



The Oxford Companion to the Bible (Oxford Companions)

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The Bible has had an immeasurable influence on Western culture, touching on virtually every aspect of our lives. It is one of the great wellsprings of Western religious, ethical, and philosophical traditions. It has been an endless source of inspiration to artists, from classic works such as Michaelangelo's *Last Judgment*, Handel's *Messiah*, or Milton's *Paradise Lost*, to modern works such as Thomas Mann's *Joseph and His Brothers* or Martin Scorsese's controversial *Last Temptation of Christ*. For countless generations, it has been a comfort in suffering, a place to reflect on the mysteries of birth, death, and immortality. Its stories and characters are an integral part of the repertoire of every educated adult, forming an enduring bond that spans thousands of years and embraces a vast community of believers and nonbelievers.

The Oxford Companion to the Bible provides an authoritative one-volume reference to the people, places, events, books, institutions, religious belief, and secular influence of the Bible. Written by more than 250 scholars from some 20 nations and embracing a wide variety of perspectives, the *Companion* offers over seven hundred entries, ranging from brief identifications--who is Dives? where is Pisgah?--to extensive interpretive essays on topics such as the influence of the Bible on music or law.

Ranging far beyond the scope of a traditional Bible dictionary, the *Companion* features, in addition to its many informative, factual entries, an abundance of interpretive essays. Here are extended entries on religious concepts from immortality, sin, and grace, to baptism, ethics, and the Holy Spirit. The contributors also explore biblical views of modern issues such as homosexuality, marriage, and anti-Semitism, and the impact of the Bible on the secular world (including a four-part article on the Bible's influence on literature).

Of course, the *Companion* can also serve as a handy reference, the first place to turn to find factual information on the Bible. Readers will find fascinating, informative articles on all the books of the Bible--including the Apocrypha and many other ancient texts, such as the Dead Sea Scrolls, Pseudepigrapha, and the Mishnah. Virtually every figure who walked across the biblical stage is identified here, ranging from Rebekah, Rachel, and Mary, to Joseph, Barabbas, and Jesus. The *Companion* also offers entries that shed light on daily life in ancient Israel and the earliest Christian communities, with fascinating articles on feasts and festivals, clothing, medicine, units of time, houses, and furniture. Finally, there are twenty-eight pages of full-color maps, providing an accurate, detailed portrait of the biblical world.

A vast compendium of information related to scriptures, here is an ideal complement to the Bible, an essential volume for every home and library, the first place to turn for information on the central book of Western culture.

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