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Bobbi Sutherland\*

## How the Goodman Read His Bible

**Abstract:** Though best known for its “cookbook” portion, the *Menagier de Paris* contains a wide miscellany of information. Written by a man for his fifteen-year-old wife, it teaches her to be a good wife in every sense of the word. It includes a treatise on the seven deadly sins and stories of good and bad women, many of which are drawn from the Bible. Recent scholarship has shown that contrary to long-standing assumptions, the Bible was widely known and read by the laity of the Middle Ages, especially in France and the Low Countries. The *Menagier* provides further support for these observations, as well as a fleshed-out example of how one member of the bourgeoisie interacted with the biblical text. Using the biblical text and commentaries, the author clearly interprets the church's teachings so as to fit his own lay context. He is unafraid to add to the biblical text in order to bring his characters to life or strengthen his points. The author of the *Menagier* is only one person, but he demonstrates the degree of devotion to and familiarity with the Bible that was possible for laymen of the late Middle Ages.

**Keywords:** Menagier de Paris; Bible historiale; lay readers; translation; Bible in the Middle Ages.

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## 1 Introduction

The *Menagier de Paris*, perhaps better known as Eileen Power's *Goodman of Paris*, defies easy categorization due to its wide miscellany of information, ranging from recipes and household hints to stories of good and bad women. The anonymous author, whom Power called the “Goodman,” wrote the miscellany sometime around 1393 as a guide for his fifteen-year-old bride. While scholars have studied the author's biblical stories, no one has examined the author's use of Scripture in light of recent work on the vernacular Bible and the reading practices of its lay audience. The purpose of the present article is to examine the author of the

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*Menagier's* approach to and use of the Bible in relation to current scholarship. In doing so, it will show how the author's practices align with those more broadly observed trends, provide an example of depth and context for them, and occasionally present differences. Moreover, the *Menagier* uniquely offers two perspectives on lay reading of Scripture within one text: we have the husband's approach to the Bible in the writing of his book and the wife's receiving of it through the book itself. Further, because of the book's miscellaneous nature, we have in one text several examples of the contexts in which Scripture was used. Here we see not only the author's use of Scripture, but also the way his position as a married layman shaped his understanding of it.

For too long, the perception of the Bible in the Middle Ages has been shaped by the "Protestant paradigm,"<sup>1</sup> which claims that in the Middle Ages lay access to the Bible was extremely restricted and frowned upon by the church. Recent scholarship by Margriet Hoogvliet, Clive Sneddon, and others has revealed that this was not case, and certainly not the case in France. As Sneddon has shown, there was a complete translation of the Bible into French (now called the *Bible française du XIII<sup>e</sup> Siècle*) by 1260.<sup>2</sup> In addition to this, Hoogvliet points out the numerous translations of parts of the Bible that also existed.<sup>3</sup> One of these was the *Bible historiale* by Guyard de Moulins. It combined a fairly literal translation of the Vulgate from Genesis through Acts (the Gospels presented in a harmony) with a translation of Petrus Comestor's *Historia scholastica*.<sup>4</sup> By 1314, this work had been combined with the *Bible française du XIII<sup>e</sup> Siècle*, which already included portions of the *Glossa ordinaria* and prefaces of the Paris Vulgate, as well as some other glosses.<sup>5</sup> The result was a complete, moderately glossed, Bible, known to modern scholars as the. As Sneddon explains, this indicates a desire for a complete text, as well as "sufficient but not excessive" historical commentary.<sup>6</sup> In this case, it can be

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1 Andrew Gow, "Challenging the Protestant Paradigm: Bible Reading in Lay and Urban Contexts of the Later Middle Ages," in *Scripture and Pluralism: Reading the Bible in the Religiously Plural Worlds of the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, eds. T. J. Heffernan and T. E. Burman, *Studies in the History of Christian Traditions*, 123 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2005), 161–91.

2 Clive R. Sneddon, "The *Old French Bible*: The First Complete Vernacular Bible in Western Europe," in *The Practice of the Bible in the Middle Ages: Production, Reception, and Performance in Western Christianity*, eds. Susan Boynton and Diane J. Reilly (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 296.

3 Margriet Hoogvliet, "Encouraging Lay People to Read the Bible in the French Vernaculars: New Groups of Readers and Textual Communities," in *Church History and Religious Culture* 93, no. 2 (2013), 242.

4 Sneddon, "The Old French Bible", 297–8.

5 *Ibid.*, 299–303.

6 *Ibid.*, 303.

tempting to argue that such a work, by dint of its extra-biblical material is not a “real Bible,” and suggests church attempts to control reading. As Hoogvliet notes, however, commentaries are often carefully set apart from what is text by the use of font, color, etc.<sup>7</sup> The wide circulation of this text (164 extant manuscripts<sup>8</sup>) thus attests to the desire of medieval people to have and read Scripture.

Nevertheless, as Hoogvliet notes, the *Bible historique complétée* “overshadows other forms of sacred Scripture.”<sup>9</sup> Hoogvliet argues that the medieval Bible was a “flexible text.” As she points out, the Bible existed in many forms, such as Evangelaries, liturgical books, and books of sermons with pericopes, among others.<sup>10</sup> She explains that these forms were intended for specific uses and were “an aid for associative (...) and exegetical forms of reading.”<sup>11</sup> As evidence of such use, Hoogvliet cites the manner in which the texts were selected and bound, as well as users’ reading notes.<sup>12</sup> The most popular of these “flexible texts” of Scripture were liturgical aids, devotional inspiration, and guides to moral conduct.<sup>13</sup> For example, books of pericopes served the function of preparing people to understand them during the Mass.<sup>14</sup> Even more popular were Lives of Christ and Passion Stories. Though not literal translations, these works had a clear scriptural basis and stressed that they were following the Gospels.<sup>15</sup> The purpose of these texts was not to dilute the biblical message, but to elicit “emotional response.”<sup>16</sup> Moreover, as Hoogvliet notes, the New Testament of both the *Bible historique complétée* and *Bible française du XIII<sup>e</sup> Siècle* were available bound separately, suggesting it was popular reading on its own.<sup>17</sup> Finally, readers also approached the biblical text for moral guidance. In this instance, though the biblical text might be reordered and *exempla* might be added, the Bible still remains the primary source.<sup>18</sup> In all of these forms of Scripture, the writers not only stress the importance of knowing the Bible and the faithfulness of their translations, but often give incipits and

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7 Hoogvliet, “Encouraging Lay People,” 254.

8 *Ibid.*, 244.

9 Margriet Hoogvliet, “The Medieval Vernacular Bible in French as a Flexible Text: Selective and Discontinuous Reading Practices,” in *Form and Function in the Late Medieval Bible*, eds. Eyal Poleg and Laura Light (Boston: Brill, 2013), 283.

10 *Ibid.*, 285.

11 *Ibid.*, 305.

12 *Ibid.*, 286–7.

13 *Ibid.*, 305.

14 *Ibid.*, 290.

15 *Ibid.*, 295.

16 *Ibid.*, 296–7.

17 *Ibid.*, 290.

18 *Ibid.*, 297.

important phrases in Latin, followed by translation.<sup>19</sup> Such a practice not only aids the reader in recognizing passages read in church, but also invokes the authority of the Vulgate and implies the translation's adherence to it. It is from within this dynamic biblical cultural that I will now examine the *Menagier's* use of Scripture.

When we turn to the *Menagier*, we find that the author uses the Bible frequently and with care. Whether he used the Vulgate or an unknown translation, it seems clear that he had considerable familiarity with the text. His uses of commentary are typically noted, making clear what is proper to the Bible itself. Though the author uses the Bible in a number of contexts, his manner of usage can typically be categorized as *exempla* or authority. Moreover, his selections and comments very much reflect his position as a married man and a layman. When his wife turned to the *Menagier*, she would have found the Bible, first and foremost, presented as a guide to morality, but she would also find it used to move her emotions and possibly to aid her in more fully understanding her religious practices. In any case, she would have encountered Scripture understood through the lens of married life and lay affluence.

## 2 The *Menagier's* Bible and Other Texts

Exactly which version of the Bible the author of the *Menagier* used has not been identified. That he used a complete or nearly complete version seems likely (though not indisputable) from the manner in which he uses Scripture and breadth of his citations. As Georgina A. Brereton and Janet M. Ferrier explain, "The fact, however, that it has not been possible to identify as the author's source any extant version of the many revisions of the *Bible historiale* which proliferated at this period does not necessarily mean that no such source was used."<sup>20</sup> In keeping with this possibility, the author makes regular use of the *Historia scholastica* or material based upon it. Also, as Brereton and Ferrier point out, he "expands or condenses" the Vulgate text at various points.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, he seems to imply that he has some version of the Bible in French as he mentions "*la Bible (...) et autres plusieurs bons livres en fraçois que j'ay*" [the Bible... and several other good books in French, which I have] (I.iii.118).<sup>22</sup> Also, when he cites the Gospels,

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 302.

<sup>20</sup> Georgina A. Brereton and Janet M. Ferrier, eds., *Introduction to Le Mesnagier de Paris* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), xxxii.

<sup>21</sup> Brereton and Ferrier, Introduction, xxxiii.

<sup>22</sup> This and all subsequent citations of the *Menagier* are taken from the text in *Le Mesnagier de Paris*, eds. Georgina A. Brereton and Janet M. Ferrier (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1981), unless otherwise indicated. All translations are my own, unless otherwise indicated.

he never states which book, but simply says “l’Evanguille” [Gospel] or “*comme dit nostre Seigneur*” [as our Lord says], which might suggest he was using an evangelary or a version of Guyard’s *Bible historique*, with the Gospels presented as a harmony. At the same time, it is not impossible that the author read the Vulgate and translated it himself. As Brereton and Ferrier note, “The text at times follows the Vulgate almost literally, giving chapter and verse references, and sometimes quoting a few words from the Latin.”<sup>23</sup>

Whether he was using the Vulgate or not, the author seems to have been quite familiar with the biblical text. A good example of this occurs in one of his more lengthy articles, article I.ix., where the author of the *Menagier* tells the story of Melibee (the same story told by Chaucer and Boccaccio). Like Chaucer, the author of the *Menagier* used Renaud de Louens’ French version of Albert of Brescia’s story. Scholars have noted that the author makes slight changes to the text, but they generally have dismissed them.<sup>24</sup> Jonathan Burke Severs even says:

Despite these erroneous readings, Chaucer’s source manuscript was closer to what Renaud de Louens actually wrote than is *Le Menagier de Paris*, the only hitherto available text; for, when *Le Menagier* is compared with the manuscripts, it reveals numerous unique readings which lead one to suspect that its author sometimes gratuitously altered diction and phraseology, even occasionally suppressing or adding brief passages.<sup>25</sup>

When it comes to quotations of the Bible in Melibee, however, these opinions are quite unfounded. The author’s alterations and additions are not insignificant, and they most certainly are not “gratuitous.” In almost all of these instances, the *Menagier*’s variations bring the text closer to that of the Vulgate, suggesting that they were intentional and that the author had a strong familiarity with Scripture.

Near the beginning of the Tale of Melibee, the version of Renaud de Louens refers to Romans 12:15. Table 1 shows the three versions: Renaud, the *Menagier*, and the Vulgate (Clementina) with English translations. The sentiment is the same in all of these quotations, but the wording is noticeably different. The *Menagier*’s rendering matches neither the Vulgate’s use of a gerundive – “*flentibus*” [weeping] – nor Renaud’s use of verb plus noun – “*mener plour et dolour*.” To begin, the author seems to follow Renaud, but after the first half of the statement, he stops and switches to the use of the verb itself. He says “*pleurent*” [weep] not

<sup>23</sup> Brereton and Ferrier, Introduction, xxxi.

<sup>24</sup> Brereton and Ferrier, *Le Mesnagier de Paris*, 298–9 n. 212, 16.

<sup>25</sup> Jonathan Burke Severs, “The Tale of Melibeeus,” in *Sources and Analogues of Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales*, eds. W. F. Bryan and Germaine Dempster (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1941, reprint, New York: Humanities Press, 1958), 564.

Table 1: A Comparison of Three Versions of Romans 12:15.

Renaud 569: 38–41 <sup>26n</sup>	Romans 12:15	<i>Menagier</i> l.ix.57–58
<i>Car, selon ce que dit Saint Pol l'Appostre en l'epistre aux Rommains, 'On doit mener joye avec ceulz qui joye mainnet, et doit on mener plour et doulour avec ceulz qui l'ont.'</i>	<i>Gaudere cum gaudentibus, flere cum flentibus</i>	<i>Car selon ce que dit saint Pol l'apostre en l'epistre aux Rommains, on doit mener joye avec ceulx qui ont joye et mainnent, et doit-on plourer avec ceulx qui pleurent.</i>
Because according to what St. Paul the Apostle says in the Epistle to the Romans, "One must show joy with those who show joy, and one must show tears and grief with those who have it."	Rejoice with the joyful, weep with the weeping.	Because according to what St. Paul the Apostle says in the Epistle to the Romans, one must show joy with those who have joy and show it, and one must weep with those who weep.

"mener plour et doulour" [to keep weeping and grief]. Though not identical with the Vulgate *flentibus* by changing "to weep" to a verb and omitting "doulour" altogether it is much closer.

Given the fact that this switch occurs in the middle of a line – just after the author has awkwardly added in a "*mainnent*" [keep] out of place, I suspect that he was copying his manuscript, came across a passage with which he was familiar, and accidentally began writing from (faulty) memory. That he might do such is not unusual. As Brian Murdoch notes "vernacular writers often worked from memory."<sup>27</sup> A similar example appears soon afterward when Prudence quotes Job. Though the text of the *Menagier* follows Renaud nearly word-for-word, at the end the author changes "*benoist soit le nom de lui*" [blessed be his name] to "*benoist soit le nom nostre Seigneur*" [blessed be the name of the Lord], which is, of course, the wording found in the Bible, Job 1:21. Again, he follows his source until he encounters an extremely familiar passage; then the author either slips, allowing his memory to take over, or corrects his text to what he knows to be the biblical words. He makes similar changes elsewhere.<sup>28</sup> In other words, the author of the

<sup>26</sup> All references to Renaud are from Jonathan Burke Severs, "The Tale of Melibeus," in *Sources and Analogues of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales*, eds. W. F. Bryan and Germaine Dempster (Chicago: 1941, reprint, New York: 1958).

<sup>27</sup> Brian Murdoch, *The Medieval Popular Bible: Expansions of Genesis in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2003), 1.

<sup>28</sup> When quoting Solomon in Proverbs 25:27, Renaud says "*boit le miel*" [drink honey], but while the *Menagier* quotes this, he changes "*boit*" to "*mengue*" [eat] in keeping with the Bible – though both Renaud and the *Menagier* change the context significantly. Again, when quoting Ecclesiast

*Menagier* had relative familiarity with the Bible and did not hesitate to correct his sources if they did not follow the text.

The author of the *Menagier* uses many sources to aid in his understanding of Scripture, and fully acknowledges that he does so. At the end of I.iii, he tells his wife to make use of “...les predicacions et sermons que vous orrez en vostre parroisse et ailleurs, la Bible, la Legende Doree, l’Apocalice, la Vie des Peres et autres plusieurs bons livres en françois que j’ay...” [the preaching and sermons which you hear in your parish and others, the Bible, the Golden Legend, the Apocalypse, the Life of the Fathers, and several other good books in French which I have...] (I.iii.118). This indicates that both the author and his wife had at their disposal numerous flexible texts of the Bible – an Apocalypse, possibly collections of sermons, and, as noted above, perhaps a French Bible and an evangeliary or Life of Christ – as well as other religious works. That the author made use of these in writing would not be surprising. In other places he mentions Josephus, the *Decretum*, the *Catholicon*,<sup>29</sup> the Life of St. Bernard, Jerome, Augustine, and Gregory. However, the source of which he clearly makes the most use is the *Historia scholastica* of Petrus Comestor. He refers to this text as “Ystoire,” “Istoire,” and “Histoire sure bible” and its author as “l’istoriteur” or “Cellui qui fist Ystoire sure Bible” [He who made the History of the Bible]. It is, of course, fully possible that he was using some version of the *Bible historiale*, but evidence suggests that he was using Comestor directly, at least at times. For example, when discussing Abraham’s journey to Egypt and his deception of Pharaoh, the author of the *Menagier* has Abraham say of the Egyptians “Les hommes de ceste terre sont chaulx et luxurieux” [The men of this land are hot and lascivious] (I.v.4). Those versions of the *Bible historiale* and *Bible historiale complétée* that I have consulted omit this,<sup>30</sup> but Comestor says “...timensque libidinem Aegyptiorum” [and fearing the libidinousness of the Egyptians] (PL 198: 1093A). Again, discussing the creation of Eve, the author of the *Menagier* makes a point of clarifying “Cellui qui fist Ystoire sur Bible dist que Dieu prist de la chair aussi avecques la coste, et aussi dist Josephus” [He who made the history of the Bible says that God took the flesh also with the rib, and Josephus says this too] (I.v.2). And, indeed, Comestor states “Cumque obdormisset, tulit dominus unam de costis ejus, carnem scilicet et os” [And when

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ticus (both Renaud and the *Menagier* say “Solomon” in keeping with medieval tradition) Renaud adds “cousin” to the list of people whom one should not trust; the *Menagier* omits this addition, which does not occur in the biblical text.

<sup>29</sup> The *Catholicon* was a popular 13th-century Bible dictionary written by Johannes Balbus.

<sup>30</sup> I have consulted the *Bible historiale* found in New Haven, CT, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library MS 129 and the *Bible historiale complétée* found in Cambridge, MA, Houghton Library MS F Typ 555.

he had fallen asleep, the lord took one of his ribs, the flesh as well as the bone] (PL 198: 1070B). Here the words are very close to Comestor – “took the flesh with the rib” versus “took one of his ribs, the flesh as well as the bone.” Again, the versions of the *Bible historiale* and *Bible historiale complétée* that I have consulted skip this point and go immediately into a discussion of Lilith, Adam’s supposed first wife.<sup>31</sup>

Regardless of the exact source, this latter example shows that the author notes the authority of his information. Such statements serve the function both of providing authority to the author’s words and distinguishing between these sources and the Bible itself. In fact, the author even cites sources within sources. For example, he states “*On treuve en Histoire que saint Gerosme dit: ‘Tantost apres la sepmaine des nopces pour Lye, Jacob prist Rachel. Pour la grant joye qu’il en ot il servy volentiers les vii ans ensuians.’*” [One finds in the History that St. Jerome says ‘Immediately after the wedding week for Leah, Jacob took Rachel. For the great joy, which he had in this he voluntarily served the following 7 years.’] (I.v.16) The care the author takes to cite his sources extends to his quotation of the Bible itself. He nearly always gives the book from which he quotes and frequently the chapter as well. These references are almost always accurate with two exceptions: First, when he is following Renaud’s version of Melibee, he tends to make the same mistakes. The other error is that he says “Genesis 6” where he clearly means “Genesis 16.” Other than this, his citations are correct. He does, however, occasionally say “Our lord says,” “Paul says,” etc. and then quotes something not found in Scripture. An example of this is in the Tale of Melibee. He says “*Car Saint Jacques dit en son épistre: jugement sans miséricorde sera fait à celui qui ne fera miséricorde, car justice sans miséricorde est tyrannie*” [Because St. James says in his epistle: judgement without mercy will be done to him who does not show mercy, *because justice without mercy is tyranny*] (I.ix.1419–1420) [italics in the original]. Here, the author follows Renaud (and is fairly close to Scripture) until the very last phrase (italicized); he then appends a common proverb, which does not, in fact, occur in Scripture.<sup>32</sup> Such an error does not suggest extreme ignorance, however, since educated people throughout history have made similar mistakes. People today frequently confuse Shakespeare and the King James Bible; thus, someone today might easily think “justice without mercy is tyranny” could be found in Proverbs.

<sup>31</sup> The explanation that God took “The flesh as well as the bone” is also absent from The Hague, Museum Meermanno, MS 10 B 23, f. 9v–10r. I am grateful to the anonymous reviewer for DGJBR for this very useful information.

<sup>32</sup> In Renaud the text reads “*Car Saint Jacque dit en son épistre, ‘Jugement sens miséricorde sera fait à celui qui ne fera miséricorde.’*”

Proverbs is a book one might expect a man like the author of the *Menagier* to favor, but surprisingly, his only quotations from it occur in Melibee. Again, outside of Melibee, his quotations and references suggest a man who was widely read within Scripture and had much of it at his command. Perhaps unsurprisingly, he quotes lengthy passages of Genesis and Daniel, but he also quotes II Corinthians, Tobit, Maccabees, Hebrews, and Ephesians. He quotes or nearly quotes the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, but almost never refers to them specifically as Matthew or Luke; they are merely “l’evanguile” [the Gospel]. Far more frequently, he simply states “*Comme dit nostre Seigneur*” [As our Lord says]. As noted previously, this might indicate the use of an Evangelary, Life of Christ, or Gospel harmony.

### 3 Scripture as Proof

Nearly all of the author of the *Menagier*’s use of Scripture occurs in the First Distinction, and the overwhelming majority of his direct usage occurs in articles iii to ix, or the stories of good and bad women. Perhaps needless to say, here he presents the Bible in the context of moral guide. The manner in which he does so, however, can be classified in two ways: as *exempla* and as proof. When using the Bible as *exempla*, he uses lengthy passages of Scripture as stories to illustrate the virtue under discussion. The author uses these biblical *exempla* in the same way that he uses stories from literature or anecdotes from his life. These passages of Scripture are usually several paragraphs long, and though the author will add in asides, they are generally quite close to the biblical text. When he uses the Bible as proof or support for his argument, however, he works much like the writer of a medieval sermon. In his article on the use of the Bible in medieval sermons, Eyal Poleg explains that there were two types of biblical references, which differed by function.<sup>33</sup> The *thema*, based on the pericope or part of it, was the core of the sermon.<sup>34</sup> Not only was the *thema* biblical, but it was very close to the text itself, and the sermon was constructed to fit it. The second type of biblical reference was the proof. Here the preacher had more freedom and the passages could be modified to help with integration into the sermon. There would be many used throughout the homily, and they might come from any portion of Scripture or even from

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<sup>33</sup> Eyal Poleg, “‘A Ladder Set up on Earth’: The Bible in Medieval Sermons,” in *The Practice of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, eds. Susan Boynton and Diane J. Reilly (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 216.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 209; 216

extra-biblical sources.<sup>35</sup> A very similar attitude toward the use of prooftexts can be seen in the *Menagier's* discussion of wifely duties.

When the author of the *Menagier* uses Scripture as proof, he is much more likely to quote only a small portion (sometimes less than a verse) or even use only a phrase with “etc.” Since these quotations are meant to reinforce his own comments, they are interspersed throughout his discussion of a topic, not separated out as are the *exempla*. Finally, in these instances the author is more likely to give a precise reference and is more likely to provide the sentence first in Latin. In other words, he follows a format similar to a traditional biblical commentator or scholastic theologian.<sup>36</sup> In these instances, he is less likely to use commentaries since, in a sense, the passages of Scripture are serving the purpose of commentary on his own words. When he does consider another author's approach to Scripture in this context, he does so when he is using an extended passage to support his point, and he is very willing to adapt these commentaries to his own opinions. For example, in I.iv the author addresses the virtue of chastity. After explaining his impetus for doing so, he goes into detail on the subject. He discusses the opinions of St. Augustine and St. Gregory and then develops an elaborate, biblically-based support for the importance of chastity, which is worth quoting in full:

*Et monseigneur saint Pol le conferme en le.xi<sup>e</sup>. chappitre de ses Epistres qu'il fait secondement a ceulx de Corinte, ou il dit ainsi: Despondi enim vos, etc. Je vueil, dit il, que vous sachiez que une femme qui et espouse a un home, puis qu'elle vive chastement sans penser a avoir afaire a autre homme, peut estre dicte vierge et presentee a Nostre Seigneur Jesucrist. De chascune bonne preudefemme Jesucrist ou.xiii<sup>e</sup>. chappitre de l'Euvangile saint Mahieu en une parabole dit ainsi: Simile est regum celorum thesauro abscondito in argo, etc. Le Regne, dist il, du Ciel est semblable au tresor qui est repoz dedans un champ de terre. Lequel tresor quant aucun homme qui le labore et en fouyant le descuevre il le remuce de la grant joie qu'il en a. Il s'en va et vent tout quanque il a et achete le champ. En ce chappitre mesmes dit Nostre Seigneur ceste parole: Le Royaulme des Cieulx est semblable a l'omme marchant qui quiert bonnes pierres precieuses, et quant il en a trouvé une bonne et precieuse il va et vent tout quanque il a et l'achate. Par le tresor trouvé ou champ de terre et par la pierre precieuse nous pouvons entendre chascune bonne preudefemme ....*

[And my lord St. Paul confirms this in the 11th chapter of his Epistles that he wrote secondly to those of Corinth, where he says: I promised you indeed, etc. I would, says he, that you know that a woman who is the wife of one man, provided that she lives chastely without thinking of having an affair with another man, can be called virgin and presented to Our Lord Jesus Christ. To each proper goodwife Jesus Christ in the 13th chapter of the Gospel of St. Matthew in a parable says thus: The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field, etc. The kingdom, he says, of heaven is like a treasure, which lies in a field of earth.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 219.

<sup>36</sup> Or perhaps, as Brereton and Ferrier suggest, like a lawyer.

Which treasure when some man, who works it and digs in it, discovers it, he hides with the great joy he has in it. He sells all that he has and buys the field. In the same chapter, Our Lord tells this parable: The Kingdom of Heaven is like a merchant who desires good precious stones, and when he finds one good and precious, he goes and sells all that he has and buys it. By the treasure found in the field of earth and by the precious stone we can understand each proper goodwife.]

(I.iv.2)

Here, in a short space, we find three scriptural references, all of which are given book and chapter citations. Two of these passages receive Latin incipits as well. Furthermore, it is clear that the passages themselves are not the main point. The author is using them to support his own point about chastity, and he uses them in the manner of proofs to add authority to his words. Again, in keeping with Poleg's description of the use of proofs in sermons, there are several, and they are used with considerable freedom in order to support the author's point (the parables from Matthew are generally understood to refer to the soul's salvation, not a woman's chastity). That the author understands them as proofs is further supported by his statement a few lines later that he can "prove" the importance of chastity. The author continues this section of his text with more fully developed *exempla* (Susannah, Raymonde, and Lucretia) and ends with a few final observations. That he sees these longer stories differently from his earlier observations is clear. He says "*Ainsi avez vous deux exemples*" [thus, you have two examples] (I.iv.23). While it is true that there seem to be, in fact, three, his statement indicates that he does not consider all of his brief allusions "examples."

Another example of the author's use of Scripture as proof occurs in the next article. This section is devoted to a wife's duty to be loving and confidential regarding her husband. After a general admonition, he says he can "prove it," which he does by citing Genesis 2.<sup>37</sup> The author continues his exposition of the

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37 "*Et je le preuve: car il est trouvé ou deux<sup>me</sup>. chappiltre du premier livre de la Bible que l'en appelle Genesy, que quant Dieu eust créé ciel et terre, mer et air, et toutes les choses et creatures a leur aournement et perfection, il admena a Adam toutes les creatures qui eurent vie, et il nomma chascune ainsi qu'il luy pleust et qu'elles sont encores appellees; mais il n'y ot creature semblable a Adam, ne convenable pour lui faire ayde et compaignie. Et pour ce dist Dieu adonc: Non est bonum hominem esse solum; faciamus ei adiutorium simile ei. 'Bonne chose, dist Dieu, n'est pas que l'omme soit seul. Faisons lui ayde qui lui soit semblable.'*"

[And I prove it: because it is found in the second chapter of the first book of the Bible, which is called Genesis, that when God had created the heaven and the earth, sea and air, and all the things and creatures in their place and perfection, he led to Adam all the creatures who had life, and he named each thus as it pleased him and as they are still called; but there was no creature

passage, using Comestor and Josephus, as noted earlier. He finishes this portion of his argument by asserting “*Je dy adonc par les raisons dictes, et prises en Bible, que femme doit moult amer son mary quant de la coste de l’omme elle fut faicte.*” [I say therefore for these stated reasons and passages of the Bible that a woman must greatly love her husband as she was made from the rib of man] (I.v.3). At the end of this article, after telling the stories of Sarah and Rachel, he concludes his argument with a few additional supports. He states:

*Item, notatur Thobie, x<sup>o</sup>.: Raguel et Anne sa femme, quant ilz mirent hors de leur hostel Thobie le jenne et Sarre leur fille qui estoit femme d’icelluy jeune Thobie, ilz baisèrent icelle leur fille et l’admonestrent qu’elle amast cordialement son mary et honorast ses parens, et si fist elle. Et a ce propos il est trouvé Machabeorum.xi<sup>o</sup>., que quant Alixandre oy dire que le roy d’Egipte qui avoit espousé sa seur le venoit veoir, il manda par toutes les universitez et a son peuple qu’ilz yssissent de leurs citez et allassent au devant d’icelluy roy d’Egipte pour luy honorer. Et ainsi faisoit honneur a ses parens quant il honoroit le mary de sa seur.*

*Et pour ce que l’en ne dit mye que je ne veuille aussi bien dire des devoirs des hommes comme des femmes, je dy aussi qu’il est escript ad Ephesios,.v<sup>o</sup>., que les mariz doivent amer leurs femmes comme leur propre corps: ce n’est mye a dire par fiction ne par parole, c’est lealment de cuer.*

*[Item, it is noted in Tobit 10: Raguel and Anne, his wife, when they left Tobit the young and Sarai their daughter, who was wife to this young Tobit, outside their home, they kissed this their daughter and admonished her that she cordially love her husband and honor his relatives, and thus she did. And a propos of this, it is found in Maccabees 11, that when Alexander heard tell that the king of Egypt, who was married to his sister, was come to see him, he decreed through all the world and to his people that they issue from their cities and bow before this king of Egypt to honor him. And thus he did honor to his relatives when he honored the husband of his sister.*

*And so that one will never say that I do not well wish to speak of the duties of men as also of the duties of women, I say also that it is written in Ephesians 5 that husbands must love their wives like their own bodies: this is never to say as a fiction nor as a saying; it is loyally by heart.]*

(I.v.25–26)

Here again, there are three, brief citations of Scripture in quick succession. Though Latin incipits do not appear, the author gives the titles of Maccabees and Ephesians in Latin, as well as opening the point itself with the very learned “*item, notatur*” [Item, it is noted]. The author then finishes his support in this article with examples from

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resembling Adam, nor appropriate for him to make an aide and companion. And because of this God said therefore: It is not good for man to be alone; we will make him an assistant like him. “It is not, said God, a good thing that man should be alone. We will make him an aide, who will be like him”] (I.v.2).

nature. The author of the *Menagier*, like writers of medieval sermons, used the Bible as support for his own points. When doing so, he did not consider the full context of the quotations important, but rather emphasized their location in Scripture.<sup>38</sup>

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**38** Another example occurs in article I.vi, where the author addresses the question of obedience. The author notes he will discuss four aspects of obedience. He then addresses the first:

*En reprenant le premier point des quatre particularitez, qui dit que vous soiez humble a vostre mary et a lui obeissant, etc. et l'Esriture le commande, ad Ephesios, .v., ou il dit: Mulieres viris suis subdite sint sicut domino; quoniam vir caput est mulieris, sicut Christus caput est ecclesie. C'est adire que le commandement de Dieu est que les femmes soient subjectes a leur maris comme a seigneurs, car le mary est aussi bien chief de la femme comme Nostre Seigneur Jesucrist est chief de l'Eglise. Donques il s'ensuit que ainsi comme l'Eglise est subjecte et obeissant aux commandemens grans et petis de Jesucrist comme a son chief, tout ainsi les femmes doivent estre subjectes a leurs maris comme a leurs chief, et obeir a eulx et a leur commandemens grans et petiz. Et ainsi le commanda Nostre Seigneur, si comme dit Saint Jherosme; et aussi le dit le Decret .xxxiii, Questione quinto, capitulo quinto Cum caput. Et pour ce dit l'Appostre quant il rescript aux Hebreux ou xiii<sup>e</sup>. Chappitre: Obedite prepositis vestris et subiaccete eis, etc. C'est adire: "Obeissez a voz souverains et soiez en bonne subjection vers eulx." Encores vous est il assez moustré que c'est sentence de Nostre Seigneur, pour ce qui dit par avant que femme doit ester subjecte a homme. Car il est dit que quant au commencement Adam fut fait, Nostre Seigneur par sa bouche et parole dist: "Faison lui aide", et lors de la coste de Adam fist la femme comme aide et subjecte; et ainsi en use l'en, et c'est raison.*

[In representing the first point of these four particulars, which says that you must be humble to your husband and obey him, etc. and the Scripture commands it, Ephesians 5, where it says: Wives submit to your husbands as you would to the lord; because man is the head of woman, just as Christ is the head of the church. This is to say that the commandment of God is that women be subject to their husbands as to lords, because the husband is also the head of the woman as Our Lord Jesus Christ is head of the Church. Therefore it follows that just as the Church is subject to and obeys the commandments great and small of Jesus Christ as to a head, thus all women too must be subject to their husbands as to their heads, and obey them and their commandments great and small. And thus our Lord commanded it, just as St. Jerome says; and also *Decretum* 23, Question five, chapter five says it: *With head*. And of for this reason the Apostle says when he writes to the Hebrews in the 23rd chapter: Obey your superiors and be subject to them, etc. This is to say: "Obey your sovereigns and be in good subjection concerning them." Again, it is sufficiently shown to you that this is the opinion of Our Lord, because as it is said above woman must be subject to man. Because it is said that when in the beginning Adam was made, Our Lord by his mouth and word said: "Let us make him an aide," and then of the rib of Adam he made the woman as an aide and subject; and thus it is in use and that is the reason.] (I.vi.6)

In this passage, there are four scriptural references in a short space, though only one of which is given a full citation. Mixed within these is a reference to Gratian, and the passage continues beyond the above quotation to include a Roman proverb. Again, the author uses the passages with freedom, taking a passage from Hebrews, which refers to obedience to kings, to make a point about wifely subjection. Though the usage may not be so unusual, it seems a somewhat odd choice given the numerous Pauline passages that specifically address wifely obedience. It is tempting to think that the author got caught up in the scholastic idiom and showing off his own skill.

## 4 The Bible as *Exempla* and the Author's Lay Perspective

To most modern readers, however, the author's true skill lies in his storytelling. In Distinction I.iv to I.ix the author relates stories from classical antiquity, more recent works, personal experience, and the Bible as *exempla* to illustrate the wifely duty under discussion. It could be argued that these biblical stories function much the same way as the shorter proofs discussed above, in that they are used to further the author's overall point in a given article. Nevertheless, these passages of Scripture are significantly longer, and the author presents them in a very different tone. Like the *thema* of a sermon, though much longer, these stories become the kernel around which the rest of the article develops, and they retain their literal character. Rather than bending a single phrase to fit his own point, even the author is forced to admit that some of these tales do not fully fit his purpose. The most famous such instance is his apology at the end of the Story of Patient Griselda (I.vi.9), but there are others. For example, at the end of the story of Sarah, the author says:

*Et jasoit ce que j'aye mise l'histoire tout au long, et ne l'ay voulu desmembrer ne descoupler pour ce que la matiere est belle et s'entretient, toutesvoyes par icelle peut estre recueilly a mon propos seulement que Sarre fut tresamoureuse, privee et obeissant a son mary ....*

*[And I know that that which I have put in the story is too long, but I did not want to dismember or break it because the material is beautiful and coheres, however, of this the only part that can be excerpted for my purpose is that Sarah was very loving, private, and obedient to her husband ....]*

(I.v.11)

Thus, it seems, that the author recognizes the centrality of these *exempla* to his points, and perhaps the desire to include them shapes the points themselves. These stories are not only presented fully, but in nearly word-for-word translation of the Vulgate. Finally, they are not subjected to elaborate interpretation. The author follows the literal and historical sense of the passage quite closely, and while he does have his own sense of the story's moral, he does not use metaphorical interpretations to support it. Here, the author uses and creates for his wife a Bible that is like the *Bible historique completée*; one that focuses on a complete text (in this case a complete narrative section) with sufficient but not excessive gloss, meant to aid in the understanding of the historical sense.

Nonetheless, the author does view the Bible from a very particular perspective – that of a lay, married, member of the bourgeoisie – and this

perspective is revealed by his selection of passages and subtle alterations or comments on the text. One primary way in which we see the author of the *Menagier*'s own views of the Bible is in his addition of emotion and character to his scriptural *exempla*. Nowhere do these seem to appear more frequently than in the story of Sarah, whom he oddly considers the “first of the good and bad women” in the Bible (for some reason, he does not count Eve). Many scholars point to this passage as an example of the author of the *Menagier* at his best – and with good reason. Under his touch, Sarah emerges as a more fully rounded character than she does in the strict biblical account. He makes her hesitant to agree to Abraham's request that she masquerade as his sister, but she goes along with the plan in order to protect her husband and his people. Abraham asks Sarah to lie “*pour quoy je y puisse vivre paisiblement entre eulx, et mes gens et ma mesgnie*” [for I believe that to be able to live peacefully among them and my people and my household] (I.v.4), Sarah obeys “*non pas volentiers, maiz pour sauver la vie a sa seigneur et sa gent*” [not willingly, but to save the life of her lord and her people]. This concern with the “*mesgnie*” appears in a few places, and such additions reinforce the author's preoccupation with domestic concerns, concerns common to any married layman of substance.

The author of the *Menagier*'s most creative adaption of Sarah is in his commentary on her time in Pharaoh's household. The Bible only tells us that she was there, that the women of Egypt were unable to give birth, and that the priests determined it was the fault of Sarah, Abraham's wife. We are never certain whether Pharaoh slept with her or not. The author explains that whenever Pharaoh approached Sarah, he found her in tears and depressed because of her regret for Abraham. Not surprisingly, Pharaoh finds this behavior diminishes his interest and gets suspicious, calling his soothsayers to determine the source of her behavior and the malady afflicting the rest of his harem. The author recounts the story as follows:

*Mais oncques, ne lors ne depuis, en quelque heure le roy Pharaon ne peut venir vers elle qu'il ne la trovast tousjours plourant du regret qu'elle avoit a son mary. Et pour ce, quant le roy Pharon la veoit en icellui estat, la voulanté et le desir qu'il avoit d'elle si tresaloit et changoit, et ainsi la laissoit. Et pour ce puet l'en dire que pour sa bonté et sa loyauté que Dieu savoit en elle, laquelle estoit triste et courrouciee de ce que on l'avoit ostee a son mary, il la garda et deffendy par telle maniere que Pharon ne pot habiter a elle, et fut moult tourmeneté, et tous ceulx de sa mesgnie, pour Saire qu'ilz avoient ostee a Abraham.*

*[But never, neither then nor afterward, in whatever hour, king Pharaoh could not come near her that he did not find her always crying on account of the regret that she had for her husband. And because of this, when king Pharaoh saw her in this state, the longing and desire that he had for her so diminished and changed, and he left her. And for this reason, one could say that because of the goodness and loyalty that God knew in her, she who was sad and afflicted*

*because she had been taken from her husband, he guarded her and protected her in this manner that Pharaoh could not live with her, and was much tormented, and all his household, on account of Sarah, whom he had taken from Abraham.]*

(I.v.4)

Such a minor change reveals a great deal about the author's view of marital loyalty, sexuality, and a proper approach to the Bible. There is no biblical evidence for his adaptations, but nothing that contradicts them either, and they have a degree of logic. Furthermore, one can infer that the author of the *Menagier* assumes that a man would find a woman in tears, no matter how beautiful, a turn-off. Pharaoh, like the author, perhaps, wants a willing and happy partner, not just an available body. Yet, despite these liberties with the text, the author is unwilling to condemn Abraham's behavior. Rather, he focuses on Sarah's reasons for agreeing to the scheme: to protect her husband and her people. In this behavior, Sarah is no different than the good wife in the story of the Maillotin uprising,<sup>39</sup> who is willing to sleep with her husband's jailer (with his permission, even) in order to save his life. Thus, while sexual fidelity is an obvious virtue in the author's world, it is not raised to the extremes one finds in saints' lives, where young women will face death, rather than lose their virtue. In fact, the author seems uncomfortable with such behavior. In his telling of the tale of Lucretia (I.iv.13–21) the author makes her husband, Collatinus, adamantly opposed to her suicide. Livy never singles out Collatinus from the crowd of loved ones trying to console Lucretia. In the *Menagier*, however, when Lucretia has finished telling her family what happened, it is Collatinus who, looking at her face, sees how great is her distress. He tries to gently comfort her, forgives her (notably absent in Livy), and tells her that she has not actually sinned, citing authorities and examples in support of his argument.

The author's discussion of lust in his mini-treatise on virtue and vice provides further evidence of this "lay" attitude toward sexuality:

*Et ce pechié de luxure si a.vi. branches: la premiere si est quant un homme pense a une femme ou la femme a l'omme: et la personne a en telle pensee grant plaisance, et s'i*

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**39** This was a revolt among the bourgeoisie and artisans of Paris in 1383 in response to the increase of taxes to support the Hundred Years' War. The rebels armed themselves with heavy cudgels (maillotin), beating tax collectors and looting. 300 were arrested, and many were executed. See Baron Jerome Pichon, *Le Menagier de Paris: Traité de morale et d'économie domestique composé vers 1393 par un bourgeois parisien* vol. I (Paris: Société des bibliophiles français, 1846), 135–7 n.1.

*delicte grandement et y demeure longuement; et par longue demeure la char s'emeust a delectation. Non pour tant elle ne pecheroit point quant pour le premier esmouvement qui vient soudainement, se la personne contraignoit son couraige a y obvier et remedier.*

(I.iii.97)

[And the sin of lust also has 6 branches: the first is when a man thinks of a woman or the woman of the man, and the person has great pleasure in this thought, and enjoys himself or herself greatly and remains in it for a long time, and by the long remaining the flesh is moved to enjoyment. But in this he does not sin at all when the first emotion comes suddenly and the person constrains his heart to forget and remedy it.]

A few things are here worth noting. First, the author seems to be using Robert of Sorbon's *Qui vult confiteri* as his source.<sup>40</sup> Robert's version of the passage is as follows:

*Primus ramus luxurie est quando homo cogitat de aliqua muliere et in tali cogitatione [delectatur] et moratur nimis diu, et tunc caro movetur propter delectacionem ad faciendum peccatum, et non reprimat [se] tam cito vel [revocat] mentem suam ut deberet.<sup>41</sup>*

*[The first branch of lust is when a man thinks about a woman and in such thinking is delighted and remains an excessively long time, and thus his flesh is moved because of the enjoyment toward the accomplishment of sin, and he does not restrain himself quickly enough, calling back his mind as he should.]*

First, the author of the *Menagier* makes the sin apply equally to men and women – “ou la femme a l'omme” [or the woman of a man]. One reason for this addition is that the book is specifically addressing a woman, his wife. But it also indicates that the author considers lust a part of feminine nature. Secondly, while Robert implies that no sin is committed if the thought is remedied quickly, the author of the *Menagier* makes this point very clear. He seems to assume his wife will feel aroused on occasion, and he does not want her to worry that this is a sin; in fact, perhaps he hopes she experiences such emotions in relation to himself.

A similar attitude appears in the author's approach to the Hagar episode. The author explains that Sarah was very concerned lest Abraham die without an heir – a concern the author expresses elsewhere. As a good wife, Sarah was willing to make any sacrifice in order to prevent this, including encouraging her husband to sleep with her maid. The author thus moves the emphasis away from the issue

<sup>40</sup> F. N. M. Diekstra, “Robert of Sorbon's *Qui vult confiteri* (ca. 1260–74) and Its French Versions,” in *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 60 (1993), 215–72.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 253.

of adultery or bigamy toward an issue of inheritance and loyalty. In wrapping up the story of Sarah, he puts great emphasis on her loyalty to Abraham, loyalty that extends even to offering another woman to her husband. He says that she was grieved at the thought that Abraham might die without a child.<sup>42</sup> The author, perhaps correctly, thought such odd behavior – giving another woman to one’s husband willingly – deserved an explanation. He even notes that Sarah knew Hagar could have a child, lessening the apparent risk of needless bigamy. Again, his need to explain is in keeping with his understanding of marital relations. (Rachel is likewise painted in glowing terms and likewise praised for giving her husband heirs via another woman.)

When, later, Sarah treats Hagar harshly, the author explains that it had been her intention to take good care of her and then to make certain that her child was well-cared for too. The emphasis on this portion of the Sarah and Abraham story is unique to the author of the *Menagier*; he does not seem to find it in the Comestor or the *Glossa ordinaria* (See Table 2). Yet, though he is unafraid of interpreting events in his own way, the author takes a conservative view of biblical characters, refusing to consider them capable of wrongful action. In fact, this

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42 “Dont regarda Sairre qu’elle estoit brehaigne et ne pouoit avoir enfant, dont elle estoit moult dolante. Lors s’advisa qu’elle bailleroit Agar sa chamberiere, qu’elle avoit admenee d’Egypte, Abraham son mary pour savoir c’elle en pourroit avoir enfant : car elle doubtoit qu’il ne morust sans hoir.” [Then Sarah saw that she was barren and could not have a child, and she was very grieved. So she decided that she would give Hagar, her maid, whom she had brought from Egypt, to Abraham her husband because she knew that she could have a child. She did this because she feared lest Abraham die without an heir.] (I.v.5). And he further states: “Or veons la grant bonté et grant loyauté de ceste bonne dame et sainte femme Sarre. Elle amoit si tresloialment Abraham son mary, et bien savoit qu’il estoit si saint homme et vaillant patriarche que il lui sembloit que ce fust doleur et grant dommaige s’il mouroit sans hoir et avoir filz de son sang ; et si veoit bien qu’elle estoit brehaigne et ne pouoit concevoir. Et pour la grant desir qu’elle avoit d’avoir filz de son mary lesquelz elle peust nourrir et garder, elle bailla sa meschine et la fist couchier en son propre lit, et s’en volt deporter. Quantes dames ou femmes trouveroit on qui ainsi le feissent ? Je croy que bien peu. Et pour ce est Sarre tenue a la plus loyale a son mary qui fust des Adam le premier homme jusques a la loy qui fut donnee a Moysse.” [Here one sees the great goodness and great loyalty of this good lady and sainted woman, Sarah. She loved Abraham, her husband, so very loyally, and knew well that he was such a sainted man and valiant patriarch that it seemed to her that it was a sadness and a great shame that he should die without an heir and having a son of his own blood; and she saw well that she was barren and could not conceive. And because of the great desire that she had to have a child by her husband which she might raise and care for, she gave him her maid and had her sleep in her own bed, and wished her to enjoy herself in it. How many ladies or women would one find who would do this? I believe very few. And for this Sarah is held the most loyal to her husband who was after Adam the first man until the law was given to Moses.] (I.v.6).

Table 2: A Comparison of the *Menagier's* understanding of Genesis 16:4b–6a and that of Comestor and the *Glossa ordinaria*.

Genesis 16:4b–6a	Menagier l.v.5 114–125 and l.v.7	Comestor PL 198: 1096C	Glossa ordinaria Vol. 1: 218
<p><i>Illa concepisse se videns desepxit dominam suam. Dixitque Sarai ad Abram "Inique agis contra me. Ego dedi ancillam meam in sinum tuum quae videns quod conceperit despectui me habet. Iudicet Dominus inter me et te. Cui respondens Abram "ecce ait ancilla; tua in manu tua est utere ea ut libet."</i></p>	<p>Mais quant Agar vit et sceut qu'elle avoit conceu de Abraham, elle despita sa dame et se portoit grossement contre elle. Et quant elle vit ce, Sarre dist a Abraham: « Tu fais mauvairement encontre moy. Je te baillay ma meschine pour ce que je ne puis avoir enfans de toy, et je desiroye que je peusse avoir filz d'elle et de toy, lesquelz je peusse nourrir et garder a la fin que tu ne morusses pas sans laisser lignee de toy. Pour ce que ma meschine Agar voit qu'elle a conceu de toy, elle m'a en despit et ne me prise rien. Dieu vueille jugier entre moy et toy; car tu as tort qui suffres qu'elle me dspite.»</p>	<p><i>Quae cum concepisset desepxit dominam suam, et Abraham dissimulabat. Et ait Sarai: Inique agis contra me. Iudicet Deus inter me, et te. Cui Abraham: Ecce ancilla tua in manu tua, utere ea, ut libet.</i></p>	<p><i>Demonstravit hic Abram non se amatorem servum sed liberum fuisse genitorem, &amp; in Agar Saræ coniugi pudicitiam custodisse, nec voluntatem suam sed voluptatem illius inpleuisse; accepisse non haesisse; seminasse non amasse.</i></p>
	<p>Mais Agar sa meschine a tort l'eust en despit quant elle sceut qu'elle eust conceu de Abraham. Mais on dit communement que Qui essausse son serfil en fait son ennemy. Mais Abraham le bon patriarche vit bien et sceut que Agar la meschine avoit tort. Et pour ce il dit a Sarre: « Vecy Agar ta meschine. Je la metz en ta main, si en fais ta voulenté. »</p>		

(Table 2 Continued)

Genesis 16:4b–6a	<i>Menagier</i> l.v.5 114–125 and l.v.7	Comestor PL 198: 1096C	<i>Glossa ordinaria</i> Vol. 1: 218
<p>She, seeing that she had conceived, despised her mistress. And Sarah said to Abraham “You do me wrong. I gave my maid into your arms, who seeing that she has conceived, holds me in despite. The Lord will judge between you and me.” To which Abraham responding said “Behold your maid; she is in your hands; do with her as you wish.”</p>	<p>When Hagar saw and knew that she had conceived of Abraham, she despised her mistress and behaved badly to her. And when Sarah saw this she said to Abraham “You have done badly by me. I gave you my maid because I could not have children by you and I hoped that I might have a son by you and her whom I could raise and care for to the end that you would not die without leaving a line for yourself. Because my maid Hagar sees that she has conceived by you, she holds me in despite and takes me for nothing. God will judge between you and me because you are wrong to suffer her to despise me.”</p>	<p>Who when she had conceived despised her mistress, and Abraham pretended not to notice. And Sarah said “You do wrong against me. God judge between you and me.” To which Abraham replied “Behold your maid is in your hand; do with her as you wish.</p>	<p>Abram demonstrates that he did not love the servant but the child that was conceived in Hagar, and he protected the modesty of his wife Sarah, and did not serve his own pleasure, but God’s will; neither to receive nor ask; to seed not to love.</p>
	<p>But Hagar her maid was wrong to hold her in despite when she knew that she had conceived by Abraham. But one commonly says “He who elevates his serf, makes his enemy.” But Abraham the good patriarch saw well and knew that Hagar the maid was wrong. And because of this, he said to Sarah “See here Hagar, your maid. I put her in your hand, and you do your will in this.”</p>		

section is included to clarify that neither Abraham nor Sarah had done wrong. Yet the author does not dare contradict the written narrative or make inferences beyond what might be inferred without contradicting the text. When the author of the *Menagier* discusses Hagar's scorn for her mistress, he says that Abraham was well aware of the bad behavior on the servant's part, which is why he let Sarah do as she wished. Abraham was right to let Sarah have her way and knew that Hagar was behaving badly. He is neither harsh to Hagar nor ignorant of her actions. Likewise, Sarah is not wrong to be harsh with Hagar nor is she being unreasonable in blaming Abraham. Again, this exact interpretation cannot be found in any of the known commentaries, and the Bible seems, if anything, to imply the opposite. In this instance the author might well be relying on the *Glossa ordinaria* since it is closest in its sentiments, but the author is still clearly adding his own interpretations. He not only hopes to avoid any suggestion that his revered Bible characters might be in the wrong, but also wishes to portray them with full human emotion and motivation.

Continuing in the same manner, he says that when Sarah finally expelled Hagar and Ishmael she had good cause. He combines information that he got from multiple sources and reorders these, explaining that Sarah had seen Ishmael playing with Isaac, and that she had three reasons for wanting his departure: one, he was being cruel to Isaac; two, this cruelty made her believe he would disinherit her son; three, he had created idols and was making Isaac worship them. This is, of course, completely unfounded, biblically, but reflects popular contemporary views of Islam, the supposed religion of Ishmael's descendants.

There are times, however, when the author of the *Menagier's* views cause him to disregard received opinion, even that of the commentaries he uses elsewhere. He makes no mention of Lilith. Though he cites Comestor when explaining that Eve was created from both Adam's bone and flesh (I.v.2), he does not continue following the commentator, who then goes into a discussion of Adam's supposed first wife. Perhaps he wished to stick as closely as possible to the literal biblical text. Or perhaps he feared it would unnecessarily diminish his message to his wife: the goodness of marriage. If Adam had a first wife who sinned *before the Fall*, then marriage was not ordained in perfection. Furthermore, it might paint an overly negative picture of women, which would not serve his young wife well. That his reasoning may be something along these lines is reinforced by another variation from Comestor. Here he also differs from at least one text of the *Bible historiale*. When outlining the punishments for original sin, the *Bible historiale* adds "... *et pour ce que elle senorguilli le humilia dieu et lui diste 'tu ferie desoubz le pouvoir de lomme voire pour toy battre de divestres plaice'*" [... and because she had raised herself up, God humbled her and said to her "you will be under the

power of the man to beat you in various places”].<sup>43</sup> The author of the *Menagier* only discusses the degree to which she is subject to man, but makes no mention of man having a right to beat her. Again, Comestor says “*Quia superbivit, humiliavit eam dicens: ‘Sub potestate viri eris violenta, ut etiam vulneribus te affligat in defloratione’*” [Because she raised herself up, he humiliated her saying: ‘You will be under the violent power of man, to the extent that he will afflict you with wounds in deflowering you’.] (PL 198: 1074B). This comment is completely absent from the *Menagier*. Again, this seems to fit with his understanding of sexuality as discussed above. Not only would he not wish to harm his wife in intercourse, but he would shy from the implication that sexuality was a result of sin – since Eve must be a virgin until the Fall in Comestor’s version. Here, the author both sticks more closely to the Bible itself and avoids interpretations that do not fit his perspective.

The degree to which the author’s marital state impacts his understanding of the Bible is perhaps most clearly seen in his telling of the story of Lucifer. Though the story does not occur in what we now consider to be the Bible, it was considered biblical in the late Middle Ages, as evidenced by its inclusion in the first chapters of Genesis in the *Bible Historiale Completée*.<sup>44</sup> However, the author of the *Menagier*’s interpretation of the story is unique. He tells it in the section devoted to paying proper attention to one’s husband and home. In fact, it is the only *exempla* in this section. The author has spoken at length about the proper regard a wife must show for her husband’s well-being; he then warns of the dangers of not doing so, and in this instance, the story of Lucifer serves almost as authority as well as *exemplum*, providing weight to the author’s own assertions. In any case, the way he uses the story is remarkable:

*Et aucunes femmes sont qui au commencement font trop bien leur service vers leur mariz; et leur semble bien que leurs maris, lesquelz elles voient bien adont amoureux d’elles, et vers elles debonnaires, tellement, se leur semble, que a paines se oseroient ilz couroucer a elles se elles en faisoient moins, si se laschent et essaient petit a petit a moins faire de reverance, de service et d’obeissance. Maiz qui plus est, entreprennent auctorité, commandement et seigneurie, une foiz sur ung petit fait, apres sur ung plus grant, apres ung petit ung jour, ung autre petit en ung autre; ainsi essaient et s’avacent et montent, se leur semble, et cuident que leurs*

<sup>43</sup> New Haven, CT, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library MS 129 ff 14v and the edition found in *Historye of the Patriark: Edited from Cambridge, St John’s College, MS G.31. With Parallel Texts of “The Historia Scholastica” and the “Bible historiale,”* vol. 42 ed. Mayumi Taguchi, Middle English Texts (Heidelberg: Winter, 2010), 34. This edition uses London, British Library MS Royal 19.D.III. It is worth noting that this understanding of Eve’s curse is also absent from the text of the *Bible historiale completée* found in Cambridge, MA, Houghton Library MS F Typ 555.

<sup>44</sup> For example Houghton Library MS F Typ 555 ff 4v.

*maris, qui par debonnaireté ou par adventure par aguët, s'en taisent, n'y voyent goute pour ce qu'ilz le seuffrent aisni. Et certes ce n'est pas bien pensé ne servy; car quant les mariz voyent qu'elles discontiennent leurs services et montent en dominacion, et qu'elles en font trop, et que du souffrir mal en pourroit bien venir, elles sont a ung coup, par la volenté du droit de leurs mariz, tresbucheés comme fut Lucifer qui estoit souverain des anges de Paradiz, et lequel Nostre Seigneur ayma tant qu'il tollera et luy soffry moult de ses volentez, et il s'enogruiily et monta en outrecuidance. Tant fist et entreprist d'autres qu'il en fist trop, et en despleu a Nostre Seigneur qui longuement avoit dissimulé et souffert sans dire mot. Et lors a ung coup tout luy vint a souvenance, si le tresbucha ou plus parfont d'enfer pour ce qu'il ne continua son service, a quoy il estoit ordonné et pour lequel il avoit au commencement acquis l'amour de Nostre Seigneur qu'il avoit si grande. Et pour ce devez estre obeissant au commencement, et tousjour parseverer a ceste exemple.*

[And there are some women who at the beginning [of their marriages] do full well their service to their husbands; and it seems good to them that their husbands, who they see full well are so much in love with them and so gracious to them would hardly dare to get angry with them if they did less and if they slackened and tried little by little to do less reverence, service, and obedience. But what is more they begin to take authority, command, and lordship, at sometime over some little thing, later on over something great; after one little thing one day, another little thing another; thus they try to advance and raise themselves, as it seems to them, and to care for their husbands, who for graciousness or, by chance, as a trap keep quiet, does not seem a pleasure to them because they suffer from it. And certainly this is not well thought out or served; because when the husbands see that they discontinue their service and mount dominion and that they do too much and that suffering evil could well come of it, they are, by one blow, by the will of their husbands' right, thrown out as Lucifer who was sovereign of the angels in Paradise, and whom Our Lord loved so much that he tolerated and suffered him many of his wishes, and he grew proud and raised up in overconfidence. He did so much and took over others that he did too much, and displeased Our Lord, who a long time had dissimulated and suffered without saying a word. And then with one blow he came to complete suffering, and he threw him into the deepest depths of hell because he did not continue his service, to which he was ordained and for which in the beginning he had gained the love of Our Lord who made him so great. And for this reason, you must be obedient from the beginning and continue ever after by this example.]

(*L.vii.8*)

In this telling of the Lucifer tale, we see the author becoming audacious. Using his keen psychological insight, he seeks to understand how Lucifer might go from being the best and brightest of angels to being cast into hell for all eternity. In doing so, the author has no qualm about painting God as an over-indulgent husband, putting up with his wife's peccadillos, until they become too much, and he responds with violent retribution. It seems almost as if the author of the *Menagier* cannot imagine anyone, even God, outside of a marital or quasi-marital estate. Perhaps the author takes this line only to reinforce the overall message of his book: the necessity and essence of a good marriage. In any case, this passage shows the author's willingness to bring his own insights to bear on Scripture.

## 5 Conclusion

It was with these subtle interpretations that the author's wife received another flexible version of the Bible. She seems to have had access to a Bible in French, and very likely had other sources of Scripture as well, such as an Evangeliary or Life of Christ, books of sermons, and books of hours. Through her husband's work, she receives a book that, like many others of its time, used the Bible to add weight to its claims. If she wondered about the authority of her husband's words, she would see that they were based in Scripture. The author primarily presents her with the Bible as a moral guide, which was one of the more common presentations of the biblical text, but here it is given a personal quality aimed at guiding her in her particular walk in life as a woman and wife.<sup>45</sup> Her husband's use of the Latin incipits might have aided her in recognizing the same passages should she encounter them in church. His Latin phrases are admittedly brief, but it is possible that he included them with this purpose in mind, as well as that of adding to his authority. He uses a similar method when he provides her with prayers to Christ and the Virgin (I.i.3–9), but here he provides the entire prayer in Latin first. Finally, particularly in the *exempla*, the young wife would likely find her emotions moved. Though the object here is not devotion, or at least not in the manner of the Life of Christ, it serves a similar function. By eliciting an emotional response, the author helps his wife to connect to the characters of the Bible and makes it easier to emulate them. In other places, such as the Lucifer tale, he may hope to frighten her, making her more reverential to both God and her husband (which is the aim of the entire First Distinction). The wife encounters a flexible text of Scripture that functions much the same way as other such texts.

Thus we see one layman's relationship to the Bible. His approach to the text was very like that of his contemporaries, but in his case we are privileged to see not only how he read the Bible, but how he understood it. He read the Bible, whether in Latin or in French, and had a decent, though imperfect, knowledge of it. Like his contemporaries, he considered the biblical text authoritative, making a clear distinction between it and commentary. At the same time, however, he did wish to have the benefit of some historical glossing. Like a theologian or preacher, he uses the authority of the Bible to give added power to his own words,

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<sup>45</sup> Considering the relationship of the *Menagier* to the various *Bible moralisée* would be enlightening in this regard, but is unfortunately beyond the scope of the current project, but will be the subject of future work. On the *Bible moralisée* see: Frans van Liere, *An Introduction to the Medieval Bible*, 248–50 for a basic introduction. More detailed discussion can be found in: John Lowden, *The Making of the Bible moralisées* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000).

casually offering prooftexts to support his point. However, the author does not give the same authoritative weight to commentary, omitting and disagreeing with commentators as he sees fit. At the same time, he uses the Bible as a source of *exempla*. Here, he presents the text at length and quite literally, but in his subtle alterations we see his consistent and personal perspective. In his stories, the characters become living, breathing people with motivations and emotions. He does not contradict the biblical text, but he relies on his experience as a married man of the world to understand the married men and women of the Bible. In doing so, he provides his wife with another means of encountering Scripture. Like many such scripturally-based works, the *Menagier* presents the Bible as a source of moral guidance. Again, like many devotional works, the author hopes to elicit emotion in order to affect his wife's thoughts and behavior. In this, he provides us with a highly personalized view of Scripture, but also one that was very much a part of the dynamic biblical culture in which "the Goodman of Paris" lived.

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