BEFORE he became archbishop, Langton was famous both as a master of theology and as a preacher, and his commentaries on the Bible have special interest as showing the close connection between these two activities. They were delivered as lectures in the Paris schools (circa 1180-1206) and have come down in the form of notes, probably taken by his students. In the course of his exposition the master instructs his pupils in the duty of preaching to the laity. He also uses many devices found in contemporary sermons; among them is the exemplum, or short anecdote, intended to illustrate some particular moral point.

In a recent work M. Welter describes the evolution of the exemplum. It was gaining ground at the end of the twelfth century, with the rise of popular preaching, and soon became one of the most characteristic features of medieval sermons, so that in the thirteenth century lists of exempla were drawn up and were a favourite aid to sermon making. The earliest known of these lists were compiled from the works of Odo of Cheriton (?-1247) and James of Vitry (1180?-1240). M. Welter points


4 James of Vitry probably composed his sermons after 1227-28: Odo of Cheriton drew up a collection of fables after 1219; his sermons were written in 1219 and were probably in their finished form in 1247. Welter, op. cit. pp. 119 and 124.
out the important rôle of Paris masters in the development of the exemplum: they would see its possibilities in the classroom, then make use of it in their preaching.¹ This is a striking instance of the scholar’s influence on contemporary life. It would be interesting to know how many of the stories in thirteenth century ‘example books’ were told for the first time by a lecturer to his pupils. Would they account for a large proportion of those in later circulation? The answer could only be found in copies of twelfth century lectures, which are abundant but nearly all unpublished. Langton’s commentaries, however, show that it is a rich field. Certain of his exempla appear again and again in thirteenth century collections; the material common to Langton and Odo of Cheriton, for instance, is remarkable.² In several cases the commentaries would be an earlier source for these exempla than any which has so far been suggested, and although there is no proof that subsequent writers borrowed from Langton, his commentaries had an enormous circulation and may well have popularised the exempla that they contain.³

² Odo studied at Paris, 1214-1221, cf. Welter, op. cit. p. 123. Very little is known of his life, so he may conceivably have been at Paris earlier and have known Langton.
³ Two exempla in thirteenth century example books can be traced to the commentaries of another Paris master, Peter the Chanter (d. 1197):

(i) The story of a preacher and his ass, used by Odo of Cheriton and others, occurs in his commentary on Job: Bibliothèque Nationale MS. Lat. 15565, P 29v. Herbert, Catalogue of Romances, op. cit. p. 419, gives this as the source of the exemplum.


The following list includes all the exempla in Langton's commentaries on the Old Testament which are not drawn from Scripture, legend, or classical antiquity. Where possible his source is given, together with a reference to the corresponding exemplum in the work of Odo of Cheriton, printed by Hervieux. Reference is also made to the Speculum Laicorum, a compilation made by an English mendicant at the end of the thirteenth century, edited recently by M. Welter who gives a list of all other works where each item is found. Where Langton's exemplum does not occur in Speculum Laicorum, reference is given to the Catalogue of Romances in the British Museum. Nos. 16 and 17 seem to be peculiar to Langton. Where Langton has drawn from a recognisable source the story is summarised; in other cases the text is reproduced in full. The last on the list (No. 18) is taken from his commentary on the Pauline Epistles and has already been printed by Mgr. Lacombe. It is included as a particularly interesting exemplum, a story about Abelard and the Cistercians.

It will be seen that Langton's choice of stories agrees with what we know of his character. The element of the marvellous and miraculous does not appeal to him; his anecdotes are pointed and humorous, the best of the curious genre which they represent.

The MSS. used are Trinity College Oxford 65 for the Pentateuch, Bibliothèque Nationale Lat. 385 for Judges, Rawlinson c. 427 for Kings and one version of the Minor Prophets, Trinity College Cambridge 69 for a second version of the latter, Laud Misc. 149 for Isaias, Peterhouse College Cambridge 112 for Tobias.
These were selected for convenience, since the surviving MSS. are too numerous and their tradition is too diverse to admit of any detailed study of the text: most of the commentaries exist in two or three reportationes. It has only been possible to examine and classify a large proportion of MSS., but this has shown that the exempla are an integral part of the original work.

(1) Hermit refuses to help his brother, on the ground that he is dead to the world.

Gen. xv. 10: aves autem non divisit.

‘Birds’ represent religious, who are ‘undivided’ in the service of God.

Unde in vita beatī Bernardi legitur quod cum quidam quereret a fratre suo heremita ut sibi succurat in temporālibus, ille respondit. Vade ad fratrem nostrum, et nominavit eum, et tibi succurat; et ille mortuus erat et ille stupefactus ait: ille mortuus est. Et ego similiter mortuus sum, dixit heremita. (Trinity Coll. Oxford 65, fo 41a.)

The story is taken, with alterations, from the Vita Patrum (Migne, Patrologia Latina, lxxiv. col. 379). This same version is given by Odo of Cheriton (Hervieux, Parabola, xv.) Speculum Laicorum (no. 44).

(2) Monk explains how to reach the Kingdom of God.

On the same text:

Item idem invenitur quod quidam accedens ad claustralem quemdam quesivit ab eo qualiter posset venire ad regnum Dei, et monachus exivit vestes et cingulo cinxit se et cucurrit. Per cursum devotionis, per cingulum abstinentia sive obedientia, per nuditatem abrenuntiatio: et dixit ei: ita venies ad regnum Dei. (ibid.)


1 I was able to work on the two Cambridge MSS. in Rylands Library through the kindness of Dr. Guppy and the Librarians of Trinity College and Peterhouse.
(3) Gen. xxiv. 33: Abram’s servant refuses to eat until he has told his message.

A cardinal visits France and is given a palfrey by a certain bishop. The bishop then comes to Rome and asks the cardinal’s support. The cardinal returns his gift, saying, ‘Now I have redeemed my freedom.’ (fo 55d.)

Taken from a sermon by St. Bernard. Migne, Patrologia Latina, clxxxii, col. 782. Speculum Laicorum (no. 406). Among the works enumerated by M. Welter where this exemplum occurs is a sermon by Odo of Cheriton which has not been published by Hervieux.

(4) Man prefers to die rather than commit fornication.

Gen. xxxix. 12. Qui relictio in manu eius pallio fugit (the story of Potiphar’s wife).

Unde quidam cum laboraret in lecto egritudinis et consularet medicos, ipsi dixerunt ei quod nunquam posset convalescere nisi cognosceret aliquam, qui ait. Malo centies mori quam fornicari, ac si diceret. Malo pallium relinquere quam dominam cognoscere. (fo 74d.)

A different story, which may possibly have some connection with this one, is told by James of Vitry (Catalogue of Romances, p. 19).¹

(5) Exod. xix. 5: Eritis mihi in peculium de cunctis populis.

A man raised from the dead by the prayers of a priest. (fo 122a.)

Taken from St. Gregory, Dialogorum, Lib. I, cap. 12, in Pat. Lat. lxxvii. col. 212. Odo of Cheriton (Hervieux, xxiv.).

(6) Archbishop of York weeps when pronouncing excommunication.

Exod. xxxii. 27: occidat unusquisque fratrem et amicum et proximum suum.

Sententia enim ecclesiastica fieri debet non ex rancore vel odio sed ex amore, ut occasione sententie alii convertantur ad gremium ecclesie. Unde quidam archiepiscopus

¹ I owe this to the suggestion of M. Welter.
Eboracensis semper ferebat sententiam cum lacrimis. (fo 169d.)

(7) English prince refuses to transact business after dinner.

_Lev. x. 9_: _Vinum . . . non bibetis._

Item noli regibus dare vinum quia nullum secretum est ubi regnat ebrietas.¹ Exemplum de Anglico principe qui post prandium nulli consilium daret vel sero loqueretur. (fo 188c.)

(8) _Deut. xiv. 12_: _Immundas ne comedatis._

A monk is found to have hoarded money. His body is thrown on the dung-heap. (fo 264a.)

Taken from St. Gregory, _Dialogorum_, Lib. IV, cap. 55, in _Pat. Lat._ lxxvii. col. 420.

(9) Man sells his cloak and lends the price at usury.

On the same text:

_De hoc narrat dominus Parisiensis, qui hoc audivit de eisdem, quod quidam videns alios multiplicari in divitiis pellitiam suam vendidit et eius pretium ad usuram aliis concessit._ (ibid.)

(10) _Jud. ix. 8-15_: Fable of the bramble chosen king of the trees.

A moralisation: the olive, the vine, and the fig tree represent religious refusing a bishopric. (_MS. Bibl. Nat. Lat. 385_, fo 150c.)

Told by Odo of Cheriton (Hervieux, cxl. and clxxvii.). See also the _Catalogue of Romances_, p. 34. The same moralisation occurs in the _Allegoriae in Vetus Testamentum_ (Pat. Lat. cxxv, col. 679)²

¹ _Prov. xxvi. 4._
² The _Allegoriae_ are printed among the works of Hugh of St. Victor. They are ascribed to Peter Comestor (d. circa 1178) by R. M. Martin, ‘Notes sur l’œuvre littéraire de Pierre le Mangeur’ in _Recherches de Théologie ancienne et médiévale_, III (Louvain 1931), pp. 56 ff. This is contested by A. Landgraf, _ibid._ pp. 357 ff.
(11) Woman tells bishop that he is eating her flesh.

*II Reg. xxiii. 17:* David refused to 'drink the blood of those who fetched him water at the peril of their lives.

> Et Micheas capitulo iii. Qui comedunt carnem populi mei et pellem eorum desuper excoriant etc.,¹ unde egregie cuidam episcopo qui ex religione abstinebat a carnibus, dixit quedam muliercula quod comederet carnes, quia a suis violentes exigebat talias. *(Rawl. c. 427, f° 29c.)*

Odo of Cheriton tells this story of a Cistercian Archbishop (Hervieux, cxiii.). In *Latin Stories* (no. 28, ed. Wright, from *MS. Arundel 52*) Baldwin, the Cistercian Archbishop of Canterbury, is named. In *Add. MS. Brit. Mus. 27909 B*, f° 5, a thirteenth century collection of moral sayings and tales, the same story with one slight difference is told of 'Becket's successor, a Cistercian.' Becket’s immediate successor was a Benedictine, but Baldwin came next (1185-90). *Catalogue of Romances*, p. 71. *Speculum Laïcorum* (no. 71).

(12) Bishop gives cure of souls to his nephew but will not trust him with pears.

*IV Reg. xii. 15:* Et non fiebat ratio iis hominibus qui accipiebant pecuniam ut distribuerent eam artificibus, sed in fide tractabant eam.

Certissima erat fides eorum. Similiter indubitabilis fidei debent esse quibus anime traduntur custodiende. Unde indiscrete dicitur quidam episcopus fecisse qui nepoti suo custodiam plurium animarum concessit, de cuius fide dubitavit quia noluit ei pira custodienda committere. *(f° 46c.)*

Odo of Cheriton (Hervieux, clxii.). *Speculum Laïcorum* (no. 48).

(13) *Tob. iii. 17:* Nunquam cum ludentibus miscui me.


¹*Micheas iii. 3:* a rough quotation.
(14) Despised monk is comforted by the Lord.

Isa. LI. 12 : Ego ego ipse consolabor vos.

Nota narrationis cuiusdam abbatis albi de quodam monacho peregrino quem alii minime consolati sunt. Et responsum est ei a Domino. Ego ipse consolabor te. (Laud Misc. 149, fo 72c.)

Odo of Cheriton gives an expanded version of this story (Hervieux, cxliv.) Catalogue of Romances, p. 398.

(15) Osee xiii. 10 : Ubi est rex tuus? maxime nunc salvet te.

An old knight, sick of the fever, tells his lord, 'Henry King of the English,' that he will enter the service of that Lord who can cure sickness at his pleasure. On recovery he becomes a Cistercian. (Trinity College Cambridge 69, fo 57c.) The same story is told on Zach. vii. 11, but Richard is the king mentioned (ibid. fo 184b). I have summarised this story which is told at great length. It was the most popular of Langton's exempla, see Speculum Laicorum, 518. The version most clearly resembling Langton's is contained in an anonymous collection, mainly derived from Odo of Cheriton, compiled towards the middle of the thirteenth century, Harley 3244, fo 74. (Catalogue of Romances, p. 457.) Here the details are substantially the same: the story is told of an old knight, ill with fever, and the King of England.

(16) Fulfilment of the prophecy that 'the stone shall cry out of the wall' against unrighteous builders.

Habacuc ii. 11 : Lapis de pariete clamabit.

Unde cum quidam palatinus canis cuiusdam regis, de rapinis et extractionibus domum miro scemate edificasset, rogavit quendam clericum ut titulum memorialem scriberet in introitum domus, quod et clericus fecit, dicens: facta domus furto, durabit tempore curto. (fo 143c.)

(17) Abbot passes his days of fasting in litigious business.

Zach. vii. 5 : Cum ieiunaretis . . . numquid ieiunium ieiunastis mihi?

. . . quidam enim acutius debitores suos repetunt, te repetendo diem fallunt. Unde audivi dici quod quidam
abbas qualibet sexta feria in pane et aqua ieiunans, ea
die specialiter collectis faciendis et causis audiendis
vacabat, ut falleret diem. (fO 183c.)

(18) Abelard rebukes the monks of Clairvaux for their
respect of persons.

Jac. ii. 1-2 : Nolite in personarum acceptione habere fidem... Dicitur quod Magister P. Abaalardus, volens videre
Ordinem Clarevallensem, solus intravit in vili habitu, et
cum pauperibus pauperrime receptus est. Sed crastina
die, receptis mutatoriiis honorifice intravit capitulum
eorum; et statim clamavit. Si introierit vir aureum
anulum habens etc. Et ipsi habuerunt eum odio dein-
ceps. (Bibl. Nat. MS. Lat. 14443, fO 438a). Printed by
G. Lacombe, op. cit. ‘Studies on the Commentaries,
etc.,’ p. 61.

The story follows up Langton’s discussion of the views of
Peter the Chanter on St. Augustine’s gloss of James i. 1-2.
The Chanter quotes this gloss in his commentary on Ecclesi-
asticus with the remark:

de quo (i.e. de acceptione personarum) Ordinem
Cisterciensem multum arguebat.1

The Chanter’s commentary on the Canonical Epistles has
no reference to Abelard, but several thirteenth century copies
have a marginal note written beside the comment on James i.
1-2:

Plura habeant exempla de acceptione personarum
ut de Abaelardo intrante Clarevallense claustrum et de
magistro G grammatico et de pontifice induto sacris qui
usurario assurexit et ut ei cederent clerici iussit.2

The Abelard story had evidently become one of several
commonly used to illustrate this text. It is told, with em-
bellishments, by Odo of Cheriton. (Hervieux, clxx.)

1 Bibl. Nat. MS. Lat. 15565, fO 102d.
2 Ibid. fO 150d. The note is in the same hand as the text. Brit. Mus.
MS. Royal 10, c. V. has the note in a different hand from the text, but con-
temporary.