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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... An Approach for Research

The late Msgr. Joseph Clifford Fenton, a first class theologian of the last century, once penned the following insights: “The efforts of each man or group of men are sharply limited. The effective work of one defender of Christ may reach a few listeners for a short time. Others will come and these in turn will go. But while men live upon this earth there is no more precious and sacred privilege than that of standing forth and speaking for Christ” (*We Stand with Christ*, pp. ix-x). Fenton’s observations are from a book on Apologetics. But his words are also applicable for the defense of Biblical inspiration and inerrancy. Standing forth and speaking for Christ, it may be said, means standing forth and speaking in defense of the Scriptures.

How does one intellectually prepare for this endeavor? Here is a suggested approach for research.

Firstly, one may begin with the possibility and necessity of revelation. Then, grasp the distinction, and complementary relationship, between natural revelation (or natural theology) and supernatural revelation.

Secondly, proceed to the three key Biblical pericopes for all students of God’s Word: 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21; and John 10:22-39. Read the great commentators on these verses, found within Tradition. As well, survey the Old Testament passages that reveal God has spoken to man (e.g., “The word of the Lord came to me saying...”).

Thirdly, consult the classic dogmatic tomes that explain and defend the teachings of inspiration and inerrancy. St. Thomas Aquinas’ *Summa Theologiae* II-II, qq. 171-178, is indispensable reading.

Fourthly, undergird the steps above with the Magisterial pronouncements on Divine Revelation. The Church has mercifully given us directions for handling the Sacred Page.

Such research shouldn’t be confined to academia. The doctrines of inspiration and inerrancy could be taught (at the appropriate level) to one’s children. As well, priests and bishops could preach about the doctrines from their pulpits.

Godspeed, Salvatore J. Ciresi

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St. Jerome (A.D. 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: Galatians 2:20

"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal 2:20).

The book of Galatians may be best known, with the book of Romans, for a focus upon the doctrine of justification. This multifaceted theme stands out in Galatians 2:16, 17, 21; 3:8, 11, 24; and 5:4 (cf. Rom 2:13; 3:20, 24, 26, 28, 30; 4:2, 5, 25; 5:1, 9, 16; 8:30, 33; 10:4, 10)

But such passages are not at the expense of the interior life. The practical is never really separated from the doctrinal; the latter must be at the root of all Christian sanctity. This fact is borne out by the numerous Galatian verses that address the interior life (3:2-5; 4:4-7; 5:1-6, 13-25; 6:1-5, 7-10, 14-16). Consider Galatians 2:20.

St. Paul always seems to have the cross in view while he writes. The rich expression "crucified with Christ" (*Christō synestaurōmai*) fits in with other phrases in Galatians that convey the Suffering Servant motif. The Apostle mentions "the stumbling block of the cross" (5:11) with respect to his opponents, as well as their fear of being "persecuted for the cross" (6:12). In turn, St. Paul reveals his ardent desire to "glory" in the cross (6:14). This crucifixion is mentioned as a public act (3:1), with an efficaciousness that will aid in one's dying to sin (5:24).

The Pauline emphasis on the cross goes beyond Galatians. For him, the cross reconciles us to God (Eph 2:16), points to Christ's humility (Phil 2:8), and is an instrument of peace (Col 1:20). Per the Apostle, the Christian benefits because of the Son's salvific act of death.

Now, back to Galatians 2:20. St. Paul mystically connects the work at Calvary with the believer; a supernatural alliance, by grace, between God and man. Fr. Cornelius a Lapide comments about this union: "It is Christ, then, that teaches, preaches, prays, works, suffers in me, says S. Paul, so much so that I seem to be changed into Christ and Christ into me" (*Commentary on Galatians*, p. 252). This is "Good News."

Last point: the Apostle reveals the Savior "loved me and gave Himself for me." This was true for St. Paul and it is true for us in our day. God is transcendent, distinct from His creation and creatures. But God is also immanent; He really cares for us as individuals. So much so, that the Son went to Calvary to atone for our sins. This is love and mercy Incarnate, as in John 3:16-17.



Inerrancy Basics: Rules for Hermeneutics

Biblical hermeneutics, more generally known as Biblical interpretation, is considered a science. Some even call hermeneutics an art. The basics are discussed in Fr. William Heidt's *Old Testament Reading Guide 31: Inspiration, Canonicity, Texts, Versions, Hermeneutics — A General Introduction to Sacred Scripture*, pp. 87-103. Msgr. John Steinmueller also sets down the essentials in *The Sword of the Spirit, Which is the Word of God*, pp. 12-16.

Heidt starts us off: "In the process of expounding a passage, commentators, exegetes, homilists, theologians, or critics have no right to 'palm off' their own ideas as the statements of the author under consideration" (p. 87). This is a call for a sound approach to the Bible. Such an approach must not do violence to reason, ignore Tradition, or

neglect the perennial guidance that has come down from the Magisterium of the Catholic Church.

In view of these facts, there are three major steps that lie before the interpreter of Scripture. The technical names are called "noematics," "heuristics," and "prophoristics." All readers of the Bible, to some degree, employ the steps:

- (1) Noematics is the discovery of the sense of the text. Of course, every passage has a literal meaning; one must begin with it.
- (2) Heuristics is the discovery of the meaning of the text.
- (3) Prophoristics is the explanation of the text to others.

In tandem with the three steps, Steinmueller gives four principles of Catholic hermeneutics (pp. 15-16). Here is the substance of the principles:

- (1) The Catholic Church is entrusted with the deposit of faith. She alone has the right and duty to interpret, infallibly and authentically, the Bible.
- (2) It is illicit to interpret the Scriptures contrary to the unanimous consent of the Fathers.
- (3) When an authentic Church interpretation is absent, or a Patristic unanimous consent is lacking, one should follow the analogy of faith.
- (4) Though neither infallible or irreformable, the pre-1971 Biblical Commission texts bind in conscience. The Commission's pronouncements were of the same authority as texts issued from the Sacred Congregations.

Both scholars are reliable guides. Please pray for the repose of the souls of Fr. Heidt and Msgr. Steinmueller.

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The Church Fathers & Scripture: Pope St. Gregory the Great on the Resurrection of the Body

St. Gregory I (A.D. 540-604) reigned upon the throne of Peter from A.D. 590 to 604. Pope St. Gregory “the Great” is a Doctor of the Church.

St. Gregory dealt with matters of moral and ascetical theology as he commented upon the Scriptures. In one such work, Gregory addressed the resurrection of the body. His notable remarks on the book of Job, *Moralia* 14.55.69 (A.D. 578-595), reads as follows: “Therefore we derive hope for our resurrection from reflecting on the glory of our Head. But in case someone, quietly thinking things over, should say that he, being both God and man together, overcame the death which he incurred from his humanity by virtue of his divinity, whereas we, being merely human, are unable to rise from the condemnation of

death, it was right that at the time of his resurrection the bodies of many saints rose as well, so that he might both give us an example in himself and strengthen us through the resurrection of others who were like us in being merely human, since, should a man despair of receiving what the one who was both God and man showed forth in himself, he would be able to assume that something which he knew had occurred to people who were beyond doubt merely human could also take place in himself.”

Gregory goes on to show the rationale of the resurrected body in *Moralia* 14.55.70: “If these people do not hold onto faith in the resurrection because of obedience, they ought certainly to hold onto it because of reason. For what

does the world imitate in its elements every day if not our resurrection? Yes, as the moments of the day pass the light which lasts for a time undergoes a kind of death when, with the arrival of the darkness of night, the light which was looked upon is taken away, and it undergoes a kind of rising again, when the light which had been removed from our sight is restored as night is brought to an end. Moreover, as the seasons pass we see trees lose their green leaves and stop producing fruit; and suddenly, look, a kind of resurrection comes as we see leaves burst forth as if from withered wood, pieces of fruit growing, and the whole tree clothed with a beauty that lives again” (J. Moorhead, *The Early Church Fathers: Gregory the Great*, p. 61).



St. Thomas Aquinas & Revelation: The Validity of the Pentateuch

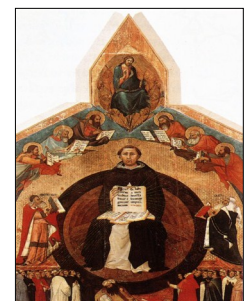
Fr. Aidan Nichols’ *Lovely, Like Jerusalem: The Fulfillment of the Old Testament in Christ and the Church*, discusses Aquinas and his handling of the Pentateuch: “For Thomas, not only was the Old Law, within its limits, good — as it had to be if it was going to prepare people for the coming of Christ — more than this, it remains valid for the Church in two respects. First, it contains the universally binding principles of the natural law, now confirmed by revelation — precisely through inclusion in Old Testament teaching. Secondly... while the binding force of these special precepts as law has been abrogated by the new dispensation of Christ, those same precepts inasmuch as they foreshadow Christ, can still deepen our understanding of him” (p. 264, italics in original).

The Angelic Doctor, as may be seen in the extract from Nichols, gives a lesson to every student of the Bible on the importance of the books of Moses (i.e., the Pentateuch). The “Old Law” (to use the expression of Aquinas), one may say, serves at least two functions (among others).

One function, according to Thomas: the Mosaic texts both reveal and sanction the natural law. This law is man’s participation, as a rational creature, in God’s eternal law. Pope Benedict XVI’s *Compendium of the Catechism* 416 says, “The natural law which is inscribed by the Creator on the heart of every person consists in a participation in the wisdom and the goodness of God. It expresses that original moral sense which enables one to discern by reason the

good and the bad. It is universal and immutable and determines the basis of the duties and fundamental rights of the person...” The New Testament, likewise, endorses the natural law (Rom 1:18-2:16).

The second function, according to Thomas: the Pentateuch (and the rest of the Old Testament) employs “types” that point ahead to the Savior. The earlier Testament, in other words, aids one to know and love the Redeemer of the later Testament. Aquinas is merely following the Church Fathers on typology. A “type” is a person, place, thing or event foreshadowed in the Old Testament, and realized in the New. One moves from the shadow to the reality; from type to antitype. Adam, Moses, and David are three examples of types of Christ.



The Magisterium Speaks: Pope Benedict XVI's *Verbum Domini*, Part IV

We arrive at the fourth and final paragraph in *Verbum Domini* 19 (titled “Sacred Scripture, inspiration and truth”). The Pontiff writes: “Certainly theological reflection has always considered inspiration and truth as two key concepts for an ecclesial hermeneutic of the Sacred Scriptures. Nonetheless, one must acknowledge the need today for a fuller and more adequate study of these realities, in order better to respond to the need to interpret the sacred texts in accordance with their nature. Here I would express my fervent hope that research in this field will progress and bear fruit both for biblical science and for the spiritual life of the faithful.”

A recap of the highlights from the three earlier paragraphs of *Verbum Domini* 19 is helpful at this point.

Paragraph one underlined the charism of inspiration, and drew an analogy between God’s Word and the Incarnation. Paragraph two stated the importance of inspiration for one’s approach and interpretation of the Scriptures. Paragraph three mentioned the connection between inspiration and truth. Paragraph four, at left, re-emphasizes the link between inspiration and truth, and contains a plea for further inquiries for this topic.

In light of the four paragraphs, consider the two main Biblical terms that are employed for “truth”: the Hebrew *emet*, and the Greek *alētheia*. The word *emet* indicates what is “solid, sure, reliable.” The word *alētheia* points to “the grasping of a thing as it is in reality, the mind’s full knowledge of it” (T. Dubai, *Faith and Certitude*, pp. 78-79).

The Biblical terms, and their cognates, are complements to the perennial definition of truth found in philosophy and theology. Aristotle would state that truth is “saying of what is that it is and of what is not that it is not,” which is say that truth is “telling it like it is” (P. Kreeft and R. Tacelli, *Handbook of Catholic Apologetics*, p. 386). A recent philosopher writes that truth is “the agreement of the mind with reality” (J. De Torre, *Christian Philosophy*, p. 176). Similarly, a popular theological reference work defines truth as “conformity of mind and reality” (J. Hardon, *Modern Catholic Dictionary*, p. 549). Of course, the benchmark is St. Thomas Aquinas’ massive tome, *De Veritate*.

Divine revelation, sound philosophy, and orthodox theology must fit together in the study of the Bible and truth.



The Pontifical Biblical Commission: The Response of 1907, Part V

Attention is still on the internal reasons for Johannine authorship, found in question two from *On the Author and Historical Truth of the Fourth Gospel* (1907), by the Biblical Commission. The three points under scrutiny: (1) the Fourth Gospel itself, (2) its affiliation with 1 John, and (3) the Johannian Gospel’s relation to the Synoptic Gospels. Point 1, the Fourth Gospel itself, had been examined via two propositions in the last column. Below are two additional propositions (a fifth will be covered later).

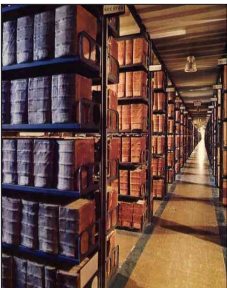
3. The writer is an eyewitness to the events he records. One detects a first-hand knowledge of facts from the prologue (Jn 1:14), at the crucifixion (Jn 19:35), and for the epilogue (Jn 21:24).

Eyewitness confirmation also comes from the details for the events — as if relayed by an observer at the scenes. At the wedding feast at Cana, the water turned into wine comes up “to the brim” in the jars (Jn 2:7). Before the multiplication of the loaves, their exact number and that of the fishes are given, and the former even described as “barley” (Jn 6:9). The feast of Tabernacles occurs at “winter” (Jn 10:22-23). During the Lord’s anointing at Bethany, one notes the fragrance “filled” the house (Jn 12:3). At Gethsemane, Simon Peter cuts off the “right ear” of the slave Malchus (Jn 18:10). The empty tomb reveals the burial “linen cloths” and the “napkin” were conspicuously apart (Jn 20:6-7).

Moreover, chronology is given in some instances of the very “day” (Jn 1:29, 35, 39, 43; 2:1; 5:9; 7:37; 9:14; 19:14; 20:1, 19) or “days” (Jn 2:12; 4:40, 43; 11:6, 17; 12:1; 20:26), and even down to the “hour” (Jn 1:39; 4:6, 52; 19:14, 27).

4. The writer discloses that he is an apostle. He was one of the first called by the Master during His ministry (Jn 1:35-39). The writer was also present at the Last Supper (Jn 13:23-26), was in the vicinity of Peter’s denials (Jn 18:15-27), and was privy to the Savior’s post-resurrection appearance at the Sea of Tiberius (Jn 21:4-14).

Among the propositions covered so far, one strains to find a pseudonymous author.



Addressing Bible Difficulties: Scholarly Tools for the Task, Part II

Here are additional suggestions for the defense of Holy Writ.

Background information:

- H. Daniel-Rops, *Daily Life in the Time of Jesus*
- W. Kaiser, Jr., exec. ed., *NIV Archaeological Study Bible*
- C. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*
- J. I. Packer, et al., *Nelson's Illustrated Encyclopedia of Bible Facts*
- G. Ricciotti, *The History of Israel*
- R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*
- H. Vos, *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Manners & Customs*
- J. Walton, et al., *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*.

Timelines and charts:

- J. Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*
- H. Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ*
- H. House, *Chronological and Background Charts of the New Testament*
- M. Smith, gen. ed., *Holman Book of Biblical Charts, Maps, and Reconstructions*
- J. Walton, *Chronological and Background Charts of the Old Testament*.

Thematic texts:

- J. Kohlenberger III, gen. ed., *Zondervan NIV Nave's Topical Bible*
- J. Smith, ed., *The New Treasury of Scripture Knowledge*
- K. Vaughan, *The Divine Armory of Holy Scripture*
- T. Williams, *A Textual Concordance of the Holy Scriptures*.

Hebrew and Greek aids:

- G. Botterweck, et al., *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament I-XV*
- G. Kittel, et al., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament I-X*
- W. Mounce, gen. ed., *Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old & New Testament Words*
- L. Richards, *Zondervan Expository Dictionary of Bible Words*
- C. Spicq, *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament I-III*
- E. Jenni and C. Westermann, *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament I-III*.

Next column will offer recommendations that interact with actual Bible difficulties. Such sources are at the crux of the matter.



The Biblical World: Emperors and Herods

The Gospel took place during the Roman Empire. Therefore, the Bible student should know some of the main personages from this historical period. The Roman Emperors and the Herodian Rulers are two key groups for consideration. Scripture references are provided when applicable.

Roman Emperors...

- Augustus (30/27 B.C.-A.D. 14): rules during Our Lord's birth (Lk 2:1) and His hidden years.
- Tiberius (A.D. 14-37): rules during Our Lord's public ministry (Mt 22:17-21; Mk 12:14-17; Lk 3:1; 20:22-25), passion (Lk 23:2; Jn 19:12-15), resurrection and ascension.
- Gaius Caligula (A.D. 37-41).
- Claudius (A.D. 41-54): rules during the famine (Acts 11:28) and expels Jews from Rome (Acts 18:2).

- Nero (A.D. 54-68): ruler to whom St. Paul appeals (Acts 25:8-21; 26:32; 27:24; 28:19).
- Galba (A.D. 68).
- Otho (A.D. 69).
- Vitellius (A.D. 69).
- Vespasian (A.D. 69-79).
- Titus (A.D. 79-81).
- Domitian (A.D. 81-96).

Herodian Rulers...

- Herod the Great (37-4 B.C.): rules as king of all Palestine over the Jews (Mt 2:1-22; Lk 1:5). After Herod's death, the Emperor Augustus divides Herod's kingdom among his three sons; Archelaus, Herod Antipas, and Philip.
- Archelaus (4 B.C.-A.D. 6): rules as ethnarch of Judea (Mt 2:22). Judea becomes a Roman province when Archelaus is deposed A.D. 6.
- Herod Antipas (4 B.C.-A.D. 39): rules as tetrarch of Galilee and Perea (Mt 14:1-10; Mk

6:14-26; Lk 3:1-20; 8:1-3; 9:7-9; 13:31-32; 23:6-16; Acts 4:26-28; 13:1).

- Philip (4 B.C.-A.D. 34): rules as tetrarch of Iturea and Trachonitis (Lk 3:1).
- Herod Agrippa I (A.D. 37-44): rules as king from A.D. 37 to 44 over Philip's former tetrarchy. From A.D. 41 to 44, Agrippa I rules as king over Judea, Galilee, and Perea (Acts 12:1-23).
- Herod Agrippa II (A.D. 50/3-93/100): rules as king over Philip's former tetrarchy and Lysanius' (Lk 3:1). From A.D. 56/61, Agrippa II rules over parts of Galilee and Perea (Acts 25:13-26:32).



Most Bible introductions cover this information. This material is adapted from the tables in H. May and B. Metzger, eds., *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: Revised Standard Version*, p. 1550.

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).

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Mr. Salvatore J. Ciresi, founder and director of the St. Jerome Biblical Guild, served two tours in the U.S. Marine Corps and is now employed 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 other 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 Catechetical Directory*; 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:

The Bible Timeline: The Story of Salvation

Jeff Cavins, Tim Gray, Sarah Christmyer, *The Bible Timeline: The Story of Salvation* (Necedah: Ascension, 2011) \$4.95.

This handy chart describes itself as follows:

“Features of *The Bible Timeline* Chart:

- The Bible is divided among 12 color-coded time periods.
- Fourteen ‘narrative’ books that tell the story are indicated.
- The other 59 ‘supplemental’ books are placed into their historical context.
- God’s plan of salvation is traced through a series of covenants.
- The genealogy of Jesus is traced throughout the biblical narrative.
- 68 key events provide an outline to the biblical story.
- Events in world history place the biblical events in ‘real time.’
- The reigning world power is indicated for each time period.”

With such features, *The Bible Timeline* lays out in chronological order the key peoples, key places, and key events which span Divine Revelation. The chart helps the Bible student go from generalities to specifics. For example, one sees in general the “Early World” period of Genesis 1-11. Then, within this period, one has the specific five key events of “Creation,” “Fall,” “Curse and promise,” “Flood,” and “People scattered at Babel.” The other periods follow this pattern of generalities to specifics.

A benefit of this tool is that it exhibits, and demonstrates, the coherence of both Testaments. St. Augustine’s wise maxim is proven true: “*The New is hidden in the Old, and the Old is made manifest in the New*” (*Questions on the Heptateuch* 2.73; A.D. 419).

A visual aid that unravels some of the complexities of Sacred History is not just for novices; even an “experienced” Bible reader will find this chart useful. This is especially the case when sorting through the prophets, the times of their ministries, and their audiences. Likewise for the deportations and returns.

Suggestion: pencil in the actual verses for each of the 68 key events. For example, next to “Creation,” annotate Genesis 1:1-2:25; next to “Fall,” annotate Genesis 3:1-24; etc.

The Bible Timeline has an appealing design, readable font, and is neither simplistic nor crowded. The chart could be affixed to the back of a Bible, or posted to a wall (which will require two charts). The three authors have produced a superb tool for Biblical studies.

