

PETER COMESTOR'S LECTURES ON THE *GLOSSA*  
"ORDINARIA" ON THE GOSPEL OF JOHN  
THE BIBLE AND THEOLOGY IN THE TWELFTH-CENTURY  
CLASSROOM

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*The traditional account of the development of theology in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries is that the emerging "academic" discipline of theology was separated from the Bible and its commentary, that the two existed on parallel but separate courses, and that the one developed in a "systematic" direction whereas the other continued to exist as a separate "practical" or "biblical-moral" school. Focusing largely on texts of an allegedly "theoretical" nature, this view misunderstands or, indeed, entirely overlooks the evidence issuing from lectures on the Bible — postills, glosses, and commentaries — notably the biblical Glossa "ordinaria." A witness to an alternative understanding, Peter Comestor, master and chancellor of the cathedral school of Paris in the second half of the twelfth century, shows that theology was created as much from the continued study of the Bible as from any "systematic" treatise. Best known for his *Historia scholastica*, a combined explanation and rewrite of the Bible focusing on the historical and literal aspects of sacred history, Comestor used the Gloss as a textbook in his lectures on the Gospels both to elucidate matters of exegesis and to help him deduce doctrinal truth. Through a close reading of Comestor's lectures on the Gospel of John, this essay reevaluates the teaching of theology at the cathedral school of Paris in the twelfth century and argues that the Bible and its Gloss stood at the heart of this development.*

In his 1911 work, *Die Geschichte der scholastischen Methode*, Martin Grabmann authored a distinction that was to prove fateful for the study of medieval theology in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In an effort to separate what he termed the "theoretical" side of theology, represented by scholars such as Peter Abelard, Peter Lombard, Robert of Melun, and Peter of Poitiers, from an allegedly "practical" treatment of the same subject, Grabmann consistently and deliberately overlooked works that seemed to concern only the Bible and its exposition.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, the types of literature that Grabmann considered theological were collections of sentences, *summae*, disputations, and *quaestiones*.<sup>2</sup> The

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Grabmann, *Die Geschichte der scholastischen Methode*, 2 vols. (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1911), 2:476.

I am grateful to Richard Shaw and Joe Goering for reading and commenting on earlier drafts of this essay. Mark Clark is owed particular thanks for his help in uncovering and honing the argument of the paper. I also wish to thank Hugh Houghton for inviting me to Birmingham to give the talk that stands at the foundation of this essay. For providing the monetary means for pursuing the research I am grateful to the Sven and Dagmar Sahlén Foundation and the *Ars Edendi* research program at Stockholm University.

<sup>2</sup> Grabmann, *Geschichte*, e.g., 13–24.

evidence springing from the lectures on the sacred page — commentaries, glosses, and postills — he relegated to the “practical” side of theology and lumped together their practitioners in the infamous “biblical-moral school” comprising such masters as Peter Comestor, Peter the Chanter, and Stephen Langton.<sup>3</sup>

Thus the account of the development of theology in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries — that the emerging “academic” discipline of theology was separated from the Bible and its commentary, that the two existed on parallel but separate courses, that the one did not contribute to or influence the other, and that the one developed in a “systematic” direction whereas the other continued to exist as a separate “practical” or “biblical-moral” school — has largely been allowed to prevail in the century following the publication of Grabmann’s book. Not even Beryl Smalley, generally accepted as the greatest authority of medieval biblical scholarship of the twentieth century, was fully able to escape Grabmann’s unhappy distinction: in fact, in her *magnum opus*, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, she used Grabmann’s distinction as the point of departure for her analysis of the works of Comestor, Langton, and the Chanter, claiming that their “common interest in biblical studies and in practical moral questions” set them apart from those who were “primarily theologians and dialecticians” whom she identified as Peter Lombard, Peter of Poitiers, and Adam of the Petit Pont.<sup>4</sup> Since much of the field of medieval biblical exegesis ever since has relied uncritically on Smalley’s preliminary and tentative research, it is no wonder that her endorsement of Grabmann’s distinction has prevailed.<sup>5</sup> Following Smalley, also the biblical *Glossa*, issuing from the school of Laon in the early twelfth century, usually known today under the designation “*ordinaria*,”<sup>6</sup> has been largely misunderstood by scholars until the present day. By focusing on

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 476–501.

<sup>4</sup> Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1952; 2nd ed. 1964), 197.

<sup>5</sup> Thus, for example, the same mistake is rehearsed — indeed, taken one further step away from the truth — by Ian Wei in his *Intellectual Culture in Medieval Paris: Theologians and the University, c. 1100–1330* (Cambridge, 2012). In the chapter “The Twelfth-Century Schools of Northern France,” while the book claims to focus “in particular on the theologians” (1), the author’s single-minded interest in the teaching pursued at the Paris schools is in the dialecticians; the fundamental importance of the study of Scripture for the development of theology is carefully circumscribed. In Wei’s analysis, Grabmann’s fateful distinction is brought to its ultimate consequence: the one-sided focus on the allegedly systematic approach embodied by some notably named and known figures, along with Peter Abelard, William of Champeaux, and John of Salisbury, allows the development of theology in the twelfth century to be defined by what Wei calls “the lure of logic” (17–33).

<sup>6</sup> This designation is late medieval at best; it was certainly not used in the twelfth century, when scholars who used it, as we shall see below, referred to it simply as *glosa*. Following this practice I shall call it by the English equivalent, the Gloss, spelled with a capital G to distinguish the work as a whole from its constituent parts, the individual glosses, marginal or interlinear.

the origin of the text, or how it was used (or not) by scholars such as Andrew and Hugh of Saint-Victor,<sup>7</sup> the essential function of the *Glossa* has been overlooked: it was a taught text. Over the course of the twelfth century, masters in the Paris schools, Peter Lombard and his students and successors, notably Peter Comestor and Stephen Langton, but also others, used the *Glossa* as a textbook to teach theology.

By looking at the lectures of Peter Comestor on the glossed Gospel of John, the following pages will examine the function of the Gloss as a teaching tool in the Paris schools. Through a detailed analysis of Comestor's teaching practices as gleaned from his lectures on John, we will discover how Comestor provided his students with a theological framework for reading the Bible. The study of Comestor's utilization of the Gloss, furthermore, will have larger consequences for our appraisal of how teaching the *sacra pagina* was pursued at a crucial moment when theology as a discipline was in the process of being created in the twelfth-century schools. Comestor's lectures attest to the fundamental role the Gloss played in this process, carrying with it the realization that theology cannot be studied without the Bible, and vice versa, in the twelfth-century theological landscape.

Before embarking on this examination of Comestor's lecture itself, however, it is necessary to say a few words on the topic of the object of his lecture, the so-called *Glossa* "ordinaria" on the Bible.

#### THE *GLOSSA* "ORDINARIA" ON THE BIBLE

In the totality of its parts — for all the books of the Gloss are never found in one single manuscript — the *Glossa* "ordinaria" is a commentary on the entire Bible made up of extracts collected mainly from the writings of the Church Fathers but also taken from other authorities, Carolingian and more recent. In the manuscripts, these are found as longer or shorter glosses surrounding and interweaving a central column of biblical text, acting as commentary on this text: short glosses

<sup>7</sup> Beginning her research program with Stephen Langton, Smalley soon shifted her attention to Andrew of Saint-Victor; see Beryl Smalley and George Lacombe, "The Lombard's Commentary on Isaias and other Fragments," *New Scholasticism* 5 (1931): 123–61; Smalley, "Andrew of St. Victor, Abbot of Wigmore: A Twelfth-Century Hebraist," *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 10 (1938): 358–73; and eadem, "The School of Andrew of St. Victor," *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 11 (1939): 146–51. Since then, many scholars have followed in her wake, and editions have been produced of Andrew's works while theologians such as Comestor and Langton have largely remained ignored by scholarship. This is unfortunate, since, whereas Andrew wrote for a very small audience and was virtually ignored in the Middle Ages, Comestor and Langton found themselves *in mediis rebus* and taught and penned works that were of significant consequence for the development of theology in subsequent centuries. See in particular Mark J. Clark, *The Making of the Historia Scholastica, 1150–1200* (Toronto, 2015).

explaining words, concepts, or shorter passages placed between the lines, and longer passages providing a more profound understanding written in the margins of the page.<sup>8</sup>

Despite the popularity of this text, which is evidenced by the many manuscripts that still exist of the books of the Gloss,<sup>9</sup> or perhaps because of it, given the problems such a vast textual tradition presents, the Gloss is something of an enigma to scholars today. Though the assumptions have been many over the course of the period that the Gloss has been studied,<sup>10</sup> we still do not know exactly for what purpose it was compiled, who compiled it, or how it was used.<sup>11</sup> One such assumption is that the text of the Gloss was “remarkably stable,”<sup>12</sup> that the contents changed little once the books of the Gloss were out,

<sup>8</sup> Though it should be used with great caution, a recent introduction to the Gloss available today is Lesley Smith, *The Glossa ordinaria: The Making of a Medieval Bible Commentary* (Leiden and Boston, MA, 2009). Reservations about some of the conclusions presented in this work may be found in Alexander Andrée, “Laon Revisited: Master Anselm and the Creation of a Theological School in the Twelfth Century,” *Journal of Medieval Latin* 22 (2012): 257–81.

<sup>9</sup> For the manuscripts of the glossed Song of Songs, Lamentations, the Gospel of John, and Ecclesiastes, see respectively Mary Dove, ed., *Glossa ordinaria in Canticum canticorum*, CCM 170 (Turnhout, 1997); Alexander Andrée, ed., *Gilbertus Universalis: Glossa ordinaria in Lamentationes Ieremie prophete; Prothemata et Liber I; A Critical Edition with an Introduction and a Translation*, Studia Latina Stockholmiensia 52 (Stockholm, 2005); idem, “The *Glossa ordinaria* on the Gospel of John: A Preliminary Survey of the Manuscripts with a Presentation of the Text and Its Sources,” *Revue bénédictine* 118 (2008): 109–34 and 289–333; Jennifer Kostoff-Käörd, “The *Glossa Ordinaria* on Ecclesiastes: A Critical Edition with Introduction” (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 2015).

<sup>10</sup> With an increasing degree of certainty, not always matched by new discoveries, Beryl Smalley believed herself able to assign the authorship of different books of the Gloss to certain scholars working in or around the Laon milieu: Anselm of Laon, his brother Ralph, and Gilbert of Auxerre, styled the “Universal,” as well as Gilbert of Poitiers and, perhaps, Alberic of Reims, were all, according to Smalley, involved in its creation. The digest of Smalley’s assumptions published by Smith in *The Glossa ordinaria*, 32–33, is certainly premature at the present stage of Gloss research.

<sup>11</sup> When it comes to the actual authorship of the books of the Gloss, recent research seems to point to Anselm’s students or collaborators rather than the master himself as being responsible for the compilation of the earliest books of the Gloss; see Alexander Andrée, ed., *Anselmi Laudunensis Glosae super Iohannem*, CCM 267 (Turnhout, 2014), x–xiii; a fruitful comparison may be made with the results of the research of Cédric Giraud, *Per verba magistri: Anselme de Laon et son école au XIIe siècle*, Bibliothèque d’histoire culturelle du Moyen Âge 8 (Turnhout, 2010), on the collections of theological sentences ascribed to Anselm, which were gathered into collections and diffused under the master’s name after his death in order to preserve the memory and teaching of the cherished teacher.

<sup>12</sup> For example, Margaret Gibson, “The Place of the *Glossa Ordinaria* in Medieval Exegesis,” in *Ad Litteram: Authoritative Texts and Their Medieval Readers*, ed. M. D. Jordan and K. Emery (Notre Dame, 1992), 5–27, who claims that, notwithstanding its inherent complexity, the text “remains remarkably stable, probably because the great bulk of the manuscripts was produced between the mid-twelfth and the early thirteenth century. Throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the *Glossa ordinaria*, though widely available, was

as it were, on the market. While this may be true for some volumes of the Gloss — such as Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, and the Gospel of John,<sup>13</sup> parts that have received critical study, which changed little over the course of the history of the Gloss — it is certainly not so with respect to books such as Genesis, the Gospel of Matthew, and the Apocalypse, of which several versions circulated already by the mid-twelfth century.<sup>14</sup>

This is the reason for placing, in the title of this paper, the adjective "ordinaria," qualifying the noun *Glossa*, in quotation marks. The adjective "ordinaria" denotes order, solidity, rigidity, canonicity — in short, a standard — and is an appellation of the later Middle Ages at the earliest for which there is no evidence in the earlier period, the twelfth century, which saw the Gloss's creation and initial diffusion: the scholars using it at this time simply referred to it as "glosa." Indeed, at this time, the Gloss was anything but "ordinaria"; it was a commentary on the Bible — or, rather, a compilation of earlier commentaries or lectures — that happened to become extremely popular very soon after its creation and was used as a teaching text in the schools and monasteries for lecturing on or studying the Bible. But in the twelfth century, for many of its books, the Gloss was still in a state of flux. There was no "standard" version of it until, perhaps, the late twelfth century or, even more likely, sometime in the thirteenth century.

There is concrete evidence that the Gloss is connected in some way to the cathedral school of Laon in northern France and its master, Anselm, who taught the *sacra pagina* there in the early years of the twelfth century. Indeed, for some of the books of the Gloss, using external and internal evidence, it is possible to trace both the earliest extant manuscripts and the compilation of the Gloss of these parts of the Bible to Laon.<sup>15</sup> The Gloss on the Gospel of John, for example, could only have

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not constantly being transcribed; it was not, for instance, a set text in the universities. Thus the text suffered little contamination or evolution" (19–20).

<sup>13</sup> See the references in n. 9 above.

<sup>14</sup> On Genesis, see Alice Hutton Sharp, "In Principio: The Origins of the *Glossa ordinaria* on Genesis 1–3" (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 2015); on the Apocalypse, see Guy Lobrichon, "Conserver, réformer, transformer le monde? Les manipulations de l'Apocalypse au Moyen Âge central," in *La Bible au Moyen Âge, Les médiévistes français 3* (Paris, 2003), 109–27; and idem, "Une nouveauté: les gloses de la Bible," *Le Moyen Âge et la Bible*, ed. Pierre Riché et al. (Paris, 1984), 95–114. An in-depth study of the Gloss on Matthew, its predecessors and use, is in preparation by myself under the project title, "Biblical Commentaries from the School of Laon in the Twelfth Century." Some partial and anticipatory results of this research may be gleaned from my "Le Pater (Matth. 6, 9–13 et Luc. 11, 2–4) dans l'exégèse de l'école de Laon: la *Glossa ordinaria* et autres commentaires," in *Le Pater noster au XIIe siècle: lectures et usages*, ed. F. Siri, Bibliothèque d'histoire culturelle du Moyen Âge 15 (Turnhout, 2015), 29–74.

<sup>15</sup> See above all the classic study by Patricia Stirnemann, "Où ont été fabriqués les livres de la glose ordinaire dans la première moitié du XIIe siècle?" in *Le XIIe siècle: Mutations et renouveau en France dans la première moitié du XIIe siècle*, ed. François Gasparri (Paris, 1994), 257–301.

been produced at Laon, since it makes extensive use of John Scotus Eriugena's Commentary on John, the only manuscript of which has been at Laon since the ninth century<sup>16</sup> and was at hand to be consulted by the *ordinatores* of the John Gloss in the twelfth century.<sup>17</sup> More important, though, is the ubiquitous usage by the Gloss on John of the *Glosae super Iohannem* or *Verbum substantiale*, a commentary on John recently restored to Anselm of Laon,<sup>18</sup> a fact that makes a Laon origin for the John Gloss even more likely.<sup>19</sup> Following the *lex parsimoniae*, it is highly unlikely that the master authored two commentaries on the same biblical text. Thus, it is probable that, at least in the case of John, the Gloss was a product of the master's students rather than having been written by the master himself, although indirectly it still conveys his teachings. Similar cases could probably be made for other books of the Gloss as well, of singular importance for the high-medieval curriculum, such as that on Genesis, the Song of Songs, the Gospel of Matthew, and the Apocalypse. All of these biblical books were probably taught at Laon, and for each of them an earlier commentary exists, perhaps originating in notes taken during Anselm's lectures.<sup>20</sup>

Whereas some books of the Gloss came from Laon and showed the influence of the teaching of Anselm, others are not so easily traceable back to his milieu, and their origin should probably be sought elsewhere. If Laon is the first chapter in the history of the Gloss, Paris would be the next. There is evidence, from the mid-twelfth century onwards, of frequent use of the Gloss in lectures at the cathedral

<sup>16</sup> See Andrée, "The *Glossa ordinaria* on the Gospel of John," 305–10.

<sup>17</sup> Idem, "On the Fortune of John Scot's *Homilia* and *Commentarius*: The *Glossa ordinaria* and the *Verbum substantiale*," in *Iohannis Scoti Commentarius in euangelium Iohannis et Homilia in prologum euangelii Iohannis*, ed. É. Jeauneau, CCM 166 (Turnhout, 2008), 139–50.

<sup>18</sup> Idem, "Anselm of Laon Unveiled: The *Glosae super Iohannem* and the Origins of the *Glossa ordinaria* on the Bible," *Mediaeval Studies* 73 (2011): 217–60.

<sup>19</sup> That the *Glosae super Iohannem* was compiled at Laon is evidenced by, among other things, its use of a particular manuscript of Alcuin's commentary on John available in the city; see Andrée, ed., *Glosae super Iohannem*, xx–xxi.

<sup>20</sup> On the Song of Songs, see Dove, *Glossa ordinaria in Canticum canticorum*, 35–36, and Cédric Giraud, "Lectiones magistri Anselmi: Les commentaires d'Anselme de Laon sur le Cantique des Cantiques," in *The Multiple Meaning of Scripture: The Role of Exegesis in Early-Christian and Medieval Culture*, ed. I. Van 't Spijker (Leiden, 2009), 177–201; on Matthew, see Adrian Ballentyne, "A Reassessment of the Exposition on the Gospel according to St Matthew in Manuscript Alençon 26," *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 56 (1989): 19–57; on the Apocalypse, see Lobricon, "Conserver, réformer, transformer le monde?" 109–28. Writing on the Laonnoise commentaries on the Song of Songs, Jean Leclercq, "Le commentaire du Cantique des cantiques attribué à Anselme de Laon," *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 16 (1949): 29–39, at 38, suggested that at the origin of all three Song of Songs commentaries stands a lecture of Anselm and that the extant commentaries thus are *reportationes* (albeit clean copies) of Anselm's lectures on the Song of Songs. I hope to revisit this question in my research project, "Biblical Commentaries from the School of Laon in the Twelfth Century" mentioned above.

school and in copying of its books in various places around France and elsewhere. Scholars have tried to find the link between Laon and Paris: who was it that took the Gloss from Laon to Paris? Anselm's students? Gilbert of Poitiers? Alberic of Reims? The obscure John of Tours?<sup>21</sup> Though we have little knowledge of who brought it there, we can see Peter Lombard using the Gloss in his lectures at Paris in the 1150s if not earlier. He left major expansions of two of the books of the Gloss — on the Psalms and the Pauline Epistles — which rapidly replaced the older commentaries. As master of the cathedral school of Notre-Dame and thus responsible for the teaching of *sacra pagina* in the city, he must have lectured on the rest of the Bible too,<sup>22</sup> using the Gloss. But concrete evidence of this is harder to come by, unless we may in fact ascribe the confection of the Gloss on some of the books of the Bible as we have it to him, just as Hermann Glunz wanted to do some eighty years ago,<sup>23</sup> a claim that Smalley ostensibly refuted.<sup>24</sup>

One way to study the development of the Gloss in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries and to pinpoint which version was available at what time and what place is to study the work of the masters using it in their teaching:<sup>25</sup> Peter Lombard, Peter Comestor, Stephen Langton, Peter the Chanter, and Hugh of Saint-Cher all used the Gloss as a basis for their own lectures, commentaries, and other work. These texts are, as a rule, substantial, and they are all

<sup>21</sup> See Arthur Landgraf, "Zwei Gelehrte aus der Umgebung des Petrus Lombardus," *Divus Thomas* 11 (1933): 157–82, here at 157–60. See also Beryl Smalley, "Peter Comestor on the Gospels and His Sources," in *The Gospels in the Schools, c. 1100 – c. 1280* (London and Ronceverte, 1985), 37–84.

<sup>22</sup> This is the revised opinion of Ignatius Brady in his Prolegomena to Peter Lombard, *Sententiae in IV libris distinctae*, 2 vols., Spicilegium Bonaventurianum 4–5 (Grottaferrata, 1971–81), 2:19\*–52\*. Concrete evidence of this teaching activity is brought forth by Mark Clark, "The Biblical Gloss, the Search for the Lombard's Glossed Bible, and the School of Paris," *Mediaeval Studies* 76 (2014): 57–114. For further proof of the Lombard's biblical lectures, see Mark Clark's forthcoming study, "Peter Lombard, Stephen Langton, and the School of Paris: The Making of the Twelfth-Century Scholastic Biblical Tradition."

<sup>23</sup> Hans Hermann Glunz, *History of the Vulgate in England from Alcuin to Roger Bacon, Being an Inquiry into the Text of Some English Manuscripts of the Vulgate Gospels* (Cambridge, 1933), 213–45.

<sup>24</sup> Beryl Smalley, "Gilbertus Universalis, Bishop of London (1128–34) and the Problem of the 'Glossa ordinaria,'" *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 8 (1936): 24–60, here at 24–44. Though Glunz was wrong in attributing the creation of the entire Gloss to the Lombard, Smalley too quickly threw out the baby with the bathwater: since for many of its parts the Gloss was in a state of development over the course of the twelfth century and was shaped in the hands of the masters using it in the schools, the Lombard may very well have been instrumental in shaping its final form, its "crystallization," as it were, to use Guy Lobrichon's term. It is a fact that some books of the Gloss went through a revision around the mid-twelfth century (Ecclesiastes, Lamentations). This hypothesis is more plausible than Gibson's theory that the Victorines were behind it.

<sup>25</sup> As Mark Clark has suggested most recently in "Peter Comestor's *Historia Genesis* and the Biblical Gloss," *Medioevo* 39 (2014): 135–70.

unedited. It is into this *mare magnum* we shall now plunge head first, choosing Peter Comestor's lectures on the Gospels, since they will help us understand both what the Gloss was in the twelfth century and how Comestor's reading of the Gospel text through its Gloss provided him with a framework for his theological teaching.

#### PETER COMESTOR

Peter of Troyes gained his colorful epithet, *Comestor* or *Manducator*, probably from his great appetite for reading — he must have eaten the books rather than reading them.<sup>26</sup> He was apparently born in or around Troyes, where he became dean of the cathedral chapter by 1147. He was in Paris at least by 1158, where he studied with Peter Lombard.<sup>27</sup> After the latter's elevation to the city's bishopric, Comestor taught the *sacra pagina* until, and probably also after, he was appointed chancellor of the cathedral school in 1167 or 1168.<sup>28</sup> He retired to the Abbey of Saint-Victor in Paris in 1178 where he died sometime after. Among his ecclesiastical patrons he counted William White Hands, bishop of Chartres and, from 1169, archbishop of Sens.<sup>29</sup> He is best known as the author of the *Historia scholastica*, a rewriting of and commentary on biblical history that, just like the Gloss, was enormously popular at the time and yet, again like the Gloss, has been largely ignored by modern scholars.<sup>30</sup>

The *Historia* is a product of Comestor's mature years, however, written after a long career of teaching *diuinitas* in Paris.<sup>31</sup> As manuscript sources bear witness, this teaching also comprised the contemporary professorial activities of *lectio*,

<sup>26</sup> It could also be a family name, as was suggested by S. R. Daly, "Peter Comestor: Master of Histories," *Speculum* 32 (1957): 62–73, at 62–63; and more recently by P. Gandil, "Pierre le Mangeur, doyen du chapitre cathédral de Troyes," in *Pierre le Mangeur ou Pierre de Troyes: Maître du XIIe siècle*, ed. Gilbert Dahan, Bibliothèque d'histoire culturelle du Moyen Âge 12 (Turnhout, 2013), 17–25.

<sup>27</sup> The complex yet undeniable links between Comestor and Peter Lombard are explored by Ignatius Brady, "Peter Manducator and the Oral Teachings of Peter Lombard," *Antonianum* 41 (1966): 454–90; and, more recently, by Clark, "The Biblical Gloss."

<sup>28</sup> Contrary to a thirteenth-century *exemplum* on the election of Maurice of Sully as bishop of Paris after Peter Lombard, Comestor was not appointed chancellor in 1160, but this post went instead to Odo of Soissons; see Claire Angotti, "Sur les traces de la lectio des *Sentences* de Pierre le Mangeur," in *Pierre le Mangeur ou Pierre de Troyes*, 149–89, at 149 and 152.

<sup>29</sup> Gandil, "Pierre le Mangeur," 17.

<sup>30</sup> But see now Mark Clark, *The Making of the Historia Scholastica* (n. 7 above).

<sup>31</sup> According to Mark Clark, "Le cours d'Étienne Langton sur l'*Histoire scolastique* de Pierre le Mangeur: Le fruit d'une tradition unifiée," in *Pierre le Mangeur ou Pierre de Troyes*, 243–66, here at 243, the first version of the *Historia*, which his pupil and collaborator Stephen Langton referred to as the *textus intrinsecus*, was completed sometime between 1169 and 1173.



*disputatio*, and *predicatio*.<sup>32</sup> Indeed, student reports of his lecture courses on the four Gospels have been preserved from the early years of his teaching; each is extensive, from fifty to ninety folios on average in the many extant manuscript copies of each text.<sup>33</sup> It is hard to tell exactly when the lectures were delivered, except that they were probably given on various occasions in slightly different versions<sup>34</sup> and that this happened before the publication, as it were, of the *Historia scholastica*, since the latter builds on the former.<sup>35</sup>

Comestor's Gospel lectures have not received the scholarly attention they deserve. Aside from Arthur Landgraf's identification of the lectures as Comestor's<sup>36</sup> and a handful of studies by Beryl Smalley,<sup>37</sup> Gilbert Dahan,<sup>38</sup> Emmanuel Bain,<sup>39</sup> and Mark Clark,<sup>40</sup> all highlighting different aspects of the texts, no one as yet has performed an in-depth study of any of the lectures. That is not the purpose of this essay either; its aim, rather, is to provide an *aperçu*, or a foretaste, of what Comestor's Gospel lectures have to offer and in doing so to show how important their study is for our understanding of the medieval schools and the development of theology in the twelfth century.<sup>41</sup>

#### COMESTOR'S LECTURES ON THE GLOSED JOHN

The lecture on the Gospel of John is extant in sixteen manuscripts dating from the latter half of the twelfth and the thirteenth century.<sup>42</sup> With allowance for some

<sup>32</sup> See here the dated but still excellent account in G. Paré, A. Brunet, and P. Tremblay, *La renaissance du XIIe siècle: Les écoles et l'enseignement* (Ottawa, 1933), especially 121–31.

<sup>33</sup> A preliminary census of the manuscripts is provided by Friedrich Stegmüller, *Repertorium biblicum medii aevi*, 11 vols. (Madrid, 1950–80), nos. 6575–78. It should be noted that some manuscripts contain additional material in the shape of supplementary glosses not present in all manuscripts.

<sup>34</sup> This is signaled by additional sections or passages in some manuscripts, clearly marked out as such, which is probably evidence of different versions or updates to the lecture courses.

<sup>35</sup> See Clark, *The Making of the Historia Scholastica*.

<sup>36</sup> Arthur Landgraf, "Recherches sur les écrits de Pierre le Mangeur," *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 3 (1931): 292–306 and 341–72.

<sup>37</sup> Smalley, "Peter Comestor on the Gospels and His Sources" (n. 21 above).

<sup>38</sup> Gilbert Dahan, "Une leçon biblique au XIIe siècle: Le commentaire de Pierre le Mangeur sur Matthieu 26, 26–29," in *Ancienne Loi, Nouvelle Loi*, ed. J.-P. Bordier, Littérature et revelation au Moyen Âge 3 (Paris, 2009), 19–38; and idem, "Les exégèses de Pierre le Mangeur," in *Pierre le Mangeur ou Pierre de Troyes*, 49–87.

<sup>39</sup> Emmanuel Bain, "Le travail du maître dans le commentaire sur l'évangile de Matthieu," in *Pierre le Mangeur ou Pierre de Troyes*, 89–123; and idem, "Pierre le Mangeur et le 'Notre père,'" in *Le Pater noster au XIIe siècle*, 113–55.

<sup>40</sup> See especially Clark, *The Making of the Historia scholastica*; and idem, "The Biblical Gloss, the Search for the Lombard's Glosed Bible, and the School of Paris" (n. 22 above).

<sup>41</sup> The preliminary results obtained in this study are the fruit of my work preparing critical editions and in-depth studies of Comestor's lectures on Matthew and John.

<sup>42</sup> See Stegmüller, *Repertorium biblicum*, no. 6578. This list in Stegmüller is only a starting point and needs modification. Throughout this article, I quote Comestor's lecture on John

variation among the manuscripts, it comprises some 87,000 words. Given its length, it is probably wrong to call it “lecture” in the singular; it is rather a lecture course. There are, however, no indications in the manuscripts where one lecture ends and another begins; unlike later student reports from the thirteenth century, which make clear the divisions of the magisterial lectures, these *reportationes* are continuous.<sup>43</sup> Beginning with a prologue, “*Omnia poma noua et uetera*” (Cant. 2, 1), which Mark Clark convincingly has argued was lifted from a lost commentary or lecture by Peter Lombard,<sup>44</sup> Comestor thereafter in a short note explains his procedure in commenting on the prefatory material usually present in manuscripts of the John Gloss:<sup>45</sup>

Nota quod Augustinus, qui precipue exposuit Iohannem, fecit introitum, qui sic incipit: OMNIBVS DIVINE SCRIPTVRE PAGINIS. Sed magister ad introitum Augustini quodammodo preparauit ingressum, ut commodior esset accessus. Et uide quia introitus Augustini legendus esset ante prologum. Facimus tamen ordinem preposterum, quod non propter aliud introductum est, nisi quia nimis modica esset lectio si quis ante prologum legeret solum introitum; nimis proluxa si quis cum introitu legeret prologum. Primo ergo legemus prologum, *HIC EST IOHANNES*.<sup>46</sup>

The first preface mentioned by Comestor in this note, “*Omnibus diuine scripture paginis*,” and called by him an *introitus*, is a longer prologue identifiable with

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from the manuscript Troyes, Médiathèque du Grand Troyes, 1024, fol. 216r–276v. This is a manuscript of the early thirteenth century, comprising all four of Comestor’s Gospel lectures.

<sup>43</sup> Gilbert Dahan has pointed out this obstacle for our understanding of Comestor’s lectures; see “Une leçon biblique,” 22.

<sup>44</sup> Clark, “The Biblical Gloss.”

<sup>45</sup> For a discussion of the prefaces to the Gloss on John and their contents, see Andrée, “The *Glossa ordinaria* on the Gospel of John” (n. 9 above), 291–93.

<sup>46</sup> “Note that Augustine, who devoted special attention to John, made an introduction (*introitus*), which begins in this fashion: <THIS GOSPEL SURPASSES> ALL THE PAGES OF DIVINE SCRIPTURE. But the Master prepared in a certain fashion an entryway [*ingressum*] to Augustine’s introduction [*ad introitum Augustini*], in order that there might be a more suitable approach [*accessus*] <to John’s Gospel>. And see that Augustine’s introduction [*introitus Augustini*] was supposed to be read before the prologue [*ante prologum*]. We are taking them in reverse order, however, a mode of proceeding that has been introduced for no other reason than that the lecture would be of too modest a length, if someone were to read the introduction alone [*solum introitum*] before the prologue [*ante prologum*], and too lengthy, if someone were to read the prologue with Augustine’s introduction [*cum introitu legeret prologum*]. Let us therefore read the prologue [*prologum*] first. *THIS IS JOHN*.” Troyes 1024, fol. 216v<sup>a</sup> (translation by Mark Clark, “The Biblical Gloss,” 89). In my transcriptions of Comestor’s lectures for this essay I will use different typographical means to distinguish between the different levels of text in the commentary: italicized capitals are used for the biblical lemma; small caps for the text of the Gloss, marginal and interlinear; italics are employed for quotations from other books of the Bible.

Anselm of Laon's preface to his commentary on John, the *Glosae super Iohannem*, which, following Comestor, was often attributed to Augustine;<sup>47</sup> the second is an *ingressus* to this *introitus* prepared by Comestor's *magister*, who, as we have seen, is to be identified as Peter Lombard.<sup>48</sup> The third text is the *prologus*, which begins "Hic est Iohannes." This is the so-called "Monarchian" prologue, a short introductory text, a sort of *accessus*, found in most manuscripts of the glossed John and often associated with Jerome.<sup>49</sup> In the note, Comestor explains that, although Augustine's *introitus* ought to be read before the prologue "Hic est Iohannes," Comestor will read the two texts in inverse order, only because if one reads only the *introitus* before the prologue, the lecture will be too short; however, if one reads the prologue together with the *introitus*, the lecture will be too long. And then he begins to lecture on the prologue, "Hic est Iohannes," etc.

From this statement we may tentatively conclude that, for Comestor, a lecture of appropriate length would correspond to his treatment of the prologue, that is, the text beginning "Hic est Iohannes." My transcription of Comestor's lecture on the prologue "Hic est Iohannes," covering almost five columns in Troyes 1024, comprises around five pages, or 1,767 words. The comments on the "introitus Augustini" are much shorter, one and a half columns in the manuscript, or hardly two pages (568 words) in my transcription.<sup>50</sup> Indeed, if my estimate of the length of the comments on the *prologus* is correct, then a lecture on only the *introitus* would be too short, while a lecture on both introductory texts would be too long according to the measure of Comestor. The right length of one lecture, according to this estimate, would therefore comprise the equivalent of five columns in Troyes 1024 (or five printed pages) or around 1,800 words. In

<sup>47</sup> "Omnibus diuinae scripturae paginis euangelium excellit, quia quod lex et prophetae futurum praedixerunt, hoc completum dicit euangelium. . . . Iste siquidem est Iohannes, quem Dominus de fluctuaga nuptiarum tempestate uocauit, cui et matrem uirginem uirgini commendauit." ("This Gospel surpasses all pages of divine scripture, because that which the law and the prophets foretold, this the Gospel tells being completed. . . . Indeed, this is John, whom the Lord called from the turbulent storms of marriage, to whom he also, a virgin, commended his virgin mother.") *Anselmi Laudunensis Glosae super Iohannem*, Proth. 4, 31–72, ed. Andrée, 4–5.

<sup>48</sup> See Clark, "The Biblical Gloss."

<sup>49</sup> "Hic est Iohannes euangelista, unus ex duodecim discipulis Dei qui uirgo electus a Deo est . . . ut sciendi desiderio conlocato et quaerentibus fructus laboris et Deo magisterii doctrina seruetur." ("This is John the evangelist, one of the twelve disciples of God, who was elected by God to be a virgin . . . so that, when the desire to know has been settled, both the fruit of labor and the doctrine of teaching for God might be reserved for those who seek.") Stegmüller, *Repertorium biblicum*, no. 624.

<sup>50</sup> That the commentary on the *introitus* is shorter, in spite of the *introitus* itself being a longer text than "Hic est Iohannes," is explainable by the fact that, in Comestor's work, the *introitus* has already been expounded through the Lombard's preface placed at the beginning of Comestor's lectures (this is the opening prologue beginning, "Omnia poma noua et uetera": see Clark, "The Biblical Gloss," 94–97, for a transcription and translation).

Troyes 1024, furthermore, the text totals sixty folios written in double columns. Sixty folios make 120 manuscript pages, each with two columns. This makes a total of 240 columns. If five manuscript columns is an appropriate estimate for the length of one lecture, it would thus have taken forty-eight lectures for Comestor to cover John's Gospel.<sup>51</sup>

Not mentioned by Comestor at this point but regularly found in manuscripts of the glossed John (and, as we shall see, commented on by Comestor later in his lecture) are two other prefaces: a short etymological gloss on the name "Iohannes," taken verbatim from the *Glosae super Iohannem*, which in turn took it from Jerome and, filtered through the Homilies of Heiric of Auxerre, the Homily on the Prologue of the Gospel of John Scotus Eriugena;<sup>52</sup> and the preface beginning "Contra eos qui," a seemingly original compilation on the divine and eternal nature of the Word made for the Gloss on John, commenting on the first three verses of the Gospel and showing that these verses were written to refute certain heresies that flourished in John's time and later.<sup>53</sup> As

<sup>51</sup> To enter the realm of speculation, based on the figures above, if he gave one lecture per day, six days per week, Comestor's course on John would have lasted for approximately eight weeks. The other Gospel lectures being of approximately the same length, he could have covered all four of them over the course of one year.

<sup>52</sup> "Iohannes interpretatur 'Dei gratia' siue 'in quo est gratia' uel 'cui donatum est.' Cui autem theologorum donatum est ita abscondita summi boni penetrare mysteria et sic humanis mentibus et sensibus intimare?" ("John is translated 'grace of God' or 'in whom is grace' or 'to whom it has been given.' To whom among the theologians, however, was it given so to penetrate the hidden mysteries of the highest good and transmit it in such a way to human minds?") *Glosae super Iohannem*, Proth. 5, 73–76, ed. Andrée, 5. See also Jerome, *Liber interpretationis hebraicorum nominum*, 69, 16–17 and 76, 19–20, ed. P. de Lagarde, CCL 72 (Turnhout, 1959), 146 and 155; Heiric of Auxerre, *Homiliae per circulum anni*, 1, 11, 42–47, ed. R. Quadri, CCM 116 (Turnhout, 1992), 91, adapted from John Scotus, *Homilia super "In principio erat uerbum,"* 2, 2–6, ed. É. Jeuneau, CCM 166 (Turnhout, 2008), 5.

<sup>53</sup> "Contra eos qui propter temporalem natiuitatem dicebant non Christum semper fuisse incipit de eternitate uerbi dicens: *In principio erat uerbum*. Verbum dicitur uel quod profertur et transit, ut quando dicitur 'Deus' uel aliquid huiusmodi, uel cogitacio seu conceptio mentis, que ex mente nata, cum ipsa mente permanet, ut quando cogitas uel diuinam substantiam uel aliam rem. . . . Vt autem et ipse tenebre possent comprehendere, est premissus homo in testimonium huius lucis, et ipsa lux, id est uerbum factum est caro quasi mutatus in lac propter paruulos. In forma enim deitatis non posset nosci a paruulis." ("Against those who say that Christ has not existed always on account of his birth in time, he [i.e., John] begins by talking about the eternity of the Word: *In the beginning was the Word*. Either that is called a word which is spoken and passes, as when it is said 'God' or anything of this kind, or a thought or concept of the mind, which is born from the mind and remains with the mind, such as when you think about the divine substance or anything. . . . But so that the shadows themselves may understand, a man was sent before in testimony of this light, and the light itself, that is, the Word made flesh, as if changed into milk because of the little ones. For in the form of divinity he could not be understood by the little ones.")

we shall soon see, this preface was of crucial importance for Comestor's working out his Gospel-based theological program.

A manuscript of the John Gloss that corresponds reasonably well to what Comestor must have had in front of him is Cambridge, Trinity College, B.1.36,<sup>54</sup> which was written around 1160 in northern France, probably Paris. From there, shortly afterwards, it was bought by Robert Amiclas and brought across the Channel, eventually ending up at the Cistercian Buildwas Abbey in Shropshire.<sup>55</sup> The manuscript is a good example of what a school copy of the Gloss must have looked like by the mid-twelfth century, when the text was used by teachers explaining the *sacra pagina*. It comprises the four prefaces or *prothematata* commented on by Comestor as outlined above: first, on fol. 1r, the prologue "Hic est Iohannes," written in larger script in the column usually reserved for the Bible text; to the right of this, in the margin, is the gloss "Iohannes interpretatur"; immediately below this follows "Omnibus diuine scripture." These two prefaces, "Hic est Iohannes" and "Omnibus diuine scripture," continue side by side until fol. 2v where they end and "Contra eos" commences. This prologue is slightly longer than any of the preceding prefaces (450 words as opposed to 277 for "Hic est Iohannes" and 315 for "Omnibus diuine") and continues on to the next folio, 3r, which also includes the opening of the Gospel proper.<sup>56</sup>

Let us now examine how Comestor uses this material in his lectures and how he proceeds to elucidate the Fourth Gospel. As we shall see, this is not an easy task: Comestor moves seamlessly between the texts found in the Gloss and his own comments, dividing and rearranging his source and instructing his audience to flip back and forth in the text as he finds suitable. This is not a simple practice to

<sup>54</sup> On the various versions of the John Gloss and suggestions for how to edit it, see Alexander Andr e, "Editing the Gloss (later *Glossa 'ordinaria'*) on the Gospel of John: A Structural Approach," in *The Arts of Editing Medieval Greek and Latin: A Casebook*, ed. Elisabet G ransson et al. (Toronto, 2016), 2–21. It should be mentioned here that the method explored in this article does not of necessity apply to other books of the Gloss, as the degree of variation between versions varies with each book. Whereas the Gloss on John is relatively stable, the Gloss on Matthew, for example, exists in a bewildering number of shapes and versions. My forthcoming study of the Gloss on Matthew and its different incarnations will, I hope, bring some order to this confusion.

<sup>55</sup> Amiclas's annotations may be seen on almost every page of the manuscript. These annotations, which may have important things to tell us about twelfth-century school practices, still await an in-depth study. On the Buildwas books in general, see Jennifer M. Sheppard, *The Buildwas Books: Book Production, Acquisition and Use at an English Cistercian Monastery, 1165–c. 1400* (Oxford, 1997); on Amiclas's books, see Rodney M. Thomson, "Robert Amiclas: A Twelfth-Century Parisian Master and His Books," *Scriptorium* 49 (1995): 238–43; and Lesley Smith, "Robert Amiclas and the Glossed Bible," in *From Knowledge to Beatitude: St. Victor, Twelfth-Century Scholars, and Beyond; Essays in Honor of Grover A. Zinn, Jr.*, ed. E. Ann Matter and Lesley Smith (Notre Dame, 2013), 131–52.

<sup>56</sup> Throughout this essay, I will quote the Gloss on John from this manuscript. A facsimile reprint of relevant folios is found in Appendix II.

describe, and to assist the reader of this essay I have included two appendices, the first with Comestor's own lecture text (beginning with his lecture on the preface "Contra eos" and the Gloss on John 1:1–2), the second with the corresponding folios (2v–3r) of the John Gloss as it appears in the manuscript Cambridge, Trinity College, B.1.36. On the surface, Comestor's is a lemmatic commentary, and the lemmata are marked out in the manuscripts either with surrounding dots or by underlining the relevant sections of the text. The scribes of these manuscripts do not distinguish between lemmata taken from the Bible text and those from the glosses explaining it: they are treated and marked out in the same way, apparently, therefore, allotting them the same level of authority. The only distinction is found in the text; the scribe (probably following the practice of the master) sometimes notes that the lemma that follows is taken from the "glosa" or from the "interlinearis," referring to the marginal and interlinear glosses respectively.<sup>57</sup>

Comestor reads the prefaces discussed above in conjunction with the glosses of the first verses of the Gospel. In this part of his lecture course, he makes no distinction between the type or category of gloss. Following from the Lombard's preface, mentioned above, Comestor explains the contents of "Hic est Iohannes" and "Omnibus diuine scripture." Immediately following this, he begins his lectures on the opening of John's Gospel.<sup>58</sup> In this passage, Comestor divides the opening of John's Gospel in four "comata," divisions of a rhetorical period, which he further defines as clauses or distinctions.<sup>59</sup> The first two, Comestor

<sup>57</sup> As some of these glosses often change places in the manuscripts, this information is a clue that may help us identify what version of the Gloss Comestor was using.

<sup>58</sup> "IN PRINCIPIO ERAT VERBUM et cetera. In principio huius euangelii ponuntur quatuor comata, id est quatuor clausule siue distinctiones, et est prima: IN PRINCIPIO ERAT VERBUM. Secunda: ET VERBUM ERAT APVD DEVM. Tertia: DEVS ERAT VERBUM. Quarta: HOC ERAT IN PRINCIPIO APVD DEVM. Due autem que premituntur apposite sunt ad duas hereses eliminandas que iam tempore Iohannis emerserant; due que secuntur ad alias duas eliminandas, que nondum oborte erant, sed Iohannes in spiritu preuidit eas emersuras, scilicet heresim Arrii et Nestorii. Sunt igitur quatuor clausule ad munimentum contra hereses, et non solum apposite sunt ad munimentum sed etiam ad supplementum, quia que continentur in quatuor clausulis ab aliis pretermissa sunt." ("IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD and so on. At the beginning of this Gospel are placed four commas, that is, four clauses or distinctions, and the first is: IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD, the second: AND THE WORD WAS WITH GOD; the third: AND THE WORD WAS GOD; the fourth: THIS WAS IN THE BEGINNING WITH GOD. The two that are put first were designed in order to repel two heresies that had already arisen in John's time; the two that follow in order to repel two others that had not yet arisen, but that John foresaw in his spirit were to arise, that is, the heresy of Arius and Nestorius. Therefore, there are four clauses of fortification against heresies, but they are not only designed in order to fortify but also to supplement, since the contents of the four clauses were omitted by the other <evangelists>.") Troyes 1024, fol. 218r<sup>b</sup>.

<sup>59</sup> Comestor's division is slightly different from the one we are used to, namely: "[1] In principio erat Verbum, et Verbum erat apud Deum, et Deus erat Verbum. [2] Hoc erat in

argues, *In principio erat uerbum* and *Et uerbum erat apud Deum*, were included by John to counter two heresies that had arisen already in his time; the two subsequent clauses, *Deus erat uerbum* and *Hoc erat in principio apud Deum*, were aimed at two heresies that John foresaw would arise in the future, namely, those of Arius and Nestorius. The Gospel was written, therefore, with these four clauses in order to fortify against heresy; but they were also included to supplement the account of the three other evangelists, since the theological claims made in the four clauses are missing from their narratives. In fact, and this is crucial for Comestor's theological program, Comestor makes the overall distinction between text in the Gospel written "ad supplementum" (as a supplement) and material included "ad munimentum" (as a fortification).<sup>60</sup> According to Comestor, and, indeed, to the tradition immediately preceding him,<sup>61</sup> John wrote his Gospel either to supplement the other, synoptic evangelists, adding things that they had not covered, or to reinforce what they had already written and, in particular, to defend Jesus's doctrines against various kinds of heresies.

Thus Comestor consistently looks at John's Gospel in relation to the other Gospels, on which, we must not forget, he also lectured. More important still, as we shall see, is the fact that Comestor also organizes the glosses of the John Gloss according to this twofold scheme: according to Comestor, the glosses may be seen as either interpreting the Gospel as providing a supplement to the other Gospels or as fortifying the doctrines therein expressed against the onslaught of various heresies. In fact, the division of the material into matters of fortification and supplementation is the basic framework through which Comestor structures his theological reading of John's Gospel.<sup>62</sup>

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principio apud Deum. [3] Omnia per ipsum facta sunt, et sine ipso factum est nihil, quod factum est. [4] In ipso uita erat, et uita erat lux hominum." On the transformation of the comma (or its equivalent) into a full stop, probably introduced with Erasmus's edition of the New Testament (1516), see Kurt Aland, "Eine Untersuchung zu Joh. 1:3–4: Über die Bedeutung eines Punktes," *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche* 59 (1968): 174–209; see also Jerome, *Homilia in Iohannem euangelistam*, 1, 1–14, ed. Germain Morin, CCL 78 (Turnhout, 1958), 517–23, at 518, lines 46–49: "Omnia per ipsum facta sunt, et sine ipso factum est nihil quod factum est. Multi enim male legunt, dicentes: Quod factum est in ipso uita erat. Sed ita distinguitur: Omnia per ipsum facta sunt," etc.

<sup>60</sup> See, for instance, his comment on fol. 217v<sup>b</sup>: "Notat etiam quia euangelium scripsit propter duo, scilicet ad munimentum et ad supplementum."

<sup>61</sup> See, for example, the comment found in the Lombard's preface to Comestor's lecture, stating the reasons John wrote his Gospel (Troyes 1024, fol. 216v<sup>a</sup>): "Fuit itaque duplex causa, scilicet confutatio hereticorum, suppletio minus dictorum." These are not precisely Comestor's words, but they are uttered to the same effect.

<sup>62</sup> This distinction is completely misunderstood by Lesley Smith, *The Glossa ordinaria* (n. 8 above), 211, who, quoting the same passage from Comestor above, believes the *supplementum* to be "some kind of improvement" on the Gloss ("read the beginning of the gloss *alii*, etc., from the supplement." [my emphasis]), meaning a supplementary commentary that

After having pointed out the initial four clauses of the Gospel, utilized both as fortification against heresies and to supplement the account of the other evangelists, Comestor continues his lecture by designating two glosses in his textbook, one of each kind: “Habes itaque duas glosas, alteram de munimento, alteram de supplemento.”<sup>63</sup> He then briefly explains the contents and purpose of these glosses:<sup>64</sup> the gloss of fortification — Comestor has still not explained which one he means — will show which heresy is supposed to be countered by which Gospel clause; the gloss of supplement will make apparent that the supplement comprises the single clauses, which are to be understood according to the parts of their letters. We will presently return to these words in attempting to identify the two glosses in the glossed John to which Comestor is alluding. First, though, Comestor instructs his audience to take up part of the gloss of supplement but advises them to be very cautious when it comes to defining the terms used in the individual clauses.<sup>65</sup> For, as Comestor notes, there are three words used in the four clauses, and these are: “beginning,” “word,” and “God.” Of these, only the word “word” remains the same and invariable, as it always, in this part of the text, refers to the Word of God, the Son of God.

But the understanding of the other words varies. “For sometimes,” Comestor explains, “the word ‘beginning’ refers to the Father, as *IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD*,” and sometimes it denotes the beginning of all creation, as in the same clause, if one follows another explication, and as in, for example, “this was in the beginning.” In the same manner, the word “God” may be

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Comestor would now and then refer his students to, but she concludes that “what this supplement was is not known, but if it covers the Gospel of John it cannot be either the *media* or *magna glosatura*.”

<sup>63</sup> “Therefore, you have two glosses, one to fortify, the other to supplement.”

<sup>64</sup> “Glosa de munimento ostendit que clausula contra quam heresim sit introducta. Glosa de supplemento ostendit singulas clausulas supplementum esse et secundum particulas littere. Lege particulas utriusque glose: prius legendo particulam glose de munimento et statim aduertendo interlinearem que congruit illi particule.” (“The gloss of fortification shows which clause is introduced against which heresy. The gloss of supplement shows that the supplement consists in the single clauses and according to the parts of the letter. Read the parts of both glosses: first by reading the parts of the gloss of fortification and immediately by looking at the interlinear gloss that matches this part.”) Troyes 1024, fol. 218r<sup>b</sup>.

<sup>65</sup> “Postea particulam glose de supplemento, sed in distinctione uerborum in singulis clausulis positorum summam adhibe diligentiam. Habemus enim tria uocabula in quatuor clausulis posita: ‘principium,’ ‘uerbum,’ ‘Deus.’ Hoc uocabulum ‘uerbum’ ubique manet immobile, ut ubique per uerbum Dei filium intelligas. Aliorum intelligentia uariatur.” (“Thereafter, read the gloss of supplement, but observe the utmost diligence in distinguishing the words placed in each clause. For we have three words placed in four clauses: ‘beginning,’ ‘word,’ and ‘God.’ The word ‘word’ remains invariable everywhere, as one everywhere understands by the word ‘word’ the Son of God. But the understanding of the other words varies.”)



understood in two different ways, personally and essentially.<sup>66</sup> Comestor then embarks on a further distinction of terms, explaining that "beginning" can have three meanings: "in the Father," "before time," and "eternally." Likewise, "with God" can have a variety of meanings: either the diversity of the divine persons or the identity of their substance. In Comestor's framework, the "supplement" provided by John has, through the Gloss, already spawned matter for theological discussion and precision.

After a substantial discussion of the relationship of the Father with the Son and the language used by Scripture to express it, too long to quote in full here,<sup>67</sup> Comestor reaches the gloss he earlier described as being "of fortification." It begins, "Contra eos qui":

AGAINST THOSE and so on, until HE IS CALLED THE WORD. The main issue is that he, that is, Christ, God's Word, is called an audible or perceptible word, which flies to the ears and immediately disappears. A concept or cogitation of the mind is also called a word, which is manifested by a word; an audible word passes quickly, an intelligible word remains in the mind. For a concept of the mind, which is manifested through an audible word, although it passes quickly together with the word, remains in the mind. Therefore these words, "name" and "word," are of like signification to the names or words that are in the voice and the names and words that are in the soul; and the names and words that are in the voice are signs of those names and words that are in the soul. Therefore the Son of God is called "word" by a suitable similitude, because it has both resemblance with the intelligible word and with the audible word. It has resemblance with the intelligible word according to the fact that it is God and coeternal with the Father, because just as an intelligible word does not pass but remains in the mind, so was the Son from eternity in the Father.<sup>68</sup>

In order to express more clearly the practices employed by Comestor in his lectures I have highlighted the lemma of the Gloss he is quoting, thus showing

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<sup>66</sup> "Nam hoc nomen 'principium' interdum notat patrem, ut *IN PRINCIPIO ERAT VERBUM*, interdum notat principium creaturarum, ut ibidem iuxta aliam expositionem, et ibi: *HOC ERAT IN PRINCIPIO*. Ita quoque hoc nomen 'Deus' modo est personale, ut ibi: *VERBUM ERAT APVD DEVM*; modo essenziale, ut ibi: *VERBUM ERAT DEVS*, id est essentia diuina." ("For sometimes the word 'beginning' refers to the Father, as in *IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD*, sometimes it refers to the beginning of creation, as in the same place according to another explication, and here: *THIS WAS IN THE BEGINNING*. Therefore, also the word 'God' is sometimes personal, as here: *THE WORD WAS WITH GOD*, and sometimes essential, as here: *THE WORD WAS GOD*, that is, of the divine essence.") Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., fol. 218<sup>b</sup>–v<sup>a</sup>.

<sup>68</sup> Troyes 1024, fol. 218v<sup>a-b</sup>; Appendix I, lines 1–11.

how little of the text of the Gloss is included in the student *reportationes*. Whether this was because the scribes of the *reportationes* deliberately abbreviated the lemma of the Gloss, or because the students (and the master) already knew it, either through the master's explanation or by having access to copies of the Gloss in the *schola*, it is too early to say.<sup>69</sup> The part of the preface of the Gloss that Comestor is commenting on runs:

**Contra eos** qui propter temporalem natiuitatem dicebant non Christum semper fuisse incipit de eternitate uerbi dicens: *In principio erat uerbum*.<sup>70</sup> Verbum dicitur uel quod profertur et transit, ut quando dicitur "Deus" uel aliquid huiusmodi, uel cogitacio seu conceptio mentis, que ex mente nata, cum ipsa mente permanet, ut quando cogitas uel diuinam substantiam uel aliam rem. Hac similitudine ratio et sapientia Dei, quae ex Deo nata omnia comprehendit, "**uerbum**" dicitur.<sup>71</sup>

In his gloss, Comestor quotes the first words of the gloss, "AGAINST THOSE," and then he skips parts of the gloss, saying, "and so on, until HE IS CALLED THE WORD." He then begins his explanation: "The main issue, the *summa*, is that he, that is, Christ, God's Word, is called an audible or perceptible word, which flies to the ears and immediately disappears," and so on. This is a thought developed by Augustine in his *Tractatus in euangelium Iohannis*, a work that was of decisive importance for the entire medieval commentary tradition on John.<sup>72</sup> Is the Word of God, Augustine asks, like words uttered in our human speech, a sound that makes a noise and then disappears? How can everything be created and ruled by this word, if it makes a sound and then disappears? What kind of word is it that is both uttered and does not vanish? It consists of four letters and two

<sup>69</sup> Comestor's use of the Gloss suggests the physical presence of manuscripts of the Gloss in the classrooms: it would have been impossible to follow Comestor's lecture without having the text of the Gloss before one's eyes. In this context, Clark suggests that some version of the *pecia* system was probably in place in Paris by the 1160s; see *The Making of the Historia Scholastica* (n. 7 above), chap. 2. Whether each student had a personal copy or whether one or more communal texts were used is, of course, impossible to say. But the close reading of the Gloss performed by the master seems at least to suggest an intimate classroom environment with not much more than a handful of students present.

<sup>70</sup> John 1:1.

<sup>71</sup> "Against those who said that Christ had not existed always on account of his birth in time, he [i.e., John] begins by talking about the eternity of the Word: *In the beginning was the Word*. Either that is called a word which is spoken and passes, as when it is said 'God' or anything of this kind, or a thought or concept of the mind, which is born from the mind and remains with the mind, such as when you think about the divine substance or another thing. By likeness with this, God's reason and wisdom, which, born from God, encompasses all things, is called the 'Word.'" Cambridge B.1.36, fol. 2v.

<sup>72</sup> See Andrée, "The *Glossa ordinaria* on the Gospel of John" (n. 9 above), 117–18.

syllables: *Deus*. Is this all God is, four letters and two syllables?<sup>73</sup> The Gloss probably lifted the paraphrase of this discussion in Augustine from an opening passage of Anselm of Laon's *Glosae super Iohannem*,<sup>74</sup> which took it from the original source.

Comestor then returns to the lemma of the Gloss, saying:

He has a resemblance with the word that is able to be heard according to the fact that he is a man created in time, because just as the perceptible word brings forth a thought, so the Son made man manifested the Father, WHO IS THE BEGINNING NOT OF THE BEGINNING, that is a circumlocution [*periphrasis*] for the Father; a similar circumlocution for the Son is: WHO IS THE BEGINNING BUT OF THE BEGINNING, and thus you may easily avoid the objection about the Holy Spirit, IN WHOM, that is in that which is spoken in the beginning, ONLY ETERNITY IS UNDERSTOOD, that is not identity in substance, because the speech, as has been said, is put beyond the usual measure. BUT BECAUSE.<sup>75</sup>

The lemma of the Gloss commented on reads, with the words and phrases quoted by Comestor in bold:

Hoc dicitur esse *in principio* contra eos qui, quia ex tempore dicitur nasci ex uirgine, dicunt non semper fuisse. *In principio*, id est patre, **qui est principium non de principio**; ipse cum eo **principium de principio, in quo solum notatur eternitas** uerbi, qua omnia precedit. **Sed quia.**<sup>76</sup>

<sup>73</sup> "Nam ecce quid prodest, quia sonuerunt uerba: *In principio erat Verbum, et Verbum erat apud Deum, et Deus erat Verbum?* Et nos diximus uerba, cum loqueremur. Numquid tale Verbum erat apud Deum? Nonne ea quae diximus, sonuerunt atque transierunt? Ergo et Dei Verbum sonuit et peractum est? Quomodo omnia per ipsum facta sunt, et sine ipso factum est nihil? Quomodo per illud regitur, quod per illud creatum est, si sonuit et transiit? Quale ergo uerbum quod et dicitur, et non transit? Intendat Caritas uestra: magna res est. Quotidie dicendo uerba uiluerunt nobis, quia sonando uerba et transeundo uiluerunt, et nihil aliud uidentur quam uerba. Est uerbum et in ipso homine, quod manet intus: nam sonus procedit ex ore. Est uerbum quod uere spiritaliter dicitur, illud quod intellegis de sono, non ipse sonus. Ecce uerbum dico, cum dico: Deus. Quam breue est quod dixi, quatuor litteras, et duas syllabas! Num quidnam hoc totum est Deus, quatuor litterae, et duae syllabae? An quantum hoc uile est, tantum carum est quod in eis intellegitur? Quid factum est in corde tuo, cum audisses: Deus? Quid factum est in corde meo, cum dicerem: Deus? Magna et summa quaedam substantia cogitata est, quae transcendat omnem mutabilem creaturam, carnalem et animalem. Et si dicam tibi: Deus commutabilis est, an incommutabilis? Respondebis statim: Absit, ut ego uel credam uel sentiam commutabilem deum; incommutabilis est Deus." Augustine, *In euangelium Iohannis tractatus*, 1, 8, 3–39, ed. R. Willems, CCL 36 (Turnhout, 1954; repr. 1990), 4–5.

<sup>74</sup> Anselm of Laon, *Glosae super Iohannem*, I, 17–22, ed. Andrée, 6.

<sup>75</sup> Troyes 1024, fol. 218v<sup>b</sup>; Appendix I, lines 11–17.

<sup>76</sup> "This is said to be *in the beginning* against those who say that he did not always exist, since he is said to be born in time by a virgin. *In the beginning*, that is the Father, who is the beginning not of the beginning; together with him he is the beginning but from the beginning,

So far, Comestor has provided a lecture on and further explained passages of the Gloss. By further elucidating passages in the Gloss that were written to expound the Gospel, he has further explained the Gospel to the degree that this may be explained in human terms. Thus, although he ultimately commented on the Gospel text, there is no doubt that he took his cue from the Gloss. In the passages quoted here, he uses much the same language and promotes the same ideas as the Gloss and its sources, but he is also introducing some explanatory elements of his own design. As we have seen in this case, he took these primarily from the realm of Latin grammar: in the first passage quoted from the preface “Contra eos” above, Comestor first defines a “word” as a concept or a thought (*conceptus* or *cogitatio*) of the mind, a thought that disappears with the spoken word when it is uttered but that remains in the mind of the speaker (and, of course, the listener, if he is paying attention). This ultimately derives from Augustine, as we have seen, though the idea had already been incorporated by Comestor’s sources and specifically the *Glosae super Iohannem* and its offspring, the Gloss. Comestor now further explains the grammar behind such a statement: the words “name” and “word” are, at the same time, of like signification to the names or words that are in the voice and the names and words that are in the soul. According to Comestor, therefore, the names and words that are in the voice are signs of those names and words that are in the soul. It is therefore possible to call the Son of God a “word,” using, in Comestor’s language, a suitable similitude, because he shows both resemblance with the word in the mind and with the word that is spoken. It is a subtle yet appealing distinction.

At this point, Comestor tells his readers, or listeners, to stop reading, “Hic dimitte,” and move ahead in the text to the gloss on the Gospel proper that begins “IN PATRE QVI EST PRINCIPIVM.”<sup>77</sup> In the Cambridge manuscript, this corresponds to the first interlinear gloss on the first verse of the Gospel text, commenting on the opening words *In principio*:

**in patre, qui est principium sine principio; filius, qui est principium de principio, uel in principio omnium creaturarum uel temporum, quia ab ipso omnia habent principium existendi.**<sup>78</sup>

By skipping ahead, the audience has fulfilled Comestor’s earlier instructions quoted above, namely, first to read a part of the gloss of fortification, that is, a part of “Contra eos,” and then to look at the interlinear gloss that matches this

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in whom solely the eternity of the Word is mentioned, through which he precedes all things. But because ...” Cambridge B.1.36., fol. 2v.

<sup>77</sup> “Stop here and read the beginning of this gloss, ‘IN THE FATHER WHO IS THE BEGINNING WITHOUT BEGINNING; THE SON WHO IS THE BEGINNING BUT OF THE BEGINNING.’” Troyes 1024, fol. 218v<sup>b</sup>; Appendix I, lines 18–19.

<sup>78</sup> Cambridge, Trinity College, B.1.36, fol. 3r.

part.<sup>79</sup> Following Comestor, this part of the Gloss (or, indeed, the Gospel) is better understood if one does not read the glosses of the Gloss in the order in which they were written in the manuscripts but rather as Comestor suggests. He reorders the Gloss into a continuous narrative so that it would make more sense. Mark Clark has recently stressed the importance of this aspect of Comestor's reading of the Gloss.<sup>80</sup>

Immediately after this, Comestor instructs his audience to dismiss the rest of this gloss too and to read the interlinear glosses. Although he does not indicate exactly which interlinear glosses he means, presumably he is referring here to the other glosses concerning the opening of John's Gospel.<sup>81</sup> After the interlinear glosses, Comestor then instructs his audience to read the beginning of the gloss of supplement that begins "THE OTHER." To return to the lecture, the gloss of supplement beginning "THE OTHER" is found towards the bottom of the page on fol. 3r of the Trinity College manuscript, following the end of the gloss "Contra eos"; it reads (as usual, the words quoted by Comestor are marked in bold face):

**Alii** euangelistae describunt Christum natum ex tempore; Iohannes affirmat eum fuisse in patre ut in principio. **Non fuit ante pater quam filius.** Ecce filius alia persona a patre, **una substantia cum patre.**<sup>82</sup>

Now that we have identified the gloss, let us see how Comestor explains it.<sup>83</sup> According to him, the unsuspecting reader of the Gloss may think that the opening statement of John's Gospel was written by John to fortify against heresy when, in fact, it was written in order to provide a supplement to the other evangelists (or perhaps both) because it highlights an aspect of the nature

<sup>79</sup> "Prius legendo particulam glose de munimento et statim aduertendo interlinearem que congruit illi particule." Troyes 1024, fol. 218r<sup>b</sup>.

<sup>80</sup> See Clark, *The Making of the Historia scholastica* (n. 7 above), especially chap. 2: "Lessons Learned in the Classroom: Comestor's Lectures on the Glossed Gospels."

<sup>81</sup> "Et dimitte ibi et lege interlineares, postea lege principium glose de supplemento, ALII et cetera." ("And stop there and read the interlinear glosses. Thereafter read the beginning of the gloss of supplement, THE OTHER and so on.") Troyes 1024, fol. 218v<sup>b</sup>; Appendix I, lines 19–20.

<sup>82</sup> "The other evangelists describe Christ as having been born in time; John affirms that he was with the Father as in the beginning. The Father was not before the Son. Behold the Son is another person than the Father, but of one and the same substance as the Father."

<sup>83</sup> "As if this (i.e., *In the beginning was the Word*) was written by John to fortify against a heresy, but it was written in order to supplement, because it had been passed over in silence by the others. And note that some manuscripts have this supplementary gloss written continuously, others divided in parts. THE FATHER WAS NOT BEFORE THE SON, because the Son is coeternal with the Father, whose coeternity with the Father is shown by John in these words: *IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD*. And note that the end of the gloss carries the speech to its proper meaning, that is to note the unity of the essence of the Son with the Father, where it is said of ONE SUBSTANCE WITH THE FATHER." Troyes 1024, fol. 218v<sup>b</sup>; Appendix I, lines 20–26.

of God that was omitted by them. Comestor then observes that in some manuscripts this gloss of supplement is written continuously; in others it is divided into two parts. In the Cambridge manuscript it is written continuously.<sup>84</sup> Comestor then refers the reader back to the first interlinear gloss quoted above, on *In principio*, which we saw ended with the words, “uel in principio omnium creaturarum uel temporum, quia ab ipso omnia habent principium existendi.” Comestor now tells his audience to resume this gloss where it was left earlier.<sup>85</sup> This comment explains that the words of the Gloss to the effect that the Son is the “beginning from the beginning,” and so also may be understood as existing in the beginning of all created things, imply that he was before the beginning of all created things and not the primordial creature.

Comestor then likens this ontological status to that of the title of a book, which is found at the beginning of the book, that is, before the book. One may note that he does not refer to this distinction as being put particularly *eleganter*. Then two heresies are identified, against which John argues in the first few verses of the Gospel: one that had already emerged by John’s own time and another that was to come after. After this he inserts a short comment identifying the latter heresy:<sup>86</sup> “Non enim eadem res potest dici apud seipsam esse nisi figurate. Huic heresi postea adhesit Sabellius et dilatauit eam.”<sup>87</sup> Comestor then moves back to the preface “Contra eos,” which he left off with the words, “Hic dimitte,” and instructs his audience first to read on in this gloss until a certain point and then leave it and continue with a gloss of supplement which is to be found among the first glosses on the opening of John.<sup>88</sup> The glosses in the Cambridge manuscript corresponding to those indicated in this passage are:

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<sup>84</sup> It is not entirely clear what Comestor refers to by this remark. No manuscript that I have checked for this essay — before or after Comestor’s time — presents this gloss divided in any way. Perhaps in Comestor’s copy the gloss was written continuously in conjunction with one or two other marginal glosses, such as “Quater ponitur erat” or “Alii inter homines.” See Appendix II for images of the relevant parts of the manuscript.

<sup>85</sup> “Now pick up the rest of the gloss which you had left, OR IN THE BEGINNING OF ALL CREATED THINGS, that is, before the beginning of all created things, not that he should have been the primordial creature, just as a title is said to be at the beginning of a book, that is, before the book. In the first clause, John is arguing against certain heretics, who had emerged in his time claiming that Christ had his beginning in the Virgin, but, because others had already emerged who granted that he was coeternal with the Father but claimed that he was the same person as the Father, assuming plurality in the words only, in order to confute them it is added: AND THE WORD WAS WITH GOD, that is, the Son with the Father and thus other than him.” Troyes 1024, fol. 218<sup>v</sup>–219<sup>r</sup><sup>a</sup>; Appendix I, lines 26–33.

<sup>86</sup> Troyes 1024, fol. 219<sup>r</sup><sup>a</sup>.

<sup>87</sup> “For the same thing cannot be said to be with itself unless figuratively. To this heresy adhered afterwards Sabellius, and he made it spread.”

<sup>88</sup> “Now take up the gloss of fortification where you left it: BUT BECAUSE OTHERS SAID and so on, up until BUT BECAUSE OTHERS AGREED and so on, and stop there and read the interlinear

1. **Sed quia alii dicebant** quod idem Deus aliquando pater, aliquando est filius, ut alter notetur in persona, subdit: *Et uerbum erat apud Deum*, ut alius apud alium. **Sed quia alii concederent** [this is the continuation of the preface "Contra eos"].<sup>89</sup>
2. An unspecified interlinear gloss, perhaps to be identified with the gloss on the lemma, *Et uerbum erat apud Deum*: "ut alia persona."<sup>90</sup>
3. **Alii inter homines** subito apparuisse, Iohannes dicit apud Deum semper fuisse. Alii uerum hominem, Iohannes uerum Deum asserit dicens: *Et Deus erat uerbum* [the gloss "of supplement" found among the marginal glosses in Trinity B.1.36].<sup>91</sup>

The gloss "Contra eos" is here again referred to as a gloss of fortification, and the last gloss, no. 3 above, is called a gloss of supplement. No further explanation of the contents of these glosses is provided. Instead, Comestor is content to comment that the first two clauses of the Gospel, *In principio erat uerbum* and *Verbum erat apud Deum*, serve to refute two heresies that had already arisen in John's time, namely, the ones mentioned at the opening of the gloss "Contra eos": those heretics who claimed that Christ had both always existed on account of his birth in time<sup>92</sup> and those who claimed that the same God is sometimes Father, sometimes Son. Therefore he adds *and the Word was with God* in order to show that the one was simultaneously with the other.

The two following clauses of the Gospel, *Deus erat uerbum* and *hoc erat in principio apud Deum*, again following Comestor, are leveled against two heresies that were to appear after John's time, that is, those such as Arius's, which would allow that the Word is coeternal with God and another person than the Father but that he is still a created being and not God. Comestor then instructs his audience to

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gloss that matches this sentence, then take the gloss of supplement here: OTHERS AMONG MEN." Ibid.: Appendix I, lines 35–37.

<sup>89</sup> "But because others said that the same God is sometimes Father, sometimes Son, so that one of them is known in the person, he adds: *And the Word was with God*, as if one with another. But because others would concede ..." Trinity B.1.36, fol. 2v.

<sup>90</sup> "*And the Word was with God*: as another person." Ibid., fol. 3r.

<sup>91</sup> "Some among men say that he appeared suddenly, John says that he was always with God. Some affirm that he is true man, John that he is true God, saying: *And the Word was God*." Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> "Behold in these two sentences he refutes two heresies that arose in his time; in the two following he refutes two others that were to arise after his time. Therefore, foreseeing in his spirit certain future heretics who would claim that he is coeternal with the Father and another person than the Father and nevertheless a created being, such as Arius, to refute these people he adds: *AND GOD WAS THE WORD*. And turn this proposition around, 'the word was God,' that is, of the divine essence, because this name 'God' is essential in this sentence, whereas in the preceding it is personal." Troyes 1024, fol. 219r<sup>a</sup>; Appendix I, lines 37–43. See also the beginning of "Contra eos," quoted above.

move back to “Contra eos,” to the sentence beginning, “but because others would allow”:

Take up the gloss of fortification where you left it: BUT BECAUSE OTHERS WOULD ALLOW and so on. And note that by that which is placed here the verb is looking forward towards the future, hence the wording WOULD ALLOW. Augustine infers that the following two heresies were not yet born, but still to be born. Therefore, because the two preceding had already been born, it is said about them: THEY SAID.<sup>93</sup>

The gloss that Comestor refers to explains that the words of the Gospel, *And the Word was God*, are directed against those who, although they would allow that the Word has always existed as another being, would still claim that he is not God:

**Sed quia alii concederent** et semper et alium fuisse sed non Deum esse, subdit: *Et Deus erat uerbum*.<sup>94</sup>

The subjunctive form *concederent*, according to Comestor’s comments, indicates that this heresy did not exist in John’s time but would emerge in the future. He finds support for this view in Augustine, who intimates that the two following heresies had yet to be born. The previously mentioned heresies, however, Comestor continues, having already arisen at the time of John’s writing, are indicated in the Gloss by the indicative mood of the verb *dicebant*, which we saw quoted above (“Sed quia alii dicebant” etc.).

Comestor then refers his audience, without further specification, to the interlinear gloss that would match this clause.<sup>95</sup> Thereafter take up, says Comestor, the gloss of supplement that begins “Others true man,” which is in reference to the following interlinear gloss, a continuation of the gloss beginning “Alii inter homines” that was quoted under no. 3 above:

**Alii uerum hominem**, Iohannes uerum Deum asserit dicens: *Et Deus erat uerbum*.

The other evangelists asserted that the Word, Jesus, was true man; John adds that he was also true God. But because John foresaw that there would come others, Comestor explains, who would claim that the Word was indeed God but by adoption and not by nature, such as Nestorius, therefore, in order to confute such

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.; Appendix I, lines 44–47.

<sup>94</sup> “But because others would allow both that he was always and is another but not God, he added: *And God was the word*.”

<sup>95</sup> “Now read the interlinear gloss that matches this sentence. Then take up the gloss of supplement where you left it: OTHERS TRUE MAN.” Troyes 1024, fol. 219r<sup>a</sup>; Appendix I, lines 47–48.



heretics, he added: *This was in the beginning with God.*<sup>96</sup> Here Comestor blends the gloss with the Gospel text. He also distinguishes between the meaning of *uerbum erat apud Deum* in verse 1 and *hoc erat ... apud Deum* in verse 2: the former is to denote the diversity of persons (as we saw above), the latter to underline the identity of essence. After this the audience is again called back to "Contra eos."

Pick up the gloss of fortification where you left it: BUT BECAUSE YET OTHERS et cetera IN WHOM, that is in him who is said to have been with God in the beginning, that is, born from God the Father before all things. HE IS CALLED CO-OMNIPOTENT, CONSUBSTANTIAL, COETERNAL, so that the weight in this word that mentions these three is such that it mentions the consubstantiality and the coeternality sufficiently openly but does not seem to mention the co-omnipotence. Leave it here and read the interlinear gloss which matches this sentence: THUS HE WAS et cetera, and pick up the gloss of supplement where you left it: OTHERS <SAY THAT HE WAS A> MAN AMONG MEN.<sup>97</sup>

The continuation of "Contra eos" commented on, bringing up the topic of the co-omnipotence, consubstantiality, and coeternity of the Word with the Father, reads in the Gloss:

**Sed quia iterum alii** esse Deum concederent sed factum Deum, ut ex hominibus fiunt dii, contra eos addit: *Hoc*, id est uerbum, Deus, *erat apud Deum in principio*, id est ante omnia natus ex Deo, **in quo et coomnipotens et consubstantialis et coeternus iudicatur.**<sup>98</sup>

Comestor then instructs the reader to leave the gloss "Contra eos" once more and instead go to the interlinear gloss that matches this sentence, "**ita erat unum cum patre, ut omne principium creaturarum sua preiret essentia,**"<sup>99</sup> and then move on

<sup>96</sup> "But because he again foresaw in his spirit others who were to come who would say that he was God but by adoption and not by nature, such as Nestorius saying: 'I do not envy Christ having been made God, because also I, if I wish, can become God.' Therefore, to refute those it is added: *THIS*, THAT IS, THE WORD, *WAS WITH GOD*, that is, with the Father, that is, he was of the same nature with the Father and thus naturally God and not by adoption, IN THE BEGINNING, that is, before time and eternally. And distinguish that this saying, *the word was with God*, makes another sense here than in the second clause. For there, it denotes the difference of person, but here the identity of essence." Ibid.; Appendix I, lines 49–55.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., fol. 219r<sup>a</sup>–219r<sup>b</sup>; Appendix I, lines 55–61.

<sup>98</sup> "But because yet others would allow that he is God but a created god, such as gods are made from men, against those he adds: *This*, that is the Word, *was with God in the beginning*, that is before all things begotten by God, in whom he is judged both co-omnipotent and consubstantial and coeternal." Trinity B.1.36, fol. 3r.

<sup>99</sup> "He was one with the Father in such a way that he preceded every beginning of creation with his own essence." Contents taken from Anselm of Laon, *Glosae super Iohannem*, I, 35–36, ed. Andrée, 7 (based on Alcuin, *Commentarius in Iohannem*, 1, 2 [PL 100:745c–d]).

to the gloss of supplement continued from above (no. 3) and found in the margin in Trinity B.1.36, fol. 3r:

**Alii hominem inter homines** temporaliter conuersatum, Iohannes apud Deum manentem dicit: *Hoc erat in principio apud Deum*. Alii dicunt miracula que fecit homo in mundo, Iohannes per ipsum omnia facta testatur: *Omnia per ipsum facta sunt*. Ecce actor bonorum: *et sine ipso factum est nichil*. Ecce non est actor malorum.<sup>100</sup>

This is the gloss where Comestor finds proof of the co-omnipotence of the Word with the Father that he found lacking from the gloss of fortification a little while earlier: through John's testimony that, first, *All things were made by him*, and, second, *And without him nothing was made*, the missing third piece, the co-omnipotence, is found in the trinity of properties common to the Word and the Father.

And this is the way it continues. As we have seen in the preceding pages, Comestor's point of departure is the Gloss rather than the biblical text, so much so that one may have the impression that this text is of equal authority with the Gospel; nevertheless, the text of the Gloss is not venerated to such a degree that it cannot be cut up by the master in order to be put together anew in order to achieve a better understanding of the biblical text. With great dexterity and acumen, the master moves in and out of the text of the glosses and the biblical text, in the process taking the students' previous or simultaneous understanding of the contents of the glosses for granted. Often, in addition to digging deeper into the contents of the glosses, Comestor also explains the order in which they ought to be read; in fact, he is reorganizing the order of the glosses for his students and comments only on a selection of them. This does not necessarily imply that he found the Gloss unsatisfactory or unintuitive to use; rather, I would suggest that his choice is intimately connected with his theological reading of the Fourth Gospel. His selection of glosses is based on how they fit in his scheme of supplement and fortification, which is the fundamental principle of his theological program.

<sup>100</sup> "Some say he was a man living in time among men, John says that he remained with God: *This was in the beginning with God*. Others name the miracles that he made as a man on earth, John testifies that all things were made by him: *All things were made by him*. Behold the author of good: *and without him nothing was made*. Behold he is not the author of evil." This part of the gloss is pieced together by extracts from Anselm of Laon, *Glosae super Iohannem*, I, 28–38 (whose sources were Alcuin, *Commentarius*, I, 1–1, 3 [PL 100:745c–d]; and Bede, *Homiliae in euangelia*, I, 8, 24–33, ed. D. Hurst, CCL 122 [Turnhout, 1955], 53), ed. Andrée, 7; and, possibly, Rabanus Maurus, *In librum Sapientiae* I, 3 (PL 109:677c).

## CONCLUSIONS

This foray into the Gospel lectures of Peter Comestor, admittedly brief and incomplete, still permits a few important conclusions to be drawn. First, it should be apparent that Comestor is teaching theology; he is not merely explaining the text of the Gospel according to different levels of understanding but, using the Gloss as his foundational theological textbook, dissecting it and rephrasing it, he teaches theology to his students. In fact, through his organization of both Gospel text and glosses into either of the "supplementum" and "munimentum" category, Comestor creates a theological framework through which he reads the Gospel and extrapolates theological doctrines from its text. In his lectures on the Fourth Gospel and its Gloss, Comestor is doing theology and he is doing it using the Bible and its commentary tradition as sources; indeed, Comestor's house of theology has two stories: on the ground floor is Scripture; the first floor is made up by the preceding tradition. In Comestor's vision of theology, therefore, there can be no division of labor: theology arises from the exegesis of the Bible, and his theological enterprise is firmly rooted at its beginning in sacred scripture.

Second, besides being an authentic and unique witness to the twelfth-century teaching of theology, Comestor's lectures also provide crucial information about the Gloss, the popularity of which is well attested but about whose purpose and use we still know very little. It is clear that, for Comestor, explicating the glosses is almost as important as explicating the biblical text itself. But this does not mean that Comestor sees the Gloss as equal to or of the same authority as the biblical text but rather that he sees it as the basis for highlighting those issues arising from the biblical text that are (or have been) in dispute and can still be argued about and perhaps as a way of bringing out before the *schola* aspects of the biblical text that would otherwise remain unnoticed. Most importantly, however, Comestor's choice to lecture on the Gloss suggests a profound humility on the part of the master before the ineffability of God's revealed Word, something that is not mastered through scholarship but rather through prayer and grace and the fullness and depth and height of which he has made no claim to encompass. The biblical text remains veiled and unveiled until the end of time. We can master the Gloss, but the Bible (the Word) we can only understand as in a glass darkly.

If they do not reveal much about the original purpose of the Gloss, Comestor's lectures certainly tell us how it was used in twelfth-century classrooms: it was a tool for teaching the Bible, efficiently and elegantly used by masters such as Comestor to extrapolate theological truths. It provided a foundation of high potential for masters, who could reorganize it, pruning it and explaining it further, like Comestor, who also used it to author his own alternative aid to biblical studies, the *Historia scholastica*. Comestor's Gospel lectures are therefore

interesting in their own right for the snapshot image they give us of how teaching theology was pursued in the schools of Paris by the mid-twelfth century, but they also provide a unique channel for our understanding of the uses of the Gloss for this purpose, serving as a basis for the scriptural theology that was being developed at Paris in the mid-twelfth century. Comestor's lectures are evidence of the Bible being at the center of this development and its focus and not separate from it, as has previously been taken for granted.<sup>101</sup>

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**Keywords:** Medieval Theology, Medieval Bible, Twelfth-Century Schools, Peter Comestor, Glossa "ordinaria"

## APPENDIX

### I. Peter Comestor, *Glose siue postille super Iohannem glosatum*

Troyes, Médiathèque du Grand Troyes, 1024

CONTRA EOS, et cetera usque ibi VERBUM DICTVR. Summa est quia uerbum dicitur ipsum audibile, quod euolat ad aures et statim perit. Verbum quoque dicitur conceptus siue cogitatio mentis, que manifestatur per uerbum, et uerbum audibile transit [218v<sup>b</sup>] repente, uerbum intelligibile manet in mente.

Cogitatio enim mentis que manifestatur per uerbum audibile, cum transit cum uerbo audibili sed remanet in mente. Itaque hec uocabula "nomen," "uerbum" equiuoca sunt ad nomina et uerba que in uoce, et nomina et uerba que sunt in anima; et nomina et uerba que sunt in uoce sunt note eorum nominum et uerborum que sunt in anima. Ergo Filius Dei eleganti similitudine uerbum dicitur, quia et habet similitudinem cum uerbo intelligibili et cum uerbo audibili. Cum uerbo intelligibili habet similitudinem secundum quod Deus et Patri coeternus, quia sicut uerbum intelligibile non transit sed manet in mente, ita Filius ab eterno fuit in Patre. Cum uerbo audibili habet similitudinem secundum quod homo factus in tempore, quia sicut uerbum audibile prodit cogitationem, sic Filius homo factus manifestauit Patrem, QVI EST PRINCIPIVM NON DE PRINCIPIO, id est ut Pater sit peryphrasis, QVI EST PRINCIPIVM SED DE PRINCIPIO, id est Filius ut sit similiter peryphrasis, et sic facile poteris euadere obiectionem que sit de Spiritu sancto, IN QVO, scilicet in eo quod dicitur in principio, SOLVM NOTATVR

<sup>101</sup> The larger implications of these conclusions, and the changes in the historiography of the twelfth century they entail, are examined in greater detail in Alexander André, "Sacra Pagina: Theology and the Bible from the School of Laon to the School of Paris," *A Companion to Twelfth-Century Schools*, ed. Cédric Giraud (Leiden, forthcoming).

ETERNITAS, id est non substantie idemptitas, quia locutio, ut dictum est, ponitur preter consuetum modum. SED QVIA.

Hic dimitte et lege principium illius glose, IN PATRE QVI EST PRINCIPIVM SINE PRINCIPIO, FILIVS QVI EST PRINCIPIVM SED DE PRINCIPIO; et dimitte ibi et lege interlineares, postea lege principium glose de supplemento, ALII et cetera. Quasi hoc scriptum est a Iohanne ad munimentum contra heresim, et idipsum scriptum est ad supplementum, quia fuerat ab aliis sub silentio pretermissum. Et nota quod glosam de supplemento quidam codices habent continuam, alii per partes. NON FVIT ANTE PATER QVAM FILIVS, quia Filius Patri coeternus, cuius coeternitas cum Patre a Iohanne ostenditur his uerbis: *IN PRINCIPIO ERAT VERBVM*. Et nota quia finis glose trahit locutionem ad proprium sensum, scilicet ut notet unitatem essentie Filii cum Patre, ubi dicitur VNA SVBSTANTIA CVM PATRE. Modo sume residuum glose, quod dimiseras, VEL IN PRINCIPIO OMNIVM CREATVRARVM, id est ante principium omnium creaturarum, non quod ipse fuerit primordialis creatura, sicut dicitur titulus esse in principio libri, id est ante librum.

Ecce Iohannes in prima clausula arguit quosdam hereticos, qui iam suo tempore emergerant dogmatizantes Christum in uirgine habuisse principium, sed quia iam alii emergerant qui concedebant esse Patri coeternum, sed asserebant esse eandem personam cum Patre, tantum in uocabulis pluralitatem facientes, ideo ad eorum confutationem subditur: ET VERBVM ERAT APVD DEVM, id est Filius apud [219<sup>r</sup>] Patrem et ita alius a Deo. Non enim eadem res potest dici apud seipsam esse nisi figurate. Huic heresi postea adhesit Sabellius et dilatauit eam.

Modo sume glosam de monimento ubi dimisisti: SED QVIA ALII DICEBANT et cetera usque ibi SED QVIA ALII CONCEDERENT et cetera, et dimitte ibi et lege interlinearem qui congruit illi clausule, postea sume glosam de supplemento ibi: ALII INTER HOMINES. Ecce in his duabus clausulis confutauit duas hereses iam suo tempore obortas; in duabus sequentibus confutat alias duas post tempus suum emersuras. Preuidens ergo Iohannes in spiritu quosdam hereticos futuros qui concederent esse Patri coeternum et aliam personam esse a Patre et tamen creaturam esse, ut Arrium, ad eorum confutationem subdit: *ET DEVS ERAT VERBVM*. Et facies propositionem transpositam, "uerbum erat Deus," id est essentia diuina quia hoc nomen "Deus" in hac clausula est essentiale, cum in precedenti sit personale.

Sume glosam de munimento ubi dimisisti: SED QVIA ALII CONCEDERENT et cetera. Et nota quia hoc ipso quod ponitur hic uerbum respiciens ad futurum, scilicet CONCEDERENT. Innuit Augustinus quia nondum nate erant due hereses sequentes sed adhuc nasciture. Vnde quia due precedentes iam orte erant, in precedentibus dictum est: DICEBANT. Modo lege interlinearem que congruit huic clausule. Postea sume glosam de supplemento ubi dimisisti: ALII VERVM HOMINEM. Sed quia iterum preuidebat in spiritu alios futuros qui dicerent esse Deum, sed adoptione non natura, ut Nestorinus dicens: "Non inuideo Christo facto Deo, quia et

ego, si uolo, possum fieri Deus,” ideo ad eorum confutationem subditur: *HOC, ID EST VERBUM, ERAT APUD DEVM*, id est apud Patrem, id est erat eiusdem nature cum Patre et ita Deus naturalis, non adoptionis, *IN PRINCIPIO*, id est ante secula et eternaliter, et distingue quia hec locutio *uerbum erat apud Deum* alium sensum hic facit quam in secunda clausula. Ibi enim notat diuersitatem persone, hic autem idemptitatem essentie. Sume glosam de munimento ubi dimisisti: *SED QVIA ITERVM ALII* et cetera *IN QVO*, scilicet in eo quod dicitur fuisse apud Deum in principio, id est natus ex Deo Patre ante omnia, *IVDICATVR COOMNIPOTENS, CONSVBSTANTIALIS, COETERNVS*, ut tantum sit pondus in hoc uerbo quod notet hec tria, et consubstantialitatem et coeternitatem satis expresse notat, sed coomnipotentiam non uidetur notare. Dimitte ibi et lege interlinearem que congruit huic clausule: *ITA ERAT* et cetera, et sume glosam de supplemento ubi dimisisti: *ALII HOMINEM INTER [219r<sup>b</sup>] HOMINES*.



