

Professor John Lowden

Towards an Understanding of the Bibles Moralisées

Professor Lowden's inaugural lecture was delivered on 28 February 2006 at the Courtauld Institute of Art as part of the Spring 2006 Friends Lecture Series, Distinguished Teachers. The Research Forum is grateful to Professor Lowden for kindly agreeing to make the text of his lecture available here.

On 1 May 1953 a BEA Viscount, call sign Oscar Golf (this aircraft, whose photo hung on my bedroom wall as a child) left London en route for Istanbul. The second pilot, Capt. Eric Lowden, was my father. The Viscount flew from London to Nice, then on to Rome, before completing the final leg to Istanbul. A couple of days later the same crew flew back to London this time via Athens and Paris. I presume it was my father's first trip to Istanbul, for his passport contained a visa issued at the airport at Yeşil Köy, dated 1 May 1953. Turning to his logbooks the bare bones of this and thousands of other flights are recorded: dates, times, destinations. But in the column of 'Remarks' for the Istanbul flight on 1 May a note has been added in different ink, but by the same hand: 'John born'.

I knew that my father had been out of the country when I was born, but it was only after his death in 2004 that I chanced to look through his logbooks and passports. It was startling, very startling, to discover that an outline of my CV was already sketched on the day of my birth: I too, it would seem, would make through my teaching and research the journey: London, Rome, Istanbul, Athens, Paris, London, although not in that order. (Maybe I was lucky not to be christened 'Oscar Golf'.) Only Nice has yet to feature on my intellectual itinerary, and I admit to some curiosity to find out what will lead me there. As an art historian and a manuscript specialist it was also satisfying to discover that my birth was documented by a contemporary hand in the unlikely context of a pilot's logbook. I think this documentation may make me unique among art historians.

Once started on a consideration of peri-natal determinism, I began to wonder how other aspects of my life might have led me to be giving this lecture this evening, and, for the first time I began to see a pattern to what I had

previously considered a somewhat haphazard training. As a young man I spent many holidays ascending mountains: this I can now appreciate was developing a useful transferable skill. As an art historian it was not some 'Mont Blanc sanction' that would be my goal, but rather those small, if rarely attempted ascents, such as the south face of an inconveniently locked Byzantine church (the south face of the Sainte-Chapelle would be a more technically challenging prospect). With the limitations on space, the bookstacks in the Courtauld Library are beginning to offer a similar challenge.

As an undergraduate I spent most of my energy and much of my time running: this I can now see was not a waste of time and effort, but rather a training in stamina and endurance that would prove invaluable when I later came to tackle intellectual projects whose bulk and complexity had deterred all but the most determined (or foolhardy, or possibly self-important). Although I have to say that by the end of the day I am now sometimes to be seen taking the lift, and not just on the upward journey.

More seriously, I am grateful to have this opportunity to say thank you to all those who taught me, formally and informally, and all those who continue to do so: teachers, colleagues, students, friends (I am delighted to see those of you who are able to be here this evening, and I am only sorry not to be joined by those, from this and other countries, who cannot attend). From them, from you, I have learned how to look, how to think, how to communicate, how to ascend the south face of a problem, and how to run it into a state of submission. To be an art historian is enormous fun. In acknowledgement of your contribution to me I sketch out this evening the history of my main current research topic, the *Bibles moralisées* (you see Louis VIII with his *Bible moralisée*), a topic that, in recognition of the emphasis of this lecture series, I acknowledge as having grown directly out of my teaching.

Thirty years after the flight to Istanbul, on 25 May 1983, I first consulted manuscripts of the *Bible moralisée* in preparation for teaching a class on a course at the Courtauld entitled 'Medieval Art 1180-1320', which in different

forms was offered both to second-year undergraduates and to those in the first-year of the then two-year MA. It was a time of major financial cuts. I had been appointed in October 1982 to replace Robin Cormack, who had secured a three-year British Academy readership, while at the same time, as the Director Peter Lasko told me, I was really expected to fill the gap in teaching left by the retirement of both Christopher Hohler and George Zarnecki, neither of whom the Institute could afford to replace. As it was clear that nobody could replace any one of those three, let alone all of them at the same time, I set about carving my own niche, researching primarily on manuscripts and teaching as widely as the Institute's structure would permit.

At this point I knew the Bibles moralisées only through the facsimile publications by Count Alexandre de Laborde (of 1911-27) and Reiner Haussherr (of 1973), which I had had reason to consult for my thesis. (Christopher Hohler at times taught the Bibles moralisées, but not to me, and it is a matter of regret that he died before my work was published, as I like to think he would have enjoyed it.) Laborde's Bible moralisée is a black and white reproduction of the three-volume manuscript divided between Oxford, Paris, and London, published in four massive plate volumes and a short volume of commentary. Haussherr's Bible moralisée reproduces in colour in one medium-sized volume the manuscript in the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, codex 2554, and is also accompanied by a brief commentary.

In 1983 I examined the Oxford and London volumes of the Oxford-Paris-London Bible moralisée, but it would be another ten years before I had occasion to look at the other Bible moralisées, two in Vienna, three in the Bibliothèque nationale de France, and one in the treasury of Toledo Cathedral, the last quire of which is in the Morgan Library in New York.

As I turned the pages of Harley MSS 1526 and 1527 in May 1983 I was struck at once by the unusual condition of the book. As happens elsewhere in some of the most expensively and carefully executed manuscripts, the artists of this Bible moralisée had chosen to work on only one side of the parchment sheet, so that painted openings alternate with blank openings, and the gold and

pigments on the front of the leaf, when they bleed or show through to the back, do not affect other images. But because a Bible moralisée is a picture book, this procedure is not restricted to the occasional full page, nor employed solely for a cycle of frontispieces (as might be the case in a Psalter, for example), but it is used throughout the entire volume (in this case throughout the entire three volumes). When I looked at the blank backs of the pages in Harley 1526 and 1527, however, it was not merely traces of pigment and gilding, from the front of the leaf, that were visible. With varying degrees of clarity, sketches of the pictorial content in the eight medallions could be seen. With the help of raking light it was evident that these sketches were in relief on the blank side of the parchment, and that the greyish colour of the lines visible under normal lighting was not on the surface. Looking at the painted side of the sheet it was clear that the impressed lines, visible on the reverse, must lie under the pigment, for to have traced over the main lines of the compositions with sufficient pressure to leave such a clear impression on the back of the leaf would surely have seriously damaged the images on the front. There was only one plausible explanation: the artists of the Oxford-Paris-London Bible moralisée must have painted the compositions in the medallions over sketches that they had previously made with a stylus. But rather than using the usual light touch (as we sometimes find in other manuscripts, for example in sketches in the blank margins of a page), in this case the artists must have wielded the stylus with heavy pressure, and sketched the images not with long fluent strokes, but with short often angular ones.

This use of preliminary underdrawings, heavily impressed with a stylus, would be difficult to understand if a second Bible moralisée, very similar to Oxford-Paris-London, had not survived: namely the Toledo manuscript. Laborde had discovered the Toledo Bible moralisée in 1912?, while in the process of publishing his facsimile of Oxford-Paris-London. He argued that Toledo was a derivative descendant of OPL. In the 1960s and '70s, however, Adelheid Heimann at the Warburg, followed by Reiner Haussherr, brought forward iconographic evidence that reversed and clarified the position: to them Oxford-

Paris-London was no more than a hasty and often inaccurate copy of Toledo. (It was this re-evaluation that led Hugo Buchthal in conversation to observe wryly that Laborde's massive facsimile was 'the most expensive mistake in art-historical publishing'.) But the observation that one of the two Bibles moralisées had pressure-traced underdrawings put the question of their relationship on an entirely different footing. Could OPL be based on tracings of Toledo? Could both OPL and Toledo be based on tracings from a common model? Could that model have been a fully finished Bible moralisée, or was it perhaps a set of workshop drawings?

At this point teaching took over from research, and I presented my ideas on the Bibles moralisées to BA and MA classes from the autumn of 1983. I busied myself on other research projects, and in 1985 encouraged one of my MAs, Tanya Alfillé, to write her PhD on the Book of Psalms in the Toledo and Oxford-Paris-London Bibles moralisées, a project which she completed in 1992. Tanya's is a superb thesis, which I still hope will be published. It sets out in great detail and with great clarity the evidence for the textual and visual relationship between Toledo and Oxford-Paris-London, primarily in the Psalms, but also by taking soundings in other biblical books. She made a notable discovery in the first weeks of her research, identifying the source of the moralisations in the Psalter as the *Magna glosatura* of Peter Lombard.

In 1992 I began a major research project entitled 'Biblical art and Biblical Knowledge.' Taking the Book of Ruth as my focus I began to assemble a corpus of all the literary and visual material from East and West in the manuscript era, extending roughly from late antiquity to the Council of Trent. I assembled biblical versions of Ruth in biblical languages and vernaculars; commentaries and glosses on Ruth; hymns and homilies citing Ruth; published and unpublished texts of all sorts; and I studied the material intensively so that I would know Ruth, in so far as it was possible, as well as any medieval scholar. Alongside this textual activity I assembled cycles and isolated images of Ruth material from every Eastern and Western context: manuscripts of course, but also stained glass, wallpaintings, textiles, metalwork, ivories, and so forth. My purpose was to

explore systematically the very general question of what, in the period, the people who made and used biblical images knew of the Bible, and how they knew what they knew. It was in some sense intended to be an exploration of the oft-repeated dictum of Pope Gregory the Great that “art is the book of the illiterate”.

In 1995 I was fortunate to be awarded a one-year Leverhulme research fellowship, and I began to pull the material together. Taking the advice I so often offer to students, always to follow the most interesting road (irrespective of whether it be the more or the less travelled by) I began to write up what was planned as section D of chapter 4 of ‘Biblical Art and Biblical Knowledge’, namely the ‘Book of Ruth in the Bibles moralisées’. Although I had already assembled photographs of the relevant pages of the seven Bibles moralisées I had not seen most of them in the original, and this was an absolutely crucial requirement. There is a fundamental difference between what you can say about a work of art, especially one as complicated as a manuscript, depending on whether you have seen it or not, and I try not to publish on material I know only at second hand. In particular I was keen to consult the manuscript in Toledo, which was notoriously inaccessible throughout the twentieth century, and which Tanya Alfillé, along with other scholars, had not been permitted to examine. Here my role as teacher had an unexpected spin-off: the father of one of my MAs, Lorena Casas, kindly advised me precisely how to approach the Cardinal Archbishop of Toledo and the cathedral chapter, and although the sacristan who had responsibility for organising my visit chose to leave Toledo, mysteriously, for all five of the days on which he had arranged for me to be there, fortunately the dean, the late Don Evencio Cofreces, graciously gave me unlimited access in the sacristan’s absence to the three volumes from the cathedral treasury. This was absolutely crucial.

In a matter of minutes in Toledo I was able to establish that identical pressure-traced underdrawings were present, and with careful scrutiny over several days I observed their existence throughout volumes I and II, and in those parts of volume III where Toledo and Oxford-Paris-London ran in parallel. Robert

Branner, working from black & white photographs in the early 1970s, had identified the early quires of volume III of Toledo as a first phase of activity, employing some of the craftsmen who had previously worked on the two Bibles moralisées in Vienna. With the manuscript itself to hand it was clear that there had been a major change of plan: production of the book had indeed begun with Volume III, the start of the New Testament, and had at first envisaged texts in latin and french. But after a few years, with work not far advanced, the plan must have been changed, a second 'twin' manuscript (Oxford-Paris-London) was commissioned, and the french text was abandoned. It was also at this point that it must have been decided to make a complete master-set of drawings for the production of a Bible moralisée, on bifolios of parchment, double-page sheets which could be circulated to as many craftsmen as were available, for tracing onto the bifolios that would later be assembled into either the Toledo or the Oxford-Paris-London manuscripts, sheets which once traced could then be distributed to as many artists as were available for gilding and painting, according to agreed norms, and finally redistributed again for the addition by various scribes of the caption-like texts, the basis for which must have been kept as separate bundles of notes. All this meant that two three-volume picture books (by far the largest and most complex project of illustration in the entire manuscript era each containing morer than 5000 images) could be completed in a short time by the concurrent labour of members of a large team, taking advantage of the physical structure of the unbound book.

First-hand investigation of the other Bibles moralisées then provided the foundations for a re-evaluation of the entire tradition of such books, although it did not produce any one piece of evidence as remarkable as the pressure-traced underdrawings.

For Haussherr in the 1970s and '80s, as for Laborde two generations earlier, the Bible moralisée (in the singular) was a type of book that fitted the norms of a textual tradition, and hence could be studied in terms of the procedures of textual criticism, with a stemma (or family tree), an original 'authorial' version or archetype, hypothetical lost models and intermediaries,

transcription errors, and so forth. For Haussherr, in particular, the appropriate method by which to study the Bibles moralisées was the version of textual criticism applied to images that had been developed by Kurt Weitzmann, termed by him 'picture criticism', and explicated in his (that is Weitzmann's) *Illustrations in Roll and Codex* in 1947. Now I had wrestled with Weitzmann's method and conclusions in my PhD of 1980 (which was supervised by Robin Cormack and informally by Hugo Buchthal), and had set out to challenge them systematically in the resultant book, *The Octateuchs*, (a study of a group of profusely illustrated Byzantine Old Testament manuscripts) which was published in 1992. One to me bizarre aspect of the Weitzmann method was that despite its philological foundations it paid virtually no attention to the text in a manuscript. From my undergraduate training in English, especially in the study of medieval texts, I knew about the procedures of textual criticism, and reading texts held no fear (it was also crucial that I had learned the relevant languages over the years). So I was confident before I began work on the Bibles moralisées that the Weitzmann approach was fundamentally flawed. It is true that in a fifteen-page review of *The Octateuchs* in *Byzantinsiche Zeitschrift*, Otto Kresten sought a middle ground, arguing that I had in fact merely out-Weitzmanned Weitzmann, by applying philological and codicological methods more scrupulously. But this was, I suggest, to miss a fundamental point: whereas Weitzmann studied the products of the middle ages primarily so as to reconstruct the lost works of earlier centuries, I was attempting to understand the surviving works as products of their own time.

It also needs to be emphasised that the situation for anyone trying to reach an understanding of the Bibles moralisées in the 1990s was unusual: just as in the 1980s the scholarly world was awaiting Weitzmann's study of the Octateuchs, promised since the 1930s and finally published posthumously only in 1999, so Haussherr in a series of important articles on aspects of the Bibles moralisées had since 1966 repeatedly referred to one or more forthcoming volumes in which he would publish in full the fruits of his research on the Bibles moralisées. Not surprisingly, given the bulk and complexity of the material, and

the standing of the scholars involved, just as people tended to avoid working on the Octateuchs from the 1930s onwards, in expectation of Weitzmann's promised magnum opus, so the study of the Bibles moralisées was to a large extent put on hold from the 1960s as Haussherr's promised study was awaited. Of course it was no accident that Weitzmann and Haussherr had set out to reserve study of the Octateuchs and the Bible moralisée to themselves: these were topics of extraordinary theoretical and empirical richness, all the more rewarding for being unworked on by most contemporary scholars.

As I examined the Bibles moralisées in the mid-1990s it became obvious that there was no lost archetype. For Laborde and Haussherr an underlying assumption was that the manuscripts must descend from some lost 'perfect' model. Thus, for example, when Haussherr observed that of the two Bibles moralisées in Vienna one contained much more of the Bible than the other, and furthermore this fuller manuscript had its text in latin, whereas the shorter version was in french, (and given the further assumption that the conceptual model for the Bible moralisée was the Bible itself: hence in latin and containing all the usual books) it followed that for Haussherr the french Bible moralisée (Vienna 2554) must be in some way derivative of and subsidiary to the latin version (Vienna 1179). Study of the texts of the two books showed this to be completely misconceived. In the Book of Ruth, for example, the latin text of the 'biblical' passages in Vienna 1179, was not the Vulgate, it was not even close to the Bible: the 'author', using the term loosely, did not even know the names of the principal characters in the book. Furthermore, in terms of language, the latinity of the passages was often shaky: this was readily explicable by the deduction that the text was in fact a latinisation of a french text, such as could be found (obviously) not in the Bible itself, but in the other Bible moralisée. For example 'Booz discalciavit unum hominem' is surely a latinisation of 'Booz deschauce un homme'. 'Ruth senefie Sainte Eglise qui a deux manieres de genz', translates into 'Ruth significat Sanctam Ecclesiam que habet duas maneries hominum'.

To understand the broader picture of these manuscripts it was necessary to sweep away the constructs of theories based on 'picture criticism' or an

application of philological method to images rather than texts. Instead of descent from a lost perfect model we have in the Bibles moralisées a first essay in the genre (Vienna 2554): a picture book, probably for Blanche of Castile, wife of King Louis VIII of France, made about 1220, with caption-like texts in French, focusing on the historical books of the Old Testament, from Genesis to Kings. Within a few years the same team made a far more ambitious picture book for Louis VIII himself (perhaps at the request of Blanche). Where it runs in parallel with Vienna 2554 many of the texts in this book, Vienna 1179, were 'back-translated' into Latin. However, where it adds new sections, such as the Apocalypse, the makers generally go directly to the Vulgate text. Within a few more years work began on an even more ambitious book: the Toledo manuscript, which was to have texts in Latin and French, and to cover virtually the entire Bible in three volumes. This manuscript was probably commissioned by Blanche, again, this time for her son, Louis IX. But after a few years the plan was changed and a twin volume, Oxford-Paris-London was completed alongside Toledo. Quite possibly Toledo and OPL were commissioned as 'his and hers' Bibles moralisées for Louis IX and his wife, Marguerite de Provence (they were married in 1234), just as the two Vienna manuscripts seem to have been for Louis's parents, Louis VIII and Blanche of Castile. Toledo and Oxford-Paris-London were made to surpass Vienna 1179. A similar pattern of revision and 'improvement' marks the later stages in the history of the Bible moralisée, until the last manuscript was left half finished at the end of the fifteenth century.

I first submitted my own unfinished work on the Bibles moralisées to Penn State Press in 1995. The anonymous readers were not overly enthusiastic. After some thought I then split the material into two volumes and set about restructuring the argument. The readers liked this version, which was submitted in 1997, and both volumes were finally published together in 2000. Volume I on the manuscripts of the Bible moralisée is now down to the last 10 copies in stock, volume II on the Book of Ruth in the Bibles moralisées has sold fewer copies.

For the first two or three years after submitting the final typescript of *The Making of the Bibles moralisées* in 1997 I had no desire to do anything further

with the topic, and I prepared papers on a range of other themes: manuscripts and the liturgy, bookcovers as visual argument in late antiquity, late Byzantine manuscript illumination, for example. But beginning in 2000, after the book's publication, I started to give conference papers and occasional lectures on the Bibles moralisées, testing the conclusions of the book, at least in part so that if anyone were to discover a serious flaw in some aspect of the argument there was a good chance it would be me. Fortunately the complex series of linked hypothesis seems to have held up so far, but it still needs to be borne in mind that the one section of the Bible moralisée that I initially worked on in detail, the Book of Ruth, represents about half of one per cent of the total material. You do not need to be a statistician to see the dangers of basing an argument on such limited foundations. That having been said, what might seem like a small basis for a grand theory was still far larger than that in any previous study, perhaps some fifty times larger.

The most remarkable change in the status quo since my publication of 2000 has been brought about by the appearance of a hugely expensive three-volume facsimile of the Toledo manuscript, together with two volumes of commentary by various authors, edited by the Toledo cathedral archivist Don Ramón González. I managed to get myself involved in this project from an early stage, and was fortunate that Don Ramon was quick to regard me as an ally in his dealings with the publisher and other contributors to the commentary. This was a stage at which the fact that I had studied Spanish at school was indispensable, even if it sometimes seemed that my role was largely to respond emphatically when questioned by Don Ramón with some version of 'Soy de acuerdo' (I agree). As a result of this involvement and the friendship of Don Ramón, I now have much easier access to the original manuscript when I go to Toledo, and the cathedral is full of advertising leaflets for the facsimile, in which I am misquoted in various languages declaring the wonders of the Biblia de San Luis. The most important spin-off of this collaboration, however, is that I have in my study a complete set of the colour proofs of the facsimile. It is an extraordinary opportunity to be able to turn to the Toledo manuscript, in facsimile

form, whenever I want to, and as the pages are unbound I can easily photograph or photocopy them or carry parts of the book around. In contrast, most of the other Bibles moralisées remain largely unpublished, and are as difficult to consult in the original in 2006 as they have ever been.

As a teacher and researcher I have always insisted that the codicological method, which studies each manuscript as an archaeological artefact, is of crucial importance to the extent that the evidence derived can be used to answer some historical question. Observation of the way that a manuscript page is pricked and ruled, for example, is not in itself particularly thrilling, but if it can be used to establish or differentiate workshop practice then this can be very valuable. The observation that what looks like a standard bifolio of parchment folded vertically in the middle to make two folios is in fact a sheet composed of two folios glued together is a codicological clue that needs to be explored further if it is to be of help. It may, for example, suggest that one half of the bifolio is original, whereas the other is a substitute, a hypothesis that it may then be possible to confirm by observing differences of condition, finish, style or script between the 'original' half and the 'replacement' half. Evidence as seemingly trivial as scattered traces of pigment on the blank back of a leaf can be used to support the theory that normal workshop practice had broken down. Signs of multiple erasures of text reveal something about the models from which the scribes were working. And so on.

Since 2000 I have made a number of soundings in the Bibles moralisées, mostly in response to the demands of conference organisers. In examining the Apocalypse in the Bible moralisées at Harlaxton I was able to reopen the question of the origins of the anglo-norman tradition of illustrated Apocalypse manuscripts. The basis of the argument in this instance was largely literary and linguistic.

In a paper for a volume on manuscript production in Paris around 1400, from a conference at Liverpool, using the example of the Limbourg brothers work in the Bible moralisée BnF fr. 166, I considered the definition of some of the

terms we often use as though they were unproblematic: 'author', 'artist', 'patron', 'workshop'.

In a paper for a volume on medieval images and texts as forms of communication, based on a conference at Utrecht, I used some pages of the Toledo Bible moralisée, including the visual colophon, to consider what was communicated in an illuminated book, how, and to whom, in view of the unique layout of a Bible moralisée and its restricted audience.

For a conference in Paris on the stained glass of the Sainte-Chapelle I somewhat ungraciously dissented from the views of the joint-organiser, Yves Christe. He had master-minded a long-term project with a team of doctoral students to ascertain the original form of the windows, basing his reconstruction in large part on the hypothesis that one or more of the Bibles moralisées were in the glaziers workshop and had provided models for the glass. I argued that the connections between glass and manuscripts were at most generic. The paper was composed in French, which my hosts were kind enough to disbelieve that I could have learned at school. (They did not know Richard Armstrong, my french teacher.)

I subsequently offered a demonstration of a possible link between a Bible moralisée image and a scene from the Vita of St Stephen in an ambulatory window at Bourges for Christe's Festschrift. I have not heard from him since it was published, but I hope this was appreciated as the eirinic gesture I had intended.

Cutting across the material in all seven Bibles moralisées, much as I had done for Ruth, I analysed the theme of the Sacrifice of Isaac for a conference on that subject at Tübingen. This enquiry revealed a progressive normalising of the iconography over time, but not in any predictable fashion. It was reassuring to learn that my contribution was as baffling to the experts on Kierkegaard, or so I was told, as theirs certainly were to me.

For a conference on the idea of influence in art history here at the Courtauld I considered the example of the influence of the Bibles moralisées, in their own time, and in modern scholarship. This led in part to a reconsideration

of the role of Laborde as founder of the Société française de reproductions des manuscrits à peintures, a key organisation in the history of our subject..

For a conference on Illuminated Narrative also at the Courtauld I returned to the question of how visual narrative is structured by the mise en page in the Bible moralisées and in particular considered whether the four methods of exegesis familiar in the middle ages (the literal [or historical], the allegorical, the anagogical, and the moral [or tropological]) could be applied to the images with their four-fold layout..

Currently, my main research interest is the Bible moralisée in the 15th century and (as it turns out) the triumph of a very different type of book, the Bible historiale. With its more than 5000 images a Bible moralisée of the type represented by, for example, Toledo or Oxford-Paris-London, presented a challenge without equal in medieval book production. Beginning a few years after the Limbourgs had worked for Philippe le Hardi, duke of Burgundy, on the last of the fully illustrated examples of a Bible moralisée, a series of less ambitious manuscripts were made (here the manuscript in Gent), until the Bible moralisée ended up as a normal-looking book of middling size, some 250 folios long, written in two columns, with a single small image at the opening of each biblical book. The four surviving manuscripts of this type have been almost entirely overlooked. They turn out to be more ambitious than might at first be suspected. Some contain two lengthy and interesting prefaces, not found in the picture-book Bibles moralisées, in addition to supplementary texts in the opening pages of Genesis, and to some of the Psalms. It was a moment of great excitement to discover in 2004 that these prefaces and additional texts were also present in a single superlative manuscript of the Bible historiale now in Brussels, a Bible historiale which also contains most of the text of the Bible moralisée but none of its images (again a connection hitherto entirely unrecognised). It also became clear in working on the 15th-century material that the version of the Bible moralisée printed with woodcut illustrations at Lyon in 1477 under the title 'L'exposicion et la vraie declaracion de la Bible' was the earliest illustrated book printed in France. I have prepared a preliminary article on this material for the

Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes, but the subject needs and merits a more extended treatment, which I hope to be able to supply.

It would be unrealistic to imagine that any one scholar could achieve more than a partial understanding of a topic as rich and complex as the Bible moralisée. So I am happy to observe how the publication of 2000 has already opened the way to numerous articles and a handful of more extensive studies by other scholars. I am involved in a number of PhDs at other institutions, and making a systematic bibliography on the Bibles moralisées available on the web has also encouraged researchers to keep me abreast of their publications. But it is especially in teaching, not just the Bibles moralisées but a whole range of topics, that I continue to find stimulation. My mother was a teacher, as are my brothers, and to me teaching and research are symbiotic. In the acknowledgements to *The Octateuchs* I referred to students as a 'wonderful amalgam of scepticism, enthusiasm, fresh ideas, cunning, and obtuseness'. I have been lucky enough to have had outstanding students over the years. But unlike the Germanic master/pupil relationship in which, much like the manuscript stemma, each generation descends, a little more enfeebled, from an archetypal omniscient and omni-competent Ur-Professor, I prefer to envisage the pattern of scholarly descent suggested by the Bibles moralisées, in which each generation seeks to surpass its predecessors, standing on the shoulders of giants perhaps, but unquestionably seeing further.

Finally, those of you who heard Paul Crossley's inspiring lecture two weeks ago will by now be aware that he and I work on the Middle Ages in very different, but, I would suggest, appropriately complementary ways. Paul is a neo-platonist, for whom God is in the idea. For him the scholar's role is to try to understand the idea by analytical study of the idea-in-action, that is to say the evidence. I am a neo-aristotelian, for whom God is in the detail. For me the scholar's role is to try to understand the complex whole by first breaking it down into parts, each of which is sufficiently small to be understood, and then

reassembling the evidence so as build a law of complex things on the basis of laws of simple things. For all our methodological differences, between us we try to avoid the extremes of idealism and empiricism – that of ideas without evidence or of evidence without ideas.

If medieval art is a wonderfully exotic salad, then Paul and I strive in our different ways to be that salad's dressing. Paul, of course, is the oil, and I, you have guessed, am the vinegar. But you too are vital ingredients: I see before me this evening the salt, the pepper, some Dijon mustard, even a little sugar, and plenty more oil and vinegar. Blending us all together may take some effort, but it is rewarding, for we don't just contribute to the dressing of the inexhaustible salad of medieval art, we get to consume the salad too.

My CV may have been partially sketched out by the itinerary of the BEA aircraft Oscar Golf in 1953, but I am still looking for the research project that will take me to Nice. Perhaps one of you will supply me with the idea (or the detail) this evening over a glass of wine.