

Mark J. Clark, *The Making of the Historia Scholastica, 1150-1200* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2015). xvi + 322 pp. ISBN 978-0-88844-198-0. Hardcover \$95.00.

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Mark Clark's examination of Peter Comestor's *Historia Scholastica* draws on years of research that Clark has devoted to the medieval document that he describes as "pregnant with the Bible," but "nevertheless not a biblical commentary (xiii)." Instead characterizing the *Historia* as a schoolbook, Clark emphasizes both its popularity during the Middle Ages — there are more than 800 extant manuscripts (14) — and its neglect by modern scholarship: the *Historia* is very much a product of its time, and is strongly rooted in the theological classrooms of late twelfth-century Paris. Furthermore, as Clark notes, there is no reliable edition of the *Historia*, as the work underwent multiple modifications by both Comestor and his student Stephen Langton.

Clark begins by reviewing historiography on the *Historia Scholastica* and by highlighting the connections between Peter Comestor and his contemporary Peter Lombard, author of the *Sentences*. Clark ably demonstrates that the *Historia* draws its inspiration from the *Sentences*, but differs in form. He then moves into an extended three-chapter analysis of Comestor's process of creating the *Historia*. Notably, in the second chapter, Clark highlights Comestor's reliance on glossed Gospels as starting material for creating the *Historia*. It is in these three chapters that Clark most thoroughly explores Comestor's intent of using his work in the schoolroom.

Clark's work, however, is strongest and most innovative in its second half, when it examines the relationship of Stephen Langton to the *Historia*. Comestor's student at the University of Paris in the late twelfth century, Langton later taught theology at the university (initially alongside Comestor) and eventually became archbishop of Canterbury in the early thirteenth century. Clark correctly demonstrates that Langton assisted Comestor in the first revisions of the *Historia* and that after his mentor's death, Langton undertook his own alterations to the work. Throughout, he continued to use it as a schoolbook. Clark argues that without Langton's contributions and subsequent writings, we would not know that Comestor used the *Historia* in his classroom or that Langton's mentor made his own revisions and glosses to his masterwork.

Throughout, Clark emphasizes the chain of knowledge that existed in twelfth-century Paris. As he argues, Hugh of St. Victor had taught Peter Lombard, who in turn taught Peter Comestor. As noted, Comestor himself later mentored Langton. Thus, Clark highlights the Victorine tradition in which the *Historia* is grounded. On a larger scale, he demonstrates that the *Historia* is a central — and representative — component of the knowledge and the scholarly traditions that circulated at the University of Paris during the twelfth century.

Clark's work has many strong points and advances many important arguments about the *Historia Scholastica*, but it is not without weaknesses. Chief among these is Clark's inconsistent presentation of excerpts from the *Historia*. At times, quotes from the schoolbook are given in Latin with an English translation but, at other times, only in Latin. A helpful appendix provides the text for the beginning of both the *Historia Scholastica* and the *Historia Evangelica* (the text's presentation of the Gospels); Clark includes both Comestor's original text and Langton's early

revisions. This appendix, however, along with other key quoted passages, is given only in Latin. This may have been a publisher's decision, but the fact remains that this decision decreases the usefulness of Clark's work. This is a specialized study, but undergraduates and early graduate students, who may not yet have a strong grasp of Latin, will find it difficult to locate the evidence for Clark's arguments in the source material that he quotes.

Despite this shortcoming, however, Clark's monograph is a strong attempt to restore to the *Historia* the prominence that it once enjoyed. His arguments about its intellectual inspirations and modifications successfully fill a lacuna in scholarship. We now have a thorough, scholarly analysis of the *Historia Scholastica* to accompany those that already exist for Lombard's *Sentences* and Gratian's *Decretals*.