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The Pedagogy of Twelfth-Century Cathedral School Biblical Commentaries

Peter Comestor's Lectures on the Gospel of Luke

Peter Comestor, born in Troyes in 1100, taught in Paris in the final third of the 12th century, while serving as chancellor of the cathedral school of Notre Dame.¹ In this position, Peter was responsible not only for overseeing its program of biblical studies, but also for granting the license required to teach theology in the diocese, a role of great administrative importance.² In short, he orchestrated what was taught, by whom, and to whom within Paris. Before acceding to the position of *magister* and then chancellor, Comestor studied in the classroom of Peter Lombard, one of the most influential masters of the later Latin Middle Ages, whose writings formed the theological curriculum of the early University of Paris, which emerged at the beginning of the 13th century.³ Comestor's writings are therefore one of the greatest ›informants‹ on the teaching tradition that stretches back from Peter Lombard to Anselm, master of the cathedral school at Laon at the end of the 11th century.⁴ It is this unbroken chain of master and

1 For reviews of Comestor's life and career, see Beryl Smalley, »Peter Comestor on the Gospels and his Sources«, in: *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 46 (1979), pp. 84-129, here pp. 84-88; Lesley Smith, *The Glossa Ordinaria: the Making of a Medieval Bible Commentary*, Leiden 2009, pp. 209 f.; Mark Clark, *The Making of the Historia scholastica, 1150 – 1200*, Toronto 2015, pp. 1-10; and Matthew Doyle, *Peter Lombard and His Students*, Toronto 2016, pp. 165-181. Also valuable are the collection of articles found in *Pierre le Mangeur ou Pierre de Troyes: Maître du XII^e siècle*, ed. by Gilbert Dahan, Turhout 2013, there especially David Luscombe, »The Place of Peter Comestor in the History of Medieval Theology«, pp. 27-48.

2 Doyle (as note 1), p. 165.

3 For reviews of Peter Lombard's career and influence upon the curricula of the Latin universities, see, in addition to Doyle (as note 1), Ignatius Brady, »Peter Manducator and the Oral Teachings of Peter Lombard«, in: *Antonianum* 41 (1966), pp. 454-490; Marcia Colish, *Peter Lombard*, Vols. 1-2, Leiden 1994; as well as Mark Clark, »Peter Comestor and Peter Lombard: Brothers in Deed«, in: *Traditio* 60 (2005), pp. 85-142; and »Peter Lombard, Stephen Langton, and the School of Paris: The Making of the Twelfth-Century Scholastic Biblical Tradition«, in: *Traditio* 72 (2017), pp. 171-274.

4 Beryl Smalley, *The Gospels in the Schools, C. 1100 – C. 1280*, London 1985, p. 4.

disciple apprenticeship that scholars have come to recognize as the Laon/ Paris ›school‹, which later gave rise to the University of Paris.⁵

For current research into the culture of the French medieval education that took place before the rise of the universities, Comestor's lectures are not only revealing because of their occasional reference to Peter Lombard's now lost, but instrumental, biblical teachings⁶, but also because they completely throw into disarray the neat categories historians have constructed regarding the study of the Bible and of the classical arts in the Latin Middle Ages⁷, which are largely based on modern expectations as to how a scholarly community should operate and appear.⁸ Contrary to these narrow expectations, I have come across, in my recent work editing Comestor's biblical teachings, a remarkable variety of topics and surprising expositions held together by his didactic interest in Latin philology, both the simple and the perplexing.⁹ In this paper, I will situate Comestor's biblical exegesis within the broader scholarly environment of the French cathedral schools of the 12th century, where the study of the Latin language, through the traditional and largely stable curriculum of the liberal arts, lay at the heart of most formal academic pursuits. I maintain throughout that further study ought to pay more attention to Peter Comestor's method of teaching by means of a grammatical parsing of the Latin Vulgate and its standardized glosses.¹⁰

5 See Luscombe (as note 1), p. 28; Mark Clark, »The Biblical Gloss, the Search for Peter Lombard's Glossed Bible, and the School of Paris«, in: *Mediaeval Studies* 76 (2014), pp. 57-114; and Alexander André, »*Sacra Pagina*: Theology and the Bible from the School of Laon to the School of Paris«, in: Cédric Giraud (ed.), *A Companion to Twelfth-Century Schools*, Leiden [forthcoming].

6 See Clark (as note 5).

7 For overviews of Latin education in the 12th century, see Birger Munk Olsen, *L'étude des auteurs classiques latins aux XIe et XIIe siècles*, Paris 1982; for insight into the interaction between arts and biblical curricula, see Alastair J. Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages*, Aldershot 1988.

8 Two prominent critics of scholars' preference for speculative medieval texts at the expense of more representative commentaries have been Marcia Colish and Giulio Silano. See Colish, »The Sentence Collection and the Education of Professional Theologians in the Twelfth Century«, in: Nancy Van Deusen (ed.), *The Intellectual Climate of the Early University: Essays in Honor of Otto Gründler* (Studies in Medieval Culture 39), Kalamazoo, Michigan 1997, pp. 1-26; and Peter Lombard, *Sentences*, trs. by Giulio Silano, Vol. 1 (Mediaeval Sources in Translation 42), Toronto 2007, pp. xxiv-vi.

9 For a review of Comestor's pedagogy see Simon Whedbee, »The Study of the Bible in the Cathedral Schools of Twelfth-Century France: A Case Study of Robert Amiclas and Peter Comestor«, in: Stefanie Brinkmann, Giovanni Ciotti, Martin Delhey, and Stefano Valente (eds.), *Education Materialized: Reconstructing Teaching and Learning Contexts through Manuscripts*, Studies in Manuscript Cultures, Berlin [forthcoming].

10 Scholars have currently taken up renewed interest in the writings of Peter Comestor. In addition to the recent publications in Gilbert Dahan's *Pierre le Mangeur ou Pierre de Troyes* (as

A century ago, scholars in the field of medieval biblical exegesis undertook expansive surveys of the Latin manuscripts of the 12th and 13th centuries. In the summaries of their findings, however, they mislead their readers by judging the French masters according to entirely modern expectations of what intellectual achievement in written form should amount to.¹¹ In accordance with their presumptions, they thus divided the writings of the 12th century *magistri* into two camps: the ›speculative, systematic camp‹ championed by Peter Lombard, which looked forward to Thomas Aquinas, and the ›historical, biblical camp‹, championed by Peter Comestor, which led nowhere and supposedly died mere decades after Comestor's own demise in the 1170s.¹² Later scholars who advanced this thesis ignored the fact that Peter Comestor learned nearly all he taught from the lips of Peter Lombard, and that the Lombard himself was the century's strongest proponent of the ›biblical commentary style‹ that the rest of his writings supposedly made obsolete.¹³

But another stream of scholarship now seeks to cast aside this distinction between the world of the biblical commentary and that of the systematic theological treatise organized topically, and emphasizes instead the importance of the liberal arts for understanding theology, in whatever literary form, in terms of the genre expectations of classical philology. Current research returns to the very beginning of the matter by asking: »What was ›theology‹ in the Latin Middle Ages?«. And the manuscripts resound over and over: Nothing other than *sacra pagina*: the close reading of the sacred texts and authorities, which discipline Hugh of St. Victor clearly and explicitly places under the jurisdiction of the liberal arts.¹⁴

note 1) and Mark Clark's *The Making of the Historia scholastica* (as note 1), University of Toronto scholars Alexander Andrée, David Foley, and I are currently in the process of editing Comestor's lectures on the four Gospels, an extensive project, with early results of our efforts soon to come.

- 11 Principally, they privileged the very few medieval writings that resembled in form the modern monograph (for example, Anselm of Canterbury's writings, or the *Summa* of Thomas Aquinas), largely disparaging the bulk of medieval content, which is in commentary form, and was looked down upon by many scholars of recent centuries.
- 12 Martin Grabmann, *Die Geschichte der scholastischen Methode*, Vols. 1-2, Freiburg i. Br. 1911, especially Vol. 2, pp. 13-24, and pp. 476-506. See also Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, Oxford 1941, pp. 196-198. The strongest current proponent of this view is Frans van Liere, »Biblical Exegesis through the Twelfth Century«, in: Susan Boynton and Diane J. Reilly (eds.), *The Practice of the Bible in the Middle Ages: Production, Reception, and Performance in Western Christianity*, New York 2011, pp. 172 f. For a refutation of this point, see Alexander Andrée, »Peter Comestor's Lectures on the *Glossa ›Ordinaria‹* on the Gospel of John: The Bible and Theology in the Twelfth-Century Classroom«, in: *Traditio* 71 (2016), pp. 203-234, here pp. 203-205.
- 13 This fact has been made most evident by the recent, works of Mark Clark and Matthew Doyle (as note 1).
- 14 Hugh of St. Victor, *Didascalicon: De studio Legendi*, ed. by C. H. Buttner, trs. by Thilo Offerfeld, Freiburg i. Br. 1997, p. 360. Here, Hugh has a lengthy discourse on the theme of ›his-

As part of the liberal arts, the exposition of texts (both sacred and profane) must be guided by the *ars grammatica* (the 'art of grammar'), which Hugh also terms *philologia* ('philology'), and which includes everything from poetry to history, and thus by extension the sacred *History of Salvation*. Of this primacy of philology, Hugh writes: »The Cathedral of Philology is, to all who have the means to see, the Throne of Wisdom, which the Liberal Arts uphold, for *in these arts* she claws her way forward«. ¹⁵ Philology, and the commentary tradition in particular, allows one to navigate through the liberal arts and sciences and brings together the unity of their diverse truths, all of which are hinted at in the biblical scriptures. ¹⁶ At least that is what the forerunners of the University of Paris at the end of the 12th century thought, following a long line of Christian thinkers in the Latin tradition.

This intimate relationship between the reading of sacred texts and the formal study of language and literature itself explains the content of Peter Comestor's most famous work, the *Historia scholastica*, a rendition and explication of the

tory, which, I think, illuminates the relationship between the study of language (philology) and of biblical texts (theology) in Comestor's lectures (all translations from Latin, here and throughout, are my own): »Thus it is no wonder that education happens best when, before you study history and the truth of deeds [that is, the *enarratio poetarum*, the grammatical reading of canonical texts, the staple of Greco-Roman primary education], you repetitiously commit to memory, from the beginning until the end, what happened, when it happened, where it happened, and by whom it was done [these are the *circumstantiae*. See footnote 73]. For these four things are especially necessary to the study of history: person, deed, time, and place [cf. Comestor's *circumstantiae* for history]. Nor do I think you can become truly learned in allegory unless you are first grounded in history [that is, clearly, 'grammar']. Do not spurn these small things! Who shuns the details, little by little slips away. If you had been ashamed to first learn the alphabet, you would now have no place at all among the grammarians [. . .]. Learn all things! Later you will see that nothing was unneeded. Limited knowledge is disagreeable«. [*Sic nimirum in doctrina fieri oportet, ut videlicet prius historiam discas et rerum gestarum veritatem, a principio repetens usque ad finem quid gestum sit, quando gestum sit, ubi gestum sit, et a quibus gestum sit [the circumstantiae], diligenter memoriae commendes. Haec enim quattuor praecipue in historia requirenda sunt, persona, negotium, tempus et locus. Neque ego te perfecte subtilem posse fieri puto in allegoria, nisi prius fundatus fueris in historia. Noli contemnere minima haec. Paulatim defluit qui minima contemnit, si primo alphabetum discere contempnissis, nunc inter grammaticos tantum nomen non haberes [. . .]. Omnia discas, videbis postea nihil esse superfluum. Coartata scientia iucunda non est.*]

15 Ibid., p. 264: »*Cathedra quippe philologiae sedes est sapientiae, quae his suppositis gestari dicitur, quoniam in his se exercendo promovetur.*«

16 This idea has a long history in the Latin Christian tradition. Some of its most influential supporters, with varying opinions, were Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*, ed. by R. P. H. Green, Oxford 1996; Cassiodorus, *Institutiones divinarum et saecularium litterarum*, ed. by Wolfgang Bursgens, Freiburg i. Br. 2003; and Hugh of St. Victor (as note 14). Other important examples are Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*, ed. by W. M. Lindsay, Oxford 1911; and Alcuin, *The Rhetoric of Alcuin & Charlemagne*, ed. by Wilbur Samuel Howell, New York 1965.

entirety of the biblical narrative, from Genesis to the Apocalypse, according to etymology, grammar, syntax, and other essential components of medieval philology.¹⁷

It also explains, as I will aim to demonstrate, Comestor's biblical lectures. In his search for the truth of the *history* of the Gospel stories, Comestor is no antiquarian nor fancier of historical trivialities.¹⁸ He is a ›master of the sacred page‹, with an emphasis on *page*. He is a curator of texts *qua* texts, and that primarily embroils him in the labour of philology. In this tradition, the study of grammar amounts to the practise of philological exegesis, which has at its heart the pursuit of history and literary art, aided by and contributing to an understanding of natural science and, ultimately, sacred divinity.¹⁹

17 For a description of the philological pedagogy of the *Historia*, see Clark (as note 1), pp. 24-27, 62 f., 82 f., and 151-156. Not only does Comestor's general method of exegesis follow the reading techniques and priorities established by the Latin grammar tradition, but he also frequently cites the most important grammar textbooks, principally Aelius Donatus' *Ars grammatica*. Further study into the *Historia* can elucidate this matter, hopefully strengthened by a suitable edition of the text's many manuscripts. Here is one example, taken from J. P. Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, Vol. 198, Paris 1841-1855, Col.1600B: »And the name ›Hosanna‹ is a Hebrew word, composed of a truncated part and a whole part [technical terms from the grammar tradition]. For ›Osi‹ signifies ›saved‹ or ›saving‹. ›Anna‹ is an imploring interjection [another technical term], just as ›papae‹ is an interjection of wonder.« [Et est Osanna verbum Hebraeum, compositum ex corrupto et integro. Osi enim sonat salva, vel salvifica. Anna est interjectio obsecrantis, sicut papae admirantis.] Compare with the unquestioned standard textbook for introductory Latin grammar throughout the Middle Ages, Aelius Donatus, *Ars minor*, ed. by Axel Schönberger, Frankfurt a. M. 2008, pp. 122-124: »What is an interjection? A part of speech signifying the affectations of the mind through a meaningless word. What does an interjection do? Only signify. What can an interjection signify? We can either signify happiness, when we say ›evax‹, or sorrow, when we say ›heu‹, or wonder, when we say ›papae‹, or fear, when we say ›attat‹.« [Interiectio quid est? Pars orationis significans mentis affectum voce incondita. Interiectioni quid accidit? Tantum significatio. Significatio interiectionis in quo est? Quia aut laetitiam significamus, ut evax, aut dolorem, ut heu, aut admirationem, ut papae, aut metum, ut attat.]

18 What Luscombe terms an »interest in antiquities« (as note 1), p. 42. Scholars' views that Comestor was principally an antiquarian stem back to Smalley, who characterized his writings as consisting of »liturgy, iconography, relics, and the archaeology and topography of Palestine«; she also described his »typical outlook« as a »preference for ... historical meaning« in which »the liturgy in his view re-enacted, recalled and even offered evidence for the gospel story«. See Smalley (as note 4), pp. 69 f. Scholarship dealing with Comestor has been largely dismissive of his lectures on account of this notion that he was principally an antiquarian and liturgist.

19 Smalley (as note 12), p. 27: »Scripture requires the same erudite treatment as the pagans give to Virgil. The sciences and liberal arts are necessary in so far as they contribute to an understanding of Scripture. The student needs language, grammar, and history in order to understand the literal sense, dialectic to distinguish true doctrine from false, arithmetic for number symbolism, natural history for the symbolism of beasts and birds; rhetoric, the crown of the higher education, is necessary not only for his own studies, but to enable him to teach and preach what he has learnt ... We learn by sharing our learning. Bible study includes the study

Comestor and his colleagues would not likely have viewed the grammatical study of the Bible as second rate theology, as Martin Grabmann's distinction between biblical and speculative theology would seem to suggest. The grammatical exegesis of the Bible was an exercise open to all modes and forms of knowledge, precisely because to study grammar was to subject a text to the principal method of antique and medieval universal science: the philological parsing of an authoritative text, a fact which holds true even for those commentaries deemed more speculative.²⁰ A close look at the bulk of the manuscripts that bear witness to what was being taught in the cathedral schools of Europe in the Middle Ages bears this out; for the purpose of this article, I will examine Comestor's lectures on the Gospel of Luke as a case study.

I must begin by describing the two manuscripts I have transcribed in order to present the pedagogy of Peter Comestor's lectures on the Gospel of Luke. The first is BnF Latin 620, an early 13th century *reportatio*²¹, or student's report, that records a lengthy series of lectures on the Glossed Gospel of Luke.²² The second is the Glossed Gospel owned by Robert Amiclas, a 12th-century scholar who also learned and taught in Paris.

This latter manuscript, Trinity College B.1.12, offers at least two indispensable witnesses to the Latin tradition of medieval biblical education. Most obviously, Amiclas' textbook contains a standard version of the Latin Vulgate text of the Gospel of Luke, along with an early version of the so called *Glossa ordinaria*, the great medieval Gloss on the Bible composed in Laon at the end of the 11th century

of Catholic tradition which St. Augustine does not distinguish from Scripture. It is part of theology, and theology is Bible study; so is philosophy, since their purpose is the same. Scripture is the starting point and the way to blessedness, which is the goal of Christian philosophy and is reached through love«.

20 See Jean Châtillon, »La Bible dans les écoles du XIIe siècle«, in: Pierre Riché and Guy Lobrichon (eds.), *Le moyen âge et la Bible*, (Bible de tous les temps 4), Paris 1984, pp. 163-197.

21 For overviews of this genre of manuscript, see Jacqueline Hamesse, »La méthode de travail des reportateurs«, in: *Medioevo e Rinascimento* 3 (1989), pp. 51-67, and »Reportatio et transmission de textes«, in: M. Asztalos (ed.), *The Editing of Theological and Philosophical Texts from the Middle Ages – Acts of the Conference arranged by the Department of Classical Languages, University of Stockholm, 29-31 August 1984*, (Studia Latina Stockholmiensia 30), Stockholm 1986, pp. 11-40.

22 For an overview of the place of Comestor's lectures within his career, see Alexander André, »The Master in the Margins: Peter Comestor, the ›Buildwas Books‹, and Teaching Theology in Twelfth-Century Paris«, in: *Scriptorium* [forthcoming]; as well as »Peter Comestor's Lectures on the Glossa ›Ordinaria‹ on the Gospel of John. The Bible and Theology in the Twelfth-Century Classroom«, in: *Traditio* 71 (2016), pp. 203-234; and Gilbert Dahan »Les exégèses des Pierre le Mangeur«, in: *Pierre le Mangeur* (as note 1), pp. 49-88.

and taught in the schools of Paris in the 12th and beyond.²³ Second, Amiclas' marginal notes clearly reveal that he studied with Comestor and recorded his *magister's* teachings in his manuscript for further reference or to amend the text of the Bible or the *Glossa*.²⁴ Not only does this fact reveal how a student might have processed his teacher's lecture, but it also allows us to approximate what version of the *Glossa* and of the Latin Vulgate Comestor would have had before him while he taught. Amiclas' Glossed Bible was produced around Paris, and likely would have been checked against his master's copy during the lectures, a practice for which we seem to have ample material evidence in the Trinity manuscript.²⁵ Further evidence for this practice is the great extent to which Comestor pays attention in his classroom lectures to correcting manuscript readings of the Bible: noting errors, suggesting alternative readings, etc.²⁶ We have double verification, then, of the importance of philology in the cathedral classroom: the masters' lectures themselves, and, in at least this rare case, the notes of a student who highlighted, presumably, what was deemed most relevant.

According to the few studies that have been done on the manuscript, we know that Robert Amiclas taught in Paris in the third quarter of the 12th century and was previously a student there in the 1150s and 1160s when Peter Comestor lectured.²⁷ Most of Amiclas' notations in the margins of his textbook copy of the Glossed Gospel of Luke likely stem from Comestor's lectures, and even depend on the unique way in which Comestor arranged the Gloss for his students while teaching.²⁸ For example, many of Amiclas' notes on Jerome's prologue to the Gospel of Luke perfectly echo Comestor's teaching²⁹, while others provide the

23 See Smith (as note 1), pp. 17-39; Alexander André, «Anselm of Laon Unveiled: The *Glosae super Iohannem* and the Origins of the *Glossa Ordinaria* on the Bible», in: *Mediaeval Studies* 73 (2011), pp. 217-260.

24 For overviews of these codices, see J. M. Sheppard, «Magister Robertus Amiclas: A Buildwas Benefactor?», in: *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society* 9 (1988), pp. 281-288; Rodney M. Thomson, «Robert Amiclas: A Twelfth-Century Parisian Master and His Books», in: *Scriptorium* 49, (1995), pp. 238-243; and André (as note 23).

25 See Whedbee (as note 9).

26 Ibid.; and André (as note 23), *passim*.

27 See Thomson (as note 24), pp. 238-243.

28 Throughout this paper, I distinguish between a gloss citation and Amiclas' or Comestor's exposition by marking, in both the Latin and my English translation, the gloss citation in SMALL CAPS, biblical citations in ALL CAPS, and exposition in normal font.

29 Comestor's lecture, BnF lat. 620, fol. 149va: »Variant readings have ›to the elect‹, and thus it reads ...«. [*Alia littera habet ›ELECTIS‹, et legitur ita ...*]. Amiclas's personal note, Trinity College B.1.12, fol. 2r: »Or, ›to the elect‹. [*vel ›is‹ (margin correction made to the word ›electus‹, ›having been elected‹, which modifies the noun from nominative to dative, i. e. ›to the elect‹)*].

same reading with slight variation³⁰, expand upon an idea³¹, or gather various teachings into a single statement.³² Each folio of the Trinity manuscript contains such classroom *vestigia*. Comestor's students certainly must have owned or borrowed versions of the Gloss, or at least the relevant portions, as Amiclas did.³³

That the students would have had copies of the Glossed Gospel in Comestor's classroom makes eminent sense once one begins to sift through the lecture *reportationes*. For even a cursory glance at Comestor's lecture material reveals that somewhere around ninety percent of these teachings take the form of philological gloss exposition, the likes of which would be rather unhelpful without a reference copy of the Gospel in question. Comestor notes a biblical lemma, and then explicates that word or phrase from the *sacra scriptura* by ›lemma hopping‹, so to speak, jumping from gloss to gloss, or within a gloss, to best arrange the commentary tradition for his students, who would have been either looking over his shoulder at his magisterial codex or at their own manuscript copies.³⁴

30 Comestor (as note 29), fol. 149va: »IN THE BEGINNING, that is, in his own prologue [proemio]«. Amiclas (as note 29), fol. 3r: »That is, in the prologue [prologo]«.

31 Comestor (as note 29), fol. 149vb: »OF THE INSEPARABLE GOD, that is, of the Father«. [INDISPARABILIS DEI, *id est Patris*]. Amiclas (as note 29), fol. 2v: »According to substance, from the Father«. [*Secundum substantiam a Patre.*]

32 Comestor (as note 29), fol. 150ra: »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«. [NE, pro »ut si hoc faceremus, NON VIDEREMVR DEMONSTRARE«, *id est Dei noticiam tradere. VOLENTIBVS DEVM, 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 edificacionem. Alia littera habet PRODIDISSE, et tunc non est ibi DEMONSTRARE'«]. Amiclas (as note 29), fol. 2v: »›LEST NOT‹, that is, ›so that‹ ›TO THE EXTENT THAT TO THOSE DESIRING [to see God]‹, etc., or ›LEST‹, that is ›NOT‹ SO MUCH TO THOSE DESIRING', etc., BUT RATHER TO THE SCORNFUL TO HAVE REVEALED THESE THINGS ...«. [NE NON, *id est ut*: TAM VOLENTIBVS et cetera. Vel NE, *id est non TAM VOLENTIBVS et cetera, QVAM FASTIDIENTIBVS PRODIDISSE.*]*

33 Whedbee (as note 9); and Andrée (as note 23).

34 Take this example, where Comestor clarifies a point of ambiguity in the Luke text (as note 29), fol. 151va: »Note that two things are said in the Gospel of Luke that cannot be simultaneously true, namely that the angel Gabriel says at different times in the text ›I STAND BEFORE GOD‹ and ›I WAS SENT TO YOU‹. And thus note that whenever an angel is sent, he everywhere finds the presence of God, for God is everywhere. Concerning this, you have the gloss that begins WHEN TO US et cetera. And it continues: EVEN THOUGH AN ANGEL IS A CIRCUMSCRIBED ... that is, a being in one place and not in another. NOT CIRCUMSCRIBED, that is, not enclosed by spatial boundaries or cutting through the air when moving. WITHIN WHOM, that is, because everywhere the angel finds God's presence. Now move on to that

Occasionally, his own interest, or the nature of a particular gloss itself, compels Peter to discuss topics that range across all the liberal arts, natural philosophy, and theology, going beyond the gloss, though never without reference to it. However, lessons on Latin grammar, or philology more broadly, often provide the backbone and structure to Comestor's otherwise wide-ranging discussions. Unless one recognizes this pattern, that is, his pragmatic method of training young clerics in their Latinity, one very important and widely applicable ›transferable skill‹ they will take with them wherever they go, one quickly loses oneself amidst what seem like the completely unconnected observations, digressions, and obsessions of a rather eccentric *magister*. In a single course, Comestor discusses the lunar calendar, Jewish naming practices, at what stage a foetus attains a distinctly human soul, the relationship of a bishop to his diocese, the arrangement of the Church's feasts, human sexuality, geometry, the Divine Attributes, and the different writing utensils found in the antique world but no longer in contemporary usage.³⁵

Nevertheless, it seems to me that two things in particular bring cohesion to Comestor's classroom: the needs attendant upon building up orthodox piety through study of the sacred texts (the cathedral schools, of course, principally offer a ›religious‹ education), and those skills of prudent distinction and discernment which clerics will find useful in serving the administrative goals of the Church or of the civil authorities whom they will serve as chancellors and attendants of various bureaucratic stations.³⁶ In that regard, two of the most influential students who studied in the schools of Paris were John of Salisbury, who involved himself in the controversies between Thomas Becket and Henry II, and Comestor's student Stephen Langton, who mediated between Henry's lacklustre son John and the English barons, helping to compose the *Magna Carta*.

other gloss, BECAUSE OF THE LOFTINESS et cetera, and afterward read that other gloss IF IT HAD BEEN A HUMAN et cetera. And see that the same angel, namely Gabriel, announced John the Baptist's conception and the Saviour's conception«. [*Nota quia duo dicuntur que uidentur non posse similes esse, scilicet ASSISTO ANTE DEVM et MISSVS SVM AD TE. Ideo nota quia quocienscumque mittatur angelus ubique inuenit presentiam Dei, quia Deus ubique est. De hoc habes glosam CVM AD NOS et cetera. ETSI ANGELVS EST SPIRITVS INCIRCVMSCRIPTVS, id est ita ens in uno loco quod non in alio. NON CIRCVMSCRIPTVS, id est loci termino clausus et sui interpositione faciens aeris ad aerem distantiam. INTRA QVEM, quia ubique inuenit eius presentiam. Modo lege illam PROPTER ALTIIVDINEM et cetera postea illam NON HOMO et cetera. Vide quia idem angelus scilicet Gabriel nunciauit conceptionem precursoris et conceptionem saluatoris.*]

35 I am currently at work editing the portions of Comestor's lectures that contain these excerpts; they are ubiquitous, however, throughout the entirety of all four of his Gospel commentaries.

36 See J. P. Haseldine's introduction to John of Salisbury, *Metalogicon*, tr. by J. B. Hall, Turhout 2013, pp. 13-23; and John Van Engen, »Studying Scripture in the Early University«, in: Robert E. Lerner and Elisabeth Müller-Luckner (eds.), *Neue Richtungen in der hoch- und spätmittelalterlichen Bibelexegese*, (Schriften des Historischen Kollegs 32), Munich 1996, pp. 17-38.

Indeed, clerics who read, write, and in general communicate effectively and intentionally best serve their kingdom and Church's desire for greater orthodoxy, piety, learning, and integration of Christian teaching within the broader society, the goals in fact outlined by all of the four Lateran Councils that immediately preceded Comestor or followed in his wake.³⁷ What David Luscombe once wrote about Peter Abelard holds true for Peter Comestor and the other teachers of his day: they sincerely sought to »uphold the teaching of Christ and the Apostles but in understanding that teaching [they were] most concerned to *reveal and to elucidate problems, to reorganize the vocabulary of thought and to highlight what had been neglected or exaggerated among the themes contained in Scripture and the Fathers*«.³⁸

Giulio Silano has described this concern as the art of cultivating *prudence*, the ability to analyze situations (whether of language, law, or theology) complicated by the immensity and diversity of the traditional authorities who have sought to clearly define them.³⁹ What to do with a legal case when the canonists seem to contradict themselves? How does one reconcile the paradoxes of the differing Gospel accounts, especially when important Church doctrine is at stake? In the 12th century, the age of *prudentia*, scholars undertook massive projects to provide thorough »casebooks« that would train specialists to be able to handle controversies requiring such fine distinction.⁴⁰ And, not coincidentally, these textbooks were the most popular and influential texts to emerge from the schools and to be carried on into the universities: Gratian's *Decretum* for canon law, Peter Lombard's *Sentences* for doctrinal theology, and Peter Comestor's *Historia scholastica* for the study of the biblical narrative.⁴¹ In Comestor's *Historia*, as well as in his lectures, he shows, through his method, that one attains this sort of discerning *prudentia* by the rigorous study of philology (grammar, rhetoric, and logic), the gateway to the other liberal arts.⁴²

The simplest of Comestor's philological comments pertain to some of the rhetorical techniques found in the Vulgate and studied throughout the Middle

37 See Silano (as note 8), pp. xxii f.; and Guy Lobrichon, »Une nouveauté: les gloses de la Bible«, in Riché and Lobrichon (as note 20), pp. 95-114.

38 David Luscombe, *The School of Peter Abelard. The Influence of Abelard's Thought in the Early Scholastic Period*, Cambridge 1969, p. 308 [my emphasis].

39 Silano (as note 8), Book 1, pp. xxii-iv.

40 Ibid., pp. xix-xxvi.

41 See Malcolm B. Parkes, »The Influence of the Concepts of ›Ordinatio‹ and ›Compilatio‹ on the Development of the Book«, in: J. Alexander and M. T. Gibson (eds.), *Medieval Learning and Literature: Essays Presented to Richard William Hunt*, Oxford 1976, pp. 115-141, here p. 127; and Minnis (as note 7), p. 13; and Silano (as note 8), p. vii.

42 Cf. Comestor (as note 29), fol. 176rb: »If you pay attention to the rules of grammar, so that the passage reads [...]«. [*Si attendas proprietatem artis gramatice ut dicat ...*]

Ages according to the writings of Donatus, Priscian, Cicero, and Quintilian. In two places he references »antonomasia«, a metonym in which an epithet or phrase takes the place of a proper name, for example where »The Philosopher« always refers to »Aristotle«. In the first instance he writes, »Indeed the Jewish Law announced a future peace, and the Gospel [*euangelium*] announces that this peace that was made is now restored between God and mankind through the Mediator. For this reason, such an announcement is called through antonomasia ›The Good News‹ [that is, *euangelium*]«. ⁴³ In the second, he describes the practice of referring specifically to Peter and Paul as »The Apostles«. ⁴⁴

Moreover, he mentions elsewhere the structural antithesis created in the Book of Ezekiel when the prophet writes, »their feet [were] upright feet« (*pedes eorum, pedes recti*), ⁴⁵ and later points out a similar case of *adaptatio per antithesim* (i. e. antithesis) in one of the glosses, which reads, »The woman seduced by the Devil brought death, the woman taught by the angel brought salvation«. ⁴⁶ Such an understanding of literary techniques formed the basis of Latin education since Greco-Roman antiquity, when the grammarians took to the task of expounding Homer and later Virgil. ⁴⁷

One further example: Comestor is keen to note any case of pleonasm, the unnecessary repetition of words for added emphasis, as for example in the phrase »Saying, thus hath the Lord dealt with me« (*dicens quia sic mihi*). ⁴⁸ Where the meaning of *quia sic* might strike a Latin reader as awkward, Comestor rewrites the sentence for greater clarity, adding, »Or so that it might not result in pleonasm: SAYING ›it is a wonder, because [*quia*] in such a way [*sic*] has God dealt with me«, or ›with merit I cover myself, because in such a way has God dealt

43 Ibid., fol. 149ra: [*Lex quidem nunciauit pacem futuram, euangelium nunciat pacem factam iam per mediatorem inter Deum et homines reformatam. Vnde annunciatio talis antonomasice dicitur euangelium.*]

44 Ibid., fol. 149va: »A DISCIPLE OF THE APOSTLES. Here the prologue depicts Luke in terms of his discipleship, and understand ›a disciple of Peter and Paul‹ on account of their primacy of place. For we are accustomed to refer to them through antonomasia as ›the Apostles«, as when we say, ›we arranged to visit the Tomb of the Apostles«. [*DISCIPVLVS APOSTOLORVM. Hic a conuictu, et intellige Petri et Pauli per excellentiam. Eos enim antonomasice apostolos intelligere consueuimus, ut cum dicitur ›disposuimus uisitare limina apostolorum.*]

45 Ibid., fol. 149ra.

46 Ibid., fol. 152rb: »TO THE VIRGIN. GLOSS: WOMAN BY THE DEVIL, and this is a fitting adaptation through antithesis«. [*AD VIRGINAM. Glosa, MULIER A DIABOLO, et est elegans adaptatio per antithesim*]. The gloss that Comestor here explicates reads: »The woman seduced by the Devil brought death, the woman taught by the angel brought salvation«. [*Mulier a diabolo seducta intulit mortem, contra mulier ab angelo edocta salutem edidit.*]

47 See Frans Van Liere, *Introduction to the Medieval Bible*, New York 2014, pp. 39-48.

48 Luke 1:25.

with me», so that the phrase might connect to that other biblical passage, SHE WAS HIDING HERSELF«. ⁴⁹

This last manoeuvre, whereby Comestor connects the meaning of one sentence of the biblical text to another by means of philological exposition, relates to the medieval grammatical technique of *continuatio*, the pursuit of the ›continuity‹ of the many layers of the text's meaning across the different hermeneutic lenses employed by the commentator (literal, allegorical, spiritualizing etc.).⁵⁰ Comestor seems to pay equal attention to his audience's comprehension of the biblical account and of these building blocks of Latin style that had been established, polished, and commented upon for over a millennium. While Comestor certainly wants his students to follow the Gospel story, not least of all so that they might learn to imitate Christ⁵¹, he also teaches them the literary and rhetorical terms and techniques that they must learn in order to be able to communicate the message of the Gospel effectively to their own students, parishioners, and charges one day, regardless of their future careers, and which also distinguish them as literate and cultured members of society, the inheritors of the legacy of Rome.⁵²

These same biblical literary techniques and *topoi* that Comestor points out to his students, would have also been taught to them by their teachers of the arts classics (such as Virgil, Lucan, and Statius) through the mediation of the most influential late antique Latin grammarians: Donatus, Servius, and Priscian.⁵³ Students who went on to write literature of their own, whether Latin commen-

49 Comestor (as note 29), fol. 151vb: »DICENS QVIA SIC MIHI, pleonasmos est. Habundat enim ›quia‹ et est ydioma bebreum. Vel ita ut non sit pleonasmos: DICENS, ›mirum est quia sic fecit mihi Deus‹. Vel, ›merito me occulto quia sic fecit mihi Deus: ut respiciat ad hoc quod dictum est OCCVLTABAT SE«.

50 Édouard Jauneau, »Gloses et commentaires de textes philosophiques«, in: »Tendenda vela«. *Excursions littéraires et digressions philosophiques à travers le Moyen Âge* (Instrumenta patristica et mediaevalia 47), Turnhout 2007, pp. 285–299, here pp. 290 f.; and Rita Copeland, »Gloss and Commentary«, in: *The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Latin Literature*, ed. by Ralph Hexter and David Townsend, Oxford 2012, pp. 171–191.

51 As Comestor says in his introduction to the Gospel of Luke (as note 29). One gets an even greater appreciation for the extent to which Comestor associates the study of the Bible with moral formation in the collection of his sermons that have survived, and are contained in Jacques-Paul Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, Vol. 198, Paris 1841–1855, especially sermons 2, 3, 12, and 20.

52 Stephen Jaeger, *The Envy of Angels: Cathedral Schools and Social Ideas in Medieval Europe, 950 – 1200*, Philadelphia 1994, pp. 1–14, 325–329.

53 See L. D. Reynolds and N. G. Wilson, *Scribes and Scholars: A Guide to the Transmission of Greek and Latin Literature*, Oxford 2013, pp. 33–39, 114 f.; Bernhard Bischoff, *Latin Palaeography: Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, trs. by Dáibhí ó Cróinín and David Ganz, Cambridge 2014, p. 218; Smalley (as note 12), p. 12; Cédric Giraud, *Per verba magistri: Anselme de Laon et son école au XIII^e siècle*, Turnhout 2010, pp. 80–83; and Van Engen (as note 36), pp. 37 f.

taries or vernacular romances, never forgot these lessons, and kept before them the models of ›good writing‹ that their teachers had provided. In these lectures, Comestor built his model of literate thought around the semantic structure of the Latin Vulgate Bible and the writings of the Latin patristic fathers as handed down to him in the Laon *Glossa ordinaria*. He seems to have desired that his students would not only learn Greek rhetorical theory, but also that they would not misunderstand something of their foundational religious literature.

To that same end, Comestor often parses for his students the Latin grammar and syntax required to make sense of the Gospel, and the *Glossa's* relationship to the *sacra pagina*. In this way he begins his lecture on the *Monarchian prologue* to Luke, attributed to Jerome in the Middle Ages and always attached at the beginning of the Gospel:

Thus the prologue says, LUKE, supply the *verbum substantivum*⁵⁴ ›was‹, SYRIAN BY NATION, that is OF ANTIOCH, supply, ›by fatherland‹, A DOCTOR BY TRADE, here the prologue highlights Luke's place in life before his conversion, A DISCIPLE OF THE APOSTLES, here the prologue highlights Luke's conversion, and understand ›a disciple of Peter and Paul‹ on account of their preeminence. For we are accustomed to understand them specifically, through antonomasia, by ›apostles‹.⁵⁵

One sees clearly here how Comestor fills in the gaps for his students, explicitly stating anything hidden implicitly in the Latin grammar, even explaining the prologue by means of the prologue (for example »SYRIAN BY NATION, that is ›OF ANTIOCH«). Elsewhere, taking initiative from the *Glossa*, he makes distinctions between *verba prolativa* and *substantiva*⁵⁶, notes that the word *sacerdos* (priest, priestess) may decline as masculine or feminine⁵⁷, explains that Hebrew names often do not fully decline when converted to Latin⁵⁸, and, in a particularly in-

54 That is, in this case, a verb of being.

55 Comestor (as note 29), fol. 149va: »Ait itaque LVCAS, suple uerbum substantiuum ›fuit‹, SYRVS NACIONE, id est ANTHIOCHENSIS, suple ›patria‹, ARTE MEDICVS. Hic commendat ab officio ante fidem. DISCIPVLVS APOSTOLORVM. Hic a conuictu, et intellige Petri et Pauli per excellentiam. Eos enim antonomasice apostolos intelligere consueuimus.«

56 Ibid., fol. 150rb, 153va. Prolatives extend the signification of a predication, substantives do not merely extend, but replace. Comestor brings up the distinction in a discussion of the *Verbum Dei*, the Word of God who is Christ, which harkens back to a late antique controversy over comparisons between the Word of God and human language, touched upon by Ambrose of Milan, whose gloss Comestor follows. Cf. Ambrose of Milan, *De fide ad Gratianum Augustum*, ed. by Christoph Marksches, Turnhout 2005, Book 4, Chapter 2, line 4.

57 Ibid., fol. 150va.

58 Ibid.

teresting case, wrestles with the intransitivity of a gloss passage that reads, »The Holy Spirit, entering the Virgin and her mind, purified [her] from the stain of the vices«. ⁵⁹

Here, Comestor seems to dance around the question of the Immaculate Conception, which was hotly debated in the decades that followed his death. ⁶⁰ The condemnations of Abelard in 1121 and 1140 over his own crafty theological distinctions indicate that such a practice of subjecting matters of religious doctrine to techniques of grammar and logic was extremely controversial, especially in France, where the formal study of logic was most rigorous and famous. ⁶¹ Perhaps, scholars have wondered, the purpose of such scholastic distinctions was not to settle an inquiry, but to endlessly complicate one in order to create new teaching opportunities. ⁶² Often, Comestor does not leave us with his preferred reading of the text: he is more than content to split the Latin in two and leave the parts for his students to experiment with.

Moreover, Comestor's treatment of the topic of transitivity reveals that he took for granted that his students would have already scaled the heights of speculative logic and grammar (sometimes called *Sprachlogik* by modern historians) before attempting to formally study the biblical narrative. ⁶³ These notions of transitivity and intransitivity emerged in the 11th century and attained popularity among grammarians in the 12th such as Alexander de Villa Dei, Peter Helias, and William of Conches. The popularity of such *Sprachlogik* in scholarly circles led to extensive academic debates over complicated problems of language classification, relying on the Aristotelian tradition of logic that would become so controversial when applied to Trinitarian theology by the likes of Abelard and his followers. ⁶⁴ Here, in his own lectures, Comestor limits himself to a rather straightforward observation on the structure of the text in question, though he must have been

59 Ibid., fol. 152vb: »And note that this phrase can be intransitive, where it is said FROM THE FILTH OF VICE, that is, ›from the vices themselves, which are sordid things‹, or it can be transitive, such that the sense reads, FROM THE FILTH OF VICE, that is from the source of vice itself, namely, from concupiscence, that is to say, ›from the cause of the vice‹. [Et nota quia potest esse intransicio ubi dictum est A SORDE VICIORVM, id est a uiciis que sunt sordes, uel transicio ut sit sensus A SORDE VICIORVM, id est a fomite uiciorum scilicet a concupiscentia, id est a causa.]

60 For a history of the theological controversy in the Middle Ages, see Marielle Lamy, *L'immaculée conception: étapes et enjeux d'une controverse au Moyen âge, XII – XVe siècles*, Turnhout 2000.

61 Luscombe (as note 38), pp. 179, 197, 308.

62 Silano (as note 8), Book 1, pp. xviii, xxv f..

63 For an accessible primer on formal logic in one of its most influential medieval contexts, see Peter Helias, *Summa super Priscianum*, ed. by Leo A. Reilly, Toronto 1993, pp. 40 f.

64 C. H. Kneepkens, »Transitivity, Intransitivity and Related Concepts in 12th Century Grammar: Explorative Study«, in: G. L. Bursill-Hall, Sten Ebbesen, and E. F. K. Koerner (eds.), *De Ortu Grammaticae: Studies in medieval grammar and linguistic theory in Memory of Jan Pinbor*, Philadelphia 1990, pp. 161-186.

aware of these daunting arts controversies, as the most influential of the late 12th century treatises on transitivity, the *Summa* of *magister* Robert of Paris, originated among the schools of Paris in the decade leading up to Comestor's death in 1178.⁶⁵

Certainly Comestor had studied, mastered, and lectured within the broad framework of the burgeoning scholastic method, heavily influenced by the *trivium* of grammar, logic, and rhetoric, whose ultimate importance within a Christian worldview was debated all throughout the later Latin Middle Ages.⁶⁶ For his part, Comestor makes full use of the philological tools handed down to him through the study of non-Christian grammar texts such as Donatus' *ars grammatica* and Priscian's *Institutiones*, but does not linger over them, and instead silently adapts them for his own interests.⁶⁷ For example, at the beginning of his Luke lectures, Peter Comestor taught the medieval *circumstantiae* proper to the late scholastic *accessus* as transmitted to us in the writings of the Laon school.⁶⁸ Thus he tells us of the *materia* (subject matter), *intentio* (intention), and *finis* (telos) of the work, as well as the *modus agendi* and the *modus tractandi* (method of treating the matter at hand).⁶⁹ He later even catalogues the specific *circumstantiae* proper to a work of historiography, which he terms the *idioma*

65 *Ibid.*, p. 171.

66 For an overview of the medieval reception of antique grammar and rhetoric, see Rita Copeland and Ineke Sluiter, *Medieval grammar and rhetoric: language arts and literary theory, AD 300 – 1475*, Oxford 2009. For the resistance of some to the integration of the language arts into the sphere of religious education, see Reynolds and Wilson (as note 53), pp. 39–50.

67 Interestingly, on the matter of the relevance of the culture of Greco-Roman antiquity to a ›Christian‹ medieval society, Comestor has the following to say (as note 29), fol. 195va: »See, therefore, that the gentile people were far from God when they were beset by their own idolatry, but afterwards the gentile philosophers contemplated the Creator though creatures, and finally came to recognize the One God, whom they had laboured most rigorously to investigate. And thus Socrates too taught his disciples to argue in favour of the existence of a single God, and Pythagoras taught his students to swear in the name of the One God. Therefore, the gentile people had already come to recognize the One God ...«. [*Vide ergo quod gentilis populus longe erat a Deo quando per ydola raptabatur, set postea gentiles philosophi per creaturas contemplati sunt Creatorem et tandem peruenerunt ad noticiam unius Dei in qua inuestiganda precipue laborauerunt. Vnde et Socrates precepit discipulis suis ut disputarent de uno Deo et Pitagoras suis ut iurarent per unum Deum. Iam ergo gentilis populus ad noticiam unius Dei uenerat ...*].

68 These terms derive from the introductory prologues and lectures that prefaced the master's line by line exegesis of the text under study. In these introductions, the master would catalogue the ›who, what, where, when, why‹ of the text in question in order to contextualise it for the students and perhaps provide a hermeneutic lens to be employed. Hence the denomination the *circumstantiae*, the ›circumstances‹ that surround (literally) the text as such, and enable one to better understand it. See Minnis (as note 7), pp. 15–30.

69 Comestor (as note 29), fol. 149rb: »Luke's ›matter‹ is seven things ... the Incarnation, death, Harrowing of Hell, Resurrection, Ascension, Advent of the Holy Spirit, and, finally, the Second Coming. Or, more simply, one can say that his ›matter‹ are the two natures of Christ. His ›intention‹ is to show that we should believe that Christ is God and human. His ›inten-

historiographi (the historian's craft), listing the *circumstantiae* »about which the historians are accustomed to determine« as the central character's »office, spouse, region, king, and time«. ⁷⁰

Afterwards, he speaks of the three persons encountered by Abraham in Genesis 18, whom Abraham puzzlingly addresses with the singular *Domine*, as a *figura* of Christ the Son of God⁷¹, employing a classical term used often, for example by John of Salisbury, to describe the license granted to an author to dance in between *ars* and *vitium* (a grammatical norm and its corresponding betrayal), the study of which allows a reader to move beyond the mere grasp of literary technique towards true semiotic interpretation of *res* and *signum*, signified and signifier, according to the old Augustinian schema.⁷²

All of these examples situate Comestor within an implicitly »speculative« milieu, not because he taught in the manner of a modern theoretician, but because the antique study of »grammar« and »history« was always inherently speculative and schematic. Yet, one must already know the »rules of the game« when reading the lectures to perceive these features of his pedagogy. Comestor has no need to be

tion«, I say, and in fact the »telos« of all the evangelists is revealed by John the Evangelist in the brief passage where he writes, »All these things are written so that you might believe that Jesus is the Son of God.« (John 20:31). Behold, the »intention« of all the evangelists: »that in believing, you might have eternal life« (ibid.). Behold, the »telos« of all things. Luke's »method« is this ...«. [*Materia Luce sunt septem ... incarnacio, mors, descensus ad inferos, resurrectio, ascensio, Spiritus sancti missio, ultimum secundus aduentus. Vel commodius potest eius materia assignari: utraque Christi natura. Intencio est monere ut Christum Deum et hominem credamus. Intentionem, inquit, et finem omnium euangelistarum breuiter aperit Iohannes in fine euangelii sui dicens: »Hec autem scripta sunt ut credatis quoniam Iesus est Filius Dei.« Ecce intencio omnium euangelistarum, »ut credentes uitam eternam habeatis. Ecce finis omnium. Modus agendi talis est ...*].

⁷⁰ Ibid., fol. 150rb-va: »Luke begins with the precursor John the Baptist's father, obviously Zachariah, and follows the historian's method [*idioma*], establishing for the reader Zachariah's office, his wife, where he lived, who was the king, and in what time he lived, for historians are accustomed to establish these *circumstantiae* about the topics they are going to narrate«. [*Incipit ergo a patre precursoris, scilicet Zacharia, et sequitur ydioma hystoriografi, determinando circa Zachariam officium eius et uxorem et regionem et regem cuius tempore fuit, quia has omnes circumstantias circa eos de quibus narrant solent hystoriografi determinare.*]

⁷¹ Ibid., fol. 153va: »And see that Mary, in her canticle known as the Magnificat, commemorating the ancients to whom the revelation of salvation was first made, particularly names Abraham to whom the revelation of the incarnation was first made. For Abraham saw three and worshiped one, because he understood through the Holy Spirit that this stood in as a *figura* for the Son of God who was to incarnate«. [*Et uide quia memorans patres quibus facta est reuelacio salutis, NOMINATIM exprimit Abraham cui primo facta est reuelacio incarnationis. Vidit enim tres et unum adorauit, qui per Spiritum intellexit gerere figuram Filii Dei incarnandi.*]

⁷² See Cédric Giraud and Constant Mews, »John of Salisbury and the Schools of the 12th Century«, in: Christophe Grellard and Frédérique Lachaud (eds.), *A Companion to John of Salisbury*, Leiden 2014, pp. 29-62, here pp. 51-53.

overly explicit about the hermeneutic boundaries of his exegesis; they would have been more or less obvious to his students, who had formally studied them for a decade before entering his classroom.

Given all the aforementioned, the *reportationes* of Comestor's lectures on the *sacra scriptura* clearly situate us in a classroom where many subjects make an appearance, and despite the emphasis of previous scholarship on Peter's interest in history and liturgy, a thorough study of the art curriculum's impact on his oral teaching would greatly illumine our understanding both of the 12th century classroom environment, as well as of Comestor's own relationship to the *magistri* and teaching tradition that preceded him. These are not peripheral, but central matters to be investigated regarding the emergence of the early university culture that developed in Paris.

These examples raise several questions that I would like to explore in my further research. Given that Comestor delves into such difficult linguistic concepts in his lectures, why does he also spend a great amount of time explaining the simplest Latin grammatical usages and phrases to his students, as if they were still learning basic Latin constructions? Does he care so much about his listeners' comprehension that he leaves no stone unturned? Perhaps the Latinity of his students ranges from more basic to advanced, despite the years of education that he can presuppose they have undertaken before reaching his doorstep? Is he teaching his students how to teach? Does the exposition of *sacra pagina*, however straightforward, offer contemplators a scholarly reward in and of itself, to the extent that no word or syntactical construction ought to be taken for granted? While this review of some salient features of Peter Comestor's lectures on the Gospel of Luke 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.