

# THE FIRST LATIN TRANSLATION OF THE QUR'ĀN

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Drawing on relevant Latin primary sources and current scholarship, this article provides an assessment of the first Latin translation of the Qur'ān completed by Robert of Ketton (ca. 1110–1160) in 1143. The article does not purport to be a wholly new study of this earliest translation, but rather aims to provide a clear picture of the historical context for the emergence of this translation along with an overview of the text. It explores two questions: When was this translation actually produced? Why?

The second part of the article examines the translation, its style, the issue of how it differs from the original text in relation to additions and omissions, and whether or not the translator can be accused of distorting the original. The appendix provides English translations of Robert's Latin translations of sixteen short suras of the Qur'ān.

**Keywords:** The First Latin Translation of the Qur'ān; Qur'ānic Studies; the Qur'ān and Europe; Western Understanding of the Qur'ān; early Reception of the Qur'ān in Europe.

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## Introduction

The Qur'ān unambiguously declares itself to be revealed in clear Arabic so that its audience may understand it.<sup>1</sup> (Q 12:2). Muslims believe the Qur'ān is the actual Speech of God, *Kalām Allāh*, and such untranslatable. Yet that has not stopped Muslims and non-Muslims from translating the original into numerous languages with the broadest common intention of making Islam's foundational sacred text accessible to those who do not know or do not have

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1. Q 12:2: *Verily, We have sent it down as an Arabic Qur'ān in order that you may understand.*
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a firm grasp of its Arabic. Currently, there are than 126 English translations of the Qurʾān and this number is continuously increasing.<sup>2</sup> These translations have been assessed as being of widely varying quality in terms of accuracy and style, with suspicions of translations being unduly influenced or even ‘distorted’ by the personal beliefs of translators.<sup>3</sup>

However, it is fair to say that among Muslim audiences and at the more popular level, there has been comparatively little study of the Latin translations of the Qurʾān, which were highly significant as the first stepping stone to making Islam’s primary text accessible to Western European audiences. This relative lack of consideration is not surprising in light of the fact that study of Latin is a niche discipline even in Western academia, and much of the scholarly attention to Latin translations of the Qurʾān presumes an academic audience familiar with the language. One of the most prominent works in the past two decades to have highlighted Latin translations of the Qurʾān is Thomas Burman’s *Reading the Qurʾān in Latin Christendom: 1140-1560*,<sup>4</sup> published in 2007; it is, in some ways, a response to Norman Daniel’s *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image*<sup>5</sup> as it offers a more sympathetic view than Norman did of the earliest Latin translators of the Qurʾān. Since the time of Burman’s work, modern critical editions and overviews of some Latin translations of the Qurʾān have been produced, such as those of Mark of Toledo (likely completed in 1210-1211),<sup>6</sup> and the 1518 translation commissioned by the Italian Cardinal Egidio da Viterbo.<sup>7</sup> Recently, Cándida Ferrero Hernández and John Tolan edited a collection of essays analyzing the translation, interpretation and

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2. For a recent survey, see Bruce B. Lawrence, *The Koran in English*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017). In particular pp. 177-188 for an appendix listing partial and complete English translations.
  3. For a sample of assessments of these translations, see e.g. Khaleel Mohammed, “Assessing English Translations of the Qurʾān,” *Middle East Quarterly* 12 (2), Spring 2005, pp. 58-71; Stefan Wild, “Muslim Translators and Translations of the Qurʾān into English,” *Journal of Qurʾānic Studies* 17 (3), 2015, pp. 158-182; Ali Yunis Aldahesh, *al-Farjamātu al-Ingilīziyyatu li-Maʿānī al-Qurʾāni al-Karīm: Dirāsaturun fī Maḍāhiri al-ʾIkhtilāf* (Cairo: Hala Publishing Company, 2020).
  4. Thomas Burman, *Reading the Qurʾān in Latin Christendom: 1140-1560* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007).
  5. Norman Daniel, *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, reprint 1980, first edition 1960).
  6. Nàdia Petrus Pons (ed.), *Alchoranus Latinus quem transtulit Marcus canonicus Toletanus*, (Madrid, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2016).
  7. Katarzyna K. Starczweska (ed.), *Latin Translation of the Qurʾān (1518/1621)*, (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2018).

reception of the Qurʾān in Latin during the period 1143-1500.<sup>8</sup>

The earliest Latin translation of the Qurʾān was undertaken by the Englishman Robert of Ketton<sup>9</sup> in Spain and completed in 1143 as part of a project commissioned by Petrus Venerabilis<sup>10</sup> to translate selected Islamic texts into Latin. Robert's translation is thought to be the most widely circulated Latin translation during the medieval period, based on the number of surviving manuscripts.<sup>11</sup> A modern critical edition of this translation only appeared in 2022, based primarily on a mid-12th century manuscript that was close to the time of the autograph.<sup>12</sup> Prior to this critical edition, the standard edition of the translation that was often cited was the one contained in a collection of texts<sup>13</sup> edited in 1543 by Swiss Protestant theologian and orientalist Theodor Bibliander (Theodor Buchmann) as part of what could be seen as an early modern Western 'encyclopaedia' of Islam.<sup>14</sup> Bibliander's edited collection was printed by Johann Oporinus in an initiative that proved controversial and succeeded in part because of Martin Luther's intervention.<sup>15</sup>

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8. Cándida Ferrero Hernández and John Tolan (eds.), *The Latin Qurʾān: Translation, Transition and Interpretation* (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2021); hereafter TLQ.
  9. No exact years of birth and death can be ascertained for Robert of Ketton. The period 1143-1157 is definitively identified as the years of his tenure as archdeacon in the church of Pamplona in what is now northern Spain. It has been suggested that in the period 1157-1159, Robert moved to Rome and became part of the retinue of the future Pope Celestine III (pope in the period 1191-1198). For details, see Angel J. Martín Duque, El inglés Roberto, traductor del Corán. Estancia y actividades en España a mediados del siglo XII, *Hispania* 22 (1962), pp. 483-506.
  10. Commonly called "Peter the Venerable" in English. Venerabilis ("The Venerable") was a title bestowed on him by his Christian contemporaries.
  11. E.g. Starczweska (2018), p. XXIV, who notes that 24 manuscripts have been found so far.
  12. José Martínez Gázquez and Fernando González Muñoz (eds.), *Alchoran sive lex Saracenorum*, (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2022). For notes on the manuscripts and the basis of the critical edition, see pp. 61-152 and pp. 175-176.
  13. Theodore Bibliander (ed.), *Machumetis Saracenorum Principis Eiusque Successorum Vitae ac Doctrina Ipseque Alcoran* (Basel, 1543).
  14. For this characterisation, see Gregory J. Miller, "Theodor Bibliander's Machumetis saracenorum principis eiusque successorum vitae, doctrina ac ipse alcoran (1543) as the Sixteenth-century "Encyclopedia" of Islam," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 24 (2), 2013, pp. 241-254.
  15. Alexander Bevilacqua, *The Republic of Arabic Letters: Islam and the*

Alongside an edition of Robert's translation were other texts whose translation from Arabic into Latin had been commissioned by Peter. Bibliander included his own justification for providing an edition of the Latin translation of the Qurʾān in particular, noting that while the Qurʾān and other Islamic texts contain "falsehoods, impieties and blasphemies," Christians should not avoid reading them, and the Church would not be harmed by their publication: in fact, "knowledge of the doctrine and deeds of Muhammad's faction, confers much benefit upon Christian men, particularly in our own time."<sup>16</sup> Bibliander's preface merits a full translation and analysis in a future work, but to avoid excessive digression, his arguments for printing the Qurʾān can be summarized here as follows (going through the preface in order):

- i. Christians have long transcribed, studied and taught pagan texts (clearly referring to those of the pre-Christian Greco-Roman world) that contain no less falsehood and blasphemy than the Qurʾān;
- ii. likewise Christian study of Jewish texts for the purpose of refuting perverse Jewish teachings about Christ etc. is commended;
- iii. one must know not only virtues but also vices so that one can effectively teach what one must avoid as well as what one must do;
- iv. the existence of heresies serves useful purposes, as they can be refuted and the believers thus become manifest and more cautious, even if they cannot win over the heretics;
- v. study of the Qurʾān is useful for learning Arabic (especially because of the convention of indicating vowels and other diacritics, whereas other Arabic texts may only have consonants) and in turn it would be useful for such students to have an accessible Latin translation of the Qurʾān;
- vi. what ultimately combats heresy and error is not burning heretical and erroneous works but rather properly refuting them;
- vii. the Qurʾān serves as a useful counterpoint to illustrate the truth and excellence of Christian scriptures, in that unlike the latter it is disorganised, confused and self-contradictory;
- viii. at the present time, great conflicts are taking place between the Ottoman Turks and Christians, and studying the Qurʾān now will be beneficial in providing the basis to refute Islam, which would be useful (for example) in the event that one were to be led away by the

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European Enlightenment, (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2018), p. 46.

16. Bibliander, *Apologia pro editione Alcorani*, as contained in Bibliander (ed.), *Machumetis Saracenorum Principis Eiusque Successorum Vitae ac Doctrina Ipseque Alcoran* (Basel, 1543).

Turks into servitude, and finally

- ix. it is impossible to speculate and establish whether Islam reflects prophecies about the Antichrist in the Bible unless one properly studies Islamic texts.

### **Historical Context: Petrus Venerabilis and Anti-Islamic Polemics**

The initiative to translate the entire Qur<sup>ʿ</sup>ān into Latin lies, as noted, with the efforts of Petrus Venerabilis (1092/1094-1156), who was born in the kingdom of France and whose name is given as Pierre Maurice de Montboissier in French.<sup>17</sup> In 1122, he was elected abbot of the Benedictine abbey of Cluny (now located in eastern France),<sup>18</sup> which enjoyed an exceptional position in Europe in effectively being the “capital of a monastic empire comprising some ten thousand monks in more than six hundred monasteries located throughout western Christendom.”<sup>19</sup> Peter’s duties as abbot would not only have meant participating in liturgical rites, preaching and instruction, but also administrative matters and travel to abbeys and priories affiliated with Cluny.<sup>20</sup> A notable aspect of his career in this regard was monastic reform, driven in part by criticism of Cluny coming from the Cistercians, a monastic order that broke away from Cluny.<sup>21</sup> Beyond these specific monastical concerns, however, Peter was living at the time of Crusades, initiated to wrest the Holy Land away from Muslim sovereignty, with four Crusader states having been established in the Levant. Peter was fully aware of this geo-political context, and we have some relevant surviving correspondence, which, in keeping with the times, shows his support for the Crusader project of maintaining Christian sovereignty in the Holy Land and that he regarded Muslims as enemies of the true faith. For example, Peter wrote in a letter addressed to an unnamed Crusader king of Jerusalem:

The humble brother Peter, abbot of Cluny, sends his regards to the glorious and magnificent king of the holy city of Jerusalem, so that he may be saved by the one who grants salvation to kings.

We thank the omnipotent King of Kings who has elevated your

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17. James Kritzeck, *Peter the Venerable and Islam*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), p. 3. Kritzeck’s study remains one of the most important on Venerabilis and his approach towards Islam. Hereafter I will only refer to Petrus Venerabilis as Peter.
  18. Denyse Riche, *L’ordre de Cluny à la fin du Moyen Âge*, (Saint-Étienne: Université de Saint-Étienne, 2000), p. 37.
  19. Kritzeck (1964), p. 3.
  20. *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.
  21. *Ibid.*, pp. 7-10.

highness to the royal throne of His royal city of Jerusalem, and has crowned you with the glorious diadem, who has made you leader of His people, defender of His church and enemy of His enemies in such a great, sacred, noble and famous city, and what's more, has marked you out with that distinguished title of His. For whereas He, called king of Israel by the forefathers, prophets, angels, Jews and Gentiles, was the king of Jerusalem, He wanted you to be king of the same Jerusalem, of the true Israel, in succession to Him and on His behalf, so that in accordance with your persona, and the kingdom entrusted to you by Him, the rod of equity should be the rod of your kingdom, so that you should love justice, hate iniquity, rule with an iron rod the enemies of Christ's cross and the Christian name (by which I mean the Turks, Saracens,<sup>22</sup> Persians and Arabs, or any barbarians who oppose His salvation of humanity), and break them like a potter's vase with your powerful right hand.

To realize this in a manly way, we strive with our minds since we cannot do so with arms, and since we cannot act with the sword, we seek to satisfy you with prayers so that we can assist your efforts in war. So render glory to the One who has glorified you, so that just as Christ triumphs everyday over the devil and his angels through His priests, thus He will also bring frequent triumphs over the heathens through the Christian kings. For as you wage the struggle and do not refuse to undertake any dangers for the sake of His people, He will assiduously grant you victory, add glory upon glory, and after this transient kingdom, He will provide you the eternal kingdom in the company of the holy kings. We commend the bearer of this letter- the venerable man lord Drogo, the precentor of the church of Nevers—to your generosity, so that if by chance he should need something, he may thus perceive you to be munificent, and thus render thanks to God and you.<sup>23</sup>

The Crusades, of course, were not the only context in which Western European Christians were aware of Islam and Muslims. Indeed, Islam and Muslims had already had an established foothold in Western Europe for more than 400 years by the time of Peter's rise to the position of abbot of Cluny, and it was this presence that enabled the sort of access to Islamic and Arabic texts

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22. Saracens being a common term in medieval Latin discourse to refer to Muslims.

23. The letter's Latin text (which I have translated here) is to be found in Giles Constable, *The Letters of Peter the Venerable* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), Vol. 1, p. 219 (Letter 82). Also see Letter 75 (pp. 208-209), addressed to Byzantine emperor John II Komnenos (r. 1118-1143) for another example of where Peter describes Arabs and Turks as enemies of "the Christian name."

that would prove important to the genesis of the first Latin translation of the Qurʾān. Peter himself tells us in the prologue to his *Liber Contra Sectam Sive Haeresim Saracenorum* (“Book Against the Sect or Heresy of the Saracens”) that he visited the “Spanish lands” (i.e. Iberia) and had a meeting with the “Lord Alfonso, the victorious emperor of the Spanish lands.”<sup>24</sup> This was the year 1141 from the incarnation of our Lord.<sup>25</sup> While Peter gives the year as 1141, Kritzeck suggests that the counting of years here could be extending to the Easter of the following year, and thus the year of the visit was 1142.<sup>26</sup> Elsewhere, in his *Summa Totius Haeresis Saracenorum* (“Summary of the Entire Heresy of the Saracens”), Peter tells us that his visit was for the purpose of “visiting our places that are there,”<sup>27</sup> by which he surely means visiting monasteries in Iberia affiliated with the abbey of Cluny. Kritzeck suggests that besides a possible intention to go on pilgrimage to the shrine of Santiago de Compostella, the more important purpose of the visit was to improve the financial situation of the abbey of Cluny by having an arrangement to pay the arrears due in accordance with the pledge by the emperor Alfonso’s grandfather for an annual donation to the abbey.<sup>28</sup> Peter returned to France around 1143.<sup>29</sup>

It was during this visit to Spain that Peter commissioned and financed the project to produce Latin translations of texts which had been identified as key Arabic texts to understand Islam. These included the Qurʾān itself, *Liber Generationis Mahumet* (“Book of Muhammad’s Genealogy”), *Doctrina Mahumet* (“Muhammad’s Doctrine”) and *Fabulae Saracenorum* (“Stories of the Saracens”), which was given a subtitle: *Chronica Mendosa et Ridicula Saracenorum*

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24. Emperor Alfonso VII (d. 1157). The most important primary source of his reign is an anonymous Latin chronicle. The chronicle consists of two parts in prose, while an appended, incomplete poem on Alfonso’s expedition against Muslim-ruled Almería in southern Iberia appears to have been the work of the same author). The chronicle includes an account of a ceremony at the cathedral of León where he was crowned emperor. According to the chronicle, this ceremony took place in June 1135 (1:69-1:71). For an edition of the two-part prose chronicle, see that of Antonio Maya Sánchez in *Chronica Hispanica saec. XII Pars I*, (Turnhout: Brepols, 1990), pp. 149-249.
25. For an edition of Peter’s treatise, see Kritzeck (1964), pp. 220-291. For the particular quotation, see p. 229. Note that all translations of Peter’s words are my own.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
27. For an edition of *Summa Totius Haeresis Saracenorum*, see *ibid.*, pp. 204-210. For the particular quotation, see *Ibid.*, p. 210.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
29. *Ibid.*, pp. 13-14.

(“The Mendacious and Ridiculous Chronicle of the Saracens”). Of these texts, the *Fabulae Saracenorum*, which provides a biography of the Prophet’s life and a brief history of his early successors, cannot be identified with any specific Arabic source text. The *Liber Generationis Mahumet* has been most recently identified as a translation of a version of *Kitāb al-Anwār* (“Book of Lights”) attributed to Abū al-Ḥasan al-Bakrī,<sup>30</sup> while the *Doctrina Mahumet* takes the form of an Islamic catechism whose original Arabic text was spuriously attributed to ‘Abdullah bin Salām, a famous Jewish convert to Islam during the Prophet’s time.

Peter’s desire to learn more about Islam, however, was not driven by mere objective inquiry and knowing for the sake of knowing. His hostility to Islam is clearly in evidence in the already cited letter to the king of Jerusalem. Peter’s primary aim was to acquire for himself and provide Christians a more solid foundation for understanding Islam in order to refute it. This intention becomes evident in Peter’s own writings. Indeed, he decried the lack of proper knowledge among Christians regarding the life of the Prophet and his teachings. As he put it in *Summa Totius Haeresis Saracenorum*:

Regarding this matter, it seems necessary to say who Muhammad was, and what he taught, for the sake of those who are going to read this book, so that they may better understand what they will read, and know how detestable his life and teaching were. For some think that this man was Nicholas (one of the first seven deacons), and that the sect of the Nicholites that is named after

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30. Kritzeck (ibid., pp. 84-85) identified the work with *Kitāb Nasab Rasūl Allah* (“Book of the Lineage of the Messenger of Allah”) attributed to Sa‘īd bin ‘Umar. However, through comparison with later Morisco (Iberian Muslim) manuscripts of a *Libro de las luces* (“Book of Lights”) attributed to Abū al-Ḥasan, Óscar de la Cruz Palma subsequently showed that the Latin work corresponds most closely to the *Libro de las luces*. See Óscar de la Cruz Palma, “Notas a la lectura del Liber de generatione Mahumet,” in J. Martínez Gázquez, O. de la Cruz Palma, C. Ferrero Hernández (eds.), *Estudios de latín medieval hispánico* (Florence: SISMEL, 2011), pp. 609-625. In other words, the *Liber Generationis* and the *Libro de las luces* appear to share a common Arabic ancestor text. The principal problem, which leaves this question unresolved, is that the period in which Abū al-Ḥasan lived is not precisely known. For example, if he lived in the thirteenth century CE as has been suggested, then his work obviously could not have formed the basis of the Latin translation, which might lend support to the original source text being the supposed *Kitāb Nasab Rasūl Allah*. But it has also been suggested that he lived centuries earlier, which would support the *Kitāb al-Anwār* hypothesis. For discussion, see Gázquez and Muñoz (2022), p. 25.

him and also denounced in the Apocalypse of John<sup>31</sup> is this law [religion] of the modern Saracens. Others have other fanciful conceptions about who they are, and just as they show lack of curiosity in reading and are ignorant of affairs, so they also conjure any false opinions they like, just as they do in other cases.<sup>32</sup>

With regard to Islam, Peter professed in his preface to *Liber Contra Sectam Sive Haeresim Saracenorum* that he could not clearly discern whether the religion should be classed as heresy or a form of heathenism. Peter noted that the religion seemed to combine elements of both, even while he recognised that Islam taught monotheism:

I cannot discern with sufficient satisfaction as to whether the Mahumetan error should be called a heresy and its followers heretics or heathens. For I see that like the heretics, they adopt some things from the Christian religion, and reject other things, and they also practise and teach in accordance with the pagan rite what, according to the written record, no heresy has ever done.<sup>33</sup>

Whatever appellation one preferred for Islam and Muslims, it was nonetheless necessary to oppose the religion and its adherents, since “the Mahumetan madness” (*Mahumeticus furor*) was “the greatest error of all errors” that had condemned more people “to the eternal fires” than all the heresies combined.<sup>34</sup> For Peter, the end-goal of combatting Islam would not necessarily be wiping out Muslims by the sword, but rather converting as many of them to Christianity as possible. In other words, he did not regard Muslims as irredeemable, a sentiment he imputed to some Christians who might question his enterprise on grounds such as stubbornness and language barriers. After all, it was possible for Christian apologetics and refutations of Islam to be translated into Arabic in missionary outreach to Muslims. It is worth quoting these remarks at length:

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31. For the reference, see Revelation 2:6 and 2:14-16. It should be noted that even after Peter’s time, Islam and its followers could be equated in medieval Christian discourse with the sect of Nicholas as a way to disparage and defame the religion. For example, Lucas of Tuy in his *Chronicon Mundi* (3.6), which was likely completed towards the end of the 1230s, characterised Islam as a revival of Nicholas’ sect. For an edition of *Chronicon Mundi*, see Emma Falque (ed.), *Chronicon Mundi* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003).

32. Kritzeck (1964), p. 205.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 227.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 226.

But perhaps someone will say here: ‘What use will it be to give food to those who disdain it? What will be gained by sounding off with many arguments at the snake that is deaf and blocking its own ears? Indeed, the men whom you propose to take action against are foreigners and barbarians, and say that they and the Latins have nothing in common, not only in customs, but also in language. How therefore will an Arab hear, let alone understand, a Latin, or a Persian a Roman, or an Ethiopian or an Egyptian a Gaul? One must beware of taking up toil in vain, and be on guard against time being wasted by time being wasted by taking up unnecessary work.

I say in response to this: what will be written can be translated into their language. The Christian truth can be translated into Arabic or any other languages, just as it was possible for the wicked error, through my effort, to come to the attention of the Latins. Thus, the Latin work translated into a foreign language will perhaps benefit some, whom the grace that leads to life has wanted to win over for God. The translation of the Old Testament from Hebrew, and with the exception of the Gospel of Matthew, the translation of the New Testament from Greek into all the languages of the world, subjected the world to God, and through the Christian faith called it back from the depths of hell and restored it to heaven. So also the Latin took very many other works of the fathers from the Greek, and the Greek likewise received them from the Latin. Among the many other languages of the world unknown to us, there was no lack of exchange between languages, about which one can say almost as one does about the apostles: ‘There are no languages or tongues whose voices are not heard.’ If by chance this writing under discussion does not have translators or will be of no use in translation, the Christian armoury will at least have arms with which to protect itself against these enemies, or with which to strike the enemies if by chance the parties come to do battle.<sup>35</sup>

There is no doubt then that the genesis of the project to translate the Qurʾān came within the context of Peter’s desire to disprove the validity of Islam and promote Christian apologetics, seeking if possible to convert Muslims to Christianity.

### **Robert of Ketton: Background and Aims**

The conventional appellation of “Robert of Ketton”, the first Latin translator of the Qurʾān, derives from the reference to him in the most reliable textual evidence. In a letter to Abbot Bernard of Clairvaux<sup>36</sup> regarding the translation

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35. *Ibid.*, pp. 229-230.

36. Bernard (1090-1153) was notable for being an advocate for the Knights

of the Qurʾān and other Arabic materials pertaining to Islam, Peter refers to Robert as “Rotberto Ketenensi de Anglia” (“Robert of Ketton from England”), who, as Peter says, occupied the position of archdeacon of the church of Pamplona at the time.<sup>37</sup> Robert did not accompany Peter on his journey to Spain but rather was found by Peter in Spain. Alongside Robert, Peter also found one “Hermannus Dalmata” (Hermann Dalmata), who is conventionally known as Hermann of Carinthia.

Scholarship has long recognized that Robert’s primary concern was not translation of Islamic texts with the aim of refuting Islam and proving the truth of Christianity. Rather, as Peter notes, Robert and Hermann were students of the “science of astrology” (i.e. astronomy/astrology), and he induced them to translate Islamic texts by paying them a large sum of money.<sup>38</sup> Moreover, as Robert noted in his preface to his translation of the Qurʾān, addressed to Peter, he had interrupted his “primary study of astronomy and geometry” in order to focus on translating the Qurʾān.<sup>39</sup>

Based on prologues composed by Robert himself, other surviving Latin translations of Arabic texts that can be ascribed with certainty to Robert are the *Fabulae Saracenorum* (mentioned earlier) and the *De Iudiciis* (“Concerning Judgements”), the latter being a translation of an astronomical treatise by al-Kindī (d. 259/873).<sup>40</sup> It would appear that Robert’s long-term ambition as a scholar was to produce a translation and perhaps also a study of Ptolemy’s *Almagest*, as he mentions in the preface to his translation of *De Iudiciis*, addressed and dedicated to his friend Hermann of Carinthia, that the *Almagest* is what “our particular line of study aspires to,” with Robert having first worked on the “cosmometry of Theodosius and the book of proportions”

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Templar, a Catholic military order in the Holy Land. On this matter see Bernard’s work *Liber ad Milites Templo De Laude Novae Militiae* (Book to the Templar’s Soldiers: In Praise of the New Military Order).

37. For the letter, see Kritzeck (1964), pp. 212-214. For this quotation, see p. 212.
38. Ibid.
39. For an edition of this prologue, see Gázquez and Muñoz (2022), pp. 207-208.
40. The work’s title has been given as *Kitāb al-Mudkhal fī Ahkām ‘Ilm al-Nujūm*. For more on the work, see Charles Burnett, “al-Kindī on Judicial Astrology: ‘The Forty Chapters,’” *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy*, Volume 3, Issue 1 (March 1993), pp. 77-117. As Burnett notes, the use of the Latin word *iudiciis* for the Latin titling of the work indicates that the Arabic word *ahkām* (“rulings/judgements”) was used in the Arabic title of the work as it came down to Robert.

in order to make study of the *Almagest* more accessible.<sup>41</sup> It is possible, as Julian Yolles suggests, that Robert was talking about translating the *Almagest* when he mentioned preparing a gift for Peter that encompasses “the entirety of science in itself” by revealing the orbits of all heavenly bodies and the various motions of stars.<sup>42</sup> Perhaps Robert never got round to undertaking the translation or he did start it but never completed it. Alternatively, it may be that the translation has not survived.

While it is correct to highlight that Robert’s primary interest was in scientific matters, it is also true that he displayed deference to Peter’s motivations and sentiments by expressing agreement with them. In his prologue to the Latin translation of the Qur’ān, Robert praises Peter’s desire to make the “sterile swamp” of the “Saracen sect” become fertile, “drain out its pit” and “tear down its defences.” Robert describes his own efforts and that of his patron in war-like terms, as he characterizes himself as performing the duty of a “foot-soldier, leading the way.” He elaborates:

And I have revealed Machomet’s smoke so that it can be extinguished by your bellows, his pit, so that it can be drained by your vessel, the tinder-wood and fervor of your fire by means of your winnowing-fork, and the discourse of our fountain through your bringing it out. Therefore justice demands that while destroying the enemy’s fortress (or rather, their enclosure) and drying out their pit, you should strengthen your own men’s fortification, diligently sharpen their weapons, make their fountain emanate more strongly, and make the rampart of their kindness become larger and more spacious, for you are the world’s best region on the right-hand side,<sup>43</sup> the very sharp flint-stone of this religion and the bountifully flowing hand of kindness.

In this same preface, Robert echoed his commissioner’s disappointment about the fact that “Latinity” (by which he means Latin Catholic civilization) has allowed ignorance of “its enemies’ cause” to endure for too long. He expressed similar sentiments in his preface to the *Fabulae Saracenorum*,<sup>44</sup> asserting that

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41. For a modern edition of this preface, see Ulisse Cecini, *Alcoranus Latinus: Eine sprachliche und kulturwissenschaftliche Analyse der Koranübersetzung*, (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2012), p. 87.
  42. Julian Yolles, “Scientific Language in the Latin Qur’ans of Robert of Ketton and Mark of Toledo,” *Journal of Qur’anic Studies*, 22 (3), 2020, p. 124.
  43. Latin: *dextra mundi pars*. The concept of the ‘right-hand side of the world’ is of course the East, associated with the rising of light.
  44. For modern editions of this preface, see Cecini (2012), pp. 88-89 and

“the doctors of the Church” had allowed “the greatest heresy of all” to grow to immense size over the course of 537 years. Aligned with Peter’s sentiments, Robert expressed hope for the conversion of Muslims to Christianity. Using imagery from the Bible and Greek mythology, and he asked rhetorically:

What manner of speaking and appearance will the heralds and ministers [of Christianity] take up, or what will they say in the presence of the bridegroom who invites all, if, either because of their ignorance or negligence, that beautiful portion of the human race either does not hear anything about the nuptials or does not approach them as it has been held and disgracefully deceived in the chains of darkness or by the songs of the Sirens, not knowing that its redemption has been brought about?

Muslims then were still a part of the human race and could be redeemed if they were converted to Christianity. By translating and unpicking the “constitution of the enemy cause” (i.e. the Qur’ān), it was to be hoped that the Catholic Church could take vengeance for the insults brought against Christ, “drive away the wolves and harmful reptiles from its pastures, and heal, with the sacred fountain’s water; those who have been so far misled by its wicked enticement and have drunk its nectar-sweet and honey-sweet poisons, and bring them into the strong fortification of kindness and Christ’s palace.” However, those who ultimately refused to become Christian should be imprisoned or be made to perish quickly: “All who refuse to become Christian should either be afflicted with captivity so that they should thus cease from wicked deeds, or quickly perish so that they cannot be a further hindrance to themselves and others, in accordance with their own sect that affirms that fighting is more harmful than slaughter.”<sup>45</sup>

It may be argued that Robert was simply flattering his patron by echoing his sentiments, but there is little reason to doubt that Robert was himself hostile to Islam.

### **Robert’s Broad Approach to Qur’ān Translation: Paraphrasing**

In his introduction to a translation of an Arabic text on astronomy, Robert’s intellectual companion Hermann says that Robert once provided him advice on translating the text.<sup>46</sup> Hermann quotes him as saying that, when translating

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Gázquez and Muñoz (2022), pp. 559-560. It is not found in Bibliander’s edition of the *Fabulae*.

45. The last phrase is based on Qur’ān 2:191: “And fitna is worse than slaughter.”

46. For the original text prologue, see Charles Homer Haskins, *Studies in the history of mediaeval science*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1924),

texts in general, one “should not depart in any way from a Boethian way of thinking,” but sometimes “it seems necessary for another approach to be adopted.” Robert is quoted as suggesting that Hermann could delete the lengthy prologue, advising him not to worry about a reader who could read both languages and might charge him with distortion of the original.

The Boethian way of thinking which Robert generally supported refers to Boethius, a Roman politician and scholar of the fifth/sixth centuries CE best known for translating various works from Greek into Latin. Boethius was known for what is dubbed an *ad verbum* (literal) approach to translation.<sup>47</sup> In the Arabic-Latin translations for which Robert is best known, however, it appears that Robert departed from his general recommendation of following Boethius’ approach. Instead, he adopted an *ad sensum* approach: that is, conveying the sense of the original accurately but not being strictly bound by the structures of the original. In his preface to the translation of the Qur’ān, he explained his *ad sensum* approach, noting difficulties that came upon him in the process of translation:

Many inconveniences came before me while I relied on my fragile and feeble intellect. First lack of eloquence, then superficial knowledge, then what is rather effective at leading to the accomplishment of nothing: namely, desperation, the mother of sloth and negligence, multiplied by the fact that the substantive material of our translation is worthless, dissoluble and disjointed. And yet this material was to be immediately provided as it is to your majesty, with only the Arabic veil removed. Despite these issues, I have striven no less resolutely to obey you, as I trust that nothing is rendered invalid by the purpose with which your desire breathes, with this desire being full of divine fire. Therefore, while omitting nothing, and

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pp. 45-47.

47. José Luis Alexis Rivera Luque, “Translatological Remarks on Rendering the Qur’an into Latin,” in *TLQ*, p. 132. See also John Patrick Casey, “Boethius’s Works on Logic in the Middle Ages,” in Noel Howard Kaylor Jr. and Philip Edward Phillips (eds.), *A Companion to Boethius in the Middle Ages*, (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2012), p. 200. The precise meaning of ‘literal’ can be debated of course. In the strictest sense, it may lead to imitating grammatical constructions of the source language that contravene the rules of the target language. This sort of literalism, which would be viewed as far too excessive, appears to have been the approach of Juan of Segovia, who was critical of Robert’s approach and produced a trilingual Qur’ān (Arabic, Castilian and Latin) in the 15th century CE that has unfortunately not survived. For more on this, see Reinhold F. Gleib, “Dixit apostoli. The Word-by-word Principle in Latin Translations of the Qur’an,” in *TLQ*, pp. 57-69.

altering nothing in terms of sense except for the purpose of comprehensibility, I have brought the stones and wood so that your very beautiful and complete building may subsequently arise, joined together and indissoluble.

It is to be noted that Luque has recently argued that when Robert speaks of the obstacles to translation embodied in “lack of eloquence” (*eloquii penuria*) and “superficial knowledge” (*scientiae tenuitas*), he is referring to what he perceived to be the Qurʾān’s lack of eloquence in Arabic and lack of meaningful information.<sup>48</sup> This interpretation seems implausible, however. It is more probable that Robert is engaging in self-deprecation here, as decrying one’s own lack of eloquence and knowledge is a rather typical trope of prologues in medieval writing, especially those pertaining to works of history.<sup>49</sup> That self-deprecation is apparent also in his speaking of his “fragile and feeble intellect” and his description of himself as the “least” of Peter’s men (presumably describing the larger Arabic translation team Peter assembled). Moreover, in speaking of the obstacles he faced in translating the Qurʾān, Robert employs the rhetorical device of a tricolon in describing personal problems he had: i.e. lack of eloquence, lack of knowledge of the subject matter, and then despair about what he perceived to be the Qurʾān’s worthless content.

### A Sample of Robert’s Method: The Case of Sūrat al-Nās

A sample of Robert’s broader paraphrase approach can be seen in his rendering of Sūrat al-Nās.<sup>50</sup> Robert’s Latin translation reads:

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48. Luque (2021), p. 128.

49. For instance, in the prologue to his *Historia Gothica*, Archbishop Rodrigo Ximénez de Rada of Toledo (who commissioned the more literal translation of the Qurʾān by Mark of Toledo and does not appear to have known of Robert’s translation) refers to his “crude pen and meagre wisdom” and asks for the forgiveness of the readers and King Ferdinand III (who commissioned the project) in bringing the work to their attention. More generally, see Justin Lake, *Prologues to Ancient and Medieval History: A Reader*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2019), pp. ix-xix. For an edition of the *Historia Gothica*, see Juan Fernández Valverde (ed.), *Historia de Rebus Hispanicis* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1987).

50. Per the most reliable manuscript transmission of Robert’s translation (see Gázquez and Muñoz (2022), pp. 35-36), this is the 123rd sūra, whereas the Qurʾān is traditionally divided into 114 sūras. This division into 123 sūras arises because the edition divides the first eight sūras are divided into 17 sūras, whereas after this the division of the text accords with the standard division of sūras. In the Bibliander edition, it is the 124th sūra—the division into 124 sūras arising from the division of the first eight sūras into 18 sūras, and then following the standard division of sūras. It is not

*in nomine Domini p̄i et misericordis. Te sanctificando, omnium gentium dominum, omnium regum, omnium Deum, iugiter atque suppliciter exora, ut a diabolo humana corda penetrante, hominibusque diabolicis atque perversis te defendat et liberet.*

Rendered into English, his Latin version says:

In the name of the Lord, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Sanctifying yourself, continuously and humbly beseech the Lord of all peoples, the king of all, the God of all, to defend you and free you from the devil who penetrates human hearts, and diabolical and perverse men.

The translation of the standard Qurʾānic Basmala for the sūra opening is accurate and accords with the general literal approach adopted by all Latin translators, though the use of *Dominus* (“Lord”) instead of *Deus* (“God”) represents a slight departure from the original here.<sup>51</sup> It is, however, the following verses which make clear Robert’s paraphrase embodying alterations, additions and omissions, which would likely be considered unacceptable among translators of the Qurʾān today and are the sort of departures from the original text that led to criticism of Robert’s translation in subsequent centuries.

While he correctly understands that *al-waswās al-khannās* in this sūra refers to an evil entity, Robert’s translation does not reflect the original Arabic’s characterization of this entity as a whisperer and the entity’s whispering in the hearts of human beings—concepts that could have been captured by the Latin word *susurrator* (“whisperer”) and its corresponding verb *susurrare* (“to whisper”).<sup>52</sup> The most notable additions are the phrase “sanctifying yourself”

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clear whether it was Robert himself or a subsequent scribe introduced this division (*ibid.*). However, rather than being simply arbitrary, it is likely that the initial division of the sūras is based on the subdivision of the text into hizbs. On this, see e.g. Burman (2007), p. 80.

51. Luque (2021), p. 134. It should be noted though that based on Gázquez and Muñoz’s edition of the text, Robert is not wholly consistent in translating the Basmala, in that sometimes he uses *Dominus* (e.g. sūra 44- corresponding to sūra 53 in Robert’s text) and on other occasions *Deus* (e.g. sūra 45). The Basmala is not always given (especially in the earlier sūras up to sūra 18). In the sūras where it is given, the use of *Deus* is more usual.
52. In the entry on the term *waswās* in Oliver Leaman (ed.), *The Qur’an: An Encyclopedia* (Routledge, 2006, online edition), Andrew Rippin suggested that the term would be better translated by the English word ‘hisser’ and attributes the conventional English rendering of whisperer to Marmaduke Pickthall. Yet Rippin himself acknowledges that the Arabic word encapsulates “the susurrating voice of Satan.” This point, to

(*te santificando*) and the adverbs “continuously and humbly” (*inugiter atque suppliciter*), which are not present in the Arabic original. As for alteration, the clearest example is the structure of the first verse: Instead of the initial command (“say”), followed by the exact translation of the text, using the first person singular (“Say: I seek refuge”), Robert simply uses a second person singular imperative (*exora*: “beseech”) that can cover for both “say” and “I seek refuge” in the Arabic original, without having to shift to the first person singular in quoting what believers are instructed to say. A Latin rendering closer to the original text would have been something like: *dic: refugium apud Dominum omnium gentium...peto* (“Say: I seek refuge with the Lord of all peoples”) or *dic: ad Dominum omnium gentium...refugio* (same translation).<sup>53</sup>

However, while it is helpful to make these observations in order to understand how exactly Robert’s translation constitutes a free translation or paraphrase rather than literal translation, it may be asked whether these observations impact the broader question of Robert’s translation altering the overall meaning of the *sūra* as conveyed by the original text, at least in terms of Muslim understanding of this *sūra*. The answer is no, and so in this regard he has remained within the parameters specified in his preface. In particular, it should be pointed out that there is no consensus on how to render the precise meaning of the last three verses, which can be literally translated as follows: “From the evil of the receding [hiding] whisperer, who whispers in the hearts of men, from among jinn and men.”

It is the last verse that gives rise to the main difficulty. Should these verses be interpreted as saying that the evil whisperer is Satan and that he whispers in the hearts of both jinn and humans, or is the meaning that the evil whisperer who whispers in the hearts of men can be a jinn or a human? Both interpretations have been mentioned in exegesis,<sup>54</sup> and Robert’s rendering

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my knowledge, was recognized as far back as Ludovico Marracci’s Latin translation published in 1698, which used the Latin word *insusurrator* (“whisperer”) to render *waswās*. In his 1734 English translation, George Sale similarly adopted whisperer and the verb whisper in the relevant places.

53. Other perfectly acceptable Latin renderings are “me defendo cum” (lit. “I defend myself with...”) or “confugio ad...” (“I flee to...seeking refuge”). The former was used by Mark of Toledo, the latter by Marracci.
54. For example, Al-Qurṭubī (600-671/1204-1273) quotes Qatāda b. Dī‘āma (d. 117/735) in his tafsir of Q 114:6, as saying: “there are devils among jinn and devils among men, so you seek refuge in God from the devils of men and jinn” and then goes on to note another view: “And it has been said: that Iblis [Satan] whispers in the hearts of jinn, just as he whispers in the hearts of men, so therefore ‘in the hearts of men’ is applied to all,

would appear to be trying to accommodate both interpretations or make a compromise between the two, as he understands *al-waswās al-khannās* to be “the devil” that “penetrates human hearts” while the jinn and men in the last verse are understood as “diabolical and perverse men” (“diabolical” intended to try to convey that jinn should be understood as demon-like entities)<sup>55</sup> against whom one should seek protection just as one should seek protection against Satan.

Finally, there is something to be said aesthetically regarding Robert’s style of Latin here. While Latin has highly inflectional morphology that allows for relatively free word order, it is considered in keeping with the general word order of classical Latin to place the verbs at the end of their clauses. Robert delays the main verb (*exora*) and the verbs of the subordinate clause (*defendat* and *liberet*) to the end, creating a parallel between the verbs and an element of suspense. It is likely that such elements are deliberately intended to imitate classical Latin prose, a point that has been suggested by Thomas Burman.<sup>56</sup>

### **An Example of a Specific Term in Robert’s Translation: *al-Islām***

The approach I took to analyze *Sūrat al-Nās* as a sample excerpt for understanding Robert’s free translation style could probably be applied to most extracts from the *Qurʾān*, and one would reach the same general conclusion about his tendency to paraphrase.<sup>57</sup> For future research, it would be worthwhile to go through Robert’s entire translation *sūra*-by-*sūra* and section-by-section within the larger *sūras*, conducting detailed side-by-side comparison of the Arabic original with Robert’s translation and an English translation of the

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and ‘among jinn and men’ is a clarification of those in whose hearts he whispers.” For an online version of the tafsir, see <https://quran.ksu.edu.sa/tafseer/qortobi/sura114-aya6.html>. Also, see the tafsir of Ibn ‘Aṭiyya (d. ca.542/1147), who was Robert’s contemporary. Ibn ‘Aṭiyya explains that the phrase “among jinn and men” means that the evil whisperers can be devils or evil people who are like Satan. See Ibn ‘Aṭiyya al-Andalusī, Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq b. Ghālib. *al-Muḥarrar al-wajīz fī tafsīr al-Kitāb al-‘Azīz*. 6 vols. Ed. ‘Abd al-Salām ‘Abd al-Shāfi Muḥammad. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1422/2001), sub Q 2:6

55. For a recent discussion of jinn in the *Qurʾān*, see Nicolai Sinai, *Key Terms of the Qurʾan: A Critical Dictionary* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2023), pp. 180-190.
56. Burman (2007), p. 34.
57. Of course, some extracts will be found to adhere more closely to the source text than others. For example, as can be seen in the appendix below, the translation of *Sūrat al-Ikhlāṣ* is generally closer to the original than the translation of *Sūrat al-Nās*.

Latin. On a larger scale, a Qurʾān in Arabic with all the existing complete Latin translations arranged in multiple columns alongside the Arabic would enable easier and more direct comparison between the Arabic original, Robert’s translation and later Latin translations.<sup>58</sup>

Another beneficial approach would examine translations of particular terms throughout the entire corpus. I have decided to focus here on the term “Islām”, the verbal noun of the verb *aslama*. The term occurs eight times in the Qurʾān, which are tabulated below together with Robert’s rendering of the relevant passage when applicable and a translation of Robert’s translation.

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58. The nearest equivalent to such a project so far is the website Qurʾān 12-21, which features a variety of translations of the Qurʾān produced in Europe from the 12<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. So far, for Latin translations, only Robert’s translation in Bibliander’s edition and Marracci’s translation are featured. See <https://quran12-21.org/>

Verse	Robert's Rendering of Relevant Passage	Translation of Robert's Rendering
3:19	Coram quo nulla lex perhibetur, nisi tantum [lex] hominum sese totos suaque negotia deo voventium	In Whose sight no law is professed, except [the law] of men who vow their entire selves and their affairs to God.
3:85	Quis aliud per fidem quam legem assequi studet? Omnis quidem incredulus seculo futuro dampnandis annumerabitur	Whoso desires to follow something besides this law in matters of faith? Every unbeliever will be included among those to be damned in the future life.
5:3	tua lex	Your law
6:125	eorum cor capax et immensum ad legis intelligentiam Deus efficit, quos viam salutis docere quiverit.	As for those whom God wishes to teach the way of salvation, He makes their heart spacious and wide in order to understand this law.
9:74	fidem suamque derelictam <sup>59</sup>	And the abandoning of their faith
39:22	Cui Deus cor ad credendum aperit, suam lucem immittit	As for the one whose heart God opens up to believe, He sends His light upon that person.
49:17	non doceatis Deum legem vestram	Do not teach God your law
61:7	Quis autem peior est imponente mendacium Deo vocanti cunctos ad legem rectam, illosque malos abhorrenti?	Who is worse than the one who imputes falsehood to God, who calls all people to the right law and abhors the evil ones?

These examples show that Robert broadly understood that *al-islām* in the Qurʾān refers to a “law” (Latin: *lex*), which was the most common medieval Latin equivalent term for religion as opposed to the term *religio* that was more readily associated with the pious conduct and behavior. However, as the rendering of 3:19 shows (where the term *al-islām* first occurs in the Qurʾān), he recognized the etymological connection between *islām* and the verb *aslama* in

59. In Gázquez and Muñoz's edition (p. 307), this phrase is written as follows: “idemque suam derelictam.” However, looking at the context of the verse the phrase as it stands in their edition does not make sense. The reading in the table must be the correct one.

the conventional sense of surrender to God,<sup>60</sup> and it would appear that Robert felt the need to explain the understanding of “*islām*” in this first instance. Then, after doing so once, he did not consider it necessary to elaborate again, which is why subsequent instances where the word *islām* appears are given simpler renderings like “the right law” and simply “to believe.”

Conversely, it has been observed that when the word “Muslim” is used, Robert either passes over it in paraphrase or he simply renders it as “believers.”<sup>61</sup> For Norman Daniel, the consequence was that Robert “tended to obscure passages which define the religion of Islam and to thin the more specifically Islamic content of the Qurʾān.”<sup>62</sup> With regards to Q 3:19 in particular, Daniel says that “the phrase ‘the true religion in the sight of God is Islam’ was completely lost” in Robert’s translation.<sup>63</sup> For Ludwig Hagemann, “Robert of Ketton unfortunately did not understand the genuine Qurʾānic sense of the word Muslim and did not get at the deep spiritual meaning that lies in it.”<sup>64</sup>

In light of the rendering given in the table above for Qurʾān 3:19, the general criticisms of Robert’s approach to translating the term Muslim are overstated in terms of their significance, as is Daniel’s particular criticism of how Robert renders Qurʾān 3:19. Rather, it seems to me that Robert understood that Islam as envisioned in the Qurʾān entailed submission to God and that this path is seen as the true path to attaining God’s satisfaction and Paradise.

### Malicious Distortion?

As has already been noted, Robert expressed strong hostility to Islam in the prologues he wrote to the works he translated for Peter. He noted that the

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60. For discussion, see Sinai (2023), pp. 403-408. Also, for comparison, Mark of Toledo in this instance renders the term as “[*lex*] *Saracenorum*” (“[law] of the Saracens”). In other instances where the word *islām* occurs, Mark’s renderings consistently give the word an ethnic feel: “law of the Ishmaelites” (3:85 and 5:3), “to become a Saracen” (6:125 and 39:22), “law of the Saracen” (49:17), “faith of the Saracens” (9:74 and 61:7).

61. E.g. Daniel (1980), p. 24; Ludwig Hagemann, “Die Erste Lateinische Koranübersetzung- Mittel Zur Verständigung Zwischen Christen und Muslimen im Mittelalter?” in Albert Zimmermann and Ingrid Craemer-Ruegenberg (eds.), *Orientalische Kultur und Europäisches Mittelalter* (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 1985), pp. 52-53.

62. Daniel (1980), p. 24.

63. *Ibid.*

64. Hagemann (1985), p. 53.

Qurʾān<sup>65</sup> constitutes a “death-bearing law, but nonetheless provides in many places for those who see and the elect [of God] the greatest testimony and firmest proof of the holiness and excellence of our law.” Amid this background of denouncing and refuting Islam and trying to prove the validity of Christianity, it may well be asked whether Robert was engaging in any deliberate distortion of the text for polemical ends. That is, did Robert alter the meaning of the text in translation, *knowing* that he was misrepresenting the original?

For Burman, Robert and the other medieval Latin translators of the Qurʾān could not be seen as guilty of the charge of deliberate distortion, or if they were guilty, then that distortion only occurred in rare, exceptional cases. In Burman’s view, while these translators might not have always been successful in translation and conveying the meaning, “they are, nevertheless, primarily reading the Qurʾānic texts as philologists and not as polemicists.”<sup>66</sup> Burman was, in part, responding to Daniel, in whose view Robert “was always liable to heighten or exaggerate a harmless text in order to give it a nasty or a licentious ring.”<sup>67</sup> More recently, Gázquez and Muñoz have argued along similar lines to Burman, characterizing Robert’s translation as (i) “integral” in the sense of not containing “important omissions,” (ii) “autonomous” in the sense that Robert’s rendering of passages is not identical with those to be found in e.g. Hermann of Carinthia’s translation of the *Doctrina Mahumet*, suggesting that he worked independently of the other translators, (iii) “interpretive” in the sense of sacrificing some literalism and also making use of Muslim interpretations of the text to understand difficulties (about which more below), and (iv) “formally adapted” in that the translation was adapted to suit the conventions of medieval Christian literature, while having an air of solemnity and formality.<sup>68</sup> On the specific question of whether Robert’s translation is “ideologically slanted,” Gázquez and Muñoz say that “even if this so in some cases, the resulting interpretations follow above all the precision of the message and always have some support in Muslim tradition.”<sup>69</sup>

The charge of malicious distortion is serious and should not be thrown

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65. It has been commonly suggested that Robert titled the Qurʾān “Lex Mahumet Pseudoprophete” (“The law of the False Prophet Muhammad”). This is not followed by Gázquez and Muñoz in their critical edition, where the title is given as follows: “Here begins the law of the Saracens, which they call Alchoran: that is, the collection of precepts.” See Gázquez and Muñoz (2022), p. 209.

66. Burman (2007), p. 13.

67. Daniel (1980), p. 142.

68. Gázquez and Muñoz (2022), pp. 36-44.

69. *Ibid.*, p. 40.

around lightly. This point of caution applies to translators who have a specific ideological agenda in mind when translating particular texts. Certainly, in Robert's case, the agenda behind translating the Qur'<sup>3</sup>ān was one of aiding polemic against Islam. But should that agenda lead to the automatic assumption or suspicion of malicious distortion instead of giving the benefit of the doubt that requires a high bar of proof to be overturned?

It is helpful here to think of an analogy, partly drawing on my own extensive experience as a translator. The ideology of the group calling itself the Islamic State is marginal in the bigger picture of the Muslim world. Yet many Muslims and non-Muslims have been interested in translating and analyzing Arabic-language texts produced by the group (e.g. school textbooks, statements of creed and doctrine and treatises justifying specific policies) with the aim of better understanding the group's ideology and ultimately trying to refute it. As such then, there is a clear agenda here that goes beyond purely objective inquiry. Beyond the Islamic State group's own supporters, however, few would automatically suspect that translators and analysts of the group's texts might be engaging in deliberate distortion with the goal of making the group's ideology and beliefs seem worse than they actually are, simply because there is a policy agenda of countering the Islamic State that underpins most of this work. The point here is not to equate Islam with the ideology of the Islamic State group, but only to emphasize that being hostile to a belief system should not suppose a pre-disposition to distorting that belief system's texts when they are translated with the aim of better understanding the belief system in order to refute it.

Specifically, as a note of caution with regards to levelling charges of distortion, we do not have a very clear idea of the day-to-day process behind Robert's production of his translation of the Qur'<sup>3</sup>ān, beyond the inference that in translating the text, he seems to have worked independently of the other translators on Peter's project. If he found certain parts of the text difficult to understand at first sight, how did he resolve them? Existing scholarship has noted that in certain instances, Robert adopts an interpretation of a term that has a clear parallel in surviving works of Muslim exegesis on the Qur'<sup>3</sup>ān.<sup>70</sup> This includes examples where Robert has been accused of distortion.<sup>71</sup> The example of Sūrat al-Nās also appears to suggest Robert's awareness of different ways to interpret the end of that sūra. But what would it mean to say Robert

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70. E.g. Burman (2007) pp. 36-40.

71. See most recently Mouhamadoul Khaly Wélé, "Using Muslim Exegesis in Europe in the 12th and 18th Centuries: A Comparative Study of Robert of Ketton's and George Sale's Approaches," in *TLQ*, pp. 349-361. Wélé focused on the examples of 12:31 and 23:38.

‘made use’ of Muslim exegesis? Do we envision Robert having books of tafsir in front of him? A single tafsir that is now lost to us? A compilation of excerpts of tafsir from different authors for select passages? One should be cautious about assuming that tafsirs were then readily available.<sup>72</sup>

In addition, if Robert did make use tafsirs, attempting to identify Robert’s reliance on specific works of tafsir may prove to be an impossible task, though future research may find it worthwhile to do a detailed side-by-side comparison between Ibn ‘Aṭiyya’s tafsir, which may have been available to him, and Robert’s translation. The likely problem will be that for many given verses, overlapping explanations will be found in multiple tafsirs, and in certain cases, parallels within a given tafsir, and divergences found in other cases will then cast doubt on the hypothesis of reliance on that particular tafsir, or instances where one might have expected use of exegesis but the use of exegesis does not appear to be there.

For example, consider Qurʾān 2:62, noted by Burman, where Robert appears to have made use of exegesis. The verse mentions those who have become Jews, the Christians and the Sabians. Who are the Sabians? In Robert’s translation, the term Sabians is rendered as “the one who abandons his law and converts to another” (*lege sua relicta in aliam tendens*). This rendering, as Burman notes, has a parallel in al-Ṭabarī’s tafsir, and thus Robert is effectively translating the word Sabians by means of an exegetical explanation in several words.<sup>73</sup> But many other tafsirs repeat this, without mentioning the source. Hence it becomes difficult to determine if Robert used a specific tafsir. On the other hand, if we consider al-Ṭabarī’s tafsir of the end of Sūrat al-Nās, we find that he adopts the explanation that Satan is the evil whisperer and that he can whisper into the hearts of jinn and men, where *of jinn and men* at the end of the verse is taken as a clarifier of the “men” in whose hearts Satan whispers.<sup>74</sup>

Yet another question: Was Robert just relying on oral transmission of interpretation? In other words, was the exegesis that comes through in his translation the result of what he heard from learned Muslims or people of Muslim origin who might have converted to Christianity? In his preface to *Liber Contra Sectam Sive Haeresim Saracenorum*, Peter mentions that he “added a Saracen also to the company of the Christian translators” so that there would be complete confidence in the translations, and he tells us that “the

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72. On this point, cf. *ibid.*, p. 356.

73. Burman (2007), p. 37.

74. al-Ṭabarī, Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad b. Jarīr. *Jāmiʿ al-bayān ʿan taʾwīl āy al-Qurʾān*. Ed. ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbd al-Muḥsin al-Ṭurkī et al. 26 vols. (Cairo: Dār Hajar, 1422/2001).

Saracen's name was Mahumeth."<sup>75</sup> Who exactly was this "Mahumeth" and was he Robert's informant, assisting him in translating passages of the Qur<sup>3</sup>ān that Robert found difficult?<sup>76</sup> There are no clear answers to these questions, and for now it only seems safe to assume that in a general sense, Robert may have used exegesis, without purporting to identify specific works of exegesis or engaging in speculation as to how he became familiar with exegesis for certain passages.

Obstacles to making charges of deliberate distortion are greater and perhaps insurmountable. What might be seen as distortion could be the result of simple error, incomplete access to exegetical information, the result of dependence on faulty oral transmission, and the like. It would seem to me that to afford some basis of seriously entertaining the charge of distortion, one would have to establish a clear and extensive pattern of apparently egregious errors that point in the directions of an ideological agenda where Islam is made to look bad and Christianity is vindicated, while simultaneously proving that Robert 'knew better'. To date, none of the cases examined as possible examples of deliberate distortion by Robert have established anything along those lines.

For example, Óscar de la Cruz Palma has asserted that in Robert's translation, "references to Jewish traditions that can be found in the Qur<sup>3</sup>ān are made into attacks on Christianity."<sup>77</sup> He only offers two examples however:

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75. Kritzeck (1964), p. 229.

76. Beyond this specific possibility of "Mahumeth" acting as an intermediary for tafsir, Gázquez and Muñoz (2022, pp. 42-43) have suggested that "Mahumeth" might have played a broader role as an intermediary orally rendering the Arabic text into Romance (that is, the spoken vernacular descended from Latin and by this stage clearly distinct from literary Latin), which Robert would then have rendered into Latin. Besides noting Peter's testimony about "Mahumeth," Gázquez and Muñoz note that Robert's translation occasionally uses words that are more vernacular in feel and occasionally leaves Arabic terms untranslated. In addition, it is attested that an Arabic work could first be rendered into Romance before being translated into Latin: this was most notably the case with the *Liber Scale Machometi* ("Book of Muhammad's Ladder"), an apocryphal Arabic work about the Prophet's journey into the Heavens that was first translated into Spanish by one "Abraham" and from Spanish into Latin by Bonaventura de Senis in the latter half of the thirteenth century CE. However, Gázquez and Muñoz admit that these lines of evidence do not prove their suggestion. I myself do not find the notion convincing. For an edition of the *Liber Scale Machometi*, see Edeltraud Werner (ed.), *Liber Scale Machometi*, (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1986).

77. Óscar de la Cruz Palma, "Robert de Ketton, traditore: Manifestations of

The first is that of Qurʾān 2:223, which is translated by Robert as follows:

*mulieres vobis subiectas penitus pro modo vestro, ubicumque volueritis, perarate, Deum timentes, ad quem omnium fit reditus, qui bonis praemia, malis cruciatus tribuit. vestris animabus utiles estote.*

Plough the women subject to you entirely in your way, wherever you wish, fearing God, to whom all return, and who bestows rewards on the good and torments on the evil. Be useful to yourselves.

The Arabic original reads:

*niṣāʾukum ḥarḥun lakum faʾtū ḥarḥakum annā shiʾtum waqaddimū li-anfusikum wa-ittaqū l-lāha wa-ʿlamū annakum mulāqūhu wabashiri l-muʾminin*

Robert’s somewhat free rendering again has elements of omission, alteration and addition. The word “subject” (Latin: *subiectas*) is not in the original and appears to be Robert’s interpretation of “your women” as referring either to one’s lawful wife or one’s slave woman. Robert omits the description of the women as *ḥarḥ* (which might be rendered by the Latin *fundus*), and instead captures the imagery of the farmland and coming to it with the Latin verb *perarare* (“to plough”), while understanding that the reference is to having sexual relations with one’s women. He omits the imperative verbs in the statement: “*And know that you will meet Him [God], and give glad tidings to the believers*” (which in Latin would be rendered by *scitote* and *evangelizate gaudium* respectively), and instead turns them into general axioms that all things return to God, while adding that God brings torments upon the evil, which is not in the original Arabic. Finally, he does not render “and fear God” as an imperative, but instead uses a present participle (“fearing God”), while moving the phrase to a new sentence.

In most tafsirs, the expression *faʾtū ḥarḥakum* is explained as being a rebuke to the Jewish superstition that adopting a certain sexual position in intercourse would result in a squint-eyed child,<sup>78</sup> but Robert does not hint at this view in his translation, which might convey the impression that any form of sexual relation with one’s wife or concubine is permitted. He may also be criticized in particular for making “and be useful to yourselves” a new sentence, because while his rendering of the phrase is not necessarily incorrect, a possible connection assumed between the command and sexual

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anti-Islamic Radicalism in the First Latin Translation of the Qurʾan,” in TLQ, p. 120.

78. See, Tafsirs of Ṭabarī, Ibn ʿAṭṭiya, Ibn Kathīr on the verse.

relations is missed,<sup>79</sup> in that the command has been interpreted as a reminder to remember God before engaging in sexual relations.<sup>80</sup> Robert could also have stuck more closely to the original by rendering “and fear God” with an imperative (*et timeate Deum*) rather than a present participle, though it does not strike me as wholly implausible to connect fear of God/piety with sexual relations with one’s women, just as the phrase “and fear God” may also be connected with it.

Christians who read this passage were disgusted by what they saw as permitting obscenity in sexual relations and sexual violence, and it seems a reasonable point, as Oscar de la Cruz Palma notes, that Robert’s rendering in particular contributed to this disgust, in that the concept of women “subject to you” might have given the impression that all women under the rule of Islam could be raped.<sup>81</sup>

The second case De la Cruz Palma highlights is that of Q17:45-46, where Robert translates the passage as: “We will place a space and a veil [*intercapedinem atque velamen*] during the recitation of the Qur’an, while imprinting seals on their hearts<sup>82</sup> so that they cannot know.” In this case, Oscar de la Cruz Palma’s argument, which focuses on Robert’s use of the word *velamen* (“veil”), comes across as rather convoluted.<sup>83</sup> I would note that Robert’s particular turn of phrase here—“a space and a veil”—is his rendering of the Arabic word *ḥijāb* (lit. “veil” or “curtain”). In other words, Robert is using two Latin nouns for one in the original Arabic: an example of embellishment through addition, which can of course be criticized. Yet it does not seem to me that there is some deliberate manipulation here to reinforce a hostile dichotomy between Islam and Christianity. It turns out that on another occasion, Robert uses the same turn of phrase (though inverted) for the same Arabic word. In that other context, the reference is to the seclusion of Maryam from her family when she withdrew to some place in the East (Q 19:16-17), Robert’s rendering, translated into English states: “This book also does not pass over how a veil and a space [*velamen et intercapedo*] fell upon Mary’s kin as she departed from her family

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79. However, this is not the unanimous view of the phrase, and it has also been interpreted in a more general sense. See e.g. Tafsir al-Tabari.

80. Ibn ‘Aṭīyya al-Andalusī, Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq b. Ghālib. *al-Muḥarraru al-wajīz fī tafsīr al-Kitāb al-‘Azīz*. 6 vols. Ed. ‘Abd al-Salām ‘Abd al-Shāfi Muḥammad. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1422/2001.

81. Óscar de la Cruz Palma, Op. Cit, p. 116.

82. i.e. The hearts of the disbelievers.

83. Óscar de la Cruz Palma (2021), pp. 117-120.

towards an eastern place.”<sup>84</sup>

There are other passages of the Qurʾān that could have been taken by Robert to reinforce hostility to Christianity, partly based on Islamic exegesis, and yet that dichotomy reinforcement is not to be found. For example, if we look at the explanations in the tafsir of Ibn ʿAṭīyya (480-ca. 542/1087-ca.1148), then it is to be noted that in his tafsir for Q 1:7, the phrase “those who have incurred Your wrath” is explained as referring to the Jews, while the phrase “those who are astray” is said to be referring to the Christians<sup>85</sup> - an explanation that is to be found in most tafsirs and is ultimately traced back to the Prophet himself. There is no hint of this in Robert’s translation of the chapter, even though it might have been useful for him to highlight such exegesis if he knew of it.

In other instances where Robert might have wished to engage in distortion for polemical purposes, one does not find such manipulation, most notably in the Qurʾānic passages that describe Paradise which medieval Christians found scandalous because of what they perceived to be a materialistic conception of it, as well passages that extoll Prophet ʿĪsā and his mother Maryam which might be exploited by Christian apologists to prove that the Qurʾān actually concedes the validity of Christian doctrine within its messaging.<sup>86</sup> The most notable error identified in this context occurs in Robert’s rendering of Q 3:45, where he appears to have misread *wajīh* (“honoured”) as *wajh* (“face”), resulting in the translation that Prophet ʿĪsā will be “the face of all peoples in this world and the Hereafter” (*facies omnium gentium in hoc saeculoque futuro*).<sup>87</sup> This however seems to be a sincere mistake rather than a polemical distortion.

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84. Other instances of Robert’s rendering of the word *hijāb*: “a seeming threshold” (7:46), “outside the door” (in reference to asking something of the Prophet’s wives while positioned behind a partition: 33:53), “sunset” (38:32, in reference to something becoming concealed because of a *hijāb*, in a difficult passage that has led to different renderings among different translators), “division” (41:5) between the believers and disbelievers, “a veil” (42:51, only using the word *velamen*, and referring to the separation between God and man).

85. *al-Muharraru*.

86. On these points, see Burman (2007), pp. 26-27. The most notable data point in favour of Burman’s contention here is that while the Qurʾān makes reference to *Rūḥ al-Qudus* (which can be legitimately translated as “the Holy Spirit”), Robert does not use the direct Latin equivalent *Spiritus Sanctus*, which is the standard formulation for the Holy Spirit in describing the Christian Trinity.

87. This error was noted in Hagemann (1985), pp. 54-56.

## **Conclusion**

As highlighted, Robert's translation is generally a free translation that would not be deemed an acceptable way of rendering the Qur'an today. However, the notion of deliberate distortion by Robert has not been convincingly established. The standard of proof in this regard is already quite high and may be insurmountable. Even so, portraying Robert's approach to the text as that of a 'philologist' can risk down playing the fact that he was not translating the text out of objective interest, but rather as part of a project commissioned by Peter that sought to expose the supposed fallacious and malignant basis of Islam. To put it another way, it was possible for him to approach the text as a polemicist while not distorting its contents.

**Appendix: English Translation of Robert's Latin rendering  
Suras 98-113 with parallel English Translation<sup>88</sup>**

98	Al-Bayyinah (The Clear Proof)
<p>In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful</p> <p>Since they had previously known nothing, dissension and disagreement have arisen among the people of the books and those who assert that God has partners. For they have been faced with the Messenger of God who has come and recited to them the blessed books, in which the divine precepts have been written, and preached to them that they should worship one God and continually invoke Him by praying with pure heart, and bestow necessities on those who ask for them (things that the right law counsels). But the men subject to these laws are worse than all others, since they remain disbelievers and add partners to God. Hence they will forever endure the perpetual Hellfire. As for the believers, the God-fearing, and the doers of good- the best of all beings- they will obtain the great reward in God's presence: namely, Paradise watered with fountains.</p>	<p>In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful</p> <p>Those who disbelieve among the People of the Book and the idolaters will not desist until the clear proof comes unto them, a messenger from God reciting scriptures purified, wherein are books upright. Those who were given the Book did not become divided until after the clear proof had come unto them. They were not commanded but to worship God, devoting religion entirely to Him, as ḥanīfīs, and to perform the prayer, and to give the alms—that is the upright religion. Truly the disbelievers among the People of the Book and the idolaters are in the Fire of Hell, abiding therein; it is they who are the worst of creation. Truly those who believe and perform righteous deeds, it is they who are the best of creation. Their reward is with their Lord, Gardens of Eden with rivers running below, abiding therein forever, God being content with them and they being content with Him. That is for whosoever fears his Lord.</p>

88. The English translation is based on Nasr, Seyyed Hossein et al, *The Study Qur'an* (New York: HarperCollins, 2015).

99	Al-Zalzala (The Earthquake)
<p>In the name of the Lord, the Compassionate, the Merciful</p> <p>On the day when the earth is to be shaken and will cast off all its heavy things, and every soul will give an account of its every deed: by God's order, men will come in order, so as to hear God who will show everyone all of their deeds: where a good deed as large as a small ant gives rise to bliss, and an evil deed of the same extent gives rise to unhappiness.</p>	<p>In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful</p> <p>When the earth is shaken with her shaking, and the earth yields up her burdens, and man says, "What ails her?" That Day she shall convey her chronicles; for thy Lord inspired her. That Day mankind shall issue forth upon diverse paths to witness their deeds. So whosoever does a mote's weight of good shall see it. And whosoever does a mote's weight of evil shall see it.</p>
100	al-ʿAdiyāt (The Chargers)
<p>In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful</p> <p>When the horses have emitted a noise through the panting of their chest, and a fire has been struck from stones because of the blows of their feet upon them, and the dust raised from the earth falls in the morning after a raid has been carried out, the man eager for goods and riches in no way renders thanks or glory to God. Surely he has considered that God will resurrect men from the pits and reveal to them all their deeds once they have been resurrected?</p>	<p>In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful</p> <p>By the panting chargers, by the strikers of sparks, by the raiders at dawn, raising thereby a trail of dust, penetrating to the center altogether, truly man is ungrateful to his Lord, and truly he is a witness to that, and truly he is fierce in his love for good things. Does he not know that when what lies within graves is turned inside out, and what lies within breasts is made known, truly on that Day their Lord shall be aware of them!</p>
101	Al-Qāri'a (The Calamity)

<p>In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful</p> <p>On the day of the grave commandment, men will come out like gnats, moving forward from here and there, and the mountains will become like plucked wool. And the one for whom the heavy weight will incline will live the best life, whereas the one who has a light weight will rush straight into the burning fire.</p>	<p>In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful</p> <p>The calamity; what is the calamity? And what shall apprise thee of the calamity? A day wherein mankind shall be like scattered moths, and the mountains shall be like carded wool. As for one whose scales are heavy, he shall enjoy a life contenting. And as for one whose scales are light, an abyss shall be his mother. And what shall apprise thee of her? It is a raging fire.</p>
102	Al-Takāthur
<p>In the name of the Lord, the Compassionate, the Merciful</p> <p>Since your numbers and your affairs grew great by virtue of Our kindness, you came up to the traps out of negligence. This will evidently be held against you, when, once the matter and the fiery heat of the hearth have been seen by your eyes, all your acts will be inquired about by Us.</p>	<p>In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful</p> <p>Vying for increase distracts you, till you visit the graves. Nay! Soon you will know. Indeed! Soon you will know. Nay! If you knew with the knowledge of certainty, you would surely see Hellfire. Then you would surely see it with the eye of certainty. Then surely you will be questioned that Day about the blessing.</p>
103	Al-ʿAṣr (The Declining Day)
<p>In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful</p> <p>By this very hour, and history, man is pursuing loss and perdition, except the one who believes, does good works, and advises and upholds the truth.</p>	<p>In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful</p> <p>By the declining day, truly mankind is in loss, save those who believe, perform righteous deeds, exhort one another to truth, and exhort one another to patience.</p>
104	Al-Humaza (The Slanderer)

<p>In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful The one who vilifies and disparages things, and the greedy accumulator of money that he thinks will last for him while deeming himself immortal, will be damned amid a blazing fire, which never ceases, burns the hearts of men and presses upon their hearts from above.</p>	<p>In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Woe unto every slandering backbiter who amasses wealth and tallies it, supposing that his wealth makes him immortal. Nay! He shall surely be cast into the crushing Fire. And what shall apprise thee of the crushing Fire? The Fire of God, ignited, which engulfs hearts. Truly it is enclosed upon them in pillars outstretched.</p>
<p>105</p>	<p>Al-Fil (The Elephant)</p>
<p>In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful Surely it is known to you how God caused the schemes of the people of the elephant to go astray, sending against them very many groups of many kinds of birds, which cleared them away like chaff by hurling black stones at them?</p>	<p>In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Hast thou not seen how thy Lord dealt with the masters of the elephant? Did He not make their scheming go astray, and send against them birds in swarms, pelting them with stones of baked clay, such that He made them like devoured husks?</p>
<p>106</p>	<p>Quraysh</p>
<p>In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful Since the people of Quraysh have now obtained security in their summer and winter travel and forever, let them invoke in supplication and with pure heart the Lord of this house, who made them become safe and secure when they were previously afraid, and made them become rich and satisfied when they were previously needy.</p>	<p>In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. For the secure passage of the Quraysh, their secure passage in the journey of winter and of summer; so let them worship the Lord of this house, Who relieved them of hunger and made them safe from fear.</p>
<p>107</p>	<p>Al-Māʿūn (Small Kindnesses)</p>

<p>In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful</p> <p>Those who speak against the law, deprive orphans of their fortune, forget prayers, and do no good for anyone using their own fortune except in order to show off and for the sake of superstition, will be utterly destroyed for being wicked people.</p>	<p>In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful.</p> <p>Hast thou seen the one who denies religion? That is the one who drives away the orphan, and does not urge feeding the indigent. So woe unto the praying who are heedless of their prayers, those who strive to be seen, yet refuse small kindnesses.</p>
108	Al-Kawthar (Abundant Good)
<p>In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful</p> <p>We have now prepared a fount in Paradise for you. So pour out prayer before God, and humbly sacrifice to Him. Indeed your enemy will lack helpers and posterity.</p>	<p>In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful.</p> <p>Truly We have bestowed abundant good upon thee. So pray to thy Lord and sacrifice. Truly thine enemy shall be the one without posterity.</p>
109	Al-Kāfirūn (Disbelievers)
<p>In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful</p> <p>Speak to the disbelieving people as follows: I do not follow your law and sect, nor do you follow mine. Therefore to me be mine [my law and sect], and to you yours.</p>	<p>In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful.</p> <p>Say, “O disbelievers! I worship not what you worship; nor are you worshippers of what I worship; nor am I a worshipper of what you worship; nor are you worshippers of what I worship. Unto you your religion, and unto me my religion.”</p>
110	Al-Naṣr (Help)
<p>In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful</p> <p>When the divine protection and liberation come, and you see many peoples adopting God’s law, ask God to grant them pardon and mercy, for He is compassionate and the bestower of pardon.</p>	<p>In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful.</p> <p>When God’s Help and Victory come and you see mankind entering God’s religion in throngs, hymn the praise of thy Lord, and seek forgiveness from Him. Truly He is Ever Relenting.</p>
111	Al-Masad (The Palm Fiber)

<p>In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful</p> <p>Never has Abū Lahab's<sup>89</sup> money or profit been of any help to him in preventing his hand from being destroyed; and he will eventually enter a hot fire, where his wife, bound by the neck with a rope and chains, will carry wood.</p>	<p>In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful.</p> <p>May the hands of Abū Lahab perish, and may he perish! His wealth avails him not, nor what he has earned. He shall enter a blazing Fire. And his wife, carrier of firewood, upon her neck is a rope of palm fiber.</p>
<p>112</p>	<p>Al-Ikhlās (Sincerity)</p>
<p>In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful</p> <p>Say with constancy to them, that there is one God, indispensable for everything, and incorporeal, who has neither begotten nor was begotten, and He has no one like Him.</p>	<p>In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful.</p> <p>Say, "He, God, is One, God, the Eternally Sufficient unto Himself. He begets not; nor was He begotten. And none is like unto Him."</p>
<p>113</p>	<p>Al-Falaq (The Daybreak)</p>
<p>In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful</p> <p>In the name of God, the Lord of the visible circle,<sup>90</sup> sanctify yourself, asking Him to protect you from His evil work, the evil darkness of night, and the harms brought about by mages, jealous ones and those who cast spells.</p>	<p>In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful.</p> <p>Say, "I seek refuge in the Lord of the daybreak from the evil of what He has created, from the evil of darkness when it enshrouds, from the evil of those who blow upon knots, and from the evil of the envier when he envies."</p>

89. Written Avileahab in Gázquez and Muñoz's edition of the text.

90. The "visible circle" is Robert's rendering of al-falaq, which is normally understood to be the dawn. As Yolles suggests, this specific rendering reflects Robert's background in astronomy and astrology.