

Arabica sunt, non leguntur...

The Bible in Arabic: The Evidence of the Manuscripts Leuven, 22–24 April 2015

The conference *The Bible in Arabic: The Evidence of the Manuscripts*, organized by Claire Clivaz (Lausanne), Herman Teule (Nijmegen), Sara Schulthess (Lausanne) and Joseph Verheyden (Leuven), was held at the University of Leuven. It was funded by the Research Foundation Flanders and the Institute of Eastern Christian Studies, Nijmegen (IVOC), in collaboration with the project ‘The Arabic Manuscripts of the Letters of Paul of Tarsus’ funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation.

Taking into account the high number of Biblical manuscripts in Arabic as well as their importance, Sydney Griffith noted in a recent book (2013) that ‘The study of the Bible in Arabic is in its infancy’. However, one currently can observe a new interest for the Bible in Arabic, resulting in an increasing number of new publications and projects. Thus, the goal of the conference was first to bring together an international group of specialists in the field and to discuss the current research and the different ongoing projects. In that respect, the organizers gladly welcomed several representatives of the project *Biblia Arabica* (<<http://biblia-arabica.com>>, last accessed 10 October 2015) and of the new Brill series *Biblia Arabica* (<<http://www.brill.com/biar>>, last accessed 10 October 2015). In addition, the meeting was intended to further the necessity for interdisciplinary approaches.

A first focus was on the translations and their context, attempting to describe and understand the developments and interactions of the Christian, Jewish, and Islamic milieus involved in these various translation projects. In this perspective, Herman Teule explored the importance of the Arabic Bible in Northern and Eastern Mesopotamia after the tenth century. Ute Pietruschka (Halle), David Thomas (Birmingham), Camilla Adang (Tel Aviv), and Sabine Schmidtke (IAS, Princeton) studied the use of Biblical materials by early Muslim authors, respectively in collections of sayings (as Ibn Qutayba’s *‘Uyūn al-akhbār*), in early *kalām*, in the polemic against the Pentateuch by ‘Alā’ al-Dīn al-Bāḡī, and in the *Kitāb al-Kharā’iḡ wa-l-ḡarā’ih* by Qutb al-Dīn al-Rāwandī. Juan Monferrer Sala (Córdoba) offered a presentation on Arabic versions of biblical texts used in Mozarabic circles.

A second focus, which cannot be separated from the first, was on the study of particular manuscripts and their texts. Samir Arbache (Lille) dealt with lexical aspects of the text of Luke in Sin. Ar. 72; Sara Schulthess presented the Pauline section of Vat. Ar. 13; and Elie Dannaoui (Balamand) introduced the project *Digital Corpus of Arabic Gospel Lectionary*, underlining

the importance of new technologies for the study of large collections of manuscripts. Timothy B. Sailors (Tübingen) offered a link to early Christian literature with his presentation on Tatian's Diatessaron. For the Hebrew Bible, Arik Sadan (Jerusalem) studied the differences and similarities between Christian and Judaeo-Arabic (Rabbinical and Karaite) translations of the book of Job and Ronny Vollandt (Munich) focused on the importance of the Pentateuch manuscript Paris BnF Ar. 1.

One of the most interesting aspects of the meeting was its broad spectrum, which included papers on translations of the New Testament and of the Hebrew Bible; Christian, Jewish, and Muslim translators, scribes, and authors; Eastern and Western traditions. The 'Arabic Bible' did not follow one direct way through history and it is essential to build bridges from one discipline to another to reach a better understanding of this tradition, a conclusion that was reflected in the discussions as well.

For the conference programme, visit <<http://www.unil.ch/nt-arabe/colloque-2015/>> (last accessed 10 October 2015). The papers will be published in the Brill series *Biblica Arabica*.

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