

STRUCTURE OF THE BIBLE

In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets. ~ Hebrews 1:1

THE BIBLE is actually a small library of books. It is divided into two parts, the Old and New Testaments. The Old Testament relates the whole history of God's saving interaction with humankind until the coming of Jesus of Nazareth. The New Testament records God's personal encounter with humanity in the person of Jesus Christ, who lived, was crucified, died, and rose again for our salvation. These accounts are contained in what are called the Gospels, which form the very heart of the Bible. They are deeply revered by the Church because they are the principal source for her life and teaching about our Savior Jesus Christ. The New Testament also includes other books and letters that give an account of the Church in her infancy.

Because of the existence of other writings that were not inspired by God, the Church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit determined which writings were authentic and inspired, drawing up a complete list called the canon of Scripture. There are 46 books in the canon of the Old Testament (or 45 if *Jeremiah* and *Lamentations* are counted as one). There is a tradition that Moses was the author of the first five books of the Old Testament; these five books are called, collectively, the Pentateuch (derived from Greek word that means "five cases," perhaps referring to the boxes in which the scrolls were kept). By 100 BC, this list was complete (an asterisk indicates that the book is deuterocanonical; the handout entitled Deuterocanonical Books of the Old Testament explains the reason for labeling some books this way).

There are 27 books in the New Testament canon. The letters of St. Paul were the first ones written, beginning between 50 and 55 AD and ending with his death about 67 AD. The four Gospels followed soon

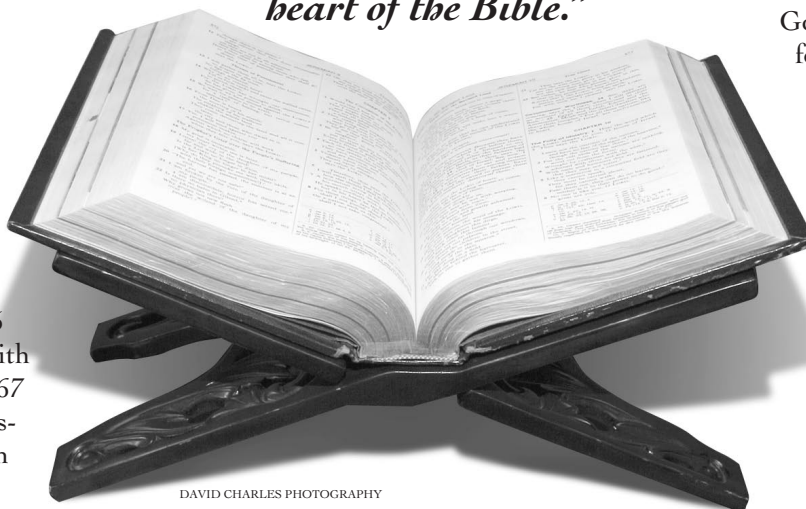
after, beginning with either the Gospel of Matthew or the Gospel of Mark and concluding with the Gospel of John. All the Gospels were written by the end of the 1st century. The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke are very similar and, for this reason, are called the "synoptic" (from a Greek word that means a similar view) Gospels. By tradition, St. Matthew is the Matthew identified as one of Jesus' apostles. St. Mark is named in the Acts of the Apostles and his Gospel is regarded as the substance of St. Peter's preaching. St. Luke is also named in the Acts of the Apostles and acted as St. Paul's traveling companion for a while. By his own description, he carefully researched his Gospel from eyewitnesses. The Acts of the Apostles, also written by St. Luke, was probably written before St. Paul's death and is at least in part history that St. Luke himself witnessed. The Gospel of St. John, by tradition, is written by the John identified as another of Jesus' apostles and also, by tradition, as the apostle "whom Jesus loved" (Jn 13:23; 19:25).

The remainder of the New Testament consists of letters written by St. Peter, St. James, St. Jude, and St. John, all apostles; the Letter to the Hebrews, whose authorship is not certain although it had traditionally been attributed to St. Paul; and the final book, Revelation, attributed as well to St. John the Evangelist.

We must understand that, although the Bible consists of 73 books written over a period of more than a millennium, by perhaps 40 human authors, its principal author is the Holy Spirit who

inspired each human author to write only what God wanted written for the sake of our salvation. In essence, therefore, Sacred Scripture is one book, and the one book is Jesus Christ, the Word of God, about whom all of Sacred Scripture writes and in whom all Scripture is fulfilled.

"The Gospels form the very heart of the Bible."



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STRUCTURE OF THE BIBLE

OLD TESTAMENT

Pentateuch

Genesis
Exodus
Leviticus
Numbers
Deuteronomy

Historical

Joshua
Judges
Ruth
1 Samuel
2 Samuel
1 Kings
2 Kings
1 Chronicles
2 Chronicles
Ezra
Nehemiah
Tobit*
Judith*
Esther
1 Maccabees*
2 Maccabees*

Wisdom

Job
Psalms
Proverbs
Ecclesiastes
Song of Songs
Wisdom*
Sirach*

Prophetic

Isaiah
Jeremiah
Lamentations
Baruch*
Ezekiel
Daniel
Hosea
Joel
Amos
Obadiah
Jonah
Micah
Nahum
Habakkuk
Zephaniah
Haggai
Zechariah
Malachi



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A deacon proclaims the Gospel reading during Mass

NEW TESTAMENT

Gospels

Matthew
Mark
Luke
John

Pauline Letters (Epistles)

Romans
1 Corinthians
2 Corinthians
Galatians
Ephesians
Philippians
Colossians
1 Thessalonians
2 Thessalonians
1 Timothy
2 Timothy
Titus
Philemon

Other Letters

(Epistles)
Hebrews
James
1 Peter
2 Peter
2 John
3 John
Jude

Other Writings

Acts
1 John
Revelation

* These books are excluded from the Protestant canon, or collection, of Scripture.

ABBREVIATIONS FOR BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

Following, in alphabetical order, are the abbreviations used in the handouts for the books of Sacred Scripture:

Acts	Acts of the Apostles	Gal	Galatians	3 Jn	3 John
Am	Amos	Gn	Genesis	Jon	Jonah
Bar	Baruch	Hb	Habakkuk	Jos	Joshua
1 Chr	1 Chronicles	Heb	Hebrews	Jude	Jude
2 Chr	2 Chronicles	Hg	Haggai	1 Kgs	1 Kings
Col	Colossians	Hos	Hosea	2 Kgs	2 Kings
1 Cor	1 Corinthians	Is	Isaiah	Lam	Lamentations
2 Cor	2 Corinthians	Jas	James	Lk	Luke
Dn	Daniel	Jb	Job	Lv	Leviticus
Dt	Deuteronomy	Jdt	Judith	Mal	Malachi
Eccl	Ecclesiastes	Jer	Jeremiah	1 Mc	1 Maccabees
Eph	Ephesians	Jgs	Judges	2 Mc	2 Maccabees
Est	Esther	Jl	Joel	Mi	Micah
Ex	Exodus	Jn	John	Mk	Mark
Ez	Ezekiel	1 Jn	1 John	Mt	Matthew
Ezr	Ezra	2 Jn	2 John	Na	Nahum
				Neh	Nehemiah
				Nm	Numbers
				Ob	Obadiah
				Phil	Philippians
				Phlm	Philemon
				Prv	Proverbs
				P(s)	Psalms
				1 Pt	1 Peter
				2 Pt	2 Peter
				Rom	Romans
				Ru	Ruth
				Rv	Revelation
				Sir	Sirach
				1 Sm	1 Samuel
				2 Sm	2 Samuel
				Song	Song of Songs
				Tb	Tobit
				1 Thes	1 Thessalonians
				2 Thes	2 Thessalonians
				Ti	Titus
				1 Tm	1 Timothy
				2 Tm	2 Timothy
				Wis	Wisdom
				Zec	Zechariah
				Zep	Zephaniah



Chi-Rho symbol, formed from the first two letters from the word 'Christ' in the Greek language, 4th century Spanish tombstone

(CCC 102, 105-106, 109-111, 120, 128-129)