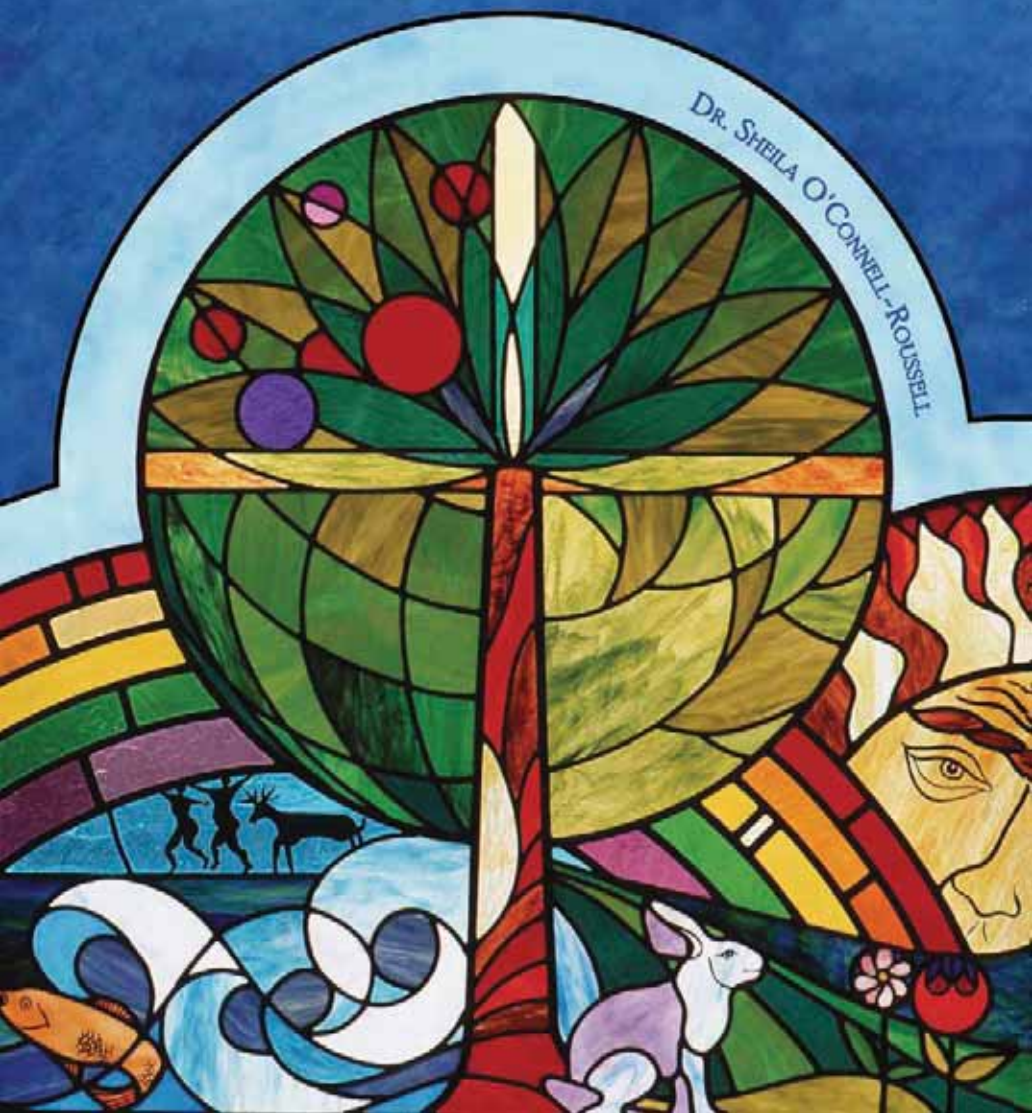


SAINT MARY'S PRESS
ESSENTIAL
BIBLE
DICTIONARY

DR. SHEILA O'CONNELL-ROUSSEL



The *SAINT MARY'S PRESS Essential Bible Dictionary* is a great resource for the high school Scripture teacher and student. A feature I really appreciate is the expanded information provided for certain entries, such as parables, Ten Commandments, and Old Testament feasts and festivals.

For example, following the parable entry is a chart listing all the parables and where they are located in each Gospel. This provides easy access to key information without the need for another resource. I also found the additional material provided for a number of entries very helpful. Many listings contain a detailed description of the character or the geographical site, and some entries provided a mini-history lesson. I think high school students will appreciate the format, the cross-referencing, and the examples of where the word(s) is found in the Bible.

—Patricia Gorman, religious studies department chairperson,
Saint Mary's Academy, Portland, OR

Opening the pages of the *SAINT MARY'S PRESS Essential Bible Dictionary* creates a sudden longing to learn more about the stories and fascinating people of the Bible. This concise, beautifully written dictionary has multifaceted appeal. It will support teachers as they seek to bring sparkle and life to classroom encounters with Bible heroes and themes. It will help students deliver top-notch assignments and glean timeless truths that are so relevant to teen life today. It will inspire homeschooling parents, pastors, RCIA directors, educators, Catholic writers, and lifelong students of our faith heritage. Every parish, school, home, and library will be richer for having this jewel of a resource.

—Therese Vorndran Nichols, coauthor (with Dr. Sheila O'Connell-Roussell) of
Lectionary-Based Gospel Dramas for Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany and
Lectionary-Based Gospel Dramas for Lent and the Easter Triduum,
both published by Saint Mary's Press

The *SAINT MARY'S PRESS Essential Bible Dictionary* acts as a bridge between Sunday school simplicity and full-fledged scholarship. It provides an approachable introduction to the Bible and acts as a launch point for further research. Dr. Sheila has embraced Pope Pius XII's call to scholarship, but she has done more. She has created a path for curious students to enter the biblical world as well.

—Madeline Wyse, sophomore in Dr. Sheila's high school religion class

Though geared for Catholic teens and their teachers, the *SAINT MARY'S PRESS Essential Bible Dictionary* provides wonderful foundational material for any Christians seeking to grow in their faith knowledge through the Scriptures. We know that a house will last only as long as its foundation, and this book offers an eternal foundation in God. Dr. Sheila O'Connell-Roussell has given us a valuable resource to delve into the understanding of the Bible and its ultimate author. May all who read this work be changed and saved by God's love forever.

—Fr. John Amsberry, pastor and national youth speaker, Archdiocese of Portland, OR

The *SAIN'T MARY'S PRESS Essential Bible Dictionary* is an accessible, readable, narrative-type tool for young people, making their Bible study both fascinating and critically accurate. Teens will appreciate the charts that allow them to see data and relationships at a glance, the color with which the characters are portrayed, the cross-references to each word to orient them to interrelated material, the relevance of the definitions to their contemporary experiences, and the ways the material is related to their Catholic Christian Tradition.

Adults who have had little opportunity for Bible study, alone or in groups, will welcome the *SAIN'T MARY'S PRESS Essential Bible Dictionary* as a handbook that provides a degree of personal assurance and sophistication for their interfaith dialogue experiences. In a sense, reading this book will give the Bible student of any age an accurate and interesting review of salvation history.

—Cecilia A. Ranger, SNJM, PhD; former chair/dean of religion, Marylhurst University; currently adjunct professor, Scripture and theology, Marylhurst University and San Francisco Theological Seminary

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Sheila O'Connell-Roussel

Contributing Author
Brian Singer-Towns



saint mary's press

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Author Acknowledgments	6
Introduction	7
Bible Book Abbreviations	8
Pronunciation Guide	8
Dictionary Entries, A to Z	9
Photographs and Maps	following page 94

List of Charts

The Books of the Bible	27
Biblical Exegesis	57
Old Testament Feasts and Festivals	60
Gospel Comparison	70
The Titles of Jesus	87
The Judges of Israel	95
The Hebrew Kings	97
The Parables of Jesus	130
The Ten Plagues of Egypt	137
The Ten Commandments	166

I dedicate this work to my granddaughter, Stella Noelle Richman, who is five years old today. I want her to know that she is part of God's great love story for humanity and that one person living her truth can change the world forever.

Dr. Sheila O'Connell-Roussell, grandmother
February 23, 2005

AUTHOR ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Let me begin by offering thanksgiving to His Holiness Pope Pius XII, who, on September 30, 1943, issued his now-noteworthy encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu*. This document directed Catholic scholars to explore the historical world of the inspired authors of the Scriptures, thereby opening modern Scripture research to the Catholic world. Much of what is contained in this dictionary would not be known today if not for Pius XII's vision.

Thank you, Vicki! I so appreciate the beautiful drawings by artist Vicki Shuck of Bend, Oregon. They offer a rich variety of images for contemplation. The same Spirit who guided the authors of the sacred Scriptures also inspires religious artists like Vicki.

I have profound appreciation for my editor, Brian Singer-Towns, and his vision, direction, counsel, craft, and faith. Brian is far more than editor. He has spent many hours encouraging and directing me and rewriting this text. Although gifted with holy humility, he is truly my coauthor and partner in this work; its clarity reveals his skillful hand. I'm also grateful for the dedication to detail and the beautiful work of editor Ginny Halbur and her commitment to this project.

I proclaim my love and gratitude to my husband, Dr. Jerry O'Neil Roussell Jr., for his patience, love of the Scriptures, teaching, counsel, and prayer. Finally, I wish to thank my high school students at St. Mary's Academy in Portland and my adult students at Marylhurst University of Oregon, who have encouraged me and touched my heart with their longing.

I pray that the *SAINT MARY'S PRESS Essential Bible Dictionary* helps young people to love the sacred Scriptures. Within the pages of the Bible, we hear God's voice, meet Jesus, Mary, and our ancestors in faith, and find a treasure for our study, worship, and prayer. Blessings.

INTRODUCTION

It has been said that the Bible is God's love letter to humans. The Scriptures are a collection of inspired ancient texts written by our ancestors in faith so all generations would remember and celebrate the sacred story of salvation.

The *SAINT MARY'S PRESS Essential Bible Dictionary* offers concise definitions for the essential people, places, events, and themes of the Holy Scriptures. This resource is designed to help young people and others deepen their understanding of the words and themes found in the word of God. We have sought to strike a balance between children's Bible dictionaries, with too little information, and scholarly dictionaries that overwhelm with too much information. We used the words and spellings found in the New American Bible (NAB) and the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV): Catholic Edition translations. These are the most commonly used translations for Catholic Bibles in the United States.

We did not include definitions for words commonly used outside the Bible with no special biblical meaning attached to them. You may consult a regular dictionary to find pronunciations and definitions for those words. Nor did we include entries giving background for each book of the Bible. You can find this information in the book introductions of *The Catholic Youth Bible (CYB)* and other similar resources.

We faced a challenge in determining which terminology to use for the Jewish people at different times throughout their history. At various times, they have been called Semites, Habiru, Hebrews, Israelites, Judeans, and Jews. Modern scholarship tells us that the religious terminology *Jew* and *Jewish* did not truly develop until centuries after the New Testament period. What has been translated in English bibles as *Jews* should probably be translated as *Judeans*. This dictionary attempts to strike a balance between common usage and this modern scriptural scholarship. We have identified those loyal to Yahweh after the Exile (sixth century BC) occasionally as the *Judean* people. More often, we have used the more commonly understood terms *Jew* or *Jewish* to refer to them, especially in New Testament times. Our prayerful hope is that the Jewish people feel honored and treasured by our efforts.

Finally, while the definitions contain many scriptural citations, please understand that these citations are not exhaustive. This would have been too distracting. Rather, we offer a sampling of references for each entry that will support users in their search to locate the crucial biblical passages associated with a particular word or phrase. You can locate additional related Bible passages by following the cross-references included in many Bibles or by using a concordance like the *SAINT MARY'S PRESS Essential Bible Concordance*.

Bible Book Abbreviations

Abbr.	Book				
		Jdt	Judith	Ob	Obadiah
Acts	Acts	Jer	Jeremiah	1 Pet	1 Peter
Am	Amos	Jn	John	2 Pet	2 Peter
Bar	Baruch	1 Jn	1 John	Phil	Philippians
1 Chr	1 Chronicles	2 Jn	2 John	Philem	Philemon
2 Chr	2 Chronicles	3 Jn	3 John	Prov	Proverbs
Col	Colossians	Job	Job	Ps	Psalms
1 Cor	1 Corinthians	Joel	Joel	Rev	Revelation
2 Cor	2 Corinthians	Jon	Jonah	Rom	Romans
Dan	Daniel	Josh	Joshua	Ruth	Ruth
Deut	Deuteronomy	Jude	Jude	1 Sam	1 Samuel
Ecc1	Ecclesiastes	Judg	Judges	2 Sam	2 Samuel
Eph	Ephesians	1 Kings	1 Kings	Sir	Sirach
Esth	Esther	2 Kings	2 Kings	Song	Song of Solomon
Ex	Exodus	Lam	Lamentations		
Ezek	Ezekiel	Lev	Leviticus	1 Thess	1 Thessalonians
Ezra	Ezra	Lk	Luke	2 Thess	2 Thessalonians
Gal	Galatians	1 Macc	1 Maccabees	1 Tim	1 Timothy
Gen	Genesis	2 Macc	2 Maccabees	2 Tim	2 Timothy
Hab	Habakkuk	Mal	Malachi	Titus	Titus
Hag	Haggai	Mic	Micah	Tob	Tobit
Heb	Hebrews	Mk	Mark	Wis	Wisdom of Solomon
Hos	Hosea	Mt	Matthew		
Isa	Isaiah	Nah	Nahum	Zech	Zechariah
Jas	James	Neh	Nehemiah	Zeph	Zephaniah
		Num	Numbers		

Vowel Sounds

A:	cat, sat	EYE or Y:	ice, nice, fly
AH:	ha, mom	I:	bit, hit
AY:	ace, hey, day	OH:	home, coat
AIR:	air, tear, fair	OO:	moon, spoon
AR:	car, far	OU:	out, shout, down
AW:	law, saw	OI:	boy, coin
EE:	eat, beet, neat	U:	book, put, should, full, wolf
E:	bread, Fred, Ted	UH:	cut, nut, love
ER:	bird, heard		

Consonant Sounds

Consonants sound as the letter normally sounds with these exceptions:

G (hard G):	gun, lug
J:	edge, dodge, bandage
CH:	church, chance, cheap

A



AARON (AIR-uhn): The first high priest of the old Law and a member of the tribe of Levi, Aaron was born into slavery in Egypt. With his sister, Miriam, Aaron supported their brother, Moses, during the Exodus. Aaron spoke for Moses (Ex 4:13–16), demanding Pharaoh free the Israelite slaves. Aaron witnessed the first Passover (Ex 12:27), the plagues and wonders (Ex 5–10), the escape across the sea, and forty years in the desert (Ex 12–15).

Aaron's story took a negative turn when he lost faith, fell into peer pressure, and led the people back to idolatry by worshipping a golden calf (Ex 32). Aaron and the people repented, and Leviticus 8–9 tells how he and his sons were ordained for priesthood.

The priests and historians who were the final editors of the Pentateuch lived centuries after Aaron. Most likely they were captives in the Babylonian Captivity, who, once freed, worked to unify and rebuild the people of Israel. (See **Ezra**.) Their stories of Aaron helped reclaim the religious identity and the cen-

trality of the priestly role within the Israelite people.

From Aaron's story, we learn about the importance of God's Covenant, the devastations of sin and idolatry, the pain of betrayal, the need for forgiveness, and the strength of reconciliation and faith. See also **Exodus; Levi, Levite; Miriam; Moses; Priest**.

ABBA (AH-buh): A personal title used by Jesus to identify his—and our—intimate relationship with God. Abba means “my Father” or “our Father” in Aramaic. Even though the New Testament was written in Greek, this Aramaic word is specifically used in Mk 14:36, Rom 8:15, and Gal 4:6. This usage indicates that the early Christians recalled that Jesus regularly addressed God as Abba. When Jesus taught his disciples to pray the Our Father, he invited them to understand that their relationship with the God of Creation was that of a precious child and loving parent (Mt 6:9). Like the Father in the parable of the prodigal son, God longs for us to know the love and protection of home, which also becomes an image of the Church (Lk 15:11–32).

ABEDNEGO (uh-BED-nee-go): A friend of the folk hero Daniel who, along with Shadrach and Meshach, refused to worship the golden idols of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. Because of their faith, these three were spared death in the fiery furnace in Babylon (Dan 3). See also **Babylonian Captivity; Meshach; Shadrach**.

ABEL: See **Cain and Abel**.

ABIMELECH (uh-BIM-uh-lek): A title used to designate the kings of Syria and Palestine (Gen 20:2, 26:26), as well as a personal name (Judg 8–9; 1 Chr 18:16).

ABOMINATION: A defilement caused by a major offense against God’s Law. Sacrificing unclean animals in worship or committing idolatry, blasphemy, or sinful behaviors caused religious impurities (Deut 7:25, 17:1, 25:16, 27:15). Other abominations included eating with nonbelievers (Gen 43:32; Acts 10:28) or inappropriate interaction with lower classes such as socializing with shepherds (Gen 46:34).

ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION: Phrase used in the Bible to describe the worst offenses against the Jewish or Christian faith. The title was first used in the Old Testament Book of Daniel to condemn the Syrian Warlord Antiochus Epiphanes, who persecuted the people, forbade the Torah, and murdered thousands of Jewish people (167 BC). His dedication of an altar to Zeus in the holy Temple of Jerusalem was called an abomination of desolation (Dan 9:27, 11:31; 1 Macc 1:54, 6:7).

In New Testament times, a number of Roman Emperors (Caligula [AD 41], Nero [65], Domitian [90–95]) demanded by law that the people revere them as divine. Jesus used the phrase “desolating abomination” or “desolating sacrilege” as a condemnation of this blasphemy (Mk 13:14; Lk 21:20).

ABORTION: The killing of a baby within the womb. Abortion ends the life and the earthly potential of one of God’s little ones. From ancient times, the prophets condemned as evil those who had “no mercy on the fruit of the womb” and no pity on children (Isa 13:18).

From within the sacred safety of the womb, God has called us to life and named and formed us from the moment of conception (Jer 1:5; Job 31:15; Ps

22:9). Scripture reveals the heart of God, who loves so infinitely that even if a mother were to “show no compassion for the child of her womb” (Isa 49:15), God would never forget the little one.

ABRAHAM (AY-bruh-ham): The father of monotheism. His original name was Abram, the eldest son of Terah (Gen 11:27) of Ur of the Chaldeans of Mesopotamia. Abram was husband to Sarai—to whom he was related, maybe even as a half brother—and kept her Egyptian slave Hagar as concubine. The biblical account says the family went north to the village of Haran (Gen 11:31). There, Abram encountered God and accepted the call to enter his legendary journey of faith, to leave everything he knew, and to go to the land of Canaan (Gen 12:1–6). God promised old Abram and barren Sarai that they would become the ancestors of a multitude, a great nation, would receive the land of Canaan, and become a blessing to the whole earth (Gen 12:2, 17:1–22).

This first patriarch of the Old Testament responded to God’s call and entered into a covenant relationship with God. God changed Abram’s name to Abraham and Sarai’s name to Sarah. Because of his faith in God, Abraham changed the world forever (Rom 4; Gal 3:9; Heb 11:8–22).

Abraham and Sarah were the parents of Isaac, a patriarch of the Twelve Tribes of Israel. Isaac’s son Jacob fathered the tribes who were the ancestors of the Jewish people. Abraham and Hagar are the parents of Ishmael and the ancestors of the Arab peoples who embraced the Islamic religion. Christians consider themselves adopted children of Abraham and Sarah because Jesus Christ was a Jew. Thus, Abraham is the spiritual parent of three great world religions: Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. See also **Covenant; Isaac; Lot; Patriarch; Sarah.**

ABSALOM (AB-suh-luhm): The adored son of David and Maacah, the daughter of King Talmai of Geshur (2 Sam 3:3). Absalom was handsome and popular with the people. His story turned to grief when his sister Tamar was raped by her half brother Amnon, the eldest son of David by Ahinoam of Jezreel. Absalom took the shamed Tamar into his home and plotted revenge. After ordering the execution of Amnon, Absalom feared for his life. He ran away and hid for three years in Geshur with his grandfather.

David's counsel from the wise woman of Tekoa resulted in reconciliation; but upon his return, Absalom proclaimed himself king and took the throne. In the battle that followed, Absalom was killed. David was inconsolable. His heart was broken at the death of Absalom (2 Sam 13–18).

ADAM, ADAMAH (AD-uhm, AD-uh-muh): *Adam* is a Hebrew word that means “human.” It comes from the Hebrew word *adamah*, which means “fertile land” or “soil.” In the second Creation story in Genesis 2, the first human being is called Adam because God made him from the *adamah* (Gen 2:7). Later, God created Eve to be a companion for Adam. They were created in the divine



image, male and female. Humans were made from soil—the watery clay into which the Creator breathed the breath of life. Created in holiness, God asked the man and woman to be stewards of creation and to care for one another, the animals of the planet, and Eden (Gen 1:28).

The story of the garden of Eden is mythic—meaning it was not written as history or science. It paints a picture of creation as God intended it to be. Eden represents the ideal state of perfect harmony between God, human beings, and all creation. The Creator's intent for us is happiness and covenant love, but human sin has bruised this bliss and turned it into the condition of woundedness. Jesus has healed the pain and loss of sin and taught us how to reconcile this alienation, so we can accept ourselves as new creatures. This is why the New Testament contrasted Adam's sin with Jesus' obedience (Rom 5:18; 1 Cor 15:21–22). See also **Earth; Eden; Eve; Original Sin**.

ADONAI (ad-oh-NY): A Hebrew word meaning “Lord” and used as a title for God. *Adonai* is not a personal name but rather a respectful substitution for the divine name Yahweh. The word *LORD* (in small capitals) is substituted for *Adonai* in English translations of the Bible. See also **God; Lord; Yahweh**.

ADULTERY: The name for a sin against the sixth commandment, when a married man or woman has sexual intercourse with someone who is not his or her spouse (Ex 20:14; Deut 5:18). Adultery is a sexual, emotional, and spiritual fracture of the marriage covenant. Adultery is also compared in the Scriptures to idolatry, the breaking of the bond of covenant relationship between God and humanity (Jer 3:9, 7:9; Ezek 23:37).

ADVOCATE: A name for the Holy Spirit that means protector, a divine defense attorney of sorts who functions as a helper and guardian, also translated as Paraclete (Jn 14:16–17,26). Jesus is also called our advocate (1 Jn 2:1). See also **Paraclete**.

AHAB (AY-hab): The seventh king of Israel, son of Omri (869–850 BC). The infamous Jezebel of Sidon was his queen. Together, they served foreign gods in idolatry and injustice. They erected sacred poles, built temples for Baal, and dedicated the royal gates of Jericho with the sacrifice of their first-born children Abiram and Segub. When famine struck the land, Ahab supported Jezebel's slaughter of the prophets of God.

Elijah condemned Ahab for his idolatry and murders. Ahab ignored the prophet, sat in rich robes in his ivory house, and died without repentance (Kings 16:29—22:40). See also **Elijah; Idolatry; Jezebel; Samaria**.

AHASUERUS (ay-HAS-yoo-ER-uhs): This king was known in the Bible as Ahasuerus and to history as Xerxes I (486–465 BC). He married the Jewish heroine Esther after he banished his queen Vashti (Esth 2:7). He was remembered as the ruler of vast lands from India to Ethiopia (Esth 1:1). Ahasuerus, along with Esther, is a hero to the Jews and is celebrated in the feast of Purim (Esth 11).

Ahasuerus was connected to Cyrus the Great and was honored with the title king of kings under his Persian name, Artaxerxes (Ezra 7:12; 2 Macc 13:4). The Book of Daniel identified him as Ahasuerus, the father of Darius the Mede (Dan 9:1). See also **Esther; Xerxes, Artaxerxes**.

ALEXANDRIA (al-ehg-ZAN-dree-uh): A large shipping center on the coast of the Mediterranean founded and named after Alexander the Great. Alexandria was renowned in the Hellenistic world as the capital of Egypt (Acts 27:6; 28:11). By the first century AD, Alexandria had the largest Jewish population outside of Jerusalem. In Alexandria, the Septuagint, or Greek-language version of the Old Testament, was translated (285–246 BC).

The city had early Christian roots. According to tradition, the Evangelist Mark founded Alexandria's Christian community. Apollos, who ministered with Saint Paul to spread the faith, was an Alexandrian (Acts 18:24).

ALIEN: See **Foreigner**.

ALLEGORY: A literary form in which something is said to be like something else. Allegories are often used to communicate a hidden or symbolic meaning commonly understood by the people it is addressed to. The Bible often used allegories to explain spiritual reality. For example, Jesus was called the Lamb of God (Jn 1:29), an allegory symbolizing that Jesus was the sacrifice for our sins. See also **Hosea**.

ALLELUIA: See **Hallelujah**.

ALPHA AND OMEGA (AHL-fuh) (oh-ME-guh): The first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, the alpha and the omega were often used as symbols that referred to the beginning and the end of all things. The prophet Isaiah taught that God was the source, the first and last of all things (Isa 41:4). In Revelation, the Lord God says, "I am the Alpha and Omega" (Rev 1:8) and at the end of the book, Christ calls himself by the same title (Rev 22:13).

Across the centuries, Christians have proclaimed that Jesus Christ is “the Alpha and the Omega” of all history; he is yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Christians have used the Greek letters for alpha and omega to represent Christ in monuments, paintings, and sacred vestments. See also **John of Patmos**.



ALTAR: From a Hebrew word meaning “place of sacrifice.” Altars are elevated platforms where rituals that are intended to honor the holiness of God are performed. The Bible contains more than 400 mentions of altars. Altars were signs of people’s faith, the focal point that drew humanity close to the presence of the Lord (Gen 26:23–25; Josh 22:26–29).

Altars were made of stone, brick, metal, and earth and were enclosed within temples, at shrines, in courtyards, and within sacred sites in nature. On Hebrew altars, gifts of grain, oil, animals, salt, wine, and incense were sanctified and offered to the Creator. See also **Sacrifice**.

ALTAR OF BURNT OFFERINGS:

This altar was the site of burnt offerings of animal sacrifice and grain holocausts. It was made of acacia wood overlaid with bronze; its hooks and poles were covered with silver. It was a horned altar suspended by poles for transport and resting within the tabernacle courtyard (Ex 27:1–8). A courtyard altar of this fashion was included in the Temple of David (2 Chr 4:1).

ALTAR OF CHRIST: Like the altars of old, the altar on which the Eucharist is celebrated draws the faithful to God. The sacrifice of the Lamb of God is Christ offered as a testimony to faith in Jesus (Jn 1:29,36). On the altar of Christ, offerings of bread and wine are made holy and consecrated by the action of the priest into the body and blood of the Lord (Mt 26:26–30; Heb 13:10). Jesus was the sacrifice and sacrament of the altar, offered to God for the reconciliation of humanity. See also **Eucharist**.

ALTAR OF INCENSE: In the time of the desert wanderings, a moveable altar made of acacia wood covered in gold was suspended by horns, carried on poles, and placed before the curtain that covered the ark of the Covenant (Ex 30:1–10). The Altar of Incense was surrounded by cherubim of God’s glory, who protected the mercy seat that was the lid of the ark of the Covenant.

Every morning and night, the high priest Aaron offered a sacrifice of anointing oil and incense on the Altar of Incense (Ex 30:1–10). Once a year, the altar honored the rites of atonement offered on the feast Yom Kippur, or the Day of Atonement (Ex 30:10). The

Altar of Incense became a part of the Temple in Jerusalem (1 Kings 7:20–25). The New Testament recalls that the Angel Gabriel appeared to Zechariah beside the Altar of Incense to announce the birth of John the Baptist (Lk 1:11). See also **Ark of the Covenant**.

AMOS (AY-muhs): The wisdom of this ancient prophet from Tekoa in Judah has stood the test of time. Amos lived in the eighth century BC and described himself as a shepherd and “a dresser of sycamore trees” called by God to proclaim justice (Am 7:14–15). He critiqued political systems, condemned unjust treatment of workers, and demanded that profits be shared. He taught that the suppression of human rights turned “justice into poison” and “righteousness into wormwood” (Am 6:12).

Amos taught that only by living justly with God would a nation live. Repentance, restitution, and justice were necessary to avert the devastations of war and exile (Am 5:14–15). God hated false spiritual practice and felt no delight in sacrifice, liturgies, or the noise of music. God’s will for humanity was to “let justice roll down like waters, / and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream” (Am 5:21–24). See also **Justice; Prophet**.

ANDREW: A fisherman from Bethsaida in Galilee and one of the twelve Apostles. Andrew was a disciple of John the Baptist. When he heard John proclaim Jesus as the Lamb of God, he joined the Apostles (Mt 4:18–19; Jn 1:40). Andrew brought his brother, Simon Peter, to the Lord (Jn 1:41). Andrew presented Jesus with the little boy who had loaves and fishes, and then Andrew witnessed the miracle of the feeding of thousands (Jn 6:9).

We know little of the life of Andrew in the early Church. There is a tradition

that he preached the Gospel in what is today central Asia and was martyred. See also **Apostle**.

ANGEL: Spiritual creature that serves as God’s messenger, helps God’s people, and fights evil. The Bible and Catholic Tradition teach that angels are immortal beings, created with intelligence and free will. They appeared frequently in the Bible to speak for God, to warn and protect, and to give God worship and praise. Some examples of the work of angels in the Bible are:

- protected Hagar and Ishmael (Gen 21:17–19)
- prevented Abraham from sacrificing Isaac (Gen 22:9–12)
- appeared to Moses (Ex 3:2)
- spoke to Gideon (Judg 6:11–23)
- healed Tobias and Sarah and protected Tobit (Tob 3:16–17)
- announced to Mary that she would be the Mother of the Messiah (Lk 1:26)
- warned Joseph of Herod’s slaughter of the Holy Innocents (Mt 2:13)
- announced Christ’s Resurrection to Mary Magdalene and the holy women (Lk 24:4–7)
- freed Peter (Acts 12:6–11)
- praised God in heaven (Rev 5:11–14)

See also **Archangel; Cherub, Cherubim; Seraphim**.

ANGER: As a feeling, anger is not a sin, but when it is nurtured and allowed to lead to vengeance and violence, then it can become sinful. Strong emotions can motivate us to change, and in that sense they are a gift. Recall that Jesus took a whip in righteous anger to drive the money changers from the Temple (Jn 2:13–17). In the society in which Jesus lived, it was considered a failure or cow-

ardice not to defend the honor of God by condemning the violation of God's law.

The Proverbs offer great wisdom in avoiding sinful violence by de-escalating anger. When a situation heats up, we can choose to speak kindly (Prov 15:1–2), stay calm and not jump to conclusions (Prov 16:32), or overlook an offense (Prov 19:11). Jesus' response to anger that threatened violence was to forgive and love the enemy (Mt 5:43–45).

ANNA (AN-uh): A prophet who recognized the infant Jesus as the Messiah. This barren widow was eighty-four years old when the Holy Family came to offer rites of purification in the Temple. Anna witnessed Simeon's prophecy (Lk 2:28–32), and she proclaimed that the child was the "redemption of Jerusalem" (Lk 2:38). A non-Scriptural tradition relates that Anna was the Blessed Mother's childhood teacher who taught young Mary the Scripture. The prophet Anna remains a model of faith for all who long to see Jesus. See also **Presentation of Christ; Simeon**.

ANNAS AND CAIAPHAS (AN-uhs) (KAY-uh-fuhs): During the reign of Caesar Tiberius (AD 14–37), the Sadducee Caiaphas and his father-in-law, Annas, both held the office of high priest in the Temple of Jerusalem (Lk 3:2). Caiaphas was chief priest during Pontius Pilate's administration, and Annas was his alternate high counsel. Together with members of the Sanhedrin and the Roman rulers, these were the authorities who crucified Jesus (Jn 18:13–14). See also **High Priest**.

ANNUNCIATION (uh-NUHN-see-AY-shuhn): The event in which the archangel Gabriel came to Mary and announced that she had found favor with



God and would become mother of the Messiah (Lk 1:26–38). Gabriel's annunciation revealed that the child would be conceived by the Holy Spirit and that nothing was "impossible with God." Mary said "Yes," and the world was never the same. See also **Archangel; Gabriel; Mary of Nazareth**.

ANOINTING: In the ancient world, anointings with perfumed oil were offered as gestures of hospitality, cleansing, perfuming, and happiness (Ruth 3:3; 2 Sam 14:2; Ps 45:7). Anointing was also used as a gesture of reverence and to prepare a dead person's body for burial (Mk 14:8; Lk 23:56).

Formal anointings were sacred consecrations used to appoint priests, prophets, and kings. The rite involved a ceremonial pouring of sacred oil onto the head of the person. The anointed person was called *messiah*, which is a Hebrew word for "anointed one" (Ex 30:30–32; 1 Sam 16:13; Ps 132:10). See also **Messiah; Oil**.

ANOINTING OF THE SICK: Jesus healed the sick and empowered his Apostles to do the same (Mk 6:13). The first Apostles healed the sick and offered forgiveness of sin through an anointing with oil (Jas 5:14). This ministry became

one of the seven sacraments, the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick.

Through the Anointing of the Sick, Jesus' healing presence continues to be made present in the world. During the sacrament, the priest anoints a sick or dying person with the oil of the sick and asks for Christ's healing presence to be with the person. See also **Sacrament**.

ANTICHRIST (AN-tee-kryst): Title given to any spirit, person, or government that stands in conflict with the teachings of Jesus Christ or that denies the reality of Jesus as Lord (1 Jn 2:18; 2 Jn 1:7).

ANTIOCH (AN-tee-ahk): An important city of the Roman Empire and a significant founding community for early Christianity. After the Romans destroyed Jerusalem (AD 70), many people fled to Antioch in Syria, and the city became the home of one of the earliest Christian communities (Gal 2:11; Acts 11:19). Scripture attests that Paul, Silas, Barnabas, and Luke all ministered in the city (Acts 13:1, 15:22–35). In Antioch, the followers of Jesus were first called Christians (Acts 11:26).

ANTIOCHUS EPIPHANES (an-TEE-uh-kuhs) (eh-PIHF-uh-neeZ): A Syrian warlord, a politically cunning, evil, and cruel ruler of Palestine who tortured and persecuted the Jewish people. The Book of Daniel records some of the perversions of his reign. Mattathias Hasmon and his sons—the Maccabees—organized a resistance that defeated him (167 BC). Their victory is celebrated during Hanukkah. The ancient city of Antioch in Turkey is named after Antiochus. See also **Maccabees**; **Mattathias Hasmon**.

APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE (uh-POK-uh-LIP-tik): Literary form that

speaks about the end times, prophesies catastrophic upheavals on earth, and promises a new creation. Common in apocalyptic literature are angelic messengers; dreams; judgments; oracles that show human destiny; visions of death, heaven, purgatory, and hell; the resurrection of the just; the promise of a heavenly hope; and the construction of a new world order.

The purpose of apocalyptic literature is to offer hope during a time of persecution. Its images of divine judgment, God's vengeance on those who do evil, and God's reward for the faithful are intended to comfort faithful people who are being persecuted. The Book of Daniel, parts of Matthew's Gospel (Mt 24:29–30), and the Book of Revelation represent this literary form.

APOCRYPHAL BOOKS (uh-POK-ruh-fuhl): In the first centuries of Christianity, a great number of books and letters written by Christians did not become part of the Bible. These writings were not included in the New Testament because they were not in complete agreement theologically with the Apostolic Tradition. They are called apocryphal writings, and they include such works as the gospels of Thomas, Peter, and Mary Magdalene, the Epistle of Barnabas, the Acts of John and Paul, and the Shepherd of Hermas.

Some of the images in apocryphal writings are quite beautiful, some are Gnostic (an early Christian heresy), and some are just strange. With the exception of Thomas, most were written in the second through the fourth centuries AD. Apocryphal writings provide a resource that helps scholars reconstruct and understand the diversity of the early Christian period, but they are not inspired Scripture, and they are theologically in error. See also **Canon**; **Deuterocanonical Books**.

APOSTLE: One sent to carry the Gospel and to serve in the mission of Christ. The Lord called twelve Apostles as representatives of the Twelve Tribes of Israel, to be his chosen leaders. Simon Peter, James the son of Zebedee, John, Andrew, Bartholomew, Simon the Zealot, Thomas, Jude Thaddaeus, Matthew, Philip, James the son of Alphaeus, and the betrayer Judas Iscariot are listed as the Twelve (Mt 10:1–4; Mk 3:13–19; Lk 6:12–16). After Jesus ascended into heaven, Judas was replaced by Matthias (Acts 1:21). Later, Paul of Tarsus was called by Christ to be an Apostle and to proclaim Jesus to the Gentiles (Acts 9–26).

The Apostles' experience of Jesus as the risen Christ became the basis of their preaching and the foundation of the Church. Jesus gave the Apostles his authority to teach, heal, and forgive sins (Mt 10:5–8; 28:18–20; Jn 20:22–23), and he left them the Holy Spirit to guide them into all truth (Jn 16:13).

Today the bishops—under the authority of the Pope, who is the successor of Saint Peter—serve as the Apostles of this age and hold the same ministries, rights, authority, and responsibility as the original Apostles. See also entries for individual Apostles.

APOSTOLIC TRADITION: This phrase refers to the process of “handing down” the Gospel (the word tradition comes from Latin, and means “to hand on”). Apostolic Tradition—sometimes just called Tradition—began with the oral communication of the Gospel by the Apostles, was written down in the Scriptures, and is handed down and lived out in the life of the Church. It is interpreted by the Magisterium (the bishops of the Church in union with the Pope) under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. See also **Inerrancy; Revelation.**

AQUILA: See **Priscilla and Aquila.**

ARAMAIC (air-uh-MAY-ik): A language that developed from Semitic roots blending Hebrew, Assyrian, and Babylonian dialects to create a new tongue. After the captivity in Babylon, the Hebrew people who returned to Jerusalem could no longer speak Hebrew. Thus, Hebrew remained the sacred language of the Temple and synagogue, but Aramaic was the language of the street and home. It became the common language spoken by the Jewish people at the time of Christ. Some Aramaic phrases are recorded in the Gospels (Mk 5:41; Mt 27:46).

ARARAT (AIR-uh-rat): A mountainous region in present-day southeast Turkey and the location where Noah's ark came to rest after the Flood (Gen 8:4). See also **Ararat, Mount; Flood; Noah.**

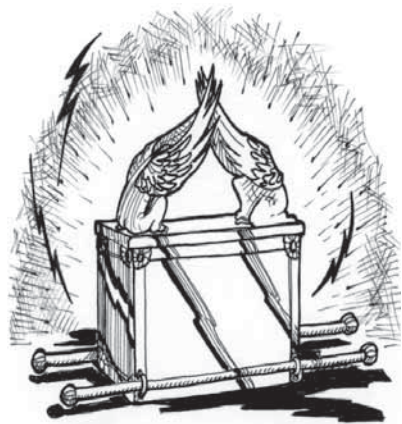
ARARAT, MOUNT (AIR-uh-rat): After the great Flood, the Bible says Noah's ark rested on the mountains of Ararat (Gen 8:4). Assyrian records identify Ararat as the land of Urartu, an area that spans present-day northwestern Iran into southeastern Turkey. It has become part of popular language to talk about Ararat as a single mountain rather than a mountain range. See also **Ararat.**

ARCHAEOLOGY: The study of antiquities, ancient sites, objects, and cultures. This science is essential for understanding the culture, places, and history of ancient peoples, as well as how they used and understood language and literature. Archaeology has reconstructed the ancient world that birthed the Scriptures, providing us with a better understanding of that world.

ARCHANGEL: A chief of the choir of angels. Scripture identifies a number of archangels by name: Michael, the patron of Israel (Dan 10:13; Jude 1:9); Gabriel, the messenger of God (Dan 9:21; Lk 1:19, 26); and Raphael, protector and healer (Tobit 3:17). See also **Angel**; **Gabriel**; **Michael, the Archangel**.

ARK OF THE COVENANT: In the Old Testament, this sacred chest housed the holy presence of God. The Book of Exodus contains the details of its construction (Ex 25:10–22; 37:1–9; 39:16–21). In the time of Moses, the ark was carried during the desert wanderings (1250 BC) and kept in the Tent of Meeting. In the period of the kings (about 1000 BC), it was placed in the holy of holies in the Temple (1 Kings 8:6–8). It held the tablets of the Law of Moses, manna from heaven, and the rod of Aaron. It was also called the ark of God (1 Sam 3:3).

Legend holds that the ark of the Covenant was lost in the Babylonian Captivity, but 2 Maccabees notes that the prophet Jeremiah hid the ark in a cave on the mountain where Moses



died. There it would stay until the day of the Lord (2 Macc 2:5–7). In the apocalyptic writings of Revelation, the ark is seen as blessed with eternal veneration in the Temple in the New Jerusalem (Rev 11:19). See also **Altar of Incense**.

ARMAGEDDON (AHR-muh-GED-uhn): See **Megiddo**.

ARTAXERXES (ahr-tak-SERK-seez): See **Ahasuerus**; **Xerxes**, **Artaxerxes**.

ASCENSION: Forty days after Easter, as the Apostles gathered on Mount Olivet outside Jerusalem, they listened to what were the last earthly teachings of the Lord. As they gazed in awe, Jesus, the glorious Son of Man, was taken up into heaven within a cloud of glory and honored at the “right hand of God” (Mk 16:19).

This Ascension of Christ is a sign that Jesus is truly the Son of God, that he is Lord over all creation, and that through the Holy Spirit he is present to all people throughout the ages (Eph 4:8–10). “Without any doubt, the mystery of our religion is great: / He was revealed in flesh, / vindicated in spirit, / seen by angels, / proclaimed among Gentiles, / believed in throughout the world, / taken up in glory” (1 Tim 3:16). See also **Resurrection of Christ**.

ASHER (ASH-er): Son of Jacob and Zilpah, who was a slave of Leah. Also the name of one of the Twelve Tribes of Israel that claims Asher as its patriarch. See also **Zilpah**.

ASHERAH (uh-SHIHR-uh): A Canaanite goddess. Her name meant “increase” or “progeny.” The gods of Canaan were

thought of as the children of Asherah and El. Asherah was the Canaanite female companion of Baal, a mother deity symbolized as a sacred tree or a serpent who was honored in groves (Ex 34:13; 2 Kings 21:7; Judg 3:7,13). Throughout Canaan, she was revered as the Asherah of the Sea, a goddess of fertility and sexual love and a divine courtesan.

Asherah was called Elat, Anat, As-tarte, Tanit of the Serpent, Ishtar of Babylon, Queen of Heaven, the Shameful, the Holy, the goddess of eroticism and warfare (1 Sam 31:10; 2 Kings 23:13–14). Her cult was outlawed and condemned, along with that of the Baals. Jeremiah condemned her under the title of Queen of Heaven (Jer 7:18, 44:17–19). See also **Grove; Idolatry; Queen of Heaven.**

ASTROLOGY: An ancient system of divination based on reading the horoscope to interpret the influence of celestial bodies on human nature and earthly events. Astrologers believed they could foretell the future by the movements of the heavens. Scripture criticized this practice, because it stole the gift of free will and placed worship on the creation rather than on the Creator (Job 38:33; Isa 47:13–14).

ATHENS: The capital of the Greek province of Attica. Since 4000 BC, people have lived on this peninsula on the southeastern coast of Greece. Attica is surrounded by mountains on its eastern and northern borders and by water to the southwest. Between 454 and 414 BC, Athens was a center of world civilization and home to the legendary Parthenon, the Acropolis, the Theater of Dionysius (which seated 14,000–17,000 people), and the Temple of Zeus. Dur-

ing the time of the New Testament, Greece was a Roman province of Macedonia (Acts 20:2), its glory days long past. However, Greece was still considered a great center of art, learning, and spirituality. Saint Paul traveled to Athens on his way to Corinth and spoke there, making several converts (Acts 17:16–33).

ATONEMENT: A healing rite intended to restore holiness and reconcile the people with God. The Old Testament taught that any kind of abomination, impurity, or infraction of the Law wounded the relationship between the individual, the community, and God. Atonement was the way to cleanse oneself from the guilt caused by such sins. This was accomplished through a sacrificial offering (Lev 22).

In an annual ritual called the Day of Atonement, the high priest made a special sacrifice as an offering for the forgiveness of the people's sins. A young bull and a goat were sacrificed. A second goat—the scapegoat—upon which symbolically all the sins of the people were placed, was led into the desert and abandoned so as to purge the community's guilt by the goat's death (Ex 16).

In Christianity, the life and death of Jesus is understood as the ultimate atonement for the sins of all humankind. Jesus offered his life as a sacrifice to heal the relationship between God and humanity (Heb 10). See also **Azazel; Redemption; Salvation; Scapegoat; Yom Kippur.**

AZAZEL (uh-ZAY-zuhl): The name for the angry spirit, the scapegoat that was sent into the desert on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16:8–10). See also **Atonement; Demon; Scapegoat.**

B

BAAL (BAY-uhl): A generic Semitic word meaning “master,” “owner,” “husband,” or “lord.” The word could be used to refer to Yahweh or to the master of a slave (Hos 2:16). However, in Scripture, the word *Baal* most often referred to the practices of idolatry or the worship of gods other than Yahweh. Baal was both the name of a specific god and a generic title that could refer to any number of gods such as Baal Peor or Baal of Hermon. Knowing which foreign god the Bible is talking about is sometimes difficult.

The Baal religions required the devotion of a priestly class. The Baals spoke only through the king and priests. Often, the religion included the use of temple prostitutes and even demanded human sacrifice, especially of infants. The worshippers of Baal were generally seen as the enemies of the Israelites (1 Kings 18:20–40). See also **Idolatry**.

BABEL, TOWER OF (BAY-buhl): The word *babel* meant “confusion,” specifically the misunderstanding of the ways of God. In its Semitic form, it meant the “gate of the gods.” In Bath, the city and land of Babel were known as “Babylon.”



The story of the tower of Babel is set in a mythic time when people lived in

unity with God and spoke one language. They migrated east to the plain of Shinar (or Babylon), built a city with a tower that reached heaven, and planned to make a name for themselves. Yahweh saw their idolatrous plans and confused their language, which stopped the construction (Gen 11:1–9).

The Hebrew people suffered a devastating exile to the land of Babylon. This Babylonian Captivity lasted an entire generation (586–539 BC) and remained a memory of devastation, the lost covenant, and national grief. While in captivity, the Israelites would have been forced into building tall buildings devoted to the gods of Babylon. No doubt the story of the tower of Babel was meant to make the Israelites think of the pride and idolatrous behavior of the Babylonians. The story is a warning against human pride and the temptation for humans to act like God. See also **Babylon**; **Babylonian Captivity**; **Exile**; **Ziggurat**.

BABYLON (BAB-ih-luhn): The name of an ancient kingdom and its capital city. The city was called the “gate of the gods” and was located on the west bank of the Euphrates River where it meets with the Tigris River, about fifty miles south of today’s Baghdad. In the time when the Babylonians conquered ancient Israel, Babylon was well known for its huge brick quarries, libraries, rich palaces, and the beautiful hanging gardens—a wonder of the ancient world. Isaiah called the city “the glory of kingdoms” (Isa 13:19).

In future centuries, the memory of Babylon’s idolatries and injustice came to symbolize the ultimate evil empire, called the Great Whore in the Book of Revelation (Rev 14:8, 17:5). See also **Babel**, **Tower of**; **Babylonian Captivity**; **Whore**.

BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY (bab-ih-LOH-nih-uhn): Babylon pillaged Judah three different times, eventually causing the ultimate demise of the holy city, Jerusalem. In 587 BC, King Nebuchadnezzar murdered thousands of Israelites, destroyed the Temple, stole anything of value, burned Jerusalem to the ground, and enslaved a large portion of the population, sending them into exile in Babylon.

The captivity resulted in the death of multitudes, the destruction of the land, the devastation of the nation, and the loss of national identity, and the infliction of hopelessness. The captivity lasted an entire generation (586–539 BC), but it, too, ended. Cyrus the Persian, the king of Elam, conquered the Babylonians and let the Israelite people return home to Jerusalem (Ezra 1). A remnant returned, but the majority of the Israelites chose to stay in Babylon. They became known as part of the Diaspora—Jewish peoples living outside the Holy Land. See also **Cyrus of Persia; Daniel; Diaspora; Exile; Ezra; Nebuchadnezzar; Zerubbabel**.

BALAAM (BAY-luhm): His name meant “foreign glutton.” Balaam was a favorite folk character of the storytellers of Israel. His tale taught the power of God and the dangers of trusting foreigners. Balaam was a prophet for hire. He would bless one or curse one’s enemies, whatever one paid him to do. King Balak of Moab hired Balaam to curse Israel, but God prevented the attack. Balaam tried to enter the Israelite camp, but his donkey refused to walk. After Balaam beat the animal, the donkey spoke back, revealing the angel of the Lord that prevented their passage (Num 22:23–35). The storyteller’s point was that an ass had clearer vision than Mesopotamia’s most famous prophet.

BALM: A perfumed spice harvested from the sap of certain trees. The balm of the tree grown in Gilead was highly prized as a restorative medicinal salve (Jer 8:22, 46:11). An ancient tradition says Solomon first received a balm tree as a gift from the Queen of Sheba and had it planted in his gardens around the Dead Sea (1 Kings 10:1–2).

BAPTISM, SACRAMENT OF: The sacrament of Baptism has deep roots in the Bible. We see Baptism prefigured, or hinted at, in the story of Noah being saved from the flood and in the story of the Israelites saved by passing through the Red Sea. The baptism of John the Baptist sets the precedent of being immersed in water for the forgiveness of sins.

Jesus elevated Baptism to a sacrament. As he told Nicodemus, Christian Baptism means being born again “of water and the spirit” (Jn 3:1–6). Just before his Ascension into heaven, Jesus told the Apostles to “make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” (Mt 28:19).

Baptism is the first of the seven sacraments of the Catholic Church. Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist are the three sacraments of Initiation. Baptism offers purification and strength, a blessing with the waters of life, a cleansing of original and personal sin, and a marking of a person as a child of God, a member of the Church. See also **Sacrament**.

BAPTISM OF REPENTANCE: A cleansing rite for the sake of repentance. This was the baptism performed by John the Baptist. John led people into the Jordan River as a sign of the forgiveness of their sins and to prepare for the Reign of God (Mk 1:4–8; Lk 3:1–18). Some thought John was the long-awaited Messiah, but he insisted that one

would come whose sandals he wasn't "worthy to fasten," one who would baptize with the "the Holy Spirit and fire" (Mt 3:11). See also **John the Baptist**.

BAPTISM OF THE LORD: The day Jesus approached the Jordan River and asked his cousin John for the Baptism of



Repentance, there was a union of heaven and earth. As John poured the water, the heavens opened and the Spirit of God hovered over the head of Jesus in the form of a dove. A voice from heaven proclaimed, "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased" (Mt 3:5–17; Jn 1:29–36). John proclaimed Jesus as the long-awaited Lamb of God, who would take away the sins of the world (Jn 1:29–36). The Church celebrates the Baptism of the Lord as the last liturgy of the Christmas season, making the bridge to Christ's public life.

BAR: A Hebrew word identifying a parent-child relationship. Jesus bar Joseph means "Jesus, son of Joseph." See also **Ben**.

BARABBAS (buh-RA-buhs): The incarcerated bandit released by Pontius Pilate instead of Jesus of Nazareth (Mt 27:15–26). Barabbas was guilty of insur-

rection and murder. In honor of the holidays, it was a Roman custom to release one prisoner who was condemned to death. The mob chose Barabbas, and Jesus was sentenced to die.

Barabbas is a symbol of rebellious humanity imprisoned by sin. Jesus' Passion is the ultimate atonement; his Crucifixion releases us from every form of bondage and sin that binds the soul and alienates us from our eternal destiny with God. Just as Barabbas was saved from death because Jesus was put to death in his place, so we are saved by Jesus, who accepted death for our sake.

BARAK (BAIR-ak): His name meant "lightning." Barak was the leader of the Israelite warriors who served under the direction of Deborah, the fourth judge of Israel. As the powerful Canaanites attacked the fearful Israelites, Deborah assured Barak that God would be with the humble Israelite troops in the battle. At Barak's plea, Deborah joined the standoff on Mount Tabor. She entered the battle, and Barak claimed the victory against Sisera's infamous 900 Canaanite chariots by the waters of Megiddo (Judg 4–5). See also **Deborah; Judge**.

BARNABAS (BAHR-nuh-buhs): An early Christian leader and missionary, baptized by the original Apostles. His name in Hebrew meant "son of encouragement." He was a Jew of the Diaspora, a landowner from Cyprus, the cousin of John Mark (Col 4:10), and the nephew of Mary of Jerusalem, in whose home the Church gathered.

The Acts of the Apostles calls Barnabas "a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith" (Acts 11:24). Barnabas helped the Apostles forgive Paul's early persecution of Christians and to trust his witness and mission (Acts 9:27). Later, he searched for Paul, took Paul under his wing in Antioch (Acts 11:25–26), and

then traveled with Paul on Paul's first missionary journey. He and Paul fought for the acceptance of Gentile Christians at the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15:12). Throughout his life, Barnabas lived up to the meaning of his name. See also **Paul**.

BARREN: Childless. In the Bible, to be barren and denied children was a great sadness and shame. It was thought to be a curse and punishment from God (Gen 16:2; 1 Sam 1:6; Lk 1:25). See also **Elizabeth; Hannah; Sarah**.

BARTHOLOMEW (bar-THAHL-uh-myoo): One of the twelve Apostles, he is called Nathanael in the Gospel of John (Jn 1:45–51) and Bartholomew in Matthew, Mark, and Luke (Mt 10:3; Mk 3:18; Lk 6:14). Little is known about Bartholomew except that his friend, the Apostle Philip, with whom he is always mentioned, brought him to Jesus. A non-Scriptural tradition says Bartholomew traveled from India to the shores of the Black Sea, spreading the faith, being martyred in Armenia. See also **Apostle**.

BARTIMAEUS (bar-tih-MAY-uhs): As Jesus walked past, a blind man shouted, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" (Mk 10:47). Jesus touched the man, Bartimaeus, son of Timaeus of Jericho, and the blind man's sight was immediately restored (Mt 20:29–34; Mk 10:46–52; Lk 18:35–43). The story of Bartimaeus taught that illness was not evidence of sin or fault from a past life and that Jesus was a man of compassion and power who offered faith as a path to redemption and freedom (Mt 11:5).

The story of Bartimaeus teaches that faith in Christ heals blindness in all its forms. Disciples of Christ across the ages have embraced this story as inspiration for personal healing and enlightenment and as a means to understand Jesus' na-

ture and mission. During Lent, the story of Bartimaeus's healing is part of the Scrutinies, the rituals that prepare adults to receive the sacraments of Initiation during the Easter Vigil.

BARUCH (BAIR-uhk): A friend and scribe of the prophet Jeremiah, a member of the tribe of Judah, and a royal clerk of King Zedekiah (Jer 36). Baruch recorded the prophet Jeremiah's words that proclaimed God's demand for justice. Jeremiah's words angered King Jehoiakim, who burned the first scroll recorded by Baruch. After the fall of Jerusalem in 587 BC, some Israelite survivors accused Baruch of being a Babylonian sympathizer, and he was taken prisoner along with Jeremiah into Egypt (Jer 43:1–7). See also **Jeremiah**.

BATHSHEBA (bath-SHEE-buh): Her name meant "daughter of abundance." Bathsheba's story, recorded in 2 Samuel 11 is a sad tale of lust, betrayal, murder, and the tragic consequences of sinful actions. Bathsheba was married to a warrior named Uriah the Hittite, who fought with Joab against the Ammonites. Bathsheba was a beautiful woman, and when King David saw her on her rooftop as she bathed, he sent his messengers to bring her into his quarters, where he seduced and impregnated her.

When David couldn't arrange for Uriah to think the child was his own, he arranged for Uriah to be killed on the battlefield. After permitting Bathsheba time to grieve the death of her husband, David called her to his house and married her, making her a queen of Israel. However, the child conceived in adultery sickened, and although David fasted, prayed, and begged the Lord for its survival, the child died in infancy. Bathsheba had another son, Solomon, who succeeded David on the throne

(1 Kings 1). She is referred to in the genealogy of Jesus (Mt 1:6). See also **David; Nathan; Queen; Solomon; Uriah**.

BEAST: Grazing animal, alone or in flocks or herds. Beasts are animals that are property and food and are used for transportation or farming. Beasts are also animals used in sacrifice or religious rites.



Beast also had another symbolic meaning in the Bible. People who let sinful appetites control them were called beasts or irrational animals (2 Pet 2:12). Evil governments or kingdoms who ruled by unjust, ferocious, violent, and inhumane power were referred to as beasts in apocalyptic literature. The Book of Daniel identified four kingdoms as beasts (Dan 7). In the Book of Revelation, the beast was the Roman Empire and the false prophets who served it (Rev 13). See also **Nero**.

BEATITUDES (bee-AT-uh-toodz): The wisdom teachings of Jesus summarized in the form of blessings. Recorded in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5:3–11) and the Teachings on the Plain (Luke 6:20–26), the Beatitudes presented Jesus' vision for the Kingdom of God. The versions in the two Gospels differ slightly. Matthew's version focused

more on spiritual reality ("Blessed are the poor in spirit"), Luke's more on material reality ("Blessed are the poor"). The blessings promised by the Beatitudes reversed the world's value system. They were the basis for a new moral vision, one that demanded a complete conversion of the heart.

BEEZEBUB: (bee-EL-zi-buhb). The biblical name for the Philistine god, Baal-zebub, who was worshipped at Ekron (2 Kings 1:2–6). The Hebrews called him "Lord of the Flies" or "Dung god." His name came to represent the personification of evil, and it became used as another name for the devil. Some people in the Bible said Jesus' power came from Beelzebub, a charge Jesus strongly denied (Mt 12:24–27). See also **Devil; Satan**.

BEL: See **Marduk**.

BEN: Hebrew for "son." See also **Bar**.

BENJAMIN (BEHN-juh-mihn): The younger son of Rachel and Jacob; Joseph was his older brother. Rachel died giving birth to Benjamin, breaking Jacob's heart. Rachel named him Ben-oni, meaning "son of my suffering," but Jacob renamed him Benjamin, meaning "son of the right hand" (Gen 35:18). Benjamin had ten brothers besides Joseph, and one of the Twelve Tribes of Israel is named after him. Saul, the first king of the Hebrews, was of the tribe of Benjamin (2 Sam 9:1–2), as was the Apostle Paul (Rom 11:1). See also **Twelve Tribes**.

BETHANY (BEHTH-uh-nee): The hometown of the disciples Martha, Mary, and Lazarus. Bethany, which means "house of figs," got its name from the fig trees that grew about the area. The village was located on the southeast-

ern slope on the Mount of Olives, east of the Jordan River about two miles from Jerusalem on the road to Jericho.

Jesus retired to Bethany after cleansing the Temple with a bullwhip (Mt 21:17). In Bethany, at the home of Simon the leper, an unnamed woman with an alabaster jar filled with perfumed oil anointed Jesus as Messiah and prepared him for the cross (Mt 26:6; Mk 14:3). In Bethany, Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead and Mary anointed his feet (Jn 11:1, 12:1). And in Bethany, the Lord gave the disciples their final blessings and ascended into the heavens (Lk 24:50). See also **Lazarus; Martha of Bethany; Mary of Bethany.**

BETHEL (BETH-el): A Canaanite town ten miles north of Jerusalem. It had Hebrew origins from Abraham's time (Gen 12:8). In Bethel, God first spoke with Jacob, who also had visions of angels traveling a ladder that reached heaven (Gen 28:10–19). In Bethel, God affirmed the promises of the Covenant and gave Jacob a new name: Israel. Jacob built a shrine, poured libation, erected a pillar, and called the place Bethel, or “house of God” (Gen 35:1–15).

In the time of the Judges (1200 BC), the Hebrews took Bethel through stealth (Judg 1:22–25). After the civil war that divided Israel and Judah (922 BC), King Jeroboam committed idolatry by enshrining golden calves in Bethel and worshipping them as the god who freed Israel in the Exodus (1 Kings 12:28–33). The reforms of King Josiah reclaimed Bethel for Yahweh (2 Kings 23:15–18).

BETHLEHEM (BEHTH-leh-hehm): A city five miles south of Jerusalem. In Hebrew, Bethlehem means “house of bread.” Bethlehem was the site where Rachel died giving birth to Benjamin (Gen 35:19). Bethlehem was the birth-

place of David and the place where the prophet Samuel anointed him king (1 Sam 16:4–13). Bethlehem is remembered as the traditional birthplace of the infant Jesus (Mt 2:1). On the site today stands the ancient Church of the Nativity, built by order of Emperor Constantine around AD 330.

BETHSAIDA (behth-SAY-ih-duh): Galilean town west of the Sea of Tiberias at the mouth of the Jordan River. Bethsaida was home to the Apostles Peter, Andrew, and Philip (Jn 1:44). Bethsaida was the site where Jesus miraculously fed more than 5,000 people with just a few fish and loaves of bread (Lk 9:10) and where he healed the blind man (Mk 8:22). It was renamed Bethsaida-Julias by the tetrarch Philip in honor of the daughter of Julius Caesar.

BETH SHAN, BETH SHEAN (behth-SHAN) (behth-SHEE-uhn): This sacred site in the ancient Near East was considered holy for more than 400 years. It is where the temples of many peoples—Canaanite, Egyptian, and Philistine—were built across the centuries (Judg 1:27). In Beth Shan, the Philistines built a temple to Asherah, where the bodies of King Saul and his sons were nailed to the wall (1 Sam 31:12).

BETROTHAL: The engagement of a man and a woman as the first step in the marriage ritual. The betrothal was a contract agreed upon by the two fathers-in-law the year before the marriage feast. At the betrothal, the girl—often as young as fourteen or fifteen years old—was legally the property of the future husband. If the bonds of betrothal were broken, the man had to seek a legal divorce. The Virgin Mary was betrothed to Joseph when the archangel Gabriel asked her to mother the Messiah (Mt 1:18). See also **Husband; Wife.**

BIBLE: A word that literally means “books.” The Bible is also called the Scriptures. It is an ancient collection of sacred writings that contain the Revelation of God. The Bible is the word of God, written by human authors under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It is without error regarding the things human beings need to know for their salvation. The Bible is a treasure of faith, wisdom, history, theology, and spiritual insight that provides an account of the story of salvation beginning with God’s original Creation and ending with a new creation in the heavenly Jerusalem.

The Bible is proclaimed in the Church’s liturgies (public prayer) and is used for private prayer, study, and inspiration. The canon of the Catholic Bible contains both the forty-six books of the Old Testament and the twenty-seven books of the New Testament. Protestant Bibles have seven fewer books in the Old Testament. See chart **The Books of the Bible**. See also **Canon; Deuterocanonical Books; Word of God**.



BILHAH (BIL-huh): Her name meant “bashful” or “faltering.” Bilhah was Rachel’s maidservant. When Rachel was barren for the first years of her marriage with Jacob, she gave Bilhah as a concubine (mistress) to Jacob. Bilhah gave birth to two sons, who were raised as Rachel and Jacob’s children. Rachel named them Dan and Naphtali (Gen 30:1–8). See also **Concubine; Jacob; Rachel**.

BIRTHRIGHT: The special blessings intended for the firstborn male of a free woman. The firstborn son received a double portion of the family’s inheritance (Deut 21:15–17). The birthright also gave to this chosen son the father’s authority over the clan.

One could lose his birthright because of immorality (1 Chr 5:1) or by foolishly trading it (Gen 25:29–34). When the early Christians called Jesus the “firstborn,” they were making the connection that he was worthy of the authority of his heavenly Father (Col 1:18). See also **Esau; Jacob**.

BISHOP: A Greek word meaning “overseer” or “guardian.” As the early Church grew, leaders were needed to teach the Gospel and lead the communities in the Eucharist. These early leaders were called bishops; their qualities were described in some of the New Testament letters (1 Tim 3:1–7; Titus 1:5–9). Bishops came to be understood as Church leaders who had been ordained as successors to the Apostles and entrusted as the shepherds of particular diocesan churches. See also **Holy Orders**.

BLASPHEMY (BLAS-fuh-mee): Speech or action that is inherently evil or disrespectful to God or God’s law. In the Law of Moses, blasphemy was an offense punishable by death (Lev 24:10–16). The religious leaders who wished Jesus’

The Books of the Bible

Old Testament													
Pentateuch							Historical Books						
Genesis Exodus Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy							Joshua Judges Ruth 1 Samuel 2 Samuel 1 Kings 2 Kings 1 Chronicles 2 Chronicles						
Ezra Nehemiah Tobit Judith Esther 1 Maccabees 2 Maccabees							Job Psalms Proverbs Ecclesiastes Song of Solomon Wisdom of Solomon Sirach						
Historical Books (continued)							Wisdom and Poetry Books						
Isaiah Jeremiah Lamentations Baruch Ezekiel Daniel Hosea Joel Amos Obadiah Jonah Micah Nahum Habakkuk Zephaniah Haggai Zechariah Malachi													
Major Writing Prophets							Minor Writing Prophets						
New Testament													
Gospels and Acts							Pauline Letters						
Matthew Mark Luke John Acts of the Apostles							Romans 1 Corinthians 2 Corinthians Galatians Ephesians* Philippians Colossians* 1 Thessalonians 2 Thessalonians*						
1 Timothy* 2 Timothy* Titus* Philemon Hebrews*							James 1 Peter 2 Peter 1 John 2 John 3 John Jude Revelation						
Pauline Letters							Catholic Letters				Apocalyptic		
*These letters may have been written by a later disciple writing in Paul's name.													

death falsely accused him of blasphemy (Mt 26:16).

BLESSING: A prayer of intention that calls on the power and compassion of God to bestow a grace or empower a healing, or a plea to affect an event through God's intervention. The Bible is filled with blessing prayers.

Blessings can be given to a community when their leader offers God's blessing upon the members of the community (Num 6:22–27; 2 Cor 13:14). Blessings can be given to individuals, especially during important life events (Gen 24:60; 1 Sam 2:20). Jesus taught that we should even bless our enemies (Lk 6:28). Blessings can be as simple as grace before meals, or as life changing as the sacramental blessings of ordination or marriage or the consecration to the vowed religious life. See also **Prayer**.

BLOOD: To ancient peoples, blood was considered the essence and source of the power of life. Because of this, blood was used for ritual atonement and cleansing from sin through animal sacrifices (Lev 4:6–7). As part of the sacrifice, a priest sprinkled blood on and around an altar (Lev 8:15). Blood was used to anoint the person of the priest and his vestments at his ordination (Lev 8:20).

The word *blood* also described human flesh or relationships. The blood of the covenant symbolized the love of God and the requirement for justice (Ex 24:6–8). The blood of the circumcision brought people of various cultures into the family of Israel and functioned as a symbol of the initiation into the tribe (Ex 4:25–26).

The Law of Moses mandated proper respect in the handling of blood. There were laws against improper butchering of animals, against drinking or eating

blood, and against bloodshed (Lev 17). See also **Kinship; Sacrifice**.

BLOOD OF CHRIST: The blood of Christ had great spiritual meaning in the New Testament. Jesus described the shedding of his blood as “the [New Covenant], which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (Mt 26:28). In many places, the Bible called Jesus the Lamb of God, whose blood was sacrificed for salvation (1 Pet 1:19). The Letter to the Hebrews described Christ as the great high priest who gained our redemption not by the blood of animal sacrifice, but by the sacrifice of his own blood (Heb 9:11–14).

At the Last Supper, Jesus invited his disciples into a profoundly intimate relationship marked by his body and blood. Jesus said that “those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them” (Jn 6:56). During the meal, he offered the wine of blessing, saying, “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood” (Lk 22:20). In the Eucharist, the priest consecrates the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ (1 Cor 10:16). See also **Eucharist; Redemption; Salvation**.

BOAZ (BOH-az): An ancestor of David who married the widow Ruth, his relative. Boaz cared for Ruth and her abandoned mother-in-law, Naomi (Ruth 4:1–13). See also **Ruth**.

BOOTHS, FEAST OF: See **Tabernacles, Feast of**.

BREAD: One of the basic foods in biblical times. Bread was made from available grains, mainly wheat or barley. It was relatively easy to make, and hard breads could be taken on long journeys.

A human being could live on basic bread and water.

Because it was so basic to sustaining life, bread took on several symbolic meanings in the Bible. Unleavened bread (bread without yeast) was connected to the escape from Egyptian slavery and was used in the Passover celebration (Ex 13:3–10). The bread made from the manna that appeared in the desert (Ex 16:14–30) symbolized God’s providence. See also **Eucharist; Manna; Passover; Wheat.**

BREAD OF LIFE: Jesus is the Bread of Life (1 Cor 11:23–26). From the beginning of Christianity, early disciples connected the sacrament of the Eucharist (Mk 14:22–25; Lk 22:14–23) with the ancient Bread of Presence reserved at the ark of the Covenant. It was also closely associated with the bread used in the celebration of the Passover meal.

Jesus is the sacrifice and sacrament of the altar, offered to God for the reconciliation of humanity (Mt 5:23, 23:19, 26:26–29; 1 Cor 5:7; 1 Pet 1:19). Jesus is known in the breaking of the bread (Lk 24:35; Acts: 42, 46, 20:7, 20:11). On the altar of the Lord, the action of the priest consecrates offerings of bread and wine into the body and blood of the Lord (Heb 13:10; Rev 6:9). See also **Blood of Christ; Eucharist.**

BREAD OF PRESENCE: Special bread offering to God, reserved on a golden table with the tabernacle in the Tent of Meeting near the sacred ark of the Covenant. This bread was changed every Sabbath, and only priests ate it (Ex 25:23–30; 40:1–33; Lev 24:5–9). On one occasion, David and his men were given the Bread of Presence when it was the only food available (1 Sam 21:1–6). Jesus used that story to make the point

that religious rituals were not more important than people themselves (Lk 6:1–4)

One of the sad memories in salvation history is when in 167 BC, the Syrian warlord Antiochus stole the sacred utensils and the Bread of the Presence reserved in the Temple of Jerusalem (1 Macc 1:22). When the Maccabees defeated Antiochus, they reestablished the Temple rites and respectfully reserved the Bread of Presence in the Temple (2 Macc 10:3).

BURNING BUSH: A crucial event in salvation history, Moses was in the Sinai Desert when God called to him from within a burning bush. All God’s sacredness, all God’s mystery, and all God’s holiness were present in that moment. Yet the fires of this God were compassionate; not even a leaf of the bush was consumed (Ex 3:1–6).



From the bush, the LORD told Moses, “I AM WHO I AM” (Ex 3:14). That name has been translated as Yahweh. Yahweh heard the cry of the poor and responded by sending Moses to lead the slaves out of “the misery of Egypt” and offered the people a Law and “a land flowing with milk and honey” (Ex 3:17). See also **Exodus; Moses.**

C

CAESAR (SEE-zer): Name given to the emperors of Rome. After the reign of Gaius Julius Caesar (100–44 BC), “Caesar” became the title for all Roman emperors. All Jews paid taxes to Caesar (Mt 22:17), but only Roman citizens like Saint Paul had the right to appeal a law case to the emperor (Acts 25:11).

The New Testament period knew a number of Caesars (Lk 2:1, 3:1, 20:22; Acts 11:28, 25:8; Phil 4:22). Numerous Caesars of Rome ruled during the writing of the Christian Scriptures. Some of the most famous Caesars were Augustus (31 BC–AD 14), Tiberius (AD 14–37), Caligula (37–41), Claudius (41–54), Nero (54–68), Titus (79–81), and Domitian (81–96). Claudius, Nero, and Domitian were particularly noted for promoting the persecution of Christians. The numeric value of Nero’s name equaled 666, the number of the beast in Revelation (Rev 13:18). See also **Deification; Nero; Roman Religion**.

CAESAREA (zeh-suh-REE-uh): A coastal town once known as “Strato’s Tower,” located seventy miles north of Jerusalem on the shore of the Mediterranean Sea. In its heyday, Caesarea was the beach resort of kings. Herod the Great rebuilt the city and named it after Caesar Augustus (31 BC–AD 14). Caesarea Maritima was graced with palaces, public buildings, a hippodrome for chariot races (which held 20,000 spectators), a theater, an impressive aqueduct, and a temple dedicated to the “divine” Caesar Augustus—which was blasphemy to the Jews.

Caesarea was the headquarters of the Roman governors of Judea, including Pontius Pilate. Caesarea was the home of the evangelist Philip, his wife, and four daughters (Acts 21:8–9). Saint Peter baptized the first Gentile Christian, the

Roman centurion Cornelius, in Caesarea (Acts 10). Saint Paul was imprisoned there for two years (Acts 24:7), and from its harbor, he sailed to Rome to stand before Nero.

In the second and third centuries AD, Caesarea was a Christian center, the see of bishops, and the home of the early Scripture scholar Origen. Caesarea was renowned for its great library and memorable scholarship.

CAIAPHAS: See **Annas and Caiaphas**.

CAIN AND ABEL (KAYN) (AY-buhl): The story of Cain and Abel is set in pre-history after Adam and Eve were expelled from the garden of Eden. The Cain and Abel story is an allegory offering timeless wisdom based on Israelite history. The backdrop of this story was the ongoing historic conflict between the farmers (represented by Cain) and the shepherds (represented by Abel). Cain symbolized the rich and powerful who had betrayed the laws of the Covenant and had taken land for their farms from nomads and shepherds. As so often happens to those who suffer injustice, Abel had no voice in the story.

Both brothers offered sacrifice to God. Abel offered the best of his flock and was deemed honorable. Cain did not offer God his best. God shamed Cain by rejecting his sacrifice. In jealousy, Cain plotted Abel’s murder. God told Cain to resist evil. Cain ignored God’s counsel and killed Abel anyway. The cycle of violence began with the children of Adam and Eve.

God told Cain that Abel’s innocent blood “cried out from the soil” (Gen 4:10). The teaching is clear. God hears the cry for the poor, and only justice will create peace on earth. The Scriptures teach that we must resist the temptation to see violence as an answer to our problems. Even Cain is spared capital pun-

ishment (Gen 4:12–15). In the New Testament, Jesus called Abel righteous (Mt 23:35), and his innocent blood was remembered as a foreshadowing of the sacrifice of Jesus (Heb 12:24). See also **Murder**.



CALEB (KAY-lehb): He was called by Moses to assist Joshua in entering the Holy Land (Num 13:1–17). Caleb and Joshua were the only ones who had faith that the Canaanites could be conquered (Num 14:5–10), and they were rewarded by being the only two people of their generation to enter the Promised Land. See also **Joshua**.

CALVARY: See **Golgotha**.

CANA (KAY-nuh): A town in Galilee, near Capernaum. In Cana, Jesus performed his first public miracle, turning water into wine (Jn 2:1–11).

CANAAN, CANAANITE (KAY-nuhn) (KAY-nuh-nyts): The name of the land to which God directed Abraham to make his home, the Promised Land, also called Palestine. It occupied the territory that is modern-day Israel. The people who occupied the land were Canaanites.

In the Bible, they were called idolaters because of their worship of Baal and Asherah. Through a series of occupations and wars, the Israelites eventually took over most of Canaan. See also **Palestine**.

CANON: From a Greek word meaning “rule” or “standard.” The word *canon* has come to mean an approved collection or list. The canon of Scripture refers to the list of books that the Church recognizes as the inspired Word of God. The Catholic Church has a slightly larger canon for the Old Testament than most other Christian churches.

When the Church fathers evaluated the writings that were presented for the New Testament canon, they used the following criteria to evaluate whether writings were worthy to be included in the New Testament. If the manuscripts agreed with all three criteria, it was considered inspired text.

- Was the manuscript written by an Apostle or a student of an Apostle?
- Did the image of Christ and the theology within the manuscript agree with the Apostolic Tradition?
- Was this text well known and accepted by the community?

See also **Apocryphal Books; Bible; Deuterocanonical Books; Inspiration; Old Testament**.

CAPERNAUM (kuh-PERR-nay-uhm): A town on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee in Palestine. This well-known city was on the highway from Damascus to Tyre. Jesus knew Capernaum well (Mt 4:13–16; Lk 4:31), and it was a focus of his ministry.

CAPTIVITY: See **Babylonian Captivity; Exile**.

CARMEL (KAHR-muhl): Hebrew word meaning “garden.” Carmel was well loved

in biblical history. It was a beautiful, fifteen-mile stretch of Palestine, bordered on the west by the Mediterranean Sea, on the east by the hills of Samaria, and on the south by Mount Carmel. In Carmel, King Saul erected a monument to his reign (1 Sam 15:12). Carmel was remembered as the site where Elijah's prayers to God defeated Jezebel's "four hundred fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah" (1 Kings 18:19).

CENTURION: A Roman commander responsible for the discipline and safety of 100 soldiers. Scripture mentions centurions several times, often in favorable ways.

A centurion from Capernaum loved the Galilean people, built a synagogue, and was a man of faith. His servant had become deathly ill, and he asked Jesus to heal the servant, which Jesus did because of the centurion's great faith (Mt 8:5–13; Lk 7:1—8:3). We repeat his words at Mass, "Lord . . . I am not worthy . . . Speak the word, and let my servant be healed" (Lk 7:6–7). A centurion stood at Calvary and recognized Jesus as the Son of God (Mt 27:54; Lk 23:47). Cornelius, the first Gentile to convert to Christianity, was a centurion (Acts 10:1).

CHALDEES, CHALDEANS (kal-DEES) (kal-DEE-uhnz): The homeland of the tribe of Abraham (Gen 11:28). Ur of the Chaldees was the ancient name for Babylon (2 Kings 25; Isa 13:19). The people were known as Chaldeans. The name became synonymous with divination, mysticism, and a class of magi that practiced the arts of astrology and magic.

CHARIOT: A horse-drawn cart, invented for use in warfare by the Hyksos-Semitic shepherd kings (1700–1500 BC). Only the powerful and wealthy

possessed a chariot, a vehicle of honor and prestige used by kings and officers in the army. Several Bible stories involved chariots. Pharaoh's chariots and chariot drivers were lost when God closed the Red Sea after the Israelites had passed through (Ex 14:28). Elijah was taken to heaven in a "chariot of fire" (2 Kings 2:11). The evangelist Philip baptized an Ethiopian, who was traveling by chariot (Acts 8:28).

CHARITY: Another word for love. See also **Faith, Hope, and Charity**.

CHERUB, CHERUBIM (CHER-uhb) (CHER-uh-bim): A type of angel in the Bible having both human and animal characteristics. Cherubim guarded the way back to the tree of life (Gen 3:24). Ezekiel had visions of them with human and animal faces (Ezek 1, 10). The ark of the Covenant and the tabernacle of God from where Yahweh spoke to Moses were decorated with cherubim (Ex 37:1–10). They also decorated Solomon's Temple (1 Kings 6:23–35). See also **Angel; Archangel; Seraphim**.



CHILD: At birth, a child was cleansed with water and a salt rub (Ezek 16:4),

wrapped in swaddling clothes (Lk 2:7), and nourished by the mother or wet nurse. The mother remained in seclusion until after she had submitted to rites of purification. A male child was considered unclean for seven days. A girl was considered unclean for two weeks and was fully purified in sixty-six days (Lev 12:1–8). On the eighth day, a boy was circumcised and the firstborn son consecrated to God (Gen 17:10–12).

At age three, a child was weaned from its mother's breast. The event was honored with a day of celebration (Gen 21:8; 1 Sam 1:22–24). Schooling began at age five. Children were considered adults at around thirteen and could be committed to marriage.

CHOSEN: Being called by God for some special purpose. The Bible is essentially a collection of stories about people who were chosen by God to bring about God's divine will in human history.

God chose Abraham and Sarah as the parents of the people of Israel (Gen 12:1–9). God chose Moses to lead the people out of the bondage of Egypt (Ex 3:1–12). God chose Israel to be in a special Covenant relationship with him (Deut 7:6–11). These Israelites, who were later called the Hebrews and the Jews, are still today called God's Chosen People. God called the prophets to speak the word of God (Jer 1:4–10). These prophets promised there would be a messiah, a chosen one, who would restore justice and lead the people to God (Isa 11:1–4).

Christians believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ, the chosen of God. He is the Son of Man who has forgiven sin and healed and redeemed humanity. Jesus specifically chose his Apostles to witness his ministry, death, and Resurrection.

Finally, all the baptized are also Christ's chosen ones, empowered to proclaim Je-

sus as Lord, to live the Good News of God's justice and everlasting love, and to witness the Reign of God to every generation. See also **Covenant**.

CHRIST: A Greek equivalent for the Hebrew word *messiah*, or "anointed one." The original messiahs were the warrior kings of Israel who led their people to liberation and established a rule of justice. King David was seen as the ideal king and messiah. After David's death, some of the prophets promised that a descendant of David would come to lead the people to freedom and restore justice to the oppressed (Isa 61:1). This promise was fulfilled in Jesus Christ, whose followers proclaimed him as the Messiah (Mk 8:29).

Christ is not Jesus' last name. Rather, Jesus is his human name, and Christ is his title. Jesus Christ literally means, "Jesus, the Anointed One," or "Jesus, Our Savior." See also **Messiah**.

CHRISTIAN: A follower of Jesus of Nazareth. In Antioch in Syria, the Jesus community was first called Christian (Acts 11:26). Christians believe Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ of God. Christians are united with the body of Christ in Baptism. They share Christ's mission to proclaim the kingdom of God and bring truth, healing, and justice to the world.

CHRISTOLOGY: The study of Jesus as the Christ and of the titles by which he was called.

CHRONICLER (KRAH-nih-kler): The name given to group of Judean scribes who, around 400 BC, composed and compiled 1 and 2 Chronicles and possibly the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. Some people think parts of the worldview of Haggai and Zechariah seem similar to the work of the Chronicler. The

Chronicler emphasizes the importance of the House of David and the worship that David and Solomon established at the Temple in Jerusalem.

CHURCH: English translation of the Greek word *ecclesia*, which means “gathering” or “assembly.” The Scriptures referred to the Church as a spiritual as well as a physical reality. In the spiritual sense, the Church was spoken of as being married to Christ, who was her faithful husband (Eph 5:22–27). The Church was also called the Body of Christ (1 Cor 12:12–31), which had many members but only one head, Christ. And when the faithful were gathered in homes to celebrate the Eucharist, they were called church (Rom 16:5; Col 4:15).

In the physical reality, the Scriptures also referred to the local community of Christians as the Church. Paul often began his letters that way, for example, “To the church of God that is in Corinth” (1 Cor 1:2).

The Church today is the people who have embraced the New Covenant—the new priestly, prophetic, and royal people of God who participate in the mission and life of Christ through the celebration of the sacraments and the proclamation of the Gospel. The Bible does not use the word *church* to refer to a building, which comes later in Christian history.

CIRCUMCISION (SUR-kuhm-SIZH-uhn): A ritual honored on the eighth day after the birth of a Jewish boy. The child has the loose fold of skin at the end of his penis removed as a consecration to God, in honor of the Covenant (Gen 17:10–12). The rite represents a cutting away of the past and bonding in blood. Circumcision becomes the seal of the Covenant and the sign of the Israelites’ commitment to God.

In the New Testament, the rite of circumcision became the focal point of an early controversy that almost split the Church. Some of the first Christians insisted that to be a follower of Christ, one also had to follow Jewish laws and rituals. This meant that any adult male who wasn’t a Jew would have to be circumcised to be a Christian. Paul and other Church leaders strongly argued against this requirement. The issue was decided at the Council of Jerusalem, when it was agreed that following all the Jewish laws and rituals was not a requirement for following Christ (Acts 15). See also **Covenant**.

CLAUDIUS (KLAU-dee-uhs): Roman emperor who followed Caligula in AD 41. In AD 49, Claudius banished the Jews and Christians from Rome (Acts 18:2). During his reign, persecutions and hostilities broke out in Jerusalem under Herod Agrippa, resulting in many deaths and causing alienation between Christians and the Jewish people. Stephen and the Apostle James, brother of John, were among the martyrs of the period (Acts 7:53–60, 12:2). See also **Caesar**.

CLEOPAS (KLEE-oh-puhs): After the death of Jesus, a disciple named Cleopas and another unnamed disciple fled Jerusalem in anguish. They walked the seven miles to their home in Emmaus, asking one another how the events of Calvary could have happened. The resurrected Jesus joined them. Cleopas and his partner looked right into Jesus’ face and spoke with him but couldn’t recognize their Lord until the breaking of the bread (Lk 24:13–35). See also **Emmaus**.

CLOUD, PRESENCE OF GOD: Clouds were often connected in the Scriptures to the presence of God. With-

in a cloud, Yahweh led the Israelites across the deserts of the unknown (Ex 13:21–22), appeared to Moses on Sinai (Ex 19:16), and gave direction and correction (Num 11:25, 12:5).



Daniel envisioned the Son of Man as coming on the clouds of heaven (Dan 7:13–14). At the Transfiguration, God spoke to Peter, James, and John from within a cloud to proclaim Jesus as the beloved Son of God (Mt 17:5). At the end of the age, the Son of Man will return, joined by the angels on the clouds of heaven (Mt 24:30; Rev 14:14).

COLOSSAE (ko-LAH-see): A city in Asia Minor located near the Lycus River valley, 110 miles east of Ephesus on the road to the Euphrates River. Colossae was known for the dyeing of cloth and the production of red wool. Saint Paul's Letter to the Colossians was written to the church founded there.

COMFORTER: See **Paraclete**.

COMMANDMENT: The commandments were the rules of life that the Chosen People followed to be in right relationship with God according to the Covenant God made with them. These commandments, also called the Law of Moses, were given in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. These books, together with the Book of Genesis, are also called the Torah. The Torah is summarized in the Ten Commandments, also called the Decalogue (Ex 20:1–18). See also **Law of Moses; Ten Commandments**.

COMPASSION: From the Hebrew word for “womb.” To be compassionate is to be as loving as a mother to the child in her womb. God's compassion for God's people reveals God's abundant, faithful love for humanity (Ps 106:45, 145:9). Compassion required pity, forgiveness of debt, and care for those in special need (Zech 7:9–10).

Jesus taught that God was a compassionate, loving Father (Mt 7:10). The parables revealed the mercy and unconditional love of God in the image of the Father in the parable of the prodigal son (Lk 15:11–32), in the care that the good Samaritan offered to the stranger (Lk 10:30–37), and in the image of the king who released the debts of his unworthy steward (Mt 18:27).

Jesus offered a mirror by which Christians examine themselves against the virtue of compassion. Be as perfect, as merciful, and as just as God, challenged Jesus (Mt 5:48). Forgive “seventy-seven times” (Mt 18:22). The Christian's dedication to Christ is to be measured against the level of compassion shown one another. Compassion is to be a way of life (Jn 20:23).

CONCUBINE (KON-kyoo-byin): A woman used as a sexual partner or breeder. A concubine did not have the

rights of a wife and was usually a slave or a woman captured in war. Her main role was as a surrogate mother, who hopefully would bear sons for the tribe (Gen 35:22; Judg 8:31, 19:25). See also **Bilhah**.

CONFESSION: An opening of one's soul before God and an admission of one's sin. The Bible contains some wonderful examples of confession (Ezek 9:5—10:1; Psalm 51; Dan 9:3—12). Confession is a profession of faith in God's forgiveness. It is an admission of our responsibility for wrong behavior, and it is a prayer asking for God's healing (Jas 5:16). The sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation was called confession before Vatican Council II. See also **Sacrament**.

CONFIRMATION: The sacrament that celebrates the complete initiation into the Body of Christ and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Along with Baptism and the Eucharist, Confirmation is a sacrament of Christian Initiation. It empowers one to faithfulness to Christ and the Church. It provides gifts of the Spirit and the grace to do the work of the Gospel: to proclaim the Reign of God and to preach Good News, heal the broken-hearted, proclaim liberty to captives, and release those in bondage (Lk 4:17—21). The biblical roots of Confirmation are found in a story in which Peter and John laid hands on Christians in Samaria who were already baptized, and they received the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:15—17). See also **Sacrament**.

CONSCIENCE: The inborn sense of right and wrong; the inner voice of the Spirit that develops character and evaluates desires, actions, and ethics (Acts 24:16). God created us with a natural

law that directs our spirits toward goodness, but our conscience needs to be trained and directed (Titus 1:15; 1 Thess 5:20—22). See also **Repentance**.

CONVERSION: An awakening to joy through the acceptance of God's unconditional love; a change of heart and mind that leads the soul to reject all sinful and unloving behaviors, have faith in the one, true God, and believe in Jesus as savior and Lord. True conversion causes the realization that love of God is the highest value and worth more than the pleasures and powers of earth. The soul responds to conversion as a new creature, with new eyes, new hope, new understanding, and a commitment to justice (Acts 26:18).

The Apostles, Mary Magdalene, and the other male and female disciples all had conversion experiences in which they came to know and love Jesus as friend and Messiah. A dramatic conversion story in the Bible is Saint Paul's conversion told in Acts 9:1—19. Paul was a very religious Pharisee who had been actively persecuting Christians. Christ appeared to Paul, and Paul came to believe in him as the Messiah. Paul turned from a persecutor of Christians into the most famous Christian missionary in history. See also **Mary Magdalene; Paul**.

CORINTH (KAWR-ihnth): A Greek city located about forty-eight miles west of Athens. It had a turbulent history. The Romans destroyed Corinth in 146 BC, and the city lay desolate for more than a century. In 46 BC, Julius Caesar rebuilt the city and named it for himself, Corinth—the praise of Julius. Corinth was noted for wealth, luxury, immorality, and the vicious habits of the people.

In the time of Saint Paul, Corinth was a successful Roman port and the ad-



ministrative center of the Roman proconsul, or administrator, of Achaia (Acts 18:12–16). Paul was in Corinth in AD 51–52. There he met the Christian missionaries, the tentmakers Aquila and Priscilla, as well as Apollos (Acts 18:1–18). During later missionary journeys, Paul wrote several letters to the Christians in Corinth, which we have as the First and Second Letters to the Corinthians.

COVENANT (KUH-vah-nuhnt): A solemn vow and contract in which God is witness. The Hebrew word for covenant means “a cutting,” which alludes to covenants often having been sealed by a sacrifice, or the shedding of blood. Covenants were made between individuals, such as the covenant between Laban and Jacob (Gen 31:44–54). They were also made between nations, such as the covenant between Abraham and Abimelech (Gen 21:22–32). A covenant was a binding oath and a commitment to a new way of being community.

The most important covenants in the Bible were covenants made with God. The first covenant was the covenant God made with Noah never again to destroy the earth with a flood (Gen 9:1–17). It was a promise that God would never abandon humanity.

The second covenant God made was with Abraham (and by implication, also

with his wife Sarah). In this important covenant, God promised to provide them with descendants who would become a great nation (Gen 12:1–3, 15:1–21). This covenant was to be marked by the circumcision of all male descendants of Abraham and Sarah.

God renewed the covenant with Abraham’s descendants, the Israelites, on Mount Sinai. This Covenant, called the Sinai Covenant, established the Israelites as God’s Chosen People (Ex 19–20). An elaborate system of laws and rituals of sacrifice were the outward signs of the Sinai Covenant. This Covenant was reaffirmed with King David—an affirmation that included the promise that the House of David would stand forever (2 Sam 7:8–17).

These Old Testament covenants revealed God’s longing to restore humanity’s lost relationship with God. They were an expression of God’s love for sinful humanity. See also **Abraham; Chosen; Circumcision; Covenant, New; House; Law of Moses; Moses.**

COVENANT, NEW (KUH-vah-nuhnt): The word *testament* is another word for covenant. Thus, the Old Testament records the story of the original covenants. The New Testament is the story of the New Covenant God made with the entire human race through Jesus Christ. In its weakness, humanity did not follow the Covenant God established with Abraham’s descendants, so God sent Jesus to live among us—God’s love in flesh (Jn 1:14–18). Through the life, death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, God established a New Covenant with humanity (Heb 9:15). The New Covenant was marked by the shedding of Christ’s body and blood (Lk 22:19–20). Jesus, the New Covenant, binds us to the love of God the Father through the Holy Spirit and makes us a new people of God. See also **Covenant.**