

Summary

THE TARGET AUDIENCE FOR THE FIRST CZECH BIBLE TRANSLATION FROM THE MID-FOURTEENTH CENTURY AND RELATED QUESTIONS

Up until now, there has been no answer to the question as to the target audience of the first Czech Bible translation, created shortly after the middle of the fourteenth century. According to an old hypothesis, still accepted by some scholars, the translation was created for the Prague monastery of Slavonic monks (founded in 1347) so as to provide them with an understandable text that could help them remedy the erroneous interpretations of the Latin Bible among heretics in Slavonic countries. This hypothesis is refuted as implausible in light of the disorderly conditions in the monastery at the time of the translation – the foundation of the monastery could only have been an indirect incentive for the translation.

From the older Czech Translations of the parts of the Bible from the beginning of the fourteenth century, only the Psalter, not the Gospel Book, was adopted in the new complete translation. It has been suggested that the oldest Gospel Book originated in Moravia and the Psalter in Bohemian. There was no independent Old Czech Translation of the four Gospels before the mid-fourteenth century, but the project of the entire Bible translation could have begun with the Gospels.

The possibility that the centre of the translation was in the Augustinian monastery in Roudnice is rejected as implausible because there were no manuscripts with Bible commentaries. It is argued that the best conditions for the translation were in the Dominican school; the Benedictines probably took part as well and the participation of the cathedral school is also possible. The relative extent of texts translated by four Benedictine translators and four Dominican translators has been newly assessed and it has been demonstrated that one of the Benedictines translated one fourth of the Bible and one of the Dominicans one third – this mysterious Dominican is also identified as the author of the philosophical-theological prologue to the Bible.

The Old Czech Psalter and Gospel Books were intended for pious women, especially women's monasteries. It is probable that the entire Bible translation continued this trend and was primarily intended for the Prague Dominican and Benedictine nuns. In this line we may also tentatively include women of the royal family, especially Catherine, the daughter of Charles IV.

Keywords: Old Czech Bible; Old Czech Gospel Book; Slavonic monastery in Prague; Prague cathedral school; unknown Dominican; Czech Bible Prologue; Dominican and Benedictine nuns; Catherine of Luxembourg

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