



# Glossa Ordinaria: The Formation of the Standard Biblical Exegetical Tradition in Medieval Christian Theology

► Araştırma makalesi / Research article

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## Abstract

The Glossa Ordinaria is regarded as one of the most significant biblical commentaries of the medieval Christian world. Developed in the 12th century, this work played a central role in both monastic education and scholastic theology by compiling exegetical traditions derived from patristic authorities. This study examines the historical development, structural features, sources, and theological authority of the Glossa Ordinaria. In particular, it explores the role of the Cistercian Order in the dissemination of the text and its use in biblical education at medieval universities. Furthermore, it addresses the critiques of the Glossa Ordinaria during the Reformation and its relevance in modern academic research. Beyond being a mere exegetical tradition, the Glossa Ordinaria serves as a fundamental resource for understanding the development of medieval theological thought. However, the absence of a critical edition presents significant challenges for scholarly engagement with the text. In this context, this study underscores the theological and historical significance of the Glossa Ordinaria, discussing both the opportunities and limitations it presents for contemporary research.

**Keywords:** Christianity, Glossa Ordinaria, Medieval Theology, Biblical Exegesis, Cistercians.

## Glossa Ordinaria: Orta Çağ İlahiyatında Standart Kutsal Kitap Tefsir Geleneginin Oluşumu

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## Öz

Glossa Ordinaria, Orta Çağ Hristiyan dünyasında Kutsal Kitap'ın yorumlanmasında kullanılan en önemli şerhlerden biri olarak kabul edilmektedir. 12. yüzyılda şekillenen bu eser, patristik otoritelerden derlenen yorumları bir araya getirerek hem manastır eğitiminde hem de skolastik teoloji içinde merkezi bir rol oynamıştır. Bu çalışma, Glossa Ordinaria'nın tarihsel gelişimini, yapısal özelliklerini, kaynaklarını ve teolojik otoritesini incelemektedir. Özellikle Sistersiyen Tarikatı'nın eserin yayılmasındaki etkisi ve üniversitelerde Kutsal Kitap eğitimi alanındaki kullanımı ele alınmaktadır. Ayrıca, Reform hareketi sırasında esere yönelik eleştiriler ve modern akademik çalışmalarda yeri de değerlendirilmiştir. Glossa Ordinaria, yalnızca bir tefsir gelenegi olarak değil, aynı zamanda Orta Çağ ilahiyat düşüncesinin gelişimini anlamak açısından da temel bir kaynak niteliği taşımaktadır. Ancak, eleştirel bir baskısının eksikliği, metnin akademik araştırmalar açısından bazı zorluklar barındırmasına neden olmaktadır. Bu bağlamda çalışma, Glossa Ordinaria'nın teolojik ve tarihsel önemini vurgulayarak, modern araştırmalar açısından sunduğu imkânlar ve karşılaşılan sınırlamaları tartışmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Hristiyanlık, Glossa Ordinaria, Orta Çağ Teolojisi, Kutsal Kitap Şerhi, Sistersiyenler.

## Giriş

The *Glossa Ordinaria* is recognized as one of the most significant and influential works in the medieval tradition of biblical exegesis. Widely utilized in both monastic life and academic circles, this text played a central role in shaping Christian theology. Developed in the 12th century, the *Glossa Ordinaria* serves as an essential resource for understanding how the Bible was read, interpreted, and commented upon in the medieval Christian world. Enriched with excerpts from the works of prominent theologians such as Jerome (d. 420), Augustine (d. 430), Gregory the Great (d. 604), and other Church Fathers, this compilation stands out for its synthesis of exegetical traditions within ecclesiastical thought. By assembling patristic interpretations, the *Glossa Ordinaria* facilitated the collective development of theological thought throughout the Middle Ages, particularly in Western Europe.

One of the most distinctive features of the *Glossa Ordinaria* is its marginal glosses (commentaries) and short interlinear annotations, which frame the biblical text. This structural format, preserved in both manuscripts and printed editions, offers valuable insight into medieval methods of biblical reading and interpretation. Beyond its extensive use in monasteries and universities for biblical education, the *Glossa Ordinaria* also shaped the intellectual framework of scholastic theology. Prominent theologians such as Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274) frequently referred to it, reinforcing its status as an authoritative source. The multi-layered exegetical approach embedded in the *Glossa Ordinaria* aimed to uncover both the literal and the allegorical or mystical meanings of sacred texts. This hermeneutical method emphasized the necessity of deep exegetical engagement, rather than relying solely on surface-level interpretations. Consequently, the *Glossa Ordinaria* emerged as one of the most important biblical commentaries of the Middle Ages, often referred to as the "Medieval Bible."

The dissemination of the *Glossa Ordinaria* owes much to monastic traditions, particularly the Cistercian Order, which played a crucial role in copying and distributing the text across European monasteries. Their efforts ensured the text's broad transmission and integration into theological education. Additionally, the *Glossa Ordinaria* continues to attract significant scholarly attention in modern academic studies, especially within the field of medieval theology. However, the lack of a comprehensive critical edition remains a significant gap, complicating in-depth research on its historical development and content. Despite this limitation, the *Glossa Ordinaria* endures as one of the most foundational examples of biblical exegesis in Western Christianity, maintaining its historical and theological relevance even today.

This study explores the historical background and origins of the *Glossa Ordinaria*, its structural features, language, and style, its sources and theological authorities, the Cistercian Order's role in its transmission, its impact on medieval Christianity, its contribution to theological and intellectual traditions, its relationship with the Reformation, and its position in modern research.

## Definition

The Latin term *glossa* derives from the Classical Greek word γλῶσσα (*glossa*), which refers both to the tongue as a speech organ and, metaphorically, to language or speech.<sup>1</sup> The modern English word *gloss* is derived from this root. In its technical sense, *glossa* typically refers to a brief annotation—often consisting of only a few words—added to the margins or between the lines of a text to clarify an ambiguous term. In Turkish usage, this concept can be translated as "haşıye" (marginal note or gloss). Accordingly, a biblical gloss can be defined as a brief annotation added to the margins or between the lines of a text to explain a specific word, often comprising just a few words. Christian writers also used the term *glossa* specifically in connection with Sacred Scripture, extending beyond doctrinal, ritual, or historical ambiguities to focus on elucidating the text's purely linguistic difficulties. The words requiring glosses can generally be categorized into five main types:

- i. Foreign words-terms appearing in the text that originate from a language different from the primary one of the manuscript.
- ii. Dialectal expressions-regional or vernacular terms that were not widely understood outside specific localities.
- iii. Archaisms-words that were once common in earlier periods but had fallen out of regular use by the time of the text's composition.
- iv. Technical terms-specialized vocabulary associated with a particular scholarly or professional field.
- v. Unexpected or unusual usages-instances where words are employed in a rare, figurative, or grammatically irregular manner.<sup>2</sup>

The term *glossa* has been said to apply to nearly all forms of biblical commentary. As marginal annotations multiplied over time, it became practical to collect them either in sequential order according to their textual placement or in alphabetical compilations. Such collections sometimes evolved into glossaries, which were occasionally referred to simply as glosses. Among the most notable biblical glossaries are: The 4th-century lexicon of Hesychius of Alexandria, The 9th-century lexicon of Photius, The 10th-century lexicon of Suidas. Initially, these glossaries consisted of only a few words. However, as lexicographers expanded their compilations by adding their own interpretations and quotations from the Church Fathers, these collections grew significantly in length. As a result, what began as a brief annotation gradually evolved into a continuous commentary spanning an entire book.<sup>3</sup> The most renowned example of this process is the *Glossa Ordinaria*, which stands as one of the most comprehensive and influential biblical commentaries of the medieval period

<sup>1</sup> H. G. Liddell vd., *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1883).

<sup>2</sup> Francis Gigot, "Scriptural Glosses", *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1909), 6/587-588.

<sup>3</sup> *The Encyclopaedia Britannica: A Dictionary of Arts, Sciences and General Literature: New Maps and Many Original American Articles by Eminent Authors. With New American Supplement* (New York: Werner Company, 1898), 10/686.

Developed in the 12th century, the *Glossa Ordinaria*<sup>4</sup> is a standardized collection of biblical commentary that surrounds the Scriptural text. Officially titled *Biblia Latina cum glossa ordinaria*, this work presents the entire Latin Bible accompanied by both marginal (*glossa marginalis*) and interlinear (*glossa interlinearis*) annotations. In this context, the *Glossa Ordinaria* represents the widely accepted and standard exegetical tradition that shaped biblical interpretation throughout the Middle Ages.

In its origins, the *Glossa Ordinaria* emerged from the marginal notes and annotations added by monks and biblical scholars to clarify or define words within the biblical text. Over centuries, these annotations accumulated to such an extent that they completely filled the margins, sometimes obscuring the primary text itself. As a result, these notes were eventually compiled into a separate book, which later expanded into multiple volumes. Following centuries of manuscript tradition, the *Glossa Ordinaria* was fully printed for the first time by Adolph Rusch (d. 1490?) in 1480/81, enabling its dissemination across all of Europe.<sup>5</sup>

Several key figures contributed to the development of this monumental work. Among them, Walafrid Strabo (d. 849) played an early role in its formation, followed by numerous monks and scholars who enriched the text with additional commentary.<sup>6</sup> Another central figure was Anselm of Laon (d. 1117), under whose guidance the *Glossa Ordinaria* was compiled and expanded. The work drew extensively from the Latin Church Fathers and other Christian theologians, incorporating their exegetical insights.<sup>7</sup> After Anselm's death, his students continued compiling glosses, lexical explanations, and commentaries, eventually producing the comprehensive edition of the *Glossa Ordinaria* around 1150. From that point forward, the *Glossa Ordinaria* became the standard exegetical reference and remained in use for centuries as a foundational text in biblical interpretation.<sup>8</sup>

## Content and Sources

*Glossa Ordinaria*'s commentaries on the Old Testament rely heavily on the authority of the Church Fathers (especially Jerome, Augustine, Gregory the Great, and Origen). These commentaries emphasize a typological reading: events, people, and institutions in the Old Testament are believed to be prefigurations of truths that will be fulfilled in the New

<sup>4</sup> The Latin word "ordinaria" in *Glossa Ordinaria* literally means "ordinary" or "regular". However, in this context, it carries a technical meaning. Here, "ordinaria" signifies that the text is "widely known," "commonly used," or follows an established standard of interpretation. Thus, rather than implying ordinarieness in the sense of being unremarkable, "ordinaria" denotes an authoritative and widely accepted commentary.

<sup>5</sup> Karlfried Froehlich - Margaret T. Gibson, *Biblia Latina cum glossa ordinaria: facsimile reprint of the editio Princeps Adolph Rusch of Strassburg 1480/81* (Brepols, 1992).

<sup>6</sup> He was a Frankish monk, theologian, poet, and scholar who lived in the 9th century. His works played a significant role in the development of the *Glossa Ordinaria*. However, his contribution was preparatory rather than definitive, serving as a foundational influence rather than a complete or final version of the text. Christina Pössel, "'Appropriate to the Religion of their Time': Walafrid's Historicisation of the Liturgy", *Writing the Early Medieval West*, ed. Charles West - Elina Screen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 80-97.

<sup>7</sup> Lesley Smith, *The Glossa Ordinaria: The Making of a Medieval Bible Commentary* (Commentaria, Band 3): 03 (Leiden Boston, 2009), 2-7.

<sup>8</sup> Although some additions, such as marginal glosses, have been attributed to figures like Walafrid Strabo, recent studies indicate that both marginal and interlinear glosses were compiled from Latin translations of the works of Origen (d. 253) and Hesychius (5th–6th century), the Latin Church Fathers, and medieval glossators working under the direction of Anselm of Laon. Smith, *The Glossa Ordinaria*, 41; David Salomon, *An Introduction to the Glossa Ordinaria as Medieval Hypertext* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2012), 4.

Testament. For example, the Psalms: are associated with the suffering and exaltation of Christ. Daniel: contains typological elements related to the eschaton (the afterlife) and the coming of Christ. Isaiah: is seen as containing prophecies about the coming of Christ, especially Isaiah 7:14 (“a virgin shall conceive”), which occupies a central place in Christian theology.

Furthermore, the Glossa Ordinaria does not directly quote Jewish commentators. However, the indirect influence of Jewish commentators such as Rashi (Rabbi Shlomo Yitzhaki, 1040-1105) is possible. Christian scholars around the University of Paris were familiar with Jewish exegesis in the 12th century. Medieval Christian exegetes did not quote Jewish interpretations directly, but they did convey some views using expressions such as “Judaeus quidam dixit”. The reason for this reluctance was the desire to preserve Christianity’s Christ-centered reading tradition. Jewish interpretations were sometimes used as “evidence” and sometimes as “counterarguments.” However, traces of Midrashic literature in the Glossa Ordinaria are very indirect and are mostly felt through second-hand interpretations in the texts of the Church Fathers. Kabbalistic texts, on the other hand, were not yet widely circulated during the Glossa period (12th century). The influence of Kabbalah in the Christian world began in the 13th-15th centuries, particularly with figures such as Pico della Mirandola and Raymond Llull. However, Christian commentators gradually began to use Jewish mysticism to “prove” the messianic nature of Jesus. This is particularly evident in texts such as the *Zohar*.<sup>9</sup>

Each book of the Glossa Ordinaria begins with prefatory texts by Jerome or other significant patristic sources. The text is richly annotated with glosses of varying thickness, carefully integrated into both the margins and the interlinear spaces. The main biblical text is prominently positioned at the center of the page in large script, ensuring its visibility, while the glosses, written in smaller script, meticulously surround it, filling both the interlinear spaces and the page margins. This layered textual arrangement reflects the Glossa Ordinaria’s multi-dimensional exegetical approach, which asserts that each passage should be interpreted through multiple levels of meaning: The literal sense (*sensus litteralis*), the spiritual and allegorical sense (*sensus spiritualis*). This structured format reinforces the medieval exegetical tradition, where biblical texts were not only read at face value but were also examined for deeper theological, moral, and mystical insights.

The primary purpose of the Glossa Ordinaria is to demonstrate that sacred texts require a multi-layered reading, constructed upon a collective exegetical tradition informed by authoritative sources. The Latin Vulgate text occupies only a small portion of the page’s center, while the marginal glosses (*glossa marginalis*) surround it, offering extensive commentary. These marginal glosses, positioned in the side columns of the manuscript, often provide in-depth explanations that can sometimes be twice the length of the biblical text itself. Due to the extensive volume of these annotations, medieval manuscripts often contained only a few sections of Scripture per manuscript, as a single volume could easily become too unwieldy. In some copies, shorter interlinear glosses (*glossa interlinearis*) were also added between the lines of the biblical text. These interlinear glosses directly reference specific words or short passages, concisely clarifying their meaning. This textual structure closely resembles modern hypertext systems, enabling readers to engage with the text through

<sup>9</sup> Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* (London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), 80.

a network of layered commentary. By presenting theological ideas in a systematic and interconnected manner, the *Glossa Ordinaria* significantly contributed to the intellectual landscape of medieval biblical exegesis.<sup>10</sup>

As a result, the *Glossa Ordinaria* became an indispensable tool for both scholastic theologians and church instruction, interpreting not only the literal (direct) meaning of Scripture but also its allegorical and moral dimensions. The impact of the *Glossa Ordinaria* on medieval biblical and philosophical studies was so profound that it was sometimes referred to as the "Medieval Bible." Its authority was reinforced by its frequent citation by major theologians, particularly Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), who consistently referenced it as an authoritative exegetical source.<sup>11</sup>

Research into the origins of the glosses reveals the diversity of authors and sources behind each book or collection, raising further questions about the overall formation process and purpose of the *Glossa Ordinaria*. The glosses are primarily drawn from theological commentaries, sermons, and exegetical analyses written by the leading Christian scholars and theologians of their time. Accordingly, the *Glossa Ordinaria* contains excerpts from authoritative patristic and Carolingian sources, including Jerome (d. 420), Augustine (d. 430), Gregory the Great (d. 604), Bede (d. 735), Anselm of Canterbury (d. 1109).

These glosses provide a rich theological framework, offering exegetical insights from multiple perspectives, including theological (doctrinal interpretations), moral (ethical teachings and applications), allegorical (symbolic meanings and typology) typological (connections between Old and New Testament narratives).

This multi-layered exegetical approach highlights the depth and complexity of the *Glossa Ordinaria*, establishing it as a fundamental text for medieval biblical interpretation.<sup>12</sup> The *Glossa Ordinaria* was not solely limited to patristic sources; late Carolingian scholars also played a significant role in its formation. In this context, several notable figures contributed to its development, including: Rabanus Maurus (d. 856), Paschasius Radbertus (d. 865), Haimo of Auxerre (d. 865), Remigius of Auxerre (d. 908), Alcuin of York (d. 804), John Scotus Eriugena (d. 877).

These scholars made substantial contributions to medieval Christian theology and biblical exegesis, shaping the interpretive tradition of the Middle Ages. Their works provided theological, doctrinal, and exegetical insights that were incorporated into the *Glossa Ordinaria*, expanding its intellectual foundation beyond early Church Fathers. However, sources from 11th-century theologians are relatively scarce within the *Glossa Ordinaria*. The works of scholars such as: Lanfranc of Bec (d. 1089), Berengar of Tours (d. 1088) are included only in limited instances. This selective incorporation suggests that while Carolingian scholarship played a crucial role in medieval biblical exegesis, later scholastic figures were not as prominently featured in the standard gloss tradition.<sup>13</sup> This diversity of

<sup>10</sup> Constance B. Bouchard, "The Cistercians and the 'Glossa Ordinaria'", *The Catholic Historical Review* 86/2 (2000), 185.

<sup>11</sup> Smith, *The Glossa Ordinaria*, 41; Salomon, *An Introduction to the Glossa Ordinaria as Medieval Hypertext*, 4.

<sup>12</sup> Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, 56.

<sup>13</sup> Smith, *The Glossa Ordinaria*, 41. The same applies to Rashi's commentary on the Tanakh, written in the 11th century and known as *Glossa Hebraica*. Although frequent references are made to the Rabbinic tradition, the source is not mentioned. Ömer Faruk Yıkar - İsmail Taşpınar, "Yahudi Müfessir Raşi ve Tefsir Anlayışı", *Burdur İlahiyat Dergisi* 8 (Haziran 2024), 174-193.

sources reflects the Glossa Ordinaria's comprehensive scope within Christian theological thought and demonstrates that its glosses represent the most esteemed exegetical tradition of the period. The broad range of commentaries and source materials not only establishes the Glossa Ordinaria as a theological reference work but also highlights its significance as an intellectual archive of medieval scholarship. This extensive exegetical tradition positions the Glossa Ordinaria as a foundational text for understanding the development of theological discourse and biblical interpretation in the Middle Ages.

Determining the individual authors of the glosses appears to be a challenging task at first glance. This difficulty arises from the complexity of distinguishing the sources behind the glosses and the inherent challenge of identifying the contributions of different authors within the text. The process of attributing specific glosses to particular theologians is further complicated by the interwoven nature of the commentary tradition, where multiple scholars and exegetes have built upon and expanded earlier annotations over time.<sup>14</sup> In many cases, the Glossa Ordinaria presents its commentaries without explicit citations. Consequently, there is often no clear indication of who authored specific glosses or which theological authority they are based on. The commentary appears to be seamlessly integrated into the biblical text itself, without any referencing system or footnotes to distinguish its sources. This lack of attribution makes it challenging for researchers and readers to trace the origins of the interpretations within the glosses. Since the commentary does not consistently include authorial remarks or editorial markers, it is difficult to determine whether a given gloss represents a direct quotation, a synthesis of multiple sources, or an independent interpretation. With few exceptions -such as editorial clarifications attributed to Gilbertus of Auxerre- the vast majority of the glosses remain anonymous, further complicating efforts to systematically map the theological and exegetical traditions embedded in the Glossa Ordinaria.<sup>15</sup>

In Adolph Rusch's first printed edition of the Glossa Ordinaria (15th century), only a portion of the marginal glosses (*glossa marginalis*) included explicit source attributions. In contrast, interlinear glosses (*glossa interlinearis*) rarely contained citations. When sources were cited, they were typically attributed to Church Fathers or prominent Carolingian scholars such as Rabanus Maurus (d. 856).<sup>16</sup> However, the frequency and variety of attributions vary across different books of the Bible. While some biblical books contain almost no citations, others include more frequent references. This variation suggests that the Glossa Ordinaria is fundamentally heterogeneous in its composition, rather than adhering to a strictly uniform system of attribution. Moreover, the pattern of attributions appears

<sup>14</sup> Smith, *The Glossa Ordinaria*, 42.

<sup>15</sup> Gilbertus Universalis, also known as Gilbert of Auxerre, who died in 1134, took an unusual approach for his time by signing his glosses with his own name. While medieval theologians typically avoided personal attribution, Gilbertus explicitly attached his name to his contributions to the Glossa Ordinaria. However, he also acknowledged that a significant portion of his work consisted of quotations from the Church Fathers. It is highly probable that Gilbert annotated most of the Old Testament, including the Torah, Joshua, Judges, Kings, the Major and Minor Prophets, and Lamentations. Salomon, *An Introduction to the Glossa Ordinaria as Medieval Hypertext*, 37; Smith Lesley, "The Glossed Bible", *The New Cambridge History of the Bible: Volume 2, From 600 to 1450*, ed. Richard Marsden - E. Ann Matter (Cambridge New York Melbourne etc.: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 366; J. S. Purvis - B. Smalley, "Gilbertus Universalis, Bishop of London (1128-34), and the Problem of the «Glossa Ordinaria»", *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 7 (1935), 235-262.

<sup>16</sup> He was one of the most prominent teachers and writers of the Carolingian era. Additionally, he was the mentor of Walafriid Strabo.

consistent across manuscript traditions—manuscripts with frequent citations tend to be similar in this regard, while others consistently lack them. Notably, as some biblical books progress, the frequency of attributions declines sharply, implying that scribes and copyists did not follow a standardized referencing system or systematic method of indicating sources. Even when attributions are present, they typically include only the author's name rather than the title of the work or a specific passage reference. This lack of precise citation makes it challenging for scholars to trace the exact sources referenced in the glosses. Furthermore, this absence of detailed attributions suggests that the *Glossa Ordinaria* was primarily intended as a practical exegetical tool rather than a scholarly reference designed for rigorous textual analysis or source verification.<sup>17</sup>

## Language and Style

The language and style of the *Glossa Ordinaria* were among the primary factors contributing to its profound influence on medieval theology and Christian thought. The text reflects both the exegetical techniques employed in biblical interpretation and the linguistic structure of medieval academic and theological traditions.

Written in Latin, the *Glossa Ordinaria* was composed in the dominant language of theological, academic, and legal discourse in medieval Europe. Since the Church regarded Latin as the "divine language," proficiency in it was essential for accessing sacred texts, reading the writings of the Church Fathers, and understanding liturgical practices. Consequently, anyone seeking a deep understanding of theology was expected to engage in linguistic and grammatical study. In the medieval period, Latin grammar study was considered not merely a technical skill but a spiritual discipline, serving as a necessary preparation for engaging with Sacred Scripture. The choice of Latin also ensured that the *Glossa Ordinaria* could be widely understood by educated clergy and theologians across the Christian world. Despite the evolution of the Latin language and regional linguistic variations, Latin maintained its universal status, facilitating the *Glossa Ordinaria*'s dissemination throughout monastic centers and universities in Western Europe. Thus, the use of Latin not only enhanced the authority of the *Glossa Ordinaria* but also made it a foundational tool for academic and theological scholarship.<sup>18</sup>

The exegetical style of the *Glossa Ordinaria* allows for multiple levels of interpretation, which can be categorized into literal, allegorical, moral, and spiritual readings. Literal Interpretation (*sensus litteralis*): The *Glossa Ordinaria* first presents the surface meaning of the biblical text, explaining how the words should be understood in their most direct and explicit sense. However, the interpretation does not remain at the literal level; instead, it progresses to deeper layers of meaning. Allegorical and Typological Interpretation: The next stage involves symbolic and allegorical readings, particularly focusing on how events, figures, and themes in the Old Testament prefigure those in the New Testament (*sensus spiritualis*). The *Glossa Ordinaria* includes extensive allegorical commentaries that highlight these

<sup>17</sup> Smith, *The Glossa Ordinaria*, 57; G. W. H. Lampe (ed.), *The Cambridge History of the Bible: The West from the Fathers to the Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 2/145.

<sup>18</sup> Latin grammar studies emerged from biblical studies, as a deeper understanding of Sacred Scripture required proficiency in its language. For this reason, the study of Latin grammar was conducted in service of biblical exegesis and, in some circles, was even regarded as a form of religious devotion. Salomon, *An Introduction to the Glossa Ordinaria as Medieval Hypertext*, 63, 80.

connections. A common example is the Exodus from Egypt, which is frequently interpreted as a symbol of Christian salvation. This typological method reflects a medieval hermeneutical tradition in which Old Testament narratives are read as foreshadowing the fulfillment of divine promises in the New Testament.<sup>19</sup> Another example of this interpretative approach can be seen in the commentaries on the Book of Genesis. These exegetical traditions interpret the events of creation as prefigurations of Christ's redemptive mission, illustrating how salvation history was foreshadowed within the structure of the biblical narrative. This method aligns with the typological reading tradition that was widely employed in medieval theological and liturgical contexts. In this framework, Old Testament events are understood as prefigurations of New Testament fulfillment, reinforcing the continuity of divine revelation throughout salvation history.<sup>20</sup> In this framework, the events in Genesis are interpreted as symbols of Christ's future role, reinforcing their connection to Christian doctrine. This typological reading highlights the continuity between the Old and New Testaments, illustrating how the early biblical narratives foreshadow the fulfillment of divine salvation in Christ. This exegetical approach is deeply rooted in medieval theological traditions, where the interpretation of Scripture was not limited to its literal meaning but extended to allegorical and prophetic dimensions. Numerous other examples of such typological readings can be found throughout the *Glossa Ordinaria*.<sup>21</sup>

For example, let us look at the passage corresponding to Psalm 22:1 in the Vulgate numbering (Psalm 21:2 in the Septuagint), which is central to the Christian exegetical tradition, particularly concerning the Passion of Christ. Since the main sacred text in the *Glossa Ordinaria* is surrounded by marginal and interlinear explanations containing the interpretations of various Church Fathers, these glosses on Psalm 22:1 also attempt to explain the theological meaning of the verse, referring in particular to the interpretations of authorities such as Augustine and Jerome. In this passage, for example, the phrase "Deus, Deus meus" is generally interpreted in the glosses as an expression of the human nature of Christ experiencing abandonment, but at the same time, his divine nature is affirmed. The phrase "Quare me dereliquisti?" (Why have you forsaken me?) is frequently discussed in the context of the mystery of the Incarnation (the becoming God-man) and the redemptive sufferings of Christ.<sup>22</sup>

Another example is Isaiah 7:14 "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son." This passage is interpreted in the *Glossa Ordinaria* as a prophecy of the birth of Christ from a virgin. The *Glossa*, referring to Jerome's translation of the Hebrew term "alma" in the Vulgate, notes that this word can mean both "young woman" and "virgin." The *Glossa*

<sup>19</sup> For example, Origen explains the spiritual meaning of the Exodus for Christians, interpreting it in relation to Christian salvation, particularly baptism. He views the Israelites' departure from Egypt as an allegory for a Christian's journey of spiritual liberation from a sinful life toward God. Origen emphasizes that this event holds profound spiritual lessons for Christians in an allegorical sense. Origenes, "Homily V", çev. Ronald E. Heine, *Homilies on Genesis and Exodus* (Catholic University of America Press, 1982), 275.

<sup>20</sup> Among the early Church Fathers, Tertullian stands out as one of the most significant figures in applying this type of interpretation. Tertullianus, "Adversus Iudaeos", *Patrologia Latina*, ed. Jacques Paul Migne (Paris: J.P. Migne, 1862).

<sup>21</sup> Samuel J. Klumpenhouwer, *Biblia Cum Glossa Ordinaria – Genesis, The Great Medieval Commentary on Sacred Scripture* (Steubenville, Ohio: Emmaus Academic, 2023).

<sup>22</sup> Fulgensius Strabus vd., *Biblicorum sacrorum cum glossa ordinaria* (Venetiis, 1603), 3/571-585.

emphasizes the theological significance of this ambiguity and interprets it as a sign of the miraculous birth and divine mission of the Messiah.<sup>23</sup>

One final example is found in Daniel 7:13: “One like a Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven” (*Aspiciebam ergo in visione noctis, et ecce cum nubibus caeli quasi Filius hominis veniebat...*) This verse is clearly interpreted as referring to the second coming of Christ in his exalted state. Commentaries interpret this expression not only as an eschatological vision but also as a figure representing the divine authority of Christ coming from God. The phrase “cum nubibus caeli” (with the clouds of heaven) is seen as a sign of the coming of the divine judgment. The description “Quasi Filius hominis” (one like the Son of Man) directly implies the union of the divine and human natures of Jesus Christ in Christian interpretation. The glosses of Nicolaus de Lyra are also in this vein; they accept the passage’s multi-layered meaning, which can be related to both the first coming and the day of judgment. Additionally, this person is brought before the figure of “antiquum dierum” (the old days), which symbolizes the Father-Son relationship. Ultimately, this verse is understood in the Glossa not merely as a prophecy but as a symbol of the full manifestation of God’s reign through Christ in Christianity.<sup>24</sup>

The Glossa Ordinaria is composed in a didactic style, which serves as the strongest evidence that it was specifically compiled for educational purposes. In addition to interpreting the literal and symbolic meanings of the Bible, the text also conveys moral teachings and theological lessons. This pedagogical approach was designed to make the text more accessible to students and clergy, facilitating their understanding of biblical exegesis. The clarity and instructional nature of the glosses enhanced their role in religious education, allowing the Glossa Ordinaria to function as a fundamental teaching tool in both monastic and scholastic settings. Furthermore, the text incorporates questions and discussions related to doctrine and theological inquiry, solidifying its role as an instrument of theological education. The concise and structured nature of the commentary ensures that key interpretations are presented clearly and efficiently, enabling: Faster comprehension of biblical texts, easy comparison of different exegetical perspectives, practical use as a theological textbook for clergy and students. By balancing brevity with depth, the Glossa Ordinaria became an indispensable resource for biblical study and theological training throughout the Middle Ages.<sup>25</sup>

### **The Role of the Glossa Ordinaria in Education and Its Place in the Catholic Church**

Throughout the Middle Ages, monasteries were not only prominent for prayer and worship, but also for the production and transmission of texts. Reading, writing, and text interpretation activities were of vital importance, particularly in terms of understanding and preserving sacred texts. The foundation of this intellectual endeavor was the monasteries’

<sup>23</sup> Strabus vd., *Bibliorum sacrorum cum glossa ordinaria*, 4/93-95.

<sup>24</sup> Strabus vd., *Bibliorum sacrorum cum glossa ordinaria*, 4/1583-84. To fully understand the glosses accompanying these verses, it would be useful to consult the facsimile edition, which is a direct reprint of the 1480/81 Strasbourg edition. This edition offers a unique insight into how medieval scholastics approached and interpreted the Holy Scriptures.

<sup>25</sup> Smith, *The Glossa Ordinaria*, 218. Alongside this, the Glossa Ordinaria is a work that contains diverse, and at times even contradictory, interpretations and references. It can be regarded as a kind of concordance or theological dictionary.

approach to education. In this context, Saint Benedict (480–547) reserved a special place for reading in his monastic rules, the *Regula Benedicti*. His directive to read both Sacred Scripture and the writings of the Church Fathers ultimately evolved into what later became known as *lectio divina*<sup>26</sup>, the meditative and spiritual reading of Scripture practiced by monks. St. Benedict explicitly stated in his Rule: "Both the books that bear divine authority from the Old and New Testaments shall be read, as well as the commentaries authored by the recognized and orthodox Catholic Fathers."

This foundational principle established biblical study as an essential monastic discipline, ensuring that monks engaged with both Sacred Scripture and authoritative theological interpretations. The *Glossa Ordinaria*, as a systematic compilation of biblical commentary, became a vital educational tool within this tradition, reinforcing its place in monastic and ecclesiastical learning.<sup>27</sup>

During the Middle Ages, nearly every theological institution in European universities used the *Glossa Ordinaria* as a primary teaching material. From the 12th century onward, it became one of the cornerstones of Catholic theology in Western Europe. Initially employed in cathedral schools and monasteries, it later became the standard exegetical text in university-level theological education. This widespread use highlights the *Glossa Ordinaria*'s central role in theological education and its importance as a foundational tool for biblical study. Given that the text contains detailed commentary on the Latin Vulgate Bible, it served as a crucial reference for theologians and students alike. As one of the principal instructional materials in monastic and cathedral schools, the *Glossa Ordinaria* functioned as an academic guide to theological studies. The marginal glosses not only helped students analyze the text but also enabled instructors to engage in scholarly discussions on biblical interpretation. Furthermore, instructors in monastic and cathedral schools frequently annotated not only the Scriptures but also various theological works, including those of the Church Fathers. These annotations, which were predominantly doctrinal in nature, reflected the medieval tradition of commentary-based theological education.<sup>28</sup>

Bringing together an extensive body of knowledge from the Church Fathers and earlier theologians, the *Glossa Ordinaria* held great authority among medieval theologians. Its explanations, rooted in the writings of the Church Fathers and early Christian authors, were regarded as essential for ensuring both the accuracy and depth of biblical interpretation. The reliance on patristic commentary reinforced the *Glossa Ordinaria*'s scholarly credibility, making it a foundational reference for theological discourse throughout the medieval period.<sup>29</sup> This status established the *Glossa Ordinaria* as a primary reference in theological discussions. Throughout the Middle Ages, theologians consistently relied on it as a foundational source for biblical interpretation. As a text that provides both lexical explanations of Scripture and theological, allegorical, and moral interpretations, the *Glossa*

<sup>26</sup> Yasin Güzeldal, "Orta Çağ Batı Hristiyan Manastırlarında (6-12. yy.) Manevi Okuma Kültürü: Lectio Divina", *Cumhuriyet İlahiyat Dergisi* 26/1 (15 Haziran 2022), 251-267.

<sup>27</sup> Benedictus Nursinus, "Regula Benedicti", *Patrologia Latina*, ed. Jacques Paul Migne (Paris: J.P. Migne, 1862), 66/böl. 9; Salomon, *An Introduction to the Glossa Ordinaria as Medieval Hypertext*, 21.

<sup>28</sup> Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, 76. There are structural and pedagogical similarities between the Gloss and the Talmud. However, there is no clear and documented evidence of direct influence. Nevertheless, in the multilingual and multicultural intellectual environment of the 12th century, the possibility of indirect influences should not be ruled out.

<sup>29</sup> Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, 66.

Ordinaria occupied a central role in theological discourse. Its inclusion of commentaries from major Church Fathers, particularly Jerome, Augustine and Gregory the Great, further reinforced its theological authority. Augustine, in his work *De Doctrina Christiana*, emphasized that biblical interpretation should not be confined to the literal sense but must also incorporate moral and allegorical dimensions. This exegetical approach, deeply embedded in the *Glossa Ordinaria*, aligned with the long-standing tradition of Christian hermeneutics, solidifying its place in medieval theological education and debate.<sup>30</sup> The *Glossa Ordinaria* enriched this exegetical tradition, becoming a widely used handbook among both monastic communities and scholastic theologians. It served as a bridge between monastic scriptural study and the emerging scholastic method, making it an essential tool for biblical interpretation. In leading medieval academic institutions such as the School of Notre Dame Cathedral, the *Glossa Ordinaria* was studied alongside the works of Peter Lombard (d. 1160) and other scholastic thinkers.<sup>31</sup> This further indicates that the *Glossa Ordinaria* was not only highly valued in monastic settings but also held great significance within academic circles. Its widespread use in both monastic scriptural study and university theological education underscores its dual role as a foundational exegetical text in medieval intellectual life.

### The Influence of the Cistercian Order

In the late 11th century, in response to the Cluny tradition, the Cistercian Order was founded in the Cîteaux (Latin: Cistercium) region of France to restore principles such as simplicity, work, and silence to monastic life. In their early days, the Cistercians embraced a life of seclusion and simplicity, but over time, they also turned to intellectual pursuits, particularly gaining attention for their commentaries on the Bible. In this context, their contribution to the development of the *Glossa Ordinaria* in the 12th century cannot be overlooked. Notably, their dedication to theological scholarship and biblical commentary created a foundation for their contributions to the *Glossa Ordinaria*. While the order initially sought to structure monastic life around simplicity and strict discipline, over time, it also embraced intellectual pursuits, playing an increasingly active role in biblical exegesis.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>30</sup> In the third chapter of this book, Augustine discusses the symbolic and figurative uses of language in Sacred Scripture and emphasizes the importance of uncovering allegorical or deeper meanings within the text. He particularly stresses that interpreting symbols, metaphors, and figurative expressions is essential for the spiritual growth of Christians. Augustinus, *De doctrina christiana*, ed. J. Martin (Turnhout: Brepols, 1962), 32/III: 10-37.

<sup>31</sup> At the beginning of his teaching career, Petrus Lombardus used the *Glossa Ordinaria* as a primary source for his commentaries on the Psalms and Paul's Epistles, incorporating all of its materials into his work. His most significant contribution in this regard is *Magna Glossatura* (Collectanea), a compilation of commentaries on the Psalms and Paul's Letters. Smith, *The Glossa Ordinaria*, 78. For a study analyzing how Lombardus' commentaries on Paul's Letters were built upon the *Glossa Ordinaria*. Peter O'hagan, "Glossing The Gloss: Reading Peter Lombard's Collectanea on the Pauline Epistles as a Historical Act", *Traditio* 73 (Ocak 2018), 83-116. *Glossa* is the most influential collection of commentaries of the Middle Ages, but it was criticized after the Reformation and lost its influence. Although it shares structural similarities with commentary traditions in other religions, there is no clear evidence of direct interaction.

<sup>32</sup> The Cistercian Order was founded in 1098 as a movement that followed the Rule of Saint Benedict and advocated for a return to the pure form of monastic life as practiced during his time. Yasin Güzelal, *Aziz Benedikt ve Hristiyan Manastır Yaşamı* (İstanbul: Ayışığı Kitaplığı, 2021), 204.

The oldest surviving Glossa Ordinaria manuscripts in France are believed to date back to circa 1140. These manuscripts were first produced at the Abbey of Saint Victor<sup>33</sup> in Paris and later transported to Clairvaux in 1146, when Prince Henry, son of King Louis VI, entered the monastery as a monk. However, the existence of these manuscripts is only the earliest indication of the close relationship between the Cistercians and the Glossa Ordinaria. The monks of Clairvaux not only preserved these glossed biblical manuscripts but also actively studied and utilized them. The renowned abbot of Clairvaux, St. Bernard (d. 1153), maintained a close friendship with Gilbertus Universalis (d. 1134)<sup>34</sup>, a cleric from Auxerre Cathedral, who played a significant role in the development and dissemination of the Glossa Ordinaria. Additionally, a substantial number of Glossa Ordinaria manuscripts have survived from Cistercian monasteries, further demonstrating the order's engagement with the text. After the first generation of Cistercians gradually transferred manual labor responsibilities to lay brothers (conversi)<sup>35</sup>, monks were able to dedicate more time to biblical commentary and manuscript production. This shift allowed the Cistercians to focus extensively on transcribing and studying glossed biblical texts, solidifying their role in the dissemination of the Glossa Ordinaria.<sup>36</sup>

The Cistercians' deep engagement with biblical exegesis can partly be understood through an examination of the books contained in their 12th-century libraries. These collections were primarily composed of works by the Latin Church Fathers, many of which were included in the Glossa Ordinaria. Following the foundation of the Abbey of Cîteaux in 1098, one of the first books copied was Gregory the Great's *Moralia in Job* (Morals on the Book of Job), a four-volume biblical commentary.<sup>37</sup> Similarly, in Clairvaux, a 12th-century library catalog reveals that Augustine and Jerome were the most frequently represented authors, particularly in the form of biblical commentaries. At the Cistercian monastery of Pontigny<sup>38</sup>, an even more comprehensive library catalog from the 12th century shows that the monks there possessed not only the works of Augustine and Jerome but also an extensive collection of biblical commentaries by contemporary scholastics, including Ivo of Chartres (d. 1115), Hugh of Saint Victor, Gilbertus Universalis. These records demonstrate the

<sup>33</sup> Located in Paris, this monastic and scholastic community was one of the most renowned centers of theology and philosophy in medieval Europe. It was founded in 415 by John Cassian (d. 435). Among its most famous members were theologians such as Hugh of St. Victor (d. 1141) and Richard of St. Victor (d. 1173). Georges Goyau, "Marseilles (Massilia)", *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910).

<sup>34</sup> Purvis - Smalley, "Gilbertus Universalis, Bishop of London (1128-34), and the Problem of the «Glossa Ordinaria»", 242-244.

<sup>35</sup> In medieval monasteries, the term "conversi" was generally used to describe lay individuals who joined the monastic community without taking full monastic vows or who held a different status within the order. Within the Cistercian Order, the conversi constituted the group responsible for agricultural labor and other physical tasks that supported the community. Since the Cistercians followed the Rule of Saint Benedict, they were obligated to dedicate portions of their time to manual labor, in accordance with Benedictine principles. Benedictus Nursinus, "RB", c. 66, böl. 48; Stephen Donovan, "Conversi", *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1908).

<sup>36</sup> Bouchard, "The Cistercians and the 'Glossa Ordinaria'", 188.

<sup>37</sup> Gregorius I Magnus, *Moralium Libri Sive Expositio In Librum Beati Job. Pars I-II*, ed. J.P. Migne (Paris: Patrologia Latina, 1848); Mustafa Furkan Dinleyici, *Orta Çağ Papalığının Mimarı Gregorius Magnus*, 2023, 77-80.

<sup>38</sup> It is the second of the four great women's monasteries of Cîteaux and was founded in 1114. Terryl Nancy Kinder, "Toward dating construction of the abbey church of Pontigny", *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 145 (1992), 77-88.

Cistercians' commitment to biblical scholarship and their engagement with both patristic and contemporary scholastic interpretations.<sup>39</sup>

Another significant aspect of the Cistercians' engagement with biblical exegesis was their extensive copying of glossed Bibles. Some scholars have questioned why 12th-century Cistercians, who abstained from eating meat<sup>40</sup>, maintained large flocks of sheep even in regions such as Burgundy, where wheat and wine were considered more valuable commodities than wool.<sup>41</sup> The answer lies in their demand for parchment. A well-sized Bible required approximately 300 sheepskins, and for a fully glossed Bible collection, at least twice that number was needed. Thus, monasteries involved in the production of some of the most voluminous books of the time were also among the primary forces behind large-scale sheep farming, ensuring a continuous supply of parchment for their manuscript production.<sup>42</sup>

The Cistercians not only copied the *Glossa Ordinaria* but also played a key role in its dissemination across European monasteries. For example, the tradition of the *Glossa Ordinaria* in England developed directly under Cistercian influence. When Thomas Becket (d. 1170)<sup>43</sup> stayed at the Cistercian monastery of Pontigny, he took *Glossa Ordinaria* manuscripts with him, which later became the foundation of glossing traditions in England.<sup>44</sup> From this perspective, it is evident that the Cistercians played a crucial role in the spread of the *Glossa Ordinaria*, making their contribution indispensable for understanding the intellectual developments of the 12th century.

### **The Reformation's Attitude Toward the *Glossa Ordinaria***

The Reformation, a religious movement that began in 16th-century Europe as a challenge to the authority of the Catholic Church, led Martin Luther (d. 1546) and other reformers to criticize certain theological texts and traditions of the Church. Among the works that came under scrutiny during this period was the *Glossa Ordinaria*. Reformers argued that such works complicated rather than clarified the meaning of Sacred Scripture. According to their criticism, the *Glossa Ordinaria* and similar glossed commentaries shifted the focus away from the biblical text itself, making the interpretations of scholars more dominant than the Scripture's original message. They viewed the extensive commentary surrounding the biblical text as an obstacle to understanding the clear and direct meaning of the Bible. Martin Luther, in particular, rejected such authoritative commentaries, asserting that Scripture should be accessible to all believers without reliance on interpretative traditions.<sup>45</sup> Martin

<sup>39</sup> Bouchard, "The Cistercians and the 'Glossa Ordinaria'", 188.

<sup>40</sup> Benedictus Nursinus, "RB", c. 66, b6l. 36:9.

<sup>41</sup> Constance Brittain Bouchard, *Holy Entrepreneurs: Cistercians, Knights, and Economic Exchange in Twelfth-Century Burgundy* (Cornell University Press, 2009), 107.

<sup>42</sup> Bouchard, "The Cistercians and the 'Glossa Ordinaria'", 189.

<sup>43</sup> Thomas Becket, a significant religious and political figure in medieval England, served as the Archbishop of Canterbury. Due to conflicts with King Henry II, he was exiled to Pontigny. Becket exerted great influence in both religious and secular spheres and was canonized as a saint after his death. David Knowles, *Thomas Becket* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1970), 2, 108.

<sup>44</sup> John Guy, *Thomas Becket: Warrior, Priest, Rebel* (New York: Random House, 2012), 185-187.

<sup>45</sup> In his work *De Captivitate Babylonica Ecclesiae Praeludium* (Prelude on the Babylonian Captivity of the Church), although he does not mention the *Glossa Ordinaria* by name, he clearly expresses his opposition to the Church's interpretative tradition through his discussion of the sacraments. Martin Luther, *De captivitate Babylonica ecclesiae* (Strassburg: Johann Prüss, 1520). In his work *Institutio Christianae Religionis* (Institutes of the Christian Religion) (1536), Calvin emphasized the supremacy of Scripture and strongly opposed the

Luther argues that the Holy Scriptures are a superior and clearer source than the interpretations of the Church Fathers. According to him, the fundamental source of Christian belief should be solely the “verba divina” (divine words); all human interpretations and conclusions must be tested against these divine texts. If the Church Fathers constantly refer to the Holy Scriptures to support their own thoughts, this already demonstrates that the text is sufficient and clear. Luther opposes the “darkening” of the sacred text with interpretations and “shading” with glosses; he sees such texts, especially structures such as the *Glossa Ordinaria*, as placing themselves before the sacred word, which he considers an epistemological deviation and a theological danger. Thus, he emphasizes that it is not the sacred text that should be tested by human words, but human words that should be tested by the sacred text.<sup>46</sup> His doctrine of “Sola Scriptura” (Scripture alone) held that the Bible is the sole authority in matters of faith, which led to the rejection of the *Glossa Ordinaria* as an authoritative theological source in Protestant theology.<sup>47</sup> Consequently, during the Reformation, the use of the *Glossa Ordinaria* declined significantly in Protestant circles. However, Reformers showed great interest in the literal interpretations of Nicholas of Lyra (d. 1349). Martin Luther was deeply influenced by Nicholas’s works, adopting his approach to literal exegesis. Luther upheld Nicholas’s view that Scripture should be understood directly, rather than mediated through Church tradition. He praised Nicholas and incorporated his exegetical methods into the Reformation’s theological framework, particularly as they aligned with the principle of “Sola Scriptura”. Since Reformers prioritized the literal meaning of Scripture over allegorical interpretations, Nicholas of Lyra’s works became a key influence in shaping their biblical exegesis.<sup>48</sup>

In response, Catholic theologians defended the *Glossa Ordinaria* and similar exegetical works during the Reformation. The Council of Trent (1545–1563), in rejecting the Reformation’s seemingly reductionist and individualistic doctrine of *Sola Scriptura*, upheld the interdependence of “Sacred Scripture” and “Tradition”—a position that necessitated the continued use of exegetical tools like the *Glossa Ordinaria*.<sup>49</sup> According to Catholic teaching,

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Catholic tradition’s practice of excessive interpretation. John Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, çev. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994), 4.

<sup>46</sup> Martin Luther - Joachim Karl Friedrich Knaake, *Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe. [Hrsg. von J.K.F. Knaake et al.]* (Weimar H. Böhlau, 1883), (WA) 7:98.

<sup>47</sup> Alister E. McGrath, *Reformation Thought: An Introduction* (Malden, Mass.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 100-102; Alister McGrath, *Christianity’s Dangerous Idea: The Protestant Revolution--A History from the Sixteenth Century to the Twenty-First* (HarperOne, 2008), 208-211.

<sup>48</sup> The most significant work of Nicholas of Lyra is *Postillae Perpetuae in Universam S. Scripturam*, a comprehensive commentary on both the Old Testament and the New Testament. In this work, Nicholas focused on explaining the literal meanings of biblical texts and sought to reshape the Christian exegetical tradition through a literal approach. Additionally, he was influenced by Jewish exegesis and incorporated the methods of Jewish commentators such as Rashi into his work. With the development of printing technology in the 15th century, *Postillae* was frequently published alongside the *Glossa Ordinaria* in the same volumes. Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, xxxii; Paul F. Stuehnenberg, “The Medieval Commentary Tradition: The *Glossa Ordinaria*, Hugh of St. Cher and Nicholas of Lyra and the Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages”, *Journal of Religious & Theological Information* 1/2 (2012), 96-99; Salomon, *An Introduction to the Glossa Ordinaria as Medieval Hypertext*, 61; Benjamin Williams, “*Glossa Ordinaria* and *Glossa Hebraica* Midrash in Rashi and the Gloss”, *Traditio* 71 (2016), 179-201; Ömer Faruk Yıkar, *Yabudi Kutsal Kitap Yorumcusu Raşi* (Eskiyei Yayınları, 2024), 138-141.

<sup>49</sup> According to the decision “*Decretum de Editione et Usu Sacrorum Librorum*” issued in the fourth session of the Council, it was emphasized that individual interpretations of Scripture could be misleading, and that traditional, Church-approved commentaries, such as the *Glossa Ordinaria*, held authoritative validity. Thus,

correctly interpreting Scripture required reference to the Church Fathers' commentaries and the broader tradition of the Church. The Church emphasized that biblical interpretation should not rely on individual reasoning alone but rather be informed by the collective wisdom of ecclesiastical tradition. Within this framework, the Glossa Ordinaria was consistently defended as an integral part of Church tradition, reaffirming its role in theological study and doctrinal teaching.<sup>50</sup>

## Modern Studies

Among the pioneers of modern studies on the Glossa Ordinaria, Adolph Rusch's 1480–81 edition holds a significant place, as it played a crucial role in preserving and transmitting the text. This publication was regarded as a groundbreaking and challenging project, considering the technological limitations of the time. One of the most remarkable aspects of Rusch's edition was its role in marking the transition from manuscript culture to the age of the printing press. Before the advent of printing, books were often chained to monastic library shelves, restricting access to a limited scholarly audience.<sup>51</sup> However, with Rusch's printed edition, the Glossa Ordinaria was made more widely accessible, enabling the dissemination of sacred texts beyond monastic scriptoria into broader intellectual circles. This transformation can be seen as a critical step in liberating biblical scholarship from its traditional confines. Despite this advancement, patristic studies in late 15th-century Europe remained unstable at best, as the looming Reformation posed a threat to the continued use of Church Fathers' writings in biblical exegesis. As a result, many individually owned copies of the Glossa Ordinaria may have been destroyed by their owners or authorities, contributing to the scarcity of surviving editions today. By the mid-17th century, interest in patristic scholarship had declined, leading to a decrease in demand for the Glossa Ordinaria. Consequently, the last known printed edition was published in Antwerp in 1634.<sup>52</sup>

Modern theologians and researchers continue to study the Glossa Ordinaria to better understand the structure of medieval theology and the development of Christian doctrine. In this context, the Glossa Ordinaria serves as a primary reference source for scholars focusing on medieval Christianity. Additionally, the Glossa Ordinaria holds a significant place in contemporary theology, as it provides insights into the historical development of Christian theological thought. Modern theologians compare medieval glosses such as the

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rather than relying solely on Sacred Scripture, the decree affirmed the necessity of considering Church tradition and authoritative exegeses in biblical interpretation. Council Fathers, "General Council of Trent: Fourth Session", *Papal Encyclicals* (08 Nisan 1546).

<sup>50</sup> Karlfried Froehlich, "An Extraordinary Achievement: The Glossa Ordinaria in Print", *The Bible as Book: The First Printed Editions*, ed. Paul Henry Saenger - Kimberly Van Kampen (British Library, 1999), 17.

<sup>51</sup> The printed edition also presented certain practical limitations. Its large dimensions posed challenges for widespread use, making it difficult to handle. Additionally, the book's high cost meant that it could only be acquired by large libraries or religious institutions. Moreover, its physical size rendered it too heavy and cumbersome for convenient placement on a bookshelf, requiring a bookstand or special reading desks for proper examination. Nevertheless, the availability of this edition paved the way for future printings, ultimately enabling the text to reach a wider readership. Salomon, *An Introduction to the Glossa Ordinaria as Medieval Hypertext*, 13.

<sup>52</sup> From the 14th century onward, it is worth noting that Nicholas' Postilla and Paulus Brugensis' Additions were included at the bottom of each page and printed in this format. Leander a S. Martino (John Jones, O.S.B.) (ed.), *Biblia Sacra Cum Glossa Ordinaria (6 Volumes) by Nicholas of Lyra* (Antwerp: Johannem Meursium, 1634); Salomon, *An Introduction to the Glossa Ordinaria as Medieval Hypertext*, 59.

Glossa Ordinaria with contemporary biblical commentaries, allowing them to analyze the evolution of theological interpretation over time. This comparative approach highlights how modern biblical exegesis has become more critical and analytical while still maintaining connections to medieval traditions. However, such analyses remain limited to the currently available versions of the text. Despite the Glossa Ordinaria's continued relevance in modern theological research, the absence of a fully critical edition and the uncertainties surrounding its historical usage indicate that much of this field still awaits further investigation. As Beryl Smalley has pointed out, the production of a critical edition of the Glossa Ordinaria remains largely incomplete. Smalley emphasizes that such an undertaking would require a large research team and considerable time, yet accessing the necessary manuscript sources remains a significant challenge.<sup>53</sup> Apart from studies such as Theresa Gross-Diaz's work on Gilbert of Poitiers and Mary Dove's edition of the Glossa Ordinaria on the Song of Songs, little significant progress has been made in understanding the text's origins and usage over the past fifty years. A turning point seemed to emerge in 1992, when Froehlich and Gibson published a facsimile edition, marking what many expected to be the beginning of serious contemporary research on the Glossa Ordinaria. However, the anticipated progress has largely not materialized. Froehlich and Gibson initially believed that a critical edition could be achieved using computer technology, but the complexity of the text and the sheer number of manuscript variants continue to hinder this effort.<sup>54</sup> Although modern digital tools theoretically allow for the collection and comparison of all surviving manuscripts, the practical benefits and outcomes of such a project remain uncertain. The presence of numerous textual variants makes it particularly difficult to determine which version should be considered the authoritative base text. These unresolved questions continue to complicate the scholarly reconstruction of the Glossa Ordinaria.<sup>55</sup>

Margaret Gibson summarizes the misconceptions surrounding the history of the Glossa Ordinaria as follows:

"Every schoolchild knows that the Glossa Ordinaria consists of two parts: the marginal glosses were written by Walafrid Strabo in the early ninth century, and the interlinear glosses were authored by Anselm of Laon in the late eleventh century. But every schoolchild also knows that this is wrong."<sup>56</sup>

## Conclusion

It is evident that the Glossa Ordinaria became an indispensable research tool for theologians and a key educational resource for students of biblical exegesis. As a fundamental component

<sup>53</sup> Beryl Smalley, "Les commentaires bibliques de l'époque romane : glose ordinaire et gloses périmées", (1961), 15-22.

<sup>54</sup> Smith, *The Glossa Ordinaria*, 234. For example, Mary Dove successfully published the commentary on the Song of Songs from the Glossa Ordinaria and employed a specific methodology for producing a modern edition. Dove acknowledged that fully replicating medieval texts is nearly impossible, and therefore adopted a simplified and limited editorial approach to make the edition feasible. This work is significant as an example of how a critical edition might be produced. Mary Dove (ed.), *Glossa Ordinaria. Pars 22. In Canticum Canticorum. Corpus Christianorum. Continuatio Mediaevalis CLXX* (Brepols: Turnholt, 1997).

<sup>55</sup> Martin Morard, "Gloss-e. gloses et commentaires de la Bible latine au Moyen âge" (IRHT-CNRS) (2022); Salomon, *An Introduction to the Glossa Ordinaria as Medieval Hypertext*, 33.

<sup>56</sup> Margaret Templeton Gibson, "The place of the 'Glossa ordinaria' in medieval exegesis", Gibson, *"Artes" and Bible in the medieval West*, 1993, 5.

of medieval theological education, this work is enriched by its use of academic Latin, its literal and allegorical interpretative techniques, and its frequent references to the Church Fathers.

The Glossa Ordinaria played a central role in both education and theological debate. However, for modern scholars, it poses significant challenges in terms of tracing sources, as it was not structured according to modern academic conventions of citation and footnoting. Rather than providing explicit references to its sources, the Glossa Ordinaria was primarily concerned with clarifying sacred texts and adding interpretative commentary. This characteristic reflects its function and usage throughout the Middle Ages.

The influence of the Glossa Ordinaria on 12th-century intellectual life, particularly the role of the Cistercian Order in its dissemination, remains significant. The Cistercians' contributions to its transmission were crucial both for their own monastic tradition and for broader intellectual and theological developments in the Middle Ages.

During the Reformation, the Catholic Church defended the Glossa Ordinaria as part of its effort to balance Sacred Scripture and Tradition against the sola scriptura principle. The Church maintained that faith could not be based on Scripture alone but had to be understood in the context of its longstanding interpretative tradition. Consequently, the Church endorsed the use of exegetical tools like the Glossa Ordinaria. However, Reformers rejected this approach, developing a broader critique of Catholic exegesis, including the Glossa Ordinaria and the entire tradition of medieval Catholic commentary. Today, the Glossa Ordinaria remains an essential resource for scholars studying medieval biblical exegesis and the development of theological thought. Modern research underscores the need for a critical edition, yet despite advances in digital tools and textual analysis, the complexity and textual variations of the Glossa Ordinaria present ongoing challenges. As a result, the role of the Glossa Ordinaria in contemporary academic research remains an area in need of further exploration.

Değerlendirme / Review	:	Bu makalenin ön incelemesi bir iç hakem (editör), içerik incelemesi ise iki dış hakem tarafından çift taraflı kör hakemlik modeliyle incelenmiştir. / <i>This article was pre-reviewed by one internal referee (editor) and its content reviewed by two external referees using a double blind review model.</i>
Etik Beyan / Ethical Declaration	:	Bu çalışmanın hazırlanma sürecinde etik ilkelere uyulmuştur. / <i>Ethical principles were followed during the preparation of this study.</i>
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