fourth Eclogue and Aeneid, Catullus, Martial, and Pliny (all in relation to the symbolism of "nuptial lamps and torches"); not to mention citations of more than two dozen Church Fathers along with a quotation from Rabbi Achaia and the Mishnah. It is hard to say what is more striking – the sheer breadth and density of Lapide’s interpretative matrix or his audacity in summoning all these resources to the interpretation of the sacred text.

Lapide himself takes a breathtaking high view of Scripture’s purpose: “The dignity, usefulness, and majesty of sacred Scripture are so great that it surpasses the books of all philosophers and theologians, among the Hebrew and the Greek and Latin authors, as much as divine wisdom surpasses all human wisdom. For sacred Scripture is the Word of God. It is the very utterance and speech of God, by means of which God enunciates his wisdom to us, and shows us the way to virtue, salvation, and eternal happiness. Wherefore St. Augustine (Epistle 3) … asserts that sacred Scripture is an encyclopedia of all the sciences.

… Sacred Scripture is the art of arts, the science of sciences: it is the Pandora and the encyclopedia of wisdom.”

Lapide prefaces his commentary with thirty-eight “canons of interpretation,” which reflect a wise and prayerful method. Canon 35, for instance, explains the “marvelous… and wondrously consonant… harmony of the New Testament with the Old in the economy of salvation. This hermeneutical presupposition has consequences for Lapide’s method. “Hence, in order to explain a Scripture passage of the New Testament from its roots and foundations, examine and trace the figure, the prophecy or thought of the Old Testament to which it alludes. For the old Law was the prelude to the new, and the new is the completion of the old.”

It is clear that the Fathers hold pride of place for Lapide in his interpretative work. He systematically catalogues all the Fathers’ comments on individual verses of Scripture. In places, his commentary recalls the beautiful and rich chain of patristic wisdom found in Saint Thomas Aquinas’ famous Catena Aurea. Lapide’s four-volume work should be a welcome addition to the libraries of scholars and pastors alike.

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