**A Personal Introduction to the Bible – Joe Moffatt**

1st Talk – Seeing the Bible as a Library – September 17th 2019

**An inspiration to countless generations**

*It is not a herb, but a tree, or rather a whole paradise of trees of life, which bring forth fruit every month, and the fruit thereof is for meat, and the leaves for medicine.*

Preface to the King James Version

*God speaks to us in three places: in scripture, in our deepest selves, and in the voice of the stranger.*

Thomas Merton

**The Holy Word of God?**

The 39 Articles in the BCP states that ‘Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation’. But this is not the same as ‘all things contained in the Bible are necessary for salvation’. The Bible may be ‘more than sufficient’ without being perfect or inerrant.

*As incredible praises given unto men do often abate and impair the credit of their deserved commendation, so we must likewise take great heed, lest, in attributing to Scripture more than it can have, the incredibility of that do cause even those things which indeed it hath most abundantly, to be less reverently esteemed.*

Richard Hooker

In other words, don’t ask it to carry more weight than it can bear! Or allow it to speak for itself, on its own terms, as human writing that reflects profoundly on the story of God and his people, rather than words that have been dictated by God.

*The Bible does not ‘map’ directly onto religious faith and practice (neither Jewish or Christian). It is a melee of materials, few of which directly address the question of what is to be believed.*

John Barton

**One book or more like a library?**

Diversity

1. Translations
2. Manuscripts
3. Times
4. Contexts
5. Cultures
6. Genres

Understanding some of this diversity isn’t necessary – God can still speak to us very directly through a single word, phrase or passage – but it can often help.

**Where to start?**

Modern translations

* New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) – as used in our church and in academia.
* Revised English Bible (REB) – as if it had been written yesterday
* New International Version (NIV) – favoured by Evangelicals
* New Jerusalem Bible (NJB) – Roman Catholic Version
* The Message – Eugene Peterson – idiomatic translation in contemporary language

The History of the Bible

* An Introduction to the Bible – J.W. Rogerson (3rd edition 2012)
* The Bible: The Biography – Karen Armstrong (2015)
* A History of the Bible: The Book and Its Faiths – John Barton (2019)

Regular reading

* Bible Reading Fellowship (BRF) – 5 series of daily reading notes

[www.brf.org.uk/bible-reading](http://www.brf.org.uk/bible-reading)

* The Bible Society – download an app with daily notes (search for ‘Bible Society’ in your app store)

[www.biblesociety.org.uk/explore-the-bible/daily-reflection/](http://www.biblesociety.org.uk/explore-the-bible/daily-reflection/)

* Church House Publishing – apps for Morning/Evening Prayer with readings (search for ‘Daily Prayer’) and a daily reflection on the readings (search for ‘Reflections’)

<https://www.chpublishing.co.uk/apps>

* Thursdays at 9am - Morning Prayer at St Peter and St Paul – shared reflections on the reading

Accessible commentaries

* The Lion Handbook to the Bible (5th edition 2017 - brilliant for background)
* SPCK New Testament for Everyone series by NT (Tom) Wright