The *Aeneid* as the Inspired Revelation of the Roman Church: Jacques Hugues’ *Vera Historia Romana*

It is well known that the Roman Church has looked favorably on Vergil due to the ‘messianic’ *Fourth Eclogue*. Moreover, throughout late antiquity and well into the Renaissance Vergil’s knowledge of all matters within his poetry has generally been regarded as consummate. Thus Vergil’s reputation as prophetic and infallible has attracted much allegorical treatment from Fulgentius in the fifth century through the Italian Renaissance. However, these allegorists have not satisfactorily explained the source and direction of Vergil’s authority. That is, under what inspiration and for what ends has Vergil embedded hidden truths and predictions within his works? Jacques Hugues’ seventeenth-century and almost completely unknown allegory that identifies St. Peter with Aeneas has, on the other hand, placed Vergil within a linkage of divine inspiration.

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3 For a survey of Vergilian allegory see the following: Comparetti *Virgilio nel medio evo* (as in n.1), 128-46; Hennig Brinkmann, *Mittelalterliche Hermeneutik* (Tübingen, 1980), 292-317; Chance, 45, 63-4; Don Cameron Allen, *Mysteriously Meant* (Baltimore, 1970), 135-62.
that gives the poet the revelation, the purpose, and the vehicle to conceal both Christian doctrine and predictions of the Church in Rome.

In 1655, Jacques Hugues, a canon theologian in the bishopric of Lille, Belgium, published *Vera Historia Romana*, his final work. The current Royal Belgian Academy’s *Biographie Nationale* lists five other books, of which one, surviving, is a rhetorical work on the parts of a Roman oration, and the other four are on religious subjects (658). Only his extant work on the Psalms bears any resemblance to the purpose of the *Vera*, in that it is an apologetic piece that tries to prove that ‘the Church of Rome is the true Church of Peter’ (1). In the United States the *Vera* seems to be available only at the libraries of New York Public, Boston Public, the University of Minnesota, and the University of Chicago. The work is an elaborate and imaginative allegory that purports to give, as the title indicates, the true history of Rome, as chiefly foretold in the *Aeneid*. For Hugues this true history, which begins long before Romulus and Aeneas, is the workings of Providence that culminate with Peter coming to Rome and founding the Church. A broad sketch of Hugues’ allegoresis sees both Peter and Aeneas leaving destroyed cities in the East, Jerusalem⁴ and Troy, and following a divinely charted course to establish an universal kingdom in Italy. Aeneas’ new bride, Lavinia, is the Church. Because the Church is the bride of Christ, whose earthly vicar is Peter, Aeneas’ second marriage to the native princess and Peter’s second marriage to the Church, *in loco Christi*, further identify the two. The resistance of Turnus and his ultimate defeat are the pagans and their conversion to the Church. Although Hugues begins his allegory with Noah’s son, Japhet, who civilizes Europe, and adds Homeric material to fill in chronological gaps, it is the story of Aeneas that is the ‘shell’ that conceals the central ‘kernel’ of truth.⁵ In criticizing the Jews for taking Scripture too literally and thus

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⁴ The fact that Titus does not destroy Jerusalem for another thirty years or so after Peter’s departure should not be a matter of concern for Hugues, who says in his introduction (*Apparatus* 8) that poetic genius can work loosely with time, place, and character. The truth itself will not falter over these kinds of details.

⁵ Bernardus Silvestris in his own twelfth century allegory of Vergil discusses the kernel of the message that has been intentionally concealed with a wrapping (*involucrum*) or covering (*integumentum*). See Brian Stock, *Myth and Science in the Twelfth Century* (Princeton, 1972), 37-40.
missing the intended message, Hugues describes the relationship of the inner and outer meanings.

’Sic est in fabulis, quorum pretiosum nucleum gentes fere nesciverunt, inutilem & noxium corticem solum amplexatae.’ (p. 2)\(^6\)

‘So in the stories, whose valuable kernel the unbelievers have generally been ignorant of, they have embraced only the worthless and harmful shell.’

The *Vera* received the *imprimatur*, dated September 14, 1655, and given at the church of Sant’ Andrea della Valle in Rome. Two church officials asserted that nothing in Hugues’ work was ‘offensive or contrary to sacred doctrine or moral teaching of the Catholic Church’. The censors said that not only the history but also the ‘allusions’ of the work maintain the faith. By ‘allusions’ (*allusionum*) the censors apparently approved the full extent of Hugues’ far-reaching allegoresis. However, one year after publication the *Vera* was put on the papal *Index*. Although it is not known who specifically condemned the *Vera*, two detractors, perhaps northern Protestants, strongly criticized Hugues. Joannes Böck’s principal disagreement was Hugues’ belief in the transmission of divine inspiration through the sibyls to Vergil. He says, ‘The word of God is not some fabulous poet’s.’\(^7\) Matthias Linck also found unacceptable Hugues’ explanation that it was Christian Providence, rather than the Greeks, that destroyed Troy, which he says is contrary to nearly all historical accounts. Apparently because of his placement on the *Index*, Hugues did not write

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\(^6\) The first thirty-eight pages of introductory material are not paginated. I will refer to these pages by placing p. before the number. From the *Apparatus* through the text itself are printed numbers (1-284), for which I will only cite the number.

\(^7\) For citations to Böck and Linck, see Allen *Mysteriously Meant* (as in n.3.), 162, n. 94.
his intended second book of the *Vera*, in which he promised to explain how the pagan religions adumbrated Christianity.8

That Hugues named his work *The True History of Rome* is no insignificant matter. The three principal words in the title each carried heavy implications in his day. In the 125 years preceding the *Vera*’s publication, the post-Reformation revisionists raised the questions: What is the *true* religion? What is religious and national *history*? What part, if any, does *Rome* play in the first two questions? Given these issues, one immediately recognizes the *Vera*, not to mention that it is written in Latin, as a focused response to the Protestant attack, and a defense of the Church’s historical claims. Kelley’s excellent discussion of the historiographical motives and methods of the early Reformationists provides a framework for specifically identifying Hugues’ apologetic intentions.9

The Protestant debate over what religion was the true one first required an argument based on historical antecedents. What could these European nation-states adduce to demonstrate some early independence of papal authority or at least a national trajectory uninfluenced by the Greco-Roman legacy? Asked differently, how could they establish a Protestant tradition *ex nihilo*? Kelley explains that one Protestant approach was the argument that they had maintained a continuity of the Early Church’s doctrine, which was to say that it was Rome who had gone off course. But the Protestant claim that they had preserved the pure religion amidst a relentless wave of papal crimes was not enough. Catalogues of reformers of and resisters to Rome created a more ‘human history’ consistent with the climactic events of Luther. Books of the acts of Protestant martyrs and ‘saints’ were thus one method ‘to approach the problem of finding a

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8 Hugues mentions this second book of the *Vera* on the last page of the *Promulsis*, a lengthy section of the work’s introduction and again in Chapter 30 (250), in which he is discussing the European sibyls. The final sentence of the *Vera* (Chapter 33, 284) also promises this book on theology.

tradition, of constructing its (Protestantism’s) history, in a different fashion.'"10

But in addition to this parallel ecclesiastical history, it also remained important for the Protestants to account for a national foundation story that diminished or altogether eliminated their evolution from Rome. Some national accounts were necessarily more imaginative than others. But in the case of Germany, Tacitus' *Germania* was a ready made, and admiring, rendering of the ancient German state and its people’s character. That Tacitus praised German warfare, particularly in light of the legions’ difficulty across the Rhine, further supported Germany’s rival claim to empire.

The French illustrate other means of divorcing their origins from Rome. Unlike the Germans, who had a classical, encomiastic text documenting their antiquity, the French sought perhaps to avoid Roman association altogether due to the popular and well attested Caesarian literature depicting their inferiority and subjugation. To bypass Rome, French historians of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries created fanciful genealogies and foundation myths, such as Francus, the son of Trojan Hector.11 The so-called lineage from Francus was particularly clever, since it put the French on par with, if not above, the Romans, whose Trojan founder, Aeneas, was not a inner member of the royal house of Priam. However, similar to German revisionists, French historians also drew on the tradition of the French monarchy, and making use of archival material and antiquities, developed other non-Trojan legends that traced the Gallic church back to apostolic times. This historiographical trend developed further in the seventeenth century, but the commonality since the days of Luther was the enormous effort, sometimes ingenious, other times silly, to exclude Italian contributions to the creation of a national story and identity.

Kelley’s survey of post-Reformation historiography ends with England, whose aims and methods remain much the same as those of

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10 Kelley *Faces of History* (as in n.9), 171.

11 Kelley *Faces of History* (as in n.9), 171.
Germany and France. The invocation of King Arthur had its popularity, and the search for and examination of old texts, monuments, and other source material were the ‘Herodotean efforts,’ as Kelley called them, that provided a new national history and tradition. England also invoked Trojan lineage; in this case it was Brutus, a great grandson of Aeneas. Although connections with classical antiquity were not completely eliminated, Rome as the principal conduit for England’s and later Great Britain’s development was dismissed.

Before turning to Hugues’ response to these historiographical innovations, a few other remarks will be helpful. Kelley quotes Jean Bodin: “‘No question has exercised the writers of histories more than the origin of peoples.’” Kelley himself continues: ‘For many people, too, the question of national origins is associated, if not identified, with that of the origins of the world; and so myths of origins have a theological and philosophical as well as a historical dimension.” The interest in national origins is closely related to, if not often the motivation for, the spate of genealogies, chronologies, and especially universal histories. These subgenres, as it will be seen with Hugues, are especially adaptable for making historically based claims for religious primacy and authority.

Just as the Protestant nation-states maintained various Trojan origins as a means to connect themselves with the classical past yet to remain disconnected from Rome, their expressed development from Japhet also accomplished this and more. The interest in Japhet as a state’s founder was based on certain elements of the concept of *philosophia perennis* (*prisca theologica, prisca sapientia*, or other combinations of these words). Faivre says, ‘This Renaissance search for a Prisca theologica represents one way in which Western esotericism focused its obsessive

12 Kelley *Faces of History* (as in n.9), 183.


14 Kelley *Faces of History* (as in n.9), 200-01.

15 Kelley *Faces of History* (as in n.9), 211-16.
quest for origins.' This ‘perennial philosophy’ in part was the belief that God’s full revelation was transmitted by a chain of prophetic personages, of whom the basic links were Adam to Enoch to Noah and to his sons, who in turn took this knowledge and inspired those whom they civilized. In a religiously unified Europe, it would be accepted that this divine knowledge was transmitted to and by the Greek philosophers and onward to the Romans. If, however, a national history wished to avoid the Greco-Roman channel of authority, the solution was to claim that Japhet himself was the direct founder and source of inspired knowledge. Such was the solution for France, Germany, and to a less extent England.

Hugues did not reject this tradition of perennial philosophy conveyed by Japhet. On the contrary, he bases his proof of the authority of Rome upon this same concept. Some accounts include the sibyls as the recipients of this early and pure wisdom. As it will be discussed below, Hugues devotes one-third of the Vera to proving that Latium was Japhet’s first stop and that through the local sibyls God’s revelation was passed on to the classical authors. In Hugues’ day and throughout the century before him philosophia perennis was a broadly invoked concept, especially evident by the publication of the great compendium of this subject, Henry More’s Conjectura Cabbalistica, two years before the Vera. Although

16 Antoine Faivre, Access to Western Esotericism (Albany, 1994), 58.


18 Helander ‘Neo-Latin Studies’ (as in n.13), 21-2.

19 Faivre Access to Western Esotericism (as in n.16) 35; Cees Leijenhorst, ‘Francesco Patrizi’s Hermetic Philosophy’ in Roelof van den Brock and Wouter J. Hanegraaff (eds.) Gnosis and Hermeticism (Albany, 1998), 127 and n. 18.

Hugues does not mention the cabbalistic tradition in the *Vera*, Ficino’s well known belief in the fifteenth century that *prisca philosophia* prefigured Christian truths could have given Hugues further incentive to identify the sibyls as the source of inspiration upon the Greek and Roman poets. Moreover, the partial and distorted nature of this *prisca sapientia* suited Hugues’ interpretations well. For the classical myths that predict Christian doctrine, treated below under the *fabulae doctae*, are precisely this: perennial, but imperfectly transmitted, truths. Although the credence in the national claim upon Japhet fluctuated, Hugues took full advantage of the tradition that *philosophia perennis* before the time of Christ was manifested in the Greco-Roman wisdom. It should also be pointed out that Hugues was not arguing only against Protestants. Certain Catholic scholars before him also were skeptical about the traditional origins of Rome, and although their doubts were not religiously motivated, they nevertheless played into the hands of the Protestants. The skeptics’ arguments generally dealt with the issues of availability and consistency of sources, not from any personal animus toward Rome.

Henry Cornelius Agrippa, who published *Of the Vanitie and Uncertaintie of Artes and Sciences*, summarizes well the state of confusion and incredibility of historiography a quarter of a century before the publication of the *Vera*. He says, ‘This Arte, albeit it doothe chiefly rquire an Order, Agreemente, and Truth, of all thinges: notwithstanding, it perfourmeth it leaste of all. Historiographers doo so mutche disagree emonge them selves, and doo write so variable and divers thinges of one matter, that it is impossible, but that a number of them shoulde be verie Liars, I speake not onlie of the begininge of the Worlde, of the Universall Floude, of the building of Rome...’ Agrippa then continues to list the causes of false history, such as the motives of giving pleasure

21 Leijenhorst ‘Patrizi’s Hermatic Philosophy’ (as in n.19), 127-8.

22 Beitenholz gives a very useful history of the skeptics and defenders of the traditional origins of Rome. Hugues, however, is not mentioned (Peter G. Bietenholz, *Historia and Fabula* [Leiden, 1994] 288-310).

and flattery and other self serving purposes, to which Hugues’ work aims to reply.

The preceding sketch of fifteenth and sixteenth century historiography is intended to provide a background for Hugues’ use of historia in his title. This done, Hugues’ selection of vera and Romana becomes immediately understood. The vera, of course, is an assertion that all the other recently developed national histories are false and are desperate attempts to establish a credibility and authority for their Protestantism. In the same way the word Romana reproves the Protestant historians’ efforts to exclude Rome from their works, which is to say that being true and being Roman are one and the same. He does much the same as the Protestant national historians in order to explain the origins of the Italians and the historical telos of the Romans in particular; and upon this foundation rests the truth of the Roman religion. Like the English and French in particular, Hugues also adduces a great deal of archeological evidence to argue for the legitimate origin of the Roman Church. For example, most of Chapter XXII deals with monuments, statuary, inscriptions, and sacred relics as evidence that the Holy See was divinely destined to be in Rome. In view of the significance of Hugues’ title and the Protestant background given above, the following is a brief overview of the Vera’s construction.

Of the thirty-three chapters comprising the Vera, the first ten more or less deal with Noah’s son Japhet. The purpose of this seemingly lopsided and front-loaded argument is twofold: first, to counteract immediately the Protestants’ appropriation of Japhet as founder of their nation states, and second, as will be discussed throughout the paper, to establish the link of inspiration from the Holy Spirit to the regional sibyls and thence to the classical poets. Thus Hugues in the first chapter not only explains Japhet as the father of the Europeans, but especially of Latium:

‘Latium in Europa, atque adeo orbe universo primaria regio, ab ipso Iaphet primum inhabitatum, & ab eodem Parente Lato Latium appellatum, sicut & Latini, & Latina lingua, omnem facile coniecturam vincit, Europam ab eodem cultam atque nominatam.’(13)
'Latium was the first inhabited place in Europe by Iaphet himself, and up to that time the foremost region in the entire world. It was called Latium by the same parent Latus, just as in the words Latins and the Latin language. This easily and successfully proves every conjecture that Europe was civilized and named by the same person.'

'Nam praeter apertissimum Etymom nominis Latii, ac Latini a Lato cuius est Synonymum hebraicum Iaphet, Italian in qua vetus atque novum Latium, olim Iapygiam, quasi Iapyciam, sive Iapytiam (ubi quoque promontorium Iapygis, & ventus Iapyx ab Italia in Graecia spirans) a vetustissimis Historicorum dictam accepimus.' (13)

'For besides the very obvious root of the name Latium and Latinus from Latus, whose synonym is the Hebraic Iaphet, we have received Italia, spoken by the most ancient of historians. In this is the old and the new Latium, formerly Iapygia, almost lapycia or Iapytia (where also is the promontory Iapygis, and the wind Iapyx blows from Italy toward Greece).'

Regardless of the merits of the foregoing argument, based chiefly on etymology as most of the work is, Hugues immediately claims Japhet as the founder of Latium and thus defines the origins of Rome, not only anterior to Romulus and Aeneas, but also understood to be inspired through God's word to Adam and Noah.

Chapters 2-10 largely deal with the development of Europe, chronologies, and genealogies deriving from Japhet. By the time the focus narrows to the city Rome and the Janiculum in chapters 11 and 12, the reader understands the direct, historical transmission from Noah to the Vatican. Chapter 13 introduces Aeneas, that is, the arrival and importance of Peter in Rome. The following fourteen chapters prove how the evolution of the Church, comprising edifices, festivals, liturgy, martyrs, popes, and sacred doctrine and mysteries, has been predicted chiefly in the Aeneid as well as in other classical literature. The final six chapters are a mixture of imperial history, further chronologies, and discourses on the
sibyls. Chapter 31 returns to the importance of Japhet, where Hugues traces the chronology from the Flood to the Nativity.

The preceding outline of the *Vera*’s development reflects the importance of its title and the significance to its times. With the preponderant argument made about Japhet founding Latium, the clarion themes of ‘true’ and ‘Roman’ now underpin the ‘history’ of the rest of Europe, Peter, and the Church that makes the large, middle portion of the *Vera*. Whereas England and France, as it has been seen, also claimed Japhet and a Trojan offspring as their founders, Hugues’ literary-based argument is far superior. Only he can adduce the greatest Latin piece of literature, whose hero comes from Troy, conquers, and colonizes Latium—that is, the uncontested national story of Rome, Italy, and the Empire. As it will be discussed below, it is the two threads of the Japhet and Aeneas stories that weave into the purpose and persona of Peter.

The title page to Hugues’ introduction sounds the thematic note to his argument for Vergil’s inspired prophecies. Prominent on this first page is the dedication to Fabio Chigi, that is, Pope Alexander VII, who was elected six months before the date of the *imprimatur*. Hugues immediately begins to develop the idea that Alexander VII is part of the chain of inspiration of which Vergil is a link. The next five pages are a highly imaginative address to the pope with the purpose of connecting the pontiff’s family with the unfolding revelation of Rome’s history.

Hugues’ argument begins with the assertion to the pope that it is the golden bough in the *Aeneid* (6.195-6) that divinely transmits and directs the earliest beginnings of Europe, Italy, and Rome. Moreover, Hugues says that Aeneas plucking the bough is really Peter choosing Alexander. Hugues makes this connection by identifying the oak of the golden bough with the ‘oak’ name in the della Rovere (‘of the oak’ in Italian) popes, especially Julius II, and the Chigi family of Alexander VII, who two generations earlier was adopted by the della Rovere.

‘...cum is (Petrus) Ramum Aureum in Chisia Quercu inventum deserpsit, hoc est, ALEXANDRUM, Surculum, suae Cathedrae vacantis successorem legit’ (5).
‘...when Peter plucked off the golden branch found on the Chigi oak; that is, he picks the twig, Alexander, the successor of his vacant episcopal seat.’

Hugues is also punning on the adjective Chisia. The reference is to the word ‘shady,’ found in the Vergilian passage immediately following (6.633) ilice opaca (‘shady oak’). But Hugues adapts the Greek word for shady (σκίος) and thus connects Alexander’s family name, Chigi, with the description of the oak on which grew the golden bough and the Italian word for church, chiesa. This extremely subtle word association illustrates to what length Hugues goes to prove his point. The added oak trees on the Chigi coat of arms demonstrate for Hugues this linkage back to the golden bough. The enigmatic ‘hesitating’ (cunctantem (6.211)) is, Hugues says, Chigi’s immediate reluctance to accept his election as pope.

‘...cunctantem vero, ob nunnallem (ut evenit) in Purpuratis Comitiis moram, antequam FABIO rerum potiturus, tantisper cunctando, Roma potiretur’ (5).

‘...truly hesitating on account of some delay, as it turned out, in the Conclave, before Fabio, though intending to master the situation but delaying just this long, took control of Rome.’

The ‘some delay’ that Hugues refers to was the protracted eighty day Conclave, at the end of which Chigi still expressed reservation about accepting the election.

Hugues uses the metaphor of exile to explain that the knowledge of Rome and of its people is now returning, once one recognizes that it was the power of Peter that plucked the bough. Hugues concludes this section of the introduction by reinforcing the connection between Alexander and the classical past. Citing Horace (Odes 1.12.45), he draws on the Julian star and the image of Marcellus and the Julian family growing like a tree that harks back to the oak and the divine bough. Hughes’ use of Ovid (Metamorphoses 15.868-70) praises Augustus’ ascent to heaven and his attention to the prayers of those under Alexander VII, who, because of Julius II, is now a projection of the apotheosized Julius Caesar and the Augustan line.

44
AENEID

This portion of Hugues’ introduction does not present an organized argument, but it raises three principles essential to the entire allegory. The first is that the current pope is ‘related’ to the ancient Julian family of Caesar, to the della Rovere popes, and ultimately to the founders of the Julian line, Aeneas himself and his son Iulus. For Hugues this is one of the strongest and most frequently used proofs that ancient Rome anticipated and even existed for the coming of the Church. Since Aeneas is the forebear of Alexander VII and other popes, Peter, the first pontiff, is the authority and persona of Aeneas, and hence the Petrus-Aeneas union that Hugues refers to.

A second essential principle in this section is the divinely inspired voice of the Sibyl. All of Aeneas’ actions in the last seven books of the Aeneid more or less develop from the instructions of the Sibyl. Peter’s divine mission to found the Church in Rome must have a counterpart in the Aeneid, and the Sibyl’s mandates to Aeneas fulfill this correspondence. And as has been seen, it is the bough from the oak tree that identifies the divine charge to both men and helps to join the lineage of both families.

After providing a summary of the thirty-three chapters of the Vera, Hugues sets forth twenty-three pages of additional prefatory information that he titles Promulsis, that is ‘hors d’oeuvre.’ The content and purpose of this lengthy piece are to demonstrate the long history of Christian exegesis upon pagan and Jewish texts. Thus Hugues draws upon Justin Martyr, Jerome, Clement of Alexandria, Lactantius, and Augustine, to name only a few, to convince the reader that he is following a well established tradition of finding Christian truths in non-Christian literature. Half way through the Promulsis Hugues introduces a third principle that is

24 On the reverse of the title page of Sir James George Frazer’s The Golden Bough is a passage from Macrobius’ ‘Praefatio’ to his Saturnalia. Macrobius and apparently Frazer are both apologizing for the seemingly random movements of their arguments. But, says Macrobius, although bees move from flower to flower, in the end is a well ordered honeycomb with its own flavor. This, I think, describes well Hugues’ argumentative style.
crucial to his exegetical methods; namely, the concept of *fabulae doctae*, that is, ‘learned stories.’

Because Peter warns against false teachers (2 Peter 1.16-2.22) and especially against the difference between subjective interpretation of prophetic scripture and the movement of the Holy Spirit, Hugues attributes to Peter the importance of *fabulae doctae*. These so called learned stories are the myths of the pagan poets who to varying degrees have been inspired by the sibyls and thus embedded prophecies within their tales.25

Hugues’ attitude toward the *fabulae doctae* is first one of disgust, even outrage. Once, however, he expresses this immediate displeasure, he explains the value of the poets’ stories. Though ostensibly angry at the perversion of Christian truth, Hugues of course realizes that his entire thesis and its proof rely on these learned stories. That is to say, he not only cannot dismiss them, but he knows that the holy voice of the sibyl resides within the myths and therefore must be extracted.

Early in the *Promulsis* (p.2) Hugues, quoting and translating Clement, says, ‘...omnes qui fuerunt ante adventum Domini sunt fures & latrones’ (‘...all who have been before the arrival of the Lord are thieves and robbers’) (Stromata 1.1). Hugues continues to explain that the Greek philosophers and poets rob from the Prophets and Scriptures and that the Christians need to recover these thefts. (‘Quis igitur non inique vetet, a Gentilibus ea furta repeti, quae Christus detexit?’/who could fail to be unjust by forbidding that those thefts which Christ revealed should be reclaimed by the Gentiles? [p.2]). Hugues again refers to Peter and credits him for calling such stories *fabulae doctae* ‘through which stories he has subtly suggested that the virtue and presence of Christ are able to be known’ (p.2) (‘...ut Petrus fabulas antiquorum, doctas appellant, iisque Christi virtutem ac praesentiam notam fieri posse subinsinuarit’).

25 Hugues refers at one to the ‘Sibyl’ and at other times to the ‘sibyls’. In the singular and in the context of the *Aeneid*, ‘Sibyl’ seems always to mean the Cumaean. It is not clear what other sibyls he has in mind when used in the plural. For Hugues’ understanding of the other sibyls, see the discussion below of Chapter XXX in the *Vera*. 

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Later in the *Promulgis* Hugues again harshly criticizes pagan authors who debase or obscure Christian doctrine through literary figures and manipulation. He asks,

‘Quis deinde in iisdem fabularum figuris, impuri daemonis opus non agnoscat, dum videt lascivis ac turpibus tropis, ac figuris mysteria casta ac divina inverti, & stupris, vi, raptu, adulteries, incestu signari?’ (p. 17)

‘Who then would not recognize the work of a vile demon in these figures of the stories, while he sees that the pure and divine mysteries are perverted by wanton and disgraceful tropes and figures and marked by defilements, violence, rending, adulteries, and incest?’

Hugues concludes again that it is Peter, who has identified and labeled this kind of corruption.

‘Itaque Petrus Apostolus non pias, non castas, sed doctas fabulas caute nominavit, quod doctrinam quidem propheticam continet in significato, verum pietatis & castimoniae saepissime expertem in phrasi, seu signo, ita ut involucro turpi & immundo res mundae tegantur.’ (p. 17)

‘And so the apostle Peter has named the stories not holy or pure, but learned, because they indeed clearly contain prophetic doctrine, but most often without a share in piety or purity in their diction or image, so that the refined matters are covered with a disgraceful and unrefined wrapping.’

Hugues’ conviction of the validity and importance of the learned stories as prophecies of the arrival of Christ and His Church compels him to repeat Peter’s role in this identification a third time in the *Promulgis* (p. 11) and several times again in the *Apparatus*.

The *Apparatus in Originem et Annales Latii vel Italiae ac Romanae Urbis* is another ten pages preparing the reader for the text of the *Vera*. 
Hugues makes multiple references to the *fabulae doctae* again (2, 5, 7, 8, 10) and expresses the same themes as those in the *Promulsis*, namely, Peter's naming and admonition of imperfect revelation, the pagans' perversion of Christian truths, and the revealed knowledge of Christ's virtue. However, what is different from the references to the *fabulae doctae* in the *Promulsis* is Hugues' assertion of the authority of the learned stories. This authority derives from the sibylline inspiration upon the poets, as the following passages illustrate.

`...adeo ergo verum est, quod Petrus supra insinuavit, Doctis fabulis, Christum notum fieri posse. Non aliunde ergo quam ab istis Prophetis...Sibyllinis (quas Patres gentium Prophetissas appellant)...' (5)

`...thus it is so true, which Peter implied above, that through the learned stories Christ is able to become known. Therefore from nowhere else than from these sibylline prophets (whom the Fathers call the prophetesses of the pagans)...'

`Venio ad historias novi Testamenti. Narravit Sibylla, Mariam Virginem, solam cubiculo inclusam, de Spiritu Sancto in eam superventuro, olim concepturam. At narrat Poeta, Danaen (Iordaneam, seu Iudaeam) Virginem in turri conclusam, caelesti & aureo Iovis (qui Ieova) imbre impraegnatam esse...’ (7)

`I come to the historical stories of the New Testament. The Sybil has narrated that the Virgin Mary, enclosed alone in a chamber, would conceive from the Holy Spirit coming upon her from above. But the poet tells that Danae (a Jordanian or Jewess), a virgin enclosed in a tower, was impregnated by a heavenly and golden shower of Jove (who is Jehovah).’

`Cur ergo, inqüies, hæ doctæ fabulae, quas tot menda inquinant? Quod etiam in earum erroribus mendaciis, & mendis, Sibyllae doctrina clare pelluceat.’ (8)
‘Therefore, will you ask, why are these stories learned, which so many mistakes corrupt? Because even in their errors, lies, and mistakes, the doctrine of the Sibyl clearly shines through.’

The passages above display Hugues’ frustration with the doctrinal corruption of the fabulae doctae, but they also show his confidence that the Sibyl’s inspired voice is within these myths and that the truth is evident. The second passage about Danae also illustrates well the how Hugues sees the pagan poet anticipating and debasing the story of the Annunciation. The Danae myth is one of lust, jealousy, violence, and other examples of behavior unbecoming to divinities. Yet Hughes finds enough similarities between the characters and actions in the two stories to maintain that the poet’s inspiration for the myth is the same as that of the Holy Spirit upon Gabriel’s message to Mary. The difference of the stories is the result of the poets receiving insufficient revelation and their non-Christian propensity to pervert—or at least not accept—the truth.

Near the end of the Apparatus Hugues says, ‘The day would fail me, if I were to provide the entire list of authors who not only related the mysteries of the Christian faith, never expressed in the Old Testament...’ (5) (‘Dies me deficiat, si omnes fabulas velim recensere, quae non solum Christianae fidei mysteria, tradunt, nusquam in veteri Testamento expressa...’). Finally concluding the Apparatus and the introduction as a whole, he repeats the value of fabulae doctae in terms of their allegorical nature. He says that since allegories are pleasant puzzles or riddles, they flow into the mind more gently. And the more enigmatic they are, the greater truths they can reveal.

‘Primo ut suavius istis allegoriis in animos illa influerent, nam voluptatem omne aenigma fere habet adiunctam, vel potius, ut Sacra mysteria iis quasi velis cooperta, Sacrationa vulgo haberentur.’ (8)

‘First, in order that they might. How into minds more sweetly by those allegories—for almost every riddle has pleasure as its accompaniment—or rather, in order that the sacred mysteries, wrapped (as it were) in veils, might popularly be regarded as even more sacred’.
Quoting and translating Clement, Hugues compares this idea to the perception of larger or thicker bodies when viewed opaquely through water or clouds.26

“Nam ut sapienter B. Clemens Alexandrinus ait (Strom. 1.5): ‘Temeratur, quod tritum est, & eo amplius, quae per aenigma designantur, multo magis aestimantur, ut corpora maiora, densiorave ad oculos fiunt, quae ex aqua aut per nebulam intuemur.’” (8)

‘For, as the blessed Clement of Alexandria says (Stromateis 1.5): “What is well known is emphasized, and all the more is it so that things which are indicated by a riddle are valued much more highly—as bodies become larger and denser to the eye when we observe them through water or through a cloud”.

Then Hugues adds that the allegory preserves the truth, even though the fabulae dociae themselves are superficially deceitful or erroneous.

‘Non enim, si falsam quamdam circumstantiam loci, aut temporis, personae, aut rerum historicus interdum narrando afferat, continuo Summariae veritas historiae labascit.’ (8)

26 More recent critics have remarked on the power of allegory. Fletcher says that allegory ‘is a human reconstitution of divinely inspired messages, a revealed transcendental language which tries to preserve the remoteness of a properly veiled godhead’ (Angus Fletcher, Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode [Ithaca, 1964], 21). Kelley talks about the ‘redemptive opportunity’ and the ‘world of eternity and resurrection to which allegorical signs point’ (Theresa M. Kelley, Reinventing Allegory [Cambridge, 1997], 257). Murrin believes that Vergil’s purpose is moral instruction and that allegorical applications of great poetry can civilize men (Michael Murrin, The Veil of Allegory [Chicago, 1969], 84). He adds that ‘the more intelligent auditor could pass from the veil to the truths concealed behind it and find there the secrets of the cosmos, of the human soul, and the divine action’ (131).
For if the narrator occasionally through his story-telling should relate some false information about place, time, person, or events, the truth of the abbreviated narrative does not immediately threaten to collapse.

Thus before Hugues begins the *Vera* itself, his *Apparatus* has instructed the reader of the power of the allegorical medium and the assurance that the truth will not totter.

Returning to the end of the *Promulgis*, the reader sees that Hugues has another introductory section titled *Testimonia Vetera ac Nova*, in which he cites several other ancient sources, such as Sallust and Plutarch, and his own contemporaries (p.35). This piece again underscores Rome’s pre-Romulus history and the city’s ultimate purpose. Following the *Testimonia* is another dedication to Alexander VII and to the authentic natives of Rome. Through this piece the author again connects the reigning pontiff to the inspired source of Vergils’ story. Presenting the pope’s crest, prominent with two oak trees, Hugues’ dedication says: ‘In Romae Natales, Ramo Aureo reperto in Gemina Quercu, fauste adinventos’ (p.28) (‘To those born in Rome, having favorably arrived, once the golden bough was found in the twin oak’). Two elegiac couplets, apparently written by Hugues, immediately follow:

‘Quis Genitor? Quaenam magnae Cunabula Romae?
Et quo creverunt maenia lacte, rogas?
Hacc dabit Auricomo quae frondet Virga Metallo,
Nosce ALEXANDRO sub Patre Roma Patrem’ (p.38)

‘Who is the founder? What is the source of great Rome?
And do you ask, with what nourishment they have created the walls?
The branch that sprouts with the golden-mettle leaf will grant these things.
Rome will know its father under the papacy of Alexander.’

The couplets are saying that the pope’s truths about the history of Rome are the same as the Sibyl’s truths given to Vergil and expressed in the bough’s inspiration upon Aeneas. Although Alexander is two and a
half centuries before the promulgated dogma of papal infallibility, the teaching authority of the pontiff in matters of doctrine and morality, that is, the Magisterium, nevertheless is thus derivative from the same inspiration that moves Vergil.

The first twenty-nine chapters of the *Vera* itself, as previously mentioned, treat the period from Japhet’s arrival into Latium through the Roman Empire. The final four chapters are summaries and emphases. In Chapter 31 Hugues gives a chronology of the events that he has already covered from the Flood to the Nativity, and in the following chapter he provides a similar review of Roman history. What frames these two chapters of historical surveys is Hugues’ return to the importance of the Sibyl in implanting and maintaining Christian truths within classical pagan literature. Thus Chapter 30 and the final Chapter 33 serve as testimony to the justification of, if not the obligation for, his own search and the validity of his discoveries.

In Chapter 30 Hugues gives the history of the sibylline voice from Noah’s family to the Roman Empire. He explains that, although Europeans think that there are multiple sibyls, there is only one voice. This explanation is consistent with the description of the Holy Spirit in the Nicene Creed: ‘...Who has spoken through the prophets.’ After describing various myths, such as the Argonauts and the Tarquins, in which the Sibyl appears, Hugues says that even Vergil can be deceived in the representation of the Sibyl.

‘Hinc & Virgilius in fraudem inductus, qui Sibyllam, ut energumenam, sparsis comis, non uno vultu & colore, anhelo pectore atque tumescenti bacchanterm, spiritui afflanti valide renitentem, denique ut a pravo genio possessam depingit.’ (253)

‘Hence even Virgil was led into deceit, who depicts the Sibyl as an active bacchante with disheveled hair, unstable expression and color, gasping and swelling breast, strongly resisting the spirit breathing upon her, and finally as one possessed by a perverse power.’
But Hugues assures the reader that the truth makes its way through the mythic distortions.

'Quamquam nihil ilila (sic) tanta obscuritas obstitit, quin Regem illum Sibyllinum, proxime adventurum non modo agnoscerent Romani, sed & universi sed & Europaei, ut ex historiis, ac Ecloga Quarta Maronis elucat.' (253)

'Nevertheless, obscurity as great as that does not stand in the way of anything. Rather, not only the Romans but even all Europeans would recognize that the King of the sibyls is nearby and about to arrive, so that from the stories and Vergil's Fourth Eclogue He shines through.'

The assurance of the truth of the Church is confirmed by Vergil himself in describing the utterances of the Sibyl:

'...Cumaea Sibylla horrendas canit ambages antroque remugit, obscuris vera involvens...' (6. 98-100)

'...the Cumaean Sibyl/ sings dreadful ambiguities and from her cave she bellows back/ enveloping truths with obscurities...'

Hugues says of this passage:

'...haec Poeta obscura vocare...videtur, quia non perinde gentilibus, ac Romanis nota, atque illa, quae temporalem Rempublicam spectarent, quae hic vera appellat.' (255)

'...the poet seems to call these things obscure, because they are not known to the pagans as they are to the Romans; and those things which have a regard to the temporal state, he calls true.'

Returning to the story of the reduction of the Sibyl’s books in the days of Sulla, Hugues explains the Romans’ early reception of Christ and then
repeats that the diminished voice of the Sibyl still is heard through the poets and historians.

‘Ut Romani toto orbe regnaturi, cum caeteris gentibus, suavius, ac citius sibi nuntiatum Christum susciperent, quem tot retro saeculis clarissime cernerent, a Sibyllis suis sibi praemonstratum.’ (256)

‘So that the Romans, about to rule the entire world, received more easily and quickly to themselves, along with the other nations, the announced Christ, Whom they perceived very clearly so many ages ago, foretold to themselves by their own sibyls.’

‘...ut iam Sibyllinis magnam partem amissis, vox Sibyllae tenuis in iis inclusa, iuxta vaticinium supra recitatum, adhuc audieretur.’ (256)

‘...so that with a great part of the Sibylline books already lost, the diminished voice of the Sybil enclosed within these books still is heard according to the prophecy recited above.’

The last chapter, 33, is an odd mixture of elements. It begins with an extended metaphor of viticulture, perhaps because the symbolic chapter number and the association of wine refer to the earthly end of Christ’s life. Hugues divides this chapter into three indices, by which the reader can refer to those parts of the *Vera* where he has credited the Sibyl with expressing Christian truths. The first section deals with the ‘vintage’ from the *fabulae doctae* and the leaves of the Sibyl regarding the rites, sacred mysteries, and dogma of the Roman Church in opposition to Athens (the philosophers), the gentiles, the Jews, and the heterodox. Hugues describes these ‘grapes’ as ‘fruitful’ and having been ‘pressed’ into the ‘pure wine’ of Christian and orthodox truth.

‘Quo fructus operae uberior existat, lubet ad extremum, Sibyllae oracula, quae veluti uvae toto Libro sparsae, hic coacervare, ut ex his collectis, ut in vindemia assolet, aliquod Christianae atque orthodoxae veritatis merum
AENEID

exprimatur, & gratus Romanae Ecclesiae fidelibus liquor...' (281)

'The richer the fruit of the work becomes, it is of the greatest pleasure to heap up the oracles of the Sibyl, as if grapes scattered throughout the entire book. Thus from these that are gathered, as it is accustomed for vintage, some pure wine of Christian and orthodox truth is pressed out, and the liquid is pleasing to the faithful of the Roman Church…'

Alluding to Plutarch that the Sibyl is the voice of God, Hugues concludes this section by rhetorically asking, 'Who would be able to deny that all these things have been predicted by the divine inspiration of the prophets or the sibyls?' (...quis negare queat, ea Prophetarum seu Sibyllarum divino afflatu, cuncta esse praedicta...? [281]) Perhaps fearing the charge of heterodoxy himself, Hugues never specifically mentions the Holy Spirit at work upon the sibyls, but by a slip of logic Hugues says exactly this. That is, it is orthodox, of course, to believe that the Holy Spirit comes upon the Prophets, so this divinus afflatus that breathes upon the Prophets must be the Holy Spirit that also inspires the sibyls.

The second section of Chapter 33 is an index, sub-titled where the prophecies (vaticinia) of the Sibyl speak against Athens, the gentiles, the Jews, and ‘other infidels’. Hugues then provides scores of references to the text of the Vera. The third section of the final chapter is sub-titled where the prophecies ‘of this same Sibyl’ oppose Lutherans, Calvinists, and ‘other least orthodox’ (various heretics). Again he cites chapters and pages where such discussions and text proofs have occurred in the Vera. Hugues adds a Protestatio Authoris by repeating the validity of all these predictions and by submitting his work to the judgment of the Church, in whose Son he wishes to live and die.

'Quamquam illa omnia ...dicta esse protestor, eaque, uti & singula atque universa, hoc Libro contenta, judicio eiusdem Ecclesiae Romanae, ut par est, submitto, cuius filius vivere ad extremum spiritum, atque mori volo.' (284)
‘Nevertheless I maintain that all those things...have been said, and I submit them, as contained both individually and altogether in this book, for the judgment of the same Roman Church, as is appropriate, in whose Son I wish to live to my last breath and die.’

So ends the Vera.

Hugues’ innovation, that is, his explanation of and insistence upon the poet’s inspiration, is a consequence of the purpose of the Vera. Fulgentius’, Bernardus Silvestris’, and Landino’s allegories, for examples, are more or less secular or at least non-sectarian. Their Aeneas is Everyman, who, as Fulgentius says, represents the ‘full range of human life’. They see Aeneas as any person’s development from the worldly, active life to a virtuous, contemplative existence. Although they often employ incredible etymologies in revealing the text’s hidden truths, their allegorises, since they do not purport to prove religious doctrine, remain uncontroversial and acceptable within the tradition of Vergil’s omniscience.

Hugues, however, comes at a time when Vergil’s authority needs substantiation in order to counter the Protestant arguments of national histories and religious authority. To predict the Church’s foundation, her leaders, and ritualistic and doctrinal development required an inspiration different in kind from the brief messianic message in the Fourth Eclogue or from the Prophets of the Old Testament. Moreover, Hugues needed the long sweep of an epic to account for the divine origins of Latium and Italy as an apologetic response to the Protestant revisionism. To achieve this Hugues has traced the sibylline voice from the Flood to the golden bough. Aeneas’ plucking of the bough from the oak not only unites him to the evolution of Providence up to that point but also places him on the same course as Peter and all of his papal successors, most notably the currently reigning Alexander VII.

Finally, Aeneas' knowledge is, of course, really that of Vergil. When for example, Macrobius admires Aeneas' correct behavior in sacrificial rites, he praises Vergil, not Aeneas, for his complete knowledge of religion (Sat. 3.6.1). Hugues never specifically accounts for Vergil's 'contact' with the Sibyl, but repeatedly says, as pointed out above, that the works of poets and historians are divinely inspired in varying degrees. This, from Hugues' point of view, is hardly remarkable, for the Holy Spirit is audible for anyone who listens. What makes Vergil more responsive to the Sibyl's voice and therefore more prophetic is that he has chosen a lengthy subject that is adaptable to symbolize the early history of the Church. Although it is the character of Aeneas who represents Peter, Vergil himself has plucked the golden bough and has prophesied through the narrative of his poem. Thus his inspired work is 'deliberate allegory,' meaning that the author understood to some degree his intention.  

The first word of Hugues' title, *Vera*, sounds the alarm and controls the tone, purpose, and method of the work. The apologetic tone and the purpose of the *Vera* are to refute the Protestant revisionism undermining papal authority based in large part on tradition. Hugues proves that the Catholic tradition is true by calling to witness the underlying predictions in the greatest classical literature, something that no Protestant can do in such venerated texts. But more than this Hugues, embracing the tradition of *philosophia perennis*, demonstrates that the divine inspiration from God to Adam, Enoch, Noah, and Japhet has been transmitted to the ancient poets, and most especially to Vergil. That the *Vera Historia Romana* proves that the *Aeneid* is the voice for the Holy Spirit, by Whom the Church and the popes are predicted, is a bold and imaginative advance in the long history of Vergilian allegoreses.

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