

CORPUS BIBLICUM CATALANICUM 3, *Biblia del segle XIV: Èxode, Levític*. Transcription Jaume Riera. Ed. Pere Casanellas. Intro. Armand Puig i Tàrrach. Barcelona: Associació Bíblica de Catalunya / Publicacions de l'Abadia de Montserrat, 2004. CXL+ twice 248 pp.

The cultural and philological importance of the Old Catalan Bible translations has been recognized since the end of the nineteenth century. During the famous 1906 "First International Convention of the Catalan Language," the Occitan Hispanist Foulché-Delbosc urged that they be published and then agreed to transcribe the texts himself for the newly founded Institut d'Estudis Catalans. Ten years later it became obvious that the project was going nowhere. It was only in 1976 that hopes for publishing the medieval Catalan Bibles were rekindled. Father Guiu Camps persuaded the Catalan Biblical Association and Josep Casacuberta, editor of "Els Nostres Clàssics," to agree to finance and print them. Again, good intentions were overwhelmed by the magnitude of the undertaking. This project, too, was abandoned, but the research material assembled, and much preliminary work, was not to be lost. In 1997, Armand Puig i Tàrrach and Pere Casanellas i Bassols revived the old plan but put it on a more solid footing in terms of

financing, transcribing, editing, publishing, and distribution. This new project of a complete *Corpus Biblicum Catalanicum* is much more ambitious than the two previous had been. Translations up to the nineteenth century will be printed, plus several medieval parabiblical texts, such as the *Llegendes rimades*, and there will also be a history of the Latin Bible and one of the Hebrew Bible in Catalonia, bringing the total of planned volumes to forty-one! Still, progress in text-processing on personal computers, government subsidies for a fulltime researcher, the involvement of the publishing house of the Abbey of Montserrat, and the use of transcriptions and studies made by doctoral candidates, amply justify the optimism that this project, finally, will bear fruit.

And the first fruit matured in 2004: the edition of the books Exodus and Leviticus of the *Biblia del segle XIV*. It is volume 3 of the complete series, the first of nineteen needed to offer the complete fourteenth-century Catalan Bible. The three manuscripts P C E —abbreviations for Peiresc, Colbert and Egerton— are transcribed in parallel columns. The first column of each spread of two pages —numbered, for instance, 2 and 2\*— offers the original Latin text of the Vulgate, accompanied by a critical apparatus listing scribal variants, especially in Latin Bibles known to have been circulating in Catalonia, which help explain many differences among the three Catalan manuscripts. For instance, the variant Latin readings *egressi/ingressi*, or *intereal in terra*, are at the base of the difference *entraren PC/ isquéran E*, or *en la terra PC/entretant E*, in Catalan. The conclusions that can be drawn from observing such variants in Latin and Catalan are presented in part one of the Introduction. Parts two to four offer a description of the editorial criteria applied, a list of abbreviations, and a Glossary. Complete wordlists of the three manuscripts can be found on CBCat's website <abcat.org/cbcat> (along with much more information and an extensive bibliography). This glossary offers many examples of how much this edition of the Old Catalan Bibles can contribute to philology. For example, in Exodus 12:39 the manuscripts PC translate *coxerunt*, "they cooked," literally with *cogueren*, but E reads *comolguéran*, obviously from the verb *comoldre*, "to mill." Of this composed form of *oldre* only the past participles *comolt* or *comoltat* had so far been observed, which led the philologist Leo Spitzer to postulate a Catalan verb \**comoltar*, derived from a hypothetical Latin verb \**commovitare*. But Joan Coromines stipulated that there once existed a verb *comoldre* (DECat V.737b), and the Egerton Bible has now proven him right. On the other hand, we can now see that Coromines was wrong when he affirmed that Catalan *ret*, "net," had always been of the masculine gender (DECat VII.286). But the fourteenth-century Bible offers examples that it was also used as feminine, as in *la ret... plena*. We also find for the first time the forms *aret* or *arret*, which by their agglutinated initial *a* show that the article had been *la*. As is to be expected, *l'aret* was later treated as a masculine noun. In Exodus 29:22, corresponding to Latin *reticulum iecoris*, ms E reads *la ret del fetge*, and ms C *la ratella*, diminutive form of *ret*. In the opinion of the editor, Casanellas, this *retella* would be an excellent "homegrown" substitute for the crude Hellenism in modern Catalan *epipló*, ungainly vulgarization of the technical term *epiploon*.

It will have become obvious to the reader how much work has gone into the preparation of this edition. The great dictionaries by Alcover-Moll, and Coromines have been consulted in hundreds of instances. A clear idea of

which medieval words and grammatical forms are likely to cause problems for the “average” modern reader has allowed the editor to decide which words he should explain in the glossary or in footnotes. For example, text: *emblaràs*, footnote: *z<sup>1</sup> pers. del fut. del verb emblar, robar* (adding —superfluously, in my opinion— as second definition “apoderar-se amb força”). The basic Greco-Latin biblical text has been analyzed in depth, and the Catalan versions have been compared to it in every detail. Editorial interventions are of two kinds: corrections of obvious errors made by the copyist (e.g.: ms C *apres* changed to *ab pedres*, because ms P reads *ab pedres*, E *de pedres*, and Latin *lapidibus*); or corrections of mistakes made by the translator (e.g.: Latin “*non concupisces domum proximi tui*,” mss PC “*no cobejaràs la cosa de ton proisme*,” changed to “...la casa...” It seems to this reviewer that, when all Catalan manuscripts are in agreement, this kind of change is going too far. No one who wants to know what the Bible says will consult a medieval translation. Editions of translations should show philologists how old texts have been understood in those times. *Cosa* in the above example is not nonsensical as was *apres* in place of *ab pedres*, and it is well conceivable that in medieval Catalan the tenth commandment was considered to prohibit “desiring one’s neighbor’s belongings,” not just “his house.” To encourage scholars to be on the lookout for other uses of *cosa* instead of *casa* in this context, it seems recommendable to me to print in the text *cosa* and point out in a footnote that this is not what the Latin Bible says.

This first volume of the CBCat forebodes well. It impresses in every respect. The great care that went into its preparation—from the transcription, edition, and annotation, down to the printing—is admirable. It is to be hoped that this intensity of labor can be maintained. The project deserves all the support it can get. University librarians should be told by professors that this is not just “yet another Bible,” but a model of how to deal with old Bible translations and a milestone in Catalan and Romance philology.

(While this review was in press, a second volume of the CBCat appeared. It is the translation of the *New Testament* prepared by Josep Prat for the English Bible Society, which printed it in 1832, years before Catalan was “reborn” as a language of literature. For more information see the website “[abcat.org/cbcats](http://abcat.org/cbcats).”)

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