

St. Jerome would be Shocked—St. Francis de Sales Delighted! Bible Study and Research Software

By Steve Ray

You've been sucked into a time warp and are zooming through an aqua haze before rematerializing into a dark cave in the fourth century. Struggling to regain your balance, both physically and mentally, you squint in the darkness and slowly make out an old man hunched over yellowed parchment. Like you, he is squinting in the dim light of candles as he searches through the handwritten manuscripts. Your presence interrupts him and he slowly turns around. His sharp eyes meet yours and you stammer, "Where am I?" He answers sternly, "You are in my cave, why?" Before you can answer he says, with an air of impatience, "I am Jerome, this is Bethlehem, and you're in my monastery. I am studying the Scriptures—who are you and why do you dress so strangely?"

You stammer in shock as you realize you stand before the great biblical scholar St. Jerome, the very man who translated the Latin Vulgate. You quickly avert your gaze and survey the cave with its stacks of rough-looking manuscripts, smoky atmosphere, and crude writing instruments. The primitive conditions stun you. Before you can answer you feel woozy again and succumb to the aqua haze—again, a time warp sweeps you away.

Your feet hit the dirt floor as you again gather your wits about you. The stone walls and huge timbers shimmering in the dim light make you duck your head and step backwards. While your eyes adjust you study the silhouette of a young man, dressed in priestly garb and sitting at a desk with an oil lamp burning and stacks of books on his desk. Gutenberg's printing press had obviously blessed this clergyman. He is praising a new Bible—printed on real paper, "Moveable type, with chapter and verse numbering," he shouts, "Blessed be God forever!"

The shadow against the stone wall moves so you quickly look in his direction. This time you speak first. "Hello, I am sorry, but where I am—and who, who are you?" He jumps up. "I am Francis de Sales, this is my rectory and I in writing to evangelize the Calvinists around Geneva. Can you believe these new books being printed? I just . . .

Before his sentence is finished the aqua cloud again engulfs you. Dazed again, you now squint because the light is so *bright*. The time warp has mysteriously dropped you into my office! You see books set in rows all the way to the ceiling. Meekly you whisper, "Hello?". Startled, I turn around and ask, "Who are you?" After you introduce yourself—but before you can tell me about time warps—I excitedly invite you to sit down at my desk.

I ask you, "Have you ever seen anything like this before in your life? What probably took the saints of yesteryear days, or weeks to research, I can do in a matter of minutes on this computer! I have hundreds, even thousands of books right here in the palm of my hand." You step forward, still a bit stunned. I hold up a stack of CD ROMs. Sit down. I'll let you test drive this amazing computer software. You can try out this *Catholic Scholar's Pack* which is a veritable library of books on one small CD. Try the full-colored Bible atlas.

And wait until you try the powerful search engine on the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, and take a virtual tour of Jerusalem led by King David.”

You ask, “Does the computer contain more books than St. Jerome had?” “Ha”, I laugh, “it even has his *Latin Vulgate*, not to mention about ten other translations, the Hebrew text, the Greek *Septuagint* of the Old Testament, four Greek New Testament texts as well as numerous commentaries, Bible dictionaries, lexicons and more—a Catholic scholar or layman’s dream come true! And look at these programs: all the documents of the Catholic Church, the 38-volume set of the Church Fathers, and the Council of Trent. Can you believe it? And it’s easy enough for anybody to use! The Fathers just wouldn’t believe it.”

As you sit in my chair I ask, “Hey, have you seen all the Catholic stuff on the Internet?”

[Recommended Software](#)

[Bible & Catholic Theology Discount Software](#)

Church Teaching:

“The Catholic Church, since it was founded by Christ our Lord to bear salvation to all men and thus is obliged to preach the Gospel, considers it one of its duties to announce the Good News of salvation also with the help of the media of social communication and to instruct men in their proper use. It is, therefore, an inherent right of the Church to have at its disposal and to employ any of these media insofar as they are necessary or useful for the instruction of Christians and all its efforts for the welfare of souls. It is the duty of pastors to instruct and guide the faithful so that they, with the help of these same media, may further the salvation and perfection of themselves and of the entire human family” (*Inter Mirifica*, 3).

“The council fathers saw the Church as being in the very midst of human progress, sharing the experiences of the rest of humanity, seeking to understand them and to interpret them in the light of faith. It was for God’s faithful people to make creative use of the new discoveries and technologies for the benefit of humanity and the fulfillment of God’s plan for the world...employing the full potential of the ‘computer age’ to serve the human and transcendent vocation of every person, and thus to give glory to the Father from whom all good things come” (*Dawn Of A New Era*, 3).

“Easy access to Sacred Scripture should be provided for all the Christian faithful. That is why the Church from the very beginning accepted as her own that very ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament which is called the Septuagint, and she has always given a place of honor to other Eastern translations and Latin ones especially the Latin

translation known as the vulgate. But since the Word of God should be accessible at all times, the Church, by her authority and with maternal concern, sees to it that suitable and correct translations are made into different languages, especially from the original texts of the sacred books. And should the opportunity arise and the Church authorities approve, if these translations are produced in cooperation with the separated brethren as well, all Christians will be able to use them” (*Dei Verbum*, 22).