

Manuel FORCANO (ed. and transl.). *Els antievangelis jueus: Traducció de l'hebreu i l'arameu de Manuel Forcano*. Martorell: Adesiara, 2017. 128 p.; 21 cm. ISBN 978-84-16948-02-4. (Vagueries; 18)

Manuel Forcano, a Catalan poet and scholar of Jewish Studies, and currently director of the Ramon Llull Institute in Barcelona, has recently published a Catalan translation of several anti-Christian Jewish texts. Each text is translated into very readable Catalan that nonetheless resonates with the rhythm of the Hebrew or Aramaic original. Useful footnotes provide an essential understanding of many textual, historical, and hermeneutical details, without pedantry.

Suggestively titled *Els antievangelis jueus* ('The Jewish antigospels'), this volume includes a series of historically different texts: *Toledot Yeshu* (p. 37-70), some fragments from the Cairo Geniza on Jesus (p. 71-78), and three minor, short polemical texts against the apostle Peter (p. 81-92). The Jewish prayer *Nishmat kol hai* ('The soul of every living being'), which is commonly recited at Shabbat and morning festivals, is published in an appendix (p. 93-98). The texts' common ground is clearly Jewish animosity towards Christianity, which was mostly expressed in the form of parodic, irreverent, and, not uncommonly, blasphemous narratives against Jesus, his family, and his disciples.

Published as *Els antievangelis jueus. Les caricatures jueves de Jesús de Natza-ret* ('The Jewish antigospels. The Jewish parody of Jesus of Nazareth'), the first and most historically relevant text is the notorious *Toledot Yeshu* ('Genealogy of Jesus'), a quite elaborate Jewish answer to the Gospels, written first in Aramaic somewhere between the 6th and 7th centuries, and later translated into Hebrew for a broader audience. This text predates some of the anti-Christian narratives reported in the Babylonian Talmud and represented the quintessential expression of Jewish rejection of Christianity. Disseminated in a number of manuscripts, it was never really embraced by the Rabbinic elite and mostly interested the lower strata of Jewish society. The second text, published as *El Llibre doblegat. Els manuscrits arameus del Caire sobre Jesús* ('The Folded Book. The Aramaic Cairo manuscripts on Jesus'), comprises a series of Aramaic fragments from the aforementioned primitive version of *Toledot Yeshu*. The early Aramaic version is clearly less elaborate than the later Hebrew version and offers an important insight into the evolution of this Jewish polemical text. The third text, published as *El Gran Ardit. La història de Rabi Simó Kefa, l'apostòl Pere* ('The Big Ardit. The history of Rabbi Simon Kefa, the apostle Peter'), actually consists of three versions of the same short

Hebrew narrative on the apostle Peter, who is described as a difficult, stubborn, religious fanatic. The volume concludes with an appendix titled *Apèndix: "Nixmat kol hai"* ('Appendix: "The soul of every living being"').

This remarkable collection is introduced by a helpful essay that clarifies the historical and religious context of each text (p. 9-35). It is written in a clear style that presents the matter in a decently instructive way. The introduction sometimes implicitly addresses some issues of recent scholarship – Forcano seems to resonate with Peter Schäfer's famous monograph *Jesus in the Talmud* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007) and other studies – but occasionally spares the reader from overly specific scholarship. It is evident that the volume is primarily aimed at a non-scholarly audience interested in religious polemical literature. This is particularly clear in Forcano's decision to translate *Toledot Yeshu* from the 1928 Hebrew edition by the celebrated Polish-Jewish-American anthologist, encyclopaedist, and Hebraist Julius (Judah David) David Eisenstein (in his *Otzar Vikkuhim*, p. 227-235) rather than from the larger critical edition recently edited by Peter Schäfer and Michael Meerson (*Toledot Yeshu. The Life Story of Jesus*, 2 vol., Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014). The reason given in the introduction may not be philologically exemplary but is persuasive from a hermeneutical point of view: 'however, thanks to this "patchwork" version, we guarantee the reader the maximum of anecdotes and extravagant and curious details among the various versions of these texts' (p. 24). Given the intended audience of this volume, Forcano is justified in prioritising textual richness over philological accuracy. In the end, one might say, these texts were written as pieces of popular literature rather than theological tractates, and this very interesting collection is quite successful in evoking their spirit.

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MONTSE LEYRA CURIÀ. *In Hebreo: The Victorine exegesis of the Bible in the light of its Northern-French Jewish sources.* Turnhout: Brepols, 2017. 408 p.; 26 cm. ISBN 978-2-503-57542-1. (Bibliotheca Victorina; 26)

Aquest estudi innovador, sorgit arran de la tesi doctoral de Montse Leyra, es proposa de respondre a la qüestió sobre si els victorins van tenir una comprensió directa del text hebreu en els seus comentaris al Pentateuc, Jutges i