THE ARRIVAL OF THE PAGAN PHILOSOPHERS IN THE NORTH: A TWELFTH-CENTURY FLORILEGIUM IN EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

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One characteristic of Latin theologians and philosophers of the first half of the twelfth century, is that they exploited the pagan philosophers, either for independent justification for the truths of the Christian religion, or for “natural reason” which established truths which were independent of any revealed religion. Peter Abelard both paraded the pagan philosophers as witnesses to the Christian verities and set up the “philosopher” as a foil to the Christian and the Jew in his Dialogus.2 The sources for pagan philosophy were Plato’s Timaeus, Macrobius’s Commentaries on the Dream of Scipio, Martianus Capella’s Marriage of Mercury and Philology and the Asclepius of Hermes Trismegistus. Manuscripts of these texts started to proliferate in the early twelfth century and all these texts became the subject of commentaries. What I would like to draw attention to here, however, is another manifestation of these pagan philosophers, and that is in the form of a florilegium. This florilegium is included in a manuscript that appears to have accompanied the earliest Dominicans to venture into the northern regions of the British Isles. For the manuscript belonged to “Clement, of the order of preachers”, who may be Clement, bishop of Dunblane, who was part of the group of Dominicans who were invited to

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Scotland by king Alexander II in 1230. Bishop Clement died in 1258, and eventually the manuscript arrived in Edinburgh, University Library, where it was given the class mark D. b. IV. 6.

The manuscript has been written by several different hands, but the facts that the writing is in long lines and above the top line, abbreviations and “biting” are restrained, the tironian “et” is uncrossed, and the upright “d” and e-caudata are retained by some of the hands, suggest a date before the end of twelfth century, and perhaps as early as the third quarter of that century. For the original context of the manuscript’s compilation one can only make deductions from its contents.

The manuscript consists of two unequal parts: the first three fifths contain excerpts from the whole of the Bible and some related texts, while the last two fifths contain the *Florilegium* of pagan authors. Two of the hands appear in both parts of the manuscript, and the same mentality seems to lie behind the compilation of these Biblical excerpts and those from the pagan authors. All the excerpts follow the order of the original text, a running head gives the author or work from which the excerpts have been taken, and, usually, each excerpt is signalled by

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3 Fol. 243v (see Appendix below). It has been alleged that “Clementis” has also been written above an erasure in the first *ex libris*, but this name can no longer be read. The cognomen in the second *ex libris* is not clear. Richard Sharpe (*Handlist of the Latin Writers of Great Britain and Ireland before 1540* [Turnhout, 1997], p. 86), mentions a “Clement OP”, who was bishop of Dunblane and died in 1258. In Jacques Quétif and Jacques Échard, *Scriptores ordinis praedicatorum* (Rome, 1719), I:149, Clement is said to have come from Paris, and ibid., p. 111, the Dominicans are said to have first came to Scotland in 1230 and at that date the king of Scotland was in Paris. The second part of Quétif and Échard’s information presumably comes from Walter Bower’s *Scotichronicon*, where we read that “anno sequenti, id est domini m o ccxxx [1230] ingrediunt primo fratres Jacobini quos allexit Alexander rex”: 9.47, ed. D.E. R. Watt (Aberdeen, 1990), p. 144. The *Scotichronicon* further mentions the death of “egregius praedicator de ordine Praedicatorum Clemens episcopus Dumblanensis variarum linguarum interpres eloquentissimus” in 1256 (an error for 1258: see ibid., 9.48, ed. Watt, p. 146 and note). If this is not empty praise, it suggests that Clement had some reputation for learning. However, the only work tentatively attributed to him—a sermon by “frater Clemens” in British Library, Egerton 655, fols. 142v–143v—shows no knowledge of Platonic texts. Thomas Kaeppele, *Scriptores Ordinis Praedicatorum Medii Aevi* 1 (Rome, 1970), pp. 269–70, does not add further information.

4 This is the informal judgement expressed by Michael Gullick.

5 Isidore’s *De fide catholica contra Iudaeos* is copied in full, presumably because this text, in itself, consists mainly of excerpts from the Bible. Bat-Sheva Albert ("*De fide catholica contra Iudaeos* d’Isidore de Séville: La polémique anti-judaïque dans l’Espagne du vie siècle," *Revue des études juives* 141 (1982), 289–316, see p. 316), concludes that Isidore wrote the *De fide catholica* as a kind of theological primer for Christian clerics.

6 The only exception are excerpts 10 and 11 from Cicero’s *De natura deorum*,