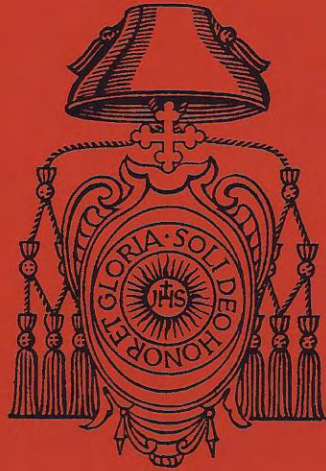


VOLUME VII

Works of St. Bonaventure



Commentary on Ecclesiastes

Edited by Robert J. Karris, O.F.M.
and Campion Murray, O.F.M.

WORKS of
ST. BONAVENTURE

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Translation and Notes by Campion Murray, O.F.M.
and Robert J. Karris, O.F.M.
Introduction by Robert J. Karris, O.F.M.

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	7
INTRODUCTION TO THE COMMENTARY	65
Chapter I	89
Chapter II.....	127
Chapter III	155
Chapter IV	189
Chapter V	209
Chapter VI.....	237
Chapter VII	251
Chapter VIII.....	293
Chapter IX.....	319
Chapter X	351
Chapter XI.....	383
Chapter XII	399
Indices	431

INTRODUCTION

THE DATE AND PURPOSE OF BONAVENTURE'S COMMENTARY ON ECCLESIASTES

The *Commentary on Ecclesiastes* by St. Bonaventure (d. 1274) was written between 1253-1257, when Bonaventure was teaching at Paris, and quickly became the dominant commentary on Ecclesiastes, displacing the commentaries of Jerome, Hugh of St. Victor, and Hugh of St. Cher as well as the *Glossa Ordinaria*.¹ Although its primary audience seems to have been the classroom, its multiple spiritual interpretations and the role that Ecclesiastes played as the second step of a three-step spiritual life suggest that this commentary may have aided preachers and spiritual directors.² As far as I can tell, all of Bonaventure's Latin commentary on Ecclesiastes has never been translated into a modern language.³

¹See *Medieval Exegesis of Wisdom Literature: Essays by Beryl Smalley*, edited by Roland E. Murphy (Atlanta: Scholars Press Reprint, 1986), esp. 39-40.

²In a tradition going back to Origen, Proverbs was for beginners. Ecclesiastes was for those making progress in the spiritual life while The Song of Songs was for the perfect.

³For the Latin original see *Commentarius in librum Ecclesiastae in S. Bonaventurae Commentarii in Sacram Scripturam*, Tomus VI (Quaracchi: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1893), 1-99.

BONAVENTURE'S THREEFOLD STYLE OF EXEGESIS IN HIS COMMENTARY ON ECCLESIASTES

BONAVENTURE ARRIVES AT THE LITERAL SENSE BY INTERPRETING SCRIPTURE BY SCRIPTURE

Anyone familiar with Bonaventure's *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke* knows that the dominant style of exegesis in that commentary focuses on the literal sense.⁴ Bonaventure arrives at the literal sense of a passage in Luke's Gospel by means of interpreting Scripture by Scripture. He maintains that the Spirit who ultimately wrote the Scriptures must be interpreted by the Spirit of the Scriptures and by the Spirit at work in the interpreter. As Bonaventure states in his "About the Mode of Expounding Scripture" in his *Breviloquium*: "Scripture has this special mode of proceeding and should be understood and expounded in a way that corresponds to it. Since it hides several meanings under a single text, the expositor must bring hidden things to light (Job 28:11). That is, once a meaning has been brought forth, to clarify it through another, more evident, scriptural passage. For instance, if I were expounding on the words of the Psalm, *Take hold of arms and shield, and rise up to help me* (35:2), and wanted to explain what is meant by the divine 'arms,' I would say that these are God's truth and good will. I would then use a more explicit biblical passage to prove that this is so. For it is written elsewhere: *You have crowned us, as with the shield of your good will* (Psalm 5:13), and again: *His truth will compass you with a shield* (Psalm 91:5). No one will find this kind of thing an easy task except by long practice in reading the text and committing its literal sense

⁴See *Bonaventure on Luke*, chapters 1-8, 9-16, 17-24 (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2003).

to memory. Otherwise, that person will never have any real capacity to expound the scriptures. The person who is too proud to learn the letters that make up a word can never understand the meaning of those words or grammatical constructions. So, too, the one who scorns the letter of sacred scripture will never rise to interpret its scriptural meanings.”⁵

In Collation 19 n. 7 of his *Collations on the Six Days* Bonaventure expresses himself more succinctly: “All of scripture is like a single zither. And the lesser string does not produce the harmony by itself, but in union with others. Likewise, one passage of scripture depends upon another. Indeed, a thousand passages are related to a single passage.”⁶

As readers work through Bonaventure’s *Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, they will find that more than fifty percent of Bonaventure’s exegesis is an interpretation of Scripture by Scripture. I give an example from his interpretation of Ecclesiastes 4:1: “And I saw the oppressions that are done under the sun,’ that is, in this world. Ezekiel 22:29 reads: ‘The people of the land have used oppression and committed robbery. They afflicted the needy and poor, and they oppressed the stranger by calumny without judgment.’ A violent seizing of goods is called *oppression*, when done not in justice, but in malice.”

⁵I have modified the translation of Dominic V. Monti found in Timothy Johnson, *Bonaventure: Mystic of God’s Word* (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1999), 43. See also Opera Omnia 5:207 and *St. Bonaventure on Luke, chapters 1-8*, xx-xxi.

⁶This is my translation of Opera Omnia 5:421. See *Bonaventure on Luke, chapters 1-8*, xxi-xxii.

BONAVENTURE'S SPIRITUAL INTERPRETATIONS DERIVE FROM THE LITERAL SENSE

While the vast majority of Bonaventure's *Commentary on Ecclesiastes* deals with the literal sense, the literal sense often becomes the springboard for various spiritual interpretations, as is the case with his *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*. There are twelve passages of spiritual interpretations in Bonaventure's *Commentary on Ecclesiastes*. Interestingly enough, none occurs in his interpretations of Ecclesiastes 5-8.⁷ The longest is found after 12:6-7. These spiritual interpretations occur as follows: after Ecclesiastes 1:7, 2:8a, 3:8, 4:9-12, 4:15-16, 9:9-10, 9:12, 9:15, 10:15, 11:7, 12:2, 12:6-7. I provide two examples, one from the beginning of his commentary and one towards the end.

The first example comes from the three spiritual interpretations of sun, spirit/wind, and rivers that Bonaventure gives after his interpretation of the literal sense of Ecclesiastes 1:1-7. He gives a christological interpretation of "the sun" in Ecclesiastes 1:7 (#20): "Note the *spiritual* interpretation of *the sun* *The sun* is Christ, about whom Malachi 4:2 says: "But unto you who fear my name, the Sun of justice will arise." This sun *arose* in the nativity to enlighten. Isaiah 60:1 reads: "Arise, be enlightened, O Jerusalem." And John 1:9 has: "He was the true light that enlightens every human being." – This sun *set* in the passion for our redemption. Amos 8:9 says: "The sun shall go down at midday," that is, in a strong love of charity. – This sun *returned to its place* in the ascension. Luke 19:12 states: "A certain nobleman went into a far country," etc.⁸ – This sun *makes its round by the south*,

⁷Could the reason be that these chapters have a preponderance of Bonaventure's *quaestiones*, that is, thirteen of thirty-four?

⁸Luke 19:12 concludes: ". . . to obtain for himself a kingdom and then return."

that is, in a fervent love of the Saints. The Song of Songs 1:6 reads: “Show me, O you whom my soul loves, where you feed, where you lie down at midday.” And John 14:23 has: “If anyone loves me . . . we will come to him and will make our abode with him.” – It *turns again to the north* in a final searching. Jeremiah 1:14 says: “From the north every evil will break,” etc.

The second example comes from Bonaventure's spiritual interpretation of Ecclesiastes 11:1: “Cast your bread upon the running waters.” In his commentary on Ecclesiastes 11:7 (#13) Bonaventure provides a tropological or moral interpretation: “These verses can also be briefly interpreted to apply to *spiritual almsgiving* that consists in instructing one's neighbor. As he did earlier, Ecclesiastes exhorts us to do this *willingly* or liberally, *abundantly*, and *without ceasing*, when he says: *Cast your bread*, etc., that is, give freely. Matthew 10:8 reads: “Freely have you received, freely give.” *Give bread*, that is, the bread of *teaching*, about which Lamentations 4:4 says: “The little ones asked for bread, and there was none to break it for them.” *Upon the running waters*, that is, those who despise temporal goods. To these alone should the bread of teaching be given. Matthew 7:6 states: “Do not give what is holy to dogs.”

BONAVENTURE'S USE OF *QUAESTIONES*

Whereas in his *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*⁹ Bonaventure does not supplement his method of interpreting Scripture by Scripture by means of the scholastic method of the *quaestio*, his *Commentary on the Gospel of John*¹⁰ and his *Commentary on Ecclesiastes* do. J. A. Weisheipl explains the scholastic method of the *quaestio*

⁹See *Bonaventure on Luke*, chapters 1-8, 9-16, 17-24.

¹⁰See *Omnia Opera* 6:237-530.

in this manner: "Generally, the lecture on a text was given in the morning, and the disputation on some significant point was held in the afternoon as a kind of seminar. The question was posed by the master; a senior student, later called a bachelor, was appointed to respond to closely argued objections (*videtur quod non*) proposed by other students. In conclusion the master summarized the state of the question. . . ."¹¹ In his *Commentary on Ecclesiastes* Bonaventure has adapted the scholastic method to address various thorny issues of interpretation.

I have numbered the thirty-four *quaestiones* Bonaventure employs in his commentary, so that they might be more readily accessible to my readers. Readers should be alerted to the fact that each *quaestio* may, in turn, have sub-questions. I refer to these sub-questions by numbering them within the larger *quaestio*. For example, I might be referring to question two of *quaestio* #1. Every chapter of Bonaventure's commentary except chapters 11 and 12 contains at least one *quaestio*. Chapter 7 has the most *quaestiones* (six) and the General Introduction and Chapter 6 have the least (one each). This method of exegesis comprises about one third of Bonaventure's entire exposition of Ecclesiastes and might helpfully be compared to the *excursus* in certain commentary series that allows the interpreter to delve into a particularly difficult issue or key concept at greater length. I like to compare these *quaestiones* to arias at operas such as "Give Me Some Music" in Samuel Barber's *Anthony and Cleopatra* that give pause to and interpret the movement of the opera.

Through his *quaestiones* Bonaventure shows himself to be very skilled in matters literary, moral, scientific, anthropological, and theological. Using somewhat broad categories and realizing that some categories overlap, I have

¹¹See "Scholastic Method," *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2nd edition, Volume 12 (Detroit: Thomson Gale, 2003), 747.

determined that Bonaventure has eight *quaestiones* that deal with anthropological matters (#3, 6, 12, 13, 19, 20, 24, 29) and eight that deal with moral questions (#7, 21, 23, 26, 27, 31, 32, 33). Six concern questions of theology or more properly theodicy (#1, 5, 8, 15, 25, 28). Five focus on physics (#3, 4, 9, 11, 30). Four discuss literary issues (#1, 2, 10, 17), and four treat questions about riches and also religious life (#14, 16, 18, 22). Finally, one *quaestio* concerns demonology (#34). In a real sense Bonaventure's *quaestiones* are a commentary within a commentary and display Bonaventure struggling with various issues and finding answers in dependence upon philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle, theologians such as Augustine and Bernard of Clairvaux, and legal principles such as those found in the *Decretals of Pope Gregory IX*. We have provided Bonaventure's *quaestiones* with their own index to assist those readers who might want to study them as a separate source for Bonaventure's thought.

In summary, the *quaestiones* deal with such issues as natural science,¹² theodicy, and the proper methodology to use in reading and studying Ecclesiastes and show Bonaventure at his creative best. In what follows I will briefly describe the nature of each one of his thirty-four *quaestiones* to whet the appetites of my readers for more leisurely enjoyment.

Quaestio #1 is one of the most important and valuable of all Bonaventure's *quaestiones*, as he discusses the problematic of Ecclesiastes from the perspective of the four Aristotelian causes. Time after time Bonaventure, especially in question one of *quaestio* #1, has to wrestle with the tradition that maintains that the purpose of

¹²Bonaventure treats questions of natural science, it seems, since the tradition, going back to Origen, required that teaching on physics or natural science be derived from Ecclesiastes. See Smalley, *Medieval Exegesis of Wisdom Literature*, 40-41.

Ecclesiastes is contempt of the world.¹³ Much is at stake in his theological wrestling, for a main thesis of his theology is that creation is a stepping-stone to God or God's footprints.¹⁴ Or as he himself says in question two of his *quaestio* #4: "A divine word is every creature because each creature speaks of God." His use of the traditional image of the world as a ring given by the bridegroom to the soul contributes to a solution of the problem of how Christians are to despise the world that God has created for human enjoyment and as a vehicle to knowledge of God. A further strength of this *quaestio* is Bonaventure's detailed discussion of the meaning of "vanity" in question two. Employing the philosophical category of "the true," Bonaventure argues: "Vanity is the lack of being ordered to a purpose, and thus all sins and abuses are vanities." He further argues: "To have true being a thing has unchangeable being. And in this way vanity is the opposite of the true in that it is changeable and transmutable." In the fourth question of *quaestio* #1 Bonaventure deals with an issue that exercises contemporary exegetes: How can such a pessimistic book as Ecclesiastes be canonical and generate trust?

¹³The tradition grouped Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and The Song of Songs together and taught that Proverbs is for beginners in the spiritual life, Ecclesiastes for those making progress in the spiritual life, and The Song of Songs for those proficient in the spiritual life. So Ecclesiastes taught that a person made progress in the spiritual life by showing contempt for things. See Smalley, *Medieval Exegesis of Wisdom Literature*, 40-41 and also question 2 of Bonaventure's *Quaestio* #2 in his commentary on Ecclesiastes 1.

¹⁴See Bonaventure's *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, ed. Philotheus Boehner and Zachary Hayes, *Works of St. Bonaventure II/Revised and Expanded* (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2002). See also Ilia Delio, *Simply Bonaventure: An Introduction to His Life, Thought, and Writings* (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2001), 54-66 (Creation).

Quaestio #2 devotes five individual questions to largely literary problems between the three works that Solomon wrote: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and The Song of Songs.

Quaestio #3 dedicates five individual questions to issues of natural science, e. g., the movements of the sun and the rivers. In this *quaestio* Bonaventure shows his dependence upon Aristotle.

Quaestio #4 revolves around four individual questions. Three of these questions deal with anthropological questions arising from specific verses in Ecclesiastes 1. For example, what is the meaning of “men and women cannot explain them in words” in Ecclesiastes 1:8? The remaining question concerns physics and stems from Ecclesiastes 1:9: “Nothing under the sun is new.” Bonaventure relies on Aristotle to solve some individual questions.

Quaestio #5 considers the meaning of two very difficult verses. Ecclesiastes 1:13 reads: “This worst occupation (the search for wisdom) God has given to men and women to be exercised therein.” Bonaventure answers that this is a “worst” occupation because it is God’s just judgment on sin. The second verse is 1:15: “The perverse are corrected with difficulty.” Bonaventure makes a threefold distinction to explain this verse. In the first distinction he borrows from Aristotle: “The answer is taken from the point of view of an *evil work*, because ‘good is done in one way, but evil is done in many ways.’”

Quaestio #6 deals solely with the meaning of Ecclesiastes 1:18: “The person who adds knowledge also adds sorrow.” In his response to this question Bonaventure quotes Aristotle: “All people by nature want to know.”

Quaestio #7 concerns the interpretations of four verses, two of which involve Bonaventure in questions of moral-

ity, e. g., why is it sinful to delight in songs (Ecclesiastes 1:8)? In answering this question, Bonaventure relies on philosophical distinctions about various types of delight.

Quaestio #8 focuses on the exposition of four troublesome verses. For example, question 4 asks about the meaning of Ecclesiastes 2:17: "I was weary of my life when I saw that all things under the sun are evil." Contrary to Ecclesiastes 2:17 Bonaventure quotes Genesis 1:31: "God saw all the things that God had made, and they were very good." His solution is found in Romans 7:12: "The law is holy and the commandment holy," but it is human beings who abuse these gifts and make them deadly.

Quaestio #9 questions the meaning of the two parts of Ecclesiastes 3:1: Do all things, including spiritual substances, have their season? Do all things, including the four elements, pass away? While quoting some texts from Scripture, Bonaventure argues mainly from philosophical and ecclesiastical authorities.

Quaestio #10 asks about the reason for the twenty-eight times mentioned in Ecclesiastes 3:2-8: Are they examples? Are they sufficient? Bonaventure's answer ultimately goes back to Augustine's interpretation of numbers: "So he used numbers that include everything and its perfection. He lists twenty-eight times and fourteen differences, because twenty-eight is a perfect number and includes a seven, that is, the whole of time."

Quaestio #11 is one long question about the meaning of Ecclesiastes 3:14: "I have learned that all the works which God has made continue forever." Using Aristotle, Bonaventure answers the question by playing on the various nuances of perpetuity, changeability, and corruption.

Quaestio #12 concludes Bonaventure's exposition of Ecclesiastes 3 and concerns the fundamental anthropo-

logical questions behind Ecclesiastes 3:19 (“Human beings have nothing more than beasts”) and Ecclesiastes 3:21 (“Who knows if the spirit of the children of Adam ascends upward?”). Bonaventure’s reply to question two of this *quaestio* is worthy of quotation: “Our faith says and presumes that good souls go upward to be rewarded and that the souls of beasts go downward into corruption. Reason and philosophy agree with this. However, reason and philosophy are both obscure and provide many grounds for doubt.”

Quaestio #13 considers four sub-questions. Two of these deal with Ecclesiastes 4:2-3 and its consideration of the non-alive as better than the living, e. g., “I praised the dead rather than the living.” Bonaventure’s answers to these fundamental questions about the value of existence and non-existence flow from Aristotle, Paul, Jonah, and Augustine.

Quaestio #14 deals with Ecclesiastes 4:7-12 and whether a solitary life should be preferred to communal living. In his reply Bonaventure seems to use two pre-formed pieces that describe three kinds of solitude and three kinds of communal living. Two quotations from Bernard of Clairvaux play a key role in Bonaventure’s formulation of this *quaestio*.

Quaestio #15 raises two questions about what making vows means in Ecclesiastes 5:3: “If you have vowed anything to the Lord, defer not to pay it.” In answering the first question, Bonaventure refers to *The Decretals of Gregory IX*. Bonaventure’s second two questions focus on Ecclesiastes 5:6: “Do not say before the angel: There is no providence.” Bonaventure’s answers seem based on God’s attributes, e. g., “Since it is characteristic of a wise person to provide for his household, this is even more so the case with the One who is most wise.”

Quaestio #16 addresses one issue, based on Ecclesiastes 5:10: "What does the author mean by saying that 'riches do not profit their owner'?" In his response Bonaventure cites Scripture, Aristotle, and Bernard of Clairvaux. The latter writes: "Temporal things of themselves are neither good nor evil. Their use is good, their abuse evil. To worry over them is worse. To seek them is more shameful." Bonaventure's answer has the feeling of a preformed response.

Quaestio #17 has four questions. The first two contain one of the most profound examinations of the literary style and argument of Ecclesiastes as Bonaventure deals with the author's commendation of the enjoyment of present delight in Ecclesiastes 5:17-19. I quote at length from his second question. The author "speaks as a preacher, who weaves his argument in such a way that different persons present diverse opinions. Thus, one person speaks as a carnal person while another as a wise person. . . . But later he speaks in his own person and says in Ecclesiastes 12:13: 'Let us all hear together the conclusion of the discourse,' where he passes sentence on those whose arguments he had earlier presented: 'Fear God, and God will judge everything.' So anything read in the book that is contrary to that sentence is made void by that sentence. Such are all the things said to recommend present pleasure."

#18 is the formulation of three questions concerning the avaricious in Ecclesiastes 6:3. Bonaventure uses Albert the Great, Jerome, insightful literary analysis, and Augustine to arrive at his answers.

Quaestio #19 deals with three questions that concern the human capacities of knowledge and will, as Bonaventure fathoms the meaning of texts such as Ecclesiastes 6:9: "It is better to see what you may desire than to desire what you do not know." Bonaventure's answers are en-

riched by texts from Augustine and Aristotle. For example, he cites Augustine: “We are able to love what is not seen, but in no way can we love what is not known.”

Quaestio #20 considers two texts. Ecclesiastes 7:2: “The day of death is better than the day of one’s birth” and Ecclesiastes 7:4: “Anger is better than laughter.” Aristotle and tradition help Bonaventure solve issues raised by the first text: “. . . death is preferred to life, for its dissolution, namely, death, has as its consequence rest and existence with Christ.” Augustine assists Bonaventure in distinguishing between “anger over sin” and “the anger of nature.”

Quaestio #21 is one of the shortest and least developed of the *quaestiones* and deals with two verses. Ecclesiastes 7:8 reads: “Oppression troubles the wise person” and Ecclesiastes 7:10 states: “Do not get angry quickly.” In responding to issues raised by Ecclesiastes 7:8, Bonaventure quotes the *Glossa Ordinaria*: This text refers “to a wise person who is just and perfect.” His response to the meaning of 7:10 is snappy: “It has to be said that anger has many forms.”

Quaestio #22 focuses on three texts. One of them is Ecclesiastes 7:12: “Wisdom with riches is more useful.” In replying to the objection that the Lord preferred the state of poverty, Bonaventure uses what seems to be a response fashioned in disputes about evangelical perfection: There is a triple poverty. He also has to deal with Aristotle’s dictum: “Art and virtue are concerned about what is difficult.”

Quaestio #23 is one of the longest of the *quaestiones* and has five individual questions. The first two questions revolve around the meaning of Ecclesiastes 7:17: “Do not be too just and do not be more wise than is necessary.”

Bonaventure is indebted to Aristotle for his answer: "Virtue consists of the middle way and is damaged by too much and too little."

Quaestio #24 grapples with the meaning of two texts. Bonaventure employs Paul, especially 1 Thessalonians 5:21 ("Test all things. Hold fast to that which is good.") to explain Ecclesiastes 7:24: "I have tried all things in wisdom." The second text is Ecclesiastes 7:29: "One man among a thousand I have found. A woman among them all I have not found." Bonaventure appeals to grammar, Jesus' life and teaching, and tradition to argue that just men *and women* exist.

Quaestio #25 focuses on two verses. Ecclesiastes 8:2 reads: "I observe . . . the commandments of the oath of God." Relying on Augustine, Bonaventure handles problems such as how the all-truthful God can swear an oath. Ecclesiastes 8:5 states: "The person who keeps the commandment will find no evil." It seems that the commentaries of Salonijs and Rupert of Deutz help Bonaventure to distinguish between evils that always endure and those that are transitory.

Quaestio #26 addresses two texts. I select Ecclesiastes 8:9: "Sometimes one person rules over another." Bonaventure's major question is whether one person can rule over another. After acknowledging that all people by nature are free and distinguishing between nature after and nature before the fall, Bonaventure argues that it is just that some people are servants. He comments: "Another reason for ruling over someone is to restrain the wicked." *Quaestio* #32 (the rule of the wicked over the just) corresponds to this question.

Quaestio #27 treats Ecclesiastes 8:14-15 under the general question: "Which status is better and more useful:

the condition of prosperity or adversity?” Scripture and Aristotle aid Bonaventure in distinguishing between the conditions of prosperity/adversity suffered by wicked people and those same conditions suffered by good people who are perfect or imperfect.

Quaestio #28 deals with three issues, the first of which arises from the meaning of Ecclesiastes 8:17: “I understand that a human being can find no reason for the works of God.” Bonaventure uses Aristotle (“words are to be understood with reference to the topic”) and Gregory (“God’s judgments are not to be discussed, but venerated in an awesome silence”) to argue that Ecclesiastes is not talking about God’s works in general, but specifically about God’s judgments.

Quaestio #29 considers four issues raised by Ecclesiastes 9:5-7. The first three issues concern life after death. For example, what does Ecclesiastes 9:5 mean: “The dead know nothing more”? Bonaventure observes that if Ecclesiastes is speaking in the person of Epicurus, his statement is clear. If he is speaking in his own name, however, these words “are to be understood of things in this world.”

Quaestio #30 provides a sophisticated discussion of chance as Bonaventure asks the meaning of Ecclesiastes 9:11: “But time and chance in all.” He uses Plato’s understanding of causation to argue that nothing happens by chance. In turn, he uses Aristotle’s understanding of causation to argue that there is chance: “In this way there is chance in everything, not because all things happen by chance, but because some element of chance is present in every changeable creature.”

Quaestio #31 investigates the theological problem of the nature and power of sin raised by Ecclesiastes 9:18:

"The person who will sin in one will lose many good things." Bonaventure's answer is based on distinctions. For example, sin is to be seen from the point of view of a three-fold deformity. Within the first deformity or loss there is a connection between sins: "Concerning the loss of a good freely given, there is indeed a connection between sins, because to commit one sin is to lose grace and all the virtues in so far as they are freely given."

Quaestio #32 corresponds to *Quaestio* 26 and asks about the situation where the wicked rule over the just. Since Waldensians and others claimed that the authority of wicked rulers was null and void, Bonaventure seems compelled to deal with such an issue as implied in Ecclesiastes 10:6: "A fool set in high dignity." Bonaventure distinguishes between three kinds of unjust rulers. Of the second kind he comments: "There is another ruler who acquires his office unjustly and rules without justice. Such a person can neither rule with justice nor should one be subject to this person."

Quaestio #33 comprises a long discussion about the sin of detraction that is prompted by Ecclesiastes 10:11: "If a serpent bites in secret, the person who backbites in secret is not better." After making three distinctions, Bonaventure offers this summary: "When there is neither necessity nor usefulness, even if what is said is the truth, a person is not excused by the passion of committing detraction. Further, such a person commits the sin of detraction, even if he is speaking the truth."

Quaestio #34 deals with the very strange Ecclesiastes 10:20: "Do not speak detraction against the king in your thought, and in your private chamber speak no evil of the rich person, because even the *birds of the air will carry your voice*." Bonaventure's focus is on "the birds of the air," who are the demons. Like many a medieval theologian

Bonaventure linked Luke 8:5 and 8:12, that is, the birds that eat up the seed along the wayside are demons. For their part demons know human thoughts and affections through some human sign, action, facial expression, or word.

BONAVENTURE'S SOURCES

As readers work their way through Bonaventure's Commentary on Ecclesiastes, it becomes clear that his major acknowledged ecclesiastical sources are the *Glossa Ordinaria*, the *Glossa Interlinearis*, Jerome, and Hugh of St. Victor. But as Crescentius v. d. Borne rightly contended over eighty-five years ago, Bonaventure's primary unacknowledged ecclesiastical source was his contemporary Hugh of St. Cher (d. 1263).¹⁵ The indices at the end of this volume will direct interested readers to the numerous and detailed footnotes where I provide instances of Bonaventure's dependence upon the wisdom of his elder commentator. For our purposes I limit myself to three examples of Bonaventure's creative adaptation of Hugh of St. Cher's materials.¹⁶

¹⁵"De fontibus Commentarii S. Bonaventurae in Ecclesiasten," *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 10 (1918): 257-270. On p. 99 QuarEd mention as Bonaventure's primary ecclesiastical sources the *Glossa Ordinaria* and *Glossa Interlinearis*, Jerome, and Hugh of St. Victor, that is, they do not recognize the influence of Hugh of St. Cher. As Beryl Smalley comments: "An examination of his own sources has revealed a close dependence on Hugh of St. Cher. . . . The fact that Bonaventure had the postill (of Hugh of St. Cher) on Ecclesiastes on his table need only show that it had come to be regarded as an indispensable adjunct to the *Gloss*, as Hugh had intended it to be, in the eighteen years or so that separate the two regencies." See *Medieval Exegesis of Wisdom Literature*, 39-40.

¹⁶For examples of Bonaventure's creative use of Hugh of St. Cher's commentary on St. Luke's Gospel see the indices in: *St. Bonaventure's Commentary on the Gospel of Luke, Chapters 1-8, 9-16, 17-24*, With an

First, Bonaventure and Hugh of St. Cher have well over one hundred citations from Scripture in common. It may be due to pure coincidence that they have so many quotations in common, or it may be due to the way their memories were trained to retain the Scriptures during their education at Paris. But when Bonaventure and Hugh of St. Cher have the same two quotations from Scripture in sequence, then coincidence may fly out the door and dependence enter.¹⁷ In their interpretations of Ecclesiastes 5:14-15a they both cite Job 1:21 and 1 Timothy 6:7. Ecclesiastes 5:14-15a reads: "As he came forth naked from his mother's womb, so shall he return and will take nothing away with him of his labor. A most deplorable evil: As he came, so shall he return." Job 1:21 states: "Naked I came out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither." 1 Timothy 6:7 says: "We brought nothing into this world, and certainly we can carry nothing out."¹⁸

A second example occurs in Bonaventure's commentary on Ecclesiastes 12:11 (#58): "So he says: *Which by the counsel of the masters*, that is, a deliberate discussion and statement, *given by one shepherd*, that is, by Christ, who

Introduction, Translation and Notes by Robert J. Karris, Works of St. Bonaventure VIII/1, 2, 3 (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2001, 2003, 2004). See further my "A Comparison of the *Glossa Ordinaria*, Hugh of St. Cher, and St. Bonaventure on Luke 8:26-39," *Franciscan Studies* 58 (2000) 121-236, "Bonaventure's Commentary on Luke: Four Case Studies of His Creative Borrowing from Hugh of St. Cher," *Franciscan Studies* 59 (2001): 133-236, and "St. Bonaventure's Use of *Distinctiones*: His Independence of and Dependence on Hugh of St. Cher," *Franciscan Studies* 60 (2002): 209-250.

¹⁷In this and other instances I provide sufficient indication of dependence and direct interested readers to the specific passages where more detail will be given in the notes.

¹⁸More details will be found in the commentary on Ecclesiastes 5:12-15a (#19) and the notes there.

is the shepherd, according to what is said in John 10:11: 'I am the good shepherd.' Words of the wise are given to them by this shepherd, according to Augustine: 'He has the office of teacher in heaven who teaches us in our heart.' For Matthew 23:8 states: 'One is your teacher, the Christ.'" In his commentary on this passage Hugh of St. Cher also quotes John 10:11 and Matthew 23:8: "Given by one shepherd], that is, by Christ, who alone is the true shepherd of souls. For John 10 says: I am the good shepherd. And Matthew 23 states: One is your teacher, the Christ."

Second, there are a significant number of instances where Bonaventure states that he is quoting a certain author, for example, Seneca, and it can be determined by comparing Bonaventure's text, that of Hugh of St. Cher, and Seneca's text itself, that Bonaventure is actually quoting Seneca through Hugh of St. Cher. I take my first example from Bonaventure's commentary on Ecclesiastes 5:9a (#13): "A covetous person will not be satisfied with money." Bonaventure observes: "And Seneca comments: 'If you want to make yourself rich, it is not necessary to accumulate money, but to curb greed.'" The editors of the critical edition of Bonaventure's Commentary on Ecclesiastes scoured Seneca's writings for this citation and had to settle for this parallel: "Money never made a man rich; on the contrary, it always smites men with a greater craving for itself." In a quotation that is virtually identical with that of Bonaventure Hugh of St. Cher writes: "And Seneca says: If you want to make yourself rich, it is not necessary to accumulate riches, but to curb greed."

My second instance stems from Bonaventure's exposition of Ecclesiastes 1:13 (#33): "Note what Hugh says: 'An occupation is a distraction of the mind that turns away, distracts, and traps a soul from being able to think of what concerns salvation.' Curiosity, however, is a willful prostitution of a human mind, embracing any truth it chances

on and being adulterous with it, because the first truth is the soul's only spouse."

I translate Hugh of St. Victor: "An occupation is a distraction and entanglement of minds that turns away, dissipates, and traps souls, lest they succeed in thinking of what pertains to salvation."

Hugh of St. Cher comments: "An occupation is described by Master Hugh of St. Victor in this way: An occupation is a distraction and an entanglement of the mind that turns away and dissipates and entangles it from being able to think of what concerns salvation. Curiosity, however, is nothing other than the willful prostitution of the human mind, embracing any truth it chances upon, and fornicating with it, or to speak more truthfully, being adulterous with it. For the first truth, which is God, is human mind's only spouse."¹⁹

I draw the conclusion: Bonaventure is not quoting Hugh of St. Victor directly, but is adapting the quotation of Hugh of St. Victor from Hugh of St. Cher.²⁰

My third and final test case provides two examples that may not be probative, because there is no third text that can be used as a control. Yet the fact that both Bonaventure and Hugh of St. Cher cite the same texts virtually in the same way does not seem to be the result of sheer coincidence. In his second question of *Quaestio* #12, after his commentary on Ecclesiastes 3:22 (#42), Bonaventure addresses the issue of whether the spirit of Adam's children ascends upward and gives this first re-

¹⁹See the full commentary and notes on Ecclesiastes 1:13 (#33) below.

²⁰See "De fontibus," 260-261 where Crescentius v. d. Borne also adduces this passage as proof of his contention that Bonaventure borrowed from Hugh of St. Cher.

sponse: “First, from the disposition of the body, which is arranged and organized with a view to its suitability towards what is above. If, then, ‘he gave to humans an uplifted face to turn their eyes to heaven,’ they also look for what is above. Therefore, the spirit goes upward.” The Latin text of Bonaventure’s citation is: *Os homini sublime dedit caelumque tueri*. This is a quotation from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, whose Latin text is: *Os homini sublime dedit caelumque videre iussit et erectos ad sidera tollere vultus* (“he gave to human beings an uplifted face and bade them stand erect and turn their eyes to heaven”). Hugh of St. Cher also quotes Ovid: “*Os homini sublime dedit coelumque videre iussit*” (“He gave to humans an uplifted face and commanded them to look to heaven”). Neither Bonaventure nor Hugh of St. Cher state that they are quoting Ovid. My hypothesis is that Bonaventure is quoting Ovid from Hugh of St. Cher and not directly.²¹

In his commentary on Ecclesiastes 10:7 (#31), “Blessed is the land, whose king is noble,” Bonaventure observes: “Namely, in nobility of character, for true nobility consists in having a soul adorned with virtues.” The Latin is: *Quia nobilitas sola est quae animum moribus ornat*. Hugh of St. Cher uses a variant of the same dictum: “*Nobilitas animi sola est, quae moribus ornat*” (“Nobility of soul consists solely in having it adorned with virtues”). The editors of Hugh of St. Cher’s commentary put this saying into italics and set it off as a quotation. It would seem to me that Bonaventure quoted this saying from Hugh of St. Cher.²²

²¹For more detail see the commentary below and especially the notes.

²²See the commentary below and the notes for more detail.

With these three instances of dependence I rest my case for Bonaventure's dependence upon Hugh of St. Cher. Although Hugh of St. Cher's postill on Ecclesiastes is the major ecclesiastical source behind Bonaventure's commentary, it plays a small role in his total creative work, one of whose main features is his use of *quaestiones* that explain difficult points in the text of Ecclesiastes and comprise about one third of his exposition.

TRANSLATION OF BONAVENTURE'S TEXT OF ECCLESIASTES

This translation is based on the Douay version and employs inclusive language. Bonaventure's text was the Latin Vulgate of the original Hebrew, a translation that St. Jerome reputedly accomplished in one day. After providing the translation of Bonaventure's text, we will compare his text to a select number of passages from the NRSV.

CHAPTER 1

¹ The words of Ecclesiastes, son of David, king of Jerusalem.

² Vanity of vanities, said Ecclesiastes, and all is vanity.

³ What profit do people have for all the labor that they engage in under the sun? ⁴ One generation passes away, and another generation comes, but the earth stands forever. ⁵ The sun rises and goes down, and returns to its place, and there rising again, ⁶ makes its round by the south and turns again to the north. The spirit goes forward surveying all places round about and returns to its circuits. ⁷ All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea does not overflow. Unto the place whence the rivers come, they return to flow again. ⁸ All things are hard. Human beings cannot explain them in words. The eye is not filled with seeing. Neither is the ear filled with hearing. ⁹ What is it

that has been? The same thing that will be. What is it that has been done? The same that will be done.¹⁰ Nothing under the sun is new. Neither is any person able to say: Behold, this is new. For it has already gone before in the ages that were before us.¹¹ There is no remembrance of former things. Nor indeed of those things which hereafter are to come, will there be any remembrance with those who will be in the latter end.

¹² I, Ecclesiastes, was king in Jerusalem.¹³ And I proposed in my mind to seek and search out wisely concerning all things that are done under the sun.

This worst occupation God has given to men and women to be exercised therein.¹⁴ I have seen all things that are done under the sun. And behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit.¹⁵ The perverse are corrected with difficulty, and the number of fools is infinite.

¹⁶ I have spoken in my heart, saying: Behold, I have become great, and in wisdom I have gone beyond all who were before me in Jerusalem. And my mind contemplated many things wisely, and I have learned.¹⁷ And I have given my heart to know prudence and learning and errors and folly. And I have perceived that in these also there was labor and vexation of spirit.¹⁸ Because in much wisdom there is much indignation. The person who adds knowledge also adds sorrow.

CHAPTER 2

¹ I said in my heart: I will go and abound with delights and enjoy good things. And I saw that this, too, is vanity.

² Laughter I counted error. And to joy I said: Why are you vainly deceived?³ I thought in my heart, to withdraw my flesh from wine, so that I might turn to wisdom and might avoid folly, till I might see what was profitable for men and women, what they ought to do under the sun, all the days of their lives.

⁴ I have made great works for myself. I built houses for myself. I planted vineyards. ⁵ I made gardens and orchards and set them with trees of all kinds. ⁶ I made for myself ponds of water to water therewith the wood of the young trees. ⁷ I acquired menservants and maidservants and had a large family and herds of oxen, and great flocks of sheep beyond all that were before me in Jerusalem. ⁸ I heaped together for myself gold and silver and the wealth of kings and provinces. I made for myself male and female singers and the delights of men and women, cups and vessels to serve and pour out the wine.

⁹ And I surpassed in riches all who were before me in Jerusalem. My wisdom also remained with me. ¹⁰ And all my eyes desired, I refused them not. I withheld not my heart from delighting itself in the things that I had prepared. I esteemed this my portion, to make use of my own labor. ¹¹ And when I turned myself to all the works that my hand had wrought and to the labors wherein I had labored in vain, I saw in all things vanity and vexation of spirit and that nothing was lasting under the sun. ¹² I passed further to behold wisdom and error and folly.

What are human beings, said I, that they can follow the King, their maker? ¹³ And I saw that wisdom excelled folly, as much as light differs from darkness. ¹⁴ The eyes of the wise are in their heads. Fools walk in darkness. And I learned that both alike were to die. ¹⁵ And I said in my heart: If the death of the fool and mine shall be one, what does it avail me that I have applied myself more to the study of wisdom? And I have spoken with my own mind and have perceived that this also is vanity. ¹⁶ For there shall be no more remembrance of the wise than of the fool forever, and the times to come shall cover all things together with oblivion. The learned die in like manner as the unlearned. ¹⁷ Therefore, I was weary of my life, when I saw that all things under the sun are evil, and all vanity and vexation of spirit.

¹⁸ Again I hated all my application wherewith I had earnestly labored under the sun. I would have an heir after me ¹⁹ and do not know whether he would be a wise person or a fool. And he will have rule over all the labors with which I have labored and have been solicitous. Is there anything so vain? ²⁰ Wherefore, I left off, and my heart renounced laboring any more under the sun. ²¹ For when a person labors in wisdom and knowledge and carefulness, he leaves what he has gotten to an idle person. So this also is vanity and a great evil. ²² For what profit will human beings have from all their labor and vexation of spirit, with which they have been tormented under the sun? ²³ All their days are full of sorrows and miseries. Even in the night they do not rest in mind. And is this not vanity?

²⁴ Is it not better to eat and drink and to show their souls good things from their labors? And this is from the hand of God. ²⁵ Who will so feast and abound in delights as I? ²⁶ God has given to a person who is good in his sight wisdom and knowledge and understanding, but to the sinner he has given vexation and superfluous care to heap up and to gather together and to give to the person who has pleased God. But this also is vanity and a fruitless solicitude of the mind.

CHAPTER 3

¹ All things have their season, and in their times all things pass under the sun.

² A time to be born and a time to die. A time to plant and a time to pluck up what has been planted.

³ A time to kill and a time to heal. A time to destroy and a time to build.

⁴ A time to weep and a time to laugh. A time to mourn and a time to dance.

⁵ A time to scatter stones and a time to gather. A time to embrace and a time to be far from embraces.

⁶ A time to get and a time to lose. A time to keep and a time to cast away.

⁷ A time to rend and a time to sew. A time to keep silence and a time to speak.

⁸ A time of love and a time of hatred. A time of war and a time of peace.

⁹ What advantage do human beings have from their labor? ¹⁰ I have seen the trouble which God has given human beings to be exercised in it. ¹¹ He has made all things good in their time and has delivered the world to their consideration, so that human beings cannot find out the work which God has made from the beginning to the end. ¹² And I have known that there was no better thing than to rejoice and to do well in one's life. ¹³ For all, who eat and drink, see good in their labors. This is a gift from God.

¹⁴ I have learned that all the works which God has made continue forever. We cannot add anything, nor take away from those things which God has made with the result that God may be feared. ¹⁵ That which has been made, the same continues. Things that will be have already been. And God restores what is past.

¹⁶ I saw under the sun in the place of judgment wickedness, and in the place of justice iniquity. ¹⁷ And I said in my heart: God will judge both the just and the wicked, and then will be the time of everything. ¹⁸ I said in my heart concerning the men and women that God would prove them and show them to be like beasts. ¹⁹ Therefore, the death of humans and of beasts is one, and the condition of them both is equal. As a human being dies, so they also die. All things breathe alike. And human beings have nothing more than beasts. All things are subject to vanity. ²⁰ And all things go to one place. Of earth they were made, and into earth they return together. ²¹ Who knows if the spirit of the children of Adam ascends upward, and if the spirit of the beasts descends downward?

²² And I have found that nothing is better than for people to rejoice in their work, and that this is their portion. For who will bring them to know the things that will be after them?

CHAPTER 4

¹ I turned myself to other things, and I saw the oppressions that are done under the sun, and the tears of the innocent, and they had no comforter. They were not able to resist their violence, being destitute of all help. ² And I praised the dead rather than the living. ³ And I judged that person happier than them both who is not yet born nor has seen the evils that are done under the sun.

⁴ Again I considered all the labors of men and women, and I remarked that their industries are exposed to the envy of their neighbors. So in this also is vanity and fruitless care. ⁵ Fools fold their own hands and eat their own flesh, saying: ⁶ Better is a handful with rest than both hands full with labor and vexation of mind.

⁷ Considering, I found also another vanity under the sun. ⁸ There is but one, and he has not a second, no child, no brother, and yet he ceases not to labor. Neither are his eyes satisfied with riches. Neither does he reflect, saying: For whom do I labor and defraud my soul of good things? In this also is vanity and a grievous vexation.

⁹ It is better, therefore, that two should be together than one, for they have the advantage of mutual companionship. ¹⁰ If one fall, he will be supported by the other. Woe to the person who is alone, for when he falls, he has no one to lift him up. ¹¹ And if two lie together, they shall warm one another. How will one alone be warmed? ¹² And if a person prevail against one, two will withstand that person. A threefold cord is not easily broken.

¹³ Better is a child that is poor and wise than a king who is old and foolish, who knows not to foresee for here-

after.¹⁴ Because out of prison and chains sometimes a person comes forth to a kingdom. And another, who is born king, is consumed with poverty.¹⁵ I saw all the living who walk under the sun with the second young man, who will rise up in his place.¹⁶ The number of all the people who were before him is infinite, and those who will come afterwards will not rejoice in him. But this too is vanity and vexation of spirit.

¹⁷ Guard your foot when you go into the house of God and draw near to hear. For much better is obedience than the victims of fools, who know not what evil they do.

CHAPTER 5

¹ Do not speak anything rashly, and let not your heart be hasty to utter a word before God. For God is in heaven, and you upon the earth. Therefore, let your words be few.² Dreams follow many cares, and in many words will be found folly.³ If you have vowed anything to God, do not defer to pay it. For an unfaithful and foolish promise displeases God. But whatsoever you have vowed, pay it.⁴ And it is much better not to vow, than after a vow not to perform the things promised.⁵ Give not your mouth to cause your flesh to sin, and do not say before the angel: There is no providence, lest God be angry at your words and destroy all the works of your hands.⁶ Where there are many dreams, there are many vanities and words without number. But do you fear God.⁷ If you shall see the oppressions of the poor and violent judgments and justice perverted in the province, do not wonder at this matter. For the person who is high has another higher, and there are others still higher than these.

⁸ Moreover, there is the king who reigns over all the land subject to him.

⁹ A covetous person will not be satisfied with money, and the person who loves riches will reap no fruit from them. So this also is vanity.

¹⁰ Where there are great riches, there are also many to eat them. And what does it profit the owner, but that he sees the riches with his eyes? ¹¹ Sleep is sweet to laborers, whether they eat little or much. But the fullness of the rich will not allow them to sleep. ¹² There is also another grievous evil which I have seen under the sun: Riches kept to the harm of the owner.

¹³ For they are lost with very great affliction. He has begotten a son who will be in extremity of need. ¹⁴ As he came forth naked from his mother's womb, so shall he return and will take nothing away with him of his labor. ¹⁵ A most deplorable evil: As he came, so shall he return. What then does it profit him that he has labored for the wind?

¹⁶ All the days of his life he eats in darkness, and in many cares, and in misery and in sorrow. ¹⁷ This, therefore, seemed good to me that people should eat and drink and enjoy the fruit of their labors, wherewith they have labored under the sun, all the days of the lives which God has given them. And this is their portion. ¹⁸ And all to whom God has given riches and substance and has given them power to eat thereof and to enjoy their portion and to rejoice in their labors. This is a gift of God. ¹⁹ For they will not remember much of the days of their lives, because God entertains their heart with delight.

CHAPTER 6

¹ There is also another evil that I have seen under the sun, and that frequent among men and women. ² A man, to whom God has given riches and substance and honor, and his soul wants nothing of all that he desires. Yet God does not give him power to eat thereof, but a stranger will eat them up. And this is vanity and a great misery.

³ If someone begets a hundred children and lives many years and attains to a great age and his soul made no use of the goods of his substance and he will be without burial, of this person I will pronounce that the untimely born is better than he. ⁴ For he came in vain and goes into darkness, and his name will be wholly forgotten. ⁵ He has not seen the sun nor known the distance between good and evil. ⁶ Although he lived two thousand years and has not enjoyed good things, do not all make haste to one place?

⁷ All human labor is for one's mouth, but one's soul will not be filled. ⁸ What more has the wise person than the fool? And what the poor person, but to go there where there is life? ⁹ It is better to see what you may desire than to desire what you do not know. But this also is vanity and presumption of spirit.

¹⁰ The person who will be, his name is already called. And it is known that he is a human being and cannot contend in judgment with him who is stronger than himself.

¹¹ There are many words that have much vanity in disputing.

CHAPTER 7

¹ Why do people need to seek things that are above them whereas they do not know what is profitable for them in their lives, in all the days of their pilgrimage, and the time that passes like a shadow? Or who can tell them what will be after them under the sun?

² A good name is better than precious ointments, and the day of death than the day of one's birth.

³ It is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting, for in that we are put in mind of the end of all, and the living think of what is to come.

⁴ Anger is better than laughter, because by the sadness of the countenance the mind of the offender is corrected.

⁵ The heart of the wise is where there is mourning. The heart of fools is where there is mirth.

⁶ It is better to be rebuked by a wise person than to be deceived by the flattery of fools.

⁷ For as the crackling of thorns burning under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool. Now this also is vanity.

⁸ Oppression troubles the wise person and will destroy the strength of his heart.

⁹ Better is the end of a speech than the beginning. Better is the patient person than the presumptuous.

¹⁰ Do not get angry quickly, for anger rests in the bosom of a fool.

¹¹ Do not say what do you think is the cause that the former times were better than they are now. For this manner of question is foolish. ¹² Wisdom with riches is more useful and brings more advantage to those who see the sun.

¹³ For as wisdom is a defense, so money is a defense. But learning and wisdom excel in this, that they give life to the person who possesses them. ¹⁴ Consider the works of God that no one can correct whom he has despised.

¹⁵ In the good day enjoy good things and beware beforehand of the evil day. For God has made both the one and the other, so that human beings may not find any just complaint against God. ¹⁶ These things I also saw on the day of my birth: Just people perish in their justice and the wicked live a long time in their wickedness. ¹⁷ Do not be too just and do not be more wise than is necessary, lest you become senseless. ¹⁸ Do not be too wicked. Do not be foolish, lest you die before your time.

¹⁹ It is good that you should hold up the just. Yes and from him do not withdraw your hand. The person who fears God neglects nothing.

²⁰ Wisdom has strengthened the wise more than ten princes of the city.

²¹ For on the earth there is no just person who does good and sins not. ²² But do not apply your heart to all words that are spoken, lest perhaps you hear your servant reviling you. ²³ For your conscience knows that you also have often spoken evil of others.

²⁴ I have tried all things in wisdom. I have said: I will be wise, and it departed further from me, ²⁵ much more than it was. It is a great depth. Who will find it out? ²⁶ I have surveyed all things with my mind to know and consider and seek out wisdom and reason, and to know the wickedness of the fool and the error of the imprudent.

²⁷ And I have found more bitter than death a woman, who is the hunter's snare, and her heart is a net and her hands are bands. The person who pleases God will escape from her, but the person who is a sinner will be caught by her. ²⁸ Behold, this I have found, said Ecclesiastes, weighing one thing after another, that I might find out the reason ²⁹ which my soul still seeks. And I have not found it. One man among a thousand I have found. A woman among them all I have not found. ³⁰ Only this have I found, that God made human beings right, and they have entangled themselves in an infinity of questions. Who is as the wise person? And who has known the resolution of the word?

CHAPTER 8

¹ The wisdom of people shine on their countenance, and the most mighty will change their face. ² I observe the mouth of the king, and the commandments of the oath of God. ³ Do not be hasty to depart from his face, and do not continue in an evil work, for he will do all that pleases him. ⁴ And his word is full of power. Neither can any one say to him: Why do you do this? ⁵ The person who keeps the commandment will find no evil. The heart of a wise person understands time and answer.

⁶ There is a time and opportunity for every business, and great affliction for men and women,⁷ who are ignorant of things past, and things to come they cannot know by any messenger. ⁸ It is not in a people's dominion to stop the spirit. Neither have they power on the day of death. Neither are they suffered to rest when war is at hand. Neither will wickedness save the wicked.

⁹ All these things I have considered, and I applied my heart to all the works that are done under the sun. Sometimes one person rules over another to his own hurt. ¹⁰ I saw the wicked buried, who also when they were yet living were in the holy place and were praised in the city as people of just works. But this also is vanity.

¹¹ For since sentence is not speedily pronounced against the evil, men and women commit evils without any fear. ¹² But though a sinner does wrong a hundred times, and by patience be borne with, I know that it will be well with those who fear God, who dread his face. ¹³ But let it not be well with the wicked. Neither let their days be prolonged, but as a shadow let those pass away who fear not the face of the Lord. ¹⁴ There is also another vanity, which is done upon the earth. There are just people to whom evils happen, as though they had done the works of the wicked. And there are wicked people, who are as secure as though they had done the deeds of the just. But this also I judge most vain.

¹⁵ Therefore, I commended mirth, because there was no good for people under the sun, but to eat and drink, and that they should take nothing else with them of their labors in the days of their lives, which God has given them under the sun.

¹⁶ And I applied my heart to know wisdom and to understand the spread of things that are upon the earth. For there are some who day and night take no sleep with their eyes.

¹⁷ And I understand that a human being can find no reason for all those works of God that have been done under the sun. And the more human beings shall labor to seek, so much the less will they find. Yea, though the wise shall say that they know it, they will not be able to find it. All these things I considered in my heart, that I might carefully understand them.

CHAPTER 9

¹ There are just and wise people, and their works are in the hand of God. And yet men and women do not know whether they be worthy of love or hatred. ² But all things are kept uncertain for the time to come, because all things equally happen to the just and to the wicked, to the good and to the evil, to the clean and to the unclean, to persons who offer holocausts and victims and to those who despise sacrifices. As the good is, so also the sinner. As the perjurer, so he also who swears truth. ³ This is a very great evil among all things that are done under the sun, that the same things happen to all people, whereby also the hearts of men and women are filled with evil and contempt while they live. And afterwards they will be brought down to hell. ⁴ There is no one who lives always or who hopes for this thing. A living dog is better than a dead lion. ⁵ For the living know that they will die, for the dead know nothing more. Neither have they a reward anymore, for the memory of them is forgotten. ⁶ Their love also, and their hatred, and their envy have all perished. Neither have they a part in this world and in the work that is done under the sun.

⁷ Go, then, and eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with gladness, because your works please God. ⁸ At all times let your garments be white, and let not oil depart from your head.

⁹ Live joyfully with the wife whom you love all the days of your unsteady life, which are given to you under the sun, all the time of your vanity. For this is your portion in life and in your labor wherewith you labor under the sun. ¹⁰ Whatsoever your hand is able to do, do it earnestly. For neither work nor reason nor knowledge nor wisdom will be in hell, whither you are hastening.

¹¹ I turned myself to another thing, and I saw that under the sun the race is not to the swift nor the battle to the strong nor bread to the wise nor riches to the learned nor favor to the skillful. But time and chance in all. ¹² No one knows his own end. But as fish are taken with the hook and as birds are caught with a snare, so men and women are taken in the evil time, when it will suddenly come upon them.

¹³ This wisdom I have also seen under the sun, and it seemed to me to be very great. ¹⁴ A little city, and few men in it. There came against it a great king and built bulwarks round about it, and the siege was perfect. ¹⁵ Now there was found in it a man poor and wise, and he delivered the city by his wisdom. And no one afterward remembered that poor person. ¹⁶ And I said that wisdom is better than strength. How then is the wisdom of the poor person slighted and his words not heard? ¹⁷ The words of the wise are heard in silence, more than the cry of a prince among fools. ¹⁸ Better is wisdom than weapons of war, and the person who will sin in one will lose many good things.

CHAPTER 10

¹ Dying flies spoil the sweetness of the ointment. Wisdom is more precious and a little glory for a time than foolishness.

² The heart of the wise are in their right hands, and the heart of fools is in their left hands.

³ But, and the fool when he walks in the way, whereas he himself is a fool, esteems all people to be fools.

⁴ If the spirit of the one who has power ascend upon you, leave not your place, because care will make the greatest sins to cease.

⁵ There is an evil that I have seen under the sun, as it were by an error proceeding from the face of the prince.⁶ A fool set in high dignity, and the rich sit beneath.⁷ I have seen servants upon horses and princes walking as servants.

⁸ The person who digs a hole will fall into it, and the person who breaks a hedge, a serpent will bite him.⁹ The person who removes stones will be hurt by them, and the person who cuts trees will be wounded by them.¹⁰ If the iron be blunt, and be not as before, but be made blunt, with much labor it will be sharpened. And after industry wisdom will follow.¹¹ If a serpent bites in secret, the person who backbites in secret is no better.¹² The words of the mouth of a wise person are grace. The lips of a fool will throw him down headlong.¹³ The beginning of his words is folly, and the end of his talk is a mischievous error.¹⁴ A fool multiplies words.

People cannot tell what has been before them. And what will be after them, who can tell them?

¹⁵ The labor of fools will afflict them who do not know how to go to the city.

¹⁶ Woe to you, O land, when your king is a child and your princes eat in the morning.¹⁷ Blessed is the land, whose king is noble, and whose princes eat in due season for refreshment and not for riotousness.

¹⁸ By slothfulness a building will be brought down, and through the weakness of hands the house will leak.

¹⁹ For the sake of laughter they make bread and wine that those drinking may feast, and all things obey money.

²⁰ Do not speak detraction against the king in your thought, and in your private chamber speak no evil of the rich person, because even the birds of the air will carry

your voice, and the one who has wings will tell what you have said.

CHAPTER 11

¹ Cast your bread upon the running waters, for after a long time you will find it again. ² Give a portion to seven, and also to eight, for you do not know what evil will be upon the earth.

³ If the clouds be full, they will pour rain upon the earth. If the tree fall to the south or to the north, in whatever place it will fall, there will it be. ⁴ The person who observes the wind will not sow, and the person who considers the clouds will never reap. ⁵ As you know not what is the way of the spirit nor how the bones are joined together in the womb of her who is with child, so you do not know the works of God who is the maker of all. ⁶ In thy morning sow your seed, and in the evening let not your hand cease. For you do not know which may rather spring up, this or that. And if both together, it will be the better.

⁷ The light is sweet, and it is delightful for the eyes to see the sun. ⁸ If people live many years and have rejoiced in them all, they must remember the darksome time, the many days, which, when they shall come, the things past will be accused of vanity.

⁹ Rejoice, therefore, O youth, in your youth, and let your heart be in that which is good and walk in the ways of your heart and in the sight of your eyes. And know that God will bring you into judgment.

¹⁰ Remove anger from your heart, and put away evil from your flesh. For youth and pleasure are vain.

CHAPTER 12

¹ Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the time of affliction comes and the years draw nigh of which you will say: They please me not.

² Before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars are darkened, and the clouds return after the rain. ³ When the keepers of the house will tremble and the strong men will stagger, and the grinders will be idle, in small number. And they that look through the holes will be darkened. ⁴ And they will shut the doors in the street, when the grinder's voice will be low. They will rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of music will grow deaf. ⁵ And they will fear high things, and they will be afraid in the way. The almond tree will flourish. The locust will be made fat. The caper tree will be destroyed, because a human being will go into the house of his eternity, and the mourners will go round about in the street.

⁶ Before the silver cord is broken and the golden fillet shrink back and the pitcher be crushed at the fountain and the wheel be broken upon the cistern, ⁷ and the dust return into its earth, from whence it was, and the spirit return to God who gave it.

⁸ Vanity of vanities, said Ecclesiastes, all things vanity.

⁹ And whereas Ecclesiastes was very wise, he taught the people and declared the things that he had done. And seeking out, he set forth many parables,¹⁰ which are profitable words, and he wrote words most right and full of truth. ¹¹ The words of the wise are as goads and as nails deeply fastened in, which by the counsel of the masters are given by one shepherd.

¹² More than these, my son, require not. Of making many books, there is no end, and much study is an affliction of the flesh.

¹³ Let us all hear together the conclusion of the discourse. Fear God and keep his commandments. This is the whole person. ¹⁴ And all things that have been done, God will bring into judgment for every error, whether it is good or evil.

VARIATIONS BETWEEN BONAVENTURE'S TEXT AND THE NEW REVISED STANDARD VERSION

There are slight and major variations between Bonaventure's text and that of the NRSV. Among the slight variations are chapter divisions. In Ecclesiastes 1-3 and 10-12 the NRSV and Bonaventure's text begin and end the same. However, in Ecclesiastes 4-9 they do not begin and end the same. For example, the NRSV has 16 verses in Ecclesiastes 4 whereas Bonaventure has 17 verses. Thus, NRSV will commence Ecclesiastes 5:1 with what in Bonaventure's text is Ecclesiastes 4:17. Another slight variation is that the NRSV will call "the author" *the Teacher* (Ecclesiastes 1:1, 2, 12; 12:9-10) where Bonaventure's text will call him *Ecclesiastes*. A final representative minor variation is that the editors of the NRSV have decided to set off as poetry certain passages in Ecclesiastes, e. g., Ecclesiastes 3:1-8; 7:1-13. Bonaventure makes no such determination.

Our consideration of the major variations between Bonaventure's text and the contemporary inclusive language translation of the NRSV begins with the observation that the NRSV is based on a Hebrew text that has a number of difficult and rare words. Four times (2:8; 5:9; 8:10; 12:11) the NRSV has a footnote that reads "meaning of Heb(rew) uncertain." If the meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain to contemporary translators, it stands to reason that it might also have been uncertain to Jerome in the fourth century. Thus, our first four examples feature those verses where the NRSV has the footnote: "meaning of Heb uncertain." The next two examples are representative of the theological problems that arise for Bonaventure because of Jerome's translation. I have put the major variations in bold type.

FIRST EXAMPLE:

The NRSV of 2:8 reads: "I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the treasure of kings and of the provinces; I got singers, both men and women, **and delights of the flesh, and many concubines.**"

Bonaventure's text of 2:8 states: "I heaped together for myself gold and silver and the wealth of kings and provinces. I made for myself male and female singers **and the delights of men and women, cups and vessels to serve and pour out the wine.**"

SECOND EXAMPLE:

The NRSV of Ecclesiastes 5:9 reads: "But all things considered, this is an advantage for a land: **a king for a plowed field.**"

Bonaventure's text of 5:9 states: "Moreover, there is the **king who reigns over all the land subject to him.**"

THIRD EXAMPLE:

The NRSV of Ecclesiastes 8:10 reads: "Then I saw the wicked buried; they used to go in and out of the holy place, and were praised in the city **where they had done such things.** This also is vanity."

Bonaventure's text of 8:10 says: "I saw the wicked buried, who also when they were yet living were in the holy place and were praised in the city **as people of just works.** But this also is vanity."

FOURTH EXAMPLE:

NRSV of Ecclesiastes 12:11 reads: "The sayings of the wise are like goads, and like nails firmly fixed are **the collected sayings** that are given by one shepherd."

Bonaventure's text of 12:11 states: "The words of the wise are as goads and as nails deeply fastened in, which

by the counsel of the masters are given by one shepherd.”

FIFTH EXAMPLE:

The NRSV of Ecclesiastes 5:6 reads: “Do not let your mouth lead you into sin, and do not say before the messenger ***that it was a mistake***; why should God be angry at your words, and destroy the work of your hands?”

Bonaventure’s text of same verse in Ecclesiastes 5:5 says: “Give not your mouth to cause your flesh to sin, and do not say before the angel: ***There is no providence***, lest God be angry at your words and destroy all the works of your hands.”²³

SIXTH EXAMPLE:

The NRSV of Ecclesiastes of 10:4 states: “If the anger of the ruler rises against you, do not leave your post, for ***calmness will undo great offenses***.”

Bonaventure’s text of 10:4 has: “If the spirit of the one who has power ascend upon you, leave not your place, because ***care will make the greatest sins to cease***.”²⁴

In summary, as readers engage in a detailed comparison of Bonaventure’s text with that of NRSV, they will find that both reflect the same original text. Yet there are unmistakable variations that will stop readers in their tracks. It goes without saying that interpretations will vary depending on what text is read. While readers may lament the faulty nature of some of Bonaventure’s text, which Jerome produced in one day, they must remember that this is the text that tradition handed on to him. For better or worse, he had to make sense of it.

²³See #15 where Bonaventure addresses the issues arising from this verse.