

*Marcus Marulus and the Biblia Latina of 1489: An Approach to His Biblical Hermeneutics.* Franz Posset.

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It is not often that one comes across a book on a Croatian humanist in English, yet it is not surprising that when one does, it focuses on Marko Marulić of Split (Marcus Marulus Spalatensis, 1450–1524), the most accomplished and celebrated of the group,

self-styled as the Croatian Dante, whose religious treatises in Latin brought him wider European fame and whose literary works in the Croatian vernacular secured unrivaled reputation at home. Two recent books by Bratislav Lučin — the bilingual Croatian-Italian biography *Iter Marulianum* (2008) and *The Marulić Reader* (2007) — have done much to introduce Marulić to international academia. Franz Posset's study successfully builds on these efforts. Posset attempts "to shed more light on Marul[ić] the Bible scholar" by analyzing his marginal notes in his copy of the Bible — preserved today in the library of the Franciscan monastery of St. Mary in Split — and thus situate him "in the history of Western Christian spirituality" (13). Given Marulić's prominent position in Croatian intellectual history and that the Bible represents the main source for the major part of his voluminous oeuvre, both the Latin and Croatian one, his effort is fully justified and, indeed, long overdue.

Posset uses the two introductory chapters to sketch a brief biography of Marulić and introduce us to his copy of the Bible, the four-volume *Biblia Latina* published in Venice by Boneto Locatelli in 1489 (ISTC ib00616000), accompanied by the running marginal commentary of Nicholas of Lyra, and prologues and commentaries of Saint Jerome, Paul of Burgos, Matthias Döring, and William Brito. He categorizes the various types of marginal notes used by Marulić and proceeds to discuss these book by book in the remaining four chapters, devoting each to one of the four volumes of the *Biblia*. The study draws a number of conclusions that will interest Marulić specialists and historians of biblical scholarship alike. Taken together, Marulić was not a biblical scholar who sought to go beyond Jerome's translation to uncover the meaning of Hebrew or Greek Bible verses. His marginalia present him rather as a lay theologian who approached the *Biblia Latina* (and its attached commentaries) as the most important source of exempla to be quarried for his works, by which he sought to "promote pastoral care for the general public" (210). A strong advocate of the *devotio moderna* — he translated Thomas à Kempis's *The Imitation of Christ* into Croatian — Marulić approached the *Biblia* from a Christocentric vantage point, as indicated most strikingly by some 250 Christograms by which he marked the relevant passages.

Posset's study introduces new perspectives on some of Marulić's works as well. As examples, one may point out the notes on Lyra's discussions of Muhammad and Islam, and notes to King David as the prefigurement of Christ, which should be taken into consideration by scholars working on Marulić's *antitursica* and his Latin biblical epic the *Davidiad*, respectively. Although Posset focuses only on a selection of marginalia from each book (due to their sheer number), the study comes accompanied by a DVD-ROM containing high-quality digital photos of Marulić's Bible, which will facilitate future research into the matter.

Overall, Posset offers penetrating analyses, regularly draws Marulić's works into the discussion, and shows thorough familiarity with the most important works of Croatian scholarship on the subject. However, in contextualizing Marulić, his intellectual milieu, and his Bible studies, he mostly looks for parallels in the German-speaking lands. These are informative, to be sure, but the approach reflects more his own

scholarly background — Posset is the author of *The Life and Works of Johann von Staupitz* (2003), *Renaissance Monks* (2005), and *The Real Luther* (2011) — than it highlights the region that had the predominant influence on the formation of Dalmatian intellectuals, Venice and the rest of Italy. Indeed, although the diffusion of the *devotio moderna* into Dalmatia still awaits research, it is worth noting that in Italy the movement found warm reception mostly in the Venetian patrician circles. Notwithstanding this point, Posset's analysis of Marulić's Bible annotations not only assuages the dearth of analytical scholarship on Croatian intellectual history in an international language, but provides a major contribution to our understanding of the humanist's intellectual profile, and will remain an important reference work for any scholar working on his oeuvre.

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