

Chapter 5

Scripture and the Changing Culture of Theology in the High Middle Ages

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The two centuries c.1050-c.1250 are widely accounted a defining period in the development of western theology, for good or ill, depending on the point of view adopted. The gradual distinction between biblical exegesis and speculative theology, the application of the tools of logical analysis to questions of biblical or doctrinal interpretation, and the challenge of newly-translated Aristotelian texts on natural science and ethics, were prominent amongst the forces that shaped understanding of what it was to do theology. The period witnessed not only an influx of new texts from ancient authorities, but also a resurgent interest in Patristic texts, including new translations of Greek patristic writing, Gregory Nazianzen, John of Damascus, and perhaps above all, the author known variously, but most conveniently as the Pseudo-Dionysius. The resources at the disposal of high medieval scholars were considerable.

As far as biblical exegesis itself is concerned this was the period which initiated the continual commentary on the bible, the *Magna Glossatura* (*Great Gloss*) emerging from the *Glossa ordinaria*, a collective enterprise, whose complexities are revealed in the current attempts to create a critical edition.¹ Patterns of biblical exegesis from the early

¹ The work of Alexander Andr  e and Cedric Giraud, especially with respect to Anselm of Laon (d.1117), is indispensable in this connection. From the former *Anselmi Laudunensis Glosae super Iohannem*, Corpus Christianorum Continuatio

church and earlier medieval period were revisited: the four senses of scripture providing a rich foundation for the medieval theological imagination.² The efforts made by clerical communities to procure copies of glossed biblical books are reflected in library catalogues and in modern survivals. The extant books from medieval Hereford Cathedral indicate exactly such a concerted drive to acquire these texts in the second half of the

mediaevalis, 267 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014), 'Anselm of Laon Unveiled: the *Glosae super Iohannem* and the Origins of the *Glossa ordinaria* on the Bible,' *Mediaeval Studies*, 73 (2011): 217-40; '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, 289-333; *Gilbertus Universalis: Glossa ordinaria in Lamentationes Ieremie prophete. Prothemata et Liber I. A Critical Edition with an Introduction and a Translation*, Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis, Studia Latina Stockholmiensia, 52 (Stockholm, 2005). From the latter Cedric Giraud, *Per verba magistri: Anselme de Laon et son école au XIIIe siècle* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010). For other literature on the Gloss see for example G. Lobrichon and P. Riché eds, *Le Moyen Age et la Bible* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1984); L. J. Smith, *Masters of the Sacred Page: Manuscripts of Theology in the Latin West to 1274* (Notre Dame, IN.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001). The foundational work of Beryl Smalley on the Glossa is still valuable, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1983).

² See Henri de Lubac, *Exégèse médiévale, les quatre sens de l'écriture*, 4 vols (Paris, 1959-1964), translated into English up to Vol. 2, Part 1 of the French original as *Medieval Exegesis, the Four Senses of Scripture*, 3 Vols., Vol. 1 trans. M. Sebanc, Vols. 2-3 trans. E. M. Macierowski (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1998, 2000, 2009).

twelfth century.³ This activity coincided with a series of bishops trained at the schools of Paris, Robert of Bethune (1131-1148), Gilbert Foliot (1148-1163), Robert of Melun (1163-1167) and Robert Foliot (1173-1186). The need to provide a reference collection for the Canons explains a preference for material essential for preaching. The situation at Hereford was mirrored by contemporary Lincoln, and elsewhere across western Christendom.⁴ A growing concern that pastoral care should be properly resourced intellectually, as well as materially and spiritually, is indicated by canon 18 of the Third Lateran Council, 1179. The canon carried the injunction that Cathedral churches should assign, with a suitable benefice, a master to teach the clerics and poor scholars of the church.⁵ Meeting the needs of the teacher would open the way to knowledge for those learning. Glossed books of the bible would have represented an important resource in this enterprise.

³ R. A. B. Mynors and R. M. Thomson, *Catalogue of the Manuscripts of Hereford Cathedral Library* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. xv-xvii.

⁴ Mynors and Thomson, *Hereford Cathedral Library*, p. xv; R. M. Thomson, *Catalogue of the Manuscripts of Lincoln Cathedral Chapter Library* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1989).

⁵ *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, Vol 1 of 2, *Nicaea I to Lateran V*, ed. Norman P. Tanner (London: Sheed and Ward, 1990). On the transmission of the canons, of which no official record survives, see Danica Summerlin, 'Three Manuscripts Containing the Canons of the 1179 Lateran Council', *Bulletin of Medieval Canon Law* 30 (2013): 21-43.

This was the period too, in which theology emerged as a distinctive disciplinary conception and framework first took form. Where Peter Abelard (1079-1142) made extensive use of the term in his speculative works of the late 11teens and 1120s the *Theologia 'summi boni'*, the *Theologia christiana*, and the *Theologia 'scholarium'* it is not entirely clear what he meant, precisely. Over the period in question *theologia* emerged as a term more generally used, and evolved technical attributes and definition, taking shape as something approaching a distinct area of intellectual activity. An important element in the evolution of theology as a technical term was the translation into Latin, and subsequent reception, of Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics*.⁶ This gave to western authors new vocabulary for the definition of learning. Although the main translation by James of Venice dated from the second quarter of the twelfth century, the work had limited reception until the early thirteenth century; Robert Grosseteste (c.1170-1253) produced the first surviving commentary in the 1220s.⁷ In the hands of Grosseteste and

⁶ Four translations were made in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries: James of Venice (second quarter of the twelfth century), Ioannes (before 1159), Gerard of Cremona (before 1187), and William of Moerbeke whose revision of the text dates to c. 1269, see Bernard G. Dod, 'Aristoteles latinus', in *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy*, ed. N. Kretzmann, A. Kenny and J. Pinborg (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 45-79, esp. 54-5, 56-7, 58, 62-4, and in tabular form at 75. For the texts: L. Minio-Paluello and Bernard G. Dod, eds. *Analytica Posteriora*, Aristoteles Latinus IV.1-4 (Leiden: Brill, 1968).

⁷ Dod, 'Aristoteles latinus', 68-70. On James of Venice see W. Berschin, *Greek Letters and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. J. C. Frakes (Washington, D.C., Catholic University of

later Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), amongst others, an intellectual shift occurred as the implications of describing theology as a ‘science,’ (*episteme*) in Aristotelian terms were explored.⁸ A lively debate would continue in the later thirteenth and early fourteenth century on how appropriately this description could be applied, with criticism of Aquinas from Godfrey of Fontaine in particular (c.1250-c.1306).⁹ At stake was the nature of theological understanding.

What theology was to be, how the bible was to be interpreted, and the role of reason in these activities form some of the fundamental questions in the ground and grammar of

America Press, 1988), 217-31. The twelfth century reception of the *Posterior Analytics* has been opened up especially by Sten Ebbesen, ‘Anonymous Aureliaensis II, Aristotle, Alexander, Porphyry and Boethius. Ancient Scholasticism and 12th Century Western Europe’, *Cahiers de l’Institut du Moyen-âge Grec et Latin* 16 (1976): 1-128, and ‘Jacobus Veneticus on the Posterior Analytics and some early 13-Century Oxford Masters on the Elenechi’, *Cahiers de l’Institut du Moyen-âge Grec et Latin* 21 (1977): 1-9, and more recently by David Bloch, ‘James of Venice and the Posterior Analytics’, *Cahiers de l’Institut du Moyen-âge Grec et Latin* 78 (2008): 37-50. For Grosseteste, *Commentarius in analyticorum posteriorum libros*, ed. Pietro Rossi, Unione Accademica Nazionale, Corpus Philosophorum Medii Aevi, Testi e Studi 2 (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1981).

⁸ This is discussed in detail and with references below.

⁹ See Godfrey of Fontaine, *Quodlibet*, IV, q. 10, *Les quatre premiers Quodlibets de Godefroid de Fontaines* eds. M. De Wulf, A. Pelzer (1904), pp. 260-264.

high medieval theological culture. Defining theology in this period and what constituted theological reflection, was, and remains, a complex task. It is an easy assumption that the intellectual activity of the schools and monasteries was basically theological or theologically orientated. This is, in most respects, perfectly true, but what that orientation meant in detail for contemporaries and how modern interpreters identify its characteristics are questions that lie at the heart of the definition. While a merely semantic approach has its limitations, the categorizations and definition of ‘theologia’ are an important element in charting cultural change. As Brian McGuire expresses it:

...the history of *theologia* is more than just a philological investigation or an exercise in arid specialization, it is rather a tool particularly well suited to expose what past thinkers have conceived the task of reflection on the Christian message to be and how they thought this task was to be related to other forms of rational discourse.¹⁰

To investigate the nature of theology/*theologia* is to explore the way in which knowledge was classified during this period and how Christian thinking was conceived.

Medieval theological thinking grew from and through biblical exegesis. Where modern theology tends to regard Scripture as the locus for theology, rather than theology in itself, this was not the case for the medieval period.¹¹ The need for the correct interpretation of

¹⁰ B. P. McGuire, ‘*Theologia* in Isaac of Stella’, *Cîteaux* 21 (1970): 219-35, at 219.

¹¹ J. A. Weisheipl, ‘The Meaning of *Sacra Doctrina* in *Summa Theologiae* I, q.1’, *The Thomist* 38 (1974): 49-80, at 55.

the Bible as the grounds for right belief is found clearly expressed by Augustine of Hippo (354-430), in the preface to his work *De doctrina christiana* (On Christian Doctrine) namely to provide ‘certain rules for the interpretation of Scripture’.¹² These were important, so that:

just as he who knows how to read is not dependent on some one else, when he finds a book, to tell him what is written in it, so the man who is in possession of the rules which I here attempt to lay down, if he meet with an obscure passage in the books which he reads, will not need an interpreter to lay open the secret to him, but, holding fast by certain rules, and following up certain indications, will arrive at the hidden sense without any error, or at least without falling into gross absurdity.¹³

¹² Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*, ed. J. Martin, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina, 32 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1962), Preface, 1: ‘praecepta quaedam tractandarum scripturarum’. English translation from Augustine, *Christian Doctrine*, trans. James Shaw, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, 1st Series, Vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979).

¹³ Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*, Preface, 9: ‘ut quomodo ille, qui legere nouit, alio lectore non indiget, cum codicem inuenerit, a quo audiat, quid ibi scriptum sit, sic iste, qui praecepta, quae conamur tradere, acceperit, cum in libris aliquid obscuritatis inuenerit, quasdam regulas uelut litteras tenens intellectorem alium non requirat, per quem sibi, quod opertum est, retegatur, sed quibusdam uestigiis indagatis ad occultum sensum sine ullo errore ipse perueniat aut certe in absurditatem prauae sententiae non incidat.’

Scripture, for Grosseteste, some eight hundred years later, contains everything, no matter how obscure it might appear.

...Scripture contains everything that nature contains, since after the creation of the world, there are no new natures or species added. It also contains the whole of the supernatural, that is to say, our restoration and future glorification. It also contains the whole of morality and the whole of rational knowledge....In it is every single cause of existence, every reason of understanding and every ordering of life.¹⁴

The pre-figurement of Christ in the Old Testament, his life in Gospels, and with the Epistles and Acts spiritual and moral teaching for the new life, complete with exemplary behaviour, and as it began with the beginning of the world so it ends with the end: all things are contained. The art of expounding Scripture, Grosseteste explains, is to make everything it contains speak to, and illuminate, the state of glory and the hope of salvation.

¹⁴ Robert Grosseteste, *Hexaemeron*, ed. R. C. Dales and S. Gieben, *Auctores Britannici Medii Aevi VI* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 1.4.1: 'Continet igitur in se hec scriptura totum quod continent natura, quia post mundi creacionem non est nove speciei seu nature adiecto. Continet eciam totum quod est supra naturam, quod videlicet est nostre reparacionis et future glorificacionis. Continet eciam totam mortalitatem et totam scienciam racionalem...In ipso est omnis causa subsistendi et ratio intelligendi et ordo vivendi'. English translation from *On the Six Days of Creation*, trans. C. F. J. Martin, *Auctores Britannici Medii Aevi*, VI (2) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996)

What follows will trace the development of *theologia* during the period in question, through its continuities and discontinuities, with emphasis both on individual thinkers and institutional change. In order to chart a route through what is an enormous subject, with multiple lines of inspiration and influence, may be taken as read, emphasis will be placed on the relationship between theology and the bible as articulated in these contexts. To this extent the discussion will not focus on biblical commentary *per se* but rather the place of the bible in how theology was expressed. The roles of Pseudo-Dionysius, and Aristotle, in medieval reflection on theology will be considered also, and in conjunction with the biblical framework. Amongst the thinkers to be considered are John of Fécamp (c.1000-1078), Abelard, Hugh of St Victor (1096-1141), Peter Lombard (c.1100-1160), John of Salisbury (c.1115-1176), Robert Grosseteste and Thomas Aquinas. Given the scale of the question the present discussion makes no attempt at a comprehensive survey, all of the thinkers to be examined were associated with north-western Europe, and include monks and secular clerks, and masters from the schools of Paris and Oxford. All were leading figures of their communities; all dwelt on the question of what *theologia* might be. Institutional change at the Universities of Paris and Oxford will also be explored, an important context for the intellectual shifts that emerged in the thirteenth century.

John of Fécamp and Peter Abelard: *Theologia* and the Trinity

The writing of John of Fécamp (c.1000-1078), Abbot of Fécamp from 1028 to 1078 provides a convenient starting point chronologically as well as conceptually.¹⁵ John's most famous work, dating in its first form from before 1028 is the *Confessio theologica*, also known in revised versions as *Confessio fidei* and the *De scripturis et verbis patrum collectus*.¹⁶ The *Confessio theologica* falls into three parts, on the Trinity, on Christ and on the desire for God. In form the treatise is meditative and prayerful. Why it should carry the title *Confessio theologica* is intriguing. One possibility is that John recalls the earlier tradition of applying the word to the Trinity, and within that with especial emphasis on the Son, both the eternal Word and the incarnate Christ. This tradition is associated particularly amongst the Greek Fathers of the fourth century. Gregory Nazianzen in his *Oration on the Holy Spirit*, one of the five Orations on the subject of the Trinity known as the *Theological Orations*, in discussing the progressive revelation of the

¹⁵ On John's tenure at Fécamp see Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History*, ed. and trans. M. Chibnall, 6 vols, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969-80), 2.292. For recent commentary on John see Lauren Mancia, 'John of Fécamp and Affective Reform in Eleventh-Century Normandy', *Anglo-Norman Studies* 37 (2015): 161-79.

¹⁶ H. Feiss, 'John of Fécamp's Longing for Heaven', in *Imagining Heaven in the Middle Ages: A Book of Essays*, ed. J. S. Emerson and H. Feiss (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000), 65; see also A. Wilmart, *Auteurs spirituels et textes dévots du moyen âge latin* (Paris: Études augustinienes, 1932), 135. The text of *Confessio theologica* is to be found in J. Leclercq and J.-P. Bonnes, eds., *Un maître de la vie spirituelle au XIe siècle: Jean de Fécamp* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1946), 110-83.

Trinity in scripture, calls upon ‘the case of Theology’. By this it is clear that he means the Son, proclaimed more obscurely in the Old Testament, and less obscurely in the New, and in the latter he also suggests that the deity of the Spirit can be found.¹⁷ Basil and John Chrysostom also use the term in similar contexts. Whether John knew of this earlier tradition is debateable, but there is evidence to suggest that he was familiar with some Greek Patristic writings in Latin translation.¹⁸

Another possible source was the writings of the Pseudo-Dionysius.¹⁹ This author was probably of Syrian origin and active after the council of Chalcedon (451) where the principal concern was the nature of the union of God and Man in Christ. The corpus of writings associated with his name enjoyed considerable posthumous fame in the medieval West. Identified at the abbey of St Denis as the Apostle of France (and also conflated with Dionysius the Areopagite of Acts 17.34, a bishop of Corinth and a bishop of Athens) his works were twice translated in the ninth century, the second time by John Scottus

¹⁷ Gregory Nazianzen, *Or.* 31.26, ed. Paul Gallay, *Grégoire de Nazianze, Discours 27-31*, Sources chrétiennes 250 (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1978). English translation: *Orations, Sermons, Letters*, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, 2nd Series, Vol. VII (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989).

¹⁸ See G. E. M. Gasper, *Anselm of Canterbury and His Theological Inheritance* (Aldershot, Ashgate Publishers, 2004), 52-55.

¹⁹ See Andrew Louth, *Denys the Areopagite* (London: Continuum, 2002) and Paul Rorem, *Pseudo-Dionysius: A Commentary on the Texts and an Introduction to Their Influence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

Eriugena subsequently the most influential, until the translation of John Saracen in the second half of the twelfth century, and Grosseteste in the thirteenth century.²⁰ Within the Pseudo-Dionysian corpus the term *theologia* is used most frequently in the *de mystica theologia*, the shortest and most condensed of the works. Its meaning seems to be almost synonymous with Scripture.²¹

It is difficult to say whether John of Fécamp knew this work. Although there is no evidence for direct borrowing from Pseudo-Dionysius in John's works, he does speak of God in terms of negative, apophatic, theology in the *Confessio theologica* when dealing with the question how God should be invoked. This theological voice, which emphasises

²⁰ For the reception in the West see most recently Paul Rorem, 'The Early Latin Dionysius: Eriugena and Hugh of St Victor', and Boyd Taylor Coolman, 'The Medieval Affective Dionysian Tradition', in *Re-thinking Dionysius the Areopagite*, ed. Sarah Coakley and Charles M. Stang (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 71-84 and 85-102. P. Chevallier, ed., *Dionysiaca: Recueil donnant l'ensemble des traditions latines des ouvrages attribués au Denys de l'Aréopagite*, 2 vols (Bruges: Desclée de Brouwer, 1937-50: repr. Stuttgart, 1989), remains significant, amidst new editions of the Latin translations. Of the latter, for example, Robert Grosseteste, *Versio Caelestis Hierarchiae Pseudo-Dionysii Areopagitae cum scholiis ex Graeco sumptis necnon commentariis notulisque eiusdem Lincolniensis*, ed. Declan Lawell, *Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis* 268 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016).

²¹ Rorem states that it almost invariably refers precisely to the Scriptures: *Pseudo-Dionysius A Commentary*, 184.

the wordlessness and unknowability of God, has particular connection to Pseudo-Dionysius's *de mystica theologia*.²² The Pseudo-Dionysian corpus was available in eleventh-century Normandy; a copy survives from Mont-St-Michel.²³ While the eleventh-century catalogue for Fécamp does not include any Pseudo-Dionysian works some do make an appearance in the twelfth-century catalogue (although not the *de mystica theologia*).²⁴ Apophatic instincts are not the exclusive province of the Pseudo-Dionysian corpus and its potential readers, but it remains possible that they were not unfamiliar to John.

John's use of the adjective *theologica* does not carry any obvious connection with the Bible, except insofar as it praises the Word of God, and there is no explanation as to why he adopted this nomenclature. The situation is frustratingly similar with respect to Peter Abelard who is better known for his association with *theologia*.²⁵ According to the

²² Denys Turner, *The Darkness of God: Negativity in Christian Mysticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 21-49.

²³ Gasper, *Anselm and His Theological Inheritance*, 205.

²⁴ The Fécamp catalogues are printed in H. Omont, *Catalogue general des manuscrits des bibliothèques publiques de France Départements*, Vol. I, Rouen (Paris, 1886), pp. xxiii-xxv and xxv-xxvii; they are discussed by B. Branch, 'Inventories of the Library of Fécamp from the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries', *Manuscripta* 23 (1979): 159-72.

²⁵ This association is well established in secondary scholarship: J. Rivière 'Theologia' *Revue des sciences religieuses* 16 (1936): 47-57, at 50ff. For a concise introduction to Abelard see C. J. Mews, *Abelard and Heloise* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

standard classification of the early twentieth century it stands in the title of three of his major works: the *Theologia 'summi boni'*, the *Theologia christiana* and the *Theologia scholarium*.²⁶ From a twelfth-century perspective matters are more complex and it is doubtful that *theologia* was designated as a title from the outset. In his *Historia calamitatum* Abelard himself referred to the *Theologia 'summi boni'* only adjectivally as '...a theological tractate, *On the Unity and Trinity of God*'.²⁷ Nevertheless the term does appear to have been used by Abelard for the title of his *Theologia christiana*. He referred to this work, nominally, by the time he came to write his *Collationes* (or *Dialogue between a Christian, a Philosopher and a Jew*), possibly between 1127 and 1132 as 'That marvellous book of theology'.²⁸

²⁶ Peter Abelard, *Opera Theologica III, Theologia 'Summi Boni' Theologia 'scholarium'*, ed. É-M. Buytaert and C. J. Mews, Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Medievals 13 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1987), 16 – the standard classification were established by Heinrich Ostlender.

²⁷ Peter Abelard, *The Letter Collection of Peter Abelard and Heloise*, (ed.) David Luscombe, trans. Betty Radice, rev. David Luscombe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 54: 'theologie tractatum *De Unitate et Trinitate*'. Peter Abelard, *Historia calamitatum edited from Troyes, Médiathèque du Grand Troyes, MS 802*, ed. Alexander Andree (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2015) provides a diplomatic edition of the principal manuscript.

²⁸ Peter Abelard, *Collationes*, ed. and trans. J. Marenbon and G. Orlandi, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), Preface, 4: 'opus illud mirabile theologie'.

The same applies to the *Theologia scholarium*, the work at the centre of the controversy between Abelard and Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) prompted by Bernard's close friend and supporter William of St Thierry (c.1085-1148). The title itself played an important role in the confrontation. It was William who, in his account of Abelard's errors in his *Disputatio contra Petrum Abaelardum*, written in 1138 for Bernard and Geoffrey of Lèves, bishop of Chartres, opined that: 'This is the novel 'theology' of the new 'theologian' on the subject of the Father and the Son.'²⁹ Bernard would continue in the same manner at the Council of Sens (1141), where he attempted, ultimately unsuccessfully, to have Abelard's work condemned.³⁰ As Michael Clanchy points out, the way in which both protagonists use the term emphasises that they both considered it to be novel.³¹ Abelard gives no reason for his choice of title, except the statement in a letter, against Bernard, to his supporters that:

²⁹ William of St Thierry, *Disputatio adversus Petrum Abaelardum*, Migne, *PL* 180, 255: 'Haec est nova novi theologi theologia de Patre et Filio'. On William see J.-M. Déchanet, *Guillaume de Saint-Thierry L'homme et son oeuvre* (Bruges: Charles Beyaert, 1942); English trans. by R. Strachan, *William of St Thierry The Man and His Work* (Spencer, MA: Cistercian Publications, 1972), and William of St Thierry, *The Enigma of Faith*, trans. J. D. Anderson (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1973), 1-31.

³⁰ On the dating of the council see C. J. Mews, 'The Council of Sens (1141): Abelard, Bernard and the Fear of Social Upheaval', *Speculum* 77 (2002): 342-82.

³¹ Michael Clanchy, *Abelard: A Medieval Life* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 264.

For a long time moreover I heard that he groaned heavily, because I had entitled with the name *Theologia* that work of mine about the sacred Trinity, insofar as the Lord granted it to be composed by me. In the end, hardly able to bear it, he offered the opinion that it should be called the *Stultiologia* rather than the *Theologia*.³²

The title may reflect the fascination with Greek or Greek sounding titles evident in other works of the late eleventh and twelfth centuries: Anselm of Canterbury's *Monologion* and *Proslogion*, Hugh of St Victor's *Didascalion* and John of Salisbury's *Policraticus* and *Metalogicon*. More than this, however, the stronger connection to Trinitarian debate, may apply here, as suggested earlier for John of Fécamp.³³

³² Raymond Klibanksy, 'Peter Abailard and Bernard of Clairvaux, A Letter by Abailard' *Mediaeval and Renaissance Studies* 5 (1961): 1-27, edition of the letter 6-8, at 6: 'Dudum autem graviter ingemuisse audieram, quod illud opus nostrum de sancta Trinitate, prout Dominus concessit a nobis compositum, *Theologiae* intitulaveram nomine. Quod ipse tandem minime preferens *Stultilogiam* magis quam *Theologiam* censuit appellandam'. English translation from Jan Ziolkowski, *Letters of Peter Abelard: Beyond the Personal* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2008), Letter 15, pp. 99-110, at 109.

³³ For Abelard's possible familiarity with Latin translations of Greek Fathers see É-M. Buytaert, 'The Greek Fathers in Abelard's *Theologies*' and *Commentary on St Paul*', *Antonianum* 39 (1964): 408-35.

In a related vein it can be established with reasonable certainty that Abelard knew of the Pseudo-Dionysian corpus, and the complex identity of its author.³⁴ That being the case, evidence for its direct influence on Abelard's understanding of theology is more limited. Nevertheless, although Abelard does not define what he means by *theologia*, some parameters can be drawn. He does not use the term to denote a discipline, using for this the terms *divinitas* and *sacra lectio*.³⁵ *Theologia* was, as Buytaert and Mews express it, 'a discourse about the divine nature rather than about the incarnation or any other benefit which flowed from God'.³⁶ Clearly divine, Trinitarian, revelation is intimate related to, and dependent upon, scripture, but at this point and in this context an explicit connection is not made to *theologia*.

³⁴ Buytaert and Mews in Abelard, *Opera Theologica III*, p.19. Abelard was for a short period a monk at St Denis and took interest in Pseudo-Dionysius's identity. In seeking to identify the author Abelard succeeded only in annoying his hosts, *Historia calamitatum* in *Letters of Peter Abelard*, ed. Luscombe, 74-76. Abelard laid out his case that the founder St Denis, could not be identified with the biblical Dionysius the Areopagite, in Letter 11 to Abbot Adam and the Monks of St Denis; see Ziolkowski, *Beyond the Personal*, 133-46.

³⁵ A case for Abelard's use of *theologia* to denote something like the modern discipline was mounted by G. Paré, A. M. Brunet and P. Tremblay, *La renaissance du XIIe siècle; les écoles et l'enseignement* (Paris: Vrin, 1933), 307-09.

³⁶ Abelard, *Opera Theologica III*, p.18 and 19.

Abelard's writings make abundantly clear the centrality to his thought of the Bible and biblical commentary: his later works include a number of biblical commentaries including the *Commentary on Romans* and then the *Hexaemeron*, a commentary on the six days of creation, dated to the late 1130s. The well known description from the *Historia calamitatum* of his pride in being able to explicate difficult passages of Ezekiel during period of study with Anselm of Laon, is instructive:

At my first lecture there were certainly not many people present, for everyone thought it absurd that I could attempt this so soon, when up to now I had made no study at all of the Scriptures. But all those who came approved, so that they commended the lecture warmly, and urged me to comment on the text on the same lines as my lecture. The news brought people who had missed my first lecture flocking to the second and third ones, all alike eager to make copies of the glosses which I had begun on the first day.³⁷

³⁷ Abelard, *Letters*, ed. Luscombe, pp.18-19: 'Et prime quidem lectioni nostre pauci tunc interfuerunt, quod ridiculum omnibus videretur me adhuc quasi penitus sacre lectionis expertem id tam propere aggredi. Omnibus tamen qui affuerunt in tantum lectio illa grata extitit ut eam singulari preconio extollerent, et me secundum hunc nostre lectionis tenorem ad glosandum compellerent. Quo quidem audito, hii qui non interfuerant ceperunt ad secundam et terciam lectionem certatim concurrere et omnes pariter de transcribendis glosis quas prima die inceperam in ipso earum initio plurimum solliciti esse',

The popularity of his lectures led to Abelard's downfall, according to the indignant author of his own misfortunes and the jealousy of Anselm once aroused led him to prohibit Abelard's activity. As Giraud's magisterial discussion emphasises, the school of Laon set up by Anselm and his brother Ralph, produced not only the model for twelfth-century exegesis, but also for twelfth-century theology, developing the *quaestio* and the Sentence collection, the balancing of authorities.³⁸ Between the master's *quaestio* and the concordance of discordant authorities the meaning of Scripture could be made clear. While *theologia* was not a term deployed to describe this process at the beginning of the twelfth century, by the middle of the century John of Salisbury could call Anselm and Ralph of Laon as 'theologians' because they examined the Bible with the aid of reason.³⁹

Hugh of St Victor and Isaac of Stella: *Theologia* and Sacred Scripture

A more extensive discussion of both scripture and *theologia* and a more articulated conceptual link between the two, is evident in the writing of Hugh of St Victor.⁴⁰ In the case of *theologia* his thoughts find expression in his *Didascalion* dealing with the

³⁸ Giraud, *Anselme de Laon*, esp. Part III.

³⁹ John of Salisbury, *Metalogicon*, I.5: 'fratres theologos'.

⁴⁰ Excellent recent surveys of Hugh's life and thought include: Paul Rorem, *Hugh of St Victor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Boyd Taylor Coolman, *The Theology of Hugh of Saint Victor, An Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); and Franklin T. Harkins, *Reading and the Work of Restoration: History and Scripture in the Theology of Hugh of St Victor* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2009).

classification of the sciences. Written in the late 1120s the work lays emphasis on the ends of human knowledge. Learning, for Hugh, should form part of a struggle towards perfection and the proper purpose of mankind to worship the Creator. As a result classification and consideration of the roles of different modes of learning are essential. *Theologia* also emerges in the context of Hugh's important commentary on the *Celestial Hierarchy* of Pseudo-Dionysius, composed during his time at St Victor, from 1125 onwards.⁴¹ The grander theological vision of restoration expressed in *De sacramentis ecclesiae*, *On the Sacraments of the Church*, written shortly after 1133, forms the basis here for his consideration of the Bible.

The fourth book of the *Didascalion* turns from discussion of the liberal arts to Scripture. It is immediately apparent that the latter have pride of place for Hugh:

The writings of philosophers, like a whitewashed wall of clay, boast an attractive surface all shining with eloquence; but if sometimes they hold forth to us the semblance of truth, nevertheless, by mixing falsehoods with it, they conceal the clay of error, as it were, under an overlay of colour. The Sacred Scriptures, on the other hand, are most fittingly likened to a honeycomb, for while in the simplicity of their language they seem dry, within they are filled with sweetness. And thus it is that they

⁴¹ See Rorem, *Hugh of St Victor*, Appendix 167-76.

have so deservedly come by the name sacred, for they are found so free from the infection of falsehood that they are proved to contain nothing contrary to truth.⁴²

Truth then is the hallmark of scripture. However, what Hugh means by, and includes within, Holy Scripture, sacred writing is striking. Truthfulness and steadfastness to the catholic faith mark the qualifications for the scriptures. Those which through the authority of the universal church have been included among the sacred books, are joined in Hugh's thought by many other writings, which, 'although they are not approved by the authority of the universal church, nevertheless pass for Sacred Scriptures, both because they do not depart from the catholic faith and because they teach many useful matters'.⁴³

⁴² Hugh of St Victor, *Didascalion*, ed. C. H. Buttmer (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1939), 4.1: 'Philosophorum scripture, quasi luteus paries dealbatus, nitore eloquii foris pollent, que, si quando ueritatis pretendunt speciem, falsa admiscendo, quasi quodam colore superducto, lutum erroris operiunt. Contra, diuina eloquia aptissime fauo comparantur, que et propter simplicitatem sermonis arida apparent, et intus dulcedine plena sunt. Unde constat quia merito tale uocabulum sortita sunt, que sola sic a falsitatis contagione aliena inueniuntur, ut nihil ueritati contrarium continere probentur'. English translation from *The Didascalicon of Hugh of St Victor*, trans. Jerome Taylor (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961) [translation emended by author].

⁴³ Hugh of St Victor, *Didascalion* 4.1: 'que licet auctoritate uniuersalis ecclesie probata non sint, tamen quia a fide catholica non discrepant et nonnulla etiam utilia docent'.

In enumerating what he means Hugh speaks of three groups of scriptures, 1) the Old Testament 2) the New Testament and 3) the Decretals, Canons, and:

the writings of the holy Fathers and Doctors of the Church - Jerome, Augustine, Gregory, Ambrose, Isidore, Origen, Bede and many other orthodox authors. Their works are so limitless that they cannot be numbered-which makes strikingly clear how much fervor they had in that Christian faith for the assertion of which they left so many and such great remembrances to posterity. Indeed we stand convicted of indolence by our inability to read all that they could manage to dictate.⁴⁴

Sacred scripture for Hugh is a wider category than the two Testaments, encompassing a canon which includes the commentary and speculation of the Fathers, including Bede (672/3-735). In the *De sacramentis* Hugh clarifies the relationship between the Fathers and the New Testament in particular. The Fathers are contained in the New Testament but:

⁴⁴ Hugh of St Victor, *Didascalion* 4.2: 'deinde sanctorum patrum et doctorum ecclesie scripta: Hieronymi, Augustini, Gregorii, Ambrosii, Isidori, Origenis, Bede, et aliorum multorum orthodoxorum, que tam infinita sunt, ut numerari non possint. Ex quo profecto apparet quantum in fide Christiana feruorem habuerint, pro cuius assertione tot et tanta opera memoranda posteris reliquerunt. Unde nostra quoque pigritia arguitur, qui legere non sufficimus que dictare illi potuerunt'.

...are not reckoned in the body of the text, since they add nothing, but by explanation and a broader and clearer treatment they amplify the same matter contained in the books mentioned above.⁴⁵

The canonical scriptures form the textual basis of sacred scripture with the Fathers accorded high status as expositors, yet conceptually still part of a broader notion of scripture.

Having opened up a definition of the Scriptures in the *Disascalion* Hugh proceeds to its proper interpretation. The senses of Scripture are enumerated, and the importance of all in discerning concepts and ideas from words in order to approach the truth.⁴⁶ Seven topics for interpretation are offered, the differences between literal and allegorical interpretation discussed and the hermeneutic structures which underpin allegorical vision.⁴⁷ All of this is directed to the purpose of scriptural study, to which Hugh returns continually. It has a moral purpose as much as intellectual and literary, study is for the

⁴⁵ Hugh of St Victor, *De sacramentis Christiane fidei*, ed. Rainer Berndt (Münster: Aschendorff, 2008), Bk. 1, Prologue, 7: 'Scriptura Patrum in corpore textus non computantur; quia non aliud adjiciunt, sed idipsum quod in supradictis continetur explanando et latius manifestiusque tractando extendunt'. English translation from *On the Sacraments of the Christian Faith (De sacramentis)*, trans. R. J. Deferrari (Cambridge, MA: Mediaeval Academy of America, 1951).

⁴⁶ Hugh of St Victor, *Didascalion* 5.3.

⁴⁷ Hugh of St Victor, *Didascalion* 5.4 and 6.4.

beginner but it should lead to actions; meditation, prayer and contemplation.⁴⁸ Philosophizing, seeking after the truth of God, has its part to play in this purpose but one the bounds of which should be policed: ‘For whoever studies the Scriptures as a preoccupation and, if I may say so, as an affliction to his spirit, is not philosophizing but is making a business out of them, and so impetuous and unwise a purpose can hardly avoid the vice of pride’.⁴⁹ By the time he wrote the *De sacramentis* Hugh had honed his attitude towards scripture yet further: its subject, stated with majestic simplicity, was ‘the works of man’s restoration’.⁵⁰ This was the end of scripture and the key to its interpretation.

Different dimensions to Hugh’s notion of *theologia* emerge from his familiarity with the Pseudo-Dionysian corpus. Where Pseudo-Dionysius associates *theologia* with Scripture in the *De mystice theologie* this meaning was rendered more complex for western readers understanding because of the place of *theologia* in the traditional classification of the sciences of the type that we have seen outlined by Hugh.⁵¹ *Theologia* could express the end of human learning as well as Scripture, a potential confusion that Hugh went a considerable way to resolve. Although not very much concerned with the *Mystical*

⁴⁸ Hugh of St Victor, *Didascalion* 5.7-9.

⁴⁹ Hugh of St Victor, *Didascalion* 5.7: ‘qui enim ad occupationem scripturas et, ut ita dicam, ad afflictionem spiritus legit, non philosophatur, sed negotiatur, uix que tam uehemens et indiscreta intentio uitio superbie carere ualet’.

⁵⁰ Hugh of St Victor, *De sacramentis* 2: ‘opera restaurationis humanae’.

⁵¹ McGuire, ‘Isaac of Stella’, 232.

Theology he was, as McGuire puts it, ‘the first to integrate Dionysian theology with traditional speculation about the description of the sciences and thus to mark a new stage in the history of *theologia*’.⁵² Scripture and speculative thought were brought into closer relation. In his commentary on the Pseudo-Dionysian *Celestial Hierarchy* Hugh makes a distinction between *theologia divina* and *theologia mundana*, that is, between divine theology and worldly theology. *Theologia mundana* incorporates the philosophizing described in the *Didascalion*. *Theologia divina* is a reflection on the total content of scripture, and therefore, fits the task of ‘theology’ set down in *De sacramentis*.⁵³ The work of restoration on which the *De sacramentis* shapes and expounds is in some measure referred to by Hugh as theology. While the definitions are not sharply drawn, a notion of theology as part of knowledge, and as connected to the Bible, is evident.

The influence of these distinctions can be observed in the writings of Isaac of Stella, in the generation after Hugh. Isaac, born in England shortly after 1100, became Abbot of the Cistercian monastery at Stella, near Poitiers in 1147, leaving in 1167 to found a small community on the Isle de Re off La Rochelle. He died at some point after 1167, possibly

⁵² McGuire, ‘Isaac of Stella’, 232.

⁵³ McGuire, ‘Isaac of Stella’, 233-34; R. Baron, *Science et sagesse chez Hugues de Saint-Victor* (Paris: P. Lethielleux, 1957), 49-50; R. Roques, *Structures théologiques de la gnose à Richard de Saint Victor: essais et analyses critiques* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1962), 297-304.

as late as 1178.⁵⁴ His thought bears the hallmarks of a training in the schools, which he did not find, it would appear, in conflict with his vocation as a Cistercian. Isaac's thought is underpinned by a strong sense of cosmic unity, from creation to restoration, and from the outflowing and return of all things to God.⁵⁵ Isaac's nine sermons for Sexagesima form an extended exploration of the divine nature, in philosophical and biblical terms, and with an additional emphasis on the lessons to be learned for monastic life. The fifth sermon for Sexagesima (the second Sunday before Ash Wednesday) meditates on the nature of God, in terms resonant of both Hugh of St Victor and Pseudo-Dionysius.

Hence, according to the proper character of his own divine theology, he is not substance, he neither has nor is wisdom. Within the narrow limits of our reasoned theology he is said to be this or the other. In symbolic and somewhat sensual theology he is called heaven and earth, the sun, fire, a lion, an ox, a bird, a tree, a stone, gold.

⁵⁴ B. McGinn, *The Golden Chain. A Study in the Theological Anthropology of Isaac of Stella* (Washington D.C.: Cistercian Publications, 1972), as well as comments in McGinn 'Isaac of Stella', and his 'Introduction' to Isaac of Stella, *Sermons on the Christian Year*, Vol. 1, trans. H. McCaffery (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1979), pp. ix-xxx. Daniel Deme, *The Selected Works of Isaac of Stella, A Cistercian Voice from the Twelfth Century* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2007); this includes introductory essays by Deme and McGinn. G. Raciti, 'Isaac de L'Étoile', *Dictionnaire de spiritualité*, vol. VII, cols. 2011-38 (Paris: Letouzey et Ane, 1971) is still of great value.

⁵⁵ McGinn, 'Introduction', *Sermons on the Christian Year*, p. xix.

One can use all these terms the more freely of him because of a likeness of nature, functions, or use, but he has nothing of all of them in the proper sense.⁵⁶

A conceptual link between Trinitarian description and *theologia* is identifiable here. The term, however, is given more distinction, between the *divina*, *rationabilis*, and *sensulais*. The first pertains to God, the second and third to human expression. Isaac raises the issue of appropriate language for the divine in the passage that follows:

...to call him heaven and the like is metaphor. To speak of him as substance, wisdom and so forth is the opposite of hyperbole. In the former case we exceed truth and go beyond the faith. In the latter we come short of both truth and exactitude. In every case we try to say something of the Ineffable, of him of whom nothing fitting can be said. Our choice is between silence and make-shift terms'.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Isaac of Stella, *Sermones*, 22 (5th for Sexagesima), 9, Migne, *PL* 194, 1762: 'Unde quantum ad divinae theologiae suae proprietatem, sicut nec substantiam, sic nec sapientiam habet, aut est; quantum vero ad inopiam et angustias rationabilis theologiae nostrae, dicitur hoc et illud. Quantum autem ad symbolicam, et quodammodo sensualem theologiam, dicitur etiam coelum et terra, sol, ignis, leo, bos, avis, lignum, lapis, aurum; et eo liberior omnia per similitudinem, aut naturae, aut officii, aut usus; quo nihil omnium per proprietatem'. English translation from *Sermons on the Christian Year*, 181.

⁵⁷ Isaac of Stella, *Sermones*, 22: 'Quare sicut metaphorice dicitur coelum, et talia, ita dicitur substantia, sapientia, et similia; eo tropo, cui contrarius est si qui dicitur hyperbole. Ille enim supergreditur veritatem, et excedit fidem: iste non pertingit ad

Theologia here operates as an intellectual process at the limits of human capacity to articulate experience of the divine, and a paradigmatic spiritual process in which the language employed can only serve to point beyond itself to the reality and verity of the Creator. The restrictions of fallen human understanding apply to biblical language along with everything else.

Isaac remarks at the outset of his sexagesimal sermons on the permeability of the boundary between monastic life and the world of secular learning, pointing to the irony that, like the praiseworthy monk who gave away his gospel for the sake of the gospel, Cistercian poverty and peace, so much desired ,brings with it an abundant dearth.⁵⁸ This was particularly so in the case of books and Scripture commentaries. Isaac himself exhibits in his writing no concerns with the application of secular learning to biblical or theological, in his own terms as outlined above, interpretation. At the time in which he was active an institutional shift was taking place in the way that these subjects were being described. By the mid-twelfth century *theologia* was beginning to occupy a different intellectual and academic space, and a more defined space within the curriculum of medieval Christian learning.

veritatem, nec accedit ad proprietatem. Dicimus enim quod possumus, qui de ineffabili fari volumus, de quo nihil proprie dici potest; tacere, aut mutuatis uti verbis, necesse est’.

Sermons on the Christian Year, 181: the translator points out that the opposite of hyperbole is excessive understatement, which is to say, meiosis.

⁵⁸ Isaac of Stella, *Sermones* (1st for Sexagesima), 18.1.

John of Salisbury to Richard Fishacre: Institutional Change in Paris and Oxford

One of the most prominent causes and symptoms of this shift was the *Four Books of Sentences* of Peter Lombard. Having previously worked within the genre of glossed commentaries on Scripture, Lombard shifted in the *Sentences* to a collection of authoritative statements from the Fathers on questions of doctrinal confusion or complication. The subsequent centrality of Lombard's *Sentences* to medieval theological training is well known.⁵⁹ It is worth noting here that the *Sentences*, in more detail than Hugh of St Victor's *De sacramentis*, is grounded in Patristic learning. While the Bible is integral to Lombard's project, and the study of *sacra pagina* essential to its purpose the

⁵⁹ A significant literature has developed over the last twenty-five years or so in which Marcia Colish, *Peter Lombard*, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1993) remains central, as do the contrasting interpretations of Phillip Rosemann, *Peter Lombard* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) and *The Story of a Great Medieval Book: Peter Lombard's Sentences* (Toronto: Broadview Press, 2007). The English translation of the *Sentences* by Giulio Silano has been vital in making wider discussion of the text and its significance possible, Peter Lombard, *Sentences*, 4 vols. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2007-10). The series of volumes *Mediaeval Commentaries on the Sentences of Peter Lombard*, vol. 1 ed. G. R. Evans, vols. 2 and 3 ed. Philipp Rosemann (Leiden: Brill, 2001, 2009, 2015) provides an equally vital series of insights into the central and creative role the text and its commentaries played in high and late medieval theological study.

form Lombard adopts is not one of scriptural commentary.⁶⁰ To this extent, biblical study and speculative interpretation of Christian thought in the schools of Paris were being separated in the classroom, even if ultimately directed to the same ends.

Many of these changes in teaching practices are identified in John of Salisbury's *Metalogicon*, a discussion of the uses and proper ways of studying the liberal arts, especially the trivium, composed in or just after 1159. The *Metalogicon* includes an account of John's education in and around Paris from the mid-1130s.⁶¹ The account begins with Abelard himself for logic, then Alberic and Robert of Melun admired in their turn for their expertise in dialectics. William of Conches gave John instruction in grammar. Under Richard the bishop John reviewed his previous learning including certain things he learnt concerning the quadrivium to which, he recalled, that he had been previously introduced by Hardewin the German. Rhetoric, John states, he learnt first under Thierry of Chartres and later Peter Helias, the most famous grammarian of the mid-twelfth century. A period of teaching followed before he went back to study, this time working with Adam of the Little Bridge (du Petit Pont) who was devoted to Aristotle. Finally on return to Paris, John became the disciple of Gilbert of Poitiers in 'dialectical and divine subjects'.⁶² Gilbert was called away to become bishop of Poitiers in 1142 and

⁶⁰ Rosemann, *Lombard*, 58.

⁶¹ On John of Salisbury a convenient entry point is *A Companion to John of Salisbury*, ed. Christophe Grellard and Frédérique Lachaud (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

⁶² John of Salisbury, *Metalogicon*, ed. C. C. J. Webb (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1929) 2.10: 'ipsumque audiui in logicis et divinis'. English translation: *The Metalogicon*

John transferred to Robert Pullen and Simon of Poissy. ‘The last mentioned two’ he notes ‘only instructed me in theology’.⁶³

Gilbert was associated with *theologia* in the description of his trial for heresy in 1148, set down in John’s *Historia pontificalis*. This work which covers the period 1148-1155 was written anywhere between 1164 and 1167. The history was constructed around several significant episodes, including the Second Crusade, and Gilbert’s trial. Bernard of Clairvaux was again a leading figure in ensuring that the charges were made and the trial convened. John was sympathetic to both sides, but perhaps so only because the condemnations resulted in failure. An extended account of Gilbert’s teaching and learning follows that of the trial, with an emphasis on his views on the Trinity, the subject upon which he was tried. It is in this context that John makes use of the term theology. Gilbert, he states, ‘...held that the disciplines are interrelated, and made them minister to theology, yet applied all rules strictly to their own class’.⁶⁴ In other words, and consonant with the attitude of Isaac of Stella, secular learning was placed at the service of Christian

of John of Salisbury: A Twelfth-Century Defence of the Verbal and Logical Arts of the Trivium, trans. D. D. McGarry (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1971).

⁶³ John of Salisbury, *Metalogicon* 2.10: ‘Sed hos duos solis theologicis habui preceptores’.

⁶⁴ John of Salisbury, *The Historia Pontificalis of John of Salisbury*, ed. and trans. M. M. Chibnall, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), c.12: ‘...habebat enim connexas disciplinas easque theologie servire faciebat, et cohibebat omnium regulas infra proprii generis limitem’.

doctrine. As John puts it a little later: ‘even in theology he [Gilbert] explained the properties of words and figures of speech by quotations from philosophers and orators as well as poets’.⁶⁵ *Theologia* is used here to indicate the understanding of the nature of God, incorporating, naturally, discussion of the Trinity, particularly the properties that are to be assigned to its members and its totality. The notion of *theologia* as a subject above all others, the pinnacle of learning is reinforced at several points in John’s discussion. Gilbert also taught that: ‘Theology, in assigning the aforesaid properties in the Trinity, follows these branches of study, and distinguishes them sometimes merely in single words, sometimes in propositions’.⁶⁶

Theologia by the 1160s was applied both to Trinitarian debate, and in some senses to a discipline whose subject was not that of the liberal arts, but an end for which the liberal arts were necessary, and in which their purpose was fulfilled.⁶⁷ John’s description of his

⁶⁵ John of Salisbury, *Historia Pontificalis* 12 (translation emended by the author): ‘proprietas figurasque sermonum et in theologia tam philosophorum et oratorum quam poetarum declarabat exemplis’.

⁶⁶ John of Salisbury, *Historia Pontificalis* 13 (translation emended by the author): ‘Theologia vero in assignandis propriis prefatas sequitur facultates, et nunc solis dictionibus, nunc etiam orationibus ea designant’.

⁶⁷ For a good summary of the Trinitarian debates of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries see Fiona Robb, *Intellectual Tradition and Misunderstanding: The Development of Academic Theology on the Trinity in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries*, unpubl. PhD thesis, University College London, 1994.

studies after the liberal arts (logic/dialectics, grammar, rhetoric), and Aristotle, as consisting of studies either *in divina* or *in theologica* is noteworthy. Allowing for the fact that John's vocabulary might reflect the date of composition, that is c.1159, rather than the 1130s, his usage indicates that *theologica* was being used to describe a separate and identifiable area of study, and learning experience. At the same time it is important to note that *theologia/theologica* held no terminological monopoly for these experiences. John was content to denote the activity of Gilbert and Robert of Meulan as lectures in 'divine letters', in addition to their expertise in dialectic. The interlacing of dialectic and divinity is, in the case of Gilbert, consistent with his training at Laon under Anselm, the fruits of which emerged in the commentary on the Psalms composed in about 1117.⁶⁸ It is clear that study of *theologia*, for John, involved the Bible in a way that the liberal arts did not.

The hierarchy of study in which John engaged was reflected in institutional change over the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and the emergence of organisational structures in which theology took an important place. Although the formal record indicates that a defined faculty of *theologia* existed at Paris by the early thirteenth century its earlier existence can be detected in a range of sources. Pope Alexander III in a letter to bishop William of Sens of 1170 condemning aspects of Peter Lombard's theology of incarnation refers already to the masters 'in theology (*in theologia*)' at Paris.⁶⁹ Other textual

⁶⁸ Theresa Gross-Diaz, *The Psalms Commentary of Gilbert of Poitiers: From Lectio Divina to the Lecture Room* (Leiden: Brill, 1996).

⁶⁹ Denifle, *Chartularium*, 1. *Pars Introductoria*, no. 3, p. 4.

witnesses, including poetic summaries of the intellectual scene at Paris, deploy different language revealing a fluid semantic relationship between theology and study of the sacred page, *sacra pagina*. Alexander Neckam, an English scholar who had trained and taught at Paris, and later taught at Oxford from about 1193-1197, described Paris some time in the 1190s poetically as the place where: ‘Here the arts flourish, the heavenly page rules, / The civil laws stand, the law enlightens, medicine flourishes.’⁷⁰ Guido of Bazoches provided a similar description of Paris to that of Neckam at about the same time (c. 1175-1190): it was a place where ‘antique philosophy’ was studied, where the arts were liberal, and the sound of canon and civil law could be heard. He goes on:

Here the saving fount of doctrine rises high, and, like three rivers from their most limpid selves bringing forth watering for the meadows of the mind, divides into three the spiritual understanding of the sacred page, historical, and allegorical and moral.⁷¹

⁷⁰ Alexander Neckam, *De laudibus divinae sapientiae*, ed. T. Wright, Rolls Series 34 (London, 1863), p.453, ll.569-70: ‘Hic florent artes, coelestis pagina regnat, / Stant leges, lucet jus, medicina viget’. For Neckam at Oxford see R. W. Southern, ‘From Schools to University’, in *History of the University of Oxford*, vol. 1, ed. J. I. Catto (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), 22-25.

⁷¹ Denifle, *Chartularium*, 1. *Pars Introductoria*, no. 54, p.56: ‘Hic fons doctrine salutaris exuberat, et, quasi tres rivos ex se limpidissimos ad prata mentium irriganda producens, dividit tripliciter intellectum sacre pagine spiritalem in hystorium, allegoricum et moralem’.

Stephen of Tournai (1128-1203), Abbot of St Geneviève in Paris from 1177, bishop of Tournai from 1192, wrote to Absalon Archbishop of Lund (c. 1178-1201) with reference to one Peter, ‘studying the sacred page’.⁷² In the same fashion as John of Salisbury’s usage of theology and divine letters, both *sacra pagina* and *theologia* clearly connote studies subsequent to the arts, intertwining biblical exegesis with doctrinal development, notably commentary on Lombard’s *Sentences*. It would however, be the latter term which became institutionalised.

The formal record of that process draws mostly on papal documents dealing with the University of Paris. One of the earliest is a charter of 1213 issued by Peter of Nemours, bishop of Paris relaying papal decisions on the relation of the masters and scholars to the chancellor of Paris.⁷³ Already in this document the four faculties that would dominate medieval universities can be seen: theology (*theologia*), law, canon or civil (*de decretis vel legibus*), medicine (*de physicis*) and those in the arts (*artes*). More detail emerges from the first statutes of Paris, granted by Cardinal Legate Robert de Courcon two years later. The study of the arts and the strictures of studying *in theologia* are covered in terms of curriculum and timetable.⁷⁴ Honorius III’s renewal of these instructions for the ordering of the university in 1219 discussed the *theologica facultas* in even greater

⁷² Denifle, *Chartularium*, 1. *Pars Introductoria*, no. 41, p.42: ‘sacra pagina studens’.

⁷³ H. Denifle, *Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis* (Paris, 1899), vol. 1, *Pars Prima* no. 16, pp.75-76.

⁷⁴ Denifle, *Chartularium*, 1. *Pars Prima*, no. 20, pp.78-80 esp. p.79.

detail.⁷⁵ The wider ramifications of a faculty of theology become apparent in the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215. Amongst the provisions for education of the clergy Innocent III included the statement that: ‘The metropolitan church shall have a theologian to teach scripture to priests and others and especially to instruct them in matters which are recognized as pertaining to the cure of souls’.⁷⁶ Theology as a discipline was placed, in this way, at the centre of the widespread changes in pastoral care provision championed by Innocent and his successors.

During the first third of the thirteenth century further shifts would occur in the classification of *theologia*, and its relationship with the bible. Already at the beginning of the century at Paris, the masters in theology were starting to exclude *quaestio* material from their lectures on scripture. Those lectures concentrated on moral exhortation and exegesis. Questions or discussion on points of doctrine raised by the passage under scrutiny which often ran further than the four senses of scripture and incorporated aspects of the arts, and points of logic in particular were gradually reserved for lectures on the Lombards’ *Sentences*.⁷⁷ The commentaries on the Gospels by the Parisian master, Peter

⁷⁵ Denifle, *Chartularium*, 1 *Pars Prima*, no. 32, pp.90-93.

⁷⁶ *Fourth Lateran Council — 1215*, c. 11 *De magistris scholasticis*: ‘Sane metropolitana ecclesia theologum nihilominus habeat, qui sacerdotes et alios in scara pagina doceat et in his praesertim informet, quae ad curam animarum spectare noscuntur’.

⁷⁷ R. James Long, ‘The Science of Theology According to Richard Fishacre: Edition of the Prologue to his *Commentary on the Sentences*’, *Mediaeval Studies* 34 (1972): 71-98,

the Chanter (d. 1197), which date to the decade between 1187 and 1197, are a good case in point. In Beryl Smalley's analysis of the text makes clear, the Chanter followed the model of commentary of Peter Comestor and Peter Lombard.⁷⁸ The *Glossa ordinaria* formed the basis of the lecture, and used liturgy as a source as well as his own observations. Moral judgements are drawn in all of the Chanter's commentary, those on poverty are instructive.⁷⁹ Noting that Christ used money, the Chanter emphasised the simplicity of Christ's lifestyle and the pattern he advocated for his disciples, with the modesty enjoined by the Gospel held up as an example to contemporary clergy. The disciples setting out on the preaching mission without provision (Matthew 10.9-10) is used to illustrate the problem: 'But how can it be understood literally, when churchmen today possess more worldly goods than laymen?'. The Chanter went on to excoriate a

at 71. See also M-D. Chenu, *Toward Understanding St Thomas*, trans. A. M. Landry and D. Hughes (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1964), 85-95.

⁷⁸ Beryl Smalley, 'The Gospels in the Paris Schools in the Late 12th and Early 13th Centuries', *Franciscan Studies* 39 (1979): 230-54. This was reprinted in her *The Gospels in the Schools c. 1100 – c. 1280* (London: Hambledon, 1985), 99-123. The most comprehensive introduction to Peter the Chanter remains John Baldwin, *Masters, Princes, and Merchants: the Social Views of Peter the Chanter and his Circle*, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970). For the influence of Peter's moral stance on just punishment see P. D. Clarke, 'Peter the Chanter, Innocent III and Theological Views on Collective Guilt and Punishment', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 52 (2001): 1-20.

⁷⁹ Smalley, 'The Gospels', 239.

‘certain great prelate [who] said that the Gospel command applied to ragged fishermen only’ and not to him.⁸⁰

The separation of biblical exegesis and speculative doctrine was probably complete at Paris by the 1230s.⁸¹ *Theologia* consisted of the study of the Bible and of the *Sentences*, and candidates were expected to study and eventually to comment on both. The complexities of this process of separation and the evidence through which it can be identified are revealed in an episode at Oxford in the late 1240s, involving Robert Grosseteste and the Dominican Richrd Fishacre (c.1200-1248). Grosseteste was at the time bishop of Lincoln (1235 to 1253), and had earlier connections probably to Paris and certainly to Oxford; as bishop of Lincoln Oxford fell within his diocese and therefore interest.⁸² Grosseteste wrote in about 1246 to the regent masters in *theologia* insisting that their ordinary lectures, in the morning should focus on the Old and New Testaments.⁸³ This has been interpreted as indicative of the conservative views held by Grosseteste, and as a rebuke to the activities of Fishacre who had advocated the modern, Parisian style of

⁸⁰ Smalley, ‘The Gospels’, 243-5, quotation from 244.

⁸¹ J. I. Catto, ‘Theology and Theologians 1220-1320’, in *History of the University of Oxford*, vol. 1, 472.

⁸² On Grosseteste see R. W. Southern, *Robert Grosseteste: The Growth of an English Mind in Medieval Europe*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); J. McEvoy, *The Philosophy of Robert Grosseteste*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982) and his *Robert Grosseteste* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

⁸³ Robert Grosseteste, *Epistolae*, ed. H. Luard, Rolls Series (London, 1861), Letter 123.

teaching in Oxford. This involved lecturing on the *Sentences*, and obviously separately from lectures on the Bible. It was only by appeal to the Pope, according to this interpretation that Fischacre was able to challenge the status quo when he was granted permission to teach as he wished by Innocent IV, who also wrote to Grosseteste on the matter.⁸⁴

This interpretation has been convincingly challenged by James Ginther.⁸⁵ A salient observation is the influence on modern scholarship of comments by Grosseteste's possible pupil Roger Bacon (1214-c.1292), made in about 1267 on the shortcoming of theologians at Paris.⁸⁶ They had forgotten that the Bible, not the *Sentences* was the primary basis for theological investigation.⁸⁷ This was not a mistake Grosseteste, Adam Marsh or Alexander of Hales ever made. Bacon's knowledge of Grosseteste and his working methods is not wholly reliable, and the letter to the Masters can be interpreted with the opposite intention. Grosseteste may in fact have been emphasising that the masters should teach on the bible first, as the basis for their ordinary magisterial lectures, leaving room for other useful material and subjects later. This was, in fact, the state of the

⁸⁴ Long, 'The Science of Theology', 74.

⁸⁵ James Ginther, 'Theological Education at the Oxford Studium in the Thirteenth Century: A Reassessment of Robert Grosseteste's Letter to the Theologians', *Franciscan Studies* 55 (1998): 83-104.

⁸⁶ Ginther, 'Theological Education', 85.

⁸⁷ Roger Bacon, *Opera minus*, in *Opera inedita*, ed. D. Brewer, Rolls Series 4 (London: Longmans, 1859), 328-30.

curriculum at Paris. Grosseteste far from being a voice of conservatism, was in fact advocating a better and more effective model. It was a model that maintained the centrality of the bible to theological culture.⁸⁸ The letter from Innocent IV to Grosseteste concerning Fishacre's desire to lecture again on the *Sentences* as a response to individual circumstances and the importance of Fishacre's commentary, rather than as part of a general instruction.

As this case shows, developments at Oxford tended during the thirteenth century to follow those of Paris. As at Paris also the formal evidence of Oxford's organization and existence is preceded by many years, often dimly illumined, of existential fact.⁸⁹ By the 1220s the bases of that organization were in place: the Chancellor was mentioned in 1226 and granted lands, and therefore recognition by the king in 1231, and by 1253/4 grants of privilege from the papacy, reveal an academic corporation.⁹⁰ Significantly Oxford possessed a faculty of *theologia*: it alone with Paris in the thirteenth century could grant a degree in theology. Grosseteste's letter indicates a body of regent masters in *theologia* in the 1240s. The *Book of the Chancellor* gives in 1252 the stipulations for the proper regulations for being licensed in *theologia* at Oxford. The license is prohibited to a candidate who has not previously incepted in Arts at Oxford or another university. The intellectual requirements are very much in keeping with Ginther's interpretation of

⁸⁸ Ginther, 'Theological Education', 101.

⁸⁹ M. B. Hackett, 'The University as a Corporate Body', in *History of the University of Oxford*, vol. 1, 43.

⁹⁰ Hackett, 'Corporate Body', 49-50.

Grosseteste's intentions on this score. The candidate had to have read 'a book of the Bible, or of (Lombard's) Sentences, or of (Peter Comestor's) Histories'.⁹¹

Robert Grosseteste and Thomas Aquines: the Wisdom of *Theologia* and *Sacra Doctrina*

Grosseteste had given serious thought himself, prior to his engagement with the Oxford curriculum, as to what *theologia* consisted of in an intellectual sense. His definition has continuities and discontinuities to the authors of the twelfth century. The most obvious difference is the effect of his reading of, and familiarity with, Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics*. As noted above although this work had been translated during the first half of the twelfth century by James of Venice its early reception was limited.⁹² It was known by 1159 to John of Salisbury who remarked on the complexity of the text in the course of his *Metalogicon*: 'The science of the *Posterior Analytics* is extremely subtle, and one with which but few minds can make much headway in it'.⁹³ Apart from John, however, very few references are to be found to the *Posterior Analytics* for the rest of the century, and exactly how John knew the commentary, whether in whole or in extract is the subject of

⁹¹ *Munimenta Academica or Documents Illustrative of Academical Life and Studies at Oxford*, ed. H. Amstey, Rolls Series (London, 1868), Part 1, *Libri Cancellarii et Procuratorum, De Theologis licentiandis ad incipiendum*, p.25: 'aliquem librum de canone Bibliae vel librum Sententiarum vel Historiarum'.

⁹² See above n.7.

⁹³ John of Salisbury, *Metalogicon* IV.6 '*Posteriorum vero Analeticorum subtilis quidem scientia est et paucis ingeniis pervia*'.

debate.⁹⁴ The first commentary that survives was made by Grosseteste, probably in the mid-1220s. Familiarity with Aristotle's text allowed Grosseteste to formulate a definition of *theologia* as a category of Christian thought in considerable detail. In particular the *Posterior Analytics* discusses the definition of science, '*episteme*'. This Grosseteste was able to apply to Christian thinking.

It is in the opening chapters of his *Hexaameron*, Grosseteste's commentary on the six days of creation composed around 1235 that the fruit of his labours on the *Posterior Analytics* is to be found with respect to theology.⁹⁵ He remarks that:

⁹⁴ B. G. Dod, '*Aristoteles latinus*', 69. David Bloch, *John of Salisbury on Aristotelian Science* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012). In addition to the literature cited in n.7 Bloch outlines John of Salisbury's acquaintance with the *Posterior Analytics* in the context of other contemporary translations in 'John of Salisbury, "John" the Translator, and the Posterior Analytics,' *Classica et Mediaevalia* 61 (2010): 267-91.

⁹⁵ See the summary in J. Ginther, *Master of the Sacred Page: A Study of the Theology of Robert Grosseteste ca. 1229/30-1235* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 33-47, esp. 35; Giles E. M. Gasper, 'The Fulfillment of Science: Nature, Creation and Man in the *Hexaameron* of Robert Grosseteste', in Jack P. Cunningham and Mark Hocknull, eds., *Robert Grosseteste and the Pursuit of Religious and Scientific Knowledge in the Middle Ages* (London: Springer, 2016), forthcoming.

Each science, each kind of wisdom has a matter and a subject to which its attention is turned. Hence this most sacred wisdom, whose name is theology, has a subject in which it is turned.⁹⁶

‘This most sacred wisdom’ Grosseteste distinguishes as ‘theologia’, is more than a science. It has as its subject something greater than a mere subject that can be grasped in its entirety by the human mind. For the subject is ‘the whole Christ [*Christus integer*].’⁹⁷ This, he elaborates, is the incarnate Word and the Church, his body. In a characteristically charged passage Grosseteste goes on to speak of the unities that are implicit in this Christological subject: the unity of God and man in Christ, of Christ and the Church through human nature and of the Church and Christ in the sacrament of the Eucharist.⁹⁸ From this point Grosseteste connects his discussion with scripture. The things belonging to *theologia* are, because of the necessary grounding of faith, believable rather than knowable. Here, Grosseteste draws his inspiration from John, creating a Christological frame with the John 17: 20-21 as the controlling verse: ‘as thou Father, in me, and I in thee’.

⁹⁶ Grosseteste, *Hex.* 1.1.1: ‘Omnis scientia et sapientia materiam habet et subiectum aliquod, circa quod eiusdem versatur intentie. Unde et hec sapientia sacratissima, que theologia nominator, subiectum habet circa quod versatur’.

⁹⁷ Grosseteste, *Hex.* 1.1.1.

⁹⁸ Grosseteste, *Hex.* 1.1.1.

The subject of theology is then Christ, which is as much to say, the revelation of the creative word of God, the ultimate relation between Creator and Creation. Theology in this sense is the possibility of knowing the divine through divine self-revelation in Christ. In its Christological formulation, as McEvoy states, ‘...theology was in Grosseteste’s eyes identical with the interpretation of the divinely revealed message of salvation’.⁹⁹ How this *theologia* is possible, Grosseteste takes pains to explain, since, ‘the subject of this wisdom is neither known in its own right, nor received through science: it is only accepted and believed through faith’.¹⁰⁰ Faith is prior in theological knowledge: ‘the subject of this wisdom is neither known in its own right, nor received through science: it is only accepted and believed through faith’.¹⁰¹ Believable things, for Grosseteste, are

⁹⁹ McEvoy, *Robert Grosseteste*, 125.

¹⁰⁰ Grosseteste, *Hex.* 1.2.1.

¹⁰¹ Grosseteste, *Hex.* 1.2.1. In this respect Grosseteste mirrors the approach of Anselm of Canterbury encapsulated in his phrase ‘faith seeking understanding (*fides quaerens intellectum*)’. Anselm, *Proslogion*, in *Opera omnia S. Anselmi Cantuariensis archiepiscopi*, ed. F. S. Schmitt, 6 vols. [vol. 1 printed at Seckau 1938; vol. 2. at Rome 1940, all reset for the Nelson ed.] (Edinburgh 1946–1961), reprinted with new editorial material as *S. Anselmi Cantuariensis archiepiscopi opera omnia*, 2 vols. (Stuttgart-Bad-Cannstatt 1968-1984)], vol. 1, c. 1: ‘I do not endeavour, O Lord,’ Anselm states, ‘to penetrate your sublimity, for in no way do I compare my understanding with that; but I long to understand in some degree your truth, which my heart believes and loves. For I do not seek to understand that I may believe, but I believe in order to understand. For this also I believe – that unless I believed, I should not understand [Non tento, domine,

either intrinsically believable, or are so because of the authority of the one who speaks. In this way Scripture takes on the greater burden of authority. Scripture has a central and binding role in theology for Grosseteste.

Theologia as ‘the most sacred wisdom’ in Grosseteste’s scheme explicitly incorporates scripture. The Christocentric definition of theology under which he operates gives Grosseteste some room for manoeuvre in this connection. Theology cannot be primarily concerned with a text, for without the mediation of Christ it would mean absolutely nothing. This was an aspect of Grosseteste’s theological vision developed in his immersion in, and translation and commentary of, the writings of Pseudo-Dionysius, in the period 1240-1243.¹⁰² In his commentary on the *Mystical Theology*, he follows the author through the ascent of the mind and the closer encounter with the divine. Grosseteste begins his commentary with the following statement:

Mystical theology is the most secret talking with God, no longer through a mirror and through the images of creatures, but the kind where the mind transcends all creatures

penetrare altitudinem tuam, quia nullatenus comparo illi intellectum meum; sed desidero aliquatenus intelligere veritatem tuam, quam credit et amat cor meum. Neque enim quaero intelligere ut credam, sed credo ut intelligam. Nam et hoc credo: quia ‘nisi credidero, non intelligam’].

¹⁰² *Mystical Theology: The Glosses by Thomas Gallus and the Commentary of Robert Grosseteste on De Mystica Theologia*, ed. and trans. James McEvoy, Dallas Medieval Texts and Translations 3 (Leuven: Peeters, 2003), 56.

and itself, and relaxes from the acts of all the powers that are able to grasp anything created. In the desire of seeing and of holding him who is above all, the mind waits in the darkness of the privation of actual comprehension, that is, in the darkness of the actual unknowing of all things, until the one it desires may manifest himself – to the extent that he ever can correspond to the dignity and receptivity of the one desiring.¹⁰³

Pseudo-Dionysius, Grosseteste goes on, begins his spiritual odyssey by calling upon the Trinity to direct him to the transcendence of all things. This includes human speech and symbols. At that peak, ‘God speaks with man and man with God, by the most secret speaking which is not through symbols or images but through unveiled vision’.¹⁰⁴ This is the place and the existence to which Scripture, in a fallen world, points: God is who is above all (Exodus 20.21).¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ McEvoy, *Mystical Theology*, Robert Grosseteste, *De Mystica Theologia*, c. 3, pp.64-5: ‘Mistica theologia est secretissima, et non iam per speculum et per ymagines creaturarum cum Deo locution, cum videlicet mens transcendit omnes creaturas et se ipsam, et otiatur ab actibus omnium virium apprehensivarum cuiuscumque create, in desiderio videndi et tenendi ipsum qui super omnia, expectans in caligine privationis actualis comprehensionis, hoc est in caligine actualis ignorantie omnium, donec manifestet se desideratus, quantum novit convenire desiderantis dignitati et susceptibilitati’.

¹⁰⁴ McEvoy, *Mystical Theology*, Grosseteste, *De Mystica Theologia*, c. 1, pp.66-7: ‘loquitur Deus cum homine et homo cum Deo secretissima illa locutione que est non symbola nec ymagines, sed per ipsam non velatam visionem’.

¹⁰⁵ McEvoy, *Mystical Theology*, Grosseteste, *De Mystica Theologia*, c. 3, pp.76 and 79.

Mystical experience is closed and secret, veiled to all who dwell purely as men. The revelation made apparent in scripture is available to all, and its proper understanding and preaching of paramount importance in the pursuit of *theologia*. As McEvoy states, ‘Grosseteste taught essentially from the Bible, clarifying its books through questions that arose from the text, and expounding both literal and spiritual senses in ways conducive to devotion and preaching’.¹⁰⁶ That his definition of theology should come at the head of a commentary on the six days of creation is also instructive. Hugh of St Victor began his *De sacramentis*, primarily concerned with the work of restoration, with a short hexaameron, on the grounds that the work of restoration is preceded by the work of foundation. Grosseteste may also be working from the same impulse; sacred wisdom begins with the creation by the Word. It is important to note however that the description of *theologia* is grounded not only on the revelation of Christ in scripture but on Christ and humanity more generally. The incarnation and the eucharist bind Christ and his people firmly together, giving to experience an equally important theological role.

Debate over the identity and status of theology would continue long after Grosseteste, whose investigation of the term is marked by exegetical, philosophical and semantic precision. Thomas Aquinas, with whom this discussion will end, was more inclined to interpret theology as a science, albeit in a particular way and one that, again, stressed its intrinsic connection to scripture. The beginning of Thomas’s *Summae theologiae* provides a useful case-study for analysis. It begins with ten *quaestiones* which raise the

¹⁰⁶ McEvoy, *Robert Grosseteste*, p.122.

points for debate. Despite the title of his work *theologia* does not feature very often in Thomas's work; as the opening points show he prefers the term *sacra doctrina*. Exactly what this means has been a subject of some controversy; the extent to which it incorporates *theologia* is the issue at stake here.¹⁰⁷

In Question 1: 'On what sort of teaching *sacra doctrina* is and what it covers [*De sacra doctrina, qualis sit et ad quae se extendat*]', Thomas observes that since the end destined for humankind is beyond the grasp of reason, divine revelation is necessary. Thomas also points out that the same conclusion can be reached from different perspectives. In this context he highlights the distinctions to be made between theology as it emerges in the classification of the sciences, as part of ancient scheme of knowledge, and of Christian doctrine, '...the theology of holy teaching differs in kind from that theology which is ranked as part of philosophy'.¹⁰⁸ The following *quaestiones* then deal with what *sacra doctrina* is. It is a science [*scientia*] (Question 2) but of a special kind. It is, as Thomas puts it, subalternated. A proper *scientia* advances from self-evident principles: a

¹⁰⁷ Weisheipl, 'The Meaning of *Sacra Doctrina*'; St Thomas Aquinas, *Faith, Reason and Theology. Questions I-IV of his Commentary on the De Trinitate of Boethius*, trans. A. Maurer, *Mediaeval Sources in Translation* 32 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1987) pp. xi-xv; B. Davies, 'Is *Sacra Doctrina* Theology?' *New Blackfriars* 71 (1990): 141-47.

¹⁰⁸ St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, Volume 1, *Christian Theology (Ia.1)*, ed. T. Gilby (Cambridge: Blackfriars, 1963), Ia.1.1: 'unde theologia quae ad sacram doctrinam pertinet differt secundum genus ab illa theologia quae pars philosophiae ponitur'.

subalternated one takes its principle from another. In the same way as certain sciences use the principles of others, for example harmony employs those of arithmetic, so *sacra doctrina* proceeds from faith which itself takes its principles from a higher *scientia*, in this case God's own knowledge (*scientia*) and revealed to humankind. *Sacra doctrina* is, as a result, a subalternated science. It deals with examples for the life of men and with the authority of human revelation, which is the basis of 'Scripture, and/or teaching.'¹⁰⁹

Sacra doctrina, as well as being the most valuable of sciences (Question 5) and the highest wisdom (Question 6), encompasses everything (Question 7). Here Thomas mentions others who have tried to define what he calls *sacra doctrina*, but, in his opinion, extrinsically rather than intrinsically.

Some writers, however, preoccupied with the things treated of by that science rather than with the formal interest engaged [i.e. defining it properly], have indicated its subject-matter otherwise, apportioning it between the reality and its symbols, or regarding it as the works of redemption, or the whole Christ, namely head and members. All these indeed are dwelt on by this science, yet as held in their relationship to God.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ Aquinas, *Summa theol.* Ia.1.2: 'sacra Scriptura seu doctrina'.

¹¹⁰ Aquinas, *Summa theol.* Ia.1.7: 'Quidam vero, attendentes ea quae tractantur in ista scientia, et non ad rationem secundum quam considerantur, assignaverunt aliter materiam hujus scientiae, vel res et signa, vel opera reparationis, vel totum Christum, idest caput et

The writers who held such views are not named, but they can be relatively easily identified. ‘Reality and its symbols’ refers to Peter Lombard, and the ‘works of redemption’ to Hugh of St Victor. ‘The whole Christ’ may well refer to Grosseteste’s *Hexaemeron*.¹¹¹ Scripture enters the discussion overtly in Question 8 dealing with the question whether *sacra doctrina* is probative. Since it is based on faith, itself based on unfailing truth, it has no need to be. However in debate with believers recourse should be had to received, authoritative texts. These proper authorities are primarily, ‘canonical Scripture’ and the Fathers.¹¹² The final questions deal with the language of scripture and its sense, with the conclusion that since God is the author, nothing false can underlie either its literal or its spiritual senses.¹¹³

For Aquinas then, *sacra doctrina* is a comprehensive statement of truth as revealed by God. That revelation is formed in part, in great part, by scripture, but it also includes the

membra. De omnibus enim istis tractatur in ista scientia, sed secundum ordinem ad Deum’.

¹¹¹ The question of Grosseteste’s influence on Thomas is intriguing. If this definition of *sacra doctrina* is derived from Grosseteste it might be the case that the question of the subalternated science in the context of Aristotle’s *Posterior Analytics* is also derived from this source.

¹¹² Aquinas, *Summa theol.* Ia.1.8.

¹¹³ Aquinas, *Summa theol.* Ia.1.10.

lived experience of the Christian community. This is elegantly expressed by Marie-Dominique Chenu:

Exegesis, dogmatic theology, and pastoral theology all go together for someone who understands the gospel, since all of them require entering into the active presence of the Word for their realization. Theology arises out of, develops, and fulfils itself in the atmosphere of this living Word received in faith. Master Thomas teaches continuously on the text of the Bible, which is the foundational text for the Faculty of Theology. His *Summa Theologiae*, despite its technical methodology, can only be understood properly as a living emanation from the *pagina sacra* (the sacred page of the Bible).¹¹⁴

To align Aquinas's *sacra doctrina* with *theologia* is possible in ways somewhat, although not entirely, similar to Grosseteste. *Theologia* for both is encompassing, paradigmatic more than a simple exegesis of the bible involving rather an active living out of scripture. In this theology and the Bible are seen to be integrally linked.

Concluding Reflections

The development of *theologia* as a discipline, a science, or, as Grosseteste, and Aquinas's critics such as Godfrey of Fontaine would prefer, a wisdom, over the late-eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries highlights many of the changes in intellectual life in the Latin West in that period. The varied articulation of *theologia* as part of schema of

¹¹⁴ M.-D. Chenu, *Aquinas and His Role in Theology*, trans. P. Philibert (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2002, orig. publ. 1959), 21.

knowledge reflects changes in the intellectual resources available to and explored by western scholars, the social purposes to which Christian learning was put, and the ways in which learning was institutionalised. The continued interest in the writings of Pseudo-Dionysius form an important element to the formulation of theology, as too the impact of Trinitarian controversy and the affirmation of a Christocentric understanding of creation. In all of this biblical interpretation forms the foundation of theological observation and thought. There was, as yet, no separation of theological thinking from biblical exegesis. As J. A. Weisheipl puts it, where Scripture tends in modern theology to be regarded as the locus for theology, for medieval thinkers it was theology.¹¹⁵ The Bible was not merely a text that was studied, it was a confrontation with and experience of the creative Word, or since the Word is also God, with God. Experience of the divine so often spoken of by mystical writers is no less vivid in the writings of John of Fécamp, Hugh of St Victor, Robert Grosseteste and Thomas Aquinas. For all that *theologia* was the highest of the faculties in the Universities of Paris and Oxford as they emerged in this period, no medieval thinker, neither Grosseteste nor Aquinas, would have described themselves as theologians in the sense of pursuing a narrow discipline. It was the experience of the living Scripture within the intellectual traditions that they inherited that underpinned the theological culture they forged.

¹¹⁵ Weisheipl, 'The Meaning of *Sacra Doctrina*', 55.