A BIBLE FOR THE MASSES IN THE MIDDLE AGES: TRANSLATING THE BIBLE IN MEDIEVAL MUSLIM SPAIN[1]

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Less than a century after founding the earliest Muslim state in Medina in A.D. 622, Islam established its first foothold on European soil. In A.D. 711, the Muslims (Arabs, Syrians, Berbers and others) landed on the coast of the Iberian Peninsula, bringing about the collapse of the Kingdom of the Vizigoths, the only viable political entity in Latin Europe at the time, and ushering in a new era in European history. Henceforth, Europe had to contend with the presence on its soil of a civilization and a religion unlike its own. As a result of the conquest of the Iberian Peninsula, dubbed "al-Andalus" by the Arabs, a significant number of Christians came to live under Muslim rule. These new Christian subjects, like their confreres in Muslim North Africa, were distinct from their co-religionists in the East in that they had turned their spiritual allegiance to Rome (Latin and Catholic). They stood apart from their Eastern counterparts, who had been absorbed in the realm of Islam a century earlier and were largely Antiochian, Alexandrian, Constantinopolitan, or Edessan, as well as Jacobite or Nestorian in spiritual allegiance. For the new Christian subjects the Biblical text was Jerome's Vulgate, not the Greek or Syriac texts utilized in the East. In this presentation I wish to focus on the circumstance in which an Arabic Bible was deemed necessary, as Latin gave way to Arabic, to satisfy the spiritual (and liturgical?) needs of the Arabic-speaking Christian community of al-Andalus. And as this is only a segment of the history of the encounter between Islam and its Christian subjects, I would like to begin with a brief introductory comment on the nature of this encounter.

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[1] The text of this lecture is largely drawn from the following papers by the author: "Arabic-speaking Christians in al-Andalus in an Age of Turmoil (Fifth-Eleventh century until A.H. 478/A.D. 1085)," *Al-Qantara*, vol. XV, Fasc. 2 (1994): 401–422; "The Arabicization and Islamization of the Christians of al-Andalus: Evidence of their Scriptures," *Languages of Power in Islamic Spain*, ed. Ross Brann (Bethesda, Maryland: CDL Press, 1997): 136–155; "Literature of the Mozarabs," *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature: The Literature of Al-Andalus,* ed. María Rosa Menocal, Raymond P. Scheindlin and Michael Sells (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000): 420–434.

We should emphasize here that the conquest of the Iberian Peninsula was not Islam's first meeting with Christianity and the Christians. Depending on the circumstances of their initial encounter with Islam and the Muslims, various Christian groups came to be identified differently. From the onset of Islamic history, two Christian communities played a significant role in the development of Arab Islamic society. The first of these communities were the *nasārá*, the Christians mentioned in the Qur'ān and with whom Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam, was acquainted. Subsequently, the term referred as well to the indigenous Christian population living under Muslim rule and protection. The Muslims were enjoined by the dictates of the Qur'ān to protect those Christians, as well as the Jews, as they were *ahl al-kitāb*, "People of the Book," the earlier recipients of Divine revelation.

The second group of Christians identified by Arabic writers were the *rūm*, who in comparison with the *nasārá*, attract more attention in the written sources. Initially mentioned in the Qur'an, the term primarily refers to the Byzantines who were at once an enemy of Islam and a source of supply of some of the craftsmen and artisans of its building programme. The defeat of a contingent of the *rūm* (Byzantines) during the prophetic age merited the Qur'anic reference, "The *rūm* are vanquished" (Qur'an 30:1), and was seen as a sign of the divine vindication of Islam and its perpetual triumph over the disbelief (*kufr*) of Christendom represented by the Byzantines. Thus the Caliph in Damascus would have felt justified when he brazenly demanded of the Byzantine Emperor that he dispatch skilled craftsmen for the construction of the Mosque in Damascus in 706, threatening the destruction of the churches at Edessa, Jerusalem and Lydda if the Emperor failed to comply. But although the *rūm* were the enemy, they merited the respect of Muslims in general. Subsequently, the term came to refer as well to any Christian body politic presided over by an alien (Christian) ruler. The body politic could be the Greeks, the Romans, or even the people of the Holy Roman Empire. Whoever they may have been, they were a potential enemy and did not merit the protection reserved for the *nasārá*.

Another group of Christians in the experience of Islam were the *ifranj* ("Franks"), whose overall portrayal in Arabic sources was that of a people not dissimilar from other remote barbarians, lacking in sophistication as well as in the creativity of either the Byzantines or the indigenous Christians (the *nasārá*). Their image was not enhanced as they came to be associated with missionary and crusading activities against Islam.

Depending on the prevailing circumstances, one or another of these labels came to be applied, in Arabic writings, to the Christians of al-Andalus. Curiously enough, a different name was applied to them at a later date by their co-religionists living outside the realm of Islam. Although derived from an Arabic original, the Castilian *mozarabe* ("Mozarab," meaning "arabicized") which came into use as early as the eleventh century as a pejorative term, refers solely though imprecisely to the Christians of the Iberian Peninsula who came in contact with Islam in one manner or another.

The rights of all Christians who lived under Muslim rule and who chose to maintain their faith were protected, at least in principle, by the dictates of the Qur'ān, as these were rendered by competent interpreters of the Muslim sacred text, as well as by the assembled records of the sayings and practices of the Prophet (the *Hadith*). In addition, their juridical rights were governed by the terms of the treaty by which they, or their ancestors, effected their surrender to the rule of Islam. The text of one such treaty, governing the Mozarabs and preserved by later Muslim historians, is purported to be that concluded in A.D. 713 between Theodmir, the defeated Vizigothic governor of the region of Murcia, and the victorious Muslim commander, ʻAbd al-ʻAzīz ibn Mūsá ibn Nusayr. According to the extant text, "they [the Christians] shall not be taken into captivity nor would they be separated from their women or children. They shall not be killed; their churches shall not be burnt nor shall their cult objects be desecrated; they shall not be forcibly converted out of their religion."[2] These guarantees were given in return for loyalty to the new masters and the payment of the *jizyah*, the tribute exacted from non-Muslim subjects, in lieu of the religious tax demanded of Muslims.

There is little doubt that this and similar treaties—be they authentic or fabricated—reflect the broad lines that governed the relationship of the Muslim rulers and their Christian subjects (the *nasārá*) and echo the tenor of the legal position of these Christians under Muslim rule in al-Andalus and elsewhere. Even if the authenticity of such a treaty or the accuracy of its text were to be called into question, the self-imposed perception in Muslim writings that a pact such as this existed and obligated the Muslims to abide by its terms, is significant. But, aside from leaving the Christians to manage their own internal affairs and to maintain their existing religious rites and edifices, the treaty is silent regarding the preservation of the identity of the Christians. If such identity were to be sustained, the responsibility of cultural self-preservation and nurture was

[2] Kassis, "Arabic-speaking Christians," *Al-Qantara*, vol. 15:2 (1994), 404, n.6.

left up to the Christians themselves to undertake. That responsibility must by necessity address matters of religion and language, the two elements that more than any other give a minority a foundation upon which to establish its exclusiveness. Such interplay of the search for identity, on the one hand, and an emphasis on the preservation of religion and language, on the other, is very much in evidence in al-Andalus.

While the text of the treaties themselves was written in Arabic, at least as far as the later preserved texts are concerned, the Muslims recognized the linguistic barrier that separated them from their vanquished subjects in al-Andalus. Evidence for this must be derived from numismatics. During the first decade of their dominion in the Peninsula, the Muslim rulers accommodated their subjects by utilizing Latin on their coins. Thus, following the numismatic tradition that was started after the fall of Carthage in North Africa, and in spite of the fact that the reform of the minting policy had already taken place two decades earlier in the Near East, the earliest coins issued in the Peninsula by the Muslims, beginning with A.H. 94/A.D. 712, bear legends containing the fundamental statement of faith of Islam in Latin rather than Arabic. The legend on one of the earliest of these coins reads, *INNDINN D SNSDSSLSNDSA*, a condensed and abbreviated form of *IN Nomine DominI NoN Deus NiSi DeuS SoLuS Non DeuS Alius*, "In the Name of God; there is no deity other than God, alone, without compeer." However, less than a decade later, Arabic was to replace Latin and the new legends included the Arabic original of which the Latin text cited above was a translation. To this was added the Arabic text of the shortest chapter in the Qur'an, that reads, in translation, "He is God, Unique; God is the Eternal One; He did not beget, nor was He begotten; He has no compeer" (*Qur'an* 112). There is no doubt in my mind that the primary intention of the legends on these coins—whether written in Latin or subsequently in Arabic—was to inform the subjugated Christians of the central content of the faith of the victors, rather than to engage in polemics.

Generally speaking, Christians in al-Andalus as elsewhere were left to manage their own affairs with little or no interference by the Muslims. We cannot gauge the attitude of the ordinary Muslims, living in the city or in the countryside, toward their Mozarabic neighbours, with whom they undoubtedly had contacts. However, we know something of the official attitude of the *fuqahā'* ("jurisconsults") towards them. According to these jurisconsults, the Christians—by virtue of the fact of not being Muslim—held a separate, secondary status (I judiciously avoid the term "inferior"). The separation of the Muslims from Christians and Jews was clearly counselled by the jurists. In

response to a judicial query, a leading tenth-century jurist (al-Qābisi) issued a *fatwá* ("legal opinion") in which he counselled Muslims "not to associate with someone whose religion is different from yours; that is the safer for you. There is no harm in doing your neighbour a favour if he asks you and if what he asks for is not sinful. There is no harm either if you were to respond to him with kind words providing that this does not unduly magnify him or place him in a rank of honour higher than his own, nor should it make him pleased with his religion. If he greets you [with the greeting 'Peace be upon you'], your response should be 'And upon you'. You should add nothing else. There is no benefit in your inquiring about his well-being or that of those who belong to him [his family]. Do not exceed or go too far; however, fulfil what is due to neighbourliness."[3]

This distancing was practised by the Christians as well. In the middle of the ninth century, Eulogius, who was to become one of the "Martyrs of Córdoba," abhorred the close association between Christians and Muslims. He lamented that "[the Cordoban Christians] consider it a delight to be subject to these people [the Muslims], and do not resist being led by the yoke of the infidels. They even make use of many of their sacrileges on a day to day basis and seek their company rather than trying to save themselves, like the Patriarch Lot, who departed Sodom for the mountains."[4]

But in spite of the relative autonomy of the Christians of al-Andalus, Latin was declining as the dominant language of both the laity and the Church, and the Christians were increasingly lured to adopt Arabic, at least as their literary language. It is of little relevance for our immediate purposes whether the process of arabicization was voluntary (auto-arabicization) or forced.[5] As the conquest became an irreversible reality, and in spite of the religious-legal definition and protection of their status, the Christians who came under Muslim rule had limited options for the preservation of their identity. Needless to say, a serious situation engulfed those who chose to retain their Christian religious identity within the Muslim polity. Of those, some continued to identify with their increasingly weakened Latin heritage. Others maintained their Christian identity

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[3] al-Wansharīsī, *Mi'yār*, (Rabat, 1981), vol. 11: 300–301.

[4] Translation by Kenneth Wolf, *Christian Martyrs in Muslim Spain* (Cambridge, 1988), 68.

[5] It is difficult to determine whether the Castilian *mozárabe* was derived from the passive participle of the Arabic verb *ista'raba*, thus meaning "one who is involuntarily arabicized," or from the active participle of the same verb, meaning "one who seeks to be arabicized," hence "auto-arabicized."

within an Arabic framework, acquiring a mastery of the language while retaining their religious orthodoxy. Not unexpectedly, without the presence of an intellectually and administratively gifted clergy, the community would be weakened.[6] It is not surprising, therefore, that the preponderance of literature created by the Christians of al-Andalus was religious in nature. But at the same time, we must remember that while the Mozarabs continued to manifest an intellectual vitality in spite of their domination by a religion other than their own, they did not achieve the intellectual or literary stature of Andalusian Jews. Nor did their intellectual output compare at any time with that of their Christian co-religionists in the Near East. As far as we know, nothing was produced by the Mozarabs to compare to the writings of Theodore Ibn Qurrah or Yahyá ibn 'Adī. Nor do we find a Christian, even writing in Latin, of the calibre of John of Damascus, writing in Greek. Moreover, the literary output among Christians of the Near East included secular literature (*adab*), a genre that according to the evidence so far before us was almost completely lacking among the Mozarabs.

It is safe to assume that by the middle of the ninth century many Christians of al-Andalus had acquired the language, customs and other social practices of the Muslims. The extent of the impact of Islam on the Christians alarmed some of the leading members of the Christian community. Notable among these was Paulus Alvarus of Córdoba, the defender of the cause of the "Martyrs of Córdoba." He was concerned about the demise of Latin among his coreligionists who, according to him, favoured the use of Arabic instead of Latin as their literary medium "The Christians forgot their language," he bemoaned, "to the point that you would not find among a thousand of them one person who could write a letter to a friend in Latin which is free from error. As for writing Arabic, you will certainly find a large number who master that language, possessing an elegant style, writing poetry that at times surpasses in quality that which is composed by the Arabs themselves." But Alvarus' remarks against his coreligionists for forsaking Latin in favour of Arabic must not be seen as resulting only from the fear of arabicization. It is very likely that he himself, an urban Cordoban, had a command of Arabic. Similarly, Isaac, the

[6] This is well demonstrated by Mikel de Epalza, who examines its import in al-Andalus, in his essay, "Falta de obispos y conversión al Islam de los cristianos del Al-Andalus," in *Al-Qantara*, vol XV (1994): 385–400; see also his essay (translated into English) "Mozarabs: An emblematic Christian minority in Islamic al-Andalus" in *The Legacy of Muslim Spain*, edited by Salma Khadra Jayyusi (Brill, 1992): 149–170.

Monk of Tábanos and the first of the so-called martyrs, was described as "a youthful monk, well-versed in Arabic learning."[7] It was, perhaps, the weakening of Latin as the sacral language of the Church under Muslim rule that alarmed Alvarus and his friends. Undoubtedly he and his friends were well acquainted with the sacral nature of liturgical and Biblical Latin in Western Christianity, and St. Isidore of Seville's (d. 636) praise of the Vulgate (of Jerome), declaring it to be "justly preferred to all others," and commending it for use in the liturgy. Moreover, Alvarus' apprehension may have been the product of fear that the Christian faith itself was weakening among his co-religionists as a result of the growing appeal of the Arabic language and Islam. Arabicization could only hasten the impending danger, while linguistic isolation could be the sole remaining line of defence. The battle for the preservation of Latin was rapidly becoming a lost cause. As the Christians of al-Andalus became increasingly arabicized, the need for the translation of their sacred scriptures into Arabic ensued. It is worthwhile repeating the fact that the first authenticated piece of Islamic writing to be introduced in the conquered territory was in Latin and contained a chapter of the Muslim Scriptures, albeit on a coin. I am inclined to believe that this had a significant bearing on the eventual desire on the part of the Christians to reciprocate by presenting their own Scriptures in the language of the conqueror.

The need for an Arabic Bible was not unique to al-Andalus, nor were translations of the text lacking in the East. Even before the spread of Islam, the Arabs must have been acquainted with at least some of the contents of the Bible. We must assume that Arab Jews had access to an Arabic text of the Hebrew Bible, for purposes of "study," in addition to the requisite liturgical Hebrew text. For the nascent Muslim community, it is true that while the Qur'an refers to Biblical personages or episodes, it does not include direct Biblical texts. Nonetheless, it recognizes the existence of Jewish and Christian scriptures, giving them their Arabic names. It refers to the *tawrāt* ("Torah") of Moses, the *zabūr* ("Psalms") of David, and the *injīl* (Ευαγγελιον, "Gospel", through the Ethiopian *wangel*) of Jesus. Throughout, it demonstrates acquaintance with the Christian Biblical narrative and teachings without citing a specific text. Arabic sources report that Waraqa ibn Nawfal, the cousin of the Prophet's

[7] Euologius, mentioned earlier, in his *Materiale Sanctorum*, translation by Colin Smith, *Christians and Moors in Spain*, vol. 1 (Warminster: Aris and Phillips, 1988), 45.

wife Khadija, was a Christian who was well-versed in the study of the Bible,[8] and wrote translations or copies of the Gospels.[9] There is evidence for the existence of Arabic translations of the Bible following the rise and spread of Islam. Perhaps the earliest translation is that of a fragment of the Book of Psalms (Psalm 77:20–31 and 51–61), found in the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus in 1901.[10] A more complete Arabic translation is dated to the eighth or to the ninth century.[11] Recently, a considerable part of the text of the New Testament was published, comprising the Pauline and Catholic Epistles, as well as the Book of Acts. The text is a translation from the Syriac by Bishr ibn al-Sirrī, a Nestorian Christian, and was done in Damascus in A.D. 867.[12] In the colophon of one of the manuscripts used in the preparation of the London Polyglot (1652), reference is made to Fathyūn ibn Ayyūb, a Syrian Christian scholar who lived in Baghdad in the middle of the ninth century, as a translator of the Bible from Syriac (Peshitta) into Arabic.[13] These translations predate the Arabic translation of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) by Saadia ha-Gaon (d. A.D. 942), deemed to be the earliest extant Biblical text in Arabic and employed, for the books of the Old Testament, in the Paris Polyglot (dating from the reign of Louis XIV).

It is not easy to determine the circumstances of the initial translation of the Bible into Arabic in al-Andalus. Rodrigo Ximenes (d. 1237), bishop of Toledo during the reign of Alfonso VIII and the primary instigator of the crusade that led to the Battle of Las Navas de Tolosa in A.D. 1212, speaks of Juan, the "glorious and saintly" Bishop of Seville "whom the Arabs call *Sa'īd al-matrān*" ("Sa'id the Bishop"), as someone who translated the Bible into Arabic:

> *Et in isto medio fuit apud Hispalim gloriosus et sanctissimus Ioannes Episcopus, qui ab Arabibus Caeit (Zaeyt) almatran vocabatur, et magna scientia in lingua Arabica claruit, multis miraculorum operationibus gloriosus effulsit, qui etiam*

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[8] According to Tabari (839–923), *The History of al-Tabarī*, vol. VI, *Muhammad at Mecca*, translated and annotated by W. Montgomery Watt and M.V. McDonald (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1988), 72.

[9] Abū al-Faraj al-Isbahānī, *Kitāb al-Aghānī* iii, 14.

[10] B. Violet, *Ein Zweisprachiges Psalmfragment aus Damaskus* (Berlin, 1902).

[11] Vatican ms. 13 (Arabic). For the debate on the date see I. Guidi, *Tradizioni degli evangeli in arabo e in etiopico* (Rome, 1902) and G. Graf, *Geschichte de christlichen arabischen Literatur*, respectively.

[12] Harvey Staal, *Mt. Sinai Arabic Codex 151* (Louvain, Institute for Middle Eastern New Testament Studies, 1985).

[13] See the brief study by J.A. Thompson, *The Major Arabic Bibles* (New York, 1956), 15.

> *sacras Scripturas catholicis expositionibus declaravit, quas in formationem posterorum Arabice conscriptas reliquit.*[14]

In the context of the discussion of the first five years of the reign of Don Pelayo, king of the Asturias (A.D. 718–737), the *Primera Crónica General* (which dates from the reign of Alfonso X, the Wise) refers to a translation of the Christian Bible into Arabic by Juan of Seville, identified once more as *Sa'īd al-matrān* ("Sa'id the Bishop"),

> "At this time, there was in Sevilla the saintly Bishop Juan, a man of great sanctity and a good and holy life, whom the Arabs called in Arabic Çaeyt almatran ("Sa'id the Bishop"). He was very knowledgeable in the Arabic language and through him God performed many miracles. He translated the Holy Scriptures into Arabic and interpreted them in accordance with the Holy Scriptures …"[15]

While confirming Juan of Seville as the translator, this reference arguably places the date of the translation within a very short period after the conquest.[16]

The tradition of ascribing the earliest Arabic translation to Bishop Juan of Seville is maintained, as late as the seventeenth century, by Juan de Mariana.[17] There is even mention of the existence in the library of El Escorial of a copy of the translation,[18] but this manuscript is now regrettably lost and there is no mention of it in Casiri's otherwise complete catalogue of the manuscripts in El

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[14] Rodericus Ximenius de Rada, *De Rebus Hispaniae* published in his *Opera* (Valencia: *Textos Medievales, 22*, 1968; reprint of 1793 edition), Book IV, Chapter 3, 77.

[15] *Primera Crónica General: Estoria de España que mandó componer Alfonso el Sabio y se continuaba bajo Sancho IV en 1289*, edited by Ramón Menéndez Pidal (Madrid, 1906), vol. I, see entry *El Rey Don Pelayo*, 326.

[16] The debate is best summarized by Eugène Cardinal Tisserant, "Une feuille Arabo-Latine de l'Épître aux Galates," *Revue Biblique*, vol. 7, sér. 2 (1910): 321–343, esp. 325–327. To this should be added P. Sj. van Koningsveld's discussion in his *The Latin-Arabic Glossary of the Leiden University Library* (Leiden, 1977): 51–52. Van Koningsveld reads *Sayyid*, apparently following Guidi.

[17] Mariana, Juan de (1536–1624), *Historia General de España*, VII. English translation: *General History of Spain, from the first peopling of it by Tubal, till the death of King Ferdinand* (London: R. Sare, 1669), VII, 3.

[18] Francisco Javier Simonet, "Estudios históricos y filológicos sobre la literatura arábigo-mozárabe," *Revista de la Universidad de Madrid*, segunda época, vol. II, 55.

Escorial compiled after the fire of 1671 which consumed a large portion of the Arabic collection of that library.[19]

While the possibility of the existence of a translation of the Bible into Arabic by Bishop Juan of Seville is not contested, the dates of the translator are not certain. Simonet, followed by Tisserant, dates Bishop Juan to the ninth century and places him in the company of those prelates who attended the Council of Córdoba in A.D. 839.[20]

The earliest extant translations of the Scriptures in al-Andalus date from the tenth century. These comprise the complete text of the Four Gospels (two strands of translation) and the Book of Psalms (two renderings in prose, and another in verse). In addition, we have fragments (dated 15 March 1115) of Paul's Epistles to the Laodiceans,[21] and to the Galatians.[22] There is evidence for the existence of other translations in circulation. For example, the *Hispana Systematica Arabica*, the compendium of canon law, most of which was completed in A.D. 1049, [23] cites Biblical passages from a translation that differs from either of the two preceding strands. The infrequent references (there are altogether only 48 quotations by my reckoning) are derived mainly from *al-tawrāt* ("Torah") without specific reference, or from the books of the Prophets, with a general reference such as "as the Prophet said," without naming the prophet being quoted. Occasionally, however, the sources are mentioned by name and are limited to Isaiah, Jeremiah, or Ezekiel, as well as a single reference to each of Zechariah and Daniel. One reference is made to Job and several to the "prophet of the Psalms" (David). These citations point to the presence of an Arabic translation of some, if not all, of the books of the Old Testament. This conclusion is further augmented by a statement made by the compiler of

[19] Michel Casiri, *Biblioteca Arabico-Hispana escurialenis recensio et explantio Michaelis Casiri* (Madrid, 1760–1770; reproduced in Osnabrück: Biblio Verlag, 1969).

[20] Francisco Javier Simonet, *Historia de los Mozárabes de España* (Madrid: Real Academia de la Historia, 1897–1903, re-issued by Ediciones Turner, Madrid, 1984), 320; Eugène Tisserant, "Une feuille arabo-latine de l'Épître aux Galates," *Revue Biblique* (1910): 327–328.

[21] Eugène Tisserant, "La version mozarabe de l'épître aux Laodicéens," *Revue Biblique* 19 (1910): 249–253.

[22] Eugène Tisserant, "Une feuille arabo-latine de l'Épître aux Galates," *Revue Biblique* (1910): 321–344.

[23] El Escorial, ms. 1623, which I am currently editing; I discuss this document in my paper, "Arabic-speaking Christians."

the compendium; in a colophon to Book VIII of the collection, he informs his patron bishop that he was going to send him the books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel which, we could assume, he was in the process of translating.

Evidence for the existence of yet other translations of the Bible may be found in Muslim sources. For example, in his polemical writings against Judaism and Christianity, the distinguished eleventh-century Andalusian writer Ibn Hazm employed yet one or more translations that are different from those so far mentioned. It is evident that he perused a complete text of the New Testament, which included (in the order presented by Ibn Hazm) the four Gospels, the Book of Acts, Revelation, 7 Catholic Epistles and 15 (*sic*) Epistles of Paul.[24] We do not know which Arabic translation he used for the remaining books: the Christian Old Testament or a translation of the Jewish Bible. The variety of the extant texts demonstrates that while a desire for an Arabic rendering of the Scriptures undoubtedly existed, it failed to produce wording that was universally accepted by the community.

We may safely assume that the contents of the Christian Bible in al-Andalus were in accordance with the established canons of the Western Christian church. This is confirmed in the definition of Scriptures in the *Hispana Sytematica Arabica*. Accordingly, these include all the books of the Old Testament as defined by the Septuagint and translated by Jerome, as well as the accepted Books of the New Testament. In addition, the liturgical requirements of the church accentuated the need for those parts of the Scriptures that were employed in the ordinary of the mass. Citing the Council of Laodecia (A.D. 365?), the *Hispana Sytematica Arabica* lists these in the order in which they are to be read in church: the Prophets and Epistles, to be read by the *lectores*, the Psalms were to be sung by the "psalmodists," and the Gospel was to be read by a deacon.

The pressing issue to be resolved by the church in al-Andalus was neither the content of the Scriptures nor the use to which they were to be put, but rather the language in which they were to be read or chanted in the liturgical offices. Doubtless, for Alvarus and his circle the language of the Scriptures and the liturgy was Latin, the *lingua sacra* of the Western Church, praised by St. Gregory I and St. Isidore of Seville. For others, however, the Scriptures had to be in the prevailing vernacular, Arabic, notwithstanding it being the language of a non-Christian religion.

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[24] Ibn Hazm, *al-fisal fil-milal wal-ahwā' wal-nihal* (Cairo, 1964), II, 20.

The argument in favour of an Arabic translation of the Bible was justified by reference to the Scriptures themselves. In his introduction to the prose version of the Book of Psalms (Vatican ms.), the unnamed translator advocates the necessity of using the vernacular (Arabic in this case) as the language of prayers, lectionaries and exegesis. He cites Scripture (Paul's I Corinthians 14) in a manner that lends support to his reasoning:

> The Apostle [Paul] said, "If a believer utters his prayers in his own tongue, he benefits himself with the spiritual gifts. Whosoever instructs the community and proclaims and interprets to them in his own tongue, realizes the spiritual benefits both for himself and the community." The Apostle further said, "I wish you all to speak in your own tongue. But more than that I want you to understand the interpretation of the prophecies."
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> The Apostle informs us that the first to believe—the Greeks, the Jews, the foreigners and the Romans—declared their faith and prayed to their Lord in the language they each knew: the Greeks in Greek, the Syrians in Syriac, the foreigners (*'ajam*) in Latin, in order that each tongue may be strengthened in the faith in God. Similarly, the prayers of the Christians in the East and the West, whether they are bishops, kings, patriarchs, monks, or the masses of their laymen, be they Franks, Arabs or Syrians, those who believe in Christ, they all pray using the Psalms that are translated from Hebrew into many languages. These include Greek, Latin, Syriac, Indian (*sic*), and Arabic.

The two renderings of the Psalms in prose by unnamed translators demonstrate a degree of independence in translation. The third extant text of

the Book of Psalms was rendered in poetry, in 989, by Hafs ibn Albār al-Qūṭī,[25] a descendent of the vanquished Vizigoths as his name indicates.[26] A suggestion to lower his date by a century might propose that the poet, championing Arabic, may have been the son of Alvarus, the champion of Latin.[27] In the Middle Ages the Book of Psalms was used as an educational tool.[28] Consequently, one wonders if Hafs' poetic rendition of Arabic Psalms may have been intended for a similar purpose. The prosodic metre he chose, known as *rajaz* (short lines with spasmic syllables), lends itself to this end. Curiously, a similar metre was employed by a Muslim poet in al-Andalus in the twelfth century to instruct Muslim youth in the fundamentals of their faith.

As far as the Gospels are concerned, we appear to have two strands of translation represented respectively by manuscripts in Munich and Madrid with duplicate manuscripts in other libraries in Europe and North Africa.[29] A remark at the beginning of Luke's Gospel (Munich) indicates that the translation of the extant Four Gospels was carried out by a Mozarab named Ibn Bilashku (Velázquez) of Córdoba in the year 946.[30] Each of the Four Gospels (Munich)

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[25] Marie-Thérèse Urvoy, *Le Psautier mozarabe* (Toulouse: Presses universitaires du Mirail, 1994).

[26] D.M. Dunlop, "Hafs b. Albar—the last of the Goths?," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1954): 147–151.

[27] D.M. Dunlop, "Sobre Hafs ibn Albar al-Qūṭī al-Qurtubī," *Al-Andalus* 20 (1955): 211–212.

[28] See the summary statement by Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1952), xiv, "The little clerk learned his letters from the Psalter and the Bible would be used in teaching him the liberal arts," citing F. Falk, *Bibelhandschriften und Bibeldrucke in Mainz von achten Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart* (Mainz, 1901), where examples are given of the use of the Psalter in education.

[29] The Madrid text is not complete and is bound together with different parts of the Christian Scriptures from different periods. The writing styles are varied, as is the medium on which the text is written. The most recent portion of this collection—and the longest—is written on paper and dates from A.D. 1542. The earliest part, which includes the Gospels, is fragmentary, written on vellum, and not dated. Within this portion, there is certainly a difference in the writing style between the Gospel according to Matthew and the Gospel of John. Undoubtedly, the fragment containing the latter is the earliest and may be dated on stylistic grounds to the eleventh century.

[30] The text of the Gospels is currently being edited by the author; see also note 1, above.

is preceded by an introduction drawn from the writings of Jerome;[31] these introductory remarks are notably absent from the other (Madrid) strand of the translation. In addition, Ibn Bilshku's work (Munich) concludes with a lectionary (appointed readings from the Gospels) arranged according to the calendar of the feasts of the Church, as well as an essay on the means of determining the dates of the beginning of Lent and of Easter.

What is striking about the translation of the Scriptures is the degree of Islamic, rather than merely Arabic, influence on the language of the Christian sacred text. This, of course, appears in different ways in the diverse manuscripts. While the London manuscript of the Book of Psalms begins with the Christian invocation "*In Nomine…*," in Arabic: "In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, One God," the Introduction ends with a clearly Islamic formula, also in Arabic: "God alone is All-Knowledgeable, All Wise, unique, having no associate, Lord of the Great Throne." The expression "unique, having no associate" in Arabic is part of a phrase used widely in Islam, particularly on coinage, as we have pointed out earlier in our discussion. Similarly, "Lord of the Great Throne" is a Qur'anic expression widely used in Muslim devotions. Unlike its London counterpart, the introduction of the Vatican text of the Book of Psalms begins with the Muslim invocation of the Divine Name, "In the Name of God, the Most Merciful, Compassionate; [I seek] Your help, O Lord." Similarly, the text of the Psalms proper in both strands begins with the Muslim *basmalah* ("In the Name of God, the Most Merciful, Compassionate"), followed by the Muslim devotional expression, in Arabic: "His help I seek." The collection of the Psalms is referred to as *al-zabūr*, the Qur'anic term for the revelation to David, which, we are told in the introduction, contains 150 *sūrah*, the Arabic term for a chapter of the Qur'an.

As for the text of the Gospels, the Muslim influence is also evident. For example, the Qur'anic nomenclature is used for "John" throughout, as well as the Qur'anic term for "disciple." The Arabic Christian terms *qissīs* ("priest") and *usquf* ("*epíscopus*") are carelessly used for the Jewish priest and high priest, respectively. In general, however, the contrast between the two strands of translation of the Gospel is quite marked. The translation by Ibn Bilashku portrays a society very much at home in its Muslim environment, fully arabicized and not uncomfortable with being islamicized. On the other hand, the Madrid

[31] See a translation by Franz Taeschner, "Die monarchianischen Prologe zu den vier Evangelien in der spanischen-arabischen Bibelübersetzung des Isaak Velasquez nach der münchner Handschrift cod. arab 238," *Oriens Christianus* XXXII (1935): 80–99.

manuscript portrays an Arabic-speaking Christian community that appears to have defined its arabicization to exclude or minimize its islamicization.

In their attempt to emphasize their religious identity the Christians of al-Andalus did not employ the translation of their Scriptures, particularly the introductory remarks, as a means of disparaging their Muslim overlords or their religion. The primary purpose of the translation may have been, at least in part, to provide a channel for introducing the sacred texts of their religion to the Muslims who, in principle, accepted their validity as revealed, though corrupted. But the ultimate purpose became obvious: to unlock their Scriptures and make them accessible to all who could read them in the same fashion that their Muslim neighbours had access to their own Book. In so doing, they desacralized the language of Scriptures (Latin or Arabic), anticipating Luther, Tyndale, and other reformers. But stylistically more akin to Tyndale's, the Arabic translation of the Bible "has not been in an elevated 'literary' style, but the language that people speak at slightly heightened moments."[32]

[32] David Daniell, *Let there be Light: William Tyndale and the Making of the English Bible* (London: The British Library, 1994), 2.