

this special kind of assistance for so long. Much more will be heard of this new spirit of realism in the days to come.

The Origin and Nature of the Chief Printed Arabic Bibles

John A. Thompson

Part II

II. The Propaganda Version

Title: *Biblia Sacra Arabica sacrae congregationis de propaganda fide iussu edita ad usum ecclesiarum orientalium: additis e regione Bibliis Latinis Vulgatis*. 3 vols. Rome: Typis eiusdem Sacrae Congregat. de Propaganda Fide, 1671.

A. Origin of the Propaganda Version

Several influences led to the publishing of a new Arabic Bible by the Roman Catholic Congregation de Propaganda Fide in Rome. Certainly one influence was the final union of the Arabic-speaking Maronites with the Roman Church in the 16th century, and the establishment of a Maronite College in Rome strengthened this relationship. A new Arabic Bible was needed to replace the variety of translations used by the Maronites with a uniform and complete version conforming to the Latin Vulgate. This contact with the Maronites showed the need for missionary propaganda in the Near East, in which a printed Bible would be a great aid. Gregory XIII (Pope 1572-1585) urged the project and the procuring of Arabic Biblical manuscripts in preparation for such an edition. The proposal in 1622 in the Congregation to carry out the editing of an Arabic Bible was in part stimulated by the publication of the Dutch Protestant scholar, Thomas Erpenius, of an Arabic New Testament in 1616 and an Arabic Pentateuch in 1622.

In 1622 the Papal Nuncio appointed four men to take up preparations for an Arabic Bible. The chairman of the committee was Sergius Risius (*Sarkis ibn Mūsā al-Ruzzī*), Maronite Archbishop of Damascus. Risius came of a leading church family in Syria and had studied in Rome. He was in charge of the work till his death in 1638. With his own hand he copied most of one of the MS. used for this Bible, Casantense arab. carsh. 2 (no. 2108). Another Maronite member was Victorinus Scialac Accurensis (*Nasrallah Shalaq al-Aqūrī*), who taught Arabic and Syriac in Rome and helped to bring out an Arabic Psalter in Rome in 1614. He died in 1635. Father Hilarion Rancati, a Cistercian, was later Abbot General of that order. The Franciscan, Thomas Obicini de Novara, had been a missionary in Syria and the Custodian of the Holy Land. It was he who submitted the plan for the Bible to the Congregatio in 1622.

Others who worked on the project included Filippo Guadagnoli, who had chief responsibility after the death of Risius in 1638 until his own death in 1656. In 1630 Father Thomas was succeeded by his student, Father Dominicus Germanus de Silesia. Abraham Ecchellensis (*Ibrāhim al-Hāqilānī*) assisted at various times till his death in 1664. As indicated above, he also had a part in editing the Arabic Bible in the Paris Polyglot. Another Maronite who aided in the Propaganda Version was Johannes Leopardus Esronite (*Yūhannā Nimrūnī al-Hasrūnī*) who died in 1632. A Capuchin, Father Brice, worked as a corrector. Louis Maracci also aided in the final editing. His most famous work is an analysis of the Koran.

The policy followed in this translation varied considerably, partly because of the death of many of the editors during the fifty years, 1622-1671. The commission to the original committee in 1622 was to "revise Arabic codices, purging them from errors, especially if they recognized heresy, so that afterwards their printing might be considered". In 1624 the Congregatio decided it was better to translate the Vulgate anew into Arabic, keeping the old translations which agreed with the Vulgate. In 1628 the principle was adopted of following the Vulgate as far as Arabic idiom permitted, and to use the Hebrew when the Latin idiom did not suit the Arabic. In 1643 a further revision in principle was adopted: to follow the Vulgate closely from the end of Ezekiel onwards.

The deaths of collaborators and changes in policies delayed the completion of the work. In 1632 Risius began the printing of Genesis, and the Pentateuch was completed in 1635. The Old Testament was finished in 1647 and the New in 1649. But the product was unsatisfactory, for there were many errors, and some felt that the translation did not follow the Vulgate closely enough. Therefore this early form was withdrawn and the revised work appeared in 1671.²²

B. Nature of the Propaganda Version

1. Format.

This Bible was published in three folio volumes. The books follow the Vulgate order. The contents of the volumes are as follows: I Preface, Corrigenda, Pentateuch, Joshua - II Chronicles; II Corrigenda, Ezra - II Maccabees; III Corrigenda, New Testament, Citations of the Old Testament in the New Testament, Interpretation of Heb., Chald., and Greek proper names in the Bible, Alphabetical Index to the contents of the Bible. The Arabic text is printed without vowels in the outer column of each page. The Latin parallel inner column is not a translation of the Arabic, but simply the Vulgate.

2. Texts Followed.

As shown above, as this work progressed there was a tendency to follow the Vulgate more and more closely. In a sample Old Testament chap-

²² A full account of the origin of the Propaganda edition is given by Alberto Vaccari. "Una Bibbia Araba per il primo Gesuita ventuto al Libano in *Melanges de l'Université Saint-Joseph, Beyrouth (Grand Liban)*, Tome X (1925): 79-104. See also Graf, I, p. 96, and also his treatments in Vols. III and IV of the individual collaborators.

ter, Ruth 1 : 1-22, at least twenty-four words and phrases show Vulgate influence. In a New Testament chapter, Ephesians 1 : 1-23, the Vulgate basis appears clearly in ten words and phrases. I John 5 : 7 and 8 have the doctrinal additions rarely found outside the Vulgate.

In accordance with the first policy, some Arabic manuscripts were used in the Propaganda Version. The most important of these for the Old Testament was Vat. arab. 468, which contains all the Old Testament except for Baruch, for which a space was saved. This MS. was copied in Tripoli, Syria, under the direction of Father Giovanni Battista Eliano, the first Jesuit sent by the Pope to Lebanon. One of his purposes was to secure manuscripts for the proposed Arabic Bible. According to the colophon, at least II Maccabees in this MS. was copied from a MS. written in Damascus in 1238, which in turn was copied from a MS. written in Antioch in 1021.²³ Vaccari, who in the work mentioned above gives the fullest treatment of Codex Vat. Arab. 468, thought in the Pentateuch of this MS. the LXX was basic with some Peshitta influence, but Graf points out that more names follow the Syriac than the Greek and that therefore the Peshitta is probably primary. The historical books, Joshua - Nehemiah in this MS. are certainly from the Syriac Peshitta. In Ruth 1 : 1-22, for example, about five words and phrases represent Peshitta readings. Tobit is from the Latin Vulgate, Judith from the LXX, and Esther and Job again from the Peshitta. Psalms in this MS. is the version by *Abū al-Fath' Abdallah ibn al-Fadl ibn ' Abdallah al-Mutrān al-Antāki*.²⁴ This scholar lived in the 11th century, originated from Antioch and held the office of deacon. He claims in an introduction to have made his translation from the Greek, but he probably used previous Arabic translations of the Psalms as well. Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song, Wisdom, and Ecclesiasticus are from the LXX. Most of the prophets are a paraphrastic translation of the Peshitta with some Septuagintal influence. According to Löfgren,²⁵ Daniel may be from the Greek with revision from the Peshitta. II Maccabees is from the Greek.

Another MS. used for the Old Testament of the Propaganda Version is Casanatense arab. carsh. 2 (no. 2108).²⁶ Most of this MS. was copied by Sergius Risius, the first chief editor of the Propaganda edition. This MS. in the Pentateuch is copied from Vat. Arab. 606 (1344 A.D.), which is based on the Peshitta, but revised from the LXX, perhaps in the Coptic version. The historical books are from Vat. Arab. 449 (1336 A.D.) which is from the LXX. The Psalms (not all in Risius's handwriting) were copied from Vat. Syr. 454 (1529 A.D.). According to Baumstark and Graf, this latter MS. was based on the Greek-Arabic tradition, but revised by the Peshitta.

Vaccari²⁷ illustrates the end result of such diverse origins in the final Propaganda text of Genesis 41 : 43. "And he mounted him on his second

²³ See Graf, I, pp. 89-92, on the controversy whether this colophon refers only to II Maccabees or to the whole Old Testament and on the relationship between Vat. arab. 468 and the similar Leningrad, As. Mus. or. D 226.

²⁴ Graf, II, pp. 52-64.

²⁵ *Op. cit.* p. 52.

²⁶ See A. Vaccari, "Un codice carsciunice della Casanatense e la Bibbia araba del 1671", in *Biblica* IV (1923): 96-107.

²⁷ *Op. cit.* p. 107.

chariot" is from Vat. arab. 468, from the LXX. "And the crier before him" is from Casan. arab. carsh 2 (no. 2108), from Vat. arab. 606, from the LXX. "That thou art lord and ruler" is from Vat. arab. 468, from the Peshitta; or from Casan. 2108, from Vat. arab. 606, from the Peshitta. "And they knew that he was ruler" from the Vulgate. "Over the land of Egypt in its entirety" is common to all these sources in substance, but this wording is that of Vat. arab. 468.

In the New Testament the Propaganda edition follows for the gospels a codex said to have been brought from Cyprus, perhaps to be identified with Borg. syr. 49, of the year 1398. Ignazio Guidi classifies the Propaganda gospels under the heading, "Alexandrine Vulgate of Syrian origin".²⁸ The manuscripts used for Acts and Epistles are not known, but were presumably of Syrian origin. In Ephesians 1 : 1-23 at least four words and phrases indicate Syriac textual origin. Graf found the Apocalypse, or Revelation, to be a translation of the Bohairic Coptic, like that in Erpenius's Arabic New Testament of 1616. Some places in the Propaganda Revelation conform more to the Latin Vulgate.²⁹

C. Evaluation of the Propaganda Version

This translation, with all its imperfections, was used by the Catholics for about two hundred years and was also reprinted by Protestants, before the production of the Smith-Van Dyck Version. The original Catholic edition of 1671 in three large and expensive volumes with the Latin Vulgate was hardly adapted for popular use. Protestant reprints, like those of the British and Foreign Bible Society beginning in 1820, omitted the Apocrypha and the Vulgate and were issued in one volume, suitable in size and price for general distribution.

For several reasons the Propaganda Version was unsatisfactory. Because of its diverse textual origin it satisfied neither the Oriental Christians, whose traditional texts had been changed, nor some of the Occidental Catholics, who wanted even greater conformity to the Vulgate.

Furthermore the translators did not always correctly interpret the texts they were ostensibly following. The Arabic preposition *bi* at the beginning of both Ephesians 1 : 7 and 10 is a mechanical translation of Latin *in* as if the latter governed the dative, but is not a correct rendering of Latin *in* with the accusative, which is the Vulgate text in these two cases.

A fault that became more serious with the renaissance of literary Arabic is that the language of the Propaganda Version does not always conform to classical usage. A few of these linguistic solecisms come from literal translation of Latin or Syriac expressions. For example, in Ruth 1 : 13, *lā turidā*, "do not be willing" (without any object) is a translation of the Latin *nonlite*. The frequent use of *bi*, noteworthy in Ephesians 1, where classical usage requires *fi*, is a Syriacism.³⁰

²⁸ *Le traduzioni degli Evangelii in arabo e in etiopico (Atti della R. Accademia dei Lincei, anno CCLXXXV. 1888. Serie Quarta Classe di scienze morali, storiche e filologiche, Vol. IV, Parte I, Memorie, p. 32.)*

²⁹ Georg Graf, "Arabische Übersetzungen der Apocalypse", in *Biblica X* (1929): 171, 172.

³⁰ G. Graf, *Der Sprachgebrauch der ältesten Christlich-arabischen Literatur*. Leipzig: Otto Harrosowitz, 109, p. 54.

Others of these linguistic features are colloquialisms, which are now offensive in written Arabic. In Ruth 1 : 10, *tasīrā* is the apocopated form of the verb instead of the indicative.³¹ In Ephesians 1 : 17, *yakūna* is not only unnecessary but contrary to strict rules of syntax.

Sometimes the language, though not grammatically wrong, is awkward. The word-order, for example, in Ruth 1 : 1 and Ephesians 1 : 19 is badly disjointed.

These linguistic short-comings made the Propaganda Version offensive to classicists, especially to Muslims. A Syrian Protestant notes that obscurities and infelicities are especially frequent in the prophets and the Pauline epistles.³² The American Protestant missionaries in Syria were almost ashamed to give this Bible to Muslims and regularly revised the grammar and vocabulary before a public reading of Scripture.³³

(To be continued)

Problems in Translating the Scriptures into Shilluk, Anuak and Nuer

Eugene A. Nida

Every translation of the Scriptures encounters its distinctive problems, but often within a related group of languages there are a number of problems which show remarkable parallelism from one language to another. The translational difficulties in Shilluk, Anuak and Nuer, all of which are closely related Nilotic languages in the Sudan, can be readily classified as phonemic, grammatical and semantic.

I. Problems of Phonemic Structure

In most languages it is usually unnecessary to consider the phonemic structure of a language when discussing translation problems. One simply accepts the system of sounds and employs a more or less one-to-one set of correspondences. However, the problems in the Nilotic languages are not so simple as all that, largely because of the extreme complexity of the phonemic structure.

There is quite a little variation in the phonemic structures of the different Nilotic languages, but Nuer, which is one of the more complex, illustrates some of the essential problems. The Nuer language has fourteen basic vowels, seven of which may be described as noncentralized and the others as correspondingly centralized. However, these fourteen vowels are completely separate entities as far as the Nuer speaker is concerned. Each of these fourteen vowels may have any one of three phonemic lengths: extra short, normal, and extra long. There are many words which differ in meaning only on the basis of such phonemic length. But there is still a further consideration in dealing with the vowel structure, namely, the

³¹ Graf, *op. cit.*, pp. 31, 32.

³² Jamil Ḥannā Trānjān, *Al-kitāb al-muqaddas fī al-lughah al-'arabiyyah*. Cairo: Nile Mission Press, 1936, p. 17.

³³ Report of The Syria Mission, 1844, kindly copied by Mr. Clifton Anderson of Beirut.