

# DESIGNING SWADDLING CLOTHES FOR CHRIST



My first encounter with the Bible publishing world came in 2005 when our family was settled in the San Francisco bay area. A family of six had come to start

a church in one of the most expensive regions of the United States. Since our congregation was primarily made up of people with limited means – drug addicts, immigrants, drifters and homeless – we were forced to find an alternative source of income. Bible publishing and the website [evangelicalbible.com](http://evangelicalbible.com) eventually came to be that.

The first relationship began with the publisher Crossway, since they owned the copyright to my favourite Bible translation, the English Standard Version. Soon thereafter, we became the official US distributor of the illustrious British R.L. Allan & Sons Bible publishers. Our company grew exponentially during this period as it carved out its niche as the marketplace for premium Bibles worldwide.

## PREMIUM & HOLY

In about 2010 we began to conceptualise the idea of creating our own Bible design – from the typesetting to the binding. Since the vast majority of Bible publishers were investing in synthetic Bibles and e-books – we put our emphasis on designing premium Bibles with natural materials coupled with traditional craftsmanship. We were confident that the premium Bible market had an important place in Bible publishing and the Christian community as a whole.

As a young boy I came to deeply respect the sacred texts of Scripture. I knew there was something that set the Bible apart from every other book in the world. In truth, I often felt condemnation when I read the Bible, because it seemed to read me as much as I read it. It was only after I experienced faith in Jesus that I experienced the Scripture as words that I could delight in, “How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!” (Psalm 119:103)

As a Pastor, Teacher and Bible Publisher, I regard the Bible as sacred, because its origin is ultimately not in man, but in God; these are indeed the “oracles of God” (Romans 3:2). Furthermore, its message provides the only hope to a world in desperate need of redemption. Since the Bible is distinctly and uniquely ‘Holy’ in nature, and

is the written record of God’s revelation to humankind, I treat my role as Bible publisher as an exciting, yet sacred commission.

## LEGIBILITY, DURABILITY, BEAUTY

As Bible design became our next frontier, I had many ideas that intersected with my reverence for the Bible. My first thought was legibility, since every word is, “flawless,” I wanted every word to be legible (Psalm 18:30). There were so many Bible designs that seemed more like marketing gimmicks than truly Bibles designed to be read, studied, and endure. I would peruse Bible shelves in bookstores and find an amazing array of bright synthetic covers with text design as a mere afterthought. Bibles were marketed for back packs and purses, but were virtually illegible. One Bible actually came with a magnifying glass to offset the microscopic text. So in many ways my vision was always very practical in nature. Create a Bible that is legible and durable, designed for people that read and study the Bible daily.

A third component of my vision for Bible design was form and beauty. The God of the Bible is the Creator of all things (Isaiah 40:28). He creates beautiful things, “Consider the lilies...even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these” (Matthew 6:28-9). Furthermore, there is a longstanding scribal tradition which included beautiful manuscript design using various modes of artistic adornment. This tradition dates back to the earliest manuscript traditions. One of my favourites is a ninth century minuscule, Empress Theodora’s Codex, written in gold letters on purple vellum (the sixth century Argenteus is similar).

## SEARCH FOR THE BEZALEL’S AND OHOLIAB’S OF PUBLISHING

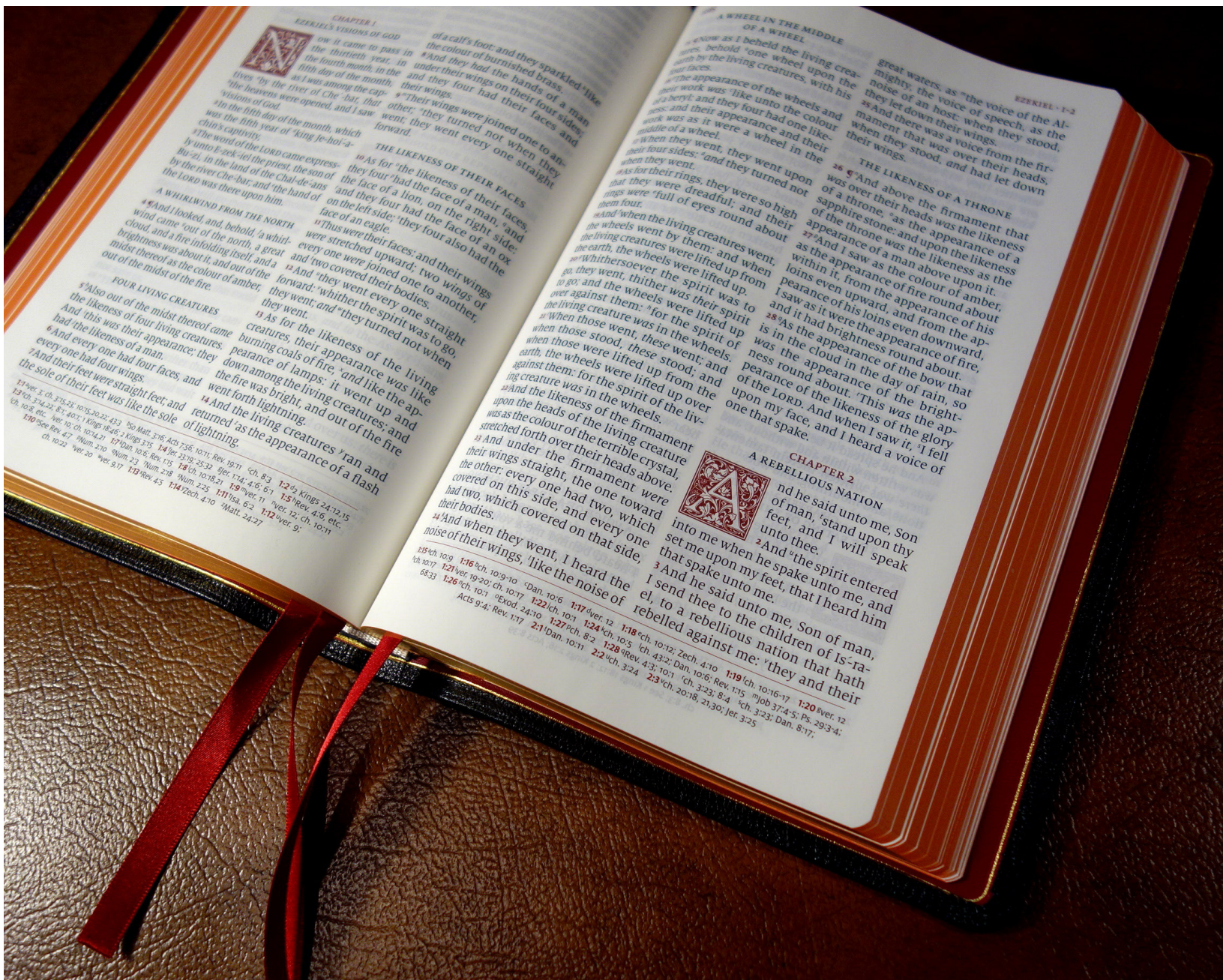
The LORD provided Spirit filled craftsmen to assist in the construction of the Tabernacle in c. 1,400 B.C. In order for our vision to materialise, we would need our own Bezalel and Oholiab (Exodus 31:1-11). Who could we find that was as enthusiastic as we were about Bible design and had the God-given aptitude to design a Bible masterpiece? We found such a person in the form of an off-the-charts passionate and creative Danish Bible designer, Klaus Krogh and his company 2K/DENMARK. I’ve always appreciated watching people perform in their specific area of gifting. Klaus’ gifting was Bible design. He always exuded an enthusiasm and

eagerness to create. I showed him a sample of what I was envisioning in terms of typesetting and he graciously explained to me how he couldn’t have designed something that poorly if he had been born cross-eyed. Within a few minutes he explained in detail the design that he would create to fit our general parameters. That design would later be known as the Quentel (named after Tyndale’s first printer), which is currently the best selling typesetting in the Premium Bible market. The typesetting is so legible we actually had a customer tell us that he had to take off his glasses to read it! When we decided to put ornamental drop caps in our Canterbury design (drop caps can be dated back to the fourth century) we were met with excitement and a sense of challenge. The Canterbury is a work of art.

The LORD chose a fellowship to construct the Tabernacle, not a single man. If we had secured our typesetters in 2K/DENMARK, we needed craftsmen and specialised artisans to build the house where these beautiful words would find a home. Such craftsmanship is a rare commodity in the twenty first century. Robotic mechanisation and economies of scale have in large measure supplanted the human craft of book binding. Few publishing houses have these traditional artisans employed in their ranks.

It’s one thing to produce a book that is read once, twice or even a half dozen times. It’s another thing altogether to produce a book that will be read every day decades. There are dozens of techniques that are employed in traditional bookbinding that produce incredible durability and beauty. A Christian publisher in the province of Friesland, located in the north of the Netherlands, Royal Jongbloed, had the knowledge and craft to complete our fellowship. The resulting triumvirate now included Denmark (2K), the Netherlands (Jongbloed) and the United States (Schuyler-publishing arm of [evangelicalbible.com](http://evangelicalbible.com)). The synergy created from the relationship of these three companies has resulted in Bibles that are a tribute to the bookbinder’s skill and to the Creator, who endows men with the skill to create. Missionaries, Evangelists, Pastors, Teachers, Bible students and unbelievers alike have a primary ‘tool’ that is designed to display God’s Words in an enjoyable, if not striking format. At the same time, the Bible student can be assured that his pages will not begin to fall out after a few years of use. Countless techniques and materials have been convened to produce a Bible that displays the Holy Words





in the most illuminating format available. Craftsmen and materials have been mined from at least seven different countries, from Scandinavia to southern India, to produce the best that we can offer.

**ULTIMATELY JUST SHABBY AND POOR CLOTHES**

Even if the form of the Good Book be immaculate, we recognise that its Words are only useful if the Creator opens the eyes of the reader to its content. Our prayer is that these Words so presented would make their way into the minds and hearts of the hearers, and Christ be manifested, since He is the ultimate subject of the entire corpus of Scripture. ■



Sky Cline was raised in Southern Africa until he returned to the United States for university. He received his B.A. from the College of William and Mary in Virginia, and his Master's degree from Duke University in North Carolina. Sky was ordained in 1997 as a Pastor in the Southern Baptist Convention. Sky also ministers in prisons and overseas as a Bible Teacher and Church Planter. He is the owner of [evangelical-bible.com](http://evangelical-bible.com) and Schuyler Bible Publishers. Sky is married and has 4 children.

"In this book you find the swaddling clothes and the manger in which Christ lies, and to which the angel directs the shepherds. Those swaddling clothes are shabby and poor, yet precious is the treasure wrapped in them, for it is Christ."

– Martin Luther, 1545