

## Renaissance and Reformation Renaissance et Réforme



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

Mark Steinacher

Volume 41, Number 2, Spring 2018

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1085995ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v41i2.29872>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Iter Press

ISSN

0034-429X (print)

2293-7374 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

Steinacher, M. (2018). Review of [Posset, Franz. Marcus Marulus and the Biblia Latina of 1489: An Approach to His Biblical Hermeneutics]. *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme*, 41(2), 208–210.  
<https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v41i2.29872>

© Canadian Society for Renaissance Studies / Société canadienne d'études de la Renaissance; Pacific Northwest Renaissance Society; Toronto Renaissance and Reformation Colloquium; Victoria University Centre for Renaissance and Reformation Studies, 2018

This document is protected by copyright law. Use of the services of Érudit (including reproduction) is subject to its terms and conditions, which can be viewed online.

<https://apropos.erudit.org/en/users/policy-on-use/>

érudit

This article is disseminated and preserved by Érudit.

Érudit is a non-profit inter-university consortium of the Université de Montréal, Université Laval, and the Université du Québec à Montréal. Its mission is to promote and disseminate research.

<https://www.erudit.org/en/>

While Pangallo's conclusions—that a less dismissive regard for amateur drama would offer access to perspectives other than those produced by and for the commercial stage, and that we might productively widen our scope in terms of the kinds of questions we tend to ask of early modern play texts—are certainly sound, his suggesting that nonprofessional plays are roughly analogous to modern “fan fiction,” which can tell us nothing about the original entertainment but provides ample evidence of the follower's understanding of that entertainment, wrongly assumes that the perspective of any producer—including that of a productive consumer—can be ascertained via the product itself. So, while plays written by industry outsiders may offer period scholars a unique vantage from which to view the products of the professional stage, thereby expanding the kinds of questions we might want to ask, the answers will remain conjectural for the very reason that Pangallo himself provides: consumers always collaborate in producing the ultimate meaning of the products that they consume.

MARK ALBERT JOHNSTON

University of Windsor

**Posset, Franz.**

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

Bausteine zur slavischen Philologie und Kulturgeschichte, neue Folge, 74. Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 2013. Pp. 250 + CD. ISBN 978-3-4122-0756-4 (hardcover) €44.90.

This volume addresses a serious lacuna in English language studies of the Renaissance and Reformation: the contributions of “the Father of Croatian Literature,” the lay theologian and historian Markus Marulić, or Marcus Marulus (1450–1524). Marulus wrote in both Latin and Croatian, despite the fact that Spalato (today, Split), where he was born and died, was under Venetian control throughout his life. No Croatian Bible translation existed then, so he relied on his 1489 edition of the *Biblia Latina*, upon which he based his versified Croatian renderings of Judith (1501) and David (ca. 1510). Franz Posset notes that the David piece has long been considered “the exegetical key”

to understanding Marulus's biblical writings, as he believed David provided a stronger antetype of Jesus than Moses.

Although a compendium of Marulus's works appeared in English in 2007, little attention has been paid to his spirituality and hermeneutic approach. Posset focuses on what may be discerned about Marulus's theology through careful critical analysis of the marginalia inserted in his *Biblia Latina*. Rarely did Marulus mark the actual biblical text, instead inserting remarks and pictograms beside the copious comments by Jerome, Nicholas of Lyra, Bishop Paul of Burgos, and Matthias Doring. Most notable are Marulus's Christograms, which Posset argues reveal a highly Christocentric theology, especially highlighting Old Testament allegorical references to Christ. What Marulus believed were prefigurations of Christ dominated his notations on the Psalms. An entire section is devoted to the "Eucharistic Psalms" (120–22). Extensive appendices and separate indices of personal names, scripture references, and subjects facilitate readers' access to particular topics.

With roots in the *Devotio moderna* and admiration for Erasmus, Marulus is another Roman Catholic figure who sought significant church reform. This background led Marulus to develop deep concern for providing pastoral care to the laity. A consummate late medieval humanist, Marulus emphasized the Bible's literal intent, retaining some mystical exegesis while joining Nicholas in scraping off the more extravagant ancient and early medieval interpretive accretions.

An autodidact, he remained a Roman Catholic until his death. Not only had Martin Luther's works not penetrated Marulus's region, the issue of selling indulgences was essentially non-existent in Spalato because of the absence of Augustinian canons, the group most concerned by the abuse. Vernacular worship was tolerated in the region, removing another potential grievance. Marulus was possibly a kindred spirit to Reginald Pole (at least as Pole is reconstructed by Eamon Duffy). Testament to both Marulus's influence and orthodoxy is Francis Xavier's inclusion of Marulus's reputation-establishing *How To Lead A Virtuous Life* (1507) among books Xavier took on his mission journeys to East Asia. John Paul II quoted Marulus during a papal visit to Croatia.

While the method of interpreting the theological significance of an author's marginalia has been applied successfully to Nicholas of Cusa and Luther, Posset relies too much on items he feels Marulus should have drawn attention to but did not. Posset's vocabulary, in which synonyms for "absence"

are legion, reveals his awareness of this weakness. Such words may be intended as a buffer against charges that Posset descends into an argument from silence.

From a technical standpoint, there are issues with the subject index. Although “double sense” and “double literal sense” are found under “Senses of Scripture,” the list is incomplete. Notably, the crucial discussion of the concept (129) is absent. Worse, although “Hebrew truth” (the Old Testament’s literal sense) crops up many times, directly (73, 75, 121, 203) or obliquely (9, 108, 115, 120, 159, 197), the phrase is overlooked, either on its own or under “Senses of Scripture.” Inexplicably, given the centrality of the practice to Marulus’s methodology, there is no mention of the dozen unequivocal instances of “cross-references” (108, 115, 137, 139, 156, 164, 168, 184, 186, 188, 190, 194). Given that “eschatological” is one of three traditional nonliteral interpretations of Scripture, it is odd that the “Second Coming” is also neglected (114, 139, 149, 151, 164).

This tome beckons future investigation of Marulus’s ecclesiology, his use of “Church *a principio mundi*” (125, 209) and “Church *ab Abel*” (112, 115, 124, 125, 132, 185), and comments intended to express “the one Church of Christ of Gentiles and Jews” (115). The prophet Isaiah is labelled an “evangelist” (135–36). Similar, and more controversial, is his reference to Islam as “heresy” and a “sect” (79, 173, 191) rather than another religion. It may be that Marulus, exposed more closely to Muslims than most Europeans of his era, viewed Islam as a Christological error, perhaps the seventh-century *nadir* of the Christological errors combated by the church in the fourth through sixth centuries.

This book would be a useful addition to the personal library of any scholar of the Renaissance or the Reformation, as well as that of a church historian. Despite the odd infelicity of expression in English, the book reads easily. Some names are cited in their Latin form despite the existence of more common English forms (e.g., Thomas Morus instead of Thomas More, 22; Arrius instead of Arius, 193). Marulus’s life and work, a useful example of a Roman Catholic intent on ecclesiastical reform, is now included in this reviewer’s seminary lectures.

MARK STEINACHER

Tyndale University College and Seminary