

Summary

THE OLD CZECH PSALM – TWO HUNDRED YEARS IN SEARCH OF CLARITY AND POETRY

The four different Old Czech translations of the Book of Psalms, from the oldest one (beginning of the 14th century) to the youngest one in the first-prints of the late 15th century, show the difficulties in transferring high spiritual poetry from Latin into the then young cultural language Old Czech. Evidence for this is given by first of all various and only gradually standardized equivalents for unusual or abstract terms, e. g. *christus*, *ecclesia*, *scandalum*, *substantia*, *synagoga*, *benedicere*, *meditari* etc., or for *aequitas*, *iustitia*, *iniquitas*, *iniustitia* and *veritas*. The oldest

²⁵ VLADIMÍR KYAS, *Česká bible*, s. 57.

²⁶ STOV. JOSEF VINTR, *Prvotisky staročeského žaltáře*, v tisku.





translation focuses on individual words and is here and there hard to understand; only the third translation takes into account whole units of thought and thereby increases clarity. The poetic appeal can already be noticed in some verses of the oldest translation, but it becomes explicit only in the fourth one. We exemplify this by passages containing the three basic principles of psalmic poetry – imagery, parallelism and dialogism. The Old Czech Book of Psalms was intended for noble women and their private piety rather than for convents, where the language of liturgical celebration was Latin.

Keywords: Old Czech Book of Psalms; poetics of Psalms; lexical variability

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