

“In *The Saint John’s Bible* the art, plentiful and beautiful, is not there as decoration or even as illustration: it is there to illuminate, to light up Holy Scripture from within. It is sacred art, focused intently on Sacred Revelation. Susan Sink’s magnificent book is above all a biblical book. She leads us into every section of the Bible, puts it in context for us, and makes clear how the art springs from and refers back to a salvific meaning. It is a book almost impossible to comprehend; it does not ask us to comprehend. What it does ask is that we open our minds and hearts and allow the Word of God, written, drawn, and painted, to transform us. These pages are not for mere reading. They are for lectio divina, as befits a Benedictine book.”

—Sister Wendy Beckett,
Contemplative nun, author, art commentator

“By its sheer beauty and craftsmanship *The Saint John’s Bible* compels its viewers to stand in awe. That experience will be further enhanced when readers have in hand Susan Sink’s *The Art of The Saint John’s Bible*. She presents us with finely crafted answers to questions we might not have even been aware we were seeking. *Why that image? Those colors? How did they . . . ?* A solid contribution to an epic enterprise.”

—George Wilson, SJ

THE ART OF THE SAINT JOHN'S BIBLE

The Complete Reader's Guide

SUSAN SINK



THE SAINT JOHN'S BIBLE

Collegeville, Minnesota

A Saint John's Bible Book published by Liturgical Press.

Donald Jackson – Artistic Director

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PREFACE

THE FIRST VOLUME of *The Art of The Saint John's Bible* came out in 2007. At the time, three volumes of *The Saint John's Bible* had been completed: *Gospels and Acts*, *Pentateuch*, and *Psalms*. Liturgical Press had hired me as a copyeditor, and it was in my first week of work that director Peter Dwyer came to my office and asked if I would be interested in this project. It was something people had been asking for since pages of *The Saint John's Bible* began touring in a major exhibition in 2005. People wanted to know, "What are we looking at?" Why was a certain passage from the Bible chosen for illumination by the Committee on Illumination and Text (CIT) rather than another? What materials and source imagery are behind the illuminations created by Donald Jackson and his team of artists and calligraphers?

At that time there was quite a bit of reference material available, such as planning documents and detailed descriptions, to accompany the traveling exhibition into museums. As the last four volumes of *The Saint John's Bible* were delivered to Saint John's Abbey and University, however, the reference material became slimmer. Pages from the Bible were mostly on display at the Hill Museum & Manuscript Library (HMML) on campus, often without much explanatory text.

I always had access to a videotaped version of Donald Jackson's presentations to the CIT when he delivered the volumes. This gave me some insight into his process and source materials, as well as clues to the way images and visual motifs worked throughout a particular volume. Each time a volume was completed, I also sat down with Fr. Michael Patella, OSB, the director of the CIT, who walked me through the significance of the biblical texts being illuminated and the way the images emphasized particular theological themes within and across volumes.

That was my foundation. As the project went on, however, I realized that much of what I wrote about the images came out of my own practice of *lectio* and *visio divina*, reflecting on the biblical passages and commentary, often in a reading chair in my office, then moving to the images spread out in the reproduction volumes on my desk. In these sessions, I tried to remain attentive to what I'd seen before in other volumes, such as patterns moving across the volumes or points of reference that deepened my experience with the text and image in front of me.

One way I know that my personal experience made its way onto the page as the project progressed is by the way readers have responded to the books. People have told me they could hear that these volumes were not merely a compendium of material collected by an editor but a reflection written by an individual. Always, I have to say, I have felt the Holy Spirit at work in this writing process. It has been a privilege to work with the Bible in this way and to spend so much time with *The Saint John's Bible*. There is such richness in these texts and images that every time I sat down to work on the project, there was something there for me to discover and to write about.

The purpose of this edition was, first of all, to straighten out the order of the books! They were completed and made available in a reproduction edition in this order: *Gospels and Acts*, *Pentateuch*, *Psalms*, *Prophets*, *Wisdom Books*, *Historical Books*, and *Letters and Revelation*. That's the order in which I first encountered and wrote about them. Particularly strange in that process was the way the New Testament bookended the rest. This edition of *The Art of The Saint John's Bible* takes them in the order they appear in the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation. It also attempts to make more connections to images and motifs that reoccur throughout the volumes. And finally, it is much more informed by my later process, that of *visio divina*, than by research into materials produced by *The Saint John's Bible* project. For me to write it, it had to be a new book. I hope this book does not lose what was of value in those original three volumes but rather intensifies the readers' experience of *The Saint John's Bible* by reflecting on the images with a view to the whole.

Susan Sink
January 2013

INTRODUCTION

Illuminate: \vt\ from *in* + *luminare* to light up, from *lumin-*, *lumen* light. 1a: to enlighten spiritually or intellectually b: to supply or brighten with light; 2a: to make clear b: to bring to the fore; 3: to make illustrious or resplendent; 4: to decorate (as a manuscript) with gold or silver or brilliant colors or with often elaborate designs or miniature pictures.

STRICTLY SPEAKING, there can be no illumination of a manuscript without gold. Although the definition has been expanded to apply to any brightly colored illustration, the relationship to light is lost in this broader usage. It is gold that reflects the light to the viewer. In this way, the light is meant to come out of the illumination, not reside in it. In an illuminated Bible, the art attends to the revelation in the words. Text and image both reflect God's presence, both reveal God's mystery.

From an artistic perspective, silver has the same effect, but its use was scaled back in early manuscripts because, unlike gold, it oxidizes black and, worse, eats through the parchment. In *The Saint John's Bible*, "silver" is used throughout the volume *Wisdom Books* to represent Wisdom, but platinum was used to avoid the oxidation issue.

Extensive use of gold leaf, applied to the page over a surface of gesso, is rubbed with a burnishing tool to shine even brighter. Gold became more common in Western manuscripts in the twelfth century, in imitation of Eastern mosaics, icons, and manuscripts. In the Eastern or Byzantine tradition, a background of gold is symbolic of heaven, the incorruptible outside of fallen creation—a tradition that has carried over to the West. In *The Saint John's Bible*, gold was used to show the presence of the Divine. As the fortunes of Abraham and his descendants rise and fall and as God breaks into human experience directly in the person of Jesus Christ, gold reminds us to look for God in the text and be aware of what the text reveals about God and God's relationship to this created world.

Illuminations are full of symbolism and, by nature, theological interpretations. Contemporary theology is exciting, in part, because of both its openness to the past and present and its increased ecumenical sensibility. If the second half of the last millennium (from the Reformation in the sixteenth century to the twentieth) was a period of constant schism and breaking off into multiple denominations within Christianity, then the last

half of the twentieth century seems to mark a shift to a new age of integration and reconciliation as denominations share their treasures with each other and people from varied spiritual traditions focus on their similarities rather than differences. The ecumenical movement, as well as movements within individual traditions, has brought about greater understanding of what it means to worship one God and share the same Scriptures. The ecumenical focus partly determined the choice of the New Revised Standard Version translation—a translation used by not only Catholics but also many Protestant denominations.

This Bible is also intentionally multicultural and contemporary, with its imagery drawing on various traditions and aesthetics from both the ancient and modern world. The images expand our visual vocabulary and invite us to embrace new symbols and contemplate new images in the context of the revelation of the Bible. On the pages of *The Saint John's Bible* you will see the double helix of DNA, images from the Hubble telescope, mandalas, patterns from Middle Eastern and South Asian textiles, an image of the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in New York, and meticulously drawn butterflies, dragonflies, and black flies. You will also find a variety of images of Christ—as worker, as shaft of light, as Word, as teacher, as icon, as baptized, as transfigured, as crucified, as resurrected, as Son of Man surveying the New Jerusalem.

The Saint John's Bible is more than an artistic work and more than a book. The project is a source of reflection, both for the team that created it and for everyone who views it either in reproduction or in exhibition. As people look at the images and read the text, they become interested in the ancient arts of calligraphy and illumination and in the way text and image work together in an illuminated Bible.

“The illuminations are not illustrations” says Father Michael Patella, chair of the Committee on Illumination and Text (CIT). “They are spiritual meditations on a text. It is a very Benedictine approach to the Scriptures.” A primary spiritual practice of Benedictine monks is *lectio divina*, a prayerful, reflective reading of Scripture. *The Saint John's Bible* has opened the door to a practice they're calling *visio divina*, using the illumination to open up and explore Scriptures, letting them speak to us in new ways.

This guide is designed as a reference book for those who are doing their own contemplative study of the Bible. This guide offers some context to place you in the biblical text associated with an illumination and information on the techniques and sources of the images. The reproductions here

are meant as references to the larger scale reproductions in the volumes of *The Saint John's Bible*. It will be difficult to see enough detail in this book alone to do a meaningful reflection.

Like all illuminated and biblical manuscripts, this one reflects the spiritual aspirations of the people who created it. The CIT, comprised of biblical scholars, theologians, artists, and historians, reflected deeply and broadly on the relationship of text and art to tradition and proclamation. This group identified which Scripture passages would receive attention and the scale of the treatment (i.e., special rendering of the text, a small illumination or a full-page illumination). They produced a schema for each volume that outlined the themes to be emphasized, the interpretation and significance of the highlighted Scripture passages, and possibilities for imagery. Reflecting Benedictine values, the illuminations and text treatments were chosen to particularly highlight three biblical themes: hospitality, conversion of life, and justice for God's people. The Benedictine understanding of radical hospitality can clearly be seen in the text treatments of *Pentateuch* that emphasize welcoming the stranger and caring for the widows and orphans in our midst.

Individual volumes also highlight particular themes. In *Wisdom Books* the feminine aspects of God are highlighted. In *Historical Books* marginal text treatments draw attention to the cycle of disobedience and God's mercy throughout the unfolding history of the Israelites. In *Revelation* the connection to the words of the Old Testament prophets are emphasized by reprising images found in the earlier volume.

The calligraphers and artists brought their energy and craft to every visual element. Donald Jackson, the art director, designer, and lead calligrapher and artist on the project, says of calligraphy: "It's capable of picking up emotions from inside me and putting them on the page. There's an energy that comes from the soles of my feet right to the top of my head." *The Saint John's Bible* is not a mechanical rendering of archetypal images assigned to the text. It is an original manuscript with not only the whole history of calligraphy and illumination as its source of reference but also with contemporary theologians, artists, and craftspeople as its contributors.

Each of the 1,127 pages of *The Saint John's Bible* took seven to thirteen hours to write and was written by one of six scribes working in Donald Jackson's scriptorium in Wales. Their work was a nice parallel to the Liturgy of the Hours at Saint John's Abbey, a regular practice of gathering the community at morning, noon, and evening to recite the psalms, listen

to the Word, and pray. Given their practice of *lectio divina*, it is easy to see why Benedictines were so often the early calligraphers, illuminators, and preservers of sacred texts through the Dark Ages in Europe.

The Art of The Saint John's Bible is not meant to be the final word on any of the images but a starting place. We intend it as a companion piece to the reproduction volumes. First and foremost, it has been written with a consciousness of the way text and image work together in *The Saint John's Bible* in order to bring people into contact with the sacred power of God's word. Unlike images in an art exhibit catalog or book of prints, these images mean very little without the Scripture that inspired them. We hope that you will read the entire passage outlined at the top of each entry before diving into the essays and accompany this book with either a Bible or one of the reproduction volumes. The images are here to illuminate the Word, and the Word is also necessary to illuminate the image. For that reason we invite you to approach this reader's guide only as a way to enhance your own experience of the text and image before you. The experience will be richest if it is your own.

Because it is the Bible that we're exploring, the guide will take some time to introduce the context behind the artwork. What is the Pentateuch? Why are there four gospels? Why doesn't *Psalms* have more images? Why did the CIT choose these passages to illuminate? Answers to questions like these will help readers make sense of the Bible project as a whole.

When approaching the essay for each major illumination, take some time with the Scripture passage first. At the beginning of each essay we have provided a question for you to consider. The essay draws your attention to particular elements of the image. Finally, return to the Scripture passage. What strikes you about it now that you didn't notice before? Ask yourself: Have I also been illuminated?

PENTATEUCH

INTRODUCTION

THE PENTATEUCH is the Greek name for the first five books of the Old Testament. In their final form, they were collected from multiple sources after the two-century-long Assyrian and Babylonian captivity (722 B.C.E. through 538 B.C.E.). By the time of exile, Israel had lived through its early formation, from the call of Abraham out of the land of Ur (present-day Iraq) all the way to the Promised Land. After the long period of slavery in Egypt, Moses and then Joshua led the Israelites to Canaan, where the Lord delivered a large territory into their hands.

Genesis and Exodus, the first two books of the Pentateuch, tell the stories of the Israelites from their creation in Genesis through their arrival at the Promised Land. After the opening accounts of creation, the flood, and other foundational stories, Genesis 18–50 tells the story of Abraham and his descendants through Joseph, ending in Egypt. Exodus begins with the birth of Moses and ends with the account of Moses setting up the tabernacle with the ark of the covenant in the desert. This house of the Lord will accompany them throughout their wanderings in the desert.

The final three books of the Pentateuch (Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy) contain the law of Moses. Finally, at the end of Deuteronomy, the story picks up at the edge of the Promised Land, where Moses foretells the history of Israel and then dies on the hills above the Jordan without entering the land of milk and honey.

The displacement and inculturation of generations in exile had ruptured the identity of the people of Israel, and they turned to a unified temple practice and a text—the Torah, the law of Moses—to unite them as the Jewish people. The Torah is the Hebrew name for the Pentateuch. From the time of Moses on, the Old Testament historians tell of the relationship between the people and God through faithfulness or unfaithfulness to the Torah. When King Josiah is brought the book of the Law after a long



period of unfaithful kings, he weeps and mourns, knowing that Israel has broken the covenant and so will face destruction.

Tradition has long claimed that Moses himself wrote the complete Torah as given to him by God on Mount Sinai and that the people of Israel carried it in the ark of the covenant into the Promised Land. It is much more likely that most of the document we now read was written after the Israelites settled in one place (namely, Canaan) and supplemented with other texts after the Babylonian captivity. In any event, it is the story of the people and their relationship to the one true God. It was written to remind them of their ancestors and of the story of God's faithfulness and promises to them—often despite their own unfaithfulness.

These are the stories meant to bring a people home to themselves and keep them on a path with their God. The stories of the Pentateuch have indeed brought comfort to captives and to those living in oppression. Jesus quoted these texts and declared that he came not to replace the Law but to fulfill it. These books provided inspirational text for the songs and sermons of the civil rights movement and other nonviolent movements worldwide. A text treatment in Leviticus highlights the teaching: "The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God" (Lev 19:34). This text has special resonance today, as countries wrestle with issues of immigration and nationalism.

The five books of the Pentateuch bring together a variety of foundational accounts and texts that underlie the Jewish, Christian, and Islamic faiths. They include the great moral code engraved by God onto tablets atop Mount Zion: the Ten Commandments. They include the two stories of creation—one of the world and humankind in seven days, the other of the humans Adam and Eve and the Garden of Eden—our first stories about who God is, God's relationship to the universe and, specifically, to humankind.

The challenges for an artist in visually representing even one of these texts are immense. On the pages of Pentateuch, Donald Jackson and his team created eight illuminations that range from a quarter-page to the two-page treatment of Abraham and Sarah. Additionally, there are six special text treatments and a number of decorations in the margins. As you contemplate these images and the texts that accompany them, we invite you to explore the nature of the God represented in this book, God's relationship with us, and what it means to be God's people.

What does this image say to you about the nature of creation?

Looking at the illumination, you'll notice right away that it has seven panels for the seven days. The first panel contains "fractals," the jagged geometric shapes that resemble jigsaw puzzle pieces. Fractals play a role in various collages in *The Saint John's Bible*. They reflect glimpses, fleeting moments of clarity, and layers of symbolic meaning—not unlike our experience of seeing God in Scripture.

This image, created by Donald Jackson with contributions from nature illustrator Chris Tomlin, emphasizes the tension between order and disorder, structure and chaos, and even the fields of mathematics and science. Can ideas of creation and science go together in a unified whole? Jackson suggests that the Genesis story, a story of seven days, nevertheless tells us about timelessness. It tells us about the beginning of space and time. So he assembled seven panels here, irregular and exploding from the dark primordial void, a state expressed verbally at the bottom of the first day with the Hebrew words *tohu wabohu*—formless and void.

Where do you begin on this image? What captures your eye? There's a lot of gold, and you'll see gold leaf throughout *The Saint John's Bible*, most often used to represent the presence of the divine. Gold here is symbolic of God's intervention in the chaos and God's ordering of the universe and its elements. Whenever you see gold in an illumination, contemplate what it means that God is present at that moment in the story—in what way? Accomplishing what purpose? How clearly do we perceive God in the story's action?

Day one is struck through with a thin ribbon of gold. This corresponds to verse 3, "Let there be light!" In what way are God and light connected, even beyond the story of creation?

Day three is made from satellite photos of the Ganges Delta. Notice the variety of color and the sense of movement not just in this panel but everywhere.

Representing archetypal humanity, like representing God, is always tricky. For the creation of human beings on the sixth

Creation

GENESIS 1:1–2:4a

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth . . . (1:1)

day, Jackson used images from aboriginal rock paintings in Australia. The huntress on top is from an even earlier rock painting found in Africa. Woven in is a fragment of Chris Tomlin's coral snake, which appears more clearly in the next illumination, the *Garden of Eden* (which also depicts the ancient huntress), and again in the portrayal of Adam and Eve. The Bible is all one story, and the image of creation includes elements that can carry us all the way from Genesis 1 to Revelation. Chris Tomlin's coral snake makes a dramatic reappearance in *Woman and the Dragon* and *The Cosmic Battle* in the book of Revelation, where it is finally vanquished.

Smudged into the surface of the illumination is the image of a black bird. Donald Jackson says, "birds are these magical, mobile, extraterrestrial creatures." Perhaps this bird connects the heavens and the earth, captures the movement expressed in every part of the illumination, and is a creature of all realms: land, sky, and sea. "The raven is a messenger in the Bible," says Jackson. There will be birds bringing messages to Noah on the ark, and this black bird will reappear most dramatically in Ecclesiastes to navigate between life and death. In legend, it was a raven that brought God's message to St. Benedict, patron of the Benedictine monks at Saint John's Abbey who commissioned this work.

❏ *Reread the story of creation now and notice God's activity, the abundance and energy of the language, and the serenity of the seventh day. What else do you see? What is prominent? How does the illumination open the text for you?*

TEXT AND PAGE ELEMENTS

Script

Scribes call their writing “script,” a term we can compare with a “font” in printed texts. Donald Jackson designed the script for *The Saint John’s Bible* with many objectives in mind. First, he wanted it to be modern. He made and rejected many samples because they felt too archaic. Of course he wanted the script to be readable even in the reproduction editions, not just on the 2’ x 3’ original pages. The script needed to have dense lines with clear channels of white between the letters so it wouldn’t all turn to mush on the page.* But also, this is the Bible, and Jackson wanted its script to have appropriate substance and seriousness. Finally, he wanted the script to have “juice.” The Bible is a living word and needs to be alive on the page.

Once he devised the script he taught it to the scribes, men and women hired to work at the Scriptorium or from their home studios over the course of the project writing the text. Although there are subtle differences in the work of the different scribes, most readers can’t see it. There might be an extra flourish in a descender at the bottom of a page or into a margin, but this is just as much about the vellum and quill and page design as the personality of the scribe. Only in *Psalms* were slight differences in the script developed to set off the different books. Writing the script was, of course, the bulk of the project, though much focus also went to the illuminations. Each page took between seven and thirteen hours to write.

Incipit

The first two pages of Genesis are written in all capital letters. This is called an *incipit* and is a special treatment of the opening text of many books in this Bible. The incipits were written by Donald Jackson and reveal a great deal of skill in terms of the calligraphy involved. Unlike the meticulously

* Christopher Calderhead, *Illuminating the Word* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2005), 72.



IN THE BEGINNING WHEN GOD CREATED THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH, THE EARTH WAS FORMLESS AND DARKNESS COVERED THE FACE OF THE DEEP; WHILE A WIND FROM GOD SWEEPED OVER THE FACE OF THE WATERS. THEN GOD SAID, "LET THERE BE LIGHT," AND THERE WAS LIGHT. AND GOD SAW THAT THE LIGHT WAS GOOD; AND GOD SEPARATED THE LIGHT FROM THE DARKNESS. GOD CALLED THE LIGHT DAY, AND THE DARKNESS HE CALLED NIGHT. AND THERE WAS EVENING, AND THERE WAS MORNING, THE FIRST DAY. AND GOD SAID, "LET THERE BE A DOME IN THE MIDDLE OF THE WATERS, AND LET IT SEPARATE THE WATERS FROM THE WATERS." SO GOD MADE THE DOME AND SEPARATED THE WATERS THAT WERE UNDER THE DOME FROM THE WATERS THAT WERE ABOVE THE DOME. AND IT WAS SO. GOD CALLED THE DOME SKY. AND THERE WAS EVENING, AND THERE WAS MORNING, THE SECOND DAY. AND GOD SAID, "LET THE WATERS UNDER THE SKY BE GATHERED TOGETHER INTO ONE PLACE, AND LET THE DRY LAND APPEAR." AND IT WAS SO. GOD CALLED THE DRY LAND EARTH, AND THE WATERS THAT WERE GATHERED TOGETHER HE CALLED SEAS. AND GOD SAW THAT IT WAS GOOD. THEN GOD SAID, "LET THE EARTH PUT FORTH VEGETATION: PLANTS YIELDING SEEDS AND FRUIT TREES OF EVERY KIND ON EARTH THAT BEAR FRUIT WITH THE SEED IN IT." AND IT WAS SO. THE EARTH BROUGHT FORTH VEGETATION:

PLANTS YIELDING SEED OF EVERY KIND, AND TREES OF EVERY KIND BEARING FRUIT WITH THE SEED IN IT. AND GOD SAW THAT IT WAS GOOD. AND THERE WAS EVENING AND THERE WAS MORNING, THE THIRD DAY. AND GOD SAID, "LET THERE BE LIGHTS IN THE DOME OF THE SKY TO SEPARATE THE DAY FROM THE NIGHT; AND LET THEM BE FOR SIGNS AND FOR SEASONS AND FOR DAYS AND YEARS. AND LET THEM BE LIGHTS IN THE DOME OF THE SKY TO GIVE LIGHT UPON THE EARTH." AND IT WAS SO. GOD MADE THE TWO GREAT LIGHTS—THE GREATER LIGHT TO RULE THE DAY AND THE LESSER LIGHT TO RULE THE NIGHT—AND THE STARS. GOD SET THEM IN THE DOME OF THE SKY TO GIVE LIGHT UPON THE EARTH, TO RULE OVER THE DAY AND OVER THE NIGHT, AND TO SEPARATE THE LIGHT FROM THE DARKNESS. AND GOD SAW THAT IT WAS GOOD. AND THERE WAS EVENING AND THERE WAS MORNING, THE FOURTH DAY. AND GOD SAID, "LET THE WATERS BRING FORTH SWARMS OF LIVING CREATURES, AND LET BIRDS FLY ABOVE THE EARTH ACROSS THE DOME OF THE SKY." SO GOD CREATED EVERY LIVING CREATURE THAT MOVES OF EVERY KIND WITH WHICH THE WATERS SWARM, AND EVERY WINGED BIRD OF EVERY KIND. AND GOD SAW THAT IT WAS GOOD. GOD BLESSED THEM, SAYING, "BE FRUITFUL AND MULTIPLY AND FILL THE WATERS IN THE SEAS, AND LET BIRDS MULTIPLY ON THE EARTH." AND THERE WAS EVENING AND THERE WAS MORNING, THE FIFTH DAY. AND GOD SAID, "LET THE EARTH BRING FORTH LIVING CREATURES OF EVERY KIND: CATTLE AND CREEPING THINGS & WILD ANIMALS OF THE EARTH OF EVERY KIND." AND IT WAS SO. GOD BLESSED THE WILD ANIMALS OF THE EARTH OF EVERY KIND, AND THE CATTLE OF EVERY KIND AND EVERYTHING

GEN 1:1-2:4



THE GREAT ANGEL OF THE LORD

1. The Great Angel of the Lord
2. The Great Angel of the Lord
3. The Great Angel of the Lord
4. The Great Angel of the Lord
5. The Great Angel of the Lord
6. The Great Angel of the Lord
7. The Great Angel of the Lord
8. The Great Angel of the Lord
9. The Great Angel of the Lord
10. The Great Angel of the Lord

designed script of the body text, each incipit is written with a freer hand. If you look at verse 1:30 you will see a variety of a's and begin to understand. The incipit for the book of Job is Jackson's favorite piece of text, one where the elements of quill, ink, vellum, and individual came together to create a beautiful block of text written in a free hand.

Correction

The text for this Bible was laid out on a computer before the calligraphers wrote on vellum. This way they had a plan that allowed the lines to roughly justify (look at the perfect justification of the regular text columns that begins with Genesis 2:4 and marvel!) and for an even number of lines to be in the columns of a page.

The two columns of the first incipit, however, do not match up! That is because a line was omitted when Donald Jackson was writing the text. It is easy to see how he would flow from "So God created" to "every living creature that moves" without realizing the omission. He left out the great sea monsters! This omission would be noticed only when he reached the end of the column and saw the gap. At that point, it was too late to go back and correct the text. Instead, he noted the text in the margin and inserted it with a simple line and arrow. We will see more elaborate ways of dealing with omissions in the text as we proceed.

Book Heading

The start of each book is also marked by a book heading designed and painted by Donald Jackson. The general design of the book plate had to be strong yet compact and flexible enough to be used for all the books of the Bible. The book plate for Genesis is elegant, a black background scattered with stars. The real challenge for Jackson was fitting the names of the books, which range in length from Job to Zechariah, on the plates!

Capitals

Genesis 3 begins with one of the elaborate, decorative initial capitals that run throughout *The Saint John's Bible*. After the scribe had finished, Donald Jackson returned to the pages to add the capitals and other elements. In fact, the scribes also left space for the chapter numbers, which Brian Simpson came and wrote in *Pentateuch*. Sue Hufton wrote the running chapter heads in English, and Izzy Pludwinski, a certified religious scribe living in Israel, wrote the running heads in Hebrew.

The capitals in *The Saint John's Bible* are another element that highlights the calligraphy. Jackson drew original capitals for each chapter; no two are alike. If there was an image on the page, he coordinated the color and sometimes even the decoration of the letter with the image. A good example is found at Leviticus 17–19, where the capitals clearly reflect the design of the text treatments.

Paragraph Marks

One other thing you might notice are the small diamonds that mark paragraph breaks in the text. *The Saint John's Bible* uses the New Revised Standard Version and must follow the conventions of that text. This includes all the marginal notes on the text, which were written by the scribes assigned to the page. However, it also required paragraph breaks. The Bible team worked with the copyright holders of the translation to get approval to use the diamonds instead of full breaks in prose passages. This made a large difference in the project's completed size. As it is, *The Saint John's Bible* runs to 1,127 pages. Actual paragraph breaks would have added additional pages, meaning more sheets of rare and expensive vellum and more weight to the volumes.



Garden of Eden and Adam and Eve

GENESIS 2:4b-25 / GENESIS 3

And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. (2:8)



GARDEN OF EDEN

How do these images match up to your vision of the Garden of Eden and Adam and Eve?

These two illuminations are directly related to the second creation story in Genesis, the story of the Garden of Eden and Adam and Eve. Notice how gold is used as a frame of God's creation (including the snake). Creation is abundant, fertile, breaking the bounds of the rectangular image. Creation is messy. The beautiful but predatory harlequin shrimp, the coral snake, and several poisonous insects foreshadow the end of innocence. Adam and Eve have painted faces, also reflective of our "divided but connected relationship" with each other and with our environment.

The figures, inspired by photographs of the Karo tribe of the Omo River in southwest Ethiopia, reflect current archaeological and anthropological theories that humankind evolved from our predecessors in Africa. What other ways do the images reflect that we are made in God's image? What else do they reflect about the first man and first woman, given dominion over the earth? What do the framing images, from textiles and a Peruvian feather cape, say about humans as creators, our fruitfulness?

In the Garden of Eden illumination, the cave paintings tell of the human need to tell stories even from earliest time. Creation is a story of dominion and celebration. Adam and Eve's painted faces, along with the decorated, colorful cloth, speak of humanity's desire to rejoice in being alive. People make patterns, like the textile patterns and the curved piece of a mandala at the center left of the Garden of Eden illumination.

The mandala is an archetypal image common to many faith traditions, a word loosely translated as "circle." Hildegard von Bingen saw mandala shapes in the visions she received from God, and the mandala can be seen throughout Christian architecture, in decorated dome ceilings, in the rose windows of Chartres. "The Buddhist mandala . . . is about the birth of intellect," according to Donald Jackson. You might want to keep a watch for other mandalas in *The Saint John's Bible*. Some will be complete, like the one at the center of the menorah in the frontispiece of Matthew's gospel, and others will be bold

fragments like those in the illumination that opens *Historical Books* at the River Jordan. How do mystery, reason, and consciousness come together when we contemplate something like the brightly colored parrot in this image of creation, the disarming smile of Eve, or the primitive figures playing musical instruments and dancing?

The two stories of creation in Genesis 1–2 both culminate in the place of humankind among the creatures. We are made in the image and likeness of the Creator, combining physical beauty and reason, and with the breath of life breathed into our nostrils by God (Gen 2:7). The wholeness and expressiveness of this origin is brought together in the mandala image. However, the coral snake is also here as fragments of a circle, hinting at a dark element within free will and human reason.

Finally, text plays a large part in these images as well. In the margins are two quotations from letters written by the apostle Paul, tying the Old and New Testaments together. Donald Jackson saw these as captions for the pictures. The text to the *Garden of Eden* captures creation as alpha and omega, the beginning waiting for the final revelation. “For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God” (Rom 8:19). There’s a sense of creative expectation: what will we be when we finish our ongoing life of grace and God’s final kingdom is revealed? The passage for *Adam and Eve* draws our attention to the platinum background behind Eve, which acts as a mirror. “And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the LORD as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another” (2 Cor 3:18). As we move closer to Christ we will see a single image reflecting back: unified in our godliness and vibrant in the variety of our smiles. “God is within us when we look into the mirror,” Jackson says of the image. “Eve and Adam are mirrors of us.”

❖ *If you were going to draw an image of something in creation that captures the beauty, mystery, creativity, and rationality of God, what would it be? If not an image, make a list of things that you think express these qualities of creation.*



ADAM AND EVE

MARGINALIA

Marginalia, any writing on the border of a page, was common in medieval and renaissance manuscripts. Marginalia could be commentary or decoration. Often the copyist monks would personalize the manuscripts by drawing fanciful decorations in the margins. Later readers might make a note on the text, as many people do when using textbooks.

At the same time, the integrity of the Bible text was very important to everyone involved. In fact, at some periods of history even the artwork became regulated, with certain archetypes always used for certain passages. The decoration also reflected the cultural situation at the time. For example, in 1131 the Cistercians, an order of monks that broke off from the Benedictine tradition, issued a decree that the elaborately decorated initial capital letters at the beginning of chapters should be in one color and should contain no human or animal figures (a decree that was widely ignored)!

The design of *The Saint John's Bible* pays special attention to Benedictine spirituality and includes images of the flora and fauna of the Minnesota landscape as well as of the Welsh countryside where it was written in Donald Jackson's scriptorium. This rootedness in the present day and local landscape is another link between this illuminated Bible and those made hundreds of years ago. Sometimes one finds in the elaborately decorated initials and margins of manuscripts a depiction of the abbey or grounds where it was being made. Sometimes even the faces of specific monks would make their way into the paintings.

At Genesis 4–6, we find the first exquisite examples of marginal nature illustrations by Chris Tomlin for *The Saint John's Bible*. Butterflies, like birds, will appear again and again in this Bible, delicate messengers between the worlds, but here they seem to be simply a further celebration of the beauty of creation. It is almost as if Jackson and Tomlin couldn't fit enough complex and gorgeous images into the creation illumination and spilled them onto these next pages.

The butterfly depicted here is the common yellow swallowtail, found in the Norfolk Broads area of the United Kingdom and in areas of the United States, including Minnesota. On the left, one drinks nectar from a purple thistle, the bane of gardeners and landscapers in the United Kingdom and Minnesota. We might associate it with the fallen world, where beauty and thorns are found together. It is not a given, however, that marginalia will reflect on the particular text on the page.

There is another type of marginalia on these pages, directly below the butterflies. These notes are part of the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, the text used for *The Saint John's Bible*. We can think of them as scholarly annotations, those notes in the margins that early readers might have made on early illuminated manuscripts. You will find some of these notes on virtually every page of the Bible, though some have more than others. The notes were part of the scribes' work and could add considerable time to finishing a page if they were extensive.



What does this illumination tell you about the two passages in Genesis?



The covenant God makes with Abraham is at the heart of both the Jewish and Christian traditions. The monotheistic lineage of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam begins with our common father, the patriarch Abraham. The menorah, a seven-branched candlestick used in Jewish worship, is the central image of this illumination and will be used most prominently again as the

frontispiece of the Gospel of Matthew, the genealogy of Jesus through the line of Abraham and Sarah. The menorah is thus used as a family tree, a version of the tree of life in the Garden of Eden. Do you see the leaves on this tree?

Other important elements in the story of God's covenant with Abraham are also represented. The stars fill the sky, as well as delicate gold-stamped figures of arabesques or mandalas. These same stamps will be used in other illuminations—for example, at the birth of Christ in Luke's frontispiece, at the miracle of the loaves and fishes in Mark, and at the Great Commission in Acts 28. *The Saint John's Bible* uses recurring images and motifs to show the unity and interplay between the books of the Bible. Also, Donald Jackson enjoys working with rubber stamps and uses them throughout the project.

The menorah here is rooted in the two names Abraham and Sarah and rises to the inscription of the names of the children of Jacob. This is the beginning of the tree that will rise in the Gospel of Matthew to the birth of Jesus. As a parallel of that image, this family tree reminds Christians that the covenant between God and Abraham through Sarah is the root of both Judaism and Christianity.

The names in the illumination are written in Hebrew. You may have noticed that the names of the books are also written in Hebrew in the upper right margins of the pages. Although to describe this volume we use the Greek word *Pentateuch*, recognizing that *The Saint John's Bible* is a Christian Bible that includes the Old Testament books and order of the Septuagint used by the early church, this annotation acknowledges that they were originally Hebrew texts. Later in the Old Testament, when we encounter books that made their way into the canon from Greek texts, you will see their Greek names in the margins.

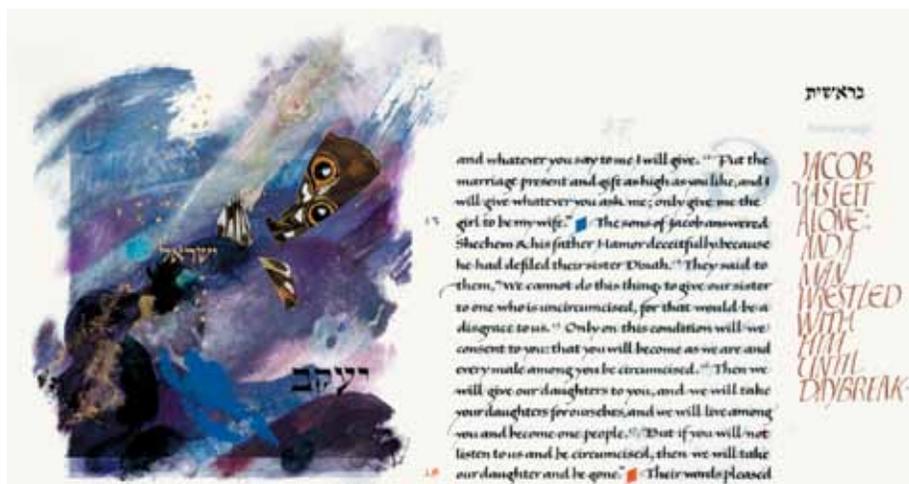
❏ *At the lower right is a black and grey figure, representing the sacrificial ram that takes the place of Isaac. Sacrifice is an essential part of the larger story too. What else do you see of the story?*

Chris Tomlin's butterflies, portrayed in accurately rendered wing fragments, are a striking presence. Butterflies, like birds, are special creatures that seem to bridge both heaven and earth. They are often hard to keep in our vision, as their wings fold closed and they become a sliver on a leaf or flower, or as they dip and disappear into the tall grass.

In *Jacob's Second Dream*, Jacob and God meet again in the night. After reading the story of Jacob wrestling with the man, consider the illumination. It reprises several elements from *Jacob's Ladder*, including the butterfly wings, the blue figures, and scattered gold. Unlike the earlier gold imprint, which was made by applying acrylic to crocheted textiles, the gold here is like squares and diamonds of confetti. There is another shadow figure, the moon of creation or something else. The Hebrew words are Jacob's two names, Israel in gold to replace Jacob in black. Again, the encounter between the heavenly and human world is emphasized in color and form.

But also, look back to the original illumination of creation. There is something of the chaos of the first day in these two illuminations of Jacob.

📖 *What is the relationship between the two Jacob stories and their images? What is the role of chaos here?*



JACOB'S SECOND DREAM

Five passages are incorporated into this single illumination by artist Thomas Ingmire. In addition to the Ten Commandments themselves, what other elements of Israel's story do you recognize?

Thomas Ingmire is the artist behind the *Ten Commandments*. His illuminations appear in every one of the seven volumes of *The Saint John's Bible* except for *Psalms*. They are marked by graphic precision and a love of letter forms—he is someone who clearly loves words and letters. He has illuminated passages where words are often at the center: *Ten Commandments*, *Messianic Predictions in Prophets*, and the *I AM Sayings* in John's gospel. He has also illuminated God's answer to Job, Hannah's prayer, and other important passages. It is wonderful to encounter his work first in this illumination, where he has created something that looks like a grand liturgical banner.

Across the top panel four stories are represented: the burning bush, the first Passover, the Red Sea crossing, and the twelve pillars erected at the foot of Mount Sinai to represent the twelve tribes of Israel. Although the illumination is divided into panels, the events combine to make one story—the story of Israel's liberation and establishment as a nation.

Ten Commandments

EXODUS 20:1-26

Then God spoke all these words . . . (20:1)



TEN COMMANDMENTS

Look for the elements of water, altar, and mountain across the top half of the illumination.

The Ten Commandments, the foundation on which these stories are built, is envisioned as a creation story. It is the creation of the moral universe, the gift of the Law bringing order to the chaos of human affairs. Do you see elements carried over from the first illumination of creation? Notice the birds—wing and eye. The familiar words of the commandments, stenciled in Stone Sans typeface as though engraved on tablets, eat through the colored background. God speaks in gold capitals here, announcing, “Here I am. I am the God of your Father. I am the LORD your God.”

Thomas Ingmire commented on how strange it was that God wrote down the commandments for a culture of people who couldn’t read. It established the idea of God as Word, which is carried into the Gospel of John. Christians believe the same God revealed in Jesus Christ gave the commandments to Moses. What does it mean for God to be proclaimed in word, when God’s name cannot be uttered as word, when no image can capture God?

What does the jumble and jockeying of text on image say about us? What does it say about God? What is our relationship to this new creation, the law meant to restore order and harmony to the world? What is our relationship to God as Word?

CORRECTIONS AND TEXT TREATMENTS

Corrections

We've already mentioned the small correction in the incipit of Genesis. Of the more than eleven hundred pages of *The Saint John's Bible*, the calligraphers made such errors only nine times. In most cases, these omissions came to be seen as artistic opportunities, and the ways the missing line is inserted or pointed to in the text are some of the most loved and delightful images in the project.

In the margin of Exodus 38 and on the second page of Leviticus 19, there are identical brown birds. The ropes in their talons attach to a box of text, and their beaks point to the places where the text should be inserted. At this place the scribe missed a line or two in the copying.

As with medieval manuscripts, on this project the investment in labor, vellum, and ink could not be wasted. There was no crumpling up of the page and tossing it in a wastebasket when an error was made. The solution then, as now, was to make the correction an element of the artwork. Like tapestries into which a flaw is woven to show the work is not perfect, this Bible is not a product of a calculating machine but the work of human hands.

You will find an index to all the corrections, also known as “lines of return,” at the back of this book. Particular favorites are the lemur in *Historical Books*, 2 Chronicles 11, and the bumblebee using a pulley system in *Wisdom Books*, Wisdom of Solomon 7.

Text Treatments

The artwork in *The Saint John's Bible* can be broken down into three main types: illuminations, text treatments, and marginalia. There are many other artistic elements that are mainstays of this kind of bookmaking, such as the elaborate capitals at the beginning of each chapter, the book plates that give the title of each book, carpet pages, incipits, and even the squares that mark the end of each paragraph. All of these elements



EXODUS 38

had to be planned and designed, and we will discuss them as they arise.

Leviticus 19 is the first place we see text treatments, the visual representation of a piece of text—sometimes not even a full verse—to highlight its message. As with the illuminations, the Committee on Illumination and Text (CIT) decided which verses should be highlighted and whether they should be a text treatment or an illumination.

Many of the text treatments are not this elaborate. In *Pentateuch* the text treatments introduce us to the work of four calligraphers on the project: Sally Mae Joseph, Hazel Dolby, Thomas Ingmire, and Suzanne Moore. While Sally Mae Joseph, who wrote these three text treatments in Leviticus, worked at Donald Jackson's studio in Wales, the other artists worked from their own studios on different commissioned pieces throughout the volumes. An index of text treatments at the back of this book identifies the passages and artists associated with them. Working on multiple pieces also had an effect on the artists, and we will see connections between their pieces as we proceed.

Text treatments make particular sense in the books of Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. It is here that we encounter the law of Moses. It's a part of the Bible we're most likely not familiar with, and the scholars behind *The Saint John's Bible* have done us a favor by highlighting key texts. If you're doing real *lectio divina*, or prayerful, sacred reading through the text, you should read not just the verses extracted here but the whole of Leviticus 19. If you do, you'll recognize an expanded version of the Ten Commandments, and a lot of other commands as well. They reflect the culture and needs of a people living in the desert in that time but also embody certain principles of fidelity to God, fairness, and justice.



LEVITICUS 19:34

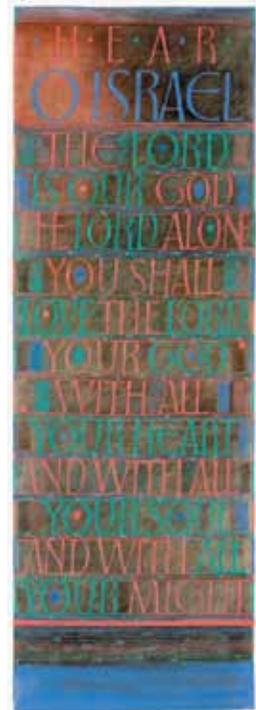
Early on, the CIT identified three themes important to Benedictines that they wanted to emphasize throughout the Bible project:

1. *Hospitality*: The Rule of Benedict says the guest should be received as Christ. *The Saint John's Bible* emphasizes texts advocating hospitality for the poor, the pilgrim, the seeker, and the stranger.
2. *Transformation*: Benedictines take a vow of *conversatio*, or conversion of life. *Conversatio* entails an ongoing process of aligning one's life more closely to the life of Christ. Texts that encourage this work in individuals and societies are also given special attention.
3. *Justice for God's People*: Finally, of special concern to Benedictines and all believers in biblical revelation is the repeated call for justice for all of God's people.

The text treatments for Leviticus 19 clearly reflect these themes. One thing you will also notice as you read is that this is decidedly a Christian Bible. The illuminations and text treatments reflect the Christian faith and the story of redemption through Jesus Christ. In the treatment for Leviticus 19:18, we see the words Jesus quoted when asked by the Pharisees to name the greatest commandment: "Love your neighbor as yourself." We will also find, at Deuteronomy 6, a text treatment of the first part of Jesus' answer: "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart" (v. 5). These emphasized texts remind us of Jesus' affirmation of the law of Moses.

As we read the chapter in its entirety, we also see again and again the emphasis on the poor—we are told not to pick our vineyard clean or harvest to the edge of the field but to leave the gleanings for the "alien" or displaced person to reap. It is easy to apply these words to our own life and times. Christianity is rooted in Judaism, and here we see that relationship in the commandment to love the Lord and neighbor and to serve the poor.

These text treatments stop us as we're flipping through the Bible. When we slow down and pay attention to the passages,



DEUTERONOMY 6:5

we see connections in the ongoing story. God made a covenant. God gave commandments. God instructs the people through Moses with a law that gives more specific direction on how to live and yet is contained in the Ten Commandments. Special text treatments form a thread to draw attention to the unfolding story of God with us, not just at the familiar stories we know and love, but deep in the books of Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

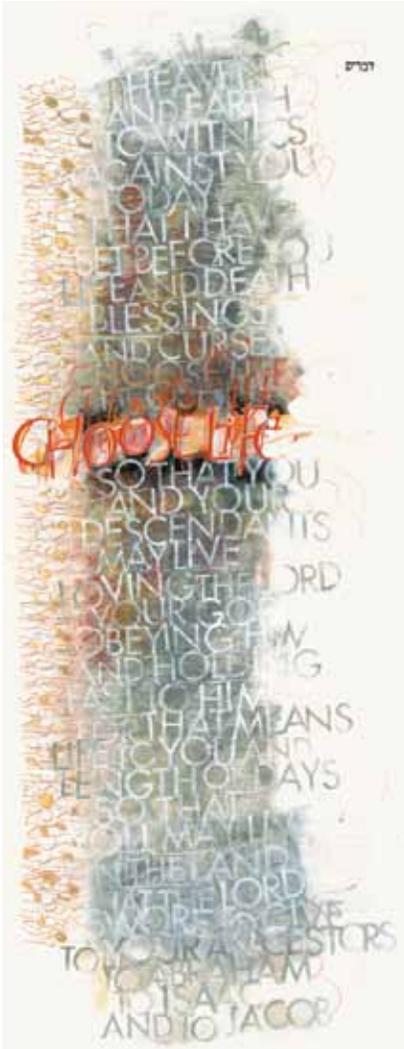
The next text treatment is found at Numbers 6:23, a common blessing that has a liturgical feel. In addition to texts that have thematic significance, text treatments are often used to highlight early hymns and prayers. This is a book commissioned by a Benedictine abbey, a community that uses Scripture daily in liturgy, singing, and proclaiming prayers and blessing. This blessing, offered to the Israelites through the high priest Aaron, is a form of hospitality, a prayer for the visitor and the stranger upon arrival and departure.

The text treatment of Deuteronomy 6:5 by Hazel Dolby will be repeated by the same artist twice in the gospels: Matthew 22:37-40 and Mark 12:29-31. These treatments use a different script, but they are identifiable as the work of one artist. In both gospel references, Jesus proclaims this first commandment, this fullness of the Law. What you will also notice at the citations in the gospels is the presence of a small black cross in the margin and the notes. These crosses mark places where the Rule of Benedict quotes Scripture. Again, *The Saint John's Bible* draws attention to the life of the community that commissioned it and the connection between this particular illuminated book and the Benedictine way of life.

A final text treatment, this time by Suzanne Moore, occurs at Deuteronomy 30. God finishes his declaration of the Law, saying: "I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, loving the LORD your God, obeying him, and holding fast to him" (30:19-20). The law is completed here in a text treatment using the Stone Sans script that was used in the illumination of the Ten Commandments, impressed on the page as on our hearts. Pause to read the entire closing chapter of Deu-

teronomy, where God speaks of the importance of the Law and where Moses takes leave of the people.

📖 *Do you have a favorite verse or passage in the Bible? Try your hand at turning it into a text treatment. Why is it important to you and what associations does it bring up for you?*



DEUTERONOMY 30:19-20

You Did Not Trust and A Poisonous Serpent

NUMBERS 20:12 /
NUMBERS 21:1-9

What does this illumination tell us about God's punishment and God's mercy?

This illumination and accompanying text treatment are part of the larger story of Moses' and Aaron's faltering faith and the punishment they receive. Numbers 20 tells the story of the Israelites grumbling and Moses' weakness. Even after their needs are met when God brings water out of the rock, it doesn't take long for the Israelites to lose heart again. So far the illuminations have focused on the positive. They have shown us the story of creation and of God's covenants and promises. They have been celebratory—even the small decoration for the story of the flood in Genesis 8:1 occurs when “God remembered Noah” and the waters abated.

Here we encounter that other vision of God associated with the Old Testament. His judgment against Aaron and Moses seems extraordinarily harsh. Now when the people grumble, miserable and hungry in the desert, the Lord sends poisonous snakes, which further compound their misery. However, when Moses prays, God sends the cure. But the cure is also a snake.

Why would we want to emphasize this story? In terms of the narrative of the Old Testament, we are moving toward *Historical Books* and the story of Israel in the Promised Land. That story is a constant cycle of disobedience, punishment, and return, as the people repeatedly break faith with God and then come back seeking forgiveness and help. Text treatments in that second volume of *The Saint John's Bible* will build on the theme that starts here.

In Christian tradition this story has been seen as foreshadowing Christ's death and resurrection. In John 3:14-15 Jesus is quoted as saying, “And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.” This image reflects the theological position that the curse of the Fall in Genesis (through Adam) becomes the blessing of salvation in the death and resurrection (through Christ).

Death of Moses

DEUTERONOMY 34:1-12

This is the land of which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob . . . I have let you see it with your eyes, but you shall not cross over there.
(34:4)

Although *Pentateuch* was finished nearly a decade before *Historical Books*, the final illumination depicting the death of Moses fits seamlessly with the opening illumination in the book of Joshua that depicts the Israelites crossing the Jordan into the Promised Land.

You have seen these elements before, the rich colors used to depict the Promised Land, the colors and the quality of the brush strokes seen in earlier illuminations for Noah, for Abraham, for the stories of Israel's passage out of Egypt. Still there is separation, the dual quality that goes back to Adam and Eve, the black night of Jacob surrounding Moses who can only look but not enter the Promised Land. After Adam and Eve, Moses is our first realistically represented face, painted by artist Aidan Hart, who works as a traditional Greek Orthodox iconographer. Moses carries the tablets of the Ten Commandments. He does not enter the Promised Land, but God is with him in the filaments of gold that pierce the darkness, in the thin band that encircles his head. Moses' face is filled with emotion.

This image captures the deep pain of exile that is part of the experience of early Israelites in Egypt and the first readers of the *Pentateuch* in exile in Babylon. It is an exile that belongs to all descendants of those banished from the garden. Moses' face registers the trials of the journey and the hope, the astonishment, of seeing that which was promised. Do you also see fear in his face? Concern and worry?

The story of Israel's release from bondage and passage to the Promised Land has had great power throughout history. It spoke to early colonists arriving in the new world of America, to slaves seeking freedom in the northern United States, to immigrants landing on Ellis Island or in San Francisco, and it speaks to people today risking their lives to cross the Rio Grande from Mexico into the United States. Finally, it speaks to all of us as we await our entry into God's kingdom. What does it mean that this volume ends with this image?

All year the Jewish people read the Torah in Hebrew. On a day in late October, during the feast of Simchat Torah, they finish this passage in Deuteronomy, roll up the Torah scroll, and begin again immediately at the first verse of Genesis. We

