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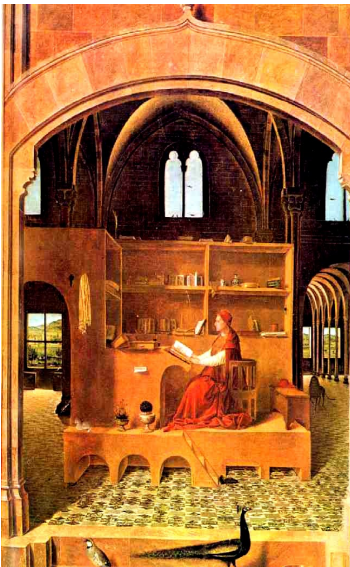
November – December
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Veritas Scripturae

The Bulletin of the St. Jerome Biblical Guild

A publication that focuses upon the doctrines
of Biblical inspiration and inerrancy —
via Tradition and the Magisterium of the Catholic Church

“Sanctify them in the truth; Thy word is truth” (Jn 17:17)



From the Director... The Book of Books

Fr. L. Fillion was a consultor to the pre-reconstituted Pontifical Biblical Commission. His illuminating work from 1926, *The Study of the Bible*, is filled with wisdom. The late Sulpician speaks to us today.

Fr. Fillion discusses the right disposition for interacting with Holy Writ: “We ought to read the Bible in the spirit in which it was written. What is this spirit? It is that of the three divine Persons, especially the Third Person of the Holy Trinity, to whom the inspiration of the Scriptures is ascribed. The Bible as a whole and in all its parts is the word of God. We must never for an instant lose sight of this fact” (p. 104). The proper approach to Scripture requires a sense of God’s awe and majesty. Such contact is patently different from one’s approach to a secular work such as the *Oxford English Dictionary*. A parallel: one’s

visit to Chartres Cathedral is not the same as one’s visit to the local supermarket. We must distinguish the sacred from the profane.

On page 105, the Sulpician continues on the handling of the Bible: “When we prepare to read it, let us free our minds from all vain and purely natural curiosity. Let us not imitate rationalists and unbelievers, the indifferent and the ignorant who treat the Scriptures as ordinary books, merely looking in them for facts, data on ancient history, or Oriental archaeology; who peruse them only for the comparative study of religions and for similar information. Bossuet is not too severe when he characterizes such a use of the Bible as a profanation. We who believe in the divine origin of the Bible, must never forget its sacred character, no matter what be the nature of our studies.

The scientific study of the Bible can by no means dispense us from this religious attitude of mind.” Such words are sound advice for the faithful, and indirectly aimed at the critics.

Fr. Fillion, on page 107, exhorts us: “Let us ask for light also each time we prepare ourselves for the reading of Scripture, so that its meaning may be plain to us for the benefit of our own soul and that of others. When you read your mother’s letters you do it with a tender and filial love. When you read the Bible do so in the same manner. You are reading a message from a great and loving God.” Holy Scripture, in view of Tradition and the Magisterium, remains the Book of Books. It is in a class by itself.

Godspeed,
Salvatore J. Ciresi

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St. Jerome (343-420) says:

“Read assiduously and learn as much as you can. Let sleep find you holding your Bible, and when your head nods let it be resting on the sacred page” (*Letter* 22.17.2; A.D. 384).

“Constantly read the Bible; in fact, have it always in your hands. Learn what you have got to teach” (*Letter* 52.7.1; A.D. 394).

“Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ” (*Commentary on Isaiah* bk. 18 prologue; A.D. 408-410).

“Love the Bible and wisdom will love you...” (*Letter* 130.20; A.D. 414).

Scripture Memorization & Exegesis: Romans 15:4

“For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope” (Rom 15:4).

Commentators frequently outline the book of Romans in a general way: chapters 1-11 is ‘dogmatic,’ 12 to part of 15 is ‘moral,’ and the remainder of 15 to 16 is an ‘epilogue.’ This threefold structure is a good complement to the more specific outlines in scholarly commentaries. Keeping the general outline in view, St. Paul uses the ‘moral’ section of Romans to emphasize the role of Scripture for the Christian life. The Apostle reveals several notable points.

God’s written word has a precise goal: it was composed for our “instruction” (*didaskalian*). We have seen this word in our earlier analysis of 2 Timothy

3:16-17, where the term is rendered “teaching.” Romans 15:4, then, indicates the doctrinal and catechetical worth of “the Scriptures” (*tōn graphōn*).

True, St. Paul probably has the Old Testament in mind. A verse earlier, Romans 15:3, he cites Psalm 69:9 as a prophetic reference to the sufferings to be endured by Christ. This Pauline pedagogical method of hearkening back to Old Testament events, in order to teach New Testament believers, is found also in 1 Corinthians 10:1-12. Thus, Msgr. P. Boylan can state plainly: “The purpose of the Old Testament writings is, then, to instruct the faithful of the New Dispensation” (*St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans*, p. 225). The conclusion is inescapable: if the Old Testament is valuable for the disciple of the Master, then how much more the New?

Let us complete our exegesis. Two graces derived from an instruction in Holy Scripture, “encouragement” (*paraklēseōs*) and “hope” (*elpida*), are linked together. Bernardine à Piconio (d. 1709), the notable Capuchin priest and exegete, says of this schooling: “To urge us to patience, by the example of Christ and the Saints, and the consideration of the motives which animated them in the endurance of suffering; and for our consolation, by bringing constantly and powerfully before us the hope of eternal life. Patience, consolation, hope, are the fruits of study of the sacred Scriptures” (*An Exposition of the Epistles of St. Paul I:174*).

There may be periods when Bible study seems to be a chore. Those very times are when we most need to read and meditate on God’s word; even if only a single verse.



Inerrancy Basics: Sources used by the Biblical Authors

The Magisterium of the Catholic Church acknowledges both oral and written sources were used for the composition of Sacred Scripture. The Pontifical Biblical Commission’s 1906 response, *On the Mosaic Authorship of the Pentateuch*, mentions this fact. Still, we must avoid any confusion on this matter.

Fr. John Laux’s *Introduction to the Bible*, a timeless reprint from TAN Books, addresses this issue with clarity on p. 30 (italics in original): “The striking similarities between certain Old Testament narratives and a number of Babylonian stories — the Creation, the Fall, the Deluge, etc., have given rise to long and bitter controversies. Special emphasis is laid by the opponents of Revelation and Inspiration on the many resemblances between the Code of Hammurabi, a contemporary of Abra-

ham, and the Mosaic Law. These facts would militate against the authority of the Bible only if we had to hold that the entire text of the Bible was revealed or dictated by God. But Revelation is not the same as Inspiration. We know from the Bible itself that the sacred writers made use of both oral and written sources. By His special guidance God enabled them to use these sources without error. Hence if the sacred writer did draw on the Babylonian writings for their knowledge, God enlightened them to select only what was true. As a matter of fact the Babylonian narratives are full of foolish and immoral polytheistic fables, whereas the Bible is strictly monotheistic and inculcates doctrines of the highest ethical value. However, it is more probable that the Babylonian as well as

the Biblical accounts are derived from a common source, viz., primitive tradition — preserved intact in the Bible, and debased and distorted in the Babylonian documents.”

Following Laux and the Church, we may say the Biblical authors utilized both oral traditions and written documents. In dealing with the Old Testament, Laux states something easy to overlook: Tradition precedes Scripture. This means the Biblical events, in time, occurred before the manual composition of the Scriptural texts. This is also the case with the New Testament; consult Luke 1:1-4.

A final point. Because of the charism of inspiration (called “special guidance” by Laux), errant sources can never be a detriment to inerrant Scripture.

“We know from the Bible itself that the sacred writers made use of both oral and written sources. By His special guidance God enabled them to use these sources without error.”

Fr. J. Laux

The Church Fathers & Scripture: Origen and Gospel Authorship

We revisit the Patristic testimony to Gospel authorship. Following St. Irenaeus, St. Papias, *The Muratorian Fragment*, and Tertullian, we now come to Origen (A.D. 185-254).

Like Tertullian, Origen is a Church Father who is not free from controversy. His orthodoxy is a problem in certain areas, but his overall contribution (like Tertullian) to Catholic theology will always be appreciated to some degree. Some call Origen one of the greatest scholars of Christian antiquity. He has nearly 2,000 works credited to his name per St. Jerome. Origen was a successor to St. Clement of Alexandria; the headmaster of the famed 'Catechetical School' of Alexandria in Egypt.

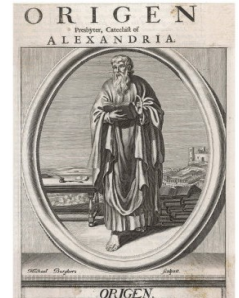
Origen's *Commentary on Matthew* 1 (c. A.D. 244), preserved in Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical*

History 6.25.4-6 from the Fourth Century, says: "As to the four Gospels, which alone are indisputable in the Church of God under heaven, I learned from tradition that the first to have been written was that of Matthew, who was formerly a tax-collector, but later an Apostle of Jesus Christ. It was prepared for those who were converted from Judaism to the faith, and was written in Hebrew letters. The second was that of Mark, who composed it under Peter's guidance.... The third, the Gospel which was praised by Paul, was that of Luke, written for Gentile converts. Last of all, there is that of John."

This testimony meshes with our knowledge of the Evangelists taken from the Biblical records. "Matthew, who was formerly a tax collector" coin-

cides with Matthew 9:9; Mark 2:14; and Luke 5:27. "Mark," who penned a Gospel account "under Peter's guidance," fits with 1 Peter 5:13. "Luke" is connected with "Paul" as discovered in Acts 16:10; 20:5-6; 27:1; 28:16; Colossians 4:14; 2 Timothy 4:11; and Philemon 24. "John" is mentioned in the Apostolic rolls from Matthew 10:1-4; Mark 3:13-19; Luke 6:12-16; and Acts 1:12-13.

Origen asserts the Matthean Gospel is the earliest, and put into "Hebrew letters." This testimony to a Hebrew text we have seen in St. Irenaeus (*Against Heresies* 3.1.1) and St. Papias (*Explanation of the Sayings of the Lord*). This matter is addressed in the 1911 response from the Pontifical Biblical Commission. Lastly, note Origen's clear endorsement of "tradition."



St. Thomas Aquinas & Revelation: The Harmony of Faith and Reason

The Angelic Doctor discusses the harmony between faith and reason in the *Summa Contra Gentiles* I, 7. His words are applicable to Biblical inerrancy, which holds the non-contradiction between the sciences and Scripture.

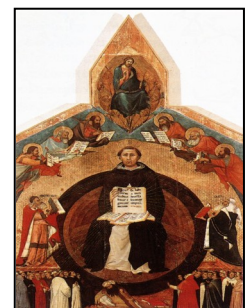
St. Thomas tells us: "[1] Now, although the truth of the Christian faith which we have discussed surpasses the capacity of the reason, nevertheless that truth that the human reason is naturally endowed to know cannot be opposed to the truth of the Christian faith. For that with which the human reason is naturally endowed is clearly most true; so much so, that it is impossible for us to think of such truths as false. Nor is it permissible to believe as false that which we hold by faith, since this is confirmed in a way that is so clearly divine.

Since, therefore, only the false is opposed to the true, as is clearly evident from an examination of their definitions, it is impossible that the truth of faith should be opposed to those principles that the human reason knows naturally. [2] Furthermore, that which is introduced into the soul of the student by the teacher is contained in the knowledge of the teacher — unless his teaching is fictitious, which it is improper to say of God. Now, the knowledge of the principles that are known to us naturally has been implanted in us by God; for God is the Author of our nature. These principles, therefore, are also contained by the divine Wisdom. Hence, whatever is opposed to them is opposed to the divine Wisdom, and, therefore, cannot come from God. That which we hold by faith as

divinely revealed, therefore, cannot be contrary to our natural knowledge" (I, 7, 1-2).

Aquinas next appeals to Scripture and Tradition: "[5] Therefore, the Apostle says: 'The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart. This is the word of faith, which we preach' (Rom. 10:8). But because it overcomes reason, there are some who think that it is opposed to it: which is impossible. [6] The authority of St. Augustine also agrees with this. He writes as follows: 'That which truth will reveal cannot in any way be opposed to the sacred books of the Old and the New Testament' [*De genesi ad litteram* II, 18]" (I, 7, 5-6).

Such Thomistic themes resurface in Vatican I's *Dei Filius* 4 (1870), and Pope John Paul II's *Fides et Ratio* 43 (1998).



The Magisterium Speaks: St. Pius X & Chronological Snobbery

Pope St. Pius X (r. 1903-14) is the last canonized Pontiff. Pius speaks directly to the Modernists in 1907's *Pascendi Domenici Gregis* (On the Doctrines of the Modernists) 34: "To hear them descant of their works on the Sacred Books, in which they have been able to discover so much that is defective, one would imagine that before them nobody ever even turned over the pages of Scripture. The truth is that a whole multitude of Doctors, far superior to them in genius, in erudition, in sanctity, have sifted the Sacred Books in every way, and so far from finding in them anything blameworthy have thanked God more and more heartily the more deeply they have gone into them, for His divine bounty in having vouchsafed to speak thus to men."

St. Pius X confronts a problem

still with us over a century later: chronological snobbery. This erroneous belief, in essence, holds modern man to be far more intellectually advanced and superior than past generations.

No doubt, there are many advantages for scholarship in the current epoch that were unavailable to past ages. Consider computer technology that makes Biblical research easier, or the accessibility of texts via the 'soft-cover' book, or even the inter-library loan system. In this light, today's Catholic has certain benefits unknown to the Apostles, the Church Fathers, the Scholastics, etc. This is indisputable, and we who grumble about modern society should recall such benefits now and again.

But such advantages are no guarantee that today's Chris-

tian automatically has a greater love for Jesus Christ, or a firmer conviction of the contents of the Bible, or a higher fidelity to the teachings of the Catholic Church. On the contrary, some modern scholars who trumpet the alleged ignorance of past generations are the very scholars who 'nuance' to near oblivion the words and deeds of the Savior, or turn a skeptical eye to anything supernatural in Scripture, or cast doubts upon the 'hard' doctrines proposed by the Magisterium.

G. K. Chesterton's words on literature apply: "real development is not leaving things behind, as on a road, but drawing life from them, as from a root" (*The Victorian Age in Literature*, p. 12). For this reason, Pius hearkens back to the ancient treasure of the "multitude of Doctors."



The Pontifical Biblical Commission: The Response of 1906, Part II

We continue to examine the first of the four questions that entail *On the Mosaic Authorship of the Pentateuch*. This first question encompasses four general points to consider for authenticity (i.e., authorship). The first point was the evidences in both Testaments. We move to the second and third points: "the persistent agreement of the Jewish people" and "constant tradition of the Church." Consider some specific material to fill in the two general points above.

The Commission states both Jews and Christians testify to Mosaic Authorship. There is "persistent agreement" in Jewish circles; three examples will suffice. The Talmud's *Baba Bathra* 14b (c. 200 B.C.), and Mishnah's *Pirque Aboth* 1.1 (c. 100 B.C.), offer evidence of Moses as author. Josephus

(d. c. A.D. 100), speaking of the Old Testament books in *Against Apion* 1.8.39, insists that "five belong to Moses."

The "constant tradition of the Church" is just as clear. St. Melito of Sardes (d. A.D. 190), in a fragment in Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* 4.26.14, mentions "Five books of Moses, Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Leviticus, Deuteronomy." St. Hilary of Poitiers (d. A.D. 368), in *Commentaries on the Psalms* prol. 15, says "of Moses there be five books." St. Cyril of Jerusalem (d. A.D. 386), in *Catechetical Lectures* 4.34, speaks "Of the Law, the first five are the books of Moses: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy." St. Jerome (d. A.D. 420), in *The Galeatic or Helmeted Prologue*, attests to "the five books of Moses." St.

Augustine (d. A.D. 430), in *Epistle* 54.1.1, writes of "the five books of Moses."

This same acknowledgment of Mosaic authorship is discovered when Popes or Councils discuss the list of the canon. Pope St. Innocent I, in *Consulenti Tibi* (A.D. 405), states "of Moses five books, that is, of Genesis, of Exodus, of Leviticus, of Numbers, of Deuteronomy." The Council of Trent, in its *Decree Concerning the Canonical Scriptures* (1546), lists the "five books of Moses, namely, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy." The Magisterial texts above, although not teaching authorship *de fide*, deserve consideration nonetheless.

The Jewish and Catholic witnesses merit attention. Next issue covers the fourth general point: internal arguments.



Addressing Bible Difficulties: New Testament Replication, Part IV

We continue to examine the reconstruction of the New Testament. A pertinent issue is the time interval between autographs (i.e., originals) and their copies (i.e., apographs). Compare the Biblical manuscripts with the secular Latin and Greek works of antiquity. Fr. A. Alexander's *College Apologetics* (p. 54-55), a text cited last issue, offers a handy chart which shows the time gap between the classical authors and the known copies of their works. A similar chart is given by two Evangelical scholars, N. Geisler and W. Nix, in *A General Introduction to the Bible* (p. 408).

Consider two classical Latin authors. Pliny the Younger died circa A.D. 115; the earliest copies of his *Letters* date to the A.D. 900s. This is at least 785 years from original to

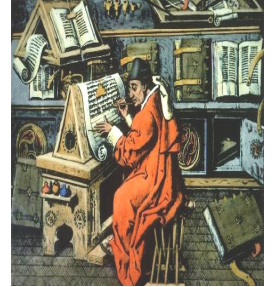
copy. Julius Caesar died 44 B.C.; the earliest copy of his *Gallic Wars* is dated A.D. 800s-900s. This is at least circa 850 years from original to copy.

Look at two classical Greek authors. Herodotus died 425 B.C.; the earliest copies of his *History* date to the A.D. 900s. This is at least 1,325 years from original to copy. Thucydides died circa 395 B.C.; the earliest copies of his *History of the Peloponnesian War* date to the A.D. 1000s. This is at least circa 1,400 years from original to copy.

Compare such intervals to the New Testament. For the sake of convenience, assume a flat date of A.D. 100 as the time of composition for all the books of the New Testament. This indicates a gap of about a generation (40 yrs.), or a few

decades added to a generation in places, from the very occurrence of the New Testament events to their actual original recording (i.e., autograph). There is about a century or two that separates the recording from the subsequent copies. In the case with some early fragments, scholars speculate decades vice centuries. In either situation (event to record, or record to copy), there is a far shorter interval of time than previously examined in the profane writings from antiquity.

A final consideration: the number of manuscripts. Caesar's *Gallic Wars* has 10 copies; Herodotus' *History* has 8. The New Testament, on the other hand, has over 5,200 Greek manuscripts for analysis. No other piece of ancient literature has as much attestation.



Featured Web Site: Scripture Catholic

'Scripture Catholic' is the web site of Mr. John Salza. His home page gives its purpose: "ScriptureCatholic.com provides over 2,000 Scripture citations from the Old and New Testament that explain and defend the teachings of the Catholic Church. This site also provides hundreds of excerpts from the writings of the early Church Fathers (1st through 8th centuries). These writings explain the Fathers' interpretation of Scripture and demonstrate that the early Church was unequivocally Catholic. Through the study of Scripture and the Church Fathers, we see that, not only is the Catholic faith biblical, Catholicism is Bible Christianity *par excellence*" (italics in original).

This focus on Apologetics naturally leads to an ample

use of the Bible. Coupled with Patrology, the Scriptures are thus read in light of Tradition with the aid of the web site. Such a reading, when sheltered under the mantle of the Magisterium, is truly Catholic.

Some of the main topical pages on 'Scripture Catholic' are "The Church," "The Bible," "The Sacraments," "The Virgin Mary," "The Saints," "Justification," "Salvation," "Eschatology," "The Trinity," "Catholic Other," and "Science." Each of the topics offer multiple sections, with supporting citations from the Church Fathers. Look at "The Church" as an example. Under this heading one has "The Biblical Church," "Primacy of Peter," and "Apostolic Succession" as sub-headings. Clicking on a sub-heading, such as "The Biblical Church," will pull up a plethora

of Scripture citations with a brief explanation of their meaning, under titles such as "Peter is the Rock on Which the Church is Built" and "The Church is Hierarchical." This concordance-style layout is user friendly and convenient. Many other titles are offered for perusal.

There is more valuable info on the site. The toolbar leads to links such as "Catholic Q&A" and "John's Radio Shows." Salza has authored several books, procurable via links to the publisher. Near the bottom of the site, one finds additional useful links: "Sites of Interest" and "Resources."

'Scripture Catholic' has a fine appearance, and navigation is easy. The site is a worthy tool for Biblical studies.

www.ScriptureCatholic.com



Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam

J. M. J.

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind" (Mt 22:37).

"Jesus said to them, 'Is not this why you are wrong, that you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God?'" (Mk 12:24).

"And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He [Christ] interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself" (Lk 24:27).

"Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name" (Jn 20:30-31).

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The St. Jerome Biblical Guild is an educational apostolate that explains and defends Sacred Scripture; via Tradition and the Magisterium of the Catholic Church. The apostolate takes its name from St. Jerome, "The Father of Biblical Studies," and labors by God's grace to accomplish the following: (1) explain the various Bible study tools and academic resources; for individual research or parish groups, (2) present studies from Scripture on specific books such as the Gospel of St. Luke, or general themes such as the Biblical roots of home-schooling, (3) promote the classic exegetical methods and insights found within Tradition; with attention to the Church Fathers and St. Thomas Aquinas, and (4) support the Magisterial doctrines of Biblical inspiration and inerrancy; the latter the main focus of the apostolate. The Guild places itself under the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Immaculate Heart of Mary. As well, the Guild seeks the intercession of St. Jean-Marie Vianney and St. Thérèse of Lisieux for favors and protection. In all things, the apostolate seeks the greater glory of God (cf. 1 Chr 28:9; Ps 37:5; Jer 9:23-24; Jn 15:5; Col 3:17; Jas 4:13-15).

+ + +

Mr. Salvatore J. Ciresi, founder and director of the St. Jerome Biblical Guild, served two tours in the U.S. Marine Corps and now works in the aviation sector. He earned his M.A. in Theological Studies, with a Scripture concentration, from the Notre Dame Graduate School of Christendom College, where he serves on the adjunct faculty. His ecclesiastical activities include past co-host of Cross Talk, a Catholic radio program in VA; a contributor on behalf of the Arlington Diocese to the 2005 revision to the *National Directory for Catechesis*; a former board member for a private Catholic school; a past columnist for the *Arlington Catholic Herald*; and a contributor to *The Latin Mass: The Journal of Catholic Culture and Tradition*. Mr. Ciresi resides with his wife and children in VA.



Book Recommendation:

Rose Book of Bible Charts, Maps, and Time Lines

A key step toward comprehending God's word is to acquire a Bible atlas. A first rate text is the *Rose Book of Bible Charts, Maps, and Time Lines* (Torrance: Rose Publishing, 2005) 192 pp., \$30.

The opening page displays a quality fold out "Bible Time Line" on one side, and "The Tabernacle" in Exodus on the other. The time line meshes 'Bible History' with 'World History' and 'Middle East History': a good way to see God's providence. Then comes the main sections of the atlas; here are some salient features.

"General Bible Charts" includes a 'Bible Overview-Old Testament,' and a 'Bible Overview-New Testament,' pp. 7-16, which place Sacred History in proper perspective. 'Table of Biblical Weights and Measures,' pp. 32-33, shows the differences in daily living between the Biblical world and ours.

"Old Testament Charts" contains several gems. A 'Family Tree of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob' on p. 53 offers much clarity to the key personages in Genesis. 'Feasts & Holidays of the Bible' on pp. 58-62 untangles the complex liturgical cycle in the Old Testament. 'Kings and Prophets' on pp. 64-65 presents a snap shot of the United and Divided Kingdoms, with the applicable Prophets to each domain. 'Archaeology and the Bible-Old Testament' on pp. 73-78 has an array of fascinating pictures and facts.

"New Testament Charts" offers 'The Genealogy of Jesus Christ' on p. 80, which graphs the relationship between Matthew 1:1-17 and Luke 3:23-38. 'Miracles of Jesus' on p. 88 and 'Parables of Jesus' on p. 89 shed light on the Gospels. 'Archaeology and the Bible-

New Testament' on pp. 113-118 is as helpful as its earlier counterpart.

"Maps" has 'The Holy Land: Then and Now' on pp. 128-129 and 'Where Jesus Walked: Then and Now' on pp. 134-135; both clarify the sites of Divine Revelation. 'Paul's Journeys,' pp. 136-140, facilitates an orderly reading of Acts.

"Illustrations and Diagrams" offers many treasures. Top notch drawings are found for 'Noah's Ark' (142-3), 'Solomon's Temple' (156-8), and 'Herod's Temple' (160-3).

Additional excellent features are contained in the *Rose Book of Bible Charts, Maps, and Time Lines*. Our separated brethren publish this atlas; Catholic scrutiny is needed in places. Nonetheless, the book is superb.

