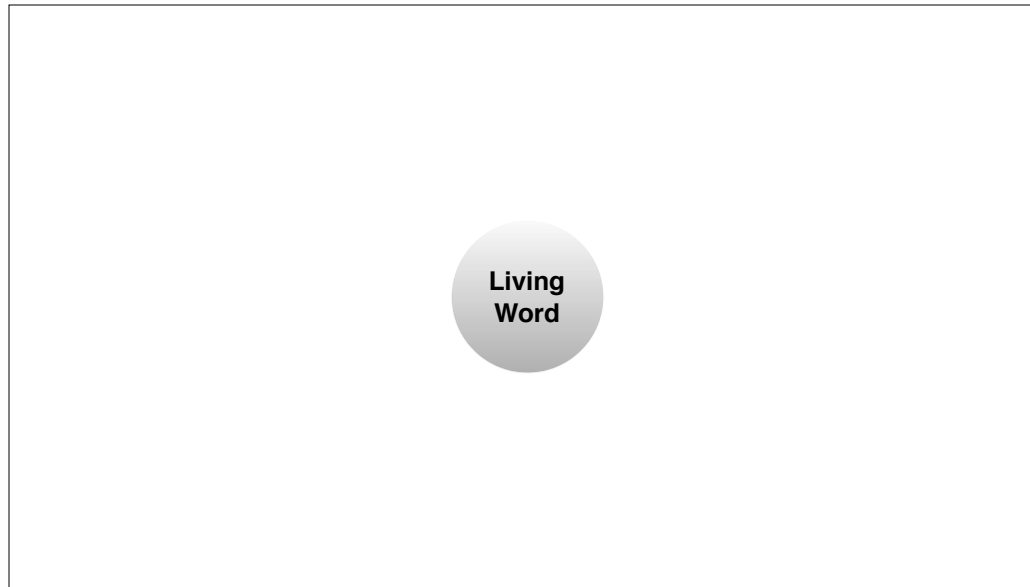
Friends, let's consider the story of this Ethiopian Bible. It is the Bible of a pastoral resident. We don't know his name, or even when he lived, but he was likely an Ethiopian priest. Making his own copy of the Bible by hand was the central task of his pastoral training. This Bible was not made by specialist scribes or bookmakers, but by a young person called to pastoral care. It's written in Coptic, once the language of the Pharaohs, later the language of common people.



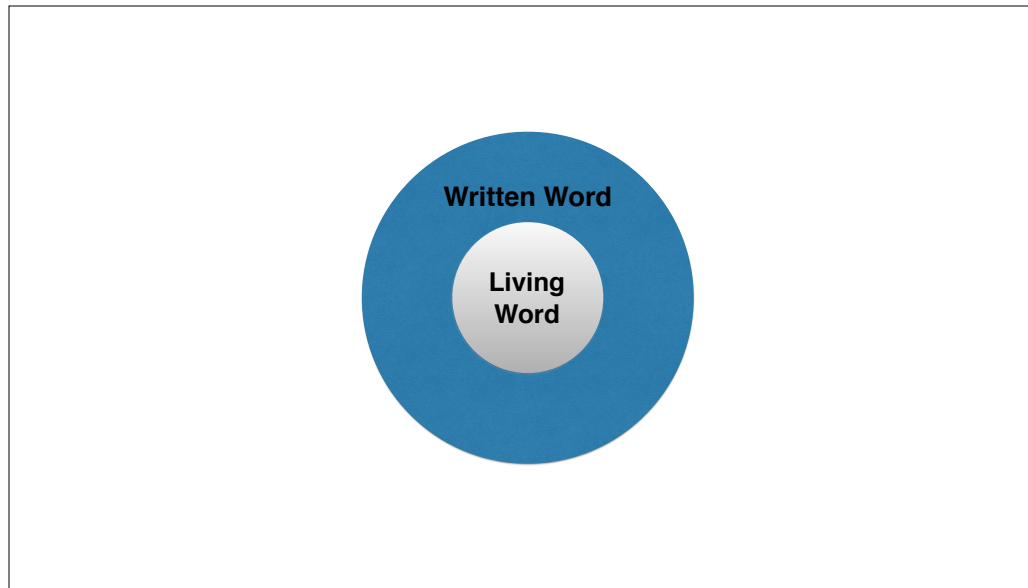
The pages are not made of paper, but of vellum. Vellum is the skin of a stillborn calf, or lamb. Vellum has no grain and absorbs ink when handwriting without smudging. This pastoral resident was poor, and could not afford good vellum, so many pages are patched, as is this one. His Bible contains God's words inscribed on faulty vellum, literally inscribed in torn and broken flesh. It is not we who find God, or lift ourselves up to God's perfection, but God who finds us right where we are, in our own broken human condition. God's finding of us leaves physical traces in our Bibles.



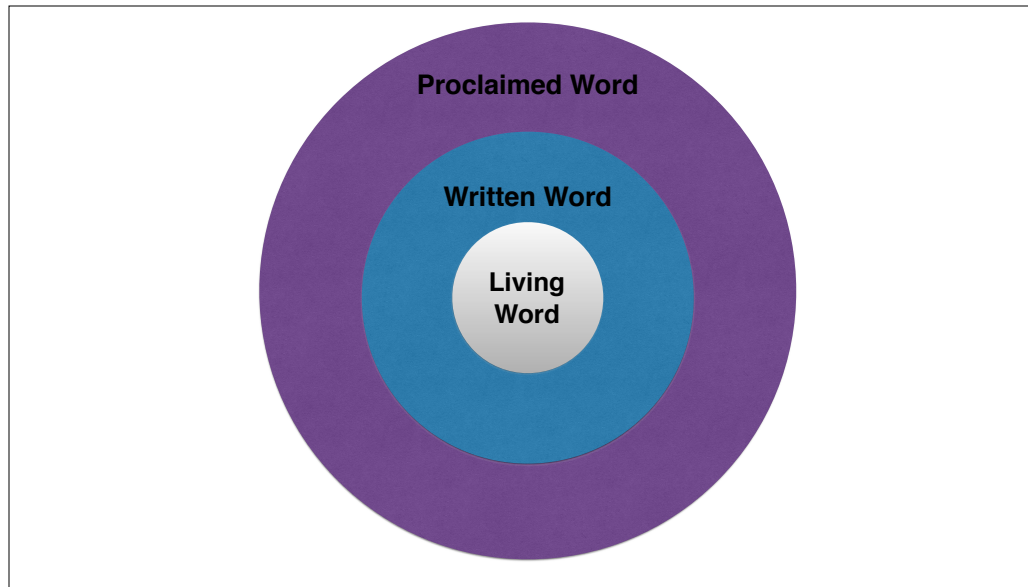
Here's a hole too small for the pastoral resident to patch. We cannot hide or fix our brokenness. If we see the Bible only as the Divine Word it can seem remote and intimidating. But if we learn to see the Bible as an echo of the Word made flesh then God becomes revealed in its very humanness, even in the holes.



So let's think a minute: Our approach to the Bible begins with the Living Word, who was born in Bethlehem. In the Incarnation, Christ himself, the reality of God, condescended and entered every aspect of human life, including human speech. God wants to be known. So he used our words to convey the loving heart of the Triune God and his presence with us. The same miracle of grace happens today. Unless the Living Word and Creator Spirit show up, we have nothing. The wonder and mystery is that they do. This is the first and sufficient answer to how the Bible has come down to us. All else flows from the Living Word made flesh.



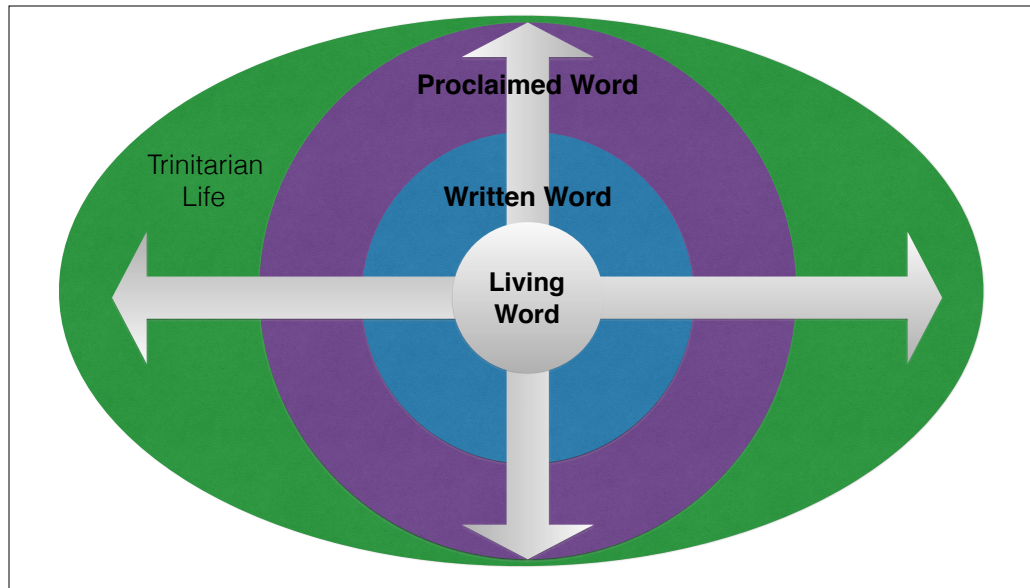
Then we have the written Word, the Bible. But we have no original copies. Why do we have no original copies? Why did God not choose to give us direct transcripts for Jesus' sermon on the mount? Why do we not have the original tablets of the 10 commandments? For that matter, Why don't we have video? Couldn't God have provided video for us if he had wanted to? One answer may be that he gave us human-mediated copies because the originals, direct from God without human mediation, would distract us from the Living Word. ~~(They would be venerated in themselves.)~~ The written word does not stand on its own, but is an act of grace. The written word is not the Living Word, but a witness to the Living Word. The Living Word speaks to us of Realities we can't see. Of Realities we can't speak. But he speaks to us in our own human speech. By his grace, the Written word becomes a window to the reality of the Living Word at work in our world. It's relational, not to be mindlessly memorized or quoted (Satan can do that). Human words are never equal to the reality. How well can you explain who someone is only through words? But with God, his word is real; so he shows up as a living word, a living reality: He meets us in his Word by his Spirit according to his promise. The written words are the normative witness to who God is, to the Living Word, and who we are in relation to him.



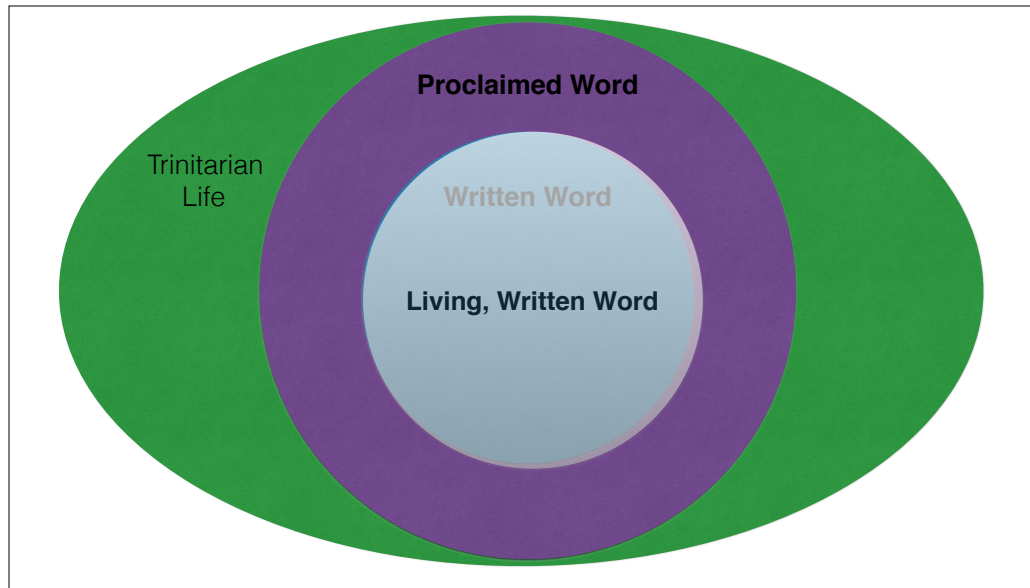
And then there is the word Proclaimed: this refers to all of us in our witness to him. Through the Proclaimed Word, the Word goes out through all the earth, to every language and nation and tribe. Through the Bible, through translations, churches, missionaries, pastoral residents, lay believers. Each of these three words — Living, Written and Proclaimed — is a Trinitarian act. In each of the three, God makes human words his own. He gives us illumination. He gives us speech. In other words,

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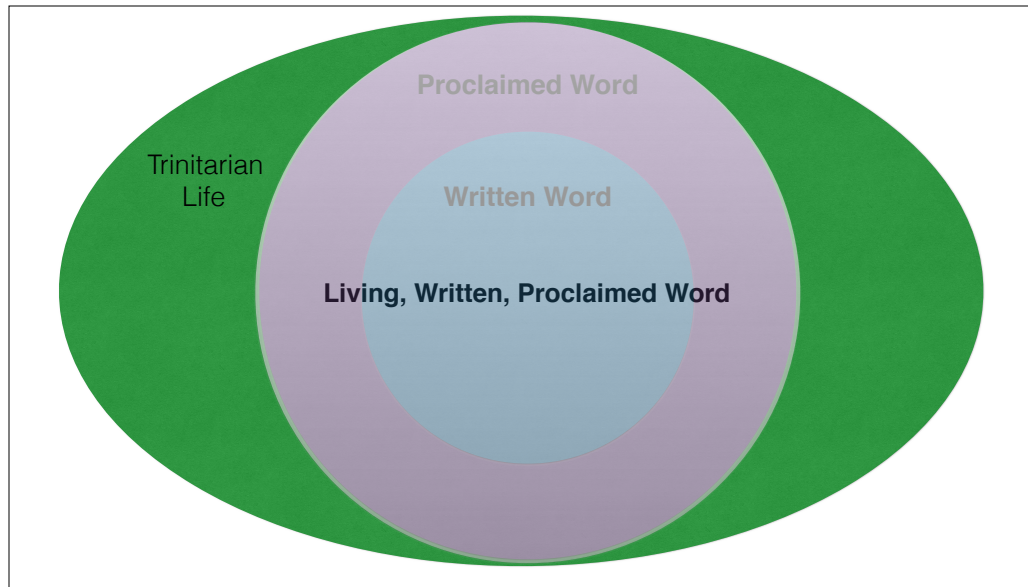
The Word in our hearts, cry of the heart, not of the mouth only. Language of the heart.



By the power of God, the Living Word / Written word / and proclaimed word are not separate, rather, • each is the place where the undiminished Living Word acts with power and grace.



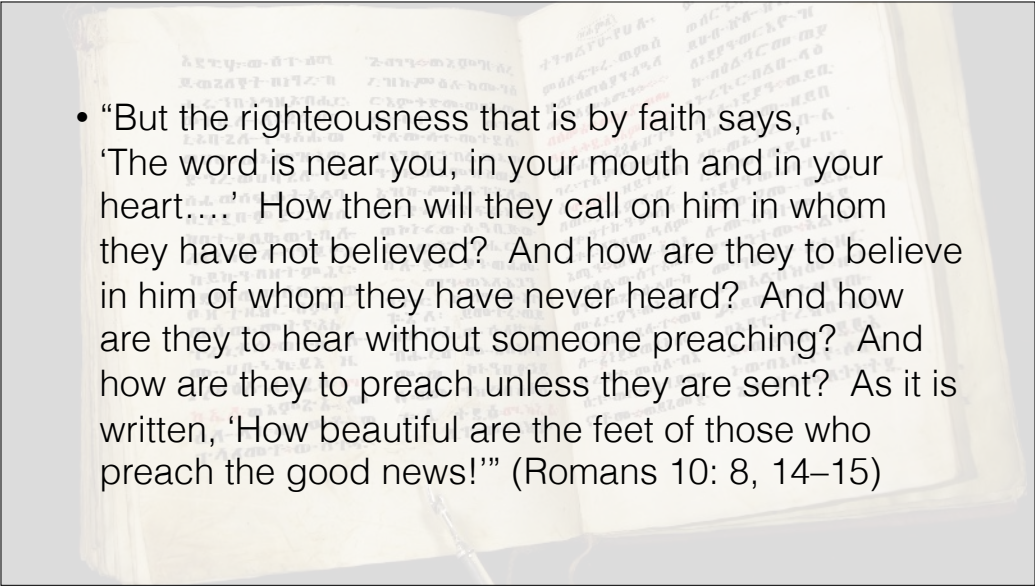
The Living Word meets us in the written Word.



And by his grace, the Living Word inhabits our proclamation. God breaks through every barrier to be present in our speech and to make the words we say to one another reflect his life of Trinitarian love. You are sent - in the great commission - with the promise that the Word lives in resurrected power and through the Spirit will transform your words to meet people wherever you go because of his real presence. A Bible collection invites us to reflect on the reality of how God has been present to people of all times and places around the world.



So, it's not the quality of the flesh or the vellum but the Word of God in the flesh that matters. This flesh, the vellum, is the flesh of the priest who in his own brokenness and poverty offered his life to proclaim the Living Word. He answered the call of Romans 10:

- 
- “But the righteousness that is by faith says, ‘The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart....’ How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!’” (Romans 10: 8, 14–15)



languages of the heart

"The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart..." (Romans 10:8)

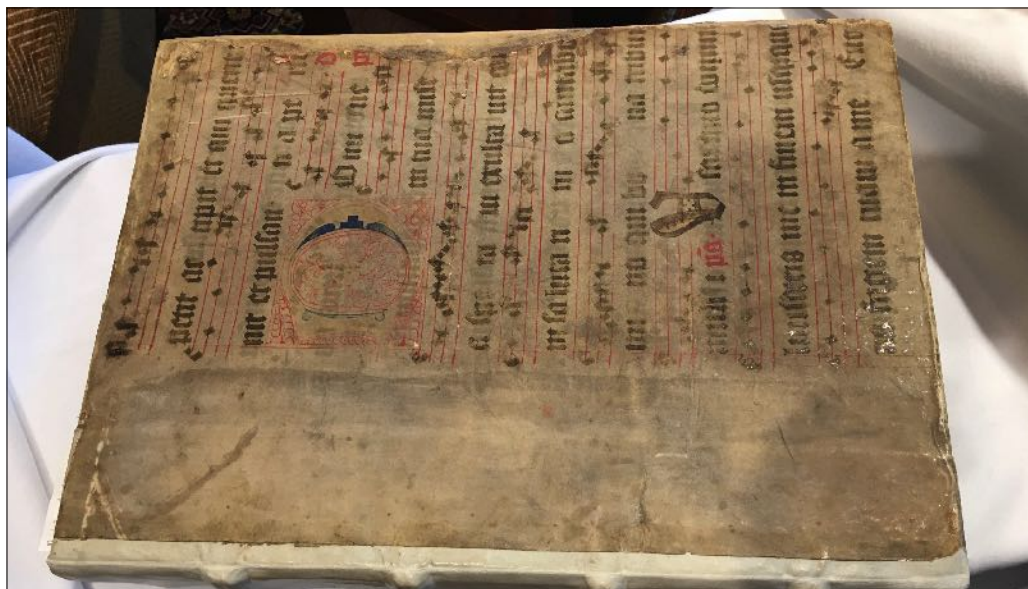
The Ethiopian priest had the Bible in his own language, the language of the heart, for himself and for his people. As Romans says, "The Word is near you, in YOUR mouth and in YOUR heart."



Common Latin

"Vulgate"

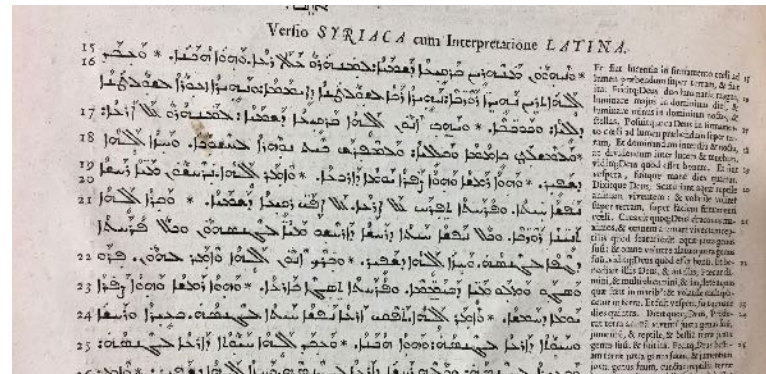
There were many early translations of the Bible, including into Coptic. Another was into the common Latin; not the literary Latin of classical writers like Cicero, but the common speech during the Roman period of ordinary people. This big Bible, printed in 1479, was written in the common Latin or Vulgate translation of Jerome.



It was bound, front and back, in discarded sheets of music. Even those found a place, not wanted elsewhere, but in the covers of the Word.



This is the first printed Bible to contain woodcuts. We'll talk more about Jerome's Vulgate and this early edition in the Bible tour.



Walton's Polyglot

Polyglot = different languages

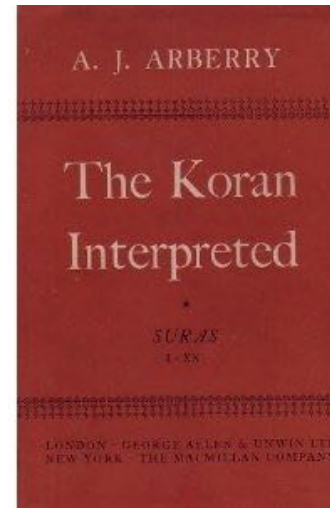
This is a picture of John Walton's polyglot, a 17th-century edition of the most important ancient manuscripts for understanding the text of the Bible. These manuscripts are in many languages, such as Syriac, as shown here. What languages did Jesus speak? Many scholars believe he was trilingual, speaking Aramaic, the language of common people in the region of Nazareth, where he grew up; Hebrew, when reading in the synagogue or debating with scribes; and Greek, which was the language of commerce and government, while working as a carpenter in nearby Sepphoris or speaking with Pilate. So during his time on the Earth, the Living Word of God spoke to us in more than one language, depending upon our need.



Here is an ancient Arabic manuscript of the Bible. Interestingly, some of the early Christian writings on Trinitarian theology are in Arabic.

Quran

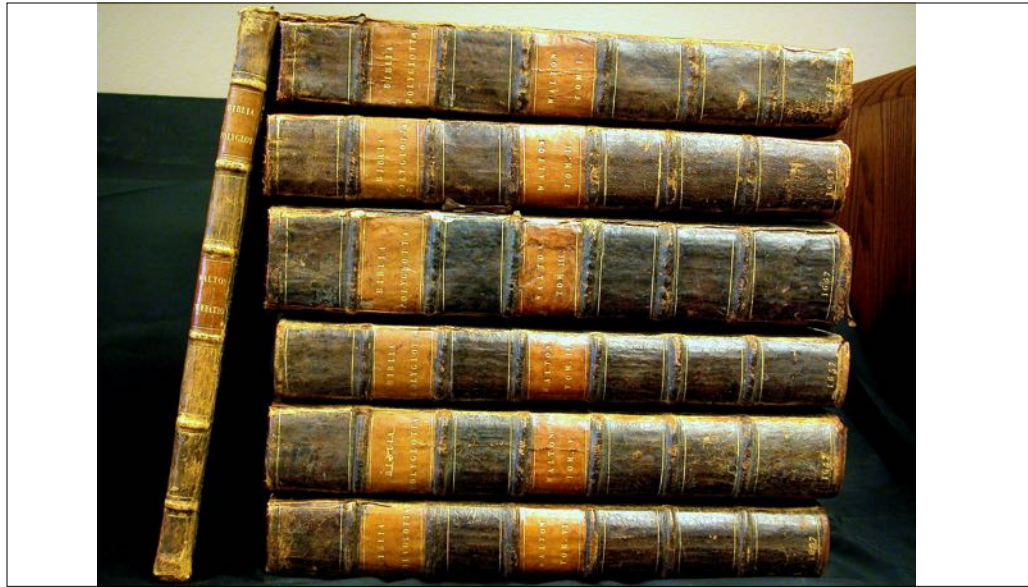
- Why are Bible translations more central to Christian faith and practice than Quran translations are to Muslims?
- Devout Muslims must read the Quran in Arabic; not in the language of the heart
- Regarded as exclusively divine; not a human work



Speaking of Arabic, let's contrast the Bible with the Quran, the scriptures of Islam. Bible translations are central to Christian faith and practice. Why are Quran translations less central to Muslims? Many translations of the Quran do exist, but they are deliberately described as "interpretations," not as Qurans. Devout Muslims strive to recite the Quran in Arabic. To read a translation in the language of one's heart is discouraged in favor of learning to read and recite the original Arabic. The Quran is regarded as almost exclusively divine, dictated word-by-word to the prophet Muhammad without the involvement of his humanity. Muslim attitudes toward the Quran contrast to Christian sensibilities about the Bible because, for us, the Living Word has already been made flesh. If the Living Word is fully human as well as fully divine, therefore so is the Bible. For this reason, while both Islam and Christianity are global religions, Islam is not indigenous in the way that Christianity is. Christianity is the first indigenous global religion, proclaimed and practiced all over the world in the language of the heart; echoes of the Living Word made flesh.



in this polyglot by Walton, there are several variant manuscripts compiled just for this passage in the book of Genesis.



But it takes 7 massive volumes for the entire Bible. And this is just for the 1650's. Imagine a stack of Bibles in every language that has ever been spoken on the face of the Earth. How tall would it be? God not only understands every language, even the forgotten ones, but he delights to speak each one, because he has chosen to be with us, in our speech, in the language of the heart, the Living Word made flesh.


Translator traitor

Words don't map one to one across languages


Reality is rich

Must understand both languages to translate

God understands every language, source of speech



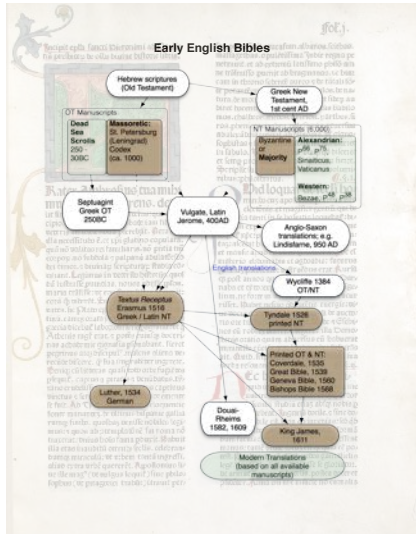
Bible Collection tour OU Libraries, 6/18 4pm



Meet at the OU Tower of Pisa located just inside the west entrance of Bizzell Library, 401 W. Brooks

William Brewster Bizzell, president of the University of Oklahoma from 1925 to 1941, donated 665 Bibles and Bible-related works to the OU Libraries special collections. These beautiful volumes now reside on the 6th floor of Bizzell Memorial Library with the History of Science Collections.

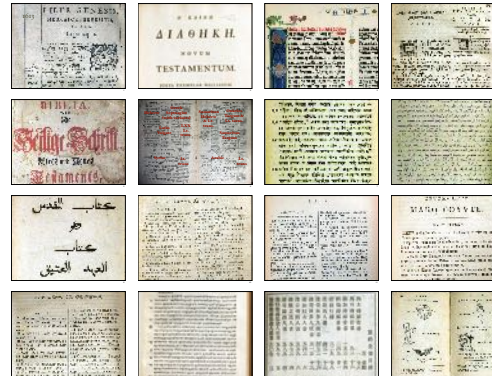
Sunday, June 18, 4-5:30 pm



Early English Bibles

The flowchart illustrates the historical development of the Bible in English. It begins with the **Hebrew scriptures (Old Testament)** and **Greek New Testament (1st cent AD)**. Key milestones include the **Septuagint (Greek OT, 250BC)**, the **Vulgate (Latin, Jerome, 400AD)**, and the **Anglo-Saxon translations (e.g., Lindisfarne, 950 AD)**. The **Wycliffe 1384 OT/NT** is a significant early English translation. The **Printed OT & NT (Coverdale, 1535; Great Bible, 1539; Geneva Bible, 1550; Bishops Bible, 1568)** marks the beginning of printed Bibles in English. The **King James, 1611** is a landmark translation. The chart also shows the influence of the **Textus Receptus (Erasmus, 1516; Greek/Latin NT)** and the **Luther, 1534 German** translation. The final stage is **Modern Translations (Based on all available manuscripts)**, which includes the **1982, 1989** and **1992, 1993** versions.

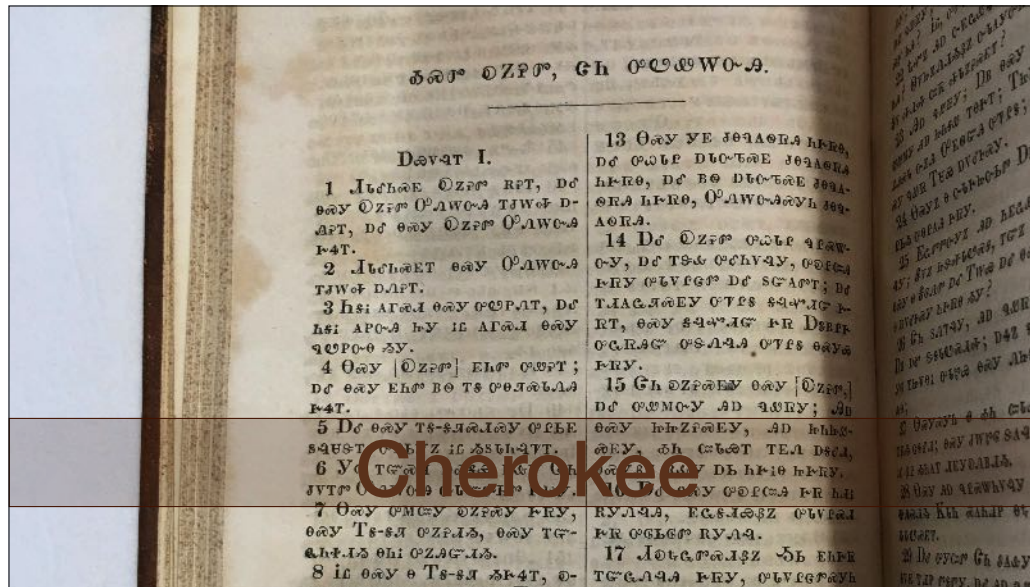
Now we'll pass over other stories of the Bible in Hebrew, Greek, Anglo-Saxon, German and English, as well as miniature Bibles, saving them for the tour.



to the ends of the earth

“from every tribe and language and people and nation...” (Revelation 5:9)

God’s word goes forth to the ends of the earth. The desire to spread God’s word to the nations in the language of the heart led to an unprecedented 19th and 20th century missionary expansion, in which Christianity became a global, indigenous religion.



Does anyone know what language this is?

MARO COYVTE.

I ENHVTECESKV.

HEYV nakcokv Cesvs Klist heckvrane vtecicvtet os,
Tewe eppuce, Eplvme eppuce.

2 Eplvme Iseken en heckuehocvtes; momen Iseke Ce-
kypen en heckuehocvtes; momen Cekvpe Cutvn en hec-
kuehocvtes momen etecakkakaten;

3 Momen Cutv Felesen hytvm Selen Temvt en heckue-
hocvtes; momen Elesen Esvnen en heckuehocvtes; mo-
men Eslvme Elamen en heckuehocvtes;

4 Momen Elame Amenetapen en heckuehocvtes; mo-

Does anyone recognize this language? Muskogee/Choctaw, Matthew, 1867

An Soisgeul do reir E O I N.

C A I B. I.

1 *Dia achd, daonnachd, agus oifig
Iosa Crìosd. 15 Fia'nais Eoin. 39
Gairm Aindreas, Pheadair, &c.*

A NN san toiseach bha am Focal,
agus bha 'm Focal maille re
Dia, agus b'è 'm Focal Dia.

2 Bha è fo air tùs maille re Dia.

3 Rinneadh gach ni leis; agus
as eugmhais cha d' rinneadh aon ni
a rinneadh.

4 Ann-san bha beatha, agus b' i
a' bheatha solus dhaoine.

5 Agus 'ta 'n solus a' foillseachadh
ann dorchadas, agus cha do ghabh
an dorchadas e.

6 Chuireadh duine o Dhia. d' am

'ta foillseachadh gach uile dhuine tha
teachd chum an t saoghail.

10 Bha è ann san t saoghal, agus
rinneadh an saoghal leis, agus cha
d' aithnich an saoghal è.

11 Thainig e dh' ionnsuidh
a mhuintir fein, agus cha do ghabh
a dhaoine fein ris.

12 Ach a mhèud 'sa ghabh ris,
thug se dhoibh cumhachd a bhi
'n an cloinn do Dhia, eadbon dhoibh-

sin ata creidsin 'n a ainm:

13 'A bha air an gineamhuin,
ach 'a ata o fhuil, no o thoil na
feòla, no o thoil duine, ach o Dhia.

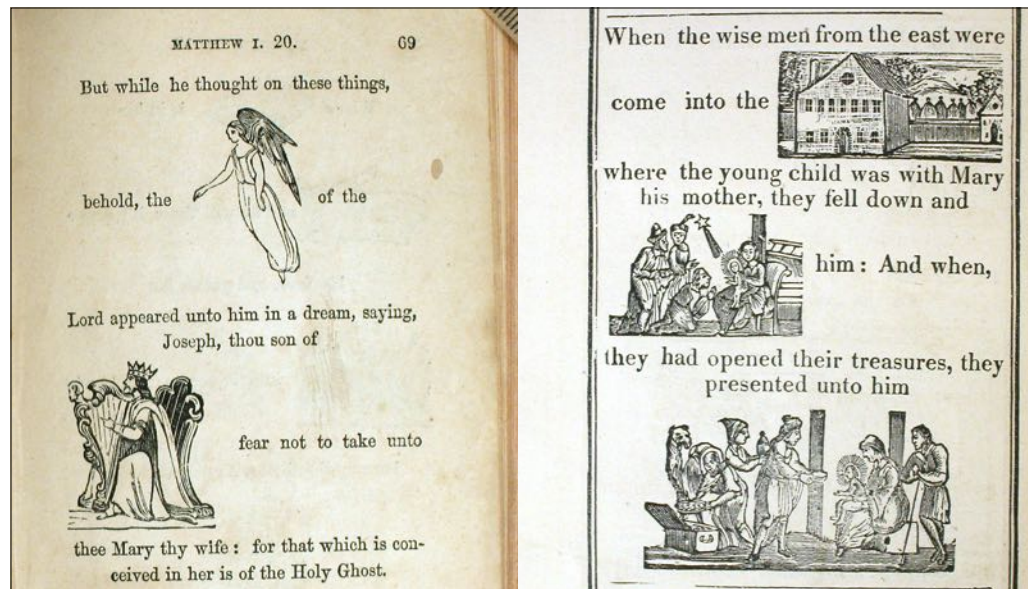
14 Agus rinneadh am Focal 'na
fheoil, agus ghabh se comhnuidh

Gaelic

Recognize this?

<p>CHAPTIR ANE.</p> <p><i>The runner-warks at the birth o' John.</i></p> <p>INASMUCKLE as mony hae taen in haun to pit doon in order a narration o' thae things that hae been made siccar amang us,</p> <p>2. E'en as they, wha war at first- haun witnesses and followers o' the Word, gied them till us ;</p> <p>3. It seemed gude to me as weel, haein kent frae the first a' things per- fetely, to write till you in set order, O weel-deservin Theophilus,</p> <p>4. That ye micht hae fu' knowledge o' the certaintie o' the things in which ye hae been trained.</p> <p>THAR was, in the days o' Herod, King o' Judea, a priest ca'd Zachariah o' Abiah's coorse : and his</p>		<p>Elizabeth sal bear a son t'ye, and his name ye'se ca' <i>John</i> :</p> <p>14. " And ye sal hae joy to ye, and rejoicin, and mony sal be blythe at his birth.</p> <p>15. " For he sal be mighty afore the Lord, and he'se drink nae wine nor strong drink ; and he sal be fu' o' the Holie Spirit, e'en frae the womb.</p> <p>16. " And mony o' Isra'l's sons wull he wise roun' till the Lord their God.</p> <p>17. " And he sal gang afore him i' the spirit and micht o' Elijah to wise-roon faithers' hearts till their bones, and the flour to the wyss-heid o' the gude ; to mak ready for the Lord a prepared folk."</p> <p>18. And Zachariah says till the</p>
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Can you read this?



Let's figure this out. "But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost." If you were a child in the first half of the 1800's, this might be the Bible you treasured. I have to believe the Living Word born as a baby in Bethlehem, speaks to children through his word.

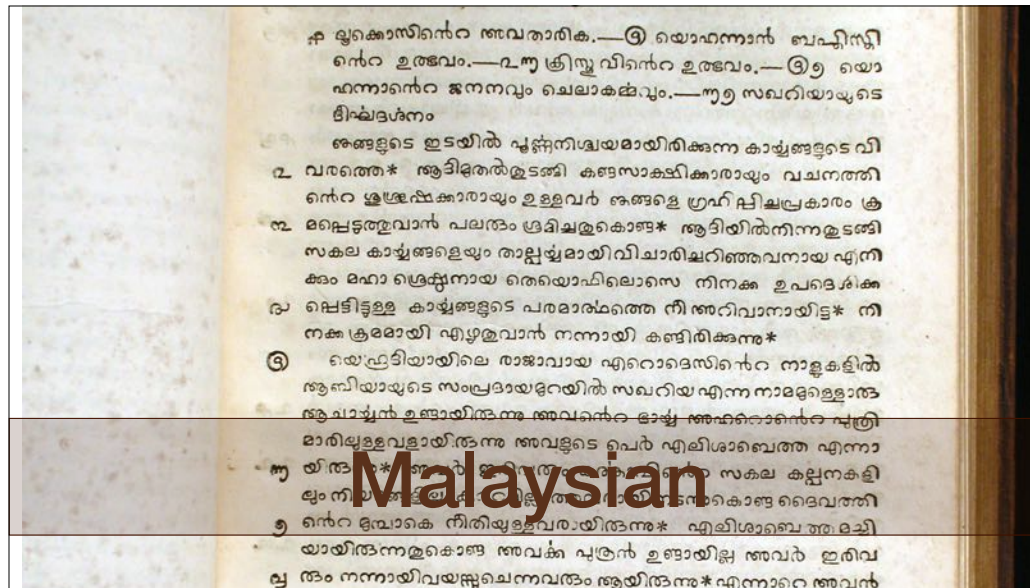
Or this? This is another one from a generation later. "When the wise men from the east were come into the house where the young child was with Mary his mother, they fell down and worshipped him: And when, they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gold..."

Wouldn't this be fun to read to your kids, in the 19th century, by candlelight?

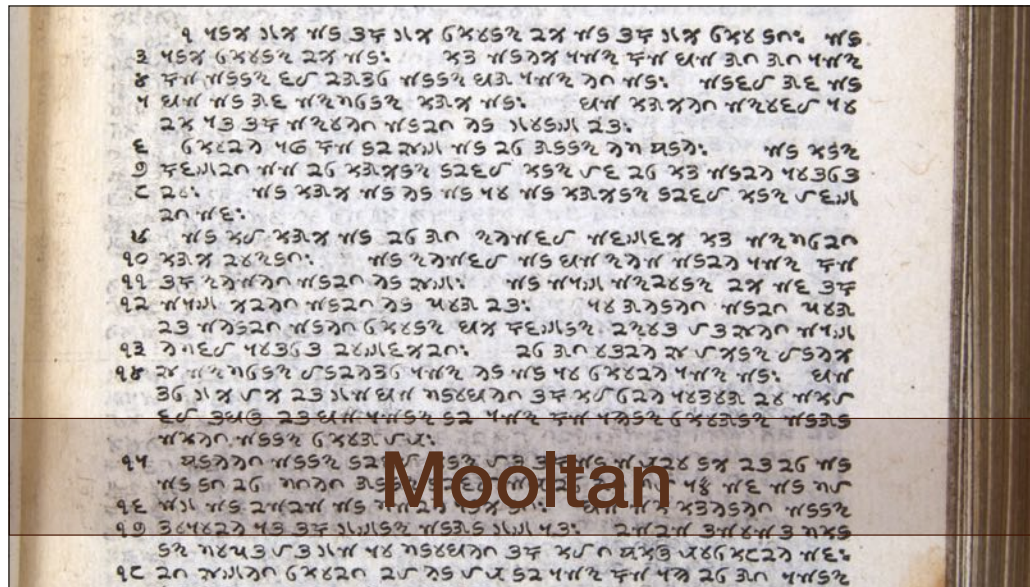


Japanese

This one? Japanese.

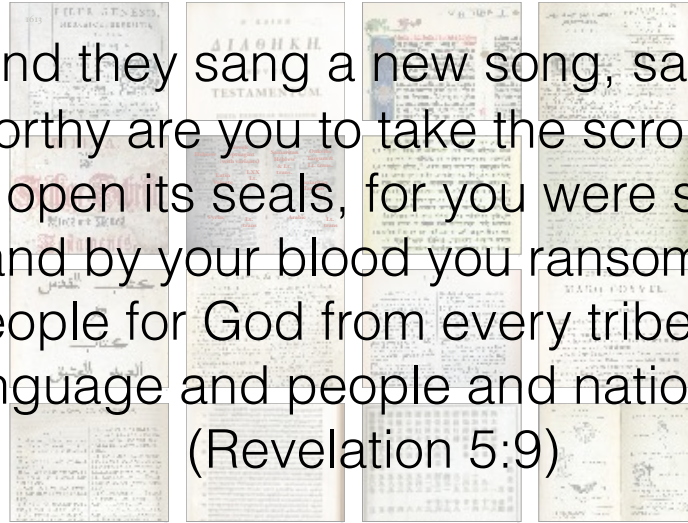


This is one of my favorite alphabets, its curly cues designed for writing on palm leaves without any straight strokes that might cause the palm leaves to split. Anyone? Malaysian, 1829



Anyone? Mooltan, Pakistan, 1819

“And they sang a new song, saying,
‘Worthy are you to take the scroll and
to open its seals, for you were slain,
and by your blood you ransomed
people for God from every tribe and
language and people and nation...’”
(Revelation 5:9)



The book of Revelation proclaims:



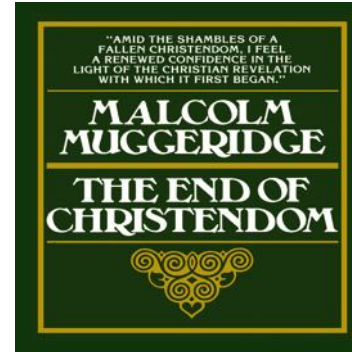
God hiddenly at work

Augustine, *City of God* (1489)

Through these translations God is hiddenly at work in the world. The Bible collection holds a 1489 copy of the *City of God* by Augustine. Augustine is shown here, writing at his desk in northern Africa.

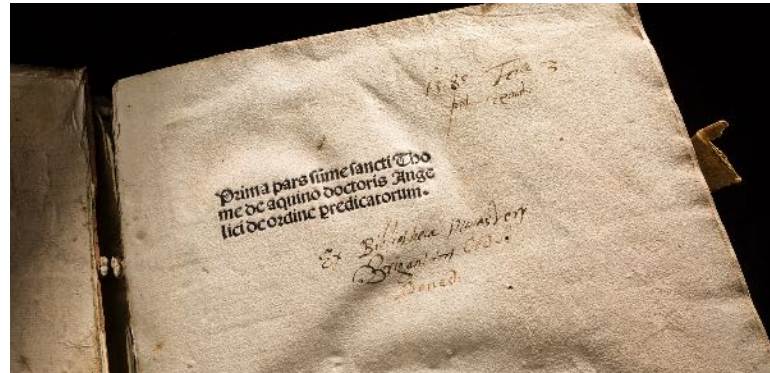


Vandals were sacking Rome, and his African monastery was about to be overrun. He saw that Christendom, meaning the Christian culture of the late Roman empire, was dead, crumbling. Yet he affirmed that God is good. Do not fear; God is doing a new, hidden work. The City of Man will perish, but we can know that the City of God will never pass away. God is the Lord of history.



More Christians today live outside Europe and North America than within

30 years ago, Malcolm Muggeridge reminded us of those same themes in a little book called *The End of Christendom*. And from the sample of Bible translations we have just considered, we can see a glimpse of the new work God is hiddenly accomplishing in the world. For now, astonishingly, it is true that: • (read). All those Bible translations have not gone forth void, but with the presence and power of the Living Word made flesh, assuming human speech.



Thomas Aquinas

"The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God endures forever."
(Isaiah 40:8)

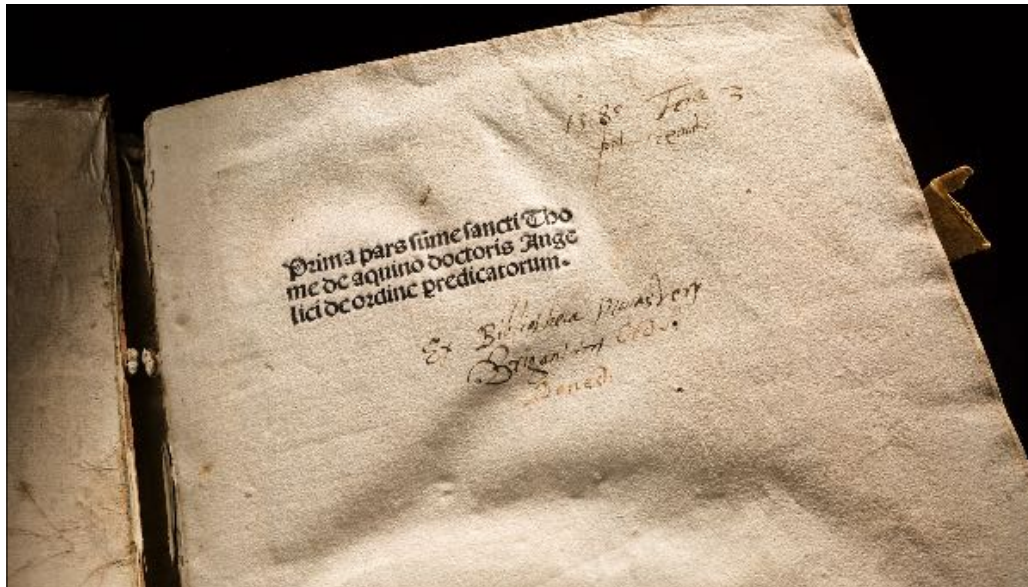
This is a 1400's edition of the Summa theologiae of Thomas Aquinas, regarded by many as perhaps the greatest theologian of the high middle ages.



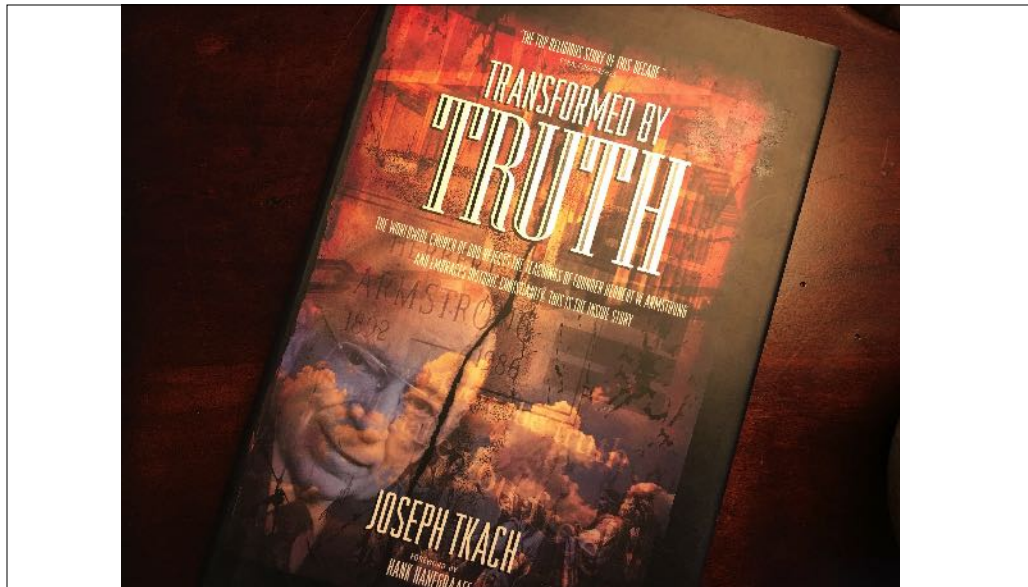
It's a very big book, and this is only part 1.



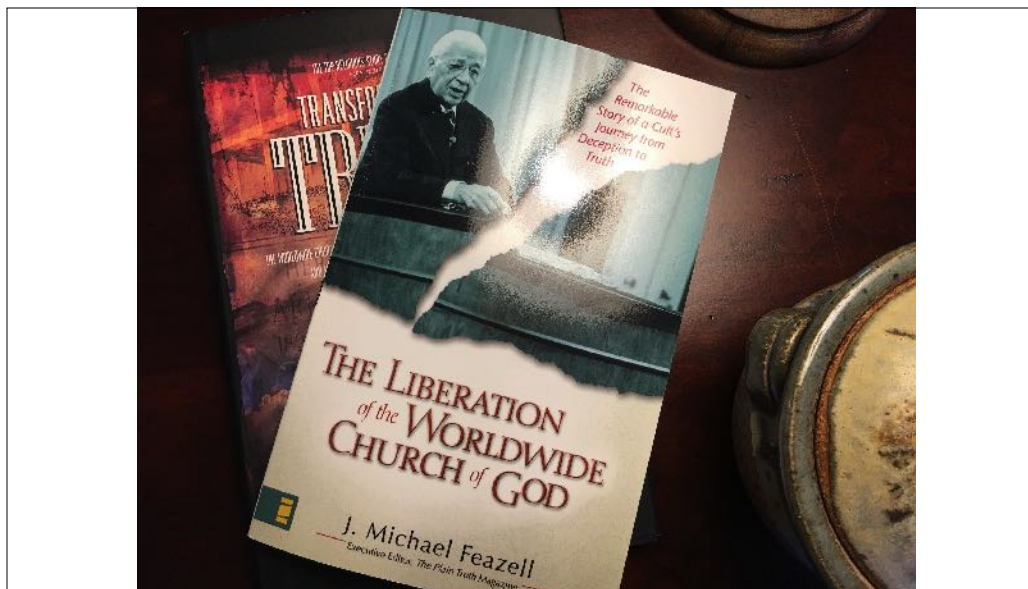
Wormholes have digested some of the cover.



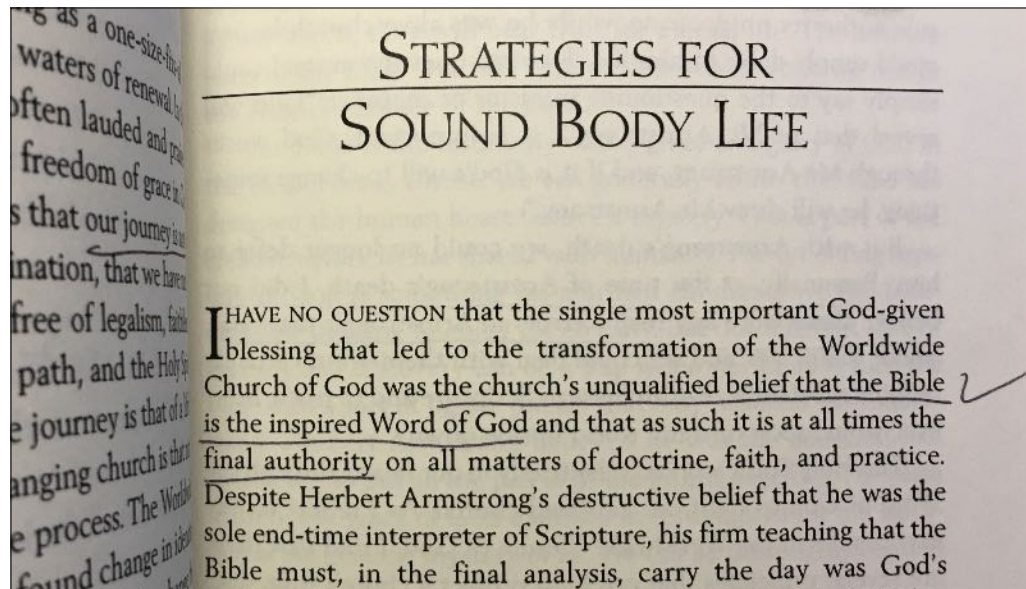
At the end of his life, Thomas was performing a mass and saw a vision of Jesus. He then said that all he had written was as dust, and he wrote no more. The grass withers, the flower falls, but the Word of the Lord endures forever. (Dust now sits at the right hand of God.)



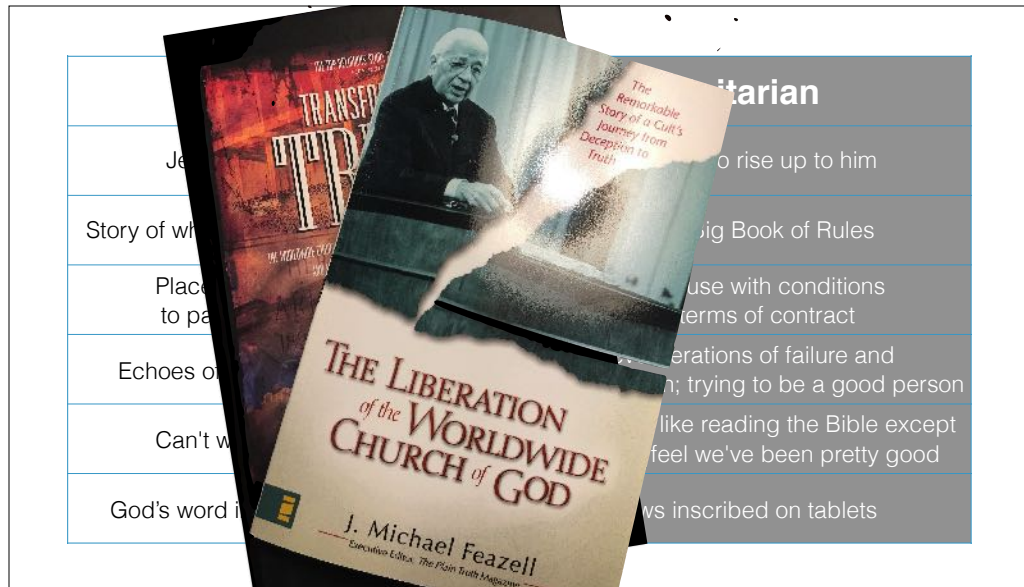
The works of Herbert Armstrong once played a central role in the history of this denomination. Joseph Tkach, Jr., described the heart wrenching journey of faith many of you have experienced from the Worldwide Church of God to Grace Communion International in this book, *Transformed by Truth*.



Mike Feazell wrote a similar book. Both agree that the move from WCG to GCI was because God met them, met you, in the Bible.



Feazell wrote, “I have no question that the single most important God-given blessing that led to the transformation of the Worldwide Church of God was the church’s unqualified belief that the Bible is the inspired Word of God and that as such it is at all times the final authority on all matters of doctrine, faith and practice.”



While it is human nature to approach the Bible through a Unitarian model rather than through a Trinitarian model. • Yet because the Trinitarian God of grace meets us in the pages of the Bible, WCG embarked on a journey of grace, a story of grace that is not to be forgotten. Just as we honor the theology of Thomas Aquinas, so I would honor any Bible that contains markings of that journey. Do you have any Bibles that represent that journey from WCG to GCI? Even the marginal annotations we no longer agree with represent the places where God met us — he came down, he can find us — in the places from which he faithfully led us on. Those echoes of grace are to be cherished and not despised. So at Lunch: ask someone next to you about the Bibles they treasure that record this exodus.

Christ-centered	One unique story that leads to Jesus	Drama, narrative, literature; not a systematic theology
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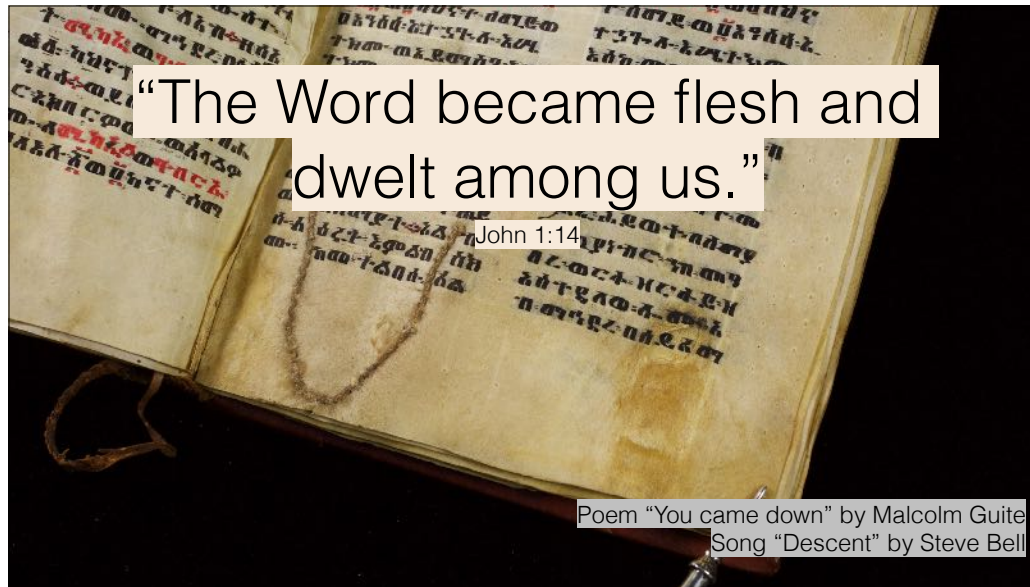
So we see our Bibles as Christ-centered, telling one unique story that leads to Jesus.

Christ-centered	One unique story that leads to Jesus	Drama, narrative, literature; not a systematic theology
Incarnational	He came down	He finds us; Not that we find him nor raise ourselves up

Our Bibles are Incarnational. He came down, he finds us. God speaks to us in our human languages, in our times and places, in the language of our hearts or we would never know him.

Christ-centered	One unique story that leads to Jesus	Drama, narrative, literature; not a systematic theology
Incarnational	He came down	He finds us; Not that we find him nor raise ourselves up
Trinitarian	Relationship	Emphasis on Who, not what: Who God really is; Who we really are in relationship with him

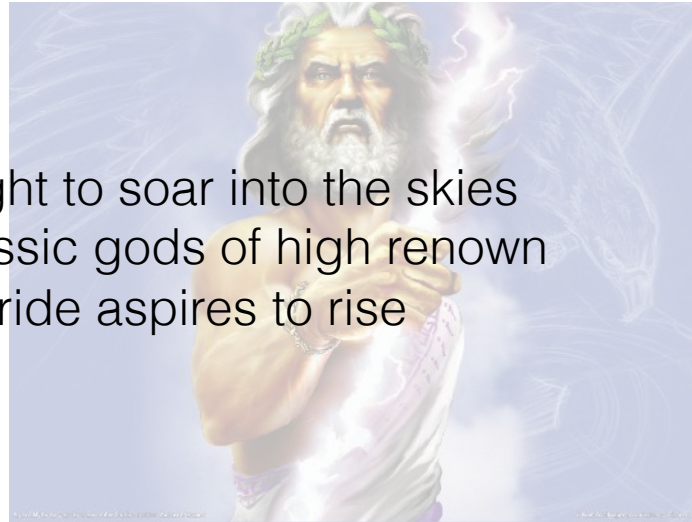
And we see our Bibles as signs of the Trinitarian love of God who brings us into relationship with him. He has included us in his story and in his family.



Let's finish with a song by Steve Bell that puts to music a poem by Malcolm Guite.

It expresses the Incarnational, Trinitarian dynamic at the heart of our appreciation of old Bibles as echoes of the Word made flesh.

They sought to soar into the skies
Those classic gods of high renown
For lofty pride aspires to rise

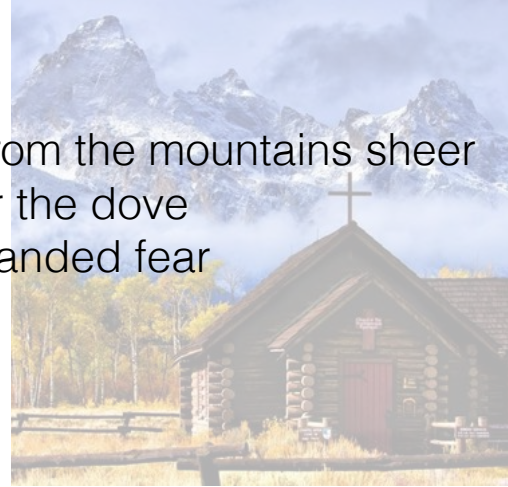


But you came down.

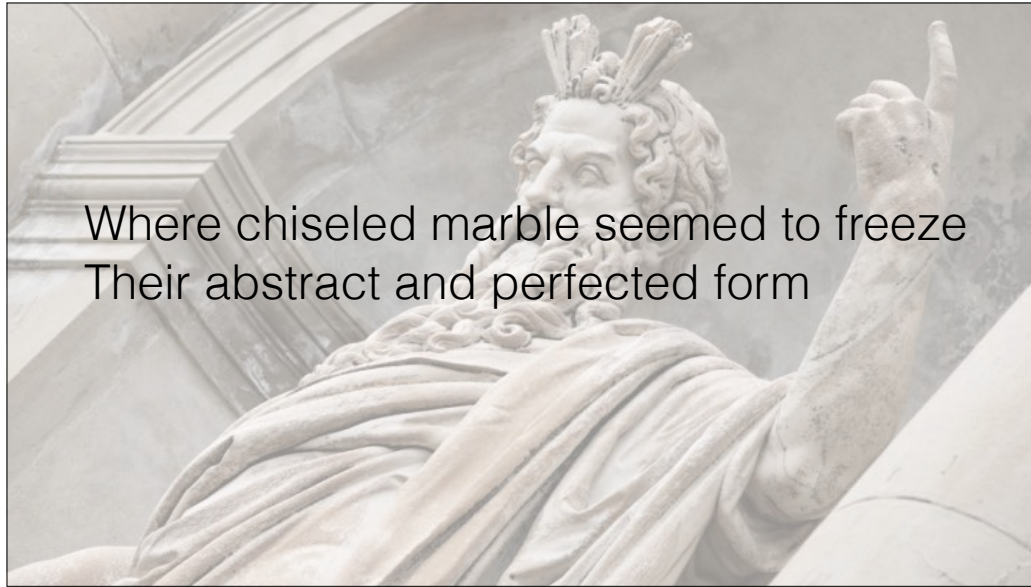


Repeat

You dropped down from the mountains sheer
Forsook the eagle for the dove
The other Gods demanded fear
But you gave love



Repeat, wait for first audio of “Where chiseled marble.”



Where chiseled marble seemed to freeze
Their abstract and perfected form

Compassion brought you to your knees
Your blood was warm

When the wise men from the east were
come into the



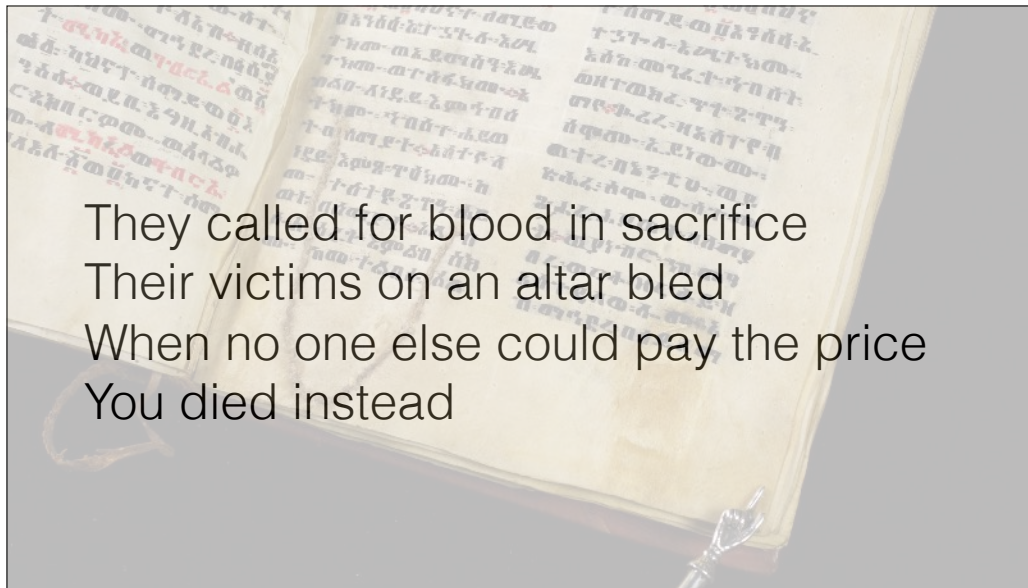
where the young child was with Mary
his mother, they fell down and



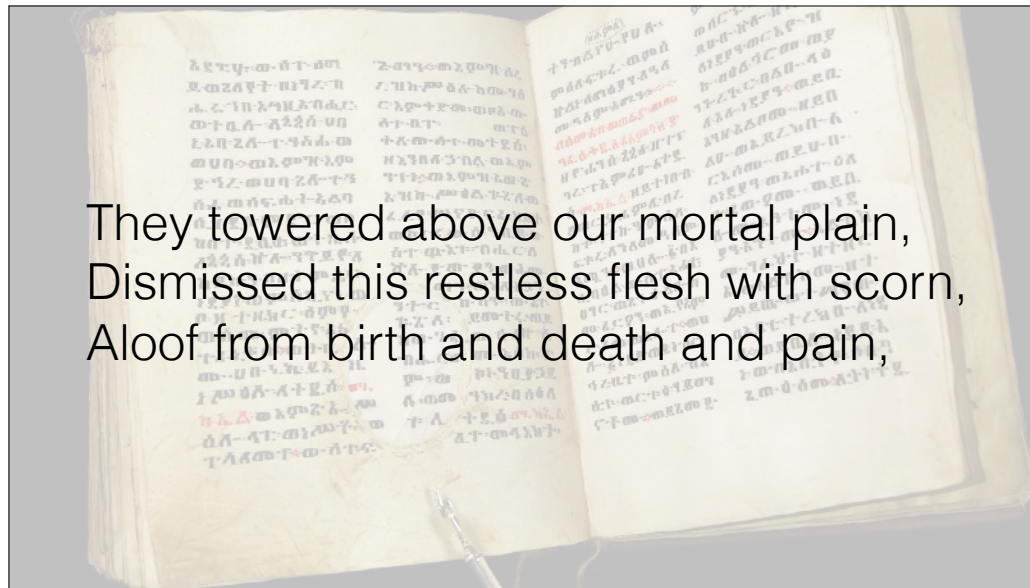
him: And when,

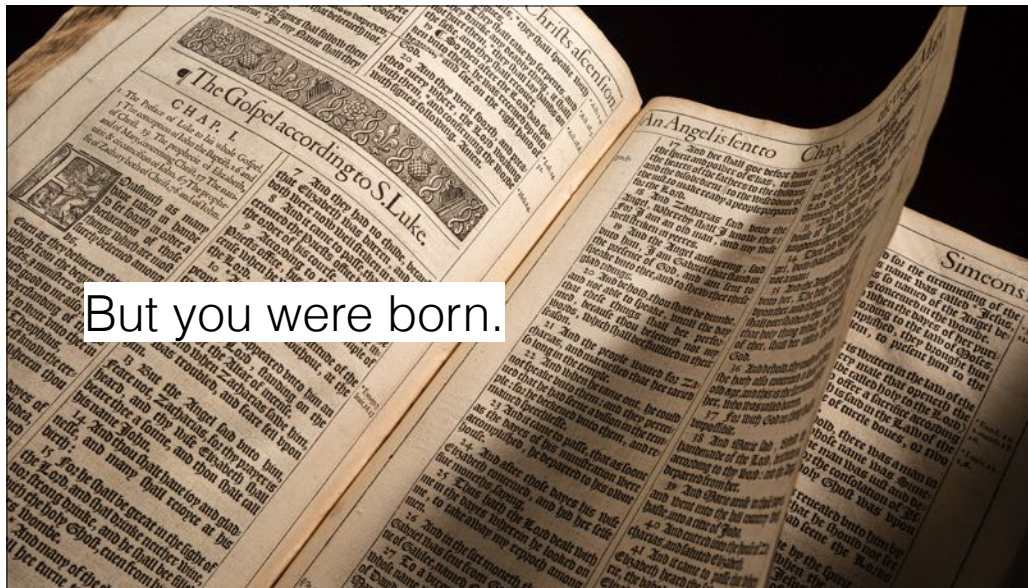
they had opened their treasures, they
presented unto him





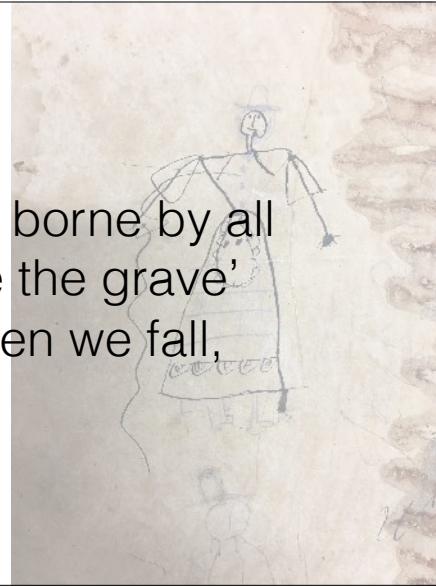
Repeat



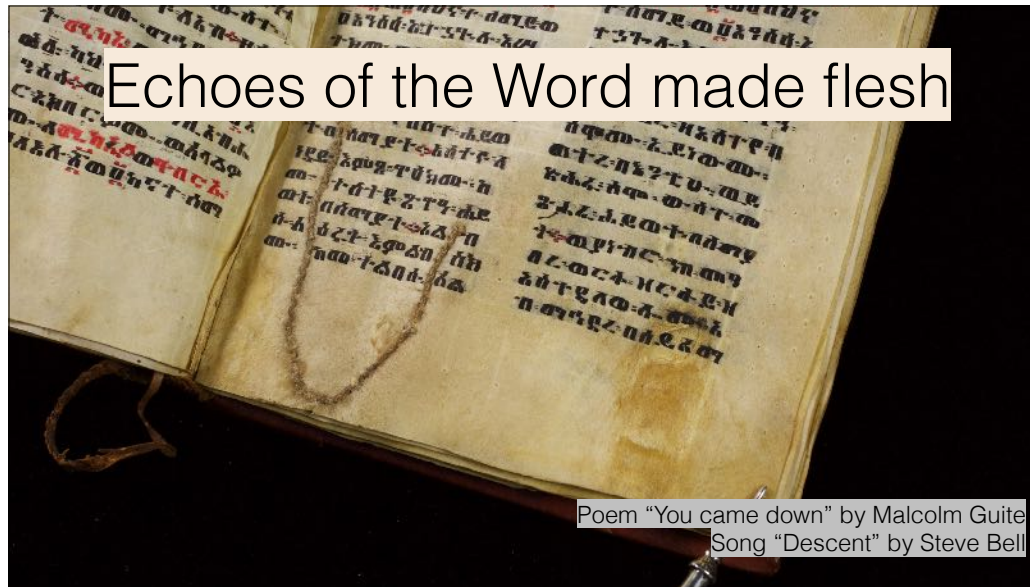


Repeat

Born to these burdens, borne by all
Born with us all 'astride the grave'
Weak, to be with us when we fall,
And strong to save.



Repeat



Amen.