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The Study of the Bible in the Cathedral Schools of Twelfth-Century France: A Case Study of Robert Amiclas and Peter Comestor

Abstract: This article explores some of the surviving evidence from twelfth-century France regarding how the Latin Bible was taught in the cathedral schools of Northern Europe. In addition to raising the question of the genre status of these manuscripts, which survive in the thousands, the article also clarifies what this material evidence can teach modern scholars about the practice of *sacra pagina*, or biblical exegesis, as was undertook specifically in the 'classroom'. While the manuscripts discussed claim to be straightforward students' reports of a master's oral lectures on a single canonical text (in this case those of Peter Comestor on the Gospel of Luke), the 'reports' themselves significantly challenge our understanding of late twelfth-century teaching practice, manuscript culture, and conception of biblical studies and theology more broadly.

1 Introduction

To study the medieval scholastic exegesis of the Bible originating in the famous cathedral schools of northern France, one must address two major trends in the existing scholarship regarding the Latin manuscripts that have survived from the late eleventh century and later times. First, historians concerned with the medieval schools tend to play down the great indebtedness of the formal study of theology to the rest of the medieval Latin curriculum (the liberal arts and natural sciences). The origins of this general pattern seem to lie in the second trend,

¹ Thorough reviews of the origins of *sacra pagina* ('the sacred page') in the methods of the arts tradition are lacking, although authors as influential as Beryl Smalley, Rita Copeland, and Cédric Giraud have observed the mutual exchange between the professional grammarians and the theologians in the twelfth century. A. J. Minnis has provided scholars with a masterful point of access into that intersection of *artes liberales* and *divinitas* in his study of the medieval *accessus* ('prologue') tradition (Minnis 1988). Also see Smalley 1941, 12, 26–27, 69–70 and 73; Copeland

namely, that scholars have too often separated 'theology' – strictly conceived of as the abstract formulation of Christian doctrine and metaphysics, a more popular object of research for intellectual historians – from the medieval study of the Bible, fundamentally an act of textual interpretation.²

This dichotomy has engendered a relative neglect of the biblical commentary material, which has very clear origins in didactic contexts that formed the intersection of a variety of disciplines (the so-called 'trivium' of grammar, logic and rhetoric, and the 'quadrivium' of arithmetic, music, geometry and astronomy), in favour of less prevalent but more treatise-like monographs that focus on a narrower selection of topics (metaphysics, or trinitarian theology, for example). Scholars' hesitance to approach the biblical commentaries of the Latin schools has made it difficult to trace the relationship between the study of the Bible, of theology and of the rest of the scholarly disciplines that were commonplace in medieval Europe during the period in which the urban schools increasingly began to shape the development of scholarship, politics and society.³

The current state of research into the biblical commentaries that survive from the leading twelfth-century urban cathedral schools (Laon and Paris) does not yet allow us to form a comprehensive portrait of the origins of these school texts or their afterlife in the universities of Paris, Oxford and Cambridge. Much editorial work remains to be done before scholars can claim to have surveyed the evidence that exists. In this article, I will review two manuscripts that stem from the end of the twelfth century in order to provide a case study on how scholars might begin to think about some of these numerous codices as points of access between modern scholars and the oral education of medieval schools, which will otherwise be irretrievably lost. My conclusions are only hypotheses, but they will hopefully entice other researchers to help fill in the gaps.

The manuscripts under consideration in this study are Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 620, a full and polished report of influential Parisian master Peter Comestor's (d. c. 1178) lecture course on the Gospel of Luke, and Cambridge, Trinity College, B.1.12, a glossed Gospel of Luke replete with the corrections and marginal notations of Robert Amiclas, a student of the arts and theology in twelfth-century Paris. The Latin term for the genre of literature that the first manuscript represents is 'reportatio' and designates a process whereby a

and Sluiter 2009, 15, 19, 210-211 and 299; and Giraud 2011, esp. 107-108, as well as Giraud 2010, 27, 48, 72, 80-83 and 190.

² Marcia Colish, for one, has tactfully criticised such tendencies (Colish 1997, esp. 1–6).

³ For a review of the place of the cathedral schools within the French courts of the twelfth century, see Jaeger 1994.

student copies down a master's oral lecture in shorthand and then later expands these notes, smoothes them out and possibly even corrects them under the master's guidance. Reportationes exist within a wide spectrum of fidelity to the lecture. Many are nothing more than students' paraphrases of a lecture and are difficult to compare, as competing reports of the same lecture will tell rather different stories. However, the original reports that witness to Comestor's lectures seem to have been authorised and perhaps even corrected by Comestor himself, given that they are both highly collatable and are consistently interspersed with planned annotations and bracket passages made to amend a teaching or insert a digression. One manuscript even calls these additions 'adjectiones magistrales'. the 'teacher's additions', suggesting that the master had some degree of oversight concerning the publication and dissemination of the written material that resulted from teaching.4 The second manuscript amounts to a single student's textbook in which private notes on a lecture appear in the margins.

In my review of these texts, I will first introduce both manuscripts and the historical figures behind their content and then briefly describe the fortuitous connection between these two codices that further justifies their comparison. Subsequently, I will provide a close reading of a portion of Comestor's lecture on the Gospel of Luke paired with Amiclas' annotations to that part of the text in his own manuscript. Drawing from this content, I will briefly characterise Comestor's pedagogy in light of what Amiclas' annotations suggest a typical student might have paid attention to among his numerous and far-reaching explications of the Gospel of Luke. Lastly, I will connect my reading of Comestor's teaching to the practice of ars grammatica (the 'art of grammar', or 'philology'), hoping that further research into the study of the Bible in the European Middle Ages will begin to emphasise the historical importance of Latin grammar review as a structuring principle for biblical exegesis, and thus theology, in some of the medieval cathedral schools of northern France.

2 The two manuscripts: a student's report and an annotated textbook

The lectures on the Gospel of Luke contained in BnF lat. 620 most likely stem from the 1160s when Peter of Troyes, nicknamed 'Comestor' and 'Manducator' by his

⁴ See Smallev 1979.

colleagues and students, taught at the cathedral school in Paris.⁵ Both names mean 'the Eater' and supposedly refer to Peter's aptitude for 'consuming' books by rapidly digesting their contents and expounding them. At the cathedral school, Comestor not only devoured material, but he also streamlined and presented it in his lengthy courses on each of the four Gospels for his students, who were preparing for positions in ecclesial and royal courts where they would rely on their technical training in order to administer the Church's sacraments and tend to civil affairs. Later, Comestor drew on this teaching experience in order to compose his famous textbook, the Historia scholastica ('School History'), a synthesised presentation of the Christian biblical narrative intended to be used in a teaching context. While this medieval best-seller, which exists in nearly 1,000 manuscripts in a variety of languages, has received some scholarly attention, Comestor's lecture-style reports largely have not, in part because they are nearly impossible to understand on their own, as the lectures are highly abbreviated and make constant, coded reference to both the Bible and the commentary tradition now known as the Glossa ordinaria (the 'standard Gloss' on the Bible composed at Laon between the 1080s and 1130s from patristic and Carolingian sources).8

The manuscript under consideration (BnF lat. 620) was composed in France in the last quarter of the twelfth century and contains reports of all four of Comestor's Gospel lectures, which, given the uniformity of the layout, script, and composition of the codex, were likely intended to circulate as a single book. By the fifteenth century, the codex was housed in the Cistercian Abbey of Fontenay, as revealed by a late medieval ex libris mark that reads Liber sancte Marie de Fonteneto (fol. 270°). Several medieval users of the manuscript have added marginal notations, most often *nota*-signs that highlight a passage of importance; these notes, as well as a subject index contained at the end of the manuscript (fol. 271^r), suggest that the reports were carefully studied. Generally, manuscripts containing twelfth-century reportationes can be divided into two categories:

⁵ For several short reviews of the life of Peter Comestor, see Clark 2015, 1-10; Smith 2009, 209-210.

⁶ For a few descriptions of the later careers of students who learned at the cathedral schools, see Giulio Silano's four-volume translation of Peter Lombard's The Sentences (Silano 2007-2010, Book 1, xxvi); John Barrie Hall and K. S. B. Keats-Rohan's translation of John of Salisbury's Metalogicon (Hall and Keats-Rohan 1991, 13); and Jaeger 1994, 328-329.

⁷ It was, in fact, one of the earliest sanctioned textbooks of the University of Paris and was adopted into both the Dominicans' and Franciscans' novitiate curricula in the thirteenth century. See Clark 2015, 6-13; and Luscombe 2013, esp. 41-43.

⁸ For a review of the importance and afterlife of Comestor's thought, in addition to the aforementioned works by Smalley 1941, Clark 2015, and Luscombe 2013, see Morey 1993.

hasty, heavily annotated school copies and tidier, more elegant reference copies. Both formats support the notion that masters like Comestor wanted to publish their teachings in order to send them out into the world beyond their urban cathedral school, whether that meant to other schools, where they would be studied and annotated, or to various monastic communities, where the lectures might be copied into more formal codices that could be read at a slower pace and without distraction from the margins. Bnf 620, with its consistent annotations and matter-of-fact proto-gothic script, seems to have originally fallen into the former category.

Our second manuscript (B.1.12) belongs to a collection of codices known as the 'Buildwas books', which contain a near-complete set of the Latin Old and New Testament along with early marginal copies of the Glossa ordinaria commentary paired with the appropriate biblical text.9 The codices are deluxe copies and reflect the wealth of the original owner, Robert Amiclas, whose nickname 'Amiclas' must therefore be a pun, as it refers to a poor fisherman depicted in Lucan's Pharsalia (Book V). These codices, now stored at the Wren Library of Trinity College, Cambridge, number nineteen volumes in total, and were gathered by Amiclas during his studies in France and later donated to the Cistercian Buildwas Abbey in Shropshire. Though they have been previously researched by R. M. Thomson, Jenny Sheppard, and Lesley Smith, Alexander Andrée is the first scholar to notice that the marginal annotations in the Amiclas bibles, which match his own hand, almost exclusively contain teachings drawn from Comestor's lecture *reportationes* and were meant to make using the Gloss easier.

Their owner, Robert Amiclas, a student-turned-master who spent time in Paris, evidently in the classroom of Peter Comestor, whose Gospel lectures he seems to have attended, brought the set to England at the end of the twelfth century. In fact, Amiclas is not only likely to have attended Comestor's lectures, but he also actively perpetuated his master's exegesis by distilling it and copying it into the outermost margin of his own Gospel texts, including B.1.12, the Gospel of Luke. Beyond the mere fact that Robert Amiclas happened to be studying in

⁹ For reviews of these codices, see Sheppard 1988; Thomson 1995. The most current assessment of these books in relation to Comestor's lectures has been undertaken by Alexander Andrée, who was kind enough to share with me his personal copy of his article (Andrée 2019).

¹⁰ See Thomson 1995.

¹¹ Sheppard was the first to identify the annotations as Amiclas' on the basis of an ownership note in one of the books (fol. 1^v in Cambridge, Trinity College, B.1.11), which reads 'Iste liber est magistri Roberti Amiclas' (This book belongs to Master Robert Amiclas) and matches the hand of the other marginal notes. Sheppard characterised them as 'marginal comments and references, additions to the gloss, corrections to both text and gloss and added punctuation of a sort which

Paris during precisely those years when Comestor would have been lecturing on the Gospels (mid-twelfth century), there are two arguments for why Amiclas likely wrote down his annotations while actively studying with Comestor. First, the manuscripts carrying Comestor's reportationes date from the late twelfth century and the early thirteenth. It seems, therefore, that by the time Comestor's lectures were widely circulating in written form throughout France, Amiclas, who retired to England before the end of the century, had already returned home and would therefore have been far less likely to encounter them. Second, the brevity and high degree of abbreviation manifest by the marginal notes, many of which consist of only a few words, suggest to Andrée that they 'were notes taken in the midst of the action of the classroom, keeping apace with the oral lecture', where 'such an environment would not have allowed for any lengthier notes to be taken'.12 Third, later medieval texts that do contain extracts from Comestor's reportationes, such as Hugh of St. Cher's Postillae and Oynus Cisterciensis' Magistralia super quattuor evangelistas ('Teacher's writings on the Four Gospels'), are generally composed of exact quotations or remarkably close, continuous paraphrases, whereas the Amiclas notes are brief, impressionistic, or even simply a visual representation of a Comestorial teaching. Taken in sum, the evidence suggests that Amiclas annotated his codices as part of an in-person educational exercise overseen by his teacher Peter Comestor.

suggests that the text and gloss were intended to be read aloud', and she further asserted that they were likely to have been written by someone who intended to use them to teach; see Sheppard 1988, 281. Andrée, David Foley and I have identified the notes as arising from the classroom of Peter Comestor on the basis of our ongoing research editing his Gospel lectures. Several pieces of evidence locate Amiclas in Paris during Comestor's lecture sessions. William of Tyre and the anonymous author of the poem Metamorphosis Goliae counted Amiclas among some of the most renowned scholars of France. Moreover, a lease of property in Paris between the Knights Templar and Amiclas dates from sometime between 1165 and 1175. All of this evidence suggests that Robert spent time in Paris during the final third of the twelfth century, when he could have studied with Comestor. The definitive attribution of Amiclas' notes to the lectures of Peter Comestor, however, relies upon thorough philological comparison of the annotations with Comestor's teaching, which forms the bulk of Andrée's article (Andrée 2019) as well as being the subject of part of this review. For the aforementioned evidence of Amiclas' time in Paris, see Thomson 1995, 238-239; Huygens 1962, esp. 822-824; Wetherbee 2017, esp. 56.

¹² Andrée 2019, 59.

3 Comparing the lecture report with the student's notes

A comparison of Comestor's lecture transcripts with B.1.12 allows us to juxtapose a polished lecture report with the classroom notes of a student who heard that lecture and committed what he thought were its salient features to the margins of his school text, which he also corrected according to his master's insights.

In fact, the two manuscripts contain so much content overlap that one can employ them reciprocally as hermeneutic keys for one another when the text of one manuscript is too highly abbreviated to be unpacked on its own terms, a process partially justified by the historic connection between Amiclas' notes (and his codex) and the oral lectures of which BnF 620 provides a snapshot.¹³ On the one hand, biblical and gloss citations that are everywhere in Comestor's lectures (and sometimes nearly impenetrable) can be decoded by reference to Amiclas' textbook, as it contains the full, unabbreviated text of both the Gospel of Luke and an early copy of the Glossa ordinaria commentary on the Bible also cited throughout by Comestor. While interpreting these textual *lemmata* in Comestor's lectures (highly truncated citations, sometimes underlined in the manuscripts, but not always), I have preferred Amiclas' text as a reference point above other manuscripts containing, for example, a Latin Gospel of Luke or its standard gloss tradition, as Amiclas actually seems to have brought his text with him when attending Comestor's lectures and to have annotated, corrected and commented upon the text as a direct result of his teacher's meticulous philological exegesis and textual criticism.¹⁴ On the other hand, Amiclas' marginal notations are themselves sometimes too abbreviated to comprehend and can only be usefully understood when read in light of Comestor's teachings, which present a full-fledged

¹³ In the following, I have distinguished between a gloss citation and Amiclas' or Comestor's exposition thereof by marking, in both the Latin and my English translation, the gloss citation in SMALL CAPS, biblical citations in ALL CAPS and the master's exposition thereof in normal font. 14 This is the unavoidable conclusion that Andrée and I arrived at after comparing Amiclas' notes with the transcription lectures of Comestor's commentaries on Luke, Matthew and Mark, the partial fruits of which Andrée carefully details at length in his 2019 publication. Work is currently also being undertaken for the case of the Gospel of John, although Amiclas' other codices have not been thoroughly reviewed. Further research into the origin of his comments on the Old Testament texts would greatly improve our understanding of the teaching of the Bible in the Parisian schools.

and coherent version of the oral lectures that Amiclas heard and occasionally referenced in the margins of his textbook in his own shorthand. 15

Many of Amiclas' notations probably stem from Comestor's lectures, given that they are a combination of paraphrases and simplifications of teaching and even depend on the unique way in which Peter arranges the Glossa ordinaria for his students while teaching, as witnessed in his lecture manuscripts.¹⁶ Where direct citations appear, they are nearly universally a slight variant that approximates but does not always replicate the teaching found in the reports, further supporting the hypothesis that Amiclas heard Comestor lecture and did not merely copy portions of the *reportatio* manuscript.¹⁷ It would seem that the simplest explanation for all these features is that Amiclas heard Comestor lecture and wrote his comments as part of the didactic exchange between the student and the master that exemplified these schools. A few examples suffice here to show the

¹⁵ For example, in the margins of fol. 10^r, B.1.12, Amiclas annotates a word found in one of the glosses with 'qi iiies. uidit. 7 unū. ad'. Comestor's teaching on the same word (BnF lat. 620, fol. 153^{va}: Vidit enim tres et unum adorauit, 'for he saw three and adored one') allows one to safely unpack the phrase as 'qui tres uidit et unum adorauit' ('who saw three and adored one'). Sometimes Amiclas' notes are unabbreviated and need no decoding, such as the point on fol. 5^r, B.1.12 where he comments on the gloss 'MOTHERS, BECAUSE THEY ARE HONOURED BY THE REWARDS OF MARRIAGE' (MATRES QVIA HONORANTVR PREMIIS CONIVGII) by writing 'for the wages of marriage are children' (stipendia enim coniugii filii sunt). The passage accords well with Comestor's more detailed teaching on the same gloss (BnF lat. 620, fol. 151^{rb}): 'BY THE REWARDS OF MARRIAGE, that is, the fruitfulness of a child. For these are the wages of married women' (PREMIIS CONIVGII, id est fecunditate prolis. Hec enim sunt stipendia mulierum).

¹⁶ On B.1.12, fol. 9^{r-v}, Amiclas has annotated Bede's lengthy gloss on the 'Magnificat' (Mary's canticle of praise) with marginal notes that say 'second part' (secunda pars) and later 'third part' (tercia pars). These designations correspond to Comestor's teaching at that point in the gloss (BnF lat. 620, fol. 153^{rb}): 'And although you do not have this demarcated in the text [my emphasis], note nevertheless a fitting threefold distinction in the gloss. For the partition of this canticle is threefold in the manner that the psalms are partitioned' (Et licet in littera non habeas distinctum, nota tamen in glosa diligenter triphariam distinctionem. Est enim triplex particio huius cantici, sicut distinguntur particiones psalmorum). Comestor then goes on to describe his reasons for breaking the gloss into three parts, providing three stages in the gloss that correspond to Amiclas' own marginal partitions, despite the fact that, as Comestor tells his audience, the standard gloss does not come with these sections already distinguished, further highlighting Amiclas' intention to follow his master's guidance.

¹⁷ On B.1.12, fol. 2^r, Amiclas annotates the word 'in the beginning' (in principio) with 'that is, in the prologue' (id est in prologo), while Comestor's lectures read (fol. 149^{va}): 'IN THE BEGINNING, that is in his own proem' (IN PRINCIPIO, id est in proemio suo). Perhaps Comestor's association between words indicating primacy (principium) and prologues (prologus) made a strong impression on Amiclas, because on B.1.12, fol. 3^r (see Fig. 2), he annotated the part of a gloss that reads 'first' (PRIMO) with, 'that is, in the prologue' (id est in prologo).

relation between the two texts and characterise the type of content typically found in Comestor's lectures and in Amiclas' reception of them.

In the standard introduction now known as the 'Monarchian prologue' attached to many medieval Latin copies of the Gospel of Luke, the text says at one point that the Apostle Paul 'Provided an ending to the Acts of the Apostles' (Sicove PAYLVS CONSVMMATIONEM APOSTOLICIS ACTIBVS DARET). 18 The prologue mentions the Acts of the Apostles in the context of the Gospel of Luke because Luke the Evangelist was thought to have written both these books of Scripture. On the surface, the prologue's notion that Paul 'provides an ending' to the Acts of the Apostles does not make much sense if one interprets it to mean that the Apostle Paul literally wrote the ending to the text, otherwise considered the work of Luke. About this textual ambiguity, Comestor's lecture report says: 'that is, the Book of the Acts of the Apostles ends with Paul, namely, with his preaching in Rome, because God finally brought him to perfection in the good after many persecutions against the Church' (id est liber Actuum apostolorum terminaretur in Paulo, scilicet in predicatione eius Rome, quia Deus eum tandem post multas ecclesie persecutiones consummavit in bono). Here, Comestor clarifies a potentially confusing and misleading point in the Latin text he is teaching (a characteristic philological comment the likes of which make up the majority of his pedagogy) by explaining that the ambiguous and odd phrase consummationem daret (literally, 'gave consummation') should not be thought of as meaning 'finished the work', but rather as 'ends by talking about Paul', since at the end of the text God brings him 'to perfection in the good' (consummavit in bono, literally, 'consummated in the good'). Keying in on this useful interpretation of an otherwise strange point in the prologue, Amiclas marks the word 'provided' ('daret') in his school book with a signede-renvoi (a 'mark of return', which functions much like a modern footnote) that corresponds to a marginal comment in his hand that reads; 'because at the end the text talks about Paul' (quia in fine agitur de Paulo, my emphasis), very clearly replicating Comestor's instruction.²⁰ A similar signe on the same folio leads to a point in the prologue that elaborates:

NEVERTHELESS, KNOWING THAT 'THE WORKING FARMER OUGHT TO EAT FROM HIS OWN FRUITS', WE HAVE SHUNNED PUBLIC CURIOSITY, LEST WE SHOULD NOT BE SEEN AS SO MUCH REVEALING GOD TO THOSE WHO ARE WILLING, BUT RATHER ASSISTING THOSE WHO LOATHE HIM (SCIENTES TAMEN QVOD

¹⁸ B.1.12, fol. 2^v. See Fig. 1.

¹⁹ BnF lat. 620, fol. 150^{ra}.

²⁰ B.1.12, fol. 2^v.

OPERANTEM AGRICOLAM OPORTET DE FRVCTIBVS SVIS EDERE, VITAVIMVS PVBLICAM CVRIOSITATEM, NE NON TAM VOLENTIBVS DEVM DEMONSTRARE VIDEMVR QVAM FASTIDIENTIBVS PRODESSE).21

In his lecture, Comestor breaks down this dense passage from the Monarchian prologue into a series of paratactic units that he glosses individually, beginning: 'NEVERTHELESS, I KNOW THAT "THE WORKING FARMER", that is, whoever labours for another's instruction' (TAMEN EGO SCIO OVOD OPORTET OPERANTEM AGRICOLAM, id est quemlibet pro instructione aliorum laborantem).²² At this point in the lecture, Amiclas' ears probably pricked at this interesting interpretation of the word 'farmer' as 'whoever labours for another's instruction', given that he has glossed 'farmer' (agricolam) above the line of his text with the word 'lecturer' (lectorem).²³ Comestor then continues his grammatical exegesis: 'WE HAVE AVOIDED PUBLIC CURIOSITY, that is, the superfluous multiplication of words' (VITAVIMVS PVBLICAM CVRIOSITATEM, id est superfluam verborum multiplicitatem). 24 Thereafter, Comestor concludes by unpacking a puzzling element of the Latin syntax of this passage from the prologue – the use of two negatives at close quarters (ne non, 'lest not') – which could easily have confused a student still unfamiliar with this text. So, Comestor rearranges the syntax in order to reveal its simple meaning:

LEST, for 'so that if we were to do this', WE WOULD 'NOT' SEEM TO REVEAL, that is, to give a witness of God, TO THOSE WHO DESIRE GOD, supply 'to see', that is, to those who want to come to a vision of God and who seek the things that profit salvation. SO MUCH, 'to the extent that'. BUT RATHER, 'to the extent that' we seem to satisfy them. For such people [who disdain God] rejoice in superfluous adornment. ASSISTING THOSE WHO LOATHE HIM, that is, those who seek vain things and that which is useless for edification. Other readings have 'HAVING ASSISTED' and in those manuscripts the word 'REVEALING' is absent.25

The compact, grammatical orientation of Comestor's biblical commentary is apparent from this passage. In fact, it is extremely difficult to translate from the Latin, as so much of Comestor's teaching hinges entirely on features of Latin grammar that are difficult to communicate in English. Nevertheless, two signifi-

²¹ B.1.12, fol. 2^v.

²² BnF lat. 620, fol. 150^{ra}.

²³ B.1.12, fol. 2^v.

²⁴ BnF lat. 620, fol. 150ra.

²⁵ BnF lat. 620, fol. 150^{ra}: Ne, pro 'ut si hoc faceremus', non videremvr demonstrare, id est Dei notitiam tradere. Volentibus deven, suple 'uidere', id est uolentibus ad Dei uisionem peruenire, et querentibus que prosunt ad salutem. TAM 'in tantum', QVAM 'in quantum' uideremur satisfacere. Tales enim superfluo ornatu gaudent. PRODESSE FASTIDIENTIBVS, id est inania et inutilia querentibus non que sunt ad edificationem. Alia littera habet PRODIDISSE, et tunc non est ibi DEMONSTRARE.

cant facts can be drawn from a reading of this passage and a comparison of its content with Amiclas' notes. First, one can easily glimpse the philological tenor of Comestor's teaching style as he jumps around his textbook word by word, explaining to his students explicitly anything hidden implicitly in the syntax of the Latin Vulgate Gospel of Luke (itself a translation from Greek), or here, its standard prologue. This method of teaching has traditionally been associated with the grammar schools of ancient Rome and later those places where the liberal arts were cultivated in medieval Europe and beyond. 26 Scholars have only rarely observed that such didactic practices predominated even in the context of the sacra pagina, the formal exeges of the Bible, although, as noted, recent studies have started to appreciate the overlap between the study of sacred and secular texts in these Latin schools.27

Second, we have not one, but two additional teachings that make their way into Amiclas' margins. Above the word *prodesse* (to assist or profit), Amiclas has written the alternative prodidisse (to have assisted), which some alternative manuscripts provide, as Comestor explained.²⁸ Likewise, Amiclas has written a note at the bottom of his manuscript that condenses the entirety of Comestor's expansive philological exegesis into a tight paraphrase:

LEST ... NOT, that is, 'so that so much' TO THOSE WHO ARE WILLING, etc., or, LEST, that is, 'so that not'so much . . . To those who are willing [...] 'but rather to have assisted those who LOATHE HIM' (NE NON, id est 'ut tam volentibus' et cetera, vel NE, id est 'ut non' tam volentibus et cetera 'fastidientibus prodidisse').²⁹

Here, Amiclas followed the way that his teacher connects, abbreviates and explains individual words of the Monarchian prologue, and then gathered these various teachings into a single paraphrase that he subsequently committed to the margins of his textbook, learning from Comestor one precise way to piece together an otherwise challenging Latin clause. In fact, Amiclas' comment is difficult to understand unless it is compared with Comestor's fuller teaching. Whereas Comestor explains the interpretative possibilities of 'ne non' at length, taking time to comment on the individual aspects of most words in the passage,

²⁶ Two recent and comprehensive reviews of the Latin tradition of the ars grammatica can be found in Copeland and Sluiter 2009, as well as Zetzel 2018. For a medieval example, see Konrad von Hirsau's Dialogus super auctores, ed. Huygens 1955.

²⁷ In addition to the above-mentioned work of Giraud (2010 and 2011), Smith (2009) and others, see the work of Zinn 1997.

²⁸ B.1.12, fol. 2^v.

²⁹ B.1.12, fol. 2^v.

Amiclas simply captures the essential idea in his reproduction: that the double negative amounts to an affirmative ('lest we should not be seen' becomes 'so that we might be seen'). These many examples stem from only a single folio of the Trinity textbook (B.1.12), yet every single sheet contains such classroom vestiges, a fact that merits serious further study.30

4 Results: what the manuscripts reveal about cathedral school teaching practices

It would seem that one could take away from this comparison of manuscripts that Comestor's students brought or borrowed versions of the Gospel and Glossa ordinaria when attending his lectures, as we find for Amiclas. Such practice could have been standard for a twelfth-century classroom in which the master taught a few, older students at a time – say three or four – for a lengthy period.³¹ That the students would have had copies of the glossed Gospel at hand in Comestor's classroom makes eminent sense as one begins to sift through the rest of the lectures; even a cursory glance at Comestor's lecture material reveals that somewhere around ninety percent of these teachings take the form of philological exposition and textual criticism, the likes of which we have just seen, which is hardly useful to a student without a copy of the text for reference and emendation. Comestor notes a biblical or gloss lemma and then explicates that word or phrase from the sacra pagina by 'lemma-hopping', so to speak, jumping from gloss to gloss or within a gloss to best arrange the commentary tradition for the students looking over his shoulder or at their own manuscript copies of the text, as their teacher unpacked the grammar and syntax of the authoritative text under examination, in this case not the Aeneid of Virgil, but the Gospel of Luke.

The fact that so many of Amiclas' annotations to his own manuscript reflect precisely that philological element of Comestor's teaching (his other notes are, by and large, corrections to or observations on the text, ³² synonyms that Comestor

³⁰ For another relevant example, see Figs 3–4.

³¹ See Doyle 2016, 115-118; as well as Leo Reilly's edition of Peter Helias's Summa super Priscianum: Reilly 1993, 12.

³² For example, on B.1.12, fol. 3^r (See Fig. 2), Amiclas denotes the gloss on the beginning of the Gospel of Luke proper as the 'introitus' ('point of entry'), employing a term used in the arts tradition to designate an introductory prologue.

provides,³³ and comments on the structure or typology of a particular gloss³⁴), as opposed to other possible takeaways from Comestor's biblical teaching (comments on the structure of canon law, for example), 35 suggests that at least Amiclas went into Comestor's lecture expecting to profit largely from his master's knowledge of the ars grammatica, here daringly applied to sacred Christian literature. It is worth keeping in mind that such a grammar-oriented reading of the sacra pagina could just have been one of many environments in which the sacra pagina was taught. Nevertheless, the fact that Comestor occasionally intersperses his grammar review with bits and pieces of speculative logic, Trinitarian theology, canon law and political theory suggests that this exercise amounted to something more than just the most elementary course imaginable. In fact, the lectures seem to build upon the types of learning that students would have encountered in the earlier stages of their education, as opposed to leaving them behind, and also hints at the more difficult types of questions and problems that would come if they were to further their studies indefinitely. In that sense, perhaps we can take these grammar reviews of an intermediate level as being emblematic of cathedral school practices.

Thus, Comestor's method of explicating the Bible and its glosses does not seem to accord with modern expectations of what medieval Christian theology or philosophy should have looked like in an academic setting. Instead of systematically and primarily teasing out creedal, ecclesiastical or liturgical doctrine from the text, Comestor treats the Gospel in the same manner that Roman grammarians had glossed the foundational texts of the classical liberal arts, such as Virgil's

³³ On B.1.12, fol. 4^r (see Fig. 4), Amiclas annotates the gloss multum ('greatly') with vel, nimis ('or, "too much"), and on fol. 6^r, he glosses the biblical text asto ('I stand') with vel assisto ('or, "I attend/assist""), which is, in fact, the variant reading that Comestor lectures on (BnF lat. 620, fol. 151va): 'Note that here, two things are said in the text that seem to be incongruent, namely I STAND BEFORE GOD and I WAS SENT TO YOU' (Nota quia duo dicuntur que uidentur non posse similes esse, scilicet ASSISTO ANTE DEVM et MISSVS SVM AD TE).

³⁴ For example, Amiclas' text is riddled throughout with annotations in his hand that label a particular gloss as mistice ('mystical') or allegorice ('allegorical') according to Comestor's own description, intended to suggest what sort of literary interpretation a particular gloss assumes vis-à-vis the biblical text. See B.1.12, fol. 3^v (Fig. 3), for instance, where Amiclas designates the gloss ZACHARIAS, MEMOR DOMINI ('ZACHARIAS [IS INTERPRETED AS], "MINDFUL OF THE LORD"') as mistice ('mystical'). Compare this with Comestor's teaching on that piece of text, where he says (BnF lat. 620, 150^{va}): 'about the mystical sense, you have glosses regarding the interpretations of names, as Zacharias is interpreted [as being] mindful of the Lord' (De mistico intellectu habes glosas de interpretationibus nominum, nam ZACHARIAS INTERPRETATVR MEMOR DOMINI).

³⁵ BnF lat. 620, fol. 152^{ra}.

Aeneid, Statius' Thebaid and Boethius' Consolation of Philosophy. 36 He teaches the Bible primarily through philology, seeking out etymologies of names.³⁷ providing synonyms for difficult terms and phrases,³⁸ and attempting to connect elements of Luke's narrative to insights from other disciplines including the 'secular' sciences, such as astronomy, 39 natural science, 40 and marriage laws, 41 all side by side and even integrated into reflections on the Christian liturgical calendar, 42 French social customs of the time, 43 and almost anything else imaginable. 44 By and large, the Glossa ordinaria commentary (in our case study, the Monarchian prologue), which appears here almost like a common textbook shared by

38 At one point, Comestor tackles the age-old question of why it is that Luke begins his genealogy of Christ with Joseph, working all the way to God in a seemingly backwards fashion compared with Matthew, who narrates his own genealogy starting with Adam and moving forward through time. The gloss reads: 'POWER WAS GRANTED TO HIM OF REPEATING THE GENERATION', at which point Comestor clarifies - regarding the strange phrase 'of repeating the generation' by adding (BnF lat. 620, fol. 149^{vb}): 'that is, of going backwards, which is to say, of narrating the order backwards, and it was fitting that he said "of repeating", because Matthew composed his genealogy in the right order, and thus Luke repeated him [repetiit], that is, he "moved backwards" [retrograde petiit]' (PERMISSA EST EI POTESTAS GENERATIONIS REPETENDE, id est reuoluende, id est ordine prepostero narrande, et bene ait 'repetende', quia Matheus texuerat genealogiam recto ordine, et ideo repetiit, id est retrograde petiit).

- **39** BnF lat. 620, fol. 151^{va}.
- **40** BnF lat. 620, fol. 151^{rb}.
- **41** BnF lat. 620, fol. 152^{rb}.
- **42** BnF lat. 620, fol. 153^{vb}.
- **43** BnF lat. 620, fol. 150^{rb}.

³⁶ The standard description of the medieval scholastic reception of the classical curriculum is Olsen 1982.

³⁷ For example, Comestor comments about the name of the angel Gabriel, saying (BnF lat. 620, fol. 151^{va}): 'And some say that "Gabriel" is the name of only one angel. Others such as [our] master [Peter Lombard] say more soundly that whoever strongly foretells something else can be called "Gabriel". And it is fitting that Gabriel, whose name is interpreted as "the courage of God", should announce the coming of Christ, so that through this it might be signified that he whose arrival Gabriel announced would come to wage war with the Devil and conquer him through courage' (Et dicunt quidem quod Gabriel est tantum nomen unius angeli, alii et sanius ut magister dicit quod quicumque aliud forte denuntiat Gabriel potest dici. Bene autem Christi aduentum nuntiauit Gabriel qui interpretatur 'fortitudo Dei', ut per hoc significaretur quia ille cuius nunciabat aduentum uenturus erat belligerare et in fortitudine diabolum expugnare).

⁴⁴ To take one particularly colourful example, during a discussion of a gloss that distinguishes between the 'sensory' and 'rational' parts of the soul (anima), Comestor remarks on his own little experiment regarding animal perception, saying (BnF lat. 620, fol. 153^{rb}): 'Animals have a certain sense of intuition. For this reason, if you place some barley before a donkey, it will eat it, but if you try to offer it stones, it will not' (Animalia habent sensualitatem. Vnde si posueris ante asinum ordeum, comedet. Si autem lapides, non).

Comestor and his students, and the exegesis of his own teachers determine what Comestor will focus on when explaining a particular passage of the Bible. 45 When he elaborates his teaching at length, he most often does so in order to elucidate problems of language and above all, as David Luscombe once wrote of Peter Abelard, 'to reorganise the vocabulary of thought' present in the *Glossa ordinaria* and in the biblical text proper. 46 This practice suggests to me that the scholars of Paris in the late twelfth century may have envisioned theology, and the study of the sacra pagina in particular, as an extension of the philological exercises they cultivated during their preparatory studies of the Latin classics (primarily Virgil, Lucan, Statius and Boethius) to a much greater extent than modern scholars have previously imagined.

5 General conclusion

By comparing a few selections of these manuscripts, I hope to have raised some productive questions not only about the content of Comestor's lectures on the Bible, but also about the context in which students and teachers studied canonical scriptures together in the twelfth-century schools of northern France that eventually combined to form the University of Paris. What does the master's philological focus suggest about the study of sacra pagina and its relation to the trivium of grammar, logic and rhetoric, which formed the basis for all Latin education in antiquity and the Middle Ages? Did students attending other lectures have textbooks of their own, as Amiclas did? What sorts of teachings and activities might one have encountered in such a classroom that are not captured in the reports, but hinted at in the students' marginal comments? And furthermore, how

⁴⁵ Comestor seems particularly fond of making comments about the structure of individual glosses and of suggesting to his students in what order they should read them and how. For example, while lecturing on the part of Luke's Gospel where an angel foretells the birth of John the Baptist, Comestor interjects (BnF lat. 620, fol. 150^{rb}): 'Have a look at that gloss, Many Things HERE et cetera. Note that some people adapt that gloss to this place in the Gospel, while others read it up above where it says AND YOU WILL CALL HIS NAME JOHN, while yet others save it for below where Luke talks about the silence imposed on Zachariah, because there Luke makes mention both of the imposition of John's name and of the Holy Spirit's act of fulfilment and of the punishment of silence' (Nota illam, MVLTA HIC et cetera. Vide quia quidam adaptant eam huic loco, quidam legunt eam superius ubi dicatur ET VOCABERIS NOMEN EIVS IOHANNEM, quidam protrahunt eam inferius ubi de silentio Zacharie agitur, propterea quia facit mencionem et de impositione nominis et de impletione Spiritus sancti et de pena silentii).

⁴⁶ Luscombe 1969, 308.

might such lengthy reviews of grammar have prepared young clerics for their future task as educated priests, the cura animarum (the 'care of souls'), which increasingly took the form in the twelfth-century of hearing confession, preaching and advocating for moral reform in society and the Church? While my short review can only begin to answer such questions, it ought to provide a useful indication of how far manuscript work can take scholars in terms of reconstructing historical practices of teaching and reading, as well as of how much crucial work has yet to be done in the study of the high medieval schools of Europe.

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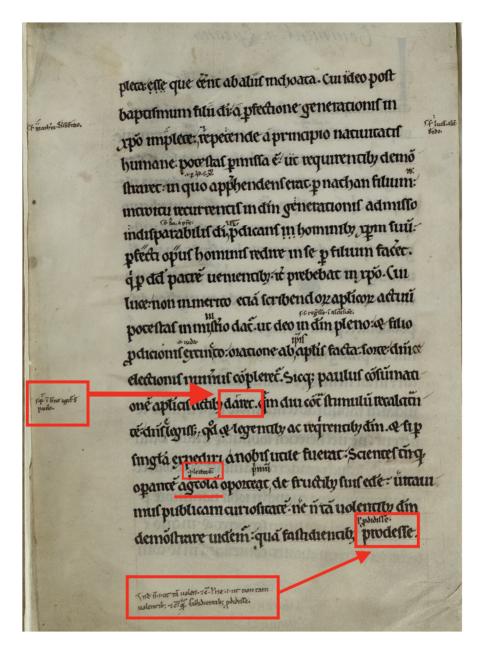


Fig. 1: Cambridge, Trinity College, B.1.12, fol. 2'; © Trinity College, Cambridge. Marginal comments are highlighted and the arrow points to the lemma that is explained.

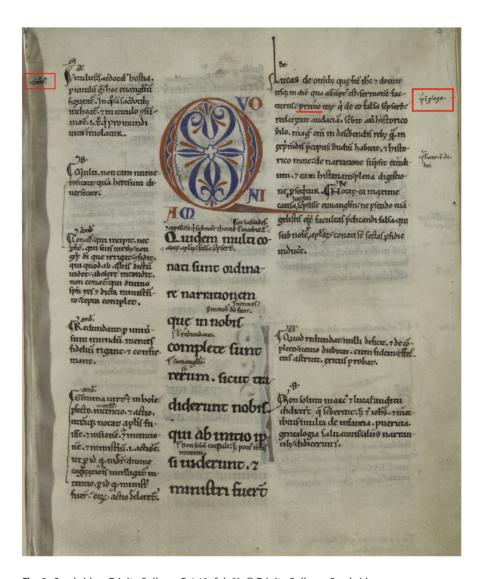


Fig. 2: Cambridge, Trinity College, B.1.12, fol. 3^r; © Trinity College, Cambridge.

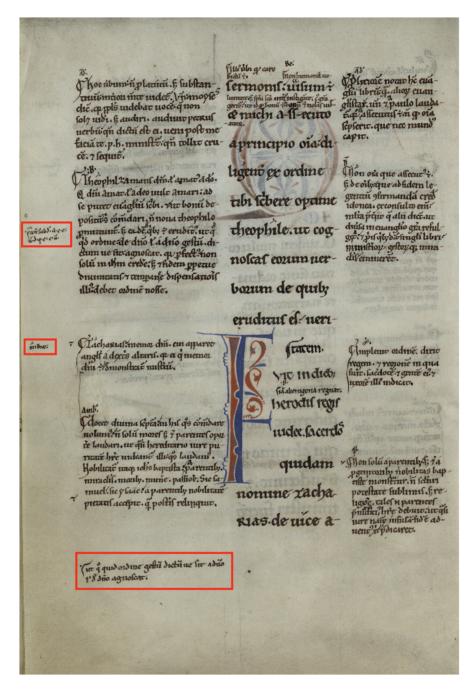


Fig. 3: Cambridge, Trinity College, B.1.12, fol. 3'; © Trinity College, Cambridge.

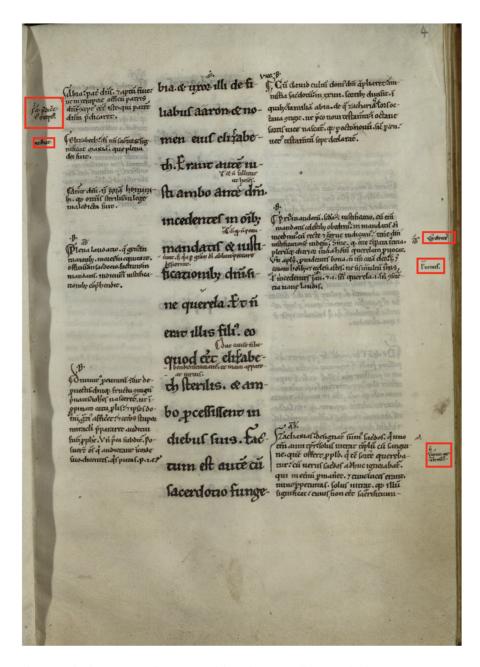


Fig. 4: Cambridge, Trinity College, B.1.12, fol. 4'; © Trinity College, Cambridge.