



*Direttore*

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## PERCORSI DI ESEGESI ANTICA E MEDIEVALE



Sic ergo efficitur ut culturae diligentia exiguum semen, uerbi causa, sinapis, quod est minimum omnium, efficiatur maius omnibus oleribus et fiat arbor, ita ut ueniant uolatilia caeli et habitent in ramis eius.

Origene, *Homélies sur l'Exode* I

Ciò che dall'evangelista Matteo (Mt 13,31-32) veniva presentato come il regno dei cieli — a partire dall'immagine di un granello di senape che si sviluppa, diviene albero e attira così gli uccelli del cielo — nell'esegesi dell'alexandrino Origene diviene in maniera originale la parola della Scrittura, pronta a moltiplicarsi e ad arricchirsi proporzionalmente all'impegno dell'esegeta-agricoltore, nonché ad attirare alla sua regola di vita dialettici e retori.

La continuità fra due periodi essenziali nell'ambito della produzione esegetica, l'epoca dei Padri e il Medioevo, viene considerata in questa collezione come implicita, in quanto comunque fondata sulla stessa ricchissima produzione patristica.

I volumi della collana si indirizzano non solo a un pubblico di ricercatori e studiosi di tutti i paesi, ma anche ai lettori colti, nell'intento di rispondere alle esigenze di approfondimento di quanti si avvicinano per la prima volta all'esegesi — con la sua foresta di affascinanti e misteriosi significati — e/o alle edizioni dei testi.

*Classificazione Decimale Dewey:*

**220.6092 (23.) BIBBIA. INTERPRETAZIONE E CRITICA (ESEGESI). Persone**

LORENZO COZZI

# THE OTHER APOCALYPSE

## HISTORY AND PROPHECY

### IN NICHOLAS OF LYRA'S POSTILLA LITTERALIS

*Preface of*

IAN CRISTOPHER LEVY





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*to Irene*

Et ascenderunt super latitudinem terrae  
et circumierunt castra sanctorum  
et civitatem dilectam.

*Apocalypsis Ioannis 20, 9*





## INDEX

- 11     *Preface*  
of IAN CRISTOPHER LEVY
- 25     Introduction  
Methodological and terminological premise  
§.1. For an intellectual history beyond philological difficulties, 25 – §.2.  
Apocalypse and prophecy: two categories and their continuity, 29 – §.3.  
Apocalyptic and prophetology in the late-medieval horizon, 34 – §.4.  
Nicholas of Lyra: a suitable profile?, 38.
- 45     Chapter I  
Nicholas of Lyra. Identity and formation of an author  
1.1. From Normandy to Paris: a problematic biography, 46 – 1.1.1 *The Commentary on the Sentences of Nicholas of Lyra*, 51 – 1.1.2. *The quodlibetal questions*, 52 – 1.1.3. *The seeds of the Postilla*, 61 – 1.2. The shadow of a Franciscan at the end of time, 70 – 1.2.1. *The path to the General Chapter of 1322*, 72 – 1.2.2. *Nicholas of Lyra in Perugia? Deconstruction of an alleged certainty*, 76 – 1.2.3. *Amidst the tides of a conflict: Nicholas of Lyra provincial minister of Burgundy*, 79 – 1.3. The project for a *Postilla litteralis super totam Bibliam*, 85 – 1.3.1. *From 1322 to 1331: the stages of a journey*, 86 – 1.3.2. *The theory of exegesis in the Postilla Litteralis*, 91 – 1.3.3. *Hermeneutics and Apocalypse: problems for an end of the world*, 100.
- 103    Chapter II  
The other apocalypse of Nicholas of Lyra  
2.1. Franciscan apocalypses, 104 – 2.1.1. *A book and its condemnation: the Lectura super Apocalypsim of Peter of John Olivi*, 106 – 2.1.2. *The foundation of a further approach: the Expositio in Apocalypsim of Alexander Minori-*

*ta*, 120 – 2.1.3. *The recovery of the historical-linear model: Peter Auriol and the Compendium sensus litteralis totius divinae Scripturae*, 132 – 2.2. Nicholas's Comment: from method to contents, 143 – 2.2.1 *Rethinking the apocalyptic tale: Nicholas of Lyra's programme*, 144 – 2.2.2. *The preface, the letters to the Seven Churches, and the method*, 151 – 2.2.3. *On Church history: from the seven seals to the First Crusade*, 158 – 2.2.4. *Apocalypse XVII-XXII: from mist to prophecy*, 184.

## 199 Chapter III

### The geometries of the prophetic word

3.1. For a return to the Prologus Primus, 200 – 3.1.1. *Haec omnia liber vitae*, 202 – 3.1.2. *Expositores proprie non sunt prophetae*, 206 – 3.1.3. *Fundamentals of Olivian prophetology*, 211 – 3.2. Prophecy as a concept and David as its model, 216 – 3.2.1. *The reasons for a place*, 217 – 3.2.2. *Propheta magnus surrexit in nobis: an Aristotelian prologue*, 221 – 3.2.3. *Queritur utrum David: a scholastic quaestio*, 225 – 3.3 Omnia membra concurrunt: the space of the prophet in the body of the Church, 235 – 3.3.1. *Shards of light: prophecy in the Acts of the Apostles*, 235 – 3.3.2. *Paul, Nicholas, and the prophetic office*, 239 – 3.3.3. *A feminine epilogue?*, 243.

## 251 *Bibliography*

## PREFACE

Among late medieval biblical exegetes there was perhaps none so widely read as Nicholas of Lyra, whose impact could be felt well into the Reformation era. Born in Normandy c. 1270, Nicholas of Lyra entered the Franciscan Order in 1300 and served as the Order's regent master of theology at Paris 1308-1309. Lyra's signal achievement was his *Postilla litteralis super totam Bibliam*, a commentary covering the entire Bible begun in 1322 and completed by 1331, although likely containing earlier material dating back to the cursory lectures he delivered as a bachelor of theology. Lyra later produced a much shorter guide to the spiritual senses known as the *Postilla Moralis* (1333-1339). It was the *Literal Postil*, however, that was most highly prized by later biblical exegetes. That it survives in more than 800 manuscripts is a testament to its enduring popularity. In 1471-1472 a five-volume set was first printed in Rome, and within a few decades Nicholas of Lyra's commentaries were being printed alongside the *Glossa Ordinaria*, which Lyra himself consulted in his own work<sup>1</sup>. When a young Martin Luther was first lecturing on Scripture at Wittenberg he likely had at hand the 1508 Basel edition of the *Glossa Ordinaria*, which also displayed Lyra's *Postilla Litteralis*

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<sup>1</sup> For an overview of Lyra's life and career see SOPHIE DELMAS, *Nicolas de Lyre: franciscain*, in G. DAHAN (edited by) *Nicolas de Lyre. Franciscain du XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle, exégète et théologien*, Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, Paris 2011, pp. 17-27.

along with the later additional comments of Paul of Burgos and replies of Matthias Doring<sup>2</sup>.

That Lyra produced his *Literal Postil* over the years 1322-1331 is actually quite significant, since these years mark an especially fractious period for the Franciscan Order, much of which was in open rebellion against the papacy. For it was during these years that Pope John XXII issued a series of bulls that struck at the very heart of the Franciscan conception of evangelical perfection which was grounded in their uniquely strict form of poverty that recognized only the simple use of material goods (*simplex usus facti*). Yet Lyra, although willing and able to defend the core principles of the Friars Minor, remained determinately moderate amidst the tumult, even as confrères such as Michael of Cesena and William of Ockham assailed John XXII as a false and heretical pope. Lyra's relative moderation is perhaps no more evident than in the Apocalypse portion of his *Postil* (1329-30), completed only a few years after John XXII had in 1326 formally condemned the 1297 Apocalypse commentary of the brilliant and controversial Franciscan Peter John Olivi.

Before turning directly to the Apocalypse, however, it may be helpful to sketch Lyra's understanding of Holy Scripture most broadly. Three general prologues accompany Lyra's *Postil* over and above the prologues that he wrote for specific biblical books wherein he addressed in further detail matters of authorial intention and literary composition. Lyra's first general prologue was actually his *principium* i.e., an encomium in praise of Scripture customarily delivered by newly incepting masters of theology<sup>3</sup>. Medieval theologians were by trade *magistri sacrae paginae*, and so it was fitting that they should ex-

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<sup>2</sup> *Textus Biblie cum glosa ordinaria; Nicolai de Lyra postilla; moralitatibus eiusdem; Pauli Burgensis additionibus; Matthie Thoring replicis. Prima - sexta pars* (Johann Froben, Johann Petri für Johann Amerbach, Basel 1506-1508). See also K. FROELICH, *Martin Luther and the Glossa Ordinaria*, in "Lutheran Quarterly", 2009, 23, pp. 29-48.

<sup>3</sup> For the three prologues see *Biblia sacra cum Glossa Ordinaria novisque additionibus*, 6 vols., Venice 1603, t. 1, (unpaginated at this point). For more precise citations see *Patrologia Latina* 113: 25-61.

tol the text that formed the basis of their discipline. It was in this first prologue that Lyra elucidated his broader vision of Holy Scripture as a sacred repository of divine wisdom and thereby revealed the foundation of his hermeneutics. Here Lyra adopted Sirach 24:32 as his lead text: “*Haec omnia liber vitae*”. Scripture is the Book of Life (*liber vitae*), the key to true life for all who believe. To this end Lyra cited Gregory the Great’s remark that, “temporal life as compared to eternal life is more fittingly called death than life”. Lyra the theologian observed, moreover, that the science of the philosophers is ordered to mundane ends, concerned as it is with this present life alone. Whereas Holy Scripture—the principal text of theology—is a unique book ordered toward happiness in the life to come, thereby surpassing the merely human knowledge acquired by philosophers. “The book containing Holy Scripture—although divided into many partial books and yet contained under one book—which is designated under the general name of the Bible, is properly called the Book of Life”<sup>4</sup>.

Although all medieval theologians agreed that Holy Scripture formed the indispensable foundation of their discipline, there remained some discussion as to theology’s precise relationship with this most sacred text. Lyra, like his Franciscan predecessors Saint Bonaventure and Peter John Olivi, directly equated Holy Scripture with theology. Scripture is properly called theology, said Lyra, precisely because it is the sole text of this science. God himself is its subject matter; indeed, it is a discourse about God. Holy Scripture, and thus theology itself, proceeds in the most certain manner, excelling all human sciences which are confined by the limits of human reason. The problem with philosophy, according to Lyra, is that even when there is no error in the cognition of first principles which are self-evident, error may nevertheless arise in the deduction of conclusions from those principles. It is no surprise, therefore, that philosophers who

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<sup>4</sup> Patrologia Latina 113:25c-d. Cf. GREGORY THE GREAT, *XL Homiliarum in Evangelia libri duo*, 35; PL 76:1259-1265.

rely solely upon human methods of investigation have often lapsed into error<sup>5</sup>.

Commenting upon Wisdom 1:7, “*Hoc quod continet omnia scientiam habet vocis*”, Lyra determined that Holy Scripture contains all things, since it is a science that brings all things under its consideration. The Christological aspect of Scripture comes to the fore here, since what is proper to Holy Scripture is that which is expressed by the Divine Word himself. It is through the Word that all things were made (Jn 1:1), which means that all things must fall under the consideration of this science, namely under the consideration of Scripture. Lyra made it clear, however, that this foundational claim does not extend to the knowledge of all particular things that may be discovered through human reason, but rather to the larger created order by which we are led into the knowledge and love of God through a true faith that has been informed by charity. Having appealed to Saint Augustine’s proviso that Scripture does not address everything whatsoever that can be known by man, but only that which strengthens faith and leads to true blessedness, Lyra explicitly turned to the *Glossa Ordinaria* which clarifies Christ’s promise to the apostles that the Spirit “will instruct you in all truth” (Jn 16:13): Christ meant all truth that is “necessary for salvation”<sup>6</sup>.

Lyra believed that the nature of Holy Scripture may be further elucidated by the text of Wisdom 7:26, “*Candor est enim lucis aeternae, et speculum sine macula Dei maiestatis, et imago bonitatis illius*”, such that the book (*liber*) of Scripture serves as a spotless mirror (*speculum*) of divine power and goodness. Just as sensible forms are apparent in a mirror, so in this book the intelligible truths shine forth. This is the book of divine foreknowledge, said Lyra, from which the apostles and prophets read; those who handed down this science<sup>7</sup>. It is noteworthy

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<sup>5</sup> Patrologia Latina 113:25d-26d.

<sup>6</sup> Patrologia Latina 113:27d-28a. See also *Biblia sacra cum Glossa Ordinaria*, 5:1273-1274. Cf. AUGUSTINUS HIPONENSIS, *De Trinitate* 14.1; Patrologia Latina 42:1035-1038.

<sup>7</sup> Patrologia Latina 113:28a.

that Lyra proceeded to cite the *Glossa ordinaria* on Isaiah 38:1, wherein the prophet said to Hezekiah, “Thus says the Lord: Set your house in order, for you shall die ...”. According to the *Glossa*, “The prophets are able to read all that is written in the book of divine foreknowledge [although they did not perceive all things, but only certain things and in the manner that God permitted]”. Lyra clarified this comment, noting that the prophets did not actually see the divine essence, which is itself identical with God’s foreknowledge, since even prophetic cognition remains obscure at that point (cf. 1 Cor 13:12). They have, however, seen the truth through a prophetic light insofar as God’s knowledge has been revealed to them. Lyra then drew an important distinction (essential to Lorenzo Cozzi’s thesis) when pointing out that the exegete and the prophet operate on very different levels. The exegete has no such knowledge, for the very fact that is he is not illuminated by the prophetic light and thus cannot read from this book of divine foreknowledge. The exegete is at a further remove from the truth, therefore, as he reads from the book of Holy Scripture that has been handed down to us by the prophets<sup>8</sup>.

Later, in the prologue to the Apocalypse portion of his *Postil*, Lyra reminded the reader of his opening remarks in the Genesis prologue wherein he had outlined the symmetry of the two testaments. Lyra was now going to tie together the whole of Scripture, its first and its last book. Indeed, he wished to show how the Apocalypse fulfills its relationship to the Old Testament prophetic books with which it is correlated. To that end Lyra adopted as his theme the words of Apocalypse 10:11, “You must prophesy again to many peoples and nations...”. Lyra proceeded to work through this verse word by word, noting that “again” is used here to signal that this final prophecy comes after the Old Testament prophets. There are, moreover, four foundations of this book: necessity which is signaled by “you must”; truth insofar as “you must prophesy”; the quality of order as he

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<sup>8</sup> Patrologia Latina 113:28b. Cf. *Biblia sacra cum Glossa Ordinaria*, 4:335-336.

prophecies “again”; and universality when proclaiming his message to “many peoples and nations”. Lyra will then make a crucial point: whereas the Old Testament prophecies may have come to pass, in this prophetic book John is describing the tribulations yet to come, those that will beset the Church all the way up until the end of the world. Revealing these events will better enable Christians to fortify themselves with the patience needed to endure this suffering. Hence the necessity of this book, according to Lyra, since it will allow the Church to prepare for what she will have to endure. With respect to the truth of John’s prophecy, Lyra sounded a chord already encountered in his *principium*, that whereas human cognition is prone to error even when beginning from first principles, divine revelation excludes all possibility of error inasmuch as it constitutes the very “measure of truth” (*regula veritatis*). The prophetic revelation contained in the Apocalypse does not proceed from human investigation, therefore, but from divine revelation which guarantees its veracity<sup>9</sup>.

To properly understand Lyra’s Apocalypse commentary it is essential to place it solidly within its wider Franciscan context. Cozzi, to his credit, has done this very effectively. Of first importance is the fact that Peter John Olivi’s 1297 *Commentary on the Apocalypse* had been only recently condemned at a Franciscan general chapter meeting at Marseilles in 1319 and then some seven years later by Pope John XXII in 1326<sup>10</sup>. Indebted to the writings of the Calabrian abbot Joachim of Fiore (d. 1202), Olivi envisioned the emergence of a new cadre of spiritual men (*virī spirituales*) who would revitalize the Church in the end times. In this deeply complex commentary, written in the final years of his life, Olivi had located in the sixth age of the world both the coming of Antichrist and the renewal of evangeli-

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<sup>9</sup> *Biblia sacra cum Glossa Ordinaria*, 6:1445-46.

<sup>10</sup> PETRUS IOHANNIS OLIVI, *Lectura super Apocalypsim*, edited by W. Lewis, Franciscan Institute Publications, Saint Bonaventure, NY 2015.



cal life inaugurated by Saint Francis<sup>11</sup>. At this time the Church's foes will consist not only of infidels and heretics as one might expect, but even the pope himself may be revealed as an enemy of the gospel. Olivi believed that in the time of the mystical Antichrist, Saint Francis's rule, and those who rigorously adhere to it, will be attacked and condemned by a corrupted and carnal church, just as Christ himself had been condemned by the reprobate synagogue<sup>12</sup>. During this time some friars will feign adherence to the gospel life, even while insisting that poor use (*usus pauper*) should be excluded from the vow of evangelical profession. Falling away from the rule as it had been originally instituted, these false brethren will seek all manner of dispensations from its restrictions<sup>13</sup>. Yet when the evangelical life of supreme poverty (*altissima paupertas*) is condemned under the mystical Antichrist and more fully consummated under the great Antichrist, then Christ and his servant Francis along with his angelic band of disciples will spiritually descend to oppose all the errors and evils of the world and stand against the whole army of demons<sup>14</sup>.

Needless to say, Olivi's Apocalypse commentary was a direct challenge both to the leaders of his own order and to the larger institutional Church. Although the seeds had already been sown in his commentary on the Gospel of Matthew. For instance, the attempt to trap Christ when asking whether it is lawful to pay taxes to Caesar (Matt 22:15-22) signaled to Olivi the end time persecution of true spiritual men. "Allegorically this whole passage," said Olivi, "can be adapted to the final times of the Church, such that through Christ the spiritual men (*spirituales viri*) are signified, while and through

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<sup>11</sup> D. BURR, *Mendicant Readings of the Apocalypse*, in (edited by) R. EMMERSON, B. MCGINN, *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY 1992), 89-102. See also Burr's more recent and comprehensive study: *The Bible in Medieval Tradition: The Book of Revelation*, Eerdmans Press, Grand Rapids 2019.

<sup>12</sup> PETRUS IOHANNIS OLIVI, *Lectura super Apocalypsim*, 6.82, pp. 308-309.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*, 7.32, p. 342.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*, 10.13; p. 455.

other people the false religious or false clerics (*pseudo-religiosi vel pseudo-clerici*)”<sup>15</sup>.

Olivi had not been the only Franciscan to locate the arrival of Francis in the final stages of history. In his 1235-45 *Expositio in Apocalypsim* Alexander Minorita located not only a prophecy of Pope Innocent III approving the life of Francis and Dominic, but compared the holy city of Jerusalem descending from heaven (Apoc. 21:10) to the Friars Minor and the Preachers, as they most perfectly imitate the teaching of the apostles in both word and deed. While upon Saint Francis was inscribed the name of Christ the lamb and his passion<sup>16</sup>. In 1319 Peter Auriol, a direct contemporary of Lyra, composed an abbreviated survey, or *Compendium*, of the entire Bible according to its literal sense. Although Peter proved to be more restrained than his Joachite predecessor Alexander, he nevertheless located the institution of the mendicant orders in “the first resurrection” (Apoc. 20:5). Through the teaching and example of Francis and Dominic during the reign of Pope Innocent III the whole of Christianity seems to have been resurrected together with Christ and now walks in newness of life. With the advent of these two orders, said Peter, the spiritual resurrection has begun and the world is being made new<sup>17</sup>.

Alexander and Auriol were clearly not so radical or contentious as Olivi, but Lyra was writing in the wake of the Olivi condemnation and in the midst of the order’s struggles with the papacy. In multiple studies of Lyra’s Apocalypse commentary, Philip Krey has emphasized Lyra’s sobriety and restraint, his desire to tap the breaks on mendicant

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<sup>15</sup> MS New College B. 49, 128va. More broadly see K. MADIGAN, *Olivi and the Interpretation of Matthew in the High Middle Ages*, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame 2003.

<sup>16</sup> ALEXANDER MINORITA, *Expositio in Apocalypsim*, edited by A. Wachtel, Hermann Böhlau, Weimar 1955, 436-510 *passim*.

<sup>17</sup> PETRUS AUREOLUS, *Compendium sensus litteralis totius divinae scripturae* 8.18, éd. P. Seeboeck (Quaracchi: Ex. Typ. Coll. S. Bonaventurae, 1896), 547.

triumphalism<sup>18</sup>. This is not say that Lyra was not supportive of his order's program of evangelical poverty, but that he adopted a more moderate tone akin to what one finds in the works of Saint Bonaventure<sup>19</sup>. To choose just a single example, Bonaventure's line that the money bag carried by Judas (Jn 12:6) was not for Christ's personal use, but instead for the poor<sup>20</sup>. Lyra similarly maintained that the bag contained donations given to Christ which were distributed to the poor, although its contents would also be used to supply the necessities of life for Christ and his disciples who lived on alms. More pointedly in defense of the Franciscan charism, Lyra refused to concede that possessing some moveable property in common might be compatible with evangelical perfection. Lyra bolstered this determination with a direct appeal to Pope Nicholas III's 1279 constitution *Exiit qui seminat*, which had extolled Franciscan poverty as the supreme expression of the evangelical life<sup>21</sup>.

While his commitment to the Order's express claim to evangelical perfection was not in doubt, therefore, Lyra specifically rejected the exegesis of Alexander and Auriol who read the events narrated in chapters 17-20 as having already taken place. In fact, Lyra reckoned this sort of exposition unfitting and even forced ("*haec expositio impropria videtur in pluribus et extorta*"). He was adamant that the whole text from the beginning of chapter 17 up until 20:6 (at which

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<sup>18</sup> See the analysis of P. KREY, *Nicholas of Lyra's Apocalypse Commentary* Medieval Institute Publications, Kalamazoo, MI 1997, 1-30; ID., *Many Readers but Few Followers: The Fate of Nicholas of Lyra's 'Apocalypse Commentary' in the Hands of His Late-Medieval Admirers*, in "Church History", 1995, 64, pp. 185-201; ID., *Nicholas of Lyra: Apocalypse Commentator, Historian, and Critic*, in "Franciscan Studies", 1992, 52, pp. 53-84.

<sup>19</sup> See L. SMITH, *The Gospel Truth: Nicholas of Lyra on John*, in (edited by) P. KREY, L. SMITH, *Nicholas of Lyra: The Senses of Scripture*, Brill, Leiden 2000, pp. 223-249.

<sup>20</sup> BONAVENTURA DE BALNEOREGIO, *Commentarius in Evangelium Ioannis*, in *Opera Omnia*, 10 vols., Ex Typographia Collegii S. Bonaventurae, Quaracchi 1882-1902, vol. 6, pp. 412-413.

<sup>21</sup> *Biblia sacra cum glossa ordinaria*, 5:1214-1215. Cf. *Exiit qui seminat*, VI 5.12.3; *Corpus Iuris Canonici*, edited by E. Friedberg, 2 vols., Leipzig 1879; reprint, Akademische Druck- u. Verlagsanstalt, Graz 1960, vol. 2, p.1112.

point he made these comments) has not yet been fulfilled. Lyra then added: "Because I am not a prophet nor the son of a prophet (Amos 7:14), I will refrain from saying anything about these future happenings, apart from what can be drawn from Scripture, the saints, and the holy doctors"<sup>22</sup>. And with respect to any supposed references to Innocent III and saints Francis and Dominic in chapter twenty-one, Lyra responded that even if this exposition might be valid in some mystical sense it does not hold up according to the literal sense ("*haec expositio salvari posset in aliquo sensu mystico non tamen in sensu literali*"). Instead, for Lyra, the literal sense of this text speaks to the heavenly Jerusalem, while those who enter are the predestined, not the mendicants. It is the Church triumphant that is being described here<sup>23</sup>.

As noted above, Lorenzo Cozzi's thoroughly documented and painstakingly detailed study of Lyra's Apocalypse commentary properly situates Lyra within a particularly fractious period of Franciscan history that prevailed for much of the 1320s. Cozzi's study begins by tracing what he fittingly calls "a problematic biography" of this remarkable biblical exegete. It is certainly true that we do not know very much about Lyra's earliest years apart from the fact that he was born in 1270 in Normandy. Where Lyra first acquired his proficiency in the Hebrew language remains a mystery, although it is possible that while still in Normandy he made contact with the Jewish community at Évreux. The Jews were expelled from France in 1306, however, so Lyra may have learned what he did about rabbinical exegesis in Paris from converted Jews<sup>24</sup>. Whatever the case, Lyra's Hebrew expertise, allowing him not only to read the Old Testament in its original language, but also to utilize the commentaries of Rabbi Solomon bar Isaac aka Rashi of Troyes (d. 1105), set him apart

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<sup>22</sup> *Biblia sacra cum Glossa Ordinaria*, 6:1661-1662.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*, 6:1671-1672.

<sup>24</sup> A. GEIGER, *A Student and an Opponent: Nicholas and his Jewish Sources*, in (edited by) G. DAHAN, *Nicolas de Lyre. Franciscain du XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle, exégète et théologien*, pp. 167-203.

from his contemporaries and furthermore rendered him an invaluable guide to later generations. For although Martin Luther had criticized Lyra for his allegorizing and his scholastic Aristotelianism, he nevertheless adopted him as a useful vehicle for Jewish sources<sup>25</sup>.

Was Nicholas of Lyra present at the fateful general chapter meeting of the Franciscans held in June 1322 at Perugia? Cozzi, rightly in my estimation, has determined that he was not present. That is important, because this chapter meeting was a watershed event in the order's increasingly antagonistic relationship with Pope John XXII. Deeply worried by this time that John XXII was laying the groundwork to overturn central components of Franciscan poverty as ratified in Nicholas III's *Exiit qui seminat*, the assembled masters and bachelors of theology specifically addressed the question whether it would be heretical to assert that Christ and the apostles had nothing either individually or in common. In their response they determined as a matter of Catholic doctrine that, in showing us the way of perfection, Christ and the apostles had nothing by right of ownership, right of dominion, or right of appropriation either individually or in common. Was Lyra a party to this deliberate refutation of a sitting pope? Among the clues to be considered are the references in two letters regarding a certain friar Nicholas. The letter of 4 June 1322 lists "Nicholas, minister of the province of France, and William Bloch, bachelors in the sacred page". And again among the signatories: "I, Brother Nicholas, minister of France and bachelor of sacred theology ...". A letter of 7 June 1322 listed among those who approved it: "Brother Nicholas, minister of the province of France". Now it is true that Lyra had been minister provincial of France from 1319, and then of Burgundy in 1325, but it is beyond dispute that Lyra was already a master of theology by 1309, some thirteen years prior to the Perugia chapter meeting. That in each case the Nicholas in question

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<sup>25</sup> A. NOBLESSE-ROCHER, 'Ce bon Nicolas de Lyre...': quelques postures de Martin Luther à l'égard du Postillator, in (edited by) G. DAHAN, *Nicolas de Lyre. Franciscain du XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle, exégète et théologien*, pp. 335–358.

is listed specifically as a bachelor of theology seems to render it impossible that this man was Nicholas of Lyra<sup>26</sup>. Lyra was therefore not a party to the antagonistic response issued from Perugia. Whether or not this was simply happenstance, it seems nevertheless fitting that this consummately moderate friar continued apace in his exegetical work unaligned with the order's more radical exponents.

Now with respect to the Apocalypse commentary itself, Cozzi's principal contribution to scholarship is in tracing the role that prophecy plays across the breadth of Lyra's *Postil*, thereby anchoring Lyra's professed unwillingness to peer into divine historical designs within a comprehensive reflection in the nature of prophecy itself. Lyra, according to Cozzi, "having evoked the notion of prophecy at the moment of greatest tension in his *Commentary*, far from being *oblitus sui*, places us instead in the presence of a privileged access channel to multiple levels of his intellectual path, within which the problem of a supernatural and divinely inspired knowledge plays a structural role". We have touched upon Lyra's clear distinction between the biblical prophet and the humble exegete. Cozzi recognizes the central importance of this distinction when analyzing Lyra's vaguely ironic quotation of Amos: "*Non sum propheta*". He consequently devotes a good deal of attention to Lyra's treatment of Psalms wherein David's prophetic gifts are discussed. For in his Psalter prologue, Lyra observed not only that David was this book's instrumental cause, but that he was also a prophet, since his mind had been illuminated and elevated by God to a level of supernatural cognition<sup>27</sup>.

Furthermore, Cozzi has persuasively suggested that Lyra's position on prophecy may be traced back to the stances adopted about a century earlier by William of Auxerre (d. 1231) and the Dominican exegete Hugh of St Cher (d. 1263). They had drawn a clear distinction

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<sup>26</sup> *Declaratio magistrorum et baccalariorum de paupertate Christi et apostolorum*, in (edited by) G. GAL, D. FLOOD, *Nicolaus Minorita: Chronica*, Franciscan Institute Publications, St Bonaventure, NY 1996, pp. 71-82.

<sup>27</sup> *Biblia sacra cum Glossa Ordinaria*, 3:415.

between the capacities of the sacred authors and subsequent exegetes when it came to discerning matters of divine foreknowledge. What seems to tie all this together is that William and Hugh were thereby attempting to correct Joachim of Fiore's overly ambitious attempt to discern the progress of cosmic history. Cozzi has good reason to surmise, therefore, that Lyra may have adopted this position in his own day in an effort to counter the Joachite exegesis manifested in the works of Peter John Olivi and also found to some degree in Alexander's commentary. It could well be that already in the years preceding his Apocalypse commentary, Lyra had been intent on sublimating the prophetic tendencies of the "*virī spirituales*" within his own Order. Hence Lyra's pointed refusal to prophesy when commenting on the Apocalypse text was well grounded in his larger exegetical program set in place over at least the preceding decade.

Lorenzo Cozzi has made a significant scholarly contribution not only by opening up further lines of analysis of Lyra's Apocalypse commentary. He has also contributed to the history of medieval interpretation more broadly in reminding us that medieval exegetes carried out their work fully cognizant of Holy Scripture's direct applicability to the times in which they lived. What these exegetes were willing to say, and in the case of Lyra what they pointedly refrained from saying, could be of much consequence. Readers of Cozzi's cogent and engaging volume will come away with a deeper appreciation of this fact.

IAN CHRISTOPHER LEVY  
*Providence College*