

The Bible – The Biography – by Karen Armstrong.
Atlantic Books 2007.

The Bible is a further volume in Atlantic Books excellent series of Books that Shook the World. It is a magisterial, beautifully written survey of the Hebrew and Christian scriptures delivered with the skill, attention to detail and meticulous research that have become Karen Armstrong's hallmarks.

The Bible is divided into 8 chapters, Torah, Scripture, Gospel, Midrash, Charity, Lectio Divina, Sola Scriptura, and Modernity with an introduction and an epilogue: Armstrong describes the origins of the books of both testaments, the process of canonisation, and, most interestingly, the ways in which these texts began to be interpreted and Jewish and Christian interpreters were influenced by each other, both consciously and unconsciously. She also details the process, with surprisingly early origins, of higher biblical criticism, and the ways in which it has opened some minds to the human rather than divine origins of key biblical texts.

The Bible is a perfect introduction to the Hebrew and Christian testaments for those who know nothing about them, for those who know a little but want to raise their knowledge to a higher level, and an excellent source text for those wishing to teach congregants of either faith.

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh