

## Introduction

After completing his study of Ecclesiastes exegesis, Christian David Ginsburg identified one sentiment shared by all interpreters of the text. It was nuanced here and there, yet always present: a common thread joining the exegetes of antiquity to the exegetes of his day. “Every fresh commentator either actually or virtually regards all his predecessors as having misunderstood Coheleth,” Ginsburg wrote in 1861.<sup>1</sup> A review of the literature written after Ginsburg gives one the impression that his statement should be considered axiomatic. Ecclesiastes exegesis is unified by the fact that each new commentator feels compelled to give those before him a nudge onto the right path. Some have argued that the very epilogue began the process, and there seems to be no stopping it.

At the same time, exegetes both ancient and modern who have tackled Ecclesiastes show a remarkable agreement on the general topics which their discussions consider. Michael V. Fox, who surveyed the available exegesis in 1999, noted that “[m]ost of the main ideas that modern interpretation ascribes to Qohelet can be found, with different emphases, in the interpretations of the earliest exegetes—a fact that seems to show that the essential themes of the book are clear.”<sup>2</sup> Perhaps by now we should know that it is silly to expect something new under the sun.

Where and how does the *Glossa Ordinaria* fit into the narrative of Ecclesiastes exegesis? The *Glossa* was the main exegetical instrument by which the Bible was taught and studied during the Middle Ages, a resource whose influence began in the early twelfth century and is still perceptible in theological writing beyond the sixteenth century. It has been suggested that the very ubiquity of the *Glossa*, “the sheer scale of the [*Glossa*] problem,” has deterred scholars from research,<sup>3</sup> thus allowing questions concerning its origins and development to remain unanswered for decades. Recently, however, we have had a surge of scholarship on the Laon–Paris teaching *milieu* in which the *Glossa* was central.<sup>4</sup>

1. Christian David Ginsburg, *Coheleth, Commonly Called the Book of Ecclesiastes* (London, 1861), 73.

2. Michael V. Fox, “Qohelet: History of Interpretation,” *Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation* (Nashville, 1999), 2: 346–54, at 349.

3. Lesley Smith, *The Glossa Ordinaria: The Making of a Medieval Bible Commentary* (Leiden, 2009), 234.

4. See Alexander André, “Peter Comestor’s Lectures on the *Glossa ‘Ordinaria’* on the Gospel of John: The Bible and Theology in the Twelfth-Century Classroom,” *Traditio* 71

The following edition, and the series of which it is a part, hopes to contribute to this scholarship by offering the first ever editorial and contextual analysis of glossed Ecclesiastes.

British historian Beryl Smalley was the first modern scholar to give the *Glossa* attention, publishing the first of a series of articles on the subject in the 1930s.<sup>5</sup> Studying the early manuscripts and examining contemporary medieval authors who wrote about the *Glossa*, she rejected the widespread notion that Walafrid Strabo was responsible for the work. She believed that Anselm, the twelfth-century master of Laon's cathedral school, conceived the project of glossing the Bible. In the hope that its origins would be demystified, Smalley called for editions to be made from early *Glossa* manuscripts.<sup>6</sup> Smalley's fame drew other scholars to study the *Glossa*. Until Mary Dove's 1997 edition of the glossed Song of Songs,<sup>7</sup> however, most scholarly interest resulted only in articles discussing eclectic aspects of the *Glossa* without attempting to contextualize these issues within the larger project of *Glossa* research that Smalley had envisaged. Dove's edition gave this project a new impetus; there were more monographs. And finally, in Lesley Smith's 2009 book and Alexander Andr ee's 2005 partial edition of glossed Lamentations,<sup>8</sup> there were attempts to place new findings in dialogue with the themes of seventy years' scholarship.<sup>9</sup> A further surge of scholarship was inspired by these treatments.

The present work condenses the editor's study of glossed Ecclesiastes's place

---

(2016), 203–34; and Mark Clark, "Peter Lombard, Stephen Langton, and the School of Paris: The Making of the Twelfth-Century Scholastic Biblical Tradition," *Traditio* 72 (2017), 171–274.

5. See Beryl Smalley, "Les commentaires bibliques de l' poque romane: glose ordinaire et gloses p rim es," *Cahiers de civilisation m di vale* 4 (1961), 15–22; "Gilbertus Universalis, Bishop of London (1128–34) and the Problem of the Glossa Ordinaria," *RThAM* 7 (1935), 235–62 and 8 (1936), 24–60; "Glossa Ordinaria," *Theologische Realenzyklop die* 13 (1984), 452–57; "La Glossa ordinaria: Quelques pr d cesseurs d'Anselme de Laon," *RThAM* 9 (1937), 365–400; *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, 3rd ed. (Oxford, 1983).

6. Smalley, "Commentaires," 22.

7. *Glossa ordinaria in Canticum canticorum*, ed. Mary Dove (Turnhout, 1997).

8. *Glossa ordinaria in Lamentationes Ieremie prophete: Prothematia et Liber 1*, ed. Alexander Andr ee (Stockholm, 2005).

9. Significant contributions include Margaret T. Gibson, "The Place of the Glossa Ordinaria in Medieval Exegesis," in *Ad Litteram: Authoritative Texts and Their Medieval Readers*, ed. Mark D. Jordan et al. (Notre Dame, 1992), 5–27, and Giuseppe Mazzanti, "Anselmo di Laon, Gilberto l'Universale e la 'Glossa Ordinaria' alla Bibbia," *Bullettino dell'Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo* 102 (1999): 1–18. Also important for our understanding of the origins of the *Glossa* is C dric Giraud, *Per verba magistri: Anselme de Laon et son  cole au XIIe si cle* (Turnhout, 2010). The classic overview of layouts used for commentaries is found in Gerhard Powitz, "Textus cum commento," *Codices manuscripti* 3 (1979): 80–89.

in the historical tradition of Ecclesiastes exegesis and the differences between the two versions of the text. Its focus is the manuscript tradition of the *Glossa* on Ecclesiastes, how its sources are used by the glossators, and what this source adaptation might suggest about the *Glossa*'s purpose. It is hoped that the study and edition together provide data supporting broader theories about the *Glossa*'s place in the intellectual history of the Middle Ages.

The research presented here revealed a lucky dovetailing: when a biblical text no one agrees upon is analyzed in a commentary that many have struggled to understand, a surprising number of the same questions are asked about each of them. A comprehensive understanding of the history of Ecclesiastes exegesis was necessary in order to fix the *Glossa* in that history and to see its relationship to the exegesis before and after it. Considering what the ancient Christian exegetes, the Fathers, and the commentators before the *Glossa* say about Ecclesiastes allows us to analyze, in the following sections, how these sources are used in the *Glossa*. The latter analysis helps us to judge how the *Glossa* itself was used. I also look at Ecclesiastes exegesis after the *Glossa*, and what it can tell us about the *Glossa*'s place in the changing pedagogy of the Bible. For example, could the Victorine focus on literal interpretation have been a reaction against the *Glossa*, which is said to have emphasized a spiritual reading of the text?<sup>10</sup>

As noted above, the question of who was responsible for glossing each of the books of the Bible is still debated in the literature. And there is more than one "who." Glosses often came from Carolingian compilations; they derive heavily from the *auctoritates*; and the material was worked into the appropriate form by *magistri* and glossators. The *Glossa* scholar is faced with missing attributions in *Glossa* manuscripts, an oral tradition in which a master's *fama* came from his lectures and not his writings, a culture of scholarly anonymity, and derivativeness which can seem mechanical. These unsolved questions of authorship have led some *Glossa* scholars to suggest that we are falsely seeking to impose a Romanticized notion of the author as solitary genius and modern notions of novelty and ownership onto a fundamentally different culture.<sup>11</sup>

The hermeneutic approaches seen in Ecclesiastes exegesis provide an excellent means by which these issues of authorship may be viewed more abstractly. Recall Ginsburg's assessment of the discord in Ecclesiastes exegesis. A chief *locus* of this discord concerns authorship. Is the epilogist the author of Ecclesiastes? Is Kohelet the author? Or is the entire book delivered by a speaker who adopts many personalities? Are the maxims in Ecclesiastes culled

10. Smith, for example, has found the *Glossa* to have a "predominantly spiritual viewpoint" (*Glossa Ordinaria*, 236).

11. See, for example, Smith, *Glossa Ordinaria*, 37.

from the authorities of a contemporary wisdom school? To what degree does the assumption of Solomonic authorship explain Ecclesiastes's acceptance into the biblical canon? Ecclesiastes's Solomonic pedigree is among the first things Jerome, Gregory, and Alcuin bring to our attention in their discussions of the book, a testament to how important this authorship/*auctoritas* was. Studying authorship issues in relation to Ecclesiastes allows us a more nuanced view of the authorship issues in the *Glossa*.

A further example of the dovetailing of research on Ecclesiastes and the *Glossa* is found in the notion of authorial intention. Craig G. Bartholomew's 1998 study of the development of hermeneutical theory as demonstrated in the history of Ecclesiastes interpretation drew attention to the pervasiveness of the intentional fallacy in analysis of this book.<sup>12</sup> We see this concern with authorial intention when exegetes have considered what Kohelet meant when he said, for example, "That which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity" (3:19).<sup>13</sup> (The words are simple, yet the passage has attracted a great deal of commentary.) The intentional fallacy suggests that it might be fruitless to speculate about the intent of an author when all we have to go on are the words on the page and our reaction to those words. For example, does it really matter that Ecclesiastes's epilogist intended to weaken the impact of Kohelet's words for posterity if, based on the main text's continued ability to engage us, the epilogue has nearly completely failed to win over any implied reader?<sup>14</sup> Who gets to decide what a text means, and how should that colour our assessment of the text? The issue of intention is also highly applicable to our judgement as to whether the *Glossa* had an overall "program," whether Christological glosses of Ecclesiastes are inherently anti-Semitic, and also whether Alcuin's renderings of Jerome on Ecclesiastes can be best explained by his desire to comment on the Carolingian court (a scholarly intention) or his desire to cut down a wordy parallelism (a mechanical intention). In the vein of Bartholomew's study, the research presented here aims to reveal the main developments in the history of exegesis by describing changing approaches to the text of Ecclesiastes.

12. Craig G. Bartholomew, *Reading Ecclesiastes: Old Testament Exegesis and Hermeneutical Theory* (Rome, 1998).

13. Biblical quotations in English are derived from the King James Version, unless otherwise noted.

14. John Jarick makes a similar argument in his excellent 2007 review of the works of Shields and Christianson. (Jarick, "The Enigma that is Ecclesiastes," *Lutheran Theological Journal* 41.2 [2007]: 103–9.) Eric S. Christianson, *Ecclesiastes Through the Centuries* (Oxford, 2007), also touches on the issue of intentionality in his full-length study of Ecclesiastes.

As (pseudo-)Rupert of Deutz says in his *Commentarius in Librum Ecclesiastes*:

This book is like the basin which Moses made from the mirrors of the women (Ex. 38:8). For he showed that in these mirrors one could see not only the faces of people, but also their minds. Likewise, the preacher Ecclesiastes made this book from bronze and from the mirrors of the women so that he could look into the minds of people. And that is why in this mirror he sees the things people do in the world.

(Iste liber est quasi labrum quod fecit Moyses de speculis mulierum [Ex. 38:8]. Docuit enim ille in talibus speculis speculari non solum facies, sed et mentes hominum. Hunc etiam librum Ecclesiastes fecit ex aere et speculis mulierum, ad speculandas mentes hominum ... Igitur in hoc uidet speculo quodcunque agunt homines in mundo.)<sup>15</sup>

15. PL 168: 1197C. For the history of the attribution of this work and the theory that it was in fact written by Sigebert of Gembloux, see Francesco Mosetti Casaretto's article "Sigeberto di Gembloux e il mistero dell' 'In Ecclesiasten' geminato," *Revue bénédictine* 125 (2015): 305–38.