



THE  
LIVING WORD

FRANK ARUNDELL

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## Codex Sinaiticus

Handwritten well over 1600 years ago, the manuscript contains the Christian Bible in Greek, including the oldest complete copy of the New Testament. Kept at St. Catherine's Monastery since the reign of Constantine.

Cover: The Sacred Monastery of the God-Trodden Mt. Sinai  
( St Catherine's Monastery )

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*They read the good book from Fri til Monday  
That's how the weekend goes  
I've got a dream house I'll build there one day  
With picket fence and ramblin' rose*

*James Travis Reeves (August 20, 1923 – July 31, 1964) was an American country and popular music singer-songwriter. With records charting from the 1950s to the 1980s, he became well known as a practitioner of the Nashville sound (a mixture of older country-style music with elements of popular music). Known as "Gentleman Jim", his songs continued to chart for years after his death. Reeves died in the crash of his private airplane. He is a member of both the Country Music and Texas Country Music Halls of Fame.*

*Some of Reeves's records are the most valuable in the world, selling for hundreds of pounds at a time. They are among the most valuable and collectable of all UK LP's. A recent sale at an auction house saw an RCA Camden issue of "God Be With Us" sold for over £1500 (Wikipedia)*

*“He who has ears to hear, let him hear. “But to what shall I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the market places, who call out to the other children, and say, ‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.’“For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon!’“The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Behold, a gluttonous*

*man and a drunkard, a friend of tax-gatherers and sinners!’ Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.”(Matthew 11: 16)*

Those *Dear Hearts and Gentle People* Jim Reeves so tenderly wrote his song about way back in 1949 seem to have retreated from the high speed culture of the Twenty-first Century. Now, we are not suggesting that no one is reading the “good book” on the weekends, but it would be a stretch of the imagination to believe today’s folks were doing it from “Fri til Monday.” If we’re not mistaken Saturday is the biggest shopping day of the week. Department stores and Supermarkets usually have their biggest days on Saturdays, in fact between “Fri” and Monday the entire weekend is normally taken up with activities that are not as sedentary or spiritually oriented as Bible reading. However, those who attend church services are most likely to hear scriptural passages read aloud to them depending on the church they attend. In the Catholic church, for example, there are specific gospel readings integrated into the liturgy for every day of the church year, as well as bible study programs offered by each parish church; other Christian communities we are sure do the same.

For those who don’t attend a church the scripture is available online in hundreds of different ways with every version available to choose from. We have used two great sites that send us the prayers and gospel passages of the Catholic mass every morning. From the UK *Universalis* is terrific, and in the USA the Catholic Bishops site, *USCCB*, is very good as well. Both e-mails every day are free.

“Each week in synagogue, Jews read, or more accurately, chant, because it is sung, a passage from the Torah. This

passage is referred to as a parshah. The first parshah, for example, is Parshat Bereishit, which covers from the beginning of Genesis to the story of Noah. There are 54 parshahs, one for each week of a leap year, so that in the course of a year, we read the entire Torah (Genesis to Deuteronomy) in their services, then proceed immediately to the first paragraph of Genesis, showing that the Torah is a circle, and never ends.” (Judaism 101)

For Muslims, “Friday Prayer is an occasion for the assembly of the Muslims of a whole city or a town. In a large city, Friday Prayer can be offered in more than one place for the convenience of the Muslim community. It gives them an opportunity to meet together to discuss and solve their individual as well as community problems. Getting together once a week develops unity, cooperation and cohesiveness among Muslims. Friday Prayer is also a demonstration of Islamic equality... The Imam should recite Surah Al-Fatihah and some verses of the Holy Quran.” (Al Islam) It should be noted that the Quran is believed to be Allah’s instructions to the Prophet Mohammed to “recite,” and not related to the Hebrew Bible or the Judeo-Christian Bible which hasn’t changed very much from the Codex Sinaiticus.

To sum it up, “the familiar observation that the Bible is the best-selling book of all time obscures a more startling fact: the Bible is the best-selling book of the year, every year. ... The amount spent annually on Bibles has been put at more than half a billion dollars. In some ways, this should not be surprising.” (The New Yorker) The good-book is good business.

In our time-worn Pocket Edition of the New Jerusalem Bible we discovered Henry Wansbrough its editor, a quick bio is appropriate.

“Henry Wansbrough OSB [Benedictine](born Joseph Wansbrough, 1934) is an English biblical scholar, Roman Catholic priest, and monk of Ampleforth Abbey. From 1990 to 2004, he served as Master of St Benet's Hall, Oxford.

Born as Joseph Wansbrough on 9 October 1934 in London, England, Henry Wansbrough is Cathedral Prior of Norwich (2004–present), Magister Scholarum of the English Benedictine Congregation (2001–present), member of the Pontifical Biblical Commission (1997–2007), Chairman of the Trustees of the Catholic Biblical Association (1996–present), and Emeritus Member of the Faculty of Theology in the University of Oxford (1990–present). He is Alexander Jones Professor of Biblical Studies within the Department of Theology, Philosophy and Religious studies at Liverpool Hope University. From 1990 until 2004 he was Master of St Benet's Hall, the Benedictine permanent private hall of the University of Oxford.

He was General Editor of the New Jerusalem Bible and the Revised New Jerusalem Bible. He has written twenty books, more than sixty articles, around ninety book reviews, an edition of the Synoptic Gospels, with an accompanying textbook, for A-Level students, and more than fifty electronic booklets, essays, and lectures, as well as editing, co-editing, and translating other volumes.

He produces the "Wednesday Word" a not-for-profit collaborative charitable trust based at St Austin's

Catholic Church, Wakefield, West Yorkshire which aims to spread the Sunday Gospel to families through primary schools and enriching the Home, School & Parish partnership.

He currently resides at Ampleforth Abbey Monastery, working as a religious studies teacher at Ampleforth College where he stays active by riding his notorious scooter around the school. He also works as a house chaplain at St Oswald's boarding house. (Wikipedia)

In his book *Introducing The New Testament* Fr. Wansborough writes:

“There are questions about existence, life, destiny, purpose, ultimate reality which every human being must ask in moments of tranquillity, contentment or anguish. From our own resources we can penetrate only a certain distance below the surface. To some it may be plain ‘Ever since God created the world his everlasting power and deity have been there for the mind to see in the things he has made’ (Rom. 1.20). On the Areopagus Paul speaks of the nations ‘feeling their way towards’ the Unknown God (Acts 17.27) tentatively, like people in the dark, with the implication of many a false step. By human efforts and philosophy alone little more can be known than the existence of the unknowable. Anselm of Canterbury’s ‘that greater than which nothing can be conceived’ tells us little that is positive. **It is the Christian faith that God revealed himself in the Bible through words and deeds in order to bring us into his friendship as a response to this gift of understanding. Christian faith rests on this understanding imparted by the Bible; the Christian believes that the whole Bible speaks of, leads to and focuses upon Jesus.** This is not the only way of understanding the

Bible, for the Jewish faith, which Christians accept as another valid way of understanding the Bible – valid but not Christian – does not lead to this conclusion (see preface to *The Jewish People and its Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible*, 2001)”

Wansbrough, Henry. *Introducing the New Testament* (pp. 3-4). Bloomsbury Publishing. Kindle Edition.

Words have meaning. Very few people would disagree with that truth filled claim. Although recently, the late Judge Antoine Scalia made a point to that effect when he wrote his dissent regarding the *Affordable Care Act* (Obamacare) in the Supreme Court, claiming that the words of the act were ambiguous. “Judge Scalia said in his [dissent](#) to the ruling on *King v. Burwell* : ‘words no longer have meaning.’ Scalia claimed that language is futile if ‘an Exchange that is established by the State is *not* ‘established by the State, but rather by the State and Federal Government.’ That of course is absurd.” We won’t belabor the point but it is an interesting connection for our essay.

Many biblical scholars today, mostly Secular Humanists, agnostics or atheists, make the same claims that the words found in the gospels suffer from the same ambiguity as those found by Scalia in “*Burwell*.” Now most of us know “ambiguity” is “an expression whose meaning cannot be determined from its context; an unclearness by virtue of having more than one meaning.” (Word Web) Let’s have a look at a well known citation of Jesus:

*“Woe to the world for temptations to sin! For it is necessary that temptations come, but woe to the one by whom the temptation comes! And if your hand or your foot causes you to*



*sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life crippled or lame than with two hands or two feet to be thrown into the eternal fire. And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into the hell of fire.”*  
**(Matthew 18: 7)**

If one were to take this quotation literally we surely would be considered quite mad. The meaning of these words in our opinion seem to be more analogous than ambiguous. Were they not the words of Jesus we would have no problem dismissing them out of hand, but since they are Jesus’ words (from Truth as a person) the quote gives us pause for thought— Would the ultimate man of Love have us destroy the gift of the body as an exchange for sins of the hands, feet or the eyes? Most likely not! In typical Jewish, Matthean style, the idea of the seriousness of certain sins of the body are made clear by exaggeration. The words become less ambiguous and more understandable by the obvious analogy.

We can take another parable where the words appear to have more of a direct meaning than an analogical one:

*In my Father’s house there are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I come again, and will receive you unto myself; that where I am, there you may be also. And where I go, you know the way. Thomas said unto him, Lord, we do not know where you go; how do we know the way? Jesus said unto him, **I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one comes to the Father, but by me.** If you had known me,*

*you would have known my Father also: from henceforth you know him, and have seen him.*

**(John 14: 2-17)**

In a more Greek oriented Johannine style, as is most of the gospel of John, it is clear that the words are more self directed. The (I AM) has reference to the Father's I AM WHO I AM as his name is understood by Moses. The "way" is clearly referring to keeping the commands Jesus has given us in order to be taken *into* himself— into the heavenly home of eternal life with the Trinitarian Godhead. Early Christians referred to themselves as the "*Way*." The "truth" is Ultimate Truth; Jesus as God, Son of the Father, who cannot deceive or be deceived. The "life" is the presence or the consciousness of God the Spirit in all of us and everywhere. Grace is participation in that Life. Faith is the result of embracing grace— not an eyes closed grand leap into hope, but an eyes-wide-open revelation of the goodness of God in all creation; and specifically us fusing with the "living words" of Jesus in the gospels.

"It is significant for what would become the gospels that from the earliest times the memories of Jesus were always understood against the background of scripture. This is evident both in the first two accounts of evangelization (Lk. 24.27; Acts 8.35) and in Paul's memorized text (the text stresses that the events were 'according to the scriptures', 1 Cor. 15.3 and 4); it will be reflected in the gospels. Memorization was extremely important in education at that time, when books were rare and expensive, whole passages being memorized for use as examples of style. It has been suggested that, when the Twelve thought it would not be right for them 'to neglect the word of God so as to give out food:

*And the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not fit that we should forsake the word of God, and serve tables. Look out therefore, brethren, from among you seven men of good report, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will continue steadfastly in prayer, and in the ministry of the word. And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus a proselyte of Antioch; whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands upon them. And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem exceedingly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.*

**(Acts 6.2):**

They were unwilling to put aside their work of garnering and developing the traditions about Jesus. The teachers in the early Christian communities (Rom. 12.7; 1 Cor. 12.28–9, etc) will also no doubt have engaged in this process. Our earliest Christian writers tell of Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis at the end of the first century, eagerly listening to the traditions about Jesus from the elders or those who had known the Twelve, and – a few years later – of Polycarp of Smyrna (69 AD -155 AD) passing on what he had learned from John ‘concerning the Lord, his mighty works and his teaching’ (Eusebius, H.E. 3.39.3; 5.20.4). At some stage it must have been thought appropriate that such traditions should be gathered together, and this is how the gospels came to be written.”...

...“None of the four canonical gospels originally included attribution to an author; all were anonymous. Papias’ evidence about the authors is neither reliable nor easy to interpret, and most modern scholars form their opinion about the authors from the text of the gospels themselves, ( that’s really all they have) sometimes appealing subsequently to the external evidence for confirmation of their findings...Unique to the gospels, however, is the saving, (redemptive) claim of their message, expressed most clearly by John 20.31, *‘these things are written so that you may believe, and that believing you may have life’*. It is not, then, an unprecedented type of writing that is unique, so much as the conviction of the writers that their subject and message has the power to change the world for those who accept them that is unique. This does not exclude the gospels from the broad category of Greco-Roman biography.”

Wansbrough, Henry. *Introducing the New Testament* (p. 40). Bloomsbury Publishing. Kindle Edition.

*And it came to pass, as he said these things, a certain woman out of the multitude lifted up her voice, and said unto him, Blessed is the womb that bare you, and the breasts which you did suck. But he said, Yes— **rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.***

**(Luke 11: 27)**

*...the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, **and the poor have the gospel preached to them.***

**(John 11: 5)**

We intuitively suspect that if the activity stated above was performed today by Jesus in the public square, people would

still reject him. Many will not be led, even by God, since they have accepted advice from many of the current “serpents” of today’s earthly paradise; *“You shall not surely die: for God knows that in the day you eat of it, (the forbidden fruit) your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as God, knowing good and evil.”*

**(Genesis 3: 5)**

As it happened, we have gotten to know “good and evil,” and many have purposely chosen some semblance of evil as a result of ignorance of the Gospel; or knowing the living-word of God through Christ in the Spirit, and relatively neglecting it in favor self satisfaction. Yes, words have meaning; but words can purposely be made ambiguous. We all know politicians say no when they mean yes, or oaths “sworn” to God with subjective “option out” nuances. Count the divorces in today’s marriages. Many good intentions might not have the strength of character behind them. Firm resolve is often dissolved by fear or indecision. Fiction is often reported and promulgated as fact. We have all sinned in one way or another since our baptism and may be reconciled by Jesus in the Sacrament of Penance by the grace of God in faith. A gross lack of enthusiasm for the word of God has lead many Catholic Christians neglect this miraculous spiritual option as a channel of Sanctifying Grace.

With the “Dictatorship of Relativism” humanity is atomized, we all become our own gods. Women are given the right to murder their offspring if they feel so inclined as a result of bad law; the human race becomes incoherent when God is missing or presumed dead. Blatant lies are called truth where “Dear hearts and Gentle people” are construed as bigoted religious fanatics: “clinging to their guns and their bibles,” and honest

ordinary citizens are called “deplorable” by certain law breakers. The American government, with the help of “Divine Providence” [In God We Trust] is *of* the people. The people are not *of* the government in the USA. Many democrat politicians are fostering this idea by the curious name of “Democratic Socialism.”

God entered the story of humanity as a baby, sharing with men their life situation but without sin. True God and true man, Jesus announces the Kingdom of God and calls everyone to repent so as to enable them to come under His Reign. At the end of His mission the plan of salvation is fulfilled by Jesus’ passion, death and resurrection, the core of the Creed. The Cross— symbol of suffering and love, forgiveness and reconciliation— becomes the new “rainbow of God” that joins heaven to earth; it drives away the darkness of night and looks forward to the dawn of Easter. The cross and resurrection are the moment when the earthly life of Christ reaches its climax. They are not only the central and crucial truth of the faith, but also the beginning of a new era in history. Raised forever from the underworld, Jesus returns as a living person to encounter men. The apostles and first disciples spread the proclamation of this extraordinary event: the tomb is empty and Jesus appears to his people. At his Ascension they do not feel lonely and abandoned. Benedict XVI notices, in his second volume of *Jesus of Nazareth*, they are now confident that the Risen One is lifted up “at the right hand of the Father” and will always be with them in a new way. The Kingdom of God, a universal Kingdom of love, justice and peace, begins a new existence for man who is now reconciled, redeemed and made whole in Christ. From the mystery of Easter is born the need, the enthusiasm and the joy of testifying to the world the greatness

of this cosmic event. After Easter, the faith of the disciples is transformed into a faith which is passionate, mature and courageous, making them true imitators of Jesus. At Pentecost the Holy Spirit breathed life into creation and history, directs it in goodness and beauty, and is the bridge between God and Jesus. He “has spoken through the prophets” whose prophecies in the Old Testament were inspired by Him and in the New Testament were fully accomplished in Him. The “Come Holy Spirit” is a prayer that proclaims real faith in a **living presence**, which sustains the new course of the work of God started with the resurrection of Christ. **The Holy Spirit is indeed the cement of the unity in the community of the church. The missionaries of the Gospel are fortified and consoled by the permanent reality of the Spirit, who guides them and leads them to the whole truth, giving them the courage to announce it without fear to the end of the earth.**

Joseph Ratzinger: Benedict XVI., *I Believe in One God* . ST PAULS / Alba House. Kindle Edition.

We cannot hate the architects of secularism in these post-modern times regardless of how uncivil they may become in spreading the idea of the absence of God and the inanity of Holy Scripture. Jesus says: “love your enemies.” Those who espouse biblical scholarship without faith in the evolutionary succession of the gospel’s veracity, study the words and meanings of the words with an indifference to their spiritual significance. When the word “spirit” itself can only express finite meanings, like school-spirit or team-spirit, the entire life of Christ along with his words and deeds are not viable; not sensible to a determinate mind-set where everything must be proved empirically. Most wind up proclaiming him a brilliant

prophet the likes of Isiah, John the Baptist, or Muhammed. “The gospels were written and copied by fallible men of a different age as they evolved, guided by the Holy Spirit, and became the ‘Living Word of God’ we have today.” (*Beyond Belief*: F. Arundell: <<http://renovabis.com>> Library pg. v intro.) modified

Words have meaning indeed, particularly when they are the inspirational words of the Son of God the Father as he clearly expressed himself to be recounted in the gospels; totally corroborated by miraculous deeds of love and mercy for all, the virtuous and sinners alike:

*It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh profits nothing:  
the words that I have spoken unto you are spirit, and are life.*

**(John 6: 63)**

Alleluia, alleluia!

I am the light of the world, says the Lord;  
Anyone who follows me will have the light of life.

Alleluia!

**(John 8:12)**

Alleluia, alleluia!

Jesus proclaimed the Good News of the kingdom  
and cured all kinds of sickness among the people.

Alleluia!

**(Matt. 4:23)**