In his commentary, Lanfranc utilized the texts and methods of the *trivium* in the service of a theological agenda. Wary of excessive use of the arts, he carefully kept their function subordinate to the meaning of St. Paul’s words. The arts were useful to Lanfranc only as they enabled the reader to unravel the meaning of the Apostle’s theological argument.

A new monk when he began writing the commentary, Lanfranc was more experienced in the use of the arts than in the interpretation of scripture or knowledge of the fathers. He was a beginner in these matters. Yet, even at this early stage, Lanfranc demonstrated a lifelong trait of strict adherence to the authority of the fathers. The principal difficulty for Lanfranc’s first research at Bec must have been the limited number of theological sources available. In the early years of the community’s development, Abbot Herluin had been concerned with the physical foundation of the monastery, with the construction of Bec’s church and other buildings. According to the *Bec Vitae*, Herluin saw in Lanfranc spectacular talent, a scholar who could be entrusted with the formation of a school and library. Lanfranc did not enter an established community with a ready-made library at his disposal. Rather, at the point he wrote the commentary, he was simultaneously collecting and correcting manuscripts to include in the monastery’s library. These factors are important to an evaluation of the commentary’s contents.

Scholars have debated the origin of the material attributed to Augustine and Ambrose in the manuscripts of Lanfranc’s commentary. Were these sources available to Lanfranc and used by him in his initial composition of the commentary? Or did he, or another editor, add this material to the existing commentary? Since evidence based upon

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the manuscripts alone is inconclusive, an answer must be sought in the commentary’s text.  

Two preliminary comments can be made. First, as demonstrated in the preceding chapter, Lanfranc’s use of the arts was not an end in itself; he selectively used them as tools for grasping the truth of Paul’s theological message. Second, a theological exposition of St. Paul carried out independently of the authority of the fathers would be incongruous to the entirety of Lanfranc’s career, which attests to an extremely literal dependence upon traditional authority. At this early stage of his theological development, he would have been especially concerned with confining his comments on scripture to the fathers’ authority. If so, at least some of the patristic material must reflect the contents of the Bec library, which Lanfranc used to the best of his ability to convey the meaning of Paul’s epistles.

To determine the validity of this hypothesis, the theological content of Lanfranc’s glosses can be examined and compared to the patristic excerpts in order to ascertain any possible relationship between them. The manuscripts contain material that is attributed to two of the church fathers, Augustine and Ambrose. The Augustine material is excerpted from

1) the Collectaneum of Florus of Lyons throughout the commentary,  
2) except for Galatians, which has been excerpted from Augustine’s own Epistolae ad Galatas expositionis liber unus.  

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2 See chapter 2. Gibson argues, based on the authority of the eight manuscripts that contain the patristic material, that Lanfranc excerpted and included all of this material as he wrote his own commentary, and that he based his theological speculation on Augustine. Gibson, “Lanfranc’s ‘Commentary,’” 95–102. Southern suggests that manuscript C, which contains only the Lanfranc material, demonstrates the earliest stage of the commentary’s evolution in which Lanfranc followed his interests and abilities in deciphering the grammatical, logical, and rhetorical dimensions of Paul’s writings. A later version that included the fathers is reflected in most of the manuscripts when Lanfranc’s abilities had developed enough to include a facility with patristic learning and theological issues. Southern, Saint Anselm, 32–5.


4 Augustine, Epistolae ad Galatas expositionis liber unus, J. Divjak, ed. (Vienna: 1971), CSEL 84.