Moralejo Álvarez, José Luis 2013: *Historia eclesiástica del pueblo de los anglos. Beda el Venerable*. Madrid, Akal. pp. 336. ISBN: 978-84-460-3223-6. 24 €.

As Bertram Colgrave states in his introduction to the canonical edition of Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum* (henceforth, *HE*), it "is probably one of the most popular history books in any language and has certainly retained its popularity longer than any rival" (1969: xvii). More than thirty years after Colgrave wrote these words, a century after Charles Plummer's seminal edition and almost thirteen centuries after Bede's completion of the *HE*, José Luis Moralejo Álvarez has translated this historiographical masterpiece into Spanish for the first time. Providing such treasure for Spanish medievalists is a laudable enterprise in itself. Beyond the inherent worthiness of the project, Moralejo Álvarez's skillfully executed translation deserves our praise: its accuracy makes it a perfect companion for the study of the original text and its naturally rendered Spanish makes us forget that we are dealing with a translation. This edition is supplemented by an introduction, explanatory footnotes and a translation of *Cuthbert's Letter on the Death of Bede*.

The introduction is divided into five sections providing relevant information on Bede's life and work, as well as on this particular translation. The first one, "Beda el Venerable," sketches a brief biography with the few known details about the quiet life of this scholar and monk. He devoted most of his time to his great interests, namely "aprender, enseñar o escribir" ["learning, teaching or writing"] (5), as he himself states in the last chapter of his history. Thus, Moralejo Álvarez describes him as "un historiador sin historia" ["a historian without history"] (6), like the Roman Livy, as he led a life that was, in Colgrave's words, "almost devoid of incident" (1969: xxi). Moralejo Álvarez suggests that Bede, as a typical "scholar-monk," probably combined his intellectual work with the manual labors that a monastery in construction like

Wearmouth and Jarrow required. He completes the portrait with an anecdote included in an anonymous *Life of Ceolfrith* and also reported by Plummer and Colgrave. According to this text, after an epidemic, only a little boy was left to sing the divine office together with abbot Ceolfrith. At first they decided to sing it partially, but soon they took up the whole office. Even though Bede does not include this episode in his autobiography, Moralejo Álvarez follows earlier scholars in identifying the boy with him and provides the anecdote as evidence of his modesty. The section concludes with a short summary of Cuthbert's account of Bede's death, the last appendix to this book, and details about the fate of his mortal remains.

After this short biography, Moralejo Álvarez proceeds to classify and briefly analyze the author's extensive and diverse production: inspired by Plummer's classification, he divides the list of 30 works provided by Bede as well as nine more that can be confidently attributed to him into four groups: didactic, historical-biographical, theological-exegetical and poetic writings. Bede's didactic writings reveal his preoccupation with the education of his pupils. Moralejo Álvarez distinguishes between textbooks dealing with arts, exact and natural sciences and computistics. The *HE* is the most important of his historical-biographical works, which also include pious biographies of previous Anglo-Saxon monks. Most of Bede's production is devoted to theological-exegetical writings: he wrote commentaries, books and even letters interpreting the Holy Scriptures. His poetical works were written both in Latin and Anglo-Saxon, although there is only one short poem written in this last language extant. His large Latin production was religious for the most part, and Moralejo Álvarez values it as just passable, relying on Brunhölzl's judgment: "no era un gran poeta; por lo general sus versos tienen el sabor de la mesa del estudioso, y en ellos se encuentra poco de poesía" ["he was not a great poet; in general, his lines have the flavor of the scholar's table, and little poetry can be found in them"] (12).

Once Bede's books have been organized into these different shelves, Moralejo Álvarez takes up the study of his most important historiographical work. In order to cover all aspects of the *HE*, he divides this section into the following six subsections. Moralejo Álvarez examines the words of the title to analyze the time and genre of this work ("La obra en su tiempo y en su género"). Although *HE* is considered the first written history of the future "England," Moralejo Álvarez points out that Bede does not write the history of a country, but the history of the *Angli*, the peoples that settled in Britain in the fifth century. This gives him the chance to make an interesting remark about how places usually took their name from the nation that populated them and not the other way round like nowadays. As for the genre, Moralejo Álvarez follows Colgrave's idea that the *HE* might have taken hints from the Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History* and Gregory of Tours's *History of the Franks* and states that it may be framed within the long tradition of national histories by means of which "los nuevos reinos surgidos de las invasiones bárbaras se fueron haciendo un lugar en la gran crónica de Europa" ["the new kingdoms that had emerged from the Barbarian Invasions made a place for themselves in the grand chronicle of Europe"] (13) but also within the tradition of ecclesiastical histories. Thus, the innovation of Bede's project lies in the combination of both historiographical traditions: he writes the first ecclesiastical history devoted to a particular nation.

The second subsection ("La *Historia eclesiástica* como documento histórico") studies the *HE* as a historical document by considering, on the one hand, Bede's partiality and, on the other, his most relevant contributions to the genre of historiography in Europe. Given that Bede's work is almost the only historical account of seventh-century Britain that we have, our picture of that time is necessarily a partial one. All the more so when his record of the events had the aim of showing "that his people, the English, the *gens Anglorum*, and above all his own particular branch of that people, the Northumbrians, had been called by God to a special

role in the history of salvation" (Thacker 2005: 462). Based on Thacker's considerations, Moralejo Álvarez defines Bede as an activist historian: besides his evangelistic mission, he has a historical mission in favor of his nation. Traditionally, the omission of two important figures for Christianity in the British Isles, namely Saint Patrick, evangelist of Ireland, and Saint Boniface, the apostle of Germany, has been considered the most important fault.

Although Moralejo Álvarez borrows from Colgrave the idea that Bede's use of the Christian era represents a fundamental novelty for the genre of historiography in Europe, he explains in further detail the origin and the subsequent relevance of this chronology, which Dionysius Exiguus developed in the 6th century. In addition, he describes how the *HE* is not annalistic, but it is organized with a flexible chronological system: although Bede's account usually follows the course of time, it is the relevance of events and not their date that places them at the beginning of the books. At the end of this section, Moralejo Álvarez provides a useful outline of each book that reveals their organization and sums up their contents.

The third subsection, "Las fuentes de la *Historia eclesiástica*," is a survey of the works that documented Bede's *HE*. Moralejo Álvarez recommends Colgrave & Mynors's chapter on "Bede's library" for further information regarding the author's acquaintance with his prologue's sources—mostly writers from the beginning of Late Antiquity. As for the documents used for the actual *HE*, he mainly refers to the information that Bede provides in his preface about his oral and written sources. Additionally, he takes a moment to discuss the importance of miraculous elements in a work that aimed to reveal a "providential system of causation" (Higham 2006: 98). Moralejo Álvarez notes that, for these events, Bede must have relied on models of the genre such as hagiographical literary works, in addition to the traditional stories and personal information that he himself acknowledges.

Moralejo Álvarez's detailed description of the *HE*'s language ("La lengua y el estilo") centers on the idea that Latin was not

only an ancient language, but also a foreign language for Bede. The distance implied by these conditions prevents the influence of macaronic Latin, making his language simple but pure. Despite giving this grammarian and teacher credit for his remarkable display of rhetorical training, Moralejo Álvarez adds a new category to the four vulgarisms that, according to Michael Lapidge, characterize Bede's Latin as medieval, namely the periphrasis of *habeo* with infinitive to indicate future time. He (23) also qualifies André Crépin's statement that "[l]e latin de Bède ne montre aucune influence de la grammaire de l'anglais" [Bede's Latin does not evince any influence of English grammar] (2005: I, 29) by citing Lapidge's discussion of the construction of toponymys in the Old English manner, that is with a preposition attached to the noun.

According to Moralejo Álvarez, his section on manuscripts is mainly a summary of Mynors's "Textual Introduction," but it also includes the opinions of more recent editors. Thus, he basically divides the codices that Mynors mentions according to Plummer's distinction between Class *c* and Class *m*. Even though the last subsection about the *HE* ("La tradición manuscrita") surveys all published editions from the *editio princeps* presumably printed by Heinrich Eggestein in the 15th century to Lapidge's 2008–2010 edition, it mainly focuses on the three main critical editions: the first definite text, which was produced by Plummer at the end of the 19th century together with a learned commentary, Colgrave & Mynors's canonical edition, which is the base text for this translation, and Lapidge's recent edition, the first one which takes into account three different witnesses instead of two. Even though Moralejo Álvarez praises Lapidge's philological work, the recent publication of his edition has limited its use for this translation.

The abundant scholarship about Bede's life and works in general and about the *HE* in particular makes it difficult for our translator to contribute new knowledge. Plummer's massive introduction to his 19th century edition already includes an extensive section about Bede's biography and historical context, a classification and brief

study of his diverse production, a reflection about his religion and remarks about his style. Although with a different organization and a laudatory overtone, Colgrave's introduction touches on most of the key aspects of the author's life and work that Moralejo Álvarez addresses: his biography, including the anecdote in the *Life of Ceolfrith,* constitutes Colgrave's section "Bede's life," and the author's sources are recorded in "Bede's Library" and "The History: its models and sources," which also deals with the genre of the work. Moralejo Álvarez's discussion of the language borrows from Colgrave in using the *Hisperica Famina* as an illustration of an overelaborated style of insular Latin opposed to Bede's simplicity. However, he builds on Colgrave's treatment of the style by incorporating Mariner's concept of *avulgaramiento* and Lapidge's medieval syntactic features. In short, Moralejo Álvarez's brief but thorough synthesis introduces Spanish readers to the important contributions of these two major critical editions, as well as including insights from more recent scholarship. Moreover, the detailed notes that furnish the text provide readers with a bibliography to deepen their knowledge of the most relevant aspects of Bede's life and work.

However, the introduction to this book also includes information unprecedented in previous editions: "Apuntes sobre Beda en la posteridad y sobre Beda en España" constitutes a ground-breaking section that, consistent with the first translation into Spanish, sheds light on Bede's reception in medieval Europe and especially in Spain. Moralejo Álvarez sums up the most relevant information available in the abundant scholarship about the author's posterity: he deals with Bede's early diffusion by virtue of two Anglo-Saxon scholars, namely his contemporary Saint Boniface and Alcuin of York and the consolidation of his fame in the time of Alfred the Great. Bede would not be well-known in Spain until the Carolingian Renaissance in the 10th century. After that, he is mentioned in the *Codex Calixtinus*, as well as in Alfonso X's *General Estoria*, but he became more relevant after the Reformation, when Spanish scholars

began to consider his work "testimonio de la ortodoxia primigenia de Inglaterra" ["evidence of England's original orthodoxy"] (31). About his later posthumous fame, Moralejo Álvarez points out his influence on notable Spanish authors, as well as his relevance for English Romanticism and especially for the Oxford movement, for whom his work was again considered a product of the pure original Christianity.

Even if the introduction is certainly exhaustive, there are certain points that are hardly considered. The section on Bede's posterity mentions Alfred the Great's translation as an evidence of Bede's posthumous importance, but this early Old English version is only briefly and superficially studied. To begin with, although traditionally attributed to King Alfred's late-ninth century translation program, the Old English version of the *Historia Ecclesiastica* (henceforth, *OEHE*) was composed "anonymously some time at the end of the ninth or beginning of the tenth century" (Rowley 2011: 2). Sharon M. Rowley's thorough study shows that "the *OEHE* produces and is produced by the complex interplay of continuity and change at work in early Britain" (2011: 56). Thus, the combined study of both the original and the translation evidences differences in time, culture, politics and demographics between Bede's and Alfred's world. Additionally, Frank M. Stenton claims that "there are many passages in which Bede's indications of rank or office become clearer through a rendering into ninth century English" (1971: 273). Either out of historical interest on the combined study of the original and its translation, or because the Old English version might shed light on particular aspects of the Latin version, a reader of Bede would likely wish to read more about the early Old English abridgement of his work; however, he or she cannot find this in Moralejo Álvarez's translation.

Furthermore, this introduction also leaves aside aspects that, according to Paul Meyvaert (1971: 137), Colgrave also fails to mention, such as:

> The chronological problems due to the use of a diversity of sources [...]; the problem of the reorganisation of Book I due to the arrival at a late date—when the *HE* was almost complete—of the Gregorian letters brought from Rome by Nothelm [...]; the problems connected with the manner in which Bede treats and modifies his source (e.g. Gildas or Eddius' *Life of Wilfrid*).

These deficiencies are less significant in the introduction of a translation than in the historical introduction of a major critical edition. However, all three of these issues would surely have been enlightening for the Spanish readers of Moralejo Álvarez's translation, especially since they usually have more difficult access to the secondary sources that address them.

The last section of the introduction informs the readership about the translation. Thus, we learn that it is based on Colgrave & Mynors's text, although it adopts elements of Lapidge's recent edition such as the convenient division of chapters into paragraphs and the repetition of each thematic epigraph at the beginning of every chapter, an idea that Lapidge takes from Plummer. These decisions considerably simplify both citing and reference in the index of names, and reading. Moralejo Álvarez announces that the footnotes clarify passages of uncertain interpretation, as well as *realia*, that is, culture-specific concepts, for the unfamiliarized modern reader. But most of this section is devoted to the explanation of the procedures followed to transcribe Anglo-Saxon and Celtic proper names into Spanish. Even though this new and copious onomastic wealth poses a challenge to the translator, who has not found a way of applying a "un sistema de transcripción riguroso y del todo coherente" ["a rigorous and completely coherent transcription system"] (34), decisions like the adoption of a morphological criterion of adaptation for the names with a tradition in Spanish or a general graphic simplification produce versions of the names that naturally fit the Spanish prose. Moralejo Álvarez's editorial decisions are successful in facilitating the reading of the text.

Even though the translation certainly offers the readers a smooth Spanish prose, minor details like the recurrent use of the adverbial phrase "en efecto" for the conjunction "nam" (II.13.1, 124 or IV.22.5, 233) retain some flavor of translation. There are also inconsistencies: the noun "cultus" is translated as both "culto" (II.13.2, 124) and "religión" (II.13.4, 125 and II.13.5, 125) within the same passage, and "culto" and "devoción" (IV.22.1) are both used to translate "religio" even within the same paragraph. However, these decisions may be justified on the grounds that, despite the lack of consistency, the chosen word, either cult, devotion or religion, better conveys the sense of the sentence. What is more difficult to justify is "caballo de postas" for "equum emissarium" (125). Du Cange's *Glossarium Mediæ et Infimæ Latinitatis* cites the following definitions for *equus emissarius*: "equus fortis et velox, qui extra alios eligitur, et ad equas mittitur ad coitum" ["strong and fast horse, chosen among the rest, and sent to the mares for coitus"] (Ezechiel. 33. Joan. de Janua) and "cheval estallon mit aux champs pour engendrer" ["stallion horse placed in the country to beget"] from a Latin glossary at Saint Gall (258). Consequently, even though the word "emissarius" certainly means emissary, "equus emissarius" is not a relay horse, but rather a stallion, as Colgrave & Mynors translate it. Given that the priest wants to destroy the idols, a stallion, which is considered stronger and faster than a castrated horse, fits much better the sense of the sentence than a relay horse, especially as it is replacing the mare that the priest is usually allowed to ride.

Despite minor details of this sort, the translation generally renders Bede's Latin closely and faithfully, while the footnotes clarify uncertainties and enrich the text with historical references. For example, in the episode of Edwin's conversion (II.13), Moralejo Álvarez cites Colgrave & Mynors to assert the importance of the passage, Plummer to explain Edwin's apostasy and Wallace-Hadrill to look into the biblical antecedents of the bird image. But not all his cultural remarks point to other works: Moralejo Álvarez also draws an interesting parallel between Bede's claim that Anglo-

Saxon priests could only ride mares and the custom in certain Spanish dioceses that newly appointed bishops entered the church to take over on a mule. As for the *realia*, he quotes Colgrave & Mynors's translation of "ducibus ac ministris" as "ealdormen and thegns" (124, fn. 119) to help the readers understand concepts that belong to the *comitatus*, a social structure locally and temporarily foreign to them. The note on Goodmanham, a small village close to Yorkshire, also clarifies a toponymy probably unknown to the Spanish readership. Finally, he draws attention to an echo of Virgil's *Aeneid*. Thus, the famous account of Edwin's conversion serves as an illustration of the different types of useful footnotes that the reader encounters in this translation.

In conclusion, despite the minor reservations mentioned, Moralejo Álvarez's work no doubt meets the readers' expectations: the faithful Spanish version is complemented by explicative footnotes and a well-organized and informed introduction with a body of citations to secondary sources. Furthermore, this work represents the first attempt in our country to translate one of the most important references of Anglo-Saxon history into Spanish. Thus, the nature of the project and the quality of the result make José Luis Moralejo Álvarez's *Historia eclesiástica del pueblo de los anglos* a priceless treasure for Spanish scholars of medieval literature.

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