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EXCLUSION OR CONCEALMENT: Approaches to Traditional Arabic Exegesis in Medieval-Latin Translations of the *Qur'ān*

When medieval Latin Christians confronted the large number of Muslims living in southern Europe and adjoining areas they also confronted the Qur'ān. For, though it took some centuries, close proximity between Christian and Muslim eventually caused Christians to take an interest in the scriptures that formed the core and inspiration of Islamic religion.[1] That interest, arising quite explicitly out of a desire to refute and convert, became so intense that by the early thirteenth century there existed two complete —though still unedited— Latin translations of the Qur'ān, both of them produced in Spain. The first of these, called *Lex Mahumet* and part of the famous collection of Islamic works translated at the behest of Peter the Venerable in 1142-43, was produced by an expatriate Englishman, Robert of Ketton, who had come to Spain during the previous decade to translate Arabic scientific and mathematical works.[2] The second translation, *Liber alchorani*, made by a native, Arabic-speaking Spanish Christian named Mark of Toledo, was completed in 1211 under the aegis of the Archbishop of Toledo, Rodrigo

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[1] On the early-medieval European lack of interest in Islam, and the slow growth of awareness and concern about it, see B. Kedar, *Crusade and Mission: European Approaches toward the Muslims* (Princeton, 1984), passim, esp. 3-135.

[2] On Robert and his translating work see Charles S. F. Burnett, "A Group of Arabic-Latin Translators Working in Northern Spain in the Mid-12th Century," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1977), 62-70, esp. 63; Idem, "Some Comments on the Translating of Works From Arabic into Latin in the Mid-Twelfth Century,"*Orientalische Kultur und europäisches Mittelalter*, ed.A. Zimmermann and I. Craemer-Ruegenberg, Miscellanea Mediaevalia 17 (Berlin, New York, 1985), 161-71; Idem, "The Translating Activity in Medieval Spain," in S. Jayyusi, ed., *The Legacy of Muslim Spain* (Leiden, 1992), 1043-45; Idem, ed. and trans., Herman of Carinthia, *De essentiis: A Critical Edition with Translation and Commentary* (Leiden, 1982), 4-5; Marie-Thérèse d'Alverny, "Translations and Translators," in Robert Benson and Giles Constable, eds. , *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge, MA, 1982), 449; J. M. Goñi Gaztambide, "Los obispos de Pamplona del siglo XII," *Antologia annua 13* (1965): 254-64; and James Kritzeck, *Peter the Venerable and Islam* (Princeton, 1964), 62-65.

Jiménez de Rada.[3] Though there were a surprising number of European intellectuals in the medieval and early-modern periods who could read Arabic and who studied the Qur'ān in the original language, the great majority of European Christians of this period who wanted to investigate Islam's holy book had to do so through the medium of one (or sometimes both)[4] of these medieval-Latin versions.

Now anyone who has thought about it (or tried her hand at translation) is aware of how serious are the potential pitfalls awaiting the translator, and how numerous the opportunities for mischief. Translating is hard work; it is also the occasion for serious distortion should the translator be so motivated. How easy it would be to adjust, to rework, to skew the meaning of a text, particularly if one were hostile to it and the civilisation that has grown up around it. So one cannot take up a medieval Latin translation of the Qur'ān without wondering if the translator has done exactly this. Medieval European Christians were, after all, overtly and nearly universally hostile to Islam and its scriptures. It is just here, however, that these two medieval Latin versions of the Qur'ān first surprise us, for, as Norman Daniel has recently observed, both translators, though they were explicitly opposed to Islam, were quite concerned to produce what they saw as an accurate, intelligible version of that work. While there are numerous flaws and errors in both works, it is very hard to find intentional, polemical distortion in either.[5]

This does not mean, though, that what readers of these texts had in their hands were Latin versions of the Qur'ān exactly as Muslims knew and understood it. For, ironically, the very methods of translation adopted by these high-medieval Arabists to insure the accuracy and intelligibility of their versions tended unintentionally to introduce sys-

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[3]For more on Mark's life and work see d'Alverny, "Deux traductions," 113-31; Eadem, "Marc de Tolede, in *Estudios sobre Alfonso VI y la reconquista de Toledo. Actas del II Congreso Internacional de Estudios 25-59 Mozárabes (Toledo, 20-26 Mayo, 1985)* [no editor listed] 3 vols. (Toledo, 1986-92), 3: Marie-Thérèse d'Alverny and Georges Vajda, "Marc de Toléde, traducteur d'Ibn Tūmart," *al-Andalus* 16 (1951), 99-140, 259-307, and 17 (1952), 1-56 (these articles also appear in a volume of Variorum Reprints: *La connaissance de l'Islam dans l'Occident Médiéval*, Charles Burnett, ed., [Aldershot and Bookfield VT: 1994); and the preface to Mark's translation edited in d'Alverny and Vajda, "Marc de Toléde, traducteur," *al-Andalus* 16 (1951), 260-68, esp. 260-61, 266-68.

[4] One manuscript - Paris, Bibiothèque Nationale, ms. lat. 14503 - contains both translations, allowing pre-modern readers to consult them side-by-side. On this manuscnpt see *Bibliothèque de l'école des chartes* 30:19; G. Ouy, V. Gerz von Buren, et al. , *Le catalogue de la bibliothèque de l'Abbaye de Saint-Victor de Paris de Claude de Grandrue, 1514* (Paris, 1983), 344-45; and M. -Th. d'Alverny, "Deux traductions," 111.

[5]N. Daniel, *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image*, rev. ed. (Oxford, 1993), 279-80.

temic distortions. Moreover, in each case the reasons for this were nearly opposite. The first Latin translator, Robert of Ketton, adopted an energetic, paraphrasing approach to his translation of 1142-43. His paraphrase, however, incorporates an enormous amount of explanatory material directly from the Muslim-Arabic tradition of Qurʾān exegesis, so that his version is really a translation of the Qurʾān melded together with substantial portions of the traditional exegesis of it. I have argued elsewhere, therefore, that Robert's much-criticised translation is really a much sounder version of the Qurʾān than it has been given credit for.[6] But though his approach is in many ways a laudable one, there is one serious difficulty with it: Robert proceeded in such a way that it became impossible for the European reader to separate the Qurʾ ānic text from the long tradition of interpretation of it. Text and commentary have been inextricably combined, and this is not really the Qurʾān as Muslims knew it.

On the other hand, Mark of Toledo attempted to produce a faithful version of the Qurʾān by translating it with mechanical literalism, following the Arabic syntax closely, paraphrasing only rarely, periodically even introducing neologisms based on Arabic models.[7] Though Mark also appears to have consulted Arabic commentaries on the Qurʾān as he translated, he only rarely altered his Latin text to make it conform with them.[8] What the European reader is faced with in this case, then, is a version of the Qurʾān that is almost entirely cut off from the tradition of interpretation according to which it was always understood by Muslims. Just as reading the Bible outside the powerful Jewish and Christian exegetical traditions developed around it is in a very real way not to read the Bible at all, so reading the Qurʾān outside the framework provided by the classical *tafsīrs*, or commentaries, is to engage a Qurʾān that is not quite the Qurʾān of Muslims.

These striking differences in their approaches to translation are apparent upon reading even short passages of their texts side by side with the Arabic Qurʾān. At verse 2:91, for example, the Quran discusses the infidelity of the ancient Jews:

> Wa-idhā qīla la-hum, ʿāminū bi-mā anzala Allāh,ʾ qālū, ʾnuʾminu bi-mā unzila ʿalaynā.ʾ Wa-yakfurūna bi-mā warāʾ ahu wa-huwa al-haqq muṣaddiqan li-

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[6]See my *"Tafsīr* and Translation: Traditional Arabic Qurʾān Exegesis and the Latin Qurʾāns of Robert of Ketton and Mark of Toledo," *Speculum* 73 (1998): 703-32.

[7]On his method of translation, see N. Daniel, *Islam and the West,* 279-80, and d'Alverny and Vajda, "Marc de Toléde, traducteur," *al-Andalus* 16 (1951), 132-40.

[8]On this see my *"Tafsīr* and Translation," 708, 716, 720-22.

mā maʿahum. Qul: fa-lima taqtulūna anbiyā' Allāh min qablu in kuntum muʾ
minīn?

[And when it is said to them, 'believe in what God has revealed,' they say,
'we believe in what has been revealed to us.' But they disbelieve in what has
come after it, and it (i. e. the Qurʾ ān) is the truth that verifies what (scripture)
they already have. Say: then why did you slay the prophets of God previ-
ously if you are believers?][9]

Mark of Toledo, the literalist, gives his reader this Latin version of
the verse:

Et quando dicitur eis, 'credite in id quod destinauit Deus,' dicunt, 'credimus
in id quod destinauit nobis,' et blasphemant in id quod est post ipsum quod est
[v]erum attestans ei quod haberent. Dic: quare occidistis prophetas Dei
priusquam crederetis.

[And when it is said to them, 'believe in that which God has sent to you,' they
say, 'we believe in that which he has sent to us. ' And they blaspheme that
which is after this, which is the truth attesting to what (scripture) they had.
Say: why did you kill the prophets of God before you believed?][10]

Though he has made small adjustments, and though he misunderstood
one word in the last sentence,[11] for the most part Mark's translation
follows the Arabic closely and carefully. As a result, the reader comes
away with not only a very good idea of the literal content of the Qurʾ
ān, but also something of a feel for its rhetorical and stylistic tenden-
cies. Mark nicely preserves here the dialogue form so common through-
out the Qurʾān: "And when it is said to them, ... they say ..." Likewise
the culminating command to "say" (translating *"Qul"* as*"Dic"* —
"Say!") jars the Latin reader just as it does the Arabic reader. It is true
that not all of this is natural in Latin. The verb *blaspheme*, for exam-
ple, is only rarely followed by the preposition *in*, but Mark gives us this
construction because that is what the Arabic has, the verb *kafara* ("to
blaspheme, to disbelieve") normally governing through the preposition

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[9] All translations from the Arabic or Latin are mine.

[10] Mark of Toledo, *Liber alchorani Machameti quem Marcus canonicus Toletanus de arabica lingua
transtulit in latinum* 2 (Turin, Biblioteca Nazionale Universitaria, F. V. 35), fol. 2va (on this
fifteenth-century ms. see A. Sorbelli, *Manoscritti delle Biblioteche d'Italia* 28, 97). Unless
otherwise indicated, I will cite this ms., which appears to be one of the better mss. of this
work.

[11] He read the *in*, *"if,"* as *an*, *"that,"* two words that differ only by a small, and often lacking
diacritic, this leading him to understand the last sentence to mean "why have you killed
the prophets of God *before you* believed," rather than, "why have you killed the
prophets of God *if you* are believers."

bi- ("in").[12] But despite such potential problems, it is certain that the reader of this passage of Mark's translation has before him a version of this verse that gets across much of its content and form quite accurately. And this passage is quite representative of his approach throughout.[13]

Robert of Ketton, in contrast, provides his reader with an abridging paraphrase of these verses, and attaches it grammatically to the previous verse — something he does fairly commonly throughout his translation:

> ... qui dicentes uos nulli nisi libro uobis dato credere uestre legi resistitis hunc suum confirmatorem respuentes. Si boni estis cur prophetas perimitis?

> [... who (i. e. the Jews), saying yourselves to believe in nothing except the book already given to you, you oppose your (own) religion, rejecting this confirmation of it. If you are good, why do you kill the prophets?][14]

Stylistically, this is much better Latin, but the price for this more Ciceronian prose has been the elimination of those very dialogic devices that Mark of Toledo so carefully preserved. Though Robert has conveyed the meaning of the passage as accurately as Mark, his reader will never feel the sense of confrontational urgency that the command "Say" (*Qul, Dic*) embodies in both the Arabic original and Mark's literal translation.

Yet we cannot write off Robert's *Lex Mahumet* as an inadequate paraphrase. We cannot do this because it turns out that this energetic recasting of the Qur'ān is frequently influenced in vivid ways by the traditional Muslim commentaries on that sacred book. Consider, for example, his translation of the first part of verse 2:282. At the beginning of this very lengthy discussion of how to draw up purchase and loan contracts, the Qur'ān reads as follows:

> Yā ayyuhā alladhīn āmunu, idhā tadāyantum bi-dayn ilā ajl musamman fauktubūhu wal-yaktub baynakum kātib biʾl-ʿadl.

> [O you who believe, when you borrow money from each other for a fixed term, do it in writing, and let a scribe write (a contract) between you with impartiality.]

Robert reworks this thoroughly:

> Emptionibus ad terminum factis adsit scriba fidelis et deum timens qui nichil addat seu minuat nec quid falsitatis ammisceat.

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[12]And Mark does this elsewhere. See my *"Tafsīr* and Translation," 709, n. 27.

[13]For a systematic discussion of his translation method, see d'Alverny and Vaida, "Marc de Toléde, traducteur," *al-Andalus 16* (1951), 132-40.

[14]Robert of Ketton, *Lex Mahumet* 1 [2]; Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, 1162, fol. 27vb.

[Let a faithful and God-fearing scribe, who neither adds anything (to the contract) nor subtracts anything (from it), and who does not mix in anything false, be present at purchases arranged with a term.][15]

As in the example of verse 2:91, Robert has here abbreviated substantially and adopted a rather different construction than the Arabic original had. But he has made at least two changes that seem to go beyond mere paraphrasing and abridging. Why speak of "purchases" *(emptiones)* rather than borrowing money as in the Arabic? And why specify that the scribe should neither add anything nor subtract anything from the contract, nor mix any falsity into it, when the Arabic had simply called on the notary to do his job "with impartiality" (bi-al-ʿadl)? In their specificity and elaboration, these changes bespeak something more than recasting and reshaping.

But this is because they are actually adjustments made to the text in order to make it conform to the traditional Muslim interpretation of this verse. For if we turn to representative, classical Muslim commentaries on the Qurʾān we find that they point out that when the Qurʾān says "when you borrow money from each other" it means, as the foundational interpreter al-Ṭabarī (838/39-923) put it, "when you *sell to each other* by means of a loan, or *buy* by means of a it, or give to each other by means of it, or take by means of it on a fixed term."[16] In light of this standard interpretation, Robert's "purchases arranged with a term" makes eminent sense as a translation for the first part of this verse. Similarly, the commentaries explain that when the Qurʾān insists that the scribe write "with impartiality" it means in particular that, as the twelfth-century commentator al-Ṭabarsī put it, the scribe must write "with justice and equity and truth, not *adding to [the contract], and not subtracting* from it in quality or extent, *not substituting* and not writing

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[15]Robert of Ketton, *Lex Mahumet* 4, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, 1162, fol. 33vb. The emphasis is mine.

[16] "*Idhā tadāyantum* yaʿnī idhā tabāyaʿtum bi-dayn aw ishtaritum bi-hi aw taʿāṭaytum bi-hi aw akhadhtum bi-hi ilā ajl musamman" (Abū al-Jaʿfar Muḥammad ibn Jarīr alṬabarī *Jāmiʿal-bayān ʿan taʾwīl āy al-Qurʾān* on 2:282, ed. Muḥammad Maḥmūd al-Halabī, 30 vols. in 12, third printing (Cairo 1388/1968), 3:116. Hereafter this work will be cited as "al-Ṭabarī." For similar comments made by a twelfth-century commentator, see Abū ʿAli al-Faḍ l ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ṭabarsī, *Majmaʿal-bayān fītafsīr al-Qurʾān*, on 2:282 no ed. listed, 5 vols. Qum, Iran, 1403 A. H., 1:397. Hereafter this work will be cited as "al-Ṭabarsī." For a very learned and readable introduction to the abundant tradition of *Qurʾānic* commentary, see Jane Dammen McAuliffe, *Qurʾānic Christians: An Analysis of Classical and Modern Exegesis* (Cambridge, 1991), 13-89. On these two commentators in particular see Ibid., 38-45, and Mahmoud Ayoub, *The Qurʾān and its Interpreters*, vol. 1 (Albany, NY, 1984), 3-4, 6-7.

anything damaging to one of the two without his knowledge."[17] Robert's amplification of the second half of this passage —"that the scribe should be one who neither adds anything ... nor subtracts anything ... and who does not mix in anything false"— is clearly based on this traditional interpretation of what writing "with impartiality" means in 2:282.

Mark of Toledo's translation of this passage departs slightly from the Arabic construction, but is still an essentially literal version that, in contrast to Robert's, includes no explanatory additions:

> O uos qui creditis, si debueritis cuiquam soluere debitum ad diem prefixum, scribatis inter uos antapocam fideliter.
>
> [O you who believe, if you are obliged to someone to pay back a debt on a fixed day may you honestly write between yourselves a contract.][18]

This certainly conveys the basic meaning of the first part of 2:282, but it lacks the informing specificity of Robert's commentary-influenced paraphrase.

And this sort of explanatory adjustment and interpolation based on the traditional Arabic exegesis of the Qurʾān shows up throughout Robert's translation. Repeatedly his paraphrase contains words, turns of phrase, and explanatory amplifications that are based on one or more of the classical Arabic *tafsīrs*, so that Robert's version is in many ways a translation of the Qurʾ ān as Muslims themselves read and understood it.[19]

Mark of Toledo and Robert of Ketten, therefore, each went to impressive though different lengths to provide their Latin-European readers with accurate versions of the Qurʾān. Both translators certainly made sloppy mistakes from time to time, but in general their approaches produced fairly admirable results. And European intellectuals certainly read their Latin Qurʾāns. Robert's elegant Latin translation was widely consulted throughout Europe over the course of six or seven

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[17] *"wal-yaktub baynakum* kātib *bi'l-ʿadl* yaʿnī wal-yaktub kitāb al-mudāyanah aw al-bayʿ ... kātib bi'l-qisṭ wa-'l-inṣāf wa 'l-ḥaqq lā yazīdu fī-hi wa-lā yanquṣu min-hu fī ṣifah wa-lā miqdār, wa-lā yastabdilu wa-lā yaktubu shayʾan yuḍirru bi-aḥadihuma illā bi-ʿilmihi" (al-Ṭabarsī on 2:282; 1:397. Similar comments are made by al-Ṭabarī on 2:282; 3:119; and also by the fourteenth-century commentator ʿImad al-Dīn Ismāʿīl ibn ʿUmar ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿaẓīm* on 2:28, no ed.listed, 2nd printing [Beirut, 1410/1990], 1:316. Hereafter this work will be cited as "Ibn Kathīr". On this commentator see McAuliffe, *Qurʾānic Christians*, 71-76).

[18] Mark of Toledo, *Liber alchorani* 2, BN Univ. F. V. 35. , fol. 6vb.

[19] I make this case in much greater detail in my "*Tafsīr* and Translation," passim.

centuries, and survives to this day in twenty-five manuscripts and two sixteenth-century printed editions: it was something of a best-seller.[20]

Mark's literal version enjoyed much less success —it survives in six manuscripts— but we know of it being copied and studied as late as the seventeenth century.[21] Given the care with which each translator approached his work, it is clear that their numerous medieval and early-modern readers were well-served in many ways.

But not in every way. For, ironically enough, the very methods that Robert of Ketton and Mark of Toledo adopted in order to insure that their Qur'āns were accurate tended in important ways to distort the Qur'ān either by cutting Latin readers off from the traditional interpretation of it, or by collapsing the text and the traditional interpretation into one undifferentiated whole.

Mark of Toledo's literal translation periodically gives the reader an accurate translation of the text without making clear how it was understood. This should be apparent already in his translation of verse 2:282 quoted just above, for his version lacks much of the specificity of Robert's translation, thoroughly influenced, as it is, by the commentaries. The same thing happens some forty verses earlier at 2:238-39a where the Arabic text reads:

> (238) Hā fiẓū ʿalà alsalawā t wa 'l-ṣalā al-wusṭā wa-qūmū li-Lāh qā nitīn, (239a) fa-in khiftum fa-rijā lan aw rukbānan.
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> [(238) Be attentive in your prayers, and (especially) the middle prayer, and stand up obediently before God, (239a) but if you are fearful, then (do so) walking or riding.]

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[20]See N. Daniel, *Islam and the West*, rev. ed., 279-80. On the manuscripts and printed editions see d'Alverny, "Deux traductions," 108-13, and Idem, "Quelque manuscrits," passim. Theodore Bibliander's two printed editions of Robert's Qur'ān together with the rest of Peter's collection as well as other works relating to Islam appeared in Basel in 1543 and 1550 under the title of *Machumetis saracenorum principis eiusque successorum vitae ac doctrine, ipseque Alcoran*. On the printed editions see Kritzeck, *Peter the Venerable*, vii-ix, and V. Segesvary, *L'Islam et la réforme: Étude sur l'attitude des réformateurs zurichois envers l'Islam (1510-1550)* (Geneva, 1978), 161-99. As d'Alverny demonstrated, Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, ms. 1162 is not only the earliest manuscript, it is almost certainly the original exemplar of the collection (see her "Deux traductions," 96-98). For this reason I will cite this manuscript in the remainder of this article.

[21]One manuscript, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, lat. 3394, was copied in the sixteenth century, but contains an impressive collection of marginal and interlinear notes from the seventeenth century (see *Bibliothèque Nationale. Catalogue général des manuscrits latins*, vol. 4 [Paris, 1966], 339-41, and T. Burman, *Religious Polemic and the Intellectual History of the Mozarabs, c. 1050-1200*, [Leiden, 1994], 220-23). For more on the manuscripts of Mark's translation see d'Alverny, "Deux traductions," 113-14, 120; and Idem, "Marc de Tolède," 49-59.

Mark's version of these verses is as compact as the Arabic:

> (238) Observate orationes et mediam orationem, et surgite Deo confitentes; (239) si timueritis, pedestres aut equitantes.

> [(238) Observe the prayers, and (especially) the middle prayer, and rise up professing God; (239) if you have been fearful, (do so) walking or riding.][22]

Both the Arabic original and this literal Latin version tell us nothing about why someone who is fearful should pray while walking or riding. The commentaries, however, clarify this. Al-Ṭabarī, for example, tells us in an explanatory paraphrase that this means that if you are afraid on account of your enemies, "then pray walking as an infantrymen on your feet, when you are in the midst of your war and your combat and the *jihād* of your enemies, or (pray) while riding on the backs of your beasts."[23] Mark of Toledo's translation is correct in a literal sense, but it does not, therefore, make clear to its readers the specific circumstances in which Muslims believed this provision came into play. Robert of Ketton's commentary-inspired paraphrase, on the other hand, accomplishes this quite neatly. One must take great care to pray, he tells us,

> nisi timoris locus impediat, quo contingente pedes pede miles equo fundat orationes.

> [unless the state of fear should impede, in the occurrence of which let the infantryman pour out the prayers on foot, the knight on horseback.][24]

In these two examples Mark of Toledo's translation is deficient in not getting across the specific meanings that Muslims believed these somewhat vague Qurʾānic passages had. Much more serious are the passages of his translation where, in failing to take into account the traditional interpretation, his literalism produces a translation that conveys a meaning that is actually different from the one Muslims recognised. His translation of the beginning of Sura 111, one of the very short suras at the end of the Qurʾān, is a good example. "Dampnificate sunt manus flammei," reads his version: "The hands of the flaming one are in-

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[22]Mark of Toledo, *Liber alchorani* 2, BN Univ. , F. V. 35, fol. 5vb.

[23]"Fa-ṣallū rijāln mushātan ʿalā arjulikum wa-antum fī ḥarbikum wa-qitālikum wa-jihād ʿadūwikum aw rukbānan ʿalā ẓuhūr dawābbikum" (al-Ṭabarī on 2:239; 2:572; see also Ibn Kathīr on 2:239; 1:279).

[24]Robert of Ketton, *Lex Mahumet* 3, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, 1162, fol. 32ra.

jured."[25] This is a (barely) allowable translation of the Arabic on strict grammatical and lexical grounds. The corresponding Arabic passage reads, "Tabbāt yadā abī lahab." The subject is *yadān*, "the two hands," which Mark has got right; these hands belong to someone or something called *abu ūlahab* which literally means "the father of flame," and in the Arabic idiom, such an expression could mean something like Mark's "the flaming one" *(flammeus)*.[26] The verb, however, is *tabbat*, which means "to perish" or "to be destroyed", not "to be injured" as Mark has it *(dampnificate sunt)*. But the real problem with this translation is that *Abū Lahab*, "the father of flame," is really a proper name here and not merely a descriptive term as Mark's translation would lead us to believe. The medieval Arabic Qurʾānic commentaries normally explain quite early on in their interpretations of this passage that Abū Lahab was a specific person, otherwise known as ʿAbd al-ʿUzzā, who was called Father of Flame on account of the radiance *(ishrāq)* of his face. He was, the commentaries go on to explain, full of hatred for the prophet, and thus was to perish.[27]

Robert of Ketton, on the other hand, makes clear that he knows that the phrase "Abū Lahab" *is* really a name, for he transliterates it, something he does only very rarely:

> Nichil unquam sua pecunia siue locrum profuit *Avileahab* quin sua manus perdita sit.
>
> [His wealth or gain nothing ever benefited *Avileahab* to the end that his hand would not be destroyed.][28]

Robert's readers, therefore, will know that these verses concern a specific person, where Mark's will not.

Another example of how Mark's literalism can result in misleading translation is found in his version of verses 2:229-30. This passage is part of one of the principle discussions of divorce in the Qur'ān, a topic of considerable complexity and with plenty of room for confusion. Mark's version follows the Arabic closely:

> (229) Repudiare bis licet et retinere; honeste autem licentiare benefaciendo; neque licet uobis ut de his que illis contulistis aliquid dematis…(230) Quod si repudiaverit [eam] non est ei licita postmodum donec cum alio contrahat uiro. Quod si repudiaverit eam non inhibetur eis ut

[25]Mark of Toledo, *Liber alchorani* 111, BN Univ., F. V. 35, fol. 84ra.

[26]See W. Wright, *A Grammar of the Arabic Language*, 3rd ed., 2 vols. (pt. 1974, 1981) 2:202-04.

[27]See, e. g., al-Ṭabarsī on 111:1, 5:559; and Ibn Kathīr on 111:1, 4:568.

[28]Robert of Ketton, *Lex Mahumet* 120, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, 1162, fol. 138ra.

matrimonimium reforment, si credunt se observaturos terminos dei et hos terminos dei demonstrabunt populo scienti. [(229) It is allowable to retain (one's wife) upon divorcing (her) twice; and it is honourable to allow her to leave with a blessing; it is not allowable that you take from them anything that you gave to them ...(230) But if he has divorced her she is not allowable for him henceforward until she contracts (a marriage) with another man. But if he (i. e. the second man) has divorced her there is nothing keeping them from re-establishing the marriage, if they believe that they will be observing of the boundaries of God, and they will demonstrate these boundaries of God to knowing people.][29]

For the most part this is quite accurate, though Mark has got the last phrase wrong. The verb here is in the singular in the Arabic (*yubayyinuhā*) and God is the subject, so we should have "and [God] demonstrates these boundaries to a people who know." But otherwise there is nothing that can legitimately be objected to — nothing, that is, until we read the passage more closely. For the verses as they stand here do seem to embody something of a contradiction. We are told in 2:229 that it is allowable for the husband to retain his divorced wife after having divorced her twice, but are then informed in 2:230 that this is *not*, as a matter of fact, allowable except on condition that she first marry another man and then be divorced from him. It seems strange that Qurʾān should speak with such imprecision in connection with a relatively important point of law.

As it turns out, the Qurʾān actually is somewhat unclear here, for the Arabic of 2:230 reads exactly as Mark's Latin version does ("Fa-in ṭallaqahā fa-lā taḥillu la-hu min baʿdu ḥattā tankiḥa zawjan ghayri-hu..."). But this confusion was universally addressed by the commentators who generally explain that when the Qurʾān says at the beginning of 2:230, "If he divorces her," it is referring, as al-Tabarsī put it, to "the third pronouncement of divorce" or "the third repudiation" (yaʿnī al-taṭlīqa al-thālitha).[30] For, in Islamic law, it is only when the husband has publicly divorced his wife on three separate occasions that he is unable to remarry her, until she has married another husband and been divorced from him. After the first and second times that a husband has pronounced his wife divorced, he has the right in Islamic law to take her back at any time during the requisite waiting period of three menstrual cycles before the end of which the divorce is not final. This limit on the number of times that a husband could divorce his wife and

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[29]Mark of Toledo, *Liber alchorani* 2, BN Univ., F. 35. V, fol. 5rb-va.
[30]Al-Tabarsī on 2:230; 1:330; see also Ibn Kathīr on 2:230; 1:262.

then take her back was intended, apparently, to keep husbands from us-
ing repeated divorce pronouncements and reconciliations as a way of
extorting from their wives the bride-price the wives had originally
paid or some other financial pe-nalty.³¹ Mark's carefully literal
translation of the Qur'ān's Arabic, therefore, fails to translate the
verse's accepted meaning. The Latin reader consulting his Qur'ān
encounters the text of these verses in isolation from their normal Mus-
lim interpretation and thereby remains ignorant of an important aspect
of Islamic law.

While Mark's literal translation sometimes obscures the Qur'ān's
meaning, Robert of Ketton's typically clarifies it, relying on the very
commentaries that Mark ignores. Here is the same passage in Robert's
version:

> (228b) Maritis, etiam si placuerit ipsi namque presunt mulieribus, (229a)
> secundo derelicte nubant potius quam ceteris, (230) tertio uero sprete
> nequaquam usquequo maritis aliis nupserint et ab illis relicte fuerint. Tunc
> autem ipse uolentes prioribus maritis ante bene reconcilientur, (229b) aut
> nullis coacte uiribus honeste dimittantur. Aliquid primo datum illis auferre
> nefas est et inhonestum.

> [(228b-229a) Let women who have been forsaken for a second time marry
> [their original] husbands, if it pleases [the husbands] —for they remain in
> charge of the women— rather than others; (230) but those who have been
> abandoned for a third time by no means [may do this] until they have mar-
> ried other husbands and have been abandoned by them. Then women who
> desire this may be reconciled thoroughly with their prior husbands as be-
> fore, (229b) or let them be sent away honourably, compelled by no men. It is
> unlawful and dishonourable to take from them anything given at the begin-
> ning.³²

This is a wide-ranging paraphrase: Robert has linked 2:228 and 2:229
grammatically and incorporated 2:230 into the middle of 2:229, because
of the similar subject matter of the first parts of both verses; and he has
also made divorced women in the plural the subject of all but the last
sentence, while in the Arabic this is all examined from the point of
view of the man. But in the middle of these fairly radical formal
changes Robert took the time to clarify these verses just as the Arab-
Muslim commentators do: it is "women who have been abandoned for *a*

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³¹On all this see J. Schacht, "Ṭalāk," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 1ˢᵗ ed., (Leiden: 1934) 4:636-40;
   Idem, An *Introduction to Islamic Law* (Oxford, 1964), 163-64; and Muhammad Abu Zahra,
   "Family Law," in *Law in the Middle East*, eds. M. Khadduri and H. Liebesny (Washington,
   1955), 132-78 and 146-51.

³²Robert of Ketton, *Lex Mahumet* 3, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, 1162, fol. 31va-vb.

third time" who are unable to marry their original husbands until they have been married and divorced from another husband. We no longer have the confusion about who can and cannot marry their divorced wives that Mark's literal translation gave us.

Mark of Toledo's Latin Qurʾān, therefore, is a Qurʾān that has been severed to a considerable degree from the living interpretative tradition in which it normally resides. What he offers is a Qur'ān without its readers, a Qurʾān without the accumulated reflection of the House of Islam upon it. Though much of the time this presents no real problem for his readers, at certain critical points it leads him to translate the Qurʾān in a way that conveys a meaning that no Muslim would have believed it had.

Since to a surprising degree Robert of Ketton translated the Qurʾān from within the Muslim interpretative tradition, his Latin version is much better about getting across the accepted meaning of the text; but it is not without problems of its own. Chief among these is that the text itself and the interpretative tradition have been conflated —scripture and exegesis have been collapsed into each other— so that the Latin reader cannot distinguish the one from the other. As the foregoing examples indicate, Robert does not clarify the Qurʾānic text by, say, adding glosses or a marginal commentary. Rather, he does so by actually inserting interpretative matter from the *tafsīr* tradition right into the Latin text itself.

Now Robert is hardly alone in doing this. Later translators since at least the time of Ludovico Marracci have likewise clarified the Qurʾānic text by incorporating interpretative material directly into the text, and in this their versions are rather similar to Robert's.[33] George Sale's version of the same passage reads "But if *the husband* divorce her *a third time,* she shall not be lawful for him again, until she marry another husband,"[34] while Marmaduke Pickthall gives us "And if he hath divorced her (the third time), then she is not lawful unto him

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[33]Marracci fills out his translation with an enormous number of explanatory interpolations in the text itself (these are always in italics and often placed in parentheses as well) and in the notes; and much of this material came directly from Qurʾānic commentaries which he carefully identifies. He did this, he says, in the places where "modi quidem loquendi, qui Arabibus proprii sunt, & praesertim qui Metaphoram continent, occurrurrent." In these cases "eos verbis quidem propriis expressi, in Notis tamen vel in ipso Textu Alcorani diverso charactere explicare necessarium putavi." See his *Refutatio alcorani* (Padua 1698), vol. 2, 13.

[34]George Sale, *The Koran,* 6th ed. (Philadelphia, 1874), 27.

thereafter until she hath wedded another husband."[35] Sheik Si Boubakeur Ḥamza does much the same thing in his French version of 1972: "Si l'époux répudie [une troisième fois] sa femme, celle-ci n'est plus licite pour lui…"[36] In a very real way then, Robert has anticipated modern translators in his inclusion of interpretative material from the Qurʾānic commentaries.

But there is one crucial difference between his approach and that of such modern translators. In one way or another Robert's successors carefully distinguish the interpolations based on the exegetical tradition from the Qurʾānic text itself. Marracci and Sale place such interpolations in italics; Pickthall and Ḥamza surround them with parentheses or brackets. Robert does nothing of the kind. In the earliest, and apparently original, manuscript of his translation there is nothing —no underlining, no different-coloured ink, no punctuation— that distinguishes commentary from original text. And this is true of all the other manuscripts and the printed editions of his Latin Qurʾān as well. The reader of his version is getting a Qur'ān that is not divorced from the traditional interpretative tradition, but he has no notion of this: text and interpretative tradition have been merged into one.

As we might expect therefore, readers of Robert's version were unable to separate out the original Qurʾānic text from the interpretative additions. They treated both as sacred text. That this is so can be seen, for example, in a table of contents preserved in a sixteenth-century manuscript containing Robert's*Lex Mahumet* (Dresden, Sächsische Landesbibliothek, 120b).[37] This lengthy (thirty-six folios) list of the contents of Robert's Latin Qurʾān frequently quotes directly from the Latin text, and in many cases it reproduces passages that are substantially influenced by Arabic commentaries. We are told, for example, that near the end of the Qurʾān, there is a discussion of how a "Fountain in Paradise was prepared for Muhammad" ("Maumeti fons in paradiso iam paratus erat"). [38] This is a paraphrase of Robert of Ketton's translation of the first verse of Sura 108: "Tibi iam fontem in paradiso preparauimus."[39] Now what Robert has translated as "fountain in paradise"

[35](Muhammad) Marmaduke Pickthall, *The Meaning of the Gloriou Koran*, Everyman's Library #105, (New York, Toronto, 1909, 1992), 54.

[36]Si Boubakeur Ḥamza, *Le Coran: traduction française et commentaire*, 2 vols., (Paris, 1972), 1:80.

[37]On this manuscript see F. Schnorr van Carolsfeld, *Catalog der Handschriften der Königl. Öffentlichen Bibliothek zu Dresden*, vol. 1, (Leipzig, 1882), 55-56.

[38]Anonymous, *Tabula*, Dresden, Sächsische Landesbibliothek, 120b, fol. 72v.

[39]Robert of Ketton, *Lex Mahumet* 117, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, 1162, fol. 138ra.

(fons in paradiso), however, is in Arabic *al-Kawthar*, a rare and vague word literally meaning something like "abundance", and the subject of a great deal of discussion in the commentaries. The commentators, in fact, had a number of varied opinions regarding what exactly it meant, but the most common view was that it meant "a river in paradise" *(nahr fī al-janna)*, as al-Ṭabarsī put it.[40] Robert's version, therefore, is substantially influenced by this commentary tradition, but the anonymous compiler of this exhaustive *Tabula* cannot tell Qur'ānic text from what is derived from traditional interpretation: he treats the whole as sacred text.

That Robert thoroughly conflated text and commentary should not cause us to ignore the great pains he took to make his paraphrase accurate and intelligible by filling it out with glosses, explanations, and interpretations drawn from the Arabic commentaries. In fact, his willingness and ability to do this stand as a massive refutation of the widespread contemporary view that pre-modern Europeans were simply not capable of learning from Muslims themselves about what the Qur'ān means. Edward Said has asserted, for example, that Europeans did not begin "to let Muslim commentators on the sacred text speak for themselves" until the eighteenth century.[41] Robert could indeed let Muslim commentators "speak for themselves" about the meaning of the Qur'ān; and he did so in the twelfth century.[42] But because he made no distinction in his text between Qur'ān and interpretation, he made it impossible for his readers to see that he had done so.

Mark's *Liber alchorani*, therefore, is a Latin Qur'ān largely extracted from its traditional interpretative framework; Robert's *Lex Mahumet* conflates the two into one. For centuries, therefore, the only available Western versions of the Qur'ān either excluded or concealed the voices of Muslim interpreters. Though there is still far too much research to be done before it is possible to speak definitively about the long-term significance of all this, some tentative observations seem ap-

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[40]See al-Ṭabarsī on 108:1; 5:549; cf. al-Ṭabarī on 108:1; 30:320-23.

[41]Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York, 1978), 117. See also Daniel, *Islam and the West*, 121, 127, 275.

[42]nd there are other examples of medieval and early-modern Latin Christians doing likewise. Mark of Toledo himself clearly drew on the Arabic exegetical tradition occasionally (see my *"Tafsir* and Translation"). Moreover an anonymous late-medieval or early-modern translator of the Qur'ān (into Latin as well) drew heavily on the Arabic commentaries in the explanatory glosses he added to his translation. This remarkable work is found in a single manuscript, Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, Mm. v. 26, on which see *A Catalogue of the Manuscripts Preserved in the Library of the University of Cambridge*, vol. 4, (Cambridge, 1861), 335.

propriate. For the interpretative traditions that gradually build up around sacred texts are more than just the academic views of an isolated coterie of scholars. Rather in some real sense they embody and represent the extended reflection of the believing community as a whole on its holy book. If the sacred text is the origin and foundation of the community's faith, then the commentaries on it provide both believers and unbelievers with an account of that community's reflection on its holy book. The original text may well be the principle inspiration of the community of believers; but it is in the commentary tradition itself that we most clearly see the inspired community actively working through the text it reveres.

This is certainly true in the case of Arabic commentaries on the Qur³ān. To read, for example, al-Tabarī's massive tafsīr is to encounter real Muslims on nearly every page. We are reminded over and over of the names and opinions of earlier authorities —Qatāda, ʿAbd Allāh Ibn ʿAbbās, Sufyān al-Thawrī, Mujāhid— who struggled to come to a deeper understanding of their Book. And every time al-Ṭabarī points out that the interpreters disagree about the meaning" ("wa-ikhtalafa ahl al-taʾ wīl fī maʿnan") of some term or usage —and there is probably no phrase used more frequently in his commentary— we remember that the early authorities had varying views, and that these views must be carefully considered before the correct one can be identified. Then, after examining these opinions and the traditions that are adduced as evidence, we are allowed to see al-Ṭabarī do just this — decide which interpretation or interpretations conform best with the Qur³ānic text and the Traditions of the Prophet. To read this commentary, then, is to witness generations of Muslims thinking about the Qur³ān. Here, therefore, one confronts not only the Qur³ān, but the community who venerates it: The House of Islam itself.

To cut off the Qur³ān from the *tafsīr* tradition as Mark does, therefore, or to conceal that tradition as Robert does, has the effect of keeping Islam at a distance even as its Book itself is brought near and made available. The Qur³ān is visible, but Islam as a living, believing, interpreting entity is obscured. That this is so must certainly, though subtly, have influenced the ways in which their readers thought about Islam and its sacred text, and there is much work for scholars to do in trying to delineate these influences.

For now it will suffice, perhaps, to suggest one way in which all this should compel us to rethink the history of the study of the Qur³ān in Western Europe. It is notable that later translators, such as Marracci and Sale, did in fact supply their readers with the Qur³ān and allow them to confront Islam at the same time. They amplify the texts of

their translations with explanations and interpretations drawn from Muslim com-mentaries, and they also provide further copious notes based on these same commentaries, making clear all the while which Muslim authorities they are drawing on.[43] This suggests that the real difference between the medieval translators, Robert and Mark, and their seventeenth and eighteenth-century successors is not so much that these later translators were, as modern thinkers, somehow more inclined to disinterested Qurʾān study —for we have seen that Robert and Mark are both quite concerned to convey accurately the meaning of the Qurʾān — but rather that they are much more willing to provide their readers with both a sound version of the Qurʾān and the record of living Muslims thinking about it and interpreting it. Modern scholars attempting to understand the evolution of European attitudes toward the Qurʾān and Islam, therefore, would perhaps do well to focus their energies not on explaining why early-modern scholars were more objective than medieval thinkers in their approach to the Qurʾān —for they were not— but rather on understanding why these seventeenth and eighteenth-century Qurʾān translators were willing to let their readers encounter the Muslim voices that traditionally explain the Qur'ān, while their predecessors were not.

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[43]See G. Sale, *The Korān*, passim; and Ludovico Marracci, *Refutatio alcorani*, vol. 2, passim.