

THE STORY

A Christian journey through the Bible

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How to read this book

The Bible is a library of law, story, poetry, prophecy, wisdom, Gospel, letters and vision, written across generations. Yet Christians receive it as one unfolding story of the God who creates, seeks, calls, rescues, forms, comes among us in Jesus Christ, gives the Holy Spirit and restores creation. This book tells that great story so that the teaching gathered in The Way can be seen within its biblical home.

This is an abridged retelling, not a replacement for Scripture. It follows the biblical narrative and sometimes pauses to show how Christians understand it in the light of Jesus Christ. Where the Old Testament does not explicitly name the Trinity, this book does not pretend that it does. It reads those ancient texts within the faith of the Church: the one God is eternally Father, Son and Holy Spirit; creation comes from the Father, through the Word, in the life of the Spirit; and God's character is revealed most clearly in Jesus.

The aim is simple: to help a newcomer hear the story, recognise its shape and discover the invitation within it. The Bible tells the truth about human dignity, sin, suffering and hope, but its deepest subject is God's faithful love.

The Story supplies the narrative; The Way helps us inhabit it through the Creeds, Commandments, Beatitudes, Lord's Prayer, sacraments, prayer, virtue and service.

The great story

The Christian faith is easier to understand when its teachings are held within the story from which they come. Eight movements give us a simple map. They do not reduce the Bible to a formula. They help us see where we are in the unfolding relationship between God, humanity and creation.

Creation

The Father creates through the eternal Word, and the Spirit gives life. The world is gift, called good by God. Human beings are made in God's image for relationship, freedom, worship, shared life and the care of creation. Christianity begins with goodness and vocation, not with failure.

Fall

Humanity mistrusts God and turns inwards. Sin wounds our relationship with God, one another, ourselves and the earth. The image of God is not erased, but human life is disordered and death enters the story. Even then God seeks, speaks, clothes and promises. Judgement never means that God has ceased to love his creation.

Calling

God calls Abraham and Sarah and promises that through their family all nations will be blessed. Israel is formed by covenant, not because its people are flawless, but because God is faithful. Their story gives the world Scripture, worship, wisdom, prophetic hope and the human family into which Jesus is born.

Guidance

God liberates Israel, gives the Law and forms a people through wilderness, worship, kings, prophets, wisdom and exile. The commandments are not a means of purchasing God's love. They teach a rescued people how freedom becomes love of God and neighbour. The story repeatedly shows the need for faithful hearts, just communities and God's renewing Spirit.

Incarnation

The eternal Son takes human flesh from the Virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit. Jesus is fully divine and fully human. In him, God comes among us and human life is taken into God's healing. Jesus announces the kingdom, welcomes those pushed aside, heals, forgives and reveals the heart of the Father.

Redemption

Jesus gives himself upon the cross and rises bodily from death. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit act in the unity of divine love. The cross is not an angry Father punishing an unwilling Son. God in Christ enters the depths of sin and death, bears their cost, defeats the powers that enslave and opens the way to reconciliation. In the resurrection, new creation begins.

Presence

The risen Christ ascends and pours out the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is not an impersonal force but the Lord and giver of life, eternally one with the Father and the Son. The Spirit gathers the Church, gives gifts for service, grows Christlike fruit, helps us pray and makes Christ present through Scripture, worship, baptism, Holy Communion and the shared life of God's people.

Restoration

God's purpose is not the abandonment of creation but its renewal. Christ will come again; the dead will be raised; evil, death and sorrow will end; and heaven and earth will be united. Humanity's vocation will be fulfilled in communion with God. The story that began in a garden ends with a renewed creation in which God dwells with his people.

This is the story Christians enter through baptism, learn to inhabit through worship and discipleship, and rehearse whenever the Creeds are spoken. The rest of this book tells it more fully.

How Anglicans read the Bible

Anglicans receive the Bible as Holy Scripture and the primary authority for Christian faith. Article VI of the Thirty-Nine Articles says that Scripture contains all things necessary for salvation. Nothing is therefore to be required as an article of faith, or as necessary to salvation, unless it is read in Scripture or may be proved from it.

We read the Bible as one unfolding story. The Old Testament is not contrary to the New. The same God is at work throughout, and everlasting life is offered through Jesus Christ, the one mediator who is both God and human. Christians therefore read the whole Bible in the light of Christ, attentive to the Holy Spirit who inspired the Scriptures and continues to form the Church through them.

This does not mean that every biblical command applies to Christians in exactly the same way. Article VII distinguishes the ceremonial and civil laws given to ancient Israel from the moral commandments that continue to shape Christian life. We ask what a passage meant in its own place within God's story, how it is fulfilled or illuminated in Christ, and how it calls us to faithful life now.

Anglicans do not read Scripture as isolated individuals. We receive it within the worshipping Church, alongside the Creeds and the accumulated wisdom of Christian Tradition, using reason to understand and apply what we read. These are related but not equal authorities. Scripture remains the governing authority: Tradition helps us hear it with the Church, and reason helps us understand and faithfully inhabit it.

The books called the Apocrypha have a genuine but carefully distinguished place. Article VI says that the Church reads them for example of life and instruction of manners, but does not use them to establish doctrine. A short guide to the books named by Article VI appears in the appendix.

PART ONE:
CREATION, COVENANT AND A PEOPLE

Genesis: beginnings and promise

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. God spoke, and light came from darkness. The waters were gathered, dry land appeared, and the world filled with plants and living creatures. Humanity, male and female, was made in God's image, given dignity, freedom and the vocation to care for creation. God looked upon all that he had made and called it very good. Christians recognise creation as the work of the Father, through the eternal Word, in the life-giving Spirit. The Trinity is not three creators, but the one God whose life is love and whose generosity gives being to everything that is.

God placed the first humans in a garden. They were free, but freedom required trust. The serpent taught them to suspect that God was withholding life from them. They ate, became ashamed and hid. God came looking for them: "Where are you?" Sin wounded their relationship with God, one another, themselves and the earth. Yet judgement was not abandonment. God clothed them and the long work of restoration began.

The wound spread through Cain's jealousy and murder of Abel, through violence, and through the pride of Babel. In the story of Noah, judgement and mercy met. God preserved life through the flood and set the rainbow as a sign of covenant with the earth. Humanity still needed healing, but God would not discard his creation.

God called Abraham and Sarah to leave home and trust a promise: they would become a people, receive a land, and through them all families of the earth would be blessed. They often trusted imperfectly. Hagar was used and cast aside, yet God saw her and heard her child. Isaac was born when hope seemed absurd. God tested Abraham, but did not permit Isaac to be sacrificed. God provided what was needed and the promise continued.

Isaac and Rebekah became parents of Esau and Jacob. Jacob deceived his brother and father, fled, encountered God in a dream, and later wrestled through the night for a blessing. He received the name Israel. He returned fearing revenge, but Esau ran to embrace him. Grace appeared not as denial of wrong, but as the possibility of relationship beyond it.

Jacob's son Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers. In Egypt he endured false accusation and prison, yet God remained with him. His gift for interpreting dreams brought him before Pharaoh. Joseph prepared Egypt for famine and eventually faced the brothers who had betrayed him. He tested them, saw that they had changed, forgave them and preserved the whole family. Human evil was not called good, but God brought life from what others intended for harm. Genesis ends with Israel's family in Egypt, carrying a promise not yet fulfilled.

Exodus: freedom and belonging

Generations passed. A Pharaoh arose who feared the growing Israelite people and enslaved them. Their children were threatened and their labour exploited. God heard their cries and remembered the covenant. In Scripture, remembering is not recovering forgotten information. It is faithful action.

God called Moses from a bush that burned without being consumed. The divine name, "I AM", revealed the God who is not one being among others, but the living source of all. Moses resisted, but God provided Aaron and promised to be with him. Through signs and plagues, the claims of Pharaoh and Egypt's gods were exposed. On the night of Passover, Israel sheltered under the sign God had given. They were rescued not because they were powerful, but because God was faithful.

God led them through the sea and into freedom. Yet liberation from slavery was only the beginning. A freed people still had to learn how to live freely. At Sinai God gave the commandments, not as a ladder by which slaves could earn rescue, but as the way a rescued people might become holy. Worship of God, truthfulness, rest, faithfulness, honour for life and neighbourly justice belonged together.

Israel made a golden calf, preferring a manageable god to the God who had set them free. Moses interceded and the covenant was renewed. The tabernacle was built as a sign that the holy God desired to dwell among his people. Christians later see the pattern fulfilled in Jesus, the Word made flesh who dwells among us, and in the Spirit who makes the Church a living temple.

Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy: formed in the wilderness

Leviticus taught Israel that worship, daily life and justice could not be divided. Sacrifice dealt seriously with sin and restored communion. Priests served the people in God's presence. Cleanliness laws taught distinction and holiness. The Day of Atonement declared that guilt must be faced and carried away. Christians read these patterns through Christ, whose self-offering is full, perfect and sufficient, not because an angry Father punishes an innocent Son, but because the Triune God acts in love to defeat sin, death and estrangement.

Numbers tells of a people who repeatedly mistrusted God in the wilderness. They complained, resisted and longed for the familiar chains of Egypt. Even Moses failed. The journey revealed that rescue can happen in a night, while formation takes a lifetime. God remained faithful, providing food, water, guidance and correction.

Deuteronomy gathered the people before they crossed into the land. Moses called them to remember: love the Lord with heart, soul and strength; teach the story to their children; protect the vulnerable; do not imagine prosperity is self-made. Covenant life was to be held in the heart and practised in the community. Moses died within sight of the land. The story moved forward without its great leader, because the promise belonged to God.

PART TWO:
LAND, KINGDOM AND EXILE

Joshua and Judges: gift, conflict and need

Under Joshua, Israel crossed the Jordan and entered the land promised to their ancestors. These accounts of conquest are among Scripture's hardest passages. They come from an ancient world of violent struggle and must not become permission for Christian violence or possession. Christians read them under the judgement of Jesus, who loves enemies, bears violence rather than sanctifying it, and gathers a kingdom not secured by the sword.

After Joshua, Israel repeatedly forgot God. Judges describes a cycle: the people turned away, suffered oppression, cried out, and were rescued through flawed leaders. Deborah judged with courage; Gideon began in weakness; Samson displayed strength without mature character. The book ends in moral darkness. Everyone did what seemed right in their own eyes. Israel needed more than occasional rescue. It needed faithful hearts and just leadership.

Ruth and Samuel: faithfulness in ordinary lives

Ruth, a foreign widow, chose faithfulness to Naomi and entrusted herself to Israel's God. In fields and family arrangements, God worked through courage, kindness and honour. Ruth married Boaz and became an ancestor of David. The story quietly insists that belonging to God's people is not built simply on blood or status, but on covenant faithfulness and grace.

Samuel was born in answer to Hannah's prayer and learned to recognise God's voice. Israel demanded a king so it could be like other nations. God warned that kings could take sons, fields and freedom, yet permitted the choice. Saul was appointed, but fear and disobedience consumed him. God then chose David, the overlooked shepherd. People looked at appearance; God looked at the heart.

David and the kingdom

David defeated Goliath not because faith guarantees easy victory, but because he trusted that Israel's life did not rest on the giant's terms. He served Saul, fled Saul's jealousy, spared his enemy and lamented when Saul died. David became king, brought the ark to Jerusalem and desired to build God a house. God instead promised to establish David's house: a lasting line through which God's reign would come.

David was courageous, prayerful and capable of deep friendship, but he also abused power. He took Bathsheba and arranged Uriah's death. The prophet Nathan told the truth. David repented, but repentance did not erase the harm or its consequences. Scripture refuses to turn its heroes into saints without shadows. God's covenant faithfulness persists, while human authority remains accountable to justice.

The Psalms give voice to Israel's life with God: praise, grief, anger, trust, confession, bewilderment and hope. They teach that prayer can tell the truth. Christians pray them with Jesus and in the Spirit, joining personal experience to the worship of the whole people of God.

Solomon and the divided kingdom

Solomon asked for wisdom and built the temple in Jerusalem. At its dedication he confessed that heaven could not contain God, much less a building, yet prayed that the temple would be a place of meeting, forgiveness and justice. His reign brought splendour, but also heavy labour, wealth and compromise. Wisdom without faithful character became insufficient.

After Solomon, the kingdom divided into Israel in the north and Judah in the south. Kings were measured not merely by success, but by covenant faithfulness and justice. Elijah confronted Ahab and the worship of Baal. On Mount Carmel God answered, yet afterwards Elijah met God not in wind, earthquake or fire, but in the sound of sheer silence. Elisha continued the prophetic work among kings, widows, soldiers and strangers.

Both kingdoms hardened themselves. Assyria conquered Israel. Later Babylon destroyed Jerusalem and the temple, and carried Judah into exile. Land, monarchy and sanctuary, the visible supports of identity, were lost. Yet God had not been defeated. The exile stripped away false security and forced a deeper question: could God still be present with his people far from home?

The prophets: truth, judgement and hope

The prophets did not mainly predict distant events. They spoke God's truth into real injustice, false worship and political fear. Amos condemned worship that ignored the poor. Hosea embodied wounded covenant love. Micah called for justice, mercy and humble fellowship with God. Isaiah saw the Holy One, exposed national pride and spoke of a servant who would bear suffering and bring light to the nations. Jeremiah warned Jerusalem, wept over its ruin and promised a covenant written on the heart. Ezekiel saw God's glory even in exile and imagined dry bones receiving breath.

The prophets held judgement and hope together. Sin was not merely rule-breaking; it was faithlessness that disfigured people and society. Judgement named reality. Hope rested not in human improvement alone, but in God's character. God would gather, cleanse, give a new heart, pour out the Spirit and establish peace. Christians receive these promises as converging in Jesus and continuing towards the renewal of all creation.

Wisdom, suffering and faithful presence

Proverbs gathers practical wisdom about speech, work, money, friendship, desire, justice and self-control. Wisdom begins in reverence for God and becomes visible in character. Ecclesiastes tests the achievements by which people try to secure meaning and finds them unable to defeat mortality. Life is gift, not possession.

Job refuses easy explanations for suffering. His friends defend a tidy moral system in which pain must prove guilt. Job protests, questions and remains in relationship with God. God does not give him a small answer to a vast wound, but opens his vision to a creation larger than his

understanding. The book permits lament while resisting the cruelty of turning another person's suffering into a theory.

Esther and Daniel show faithful life under foreign power. Esther risks herself for her people. Daniel and his companions serve skilfully without surrendering worship. God's people learn that holiness can survive without cultural control. Faithfulness may be courageous, patient and wise, trusting that empires are not eternal.

Return and waiting

Persia permitted exiles to return. Ezra taught the law; Nehemiah rebuilt Jerusalem's walls; the temple was restored. There was joy, but restoration remained incomplete. The returned community still struggled with fear, exclusion and unfaithfulness. Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi called the people back to worship, justice and hope.

The Old Testament closes without tying every thread. Israel waits for God's reign, a faithful king, forgiveness, the return of glory, the gift of the Spirit and blessing for the nations. The waiting itself becomes part of faith.

PART THREE:
JESUS CHRIST, THE WORD MADE FLESH

The Gospels: God comes among us

In the fullness of time, Jesus was born to Mary by the Holy Spirit. The eternal Word through whom creation came to be took human flesh without ceasing to be God. The Father sent the Son, not from reluctant distance, but in the one loving purpose of the Trinity. In Jesus, God does not merely send information or assistance. God comes among us.

Mary received the call with courageous trust. Jesus was born in poverty, welcomed by shepherds and sought by strangers. Herod's violence forced the family to flee. From the beginning, divine glory appeared in vulnerability. The child was truly God with us and truly human, entering the danger and dependence of human life.

At Jesus' baptism, the Son stood in the waters, the Spirit descended and the Father named him beloved. The Trinity was not created at that moment; the one eternal God was disclosed in the mission of Jesus. Driven by the Spirit into the wilderness, Jesus resisted the temptations to use power for appetite, spectacle or domination. He would reveal God through faithful love.

The kingdom of God

Jesus announced that God's kingdom had drawn near. He called people to repent, meaning more than feeling sorry: turn, see differently, become available to God's reign. He gathered disciples before they fully understood him. Belonging became the setting in which faith and character could grow.

He healed the sick, delivered the oppressed, forgave sins, welcomed children, ate with outcasts and restored people whom society had reduced to labels. His miracles were signs of creation being put right. They revealed the compassion of the Father, the authority of the Son and the life-giving power of the Spirit.

Jesus taught in stories. A sower scattered seed generously. A father ran to embrace a returning son. A Samaritan became the neighbour whom religious respectability had failed to be. A shepherd searched for one lost sheep. The kingdom was treasure, seed, yeast, feast and homecoming. It began quietly but carried the future of God.

In the Beatitudes Jesus blessed the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers and those who hunger for justice. He did not romanticise suffering. He named where God's future was already breaking into wounded lives. He taught his followers to love enemies, forgive, give without performance, seek first God's kingdom and pray to "Our Father".

Who Jesus is

Jesus asked his disciples who they believed him to be. Peter named him Messiah, but then resisted the path of suffering love. On a mountain Jesus was transfigured, and the Father again called the disciples to listen to the beloved Son. Jesus identified himself with God's wisdom, authority and saving work. He spoke of the Father who sent him and promised the Spirit who would remain with his people.

Christians confess Jesus as fully divine and fully human, not a mixture and not one person divided in two. Because he is truly human, human life is taken into God's healing. Because he is truly God, his self-giving reveals God's own heart. What Jesus does is not separate from who God is.

The cross

Jesus entered Jerusalem as a humble king. He confronted exploitative religion, shared a final meal with his disciples and gave bread and wine as signs of his body and blood. He washed their feet and commanded them to love one another as he had loved them.

Betrayed, abandoned and condemned, Jesus was crucified under Roman authority. The cross exposed human violence, political fear, religious self-protection and the power of sin. Yet Jesus did not cease to love. He forgave, entrusted himself to the Father and entered death.

On the cross, the Son offered himself through the eternal Spirit to the Father. This was not the Father punishing an unwilling Son. Father, Son and Holy Spirit acted in the unity of divine love to confront sin, bear its cost, defeat the powers that enslave, reconcile humanity and open the way home. Christ's sacrifice was once for all, full, perfect and sufficient. God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself.

Resurrection and ascension

On the third day, women came to the tomb and found it empty. Jesus had been raised. Resurrection was not a return to ordinary life or merely the survival of an idea. The crucified Jesus was alive in transformed bodily life. Death had not been avoided but defeated.

Jesus met Mary Magdalene by name, walked with disappointed disciples, ate with his friends and restored Peter after failure. The resurrection began the new creation within the old. It vindicated Jesus and revealed that love, faithfulness and life belong to the world's final truth.

Jesus ascended, not by abandoning creation, but by taking humanity into the life and reign of God. He commissioned his disciples to make disciples of all nations, baptising in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and promised to remain with them.

PART FOUR:
SPIRIT, CHURCH AND NEW CREATION

Acts: a people filled with the Spirit

At Pentecost the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples like wind and fire. They spoke so that people of many nations could understand. Babel's fragmentation began to be answered, not by erasing difference, but by creating communion across it. The Church was born as a worshipping, learning, sharing and witnessing community.

Peter proclaimed the risen Jesus. The apostles healed, taught and faced opposition. Stephen was killed while praying for his enemies. Philip carried the Gospel beyond expected boundaries. Peter learned through Cornelius that God showed no partiality. The Spirit repeatedly moved ahead of the Church, requiring it to recognise those whom God had already welcomed.

Saul, a persecutor, encountered Jesus and became Paul. He travelled across the Roman world announcing that in Christ God was fulfilling Israel's promise for the nations. Communities formed around Scripture, baptism, the Lord's Supper, prayer, mutual care and mission. Conflict arose, including the question of whether Gentiles must become culturally Jewish. The Church discerned together that salvation was grace, not ethnic achievement.

Acts ends with Paul in Rome, restricted yet still proclaiming the kingdom. The story remains open because the Spirit's mission continues through ordinary, imperfect people.

Paul's letters: grace and a new humanity

Paul taught that all have sinned and cannot rescue themselves through achievement. God justifies by grace through faith: we are welcomed because of Christ and enabled by the Spirit to trust him. Grace is not divine indulgence. It unites us with Christ and begins the transformation of life.

Baptism joins believers to Christ's death and resurrection. In the Eucharist the Church receives Christ's gift and becomes what it receives: one body. The Church is not a club for the like-minded but a reconciled people in whom old divisions lose their power to determine belonging. Gifts differ, yet all come from the one Spirit for the good of all.

Christian freedom is not permission to be ruled by desire. It is freedom for love. The Spirit grows fruit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Holiness is participation in the life of Christ, expressed in bodies, relationships, money, speech, work, forgiveness and care for the weak.

Paul's highest vision is love: patient and kind, rejoicing in truth, enduring and hoping. Knowledge, gifts and religious performance without love become noise. Faith, hope and love remain, and the greatest is love because God is love.

The other letters: mature faithfulness

Hebrews presents Jesus as the faithful high priest who shares human weakness and offers the decisive sacrifice. Christians may draw near with confidence, persevere in hope and gather for mutual encouragement. James insists that faith without embodied action is dead. Care for the poor, control of speech and patient endurance reveal living faith.

Peter addresses communities under pressure, calling them to holy hope and Christlike witness. John returns repeatedly to the centre: God is love; Jesus Christ has come in the flesh; those who love God must love one another. Truth and love cannot be separated. Jude urges the Church to contend for faith without surrendering to corruption.

These letters do not imagine instant maturity. They form communities through teaching, correction, encouragement and practice. The Christian life is received as gift and learned as a way.

Revelation: the Lamb and the world made new

Revelation was written to churches living under imperial pressure. Its visions unveil the spiritual truth beneath appearances. Rome looked invincible, but no empire is ultimate. At the centre of heaven's worship stands a Lamb who was slain. God's victory bears the character of Jesus: faithful witness, sacrificial love and resurrection life.

Evil is judged, not because God delights in destruction, but because love opposes everything that devours creation. Babylon, the symbol of exploitative power, falls. The martyrs are remembered. The accuser is overcome. The final victory belongs to God and to the Lamb.

Then John sees a new heaven and a new earth. The holy city descends; humanity does not escape creation for a distant spiritual realm. God makes a home among mortals. Death, mourning and pain pass away. The river of life flows, the tree bears fruit for every season, and its leaves are for the healing of the nations.

The Bible ends where it began, with God, humanity and creation together, but now the garden has become a city and the wound has been healed. The Father's purpose is fulfilled through the Son in the power of the Spirit. Creation is not discarded but restored. Human vocation is not erased but completed. God is all in all.

The story and our place within it

The Bible does not invite us merely to admire a story from a distance. It calls us to enter it. In baptism we are joined to Christ and welcomed into his people. In Scripture and prayer we learn to recognise God's voice. In the Eucharist we receive the life of Christ and are formed as his body. In daily vocation we share in God's care for the world.

The Creeds give the story its Christian shape: the Father creates; the eternal Son becomes flesh, dies, rises and will come again; and the Holy Spirit gives life and gathers the Church. The Commandments train freedom towards love of God and neighbour. The Beatitudes reveal the character of Christ and his kingdom. The Lord's Prayer teaches desire to face in the right direction: towards the Father's name, kingdom, provision, forgiveness, deliverance and glory.

Christianity is therefore more than agreeing with religious ideas. It is participation in the life of the Triune God through union with Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit. It is a shared pilgrimage on the Way: grace comes first, belonging becomes a place of formation, practices shape character, gifts become service, and every vocation may become a way of loving God and neighbour.

The final word is not human failure, institutional survival, or even death. The final word is the promise of the One seated upon the throne: "See, I am making all things new." The invitation is to trust that promise, receive the life of Christ, and take our place within God's story.

APPENDIX:
THE BOOKS CALLED APOCRYPHA

The Church of England receives the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments as Holy Scripture. Alongside them, Article VI of the Thirty-Nine Articles names a particular group of other books which the Church reads "for example of life and instruction of manners", while not using them to establish doctrine. This appendix includes only those books named there.

These writings are therefore not a second Bible, nor are they simply discarded. Anglican Christianity gives them a real but carefully distinguished place. They may illuminate the biblical story, nourish wisdom and prayer, and help us understand the world in which hope for God's deliverance was being formed. Holy Scripture remains the measure by which Christian doctrine is received and tested.

How do Anglicans receive these books?

For an Anglican newcomer, the distinction is straightforward. These books may be read, prayed with and learnt from. They belong to the inherited reading life of the Church and can deepen our understanding of virtue, suffering, wisdom, repentance and the world surrounding the New Testament. But doctrine is not established from them independently of the canonical Scriptures.

The New Testament needs no corresponding appendix. Article VI concludes by receiving all the books of the New Testament commonly received as canonical. The story therefore moves from these additional Old Testament writings into Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, where Christians confess that the hope of Israel meets its centre in Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of the Father, made known in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Third Book of Esdras

Often called 1 Esdras in modern collections, this retells events surrounding the return from exile, the rebuilding of the temple and the work associated with Ezra. It overlaps substantially with material found in

Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah, while arranging and expanding parts of that story. Its memorable contest before King Darius praises truth above wine, royal power and women, declaring the strength of truth over all.

The Fourth Book of Esdras

Often called 2 Esdras, this is a work of visions and searching questions. It wrestles with evil, suffering, judgement, the fate of God's people and the world to come. Rather than offering easy answers, it gives voice to bewilderment before God and to hope that present injustice is not the final reality.

The Book of Tobias

Usually called Tobit, this tells a family story shaped by faithfulness, prayer, generosity, marriage and healing. Tobias journeys with a companion who is eventually revealed as the angel Raphael. The story portrays God's providence working through ordinary relationships, courage and acts of mercy.

The Book of Judith

Judith is the story of a faithful and courageous widow who acts when her people are threatened by an invading army. Through wisdom, resolve and daring she delivers her community. The book celebrates trust in God and resistance to oppressive power.

The Rest of the Book of Esther

These additions expand the familiar story of Esther with prayers, dreams and explicit references to God. They make visible the prayerful and theological dimension that remains largely implicit in the Hebrew form of Esther.

The Book of Wisdom

Usually known as the Wisdom of Solomon, this reflects on wisdom, righteousness, idolatry, mortality and the hope of the righteous. Divine Wisdom is presented as coming from God and leading human beings towards holiness. Christians have often heard in its language resonances with the New Testament's proclamation of Christ as the wisdom and power of God, while recognising that the book itself belongs to the Jewish wisdom tradition.

Jesus the Son of Sirach

Also called Ecclesiasticus or Sirach, this is a substantial collection of practical wisdom. It speaks about friendship, family, speech, work, wealth, worship, leadership, humility and virtue. Wisdom is not treated as abstract knowledge but as a way of living faithfully before God.

Baruch the Prophet

Baruch speaks from the experience of exile. It brings together confession of sin, reflection on wisdom, lament and hope. Israel is called to remember whose wisdom truly gives life and to trust that displacement and sorrow will not have the last word.

The Song of the Three Children

Placed within the story of the fiery furnace in Daniel, this includes prayer in the midst of danger and a great song calling the whole creation to bless the Lord. Its language remains especially familiar to Anglicans through the canticle Benedicite, omnia opera.

The Story of Susanna

Susanna tells of a woman falsely accused by powerful men after resisting their abuse. Daniel exposes the false testimony and she is vindicated. The story is concerned with truth, justice, corrupt authority and the vindication of the innocent.

Of Bel and the Dragon

These stories associated with Daniel expose the emptiness of idolatry. Daniel demonstrates that supposedly living gods are powerless human constructions. The stories use wit and drama to insist that worship belongs to the living God rather than to objects sustained by deception.

The Prayer of Manasses

A short prayer of repentance traditionally associated with King Manasseh. It moves through confession towards trust in God's mercy. Its importance lies less in narrative than in giving words to the return of a sinner who knows that forgiveness depends upon the compassion of God.

The First Book of Maccabees

First Maccabees tells of Jewish resistance to persecution under the Seleucid rulers, the revolt led by Mattathias and his sons, and the recovery and rededication of the temple. It is a story of identity, courage, political struggle and faithfulness under pressure. The rededication of the temple stands behind the Jewish festival of Hanukkah.

The Second Book of Maccabees

Second Maccabees is not simply a continuation of the first book. It recounts part of the same period with a stronger theological emphasis. Stories of persecution and martyrdom explore fidelity to God, prayer, judgement and hope beyond death, including a striking confidence in resurrection.