

Antonio Gerace

Biblical Scholarship in Louvain in the 'Golden' Sixteenth Century



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Introduction

1. The Historiographical Category of 'Golden Age of Catholic Biblical Scholarship'

The historiographical category of 'Golden Age' or 'Golden Century' is commonly used with reference to the Spanish 'Siglo de Oro', to indicate the Spanish leadership in Europe, or to the 'Dutch Golden Age', to stress the cultural, economic and political development of the Low Countries in the 17th century. In addition to these 'Golden Ages', there is also the so-called 'Golden Age of Catholic Biblical Scholarship'. In this sense, the expression could be properly applied to two different periods: first, the Patristic Age, and, second, the 'rebirth' of Catholic exegesis in the Early Modern Era. The former period covers about three centuries (2nd–5th) of intense Christian scholarship, dominated in particular by authors belonging to two of the five Patriarchal Sees, Alexandria and Antioch, as Pope Leo XIII maintained in his Encyclical Letter *Providentissimus Deus* (18 November 1893).¹ In addition to the Golden Age of the Church Fathers, from the 19th century onwards, scholars started to use the expression 'Golden Age' to refer to the century following the Council of Trent. This attribution is due to the flourishing of biblical studies among Catholic scholars and theologians, in part as an effect of the Council of Trent itself, but also a result of the rise of Renaissance humanism and the reaction against the Protestant Reformation.² Competition with these

1 "When there arose, in various Sees, Catechetical and Theological schools, of which the most celebrated were those of Alexandria and of Antioch, there was little taught in those schools but what was contained in the reading, the interpretation and the defence of the divine written word. From them came forth numbers of Fathers and writers whose laborious studies and admirable writings have justly merited for the three following centuries the appellation of the golden age of biblical exegesis", Leo XIII: 1893. The Pentarchy numbers Alexandria, Antioch, Constantinople, Jerusalem, and Rome.

2 I shall speak about biblical humanism using 'humanism' specifically to indicate that biblical scholars in this period considered the study of the Scriptures in their 'original' tongues as necessary. In other words, they recovered the philological approach proper to the first humanists, such as that of Valla, applying it exclusively to the Scriptures. I agree with Josef

new and learned 'enemies of the faith' induced Catholic theologians to take on a thorough study of the Bible, both philologically and exegetically. It led to the production of an important number of commentaries of outstanding quality and, moreover, a renewed attention to the preaching of the Scriptures. Therefore, the Golden Age of biblical scholarship also includes a 'Golden Age' of preaching, given the importance of sermons in defence of the Catholic faith against Protestant teachings.

The starting point of this Golden Age may be dated either to the beginning of the Council of Trent (1545) or to its end (1563); its endpoint is difficult to indicate exactly, whether it is 1650 or 1660, or even 1663. However, the aim of this section is not to answer this question; rather it is to show the development of this historiographical category. It seems that German scholars, and Jesuits in particular, were the first to identify this Golden Age of Catholic biblical scholarship in the Early Modern Era. Perhaps the very first scholar to do so was the German theologian Matthias Joseph Scheeben (1835–1888), in his *Handbuch der katholischen Dogmatik* (1873–1887). Indeed, he noticed the development of biblical studies among Catholic scholars in the period 1570–1660 which he referred to as the *Blütezeit* – a term that can be translated as 'flourishing' (Scheeben: 1882, 1083–1099)³ – and which he saw as preceded by a *Vorbereitungszeit*, a 'preparatory period' lasting from 1500 to 1570 (Scheeben: 1882, 1080). Scheeben maintains that this *Blütezeit* was characterized by a speculative and systematic scholastic theology together with exegesis and controversialist theology. He also mentions several authors who worked in those years and identifies five categories of scholars in his treatise: 1) the 'exegetes', i.e. the commentators, 2) the polemicists and controversialists, 3) the scholastic authors; 4) the mystics; 5) the historians of the Patristic age (Scheeben: 1882, 1083–1099). He further divides the scholastic authors into three subsets: a) Thomists; b) Franciscans; and c) Jesuits. However, a more complete list of the scholars of the *Blütezeit* appeared soon after Scheeben's text, in the work of the German Jesuit Hugo Hurther (1832–1914) whose monumental *Nomenclator Literarius* (1871–1886) provided a kind of biographical dictionary of theologians, starting from the beginning of Christendom and ending in 1869. Hurter's *Nomenclator* was first edited in five volumes,

IJsewijn, who says "during the period under discussion (16th century in the Low Countries) humanism was an affair of a slowly growing but always limited numbers of students, teachers, and writers. Many of them did not view humanist studies as an end in itself but as a means of improving theological studies and Christian life. For this reason, it is better perhaps to speak of humanist Christians than of Christian humanism. This is not merely a matter of terminology but an attempt to define the essential. In their eyes, the fundamental value was not so much a renaissance of ancient literature as a renewal of Christian *pietas*, and here lies an abyss between them and the leading Italian *oratores et poetae*", IJsewijn: 2015, 164.

3 See also Murray: 2016, 1–3.

followed by two emended editions: the second in the years 1892–1899, and the third in the years 1903–1913. In particular, the third volume, first published in 1883, focused on the first century following the end of the Council (1564–1663), and provided an 'index' of more than 2,500 names of theologians, spread throughout Europe.⁴

After Hurter's list, another German Jesuit, Rudolf Cornely (1830–1908), further defined the 'Golden Age'. In his *Historica et critica introductio in Utriusque Testamenti libros sacros* (1885), he maintained that the century between the Council of Nicaea (325) and that of Chalcedon (461) has, with reason, been referred to as the 'Golden Age' of theological studies. However, Cornely explains, the second half of the 15th century gave new and powerful instruments to biblical studies. The first of these new instruments was the study of the 'original' biblical languages, Hebrew – already required by Clement V (*ca.* 1264–1314) in the wake of the Council of Vienne (1311–1312) – and Greek, supported by humanist popes, such as Nicholas V (1397–1455), who considered these biblical languages useful for gaining a better comprehension of the Latin Vulgate.⁵ Another important aid was the invention of the printing press by Johann Gutenberg (*ca.* 1398–1468) around 1440, a development that enabled the rapid spread both of editions of the Bible and commentaries on the Scriptures.⁶ Therefore, it was between the second half of the 15th century and the beginning of the 16th that new seeds were dispersed in Biblical studies.

Concerning the humanist scholars of the second half of the 15th century, Cornely mentions particularly Lorenzo Valla (1407–1457), Nicholas of Kues 'Cusanus' (1401–1464), Juan de Torquemada (OP, 1388–1468), Denis van Rijkel 'the Carthusian' (1402–1471), Peter Schwarz 'Niger' (OP, 1434–1483), Konrad Kürschner 'Pellikan' (1478–1556), Johann Reuchlin (1455–1522), Rudolf Agricola, (1443–85), Adriano Castellesi (1461–1521), Konrad Summenhart (1450–1502), Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463–1494), Felice da Prato (OSA, *ca.* 1460–1559), Agostino Giustiniani (OP, 1470–1536), Francisco Jiménez de Cisneros (OFM, 1436–1517), and Erasmus of Rotterdam (1466–1536). Among the biblical scholars of the 16th century, Cornely mentions Elio Antonio de Nebrija (1441–1522), Alfonso de Zamora (1474–1531), Diego de Zúñiga (OSA, 1536–

4 Cf. the *Index Theologorum* at the end of the third volume: Hurter: 1962 lxxvi–c.

5 "Circa medium saeculi 15 studii scripturistici nova et insigna accesserunt subsidia. Praeprimis enim illa aetate praeter linguae hebraice studium, quod a Clemente V in concilio viennensi commendatum magnos iam progressus fecerat letosque tulerat fructus inter populos occidentales graece quoque scientia ... Nicolao V imprimis eiusque successoribus promoventibus refluuit atque statim ad meliorem Scripturam intelligentiam latinamque versionem illustrandam feliciter adhiberi coepta est", Cornely: 1885, 689. However, in the same years, Ubaldo Ubaldi did not separate the period Ubaldi: 1882–1884, 415–21.

6 "Haud levioris forte momenti est, quod circa tempus inventa arte typographica libri sacri ipsi et alia monumenta theologica facilius propagari potuerint", Cornely: 1885, 689.

1598), Thomas de Vio 'Cajetan' (OP, 1469–1534), Sante Pagnini (OP, 1470–1541), François Vatable (d. 1547), Jean de Gagny (1500–1549), John Wild 'Ferus' (OFM, 1497–1554), Isidoro da Chiari (OSB, *ca.* 1495–1555), Frans Titelmans (OFM^{Cap}, 1502–1537), Ralph Baines (*ca.* 1504–1559) and Jerónimo de Azambuja 'Oleaster' (OP, 1503–1563). Cornely argues that their innovative approach to the Scriptures planted the seeds of the Golden Age of Catholic Biblical Scholarship, whose fruit blossomed after the Council of Trent (1545–1563).⁷

After this introduction, Cornely states that even the Patristic Golden Age can be compared and equated to the century that followed the Council of Trent (1563–1663).⁸ It was in that century that the Sixto-Clementine Vulgate was printed (1592), as well as the Sixtine edition of the Greek Septuagint (1586), and two polyglot Bibles – the Antwerp edition (1569–1572) and that of Paris (1628–1645). This new Golden Age was not only characterized by text-criticism of the Vulgate but also by the many new commentaries that gave their support to the study of the Scriptures. By directly mentioning Hurter's work, Cornely says that more than 350 commentators (*interpretes*) contributed to the flourishing of the Golden Century; actually, section 15 of Cornely's third chapter is entitled *Aurum exegeseos catholicae moderna saeculum (1563–1663)*.⁹ His use of this expression may have had a strong apologetic connotation, but in any case he

7 "Ab exeunte saeculo 15 nova quaedam in historia exegeseos periodus inchoari potest; veruntamen quum prima tantum semina exeunte 16 sparsa sint, exegetes vero non nisi post concilium tridentinum ad maturitatem perductae splendidissimos fructus dederint, a concilio tridentino terminato novum periodum inchoandum censemus", Cornely: 1885, 689. Cornely lists these authors at pages 689–694, mentioning also their main contributions, to which I shall refer in the footnotes below.

8 I shall not be devoting a chapter specifically to the Council of Trent (1545–1563) since very learned authors have analyzed it better than I could here, having devoted complete volumes, like those of Hubert Jedin (1957–1961), or handy introductions to the topic, like that of John O'Malley (2013). By contrast, I shall deal with the Council of Trent only to the extent that it aids in the comprehension of the scholars I intend to study here. Given the nature of my book, I will particularly focus on the *Insuper* decree on the authenticity of the Vulgate, issued on 8 April 1546, at the end of the Fourth, and on the *De iustificatione* decree, issued on 13 January 1547, at the end of the Sixth Session.

9 Cornely states: "Iure merito in annalibus *exegeseos catholicae saeculum illud aureum celebratur*, quod a concilio nicaeno (325) ad usque chalcedonense (461) decurrit; maximorum enim interpretum fertilis fuit illa aetas ... Nisi vero omnia nos fallunt, *primae illi exegeseos aureae aetati comparari atque etiam aequiparari licet saeculum illud, quod a finito concilio tridentino defluxit* ... Indefesso theologorum istius studio imprimis debeamus clementinam Vulgatam nostram emendatam, sixtinam editionem versionis alexandrinae, bina celeberrima polyglotta, antwerpensia (1569–1572) et parisiensia (1629–1645), nonnullas editiones principes versionum antiquarum. Plura autem et maiora in ipsa interpretationem praestiterunt; neque est Veteris aut Novi Testamenti liber, qui vere eximiis commentariis illo tempore non sit illustratus ... numerus interpretum, *qui hoc saeculum aureo floruerunt*, ingens est; plus *trecenti quiquaginta*, qui ab anno 1563 usque ad annum 1663 supremum suum diem obierunt, enumerantur a *P. Hurter*", Cornely: 1885, 695–696. Italics are mine.

wanted to stress the quality and the quantity of the contributions made by the numerous scholars that characterized that era. Among them, Cornely mentions in particular Sixtus of Siena (OFM, later OP, 1520–1569), Andreas Maes (1514–1573), Cornelius Jansenius the Elder (1510–1576), Bishop of Ghent from 1568, Francisco Foreiro (OP, 1522–1581), Juan Maldonado (SJ, 1533–1583), Francisco de Ribera (SJ, 1537–1591), Francisco de Toledo (SJ, 1532–1596), Gilbert Générard (OSB, 1537–1597), Benito Arias Montano (1527–1598), Antonio Agelli (OP, 1532–1608), Nicolaus Serarius (SJ, 1555–1609), Benedict Pereira (SJ, 1536–1610), Willem Hessels van Est 'Estius' (1542–1613), Luis Alcázar (SJ, 1554–1613), Francis Lucas 'of Bruges' (1548/49–1619), Robert Bellarmine (SJ, 1542–1621), Benedetto Giustiniani (SJ, 1554–1621), Gaspar Sanchez (SJ, 1554–1628), Juan de Mariana (SJ, 1536–1624), Tomás Malvenda (OP, 1566–1628), James Tirinus (SJ, 1580–1636), Juàn de Pineda (SJ 1558–1637), Cornelius Cornelissen van den Steen, 'a Lapide' (SJ, 1567–1637), Jacques Bonfrère (SJ, 1573–1642), Siméon Marotte de Muis (1587–1644), Jean Morin (1591–1659), James Gordon (SJ, 1553–1641), Michele Ghislieri (OP, 1563–1646), Fernando Quirino de Salazar (SJ, 1576–1646), Balthasar Cordier (SJ, 1592–1650), Giovanni Stefano Menochio (SJ, 1575–1655), Francesco Quaresmio (OFM, 1583–1650) and Jean de La Haye (OFM, 1593–1661). With Jean de la Haye, the Golden Age comes to an end, and is followed by an era of impoverishment of biblical studies among Catholic scholars. The list made by Cornely in his *Historica et Critica Introductio* remained basically unchanged (Cornely: 1885, 697–714). Later scholars list the same authors, usually in the same order, though without ever mentioning Cornely in their analysis of the Golden Age of Catholic Exegesis, the one exception being Heinrich Kihn (1883–1912). Kihn was a German scholar, who wrote an *Encyklopädie und methodologie der theologie* (1892), in which he mentions both Hurter and Cornely, in dealing with 'das goldene Zeitalter der neuer katholischen Exegese'.¹⁰ French scholarship also seems to have quickly accepted the category of 'Âge d'or' in referring to the Catholic exegesis of this period, but Hurter's *Nomenclator* was their only source of reference: the name of the 'inventor' of this category, Cornely, simply disappears from the literature. Luis Ducros (1846–1930), for instance, in his work *Les Encyclopédistes* (1900), quoting Kihn, speaks about the "Âge d'or de l'exégèse catholique moderne" (1563–1660), exactly on the basis of Hurter's list, even though he is basically translating into French the expression that Cornely had used.¹¹

10 Kihn: 1892, 201–202. In particular, among the most important authors, Kihn mentions Thomas de Vio 'Cajetan', Jacopo Sadoletto, François Vatable, Adam Sasbout, Johann Wild 'Ferus', Andreas Maes, and Cornelius Jansenius 'of Ghent'.

11 "Sans doute, on avait vu, au lendemain de la Reforme, et pour lutter contre elle, surgir toute une légion de commentateurs catholiques: Hurter n'en compte pas moins de trois cents, de l'année 1563 à l'année 1660. Durant cette période, qui est l'âge d'or de l'exégèse catholique

A quarter of a century later, the use of this category was also adopted by Italian scholarship. In 1925, again only on the basis of Hurter's work, Alberto Vaccari spoke about the 'saeculum aureum exegeseos catholicae', although giving a different date for it (1550–1650). He offered a reason for taking 1550 as the starting date: two decrees at the opening of the Council of Trent were in the forefront of this rebirth of biblical studies: the first promoted and inspired biblical studies while the second indicated the right way to interpret the Bible. Vaccari did not refer to the decrees chronologically. His first reference is to the decree issued on 17 June 1546, during the Fifth Session, *On the Institution of a Lectureship of Sacred Scripture, and of the liberal arts*, which gave impulse to biblical studies thanks to the establishment of houses of study (*studia*) and academic chairs. His second reference is to the two decrees issued during the Fourth Session of the Council: *Concerning the Canonical Scriptures*, which defined the canon of the Catholic Bible and established the continuity of the apostolic tradition(s) within the Catholic Church. On the same occasion, the Council fathers issued the *Insuper* decree, which declared the Vulgate to be the 'authentic' version of the Church. That decree promoted both biblical studies and text-criticism of the Vulgate, calling for the emendation of the Latin Bible after a more than one-thousand year history. Moreover, that decree established that only the Church can faithfully interpret the Scriptures, on the basis of the "unanimous consensus" of the Church fathers.¹²

In particular, Vaccari maintained that this new age had its roots in Humanism and in the Renaissance (*Aetas renatae antiquitatis*) beginning in Italy in the 15th century. Of special relevance was the arrival of several Greek codices from the last remnants of the Byzantine Empire which had fallen on 29 May 1453 when the

moderne, il s'agissait de démontrer aux Reformes que ce Livre, qu'ils avaient sans cesse à la bouche et dont ils prétendaient avoir retrouvé le sens et le beauté première, l'Eglise romaine n'avait jamais cessé de le bien comprendre et de l'interpréter dignement : et il se peut que les exégètes catholiques de cette époque aient été aussi savant qu'ils furent laborieux et que pour sauver l'ancienne foi, ils aient mis habilement à profit, comme l'avaient fait les protestants, pour fonder la foi nouvelle, quelques-unes des meilleures conquêtes de l'humanisme, qu'ils aient su, par exemple, appliquer, comme leurs adversaires, l'histoire, l'archéologie et les nouvelles études philologiques à leur interprétation catholique des Ecritures, de telle sorte que leurs ouvrages méritent encore d'être appréciés des théologiens de nos jours", Ducros: 1900, 259. Of course, this Louis Ducros is not to be confused with the painter Louis Ducros (1748–1810). Ducros' quotation of Kihn: 1892, 202.

- 12 "Primum saeculum a Concilio Tridentino (1550–1650) ... tam fecundum fuit optimorum exegetarum apud catholicos, ut merito 'saeculum aureum exegeseos catholicae' audire meruerit. Fuit is praecipue effectus magni illius zeli, quod sanam ac veram Ecclesiam reformationem a Concilio Tridentino promotam catholicis orbis, in primis clerus, et securus est, ac fidem scientiamque catholicam adversus novatorum aggressiones strenue defendit. Itaque commemoranda sunt imprimis hoc loco duo decreta Concilii Tridentini, quorum alterum studia S. Scripturae excitavit ac promovit, alterum interpretationi rectum callem demonstravit", Vaccari: 1951, 510–567, on 544.

Ottomans, ruled by Mehmed II (1432–1481), conquered Constantinople.¹³ Among the codices arriving from the East were the Greek New Testament and the Septuagint. This led to the beginning of philological studies of Greek texts. Therefore, the 'Golden Age' was preceded by a 'preparatory' century in which several authors took on a philological analysis of the Bible, with Lorenzo Valla, Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples, and Erasmus of Rotterdam being the most important.¹⁴ Vaccari recalled another concomitant element that further helped Catholic exegesis: the invention of the printing press, which allowed for the rapid dissemination of works on the Bible.¹⁵ Vaccari mentioned a plethora of scholars who were involved in the 'Golden Century of Catholic Exegesis', often indicating their main contributions to Catholic scholarship, again chosen on the basis of Hurter's list. Vaccari ended this list by mentioning in particular Jean de La Haye and his *Biblia Maxima* (1660). According to the Italian Jesuit, this huge work concludes the 'Golden Century of Catholic Exegesis', making a kind of *summa* of that flourishing period, after which a period of decline set in. This work gathered the results of an intense century of Biblical studies, and, although de la Haye had to use the Sixto-Clementine Vulgate (1592) as the basis of his work, he did not limit himself to a simple re-printing of that Vulgate. Indeed, he added several prefaces, furnishing each chapter with the annotations of the various readings taken from Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic and Syriac manuscripts, as well as from those handed down in the works of the Church fathers. He also explicitly referred to the commentaries of Nicholas of Lyra (1270–1349), Jean de Gagny, Willem Estius, Giovanni Stefano Menochio and Giacomo Tirino (SJ, 1580–1686). Finally, de la Haye attached chronological tables and systems of both measurement and currency.¹⁶ In effect, he analyzed almost every aspect of the Bible, from its text

13 The very last remnants of the Byzantine Empire were in effect the Despotate of the Morea, which fell in 1460, the Trapezuntine Empire, which fell in 1461, and the Principality of Theodoro in Crimea, which fell in 1475, all of them conquered by Ottomans.

14 Among them, Vaccari mentioned in particular twelve scholars in addition to Valla, Lefèvre d'Étaples and Erasmus: Jean de Gagny, Elio Antonio de Nebrija, Sante Pagnini, François Vatable, Agostino Steuco, Jerónimo de Azambuja, Ralph Baines, Cajetan, Isidoro da Chiari, Adam Sasbout, Frans Titelmann, John Wild 'Ferus', Vaccari: 1951, 544.

15 "Novam aetatem inchoavit in exegesis diffusa per Italiam primum, deinde in reliquam Europam, graecae linguae et totius antiquitatis cognitio, saeculo Christi xv. Delati tunc ad Occidentis urbes graeci codices textum ipsum Novi Testamenti et Alexandrinam versionem Veteris multis aditu facilem reddidere. Sensus vero aperuit linguarum non solum graecae sed etiam hebraicae studium in dies latius pervulgatum, in quod plurimum contulit ars typographica tunc inventa", Vaccari: 1951, 543. Not by coincidence, the first book to have been published was the 42-line Gutenberg Bible (1453–55).

16 "in unum corpus collegit Iohannes de la Haye in *Bibliis magnis* et iterum simul cum postilla Lyrani et delectu variarum ex antiquis versionibus lectionum, in *Bibliis maximis* ... quae collectiones apte aureum hoc catholicae exegeseos saeculum quodammodo recapitulando concludunt", Vaccari: 1951, 549.

(using the official Vulgate and its different readings in the 'original' languages) and its exegesis, to the coins used in Old and New Testament times. Vaccari considered de la Haye's work to be a kind of 'swan song' of the 'Golden Age' of Catholic exegesis, possibly because of its complexity and its encyclopedic approach to the Bible.

At the end of this section devoted to the Catholic commentators, Vaccari even mentioned some important Protestant authors, since they also developed biblical studies in that period, such as Johannes Cocceius (1603–1669), Hugo Grotius (1583–1645), Matthew Poole (1624–1679), Samuel Bochart (1599–1667), Johann Heinrich Ursin (1608–1667), Johannes Drusius (1550–1616), Lodewijk de Dieu (1590–1642), and Johannes Buxtorf (1564–1629).¹⁷ In his lists, Vaccari mentioned especially a large number of Jesuit scholars, who arguably represent the most important Order of that 'Golden Century'. When Ignatius of Loyola (1491–1556) founded this Order in 1534,¹⁸ he considered education in every branch of human knowledge, from humanities to the sciences, to be of the utmost importance for good Catholics, as was established in the *Ratio* of the Order (1599).¹⁹ The Jesuits then established many colleges throughout Europe, starting from Gandía (1544). Therefore, it should come as no surprise that Vaccari mentions a particularly large number of Jesuits: in his list of 41 names, 18 are Jesuits, almost 50%.²⁰ However, it should also be remembered that Vaccari himself was a Jesuit, something which had undoubtedly influenced his choice.

A few years after Vaccari's contribution *Historia Exegeseos* (1928), Martin Grabmann (1875–1949) also dealt with a category very close to that of 'Golden Age', devoting the second chapter of the second part of his *Die Geschichte der Katholischen Theologie* (1933) to the 'Die Blütezeit der neuerwachten scholastischen Theologie vom Konzil von Trient bis um 1660' ('The Flourishing Period of the Newly Awakened Scholastic Theology from the Council of Trent up to 1660')

17 Vaccari: 1951, 550.

18 On 15 August 1534, Ignatius founded the order together with six companions, Francis Xavier (1506–1552), Alfonso Salmerón, Diego Laynez (1512–1565), Nicolas Bobadilla (1511–1590), Peter Faber (1506–1546), and Simão Rodrigues de Azevedo (1510–1579). This new order was later approved by Pope Paul III on 1540, through the bull *Regimini militantis ecclesiae*, then confirmed by the same Pope on 1543, through the bull *Iniunctum nobis*, and, lastly, in 1550, Julius III gave the final approval, through the bull *Exposcit debitum*. On the first period of the Jesuit order (1540–1565), cf. O'Malley: 1993, 23–36.

19 For instance, the German Jesuit Christophorus Clavius (1538–1612) was one of the most important mathematicians of his period, and the leading scholar of the reform of the Julian calendar, that then took the name of Pope Gregory XIII: the Gregorian calendar.

20 On the basis of Hurther's list, the German Jesuit scholar, Augustin Bea (1881–1968), affirmed that among the 424 exegetes who worked in the century that followed the Council of Trent, one fourth were Jesuits. It should be noted that Bea does not use the 'Golden age' category. Cf., Bea: 1942, 122.

(1980, 154).²¹ Grabmann basically recovered Scheeben's work – without mentioning him – and he offered a list of the most important scholars, first identifying those of the “preparatory period up to the end of the Council of Trent”, from 1500 up to 1570, which is also the prelude to “the Catholic Golden Age”:²² Sixtus of Siena, Luis de Tena (OFM, d. 1622), Francesco Pavone (SJ, 1568–1637), and Francis Lucas ‘of Bruges’. Of course, other biblical scholars influenced this flourishing of Catholic Scholarship, such as the Jesuits, Alfonso Salmerón (1515–1585), Francisco de Toledo and Cornelius ‘a Lapide’. It was not only Jesuits who contributed to the development of biblical studies: for instance, from Belgium, Willem Estius and Cornelius Jansenius (1510–1576), also offered commentaries on the Vulgate (Grabmann: 1980, 155–158). Among the polemical and controversialist theologians, some key figures arose, such as Thomas Stapleton (1535–1598), Gregorio de Valencia (SJ, 1550–1603), Robert Bellarmine, Jacob Gretser (SJ, 1562–1625), Adam Tanner (SJ, 1572–1632) and Jacques Davy du Perron (1556–1618).²³ As has been said, scholasticism also contributed important developments thanks to three schools. First, the Thomist scholars, mostly represented by Dominicans, especially those of the school of Salamanca founded by Francesco de Vitoria, such as Domingo Bañez (OP, 1528–1604) and Bartolomé de Medina (1527–1580);²⁴ second, the Scotist school of the Franciscans, led by scholars such as Andrea de Vega (d. 1560) and Cornelio Musso (1511–1574); and finally, the Jesuit school, including Francisco de Toledo, Gregorio de Valencia, Francisco Suárez (1548–1617), also called *Doctor Eximius*, and Luis de Molina (1535–1600), amongst others.²⁵ These impressive lists of names show that many centres of biblical scholarship arose all over Europe at this time. In addition to the Habsburg Netherlands, with its university cities of Louvain and Douai, where Jesuits and Augustinian-minded scholars predominated, we also find important theological schools in Spain, represented especially by Dominicans and Jesuits. Similar schools in France and in the Italian states arose as well.²⁶

In addition to the German and the Italian theologians, even the Reformed minister from Geneva Victor Baroni (1893–1969) acknowledged the Catholic development of biblical studies in *La Contra-Réforme et la Bible* (1943), although

21 According to Grabmann, this flourishing period was almost inevitably followed by the decadence of the scholastic period for a century, 1660–1760: see the sixth chapter of the second part: “Die Theologie in der Zeit des Niedergangs der Scholastik (1660–1760)”, Grabmann: 1980, 192.

22 See the first chapter of the second part “Die Vorbereitungszeit bis zum Schluss des Konzils von Trient”, Grabmann: 1980, 147–154.

23 For the entire list, cf. Grabmann: 1980, 158–161.

24 For the entire list, Grabmann: 1980, 162–165.

25 For the entire list, cf. Grabmann: 1980, 168–172.

26 On the development of the Golden Age, cf. François, Gerace *et al.*: 2020. Part of this introduction was included in this article.

he never used the concept of a 'Golden Age'. By contrast, Spanish scholars used the historiographical category of 'Golden Age' in a sense closer to that of Scheeben than that of Cornely and Vaccari. Actually, Scheeben spoke about a 'newly awakened Scholastic theology', stressing the philosophical approach to the analysis of the Scriptures, 'reborn' after the high level achieved with Thomas Aquinas in the 13th century. At the same time, Vaccari dealt expressly with the 'Golden Century of Catholic Exegesis', thus emphasizing works on the interpretation of the Vulgate which were developed more deeply thanks to philology. The Spanish scholar Jose Jiménez Fajardo actually preferred to use the expression 'Second Golden Age of Scholastic Theology'. In fact, he quoted Grabmann, and followed his terminology in his monograph which focused on the theological question of the essence of venial sins and especially how they were discussed by Catholic scholars in this 'Second Golden Age' (Jiménez Fajardo: 1944, 41).

In 1946, the fourth centenary of the Council of Trent was celebrated with three conferences at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome, on 20 January, 3 and 17 February respectively. The main contributions were those of the Belgian Jacques-Marie Vosté (OP, 1883–1949), who spoke about the Tridentine decree *Insuper* on the authenticity of the Vulgate; then, Alberto Vaccari, who dealt with exegesis at the Council of Trent; and, finally, Salvatore Garofalo (1911–1998), who presented his paper on the Italian humanists and their work on the Bible. In his contribution, Vaccari spoke about a 'Golden Century of Catholic Exegesis' during which Catholic theologians produced many more works of biblical scholarship than Protestant theologians. Catholic theologians, however, lost this primacy in biblical scholarship over the two centuries following their 'Golden Age' (1946, 301, n. 1).²⁷ In any event, the Catholic 'Golden Century' produced such a high standard in exegesis that, Vaccari continued, some Protestant scholars even used and appreciated Catholic commentaries, such as those of Francisco Foreiro on Isaiah (1565), Andreas Maes on Joshua (1574), Antonio Agelli on the Psalms (1606), and Gaspar Sánchez (SJ 1554–1628) on the Prophets (1621).

27 "Intanto, l'attuazione dei canoni Tridentini di riforma causò nei paesi cattolici un intensificarsi dello studio delle divine Scritture, che portò ben presto copiosi e consolatissimi frutti. Non per nulla il secolo che seguì al Concilio di Trento vide uscire alla luce tanta e tale messe di commenti biblici d'autori cattolici (come fu già rilevato dal R. P. Retore di questo Istituto all'apertura della precedente conferenza) che poté essere chiamato il secolo d'oro dell'esegesi cattolica. Certo la produzione cattolica nel campo biblico superò allora per numero e qualità quella protestantica. Alcuni commenti cattolici di quel secolo ancor oggi sono consultati ed apprezzati anche da protestanti, mentre quelli contemporanei dei protestanti giacciono dimenticati nella polvere delle biblioteche. Così tenemmo allora un primato, che purtroppo andò perduto nei due secoli seguenti, quando anche gli avvenimenti politici frustrarono in notevole parte i benefici effetti della riforma promossa dal Concilio Tridentino. Tra questi effetti in ragguardevole posto deve porsi la magnifica fioritura biblica, alla quale abbiamo or ora accennato", Vaccari: 1946, 327.

A few years after Vaccari's "Esegesi ed esegeti", another Italian Jesuit scholar, Tiburzio Gallo, used the 'Golden Age' to indicate the century after the Council of Trent. The occasion was given by his monograph in three volumes on the interpretation of the *proto-evangelium*, Gen 3:15: "I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed: she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel".²⁸ The first volume analyses the interpretations of the first fifteen centuries of the history of Church, starting from Origen and going up to the Council of Trent; the second volume deals with the 'aetas aurea exegesis catholicae' ('The Golden Age of Catholic Exegesis'), from the beginning of the Council of Trent (1545) up to 1660; the third volume goes from 1660 up to 1854, when Pius IX proclaimed the dogma of the Immaculate Conception in the bull *Ineffabilis Deus* on 8 December. In these three volumes, Tiburzio Gallo analyzed more than five-hundred authors. It is especially interesting to note that he did not restrict himself to Catholic theologians but also referred to the comments of Protestant scholars on Gen 3:15. In effect, he intended to offer the interpretation(s) of the *proto-evangelium* to which Christendom had adhered from its birth up to 1854. In particular, in his second volume, devoted to the 'Golden Age', Gallo referred to 184 authors, 152 Catholics and 32 Protestants.²⁹ Finally, Gallo concluded his list by referring to de la Haye's *Biblia Maxima*, as Vaccari had done, but he also included the Lutheran scholar Martin Caselius (1608–1656) and his *De lapsu priorum parentum*. In effect, both de la Haye and Caselius wrote works that were able to summarize the intense scholarship of both Catholic and Protestant biblical scholarship respectively.³⁰

Between Scheeben's 'Die Blütezeit der neuerwachten scholastischen' and Cornely's 'Aureum exegeseos catholicae moderna saeculum', scholarship seems to have more frequently accepted the latter expression. More recently, the German Catholic scholar Johann Baptist Bauer (1927–2008) has spoken about 'das goldene Zeitalter der katholischen Exegese (1550–1650)' (1971, 30). In 2007,

28 If not otherwise declared, the English translations of the biblical passages are taken from the Douai–Rheims Vulgate edition (DRV), available at <http://www.drbo.org/>.

29 Gallo himself furnishes his data. Moreover, he adds that 125 Catholic theologians gave a Mariological interpretation to Gen 3:15, by reading *ipsa conteret caput tuum*, while the other 27, although not negating the Mariological reading, by using a philological approach, opted for *ipse conteret caput tuum*, with a Christological interpretation. For both Catholics and Lutherans, the *semen* of the woman is the type of Christ while Calvinists consider *semen* as the "humankind when it will win the infernal snake". *Mulier* among Catholics could be considered as Eve, the Holy Church but above all the Virgin Mary. On the other hand, Protestants consider her as Eve or the genus of the woman, and also consider Adam as humankind, Gallo: 1953, 275.

30 "Opportune terminatur pars prior inquisitionis posttridentinae *Biblia Maxima Versionem Johannis De La Haye et dissertatione De Lapsu Priorum Parentum Martini Caselii*. Ille resumit ideas principiaiores in hac periodo apud catholicos, hic apud novatores", Gallo: 1953, 273. Gallo refers to Caselius 1637.

Meinrad Böhl followed Bauer's expression, although without reference to Vaccari's or Cornely's work: the use of the bibliographical category of 'Golden Age' seems to have gained academic acceptance (2007, 80). This statement is valid, however, only with reference to German, French, and Italian scholarship. Spanish scholars persist in using the expression 'Siglo de Oro' specifically to indicate the Spanish leadership in Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries. Therefore, Spanish scholarship prefers to use Jiménez Fajardo's 'segunda edad de oro de la teología escolástica'.

Meanwhile, other important publications related to Early Modern biblical scholarship have appeared. Specifically with regard to exegesis, Jean-Pierre Delville's *L'Europe de l'exégèse au XVI^e siècle* (2004) ought to be taken as the reference edition. Moreover, Euan Cameron has very recently edited a volume on *The Bible from 1450 to 1750* (2016), which includes a contribution co-authored with Bruce Gordon that is very helpful for retracing the history of "Latin Bibles in the Early Modern Period". Finally, in 2012 Wim François published a milestone contribution to the development of the category of 'Golden Age': "Augustine and the Golden Age of Biblical Scholarship in Louvain (1550–1650)", which is actually the starting point of this research. In his article, François briefly examines the key figures that worked during that Golden Age in Louvain and, by extension, in other academic environments in the Habsburg Spanish Netherlands, especially Douai.

I hope therefore to have provided a useful introduction to the historiographical category of the Golden Age of Catholic Biblical Scholarship. From Hurter, Cornely, Grabmann, Vaccari and others we can be aware of the flourishing of the Biblical studies in the period 1550–1650, prepared by a long century of research. However, I want to make it clear that I shall not be using this expression with an apologetic intent, nor do I wish to pass a value judgment regarding the quality of the Catholic scholarship which, of course, does not meet the standards of today's exegesis. Rather I shall use this category as a rhetorical means to indicate the dynamism of the biblical scholarship in Early Modern Catholicism, when a large number of Bible editions, commentaries and sermon books were published by many scholars. It is also a somewhat provocative term which can serve to draw attention to the important dynamism of biblical scholarship, which has been disdained – to a certain degree – not only within certain traditions of Protestant scholarship but also among some post-Vatican II Catholic writers (cf. Fischer/François/Gerace/Murray: 2020).

2. The 'Golden Age': roots and growth

Although the Council of Trent played a clear role, it was not the cause of the 'Golden Age': many other circumstances determined the development of biblical studies among Catholic scholars. It was around 1450 that many key events determined a turning point in Europe from which biblical studies benefited considerably and which eventually brought about the 'Golden Age'. First, the Council of Ferrara-Florence (1438–1439), in which the Western and the Eastern Churches signed a reconciliation: on that occasion about 700 Greek scholars accompanied the Emperor John VIII Paleologos. Among them was also the future Catholic Cardinal Basilios Bessarion (1403–1472) who brought his library (over 900 books) into Italy. This became the nucleus of the Marciana Library in Venice. In this period, Italy received 'immigration waves' from the last remnants of the Byzantine Empire – which finally fell in 1453 –, and the Greek scholars who moved to Italy gave a strong impulse to humanism which had already started in the 14th century with Francesco Petrarch (1304–1374). In the same period, in Germany, Gutenberg invented the printing press (*ca.* 1440) which allowed the propagation of ideas in a more efficient and quicker way. Biblical scholars could apply the philological skills developed by humanists to the Bible, not only in Italy with Lorenzo Valla, who wrote his *Adnotationes in Novum Testamentum* from 1440–1450. Indeed, at the beginning of the 16th century in Germany Johann Reuchlin (1455–1522) issued *De Rudimentis Hebraicis* in 1506, while, in France, Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples (*ca.* 1455–1536) published the *Quincuplex Psalterium* (1509) and the *Pauli Epistolae xiv. ex vulgata editione, adjecta intelligentia ex Graeco cum commentariis* (1512). A few years later, Erasmus issued his *Novum Instrumentum* in Basel (1516),³¹ a real landmark in the development of biblical humanism, while, in Spain, Cardinal de Cisneros (1436–1517) first established the *Universitas Complutensis* (1500). There, humanistic philological skills were applied to provide a polyglot Bible in Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek and Latin (1522). Moreover, the first Latin translation from Hebrew since Jerome's time was edited in 1528 by Sante Pagnini, who also provided a grammar and a dictionary of Hebrew (*Hebraicarum Institutionum libri quattuor*, 1526 and *Thesaurus Linguae Sanctae*, 1529; cf. Kessler-Mesguich: 2013, 121–151; Grendler: 2008, 240–247; Engammare: 2002, 41–52). The rise of the Reformation (1517) also contributed significantly to the development of Catholic Biblical scholarship since Catholics felt the need to counter Luther's *sola Scriptura* theology by focusing on the text of the Bible itself and studying the Latin and Greek Church fathers. In other words, Catholics needed to train themselves in order to counter the advance of Lu-

31 I shall deal with the biblical humanism in the Low Countries more specifically in the next section.

theranism and other 'heterodox' confessions, such as Calvinism and Anabaptism. Many Catholic biblical commentators appeared. In Italy, for instance, Cajetan published his *Ientacula Novi Testamenti* (1525), followed by commentaries on the Psalms (1527), the four Gospels (1531), the Acts of the Apostles (1531), the Pentateuch (1531), the Historical Books of the Old Testament (1533) and, finally, the Book of Job (1535) (O'Connor: 2017; Grendler: 2008; Wicks: 2008), while Agostino Steuco (1497–1548) published his annotations to the Pentateuch in 1529 (Delph: 2008; Grendler: 2008), and Jacopo Sadoletto (1477–1547) used the Greek and Hebrew 'originals' to emend the Latin Vulgate, even publishing a Commentary on Paul's Epistle to Romans (1535) (Grendler: 2008; Douglas: 1959). In France, Jean de Gaigny wrote several highly regarded commentaries on New Testament books: *Brevissima et facillima in omnes divi Pauli epistolas scholia* (1543) and *Clarissima et facillima in quatuor sacra Jesu Christi evangelia* (1552; cf. Delville: 2004, 352–357). Moreover, in 1540, Paul III approved the institution of the Jesuits, who put education at the center of their missionary work.

The solid foundations for the 'Golden Age' had been laid, and they were developed further by the Fourth Session of the Council of Trent which promoted the textual critical study of the Vulgate in order to restore it, also thanks to the *ad fontes* approach. The humanist-minded Fifth Session also contributed to the development of Biblical studies, by asking for the establishment of lecturships. Amongst the various centers of biblical studies – such as Alcalá de Henares, Cologne, Paris and Rome – maybe because of their strategic position, the Low Countries were a particularly fertile soil for theological debates and had a real influence on the history of Early Modern Catholicism. In fact, for at least fifty years, from 1533 to 1583, Louvain was the centre of reference and the most authoritative place for textual critical studies, as testified by the influence of Driedo's *De ecclesiasticis scripturis et dogmatibus* on the deliberations leading to the Fourth Session of the Council (cf. *infra* ch. 1). Moreover, the southern part of the Low Countries was a kind of 'Catholic wedge' between the strong Calvinist presence in the north, the Huguenots in France, the Lutherans in Germany and Scandinavia, and the Anglicans in England. Because of that, Catholics in the Low Countries particularly felt the necessity of both a thorough study of the Scriptures and their sound preaching, as ways to counter their many opponents who claimed to base their opinion upon the Bible.

In this book, therefore, I shall study the development of biblical scholarship in Louvain by analyzing seven authors who worked in the first part of the century in question and who are strictly linked to the Louvain milieu. In chronological order, they include Nicholas Tacitus Zegers (*ca.* 1495–1559), John Henten (1499–1566), Cornelius Jansenius 'of Ghent', Adam Sasbout,

John Hessels (1522–1566), Thomas Stapleton, and Francis Lucas 'of Bruges'. As I shall show by analyzing each of them in turn, my selection is in no case accidental: each author offered key-contributions that can effectively show the development of Catholic biblical scholarship in that period. This could be divided into three main thematic areas: 1) Text-criticism of the Latin Vulgate; 2) Exegesis of the Scriptures; and 3) Preaching of the Bible. Somehow, these three areas represent the 'study flow' of the Scriptures: the emendation of the Vulgate, aimed at restoring the text to a hypothetical 'original', and the philological approach to the Greek and Hebrew sources allowing for a better comprehension of the Bible. Such comprehension becomes the basis of commentaries made with the intention of explaining the meaning of the Scriptures to the faithful in the light of the Tradition. Furthermore, the Church needed to preach the Scriptures and their contents to the Catholic flock in order to safeguard them from any 'heretical' influence. Therefore, several homiletic works appeared so that priests could prepare their sermons appropriately. I have therefore decided to divide this work into three parts, each devoted to one of the three research areas, following the 'study-flow' of the Scriptures.

After an introduction to the religious, political and theological context in which these seven authors worked, I shall deal with the text-criticism of the Vulgate in Louvain, starting from the *Vulgata Lovaniensis*, first edited by John Henten in 1547 as an answer to Trent's request, and then by Francis Lucas' re-editions in 1574 and 1583. I shall pay particular attention to these works, revealing their importance within the context of the biblical scholarship in the Early Modern Era. In fact, the *Vulgata Lovaniensis* was the first revision of the Vulgate after its promulgation by the Council of Trent as the 'authentic' text, the only one allowed to be used within Catholic Church. The *Vulgata Lovaniensis* was the reference edition up to the publication of the Sixto-Clementine in 1592, and important scholars, such as Girolamo Seripando in 1561, expressed their appreciation for the Louvain work. Moreover, Lucas published his *Notationes in sacra Biblia* (1580). This achievement benefited from the advice of Cardinal Guglielmo Sirleto who also had his own copy of Henten's edition. The *Notationes* were later included in the *Vulgata Lovaniensis* of 1583. This text was first used by Sixtus V as the basis for his Sixtine edition in 1590, and then it was used as the reference edition for the Roman Committees working on the emendation of the Vulgate. In fact, the fifth and final Committee based the eventual Sixto-Clementine on the so-called *Codex Carafianus*, a copy of the 1583 *Vulgata Lovaniensis*, annotated by Cardinal Antonio Carafa. The Sixto-Clementine was then the only one that could be used within Catholic Church, remaining unchanged for almost 400 years. A revision of the Vulgate was required at the end of the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) by Paul VI, leading to the eventual issue of the *Nova Vulgata*