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-Delboeuf 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 1970 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 Classics," 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 Tarrech 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 full-time 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 1 of the complete series, the first of nineteen needed to offer the complete fourteenth-century Catalan Bible. The three manuscripts PCE — abbreviations for Peiresc, Colbert and Egerton — are transcribed in parallel columns. The first column of each spread of two pages —numbered, for instance, 1 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 egressus/ingressus, or interesse/ in terra, are at the base of the difference entraren PC/ tguaran 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 <cbcatal.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 coevarent, “they cooked,” literally with cogueren, but E reads comolgueren, obviously from the verb comolatre, “to mill.” Of this composed form of montatre only the last participles comoll or comoltat had so far been observed, which led the philologist Leo Spitzer to postulate a Catalan verb *comolatl, derived from a hypothetical Latin verb *comollitare. But Joan Coromines stipulated that there once existed a verb comolatre (DECat V:731b), 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 arete, 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 19:22, corresponding to Latin reticulum secoris, ms E reads la ret del fete, and ms C la retella, 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 epilò, ungainly vulgarization of the technical term epilople.

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: *emblarás*,
footnote: *per. del fut.* of 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
types: 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
concepisces dominus praxima tui,"" ms PC "*no hobejas la cosa de ton proxmec,
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 if *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 1812, years before Catalan was
"reborn" as a language of literature. For more information see the website
"abc.cat/cbcat."