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The “Egyptian Vulgate” in Europe: An Investigation into the Version that Shaped European Scholarship on the Arabic Bible

Introduction

In the years from 1818 to 1821, August Scholz (1792–1852), a Catholic orientalist and biblical scholar, made many journeys to libraries across Europe seeking New Testament (NT) manuscripts. He wrote an account of his travels in his book *Biblisch-kritische Reise*, and in this book, Scholz wrote about all the NT manuscripts he encountered in each library he visited, whether they were in Greek, Latin, Syriac, or Arabic.¹ What attracts the attention when it comes to the Arabic NT manuscripts is that he always compared their texts to the text of the printed edition of Erpenius.² This edition of the Arabic NT was prepared in 1616 by Thomas Erpenius (1584–1624), the professor of Arabic studies at Leiden University—that is, two centuries before the time of Scholz. It was the first full Arabic NT to be printed in Europe, and its text was taken from Near Eastern manuscripts that will be discussed below. Those manuscripts which received particular attention from Scholz were those, such as MS Vatican, BAV, Ar. 13, whose text was rather different from that of Erpenius’s edition.³

¹ Johann Martin Augustin Scholz, *Biblisch-Kritische Reise in Frankreich, der Schweiz, Italien, Palästina und im Archipel in den Jahren 1818, 1819, 1820, 1821* (Leipzig: Fleischer, 1823).

² Thomas Erpenius, ed. *Novum D.N. Jesu Christi Testamentum arabice ex Bibliotheca Leidensi* (Leiden: Typographia Erpeniana Linguarum Orientalium, 1616).

³ Scholz, *Biblisch-kritische Reise*, pp. 59–60, 71, 87–90.

Scholz was not the only one who undertook a comparison with this specific text. The NT scholar Franz Delitzsch (1813–1890), in his commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews, also used Erpenius’s text to compare with the text in MS St. Petersburg, National Library of Russia, ANS 327.⁴ That manuscript represents a different version from the one in the Erpenius edition,⁵ however Delitzsch considered it to be the source text of the Erpenius edition because of the similarities he saw between them. NT manuscripts are even compared to Erpenius’s edition in some manuscript catalogs of the oriental collections of European libraries: for example, in the catalog of the Bodleian Library’s oriental manuscripts collection published in 1821, Alexander Nicoll (1793-1828) noted that the text of the Gospels in MS Oxford, Bodl., Or. 265 was identical to the Erpenius edition. At the same time, since the text of the Gospels in MS Oxford, Bodl., Or. 299 does not match Erpenius’s edition, Nicoll offered the reader two pericopes from Matthew for comparison. He also commented that the text of MS Oxford, Bodl., Canon. Or. 129, which contains the Pauline and Catholic Epistles and the Acts of the Apostles, matches the Erpenius edition.⁶

These examples and others imply that the Erpenius edition was used as a reference point for (at least some) European scholars whenever they encountered a manuscript of the Arabic NT.⁷ Thus, Arabic Bible manuscripts were categorized as being either a manuscript whose text is identical to or similar to the text of Erpenius, or one of that small number of manuscripts whose text differs from it. This simple classification was performed for different units of the Arabic NT such as the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, and the Pauline Epistles.⁸

The Erpenius edition was one single episode in a whole chain of European printed material of the Arabic Bible during the Early Modern period. Slowly, however, it became clear that, in the case of the Gospels, there was only a single version that had been used in all printed material before and after Erpenius, such as the 1590 Gospels, the *Biblia sacra arabica* (1671), the Paris and London Polyglots (1645 and 1657), and Lagarde’s edition

⁴ Franz Delitzsch, *Commentar zum Briefe an die Hebräer: mit Archäologischen und Dogmatischen Excursen über das Opfer und die Versöhnung* (Leipzig: Dörffling & Franke, 1857), pp. 764-769.

⁵ A “version” in this context means a text that results from an independent translation process or a reworking of an existing Arabic translation through collation to another translation or source text.

⁶ Alexander Nicoll, *Bibliothecae Bodleianae Codicum Manuscriptorum Orientalium*. vol. I, Part 2: Arabicos (Oxford: E Typographeo Clarendoniano, 1821), pp. 16-21.

⁷ Several other scholars also compared the text of Erpenius to the texts they studied or edited. For example, Paul de Lagarde compared the variants in his edition of the Gospels to those of Erpenius in a table, see Paul de Lagarde, ed. *Die Vier Evangelien Arabisch aus der Wiener Handschrift Herausgegeben* (Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1864). Another case of comparison with the Erpenius edition can be seen in Guidi’s study of the Arabic Gospels, see Ignazio Guidi, *Le Traduzioni degli Evangelii in Arabo e in Etiopico* (Rome: Tipografia della r. accademia dei Lincei, 1888), pp. 23-24.

⁸ A biblical “unit” here means a group of books that are traditionally connected, so the five books of the Pentateuch are a unit, the four Gospels are a unit, and so are the fourteen Pauline Epistles.

(1864).⁹ In the case of the Pauline Epistles, all of these printed copies similarly present a single version, except for the Polyglots, which include a different version.¹⁰ The version that had appeared in Erpenius’s text seemed to be an “Arabic Vulgate”, corresponding to the Syriac Vulgate—that is, the Peshitta version—or the Latin Vulgate.¹¹

However, in the 19th century and particularly with the publication of *Le traduzioni degli Evangelii* by Ignazio Guidi in 1888, European scholarship started to realize quite how wide the range of Arabic Bible versions was; in his case, the range of versions of the Gospels. Guidi attempted to classify Arabic manuscripts of the Gospels into five versions.¹² He recognized among these versions a text which was celebrated in the Egyptian Coptic Church, and which he found in around forty manuscripts as well as in the printed material mentioned above; he named this the “Alexandrian Vulgate”.¹³

Fifty-six years after Guidi, in his magisterial work *Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur* (GCAL), Georg Graf recognized several versions of each unit of the Arabic Bible. He connected each version to what he considered was its specific *Vorlage*—Greek, Syriac, or Coptic—classifying those versions whose origin he could not identify and those which he had no access to in an additional category of unknown source.¹⁴ Graf identified yet more manuscripts of the version that Guidi studied. It is not clear whether he is the one who took the lead in calling this version the “Egyptian Vulgate” or not, but he was the one who extended the label to other celebrated versions of different units of the Arabic Bible.¹⁵ So,

⁹ Giovanni Battista Raimondi, and Antonio Tempesta. *Evangelium Sanctum Domini nostri Iesu Christi conscriptum a quatuor Evangelistis Sanctis idest, Matthaeo, Marco, Luca, et Iobanne* (Rome: Typographia Medicea, 1590); Sergius Risius, ed. *Biblia sacra arabica: sacrae congregationis de propganda fide jussu edita, ad usum ecclesiarum orientalium; additis e regione Bibliis latinis vulgatis*. 3 vols (Rome: Typis eiusdem Sacrae Congregat. de Propanda Fide, 1671); Guy Michel de Jay et al., eds. *Biblia 1. hebraica, 2. samaritana, 3. chaldaica, 4. graeca, 5. syriaca, 6. latina, 7. arabica. Quibus textus originales totius Scripturae sacrae, quorum pars in editione complutensi, deinde in Antverpiensi regis sumptibus extat, nunc integri, ex manuscriptis toto ferè orbe quaesitis exemplaribus, exhibentur...* 10 vols (Paris, 1629); Brian Walton, E. Castell, and Edward Pococke, eds. *S. Biblia Polyglotta Complectentia Textus Originales, Hebraicos cum Pentat. Samarit., Chaldaicos, Graecos. Versionumque Antiquarum Samarit., Chaldaic., Lat. Vulg., Aethiopicarum, Graec. Sept., Syriacae Arabicae, Persicae, Quicquid Comperari Poterat* (London: Roycroft, 1655); de Lagarde, *Die Vier Evangelien Arabisch*.

¹⁰ The Arabic Pauline Epistles in the Paris and London Polyglots are translated from Greek and was popular among the Melkite “Greek Orthodox Church.” The translation is attributed to ‘Abd Allāh ibn al-Faql al-Anṭākī. For more details about this version see my forthcoming Vevian Zaki, *The Pauline Epistles in Arabic: Manuscripts, Versions, and Transmission* (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming).

¹¹ See for example Johannes Gildemeister, *De Evangelii in Arabicum e Simpliciter Syriaca Translati* (Bonn: Adolphum Marcum, 1865), pp. 18, 26.

¹² Guidi, *Le Traduzioni degli Evangelii*, pp. 31-32.

¹³ Guidi called it the “recensione alessandrina vulgata”, see Guidi, *Traduzioni degli Evangelii*, p. 30. Burkitt later called this text a “standard text” and followed Guidi in calling it the “Alexandrian Vulgate”, see Francis Crawford Burkitt, “Arabic Versions”, in *Dictionary of the Bible: Dealing with its Language, Literature, and Contents Including the Biblical Theology*, I:136-138, (London/ New York: T. and T. Clark, 1898).

¹⁴ Graf, *GCAL*, vol. I.

¹⁵ Graf, *GCAL*, vol. I, p. 173.

for example, the version of the Pauline Epistles that is widespread in manuscripts and printed copies he named the “Egyptian Vulgate” version of the Pauline Epistles.

What we can see, then, is that it took European scholarship a long time, until the 19th century, to grasp the diversity of versions that are exhibited by Arabic NT manuscripts and attempt to deal with it. In fact, scholars generally abandoned the study of the Arabic Bible altogether at around this time, because of its secondary nature and what they felt was its lack of usefulness for textual criticism.¹⁶ However, substantial research had already taken place in Europe on the Arabic Bible in the 16th and 17th centuries, and most of this work was based on this “Egyptian Vulgate”. This paper follows the trail of the earliest manuscripts of this version of the Pauline Epistles to arrive at Europe, and the scholarship which was based on them. The paths of these manuscripts crossed in the late 16th and early 17th centuries in Western Europe, and they were a fertile source of scholarly activity, as will be examined below.

The history of Arabic Bible manuscripts, in general, has been examined as part of the broader history of Arabic learning and teaching in Europe, of Arabic book printing, or of missionary activity. In this scholarship, the focus has always been on the Pentateuch and the Gospels, and how those units participated in these processes. Vollandt, for instance, has examined the identity and history of manuscripts of the Pentateuch in the Polyglots and in the *Biblia sacra arabica*.¹⁷ Dennis Halft has recently considered the manuscript used in the 1590 Gospels in his study of the transmission of this version to the Safavid Iran.¹⁸ Many manuscripts have been briefly mentioned in the extensive work of Hamilton on Arabic learning and teaching,¹⁹ and he has devoted more space to them in discussing the

¹⁶ Vollandt has surveyed this point of view about the Arabic Bible held by many scholars; see Ronny Vollandt, *Arabic Versions of the Pentateuch: A Comparative Study of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Sources* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), pp. 3-4; and also, Hikmat Kashouh, *The Arabic Versions of the Gospels: The Manuscripts and their Families* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), p. 1.

¹⁷ See Ronny Vollandt, “The Arabic Pentateuch of the Paris Polyglot: Saadia Gaon’s Advent to the Republic of Letters”, in Sara Binay and Stefan Leder (ed.), *Translating the Bible into Arabic: Historical, Text Critical and Literary Aspects* (Beirut: Ergon Verlag Würzburg in Kommission, 2012), pp.19-35; and Ronny Vollandt, “Che Portono Al Ritorno Qui Una Bibbia Arabica Integra: A History of the *Biblia Sacra Arabica* (1671-73)”, in Juan Pedro Monferrer-Sala and Samir Khalil Samir (ed.), *Græco-Latina et Orientalia: Studia in Honorem Angeli Urbani Heptagenarii* (Beirut: CEDRAC, 2013), pp. 401-18; Ronny Vollandt, “From the Desks of a Coptic-Muslim Workshop: Paris, BnF, MS Ar. 1 and the Large-Scale Production of Luxurious Arabic Bibles in Early Ottoman Cairo”, in Esperanza Alfonso and Jonathan Decker (ed.), *Patronage, Production, and Transmission of Texts in Medieval and Early Modern Jewish Cultures* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014), pp. 231-265.

¹⁸ Dennis Halft, *The Arabic Vulgate in Safavid Persia*, Ph.D. dissertation submitted at Freie Universität Berlin, Germany, 2017.

¹⁹ See for example: Alastair Hamilton, *William Bedwell: the Arabist 1563 - 1632* (Leiden: Brill, 1985); Alastair Hamilton, “Eastern Churches and Western Scholarship”, in Anthony Grafton (ed.), *Rome Reborn: The Vatican Library and Renaissance Culture* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1993), pp. 225-250; Alastair Hamilton, “Isaac Casaubon the Arabist: ‘Video Longum Esse Iter.’” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 72 (2009), 143-168; Alastair Hamilton, “An Egyptian Traveller in the Republic of

relationship between Semitic languages and biblical studies in the Early Modern period.²⁰ Jones has also mentioned some of these manuscripts in his dissertation on the learning of Arabic in Europe,²¹ but the manuscripts of the Arabic Bible are not his main focus, and they are mentioned purely as a means of learning and teaching Arabic.²² None of this research has looked in a coherent way at manuscripts of the Pauline Epistles in Arabic, and their history of transmission before and after arriving in the hands of European scholars has been overlooked.

I will give, first, a general overview on manuscripts of the Pauline Epistles in Arabic in the Near East. Following that, some background is provided on the formation of Arabic collections in Europe, and in particular how this has affected manuscripts of the Pauline Epistles. Then a detailed description is given of the three manuscripts that form the focus—MS Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Ar. 23; MS Leiden, Universitaire Bibliotheken Leiden, Or. 217; and MS Leiden, Universitaire Bibliotheken Leiden, Acad. 2—before studying what is known about their history of acquisition. Finally, the ways in which these manuscripts have been used in the European scholarly realm, and how they have contributed to it, are explored.

Overview of Arabic Versions of the Pauline Epistles

Over three hundred manuscripts of the Pauline Epistles in Arabic are extant, with the manuscripts now located in many different places. In manuscripts dating to the 15th century or before, fourteen versions of the epistles can be detected. These versions did not all take shape at once, nor even over a relatively short period; rather they appeared in different historical moments.

The first set of versions of the Pauline Epistles in Arabic that we know about appeared in the 9th century. The four versions that have been found that date to this century all originate from Greek or Peshitta Syriac source texts. An example of a dated manuscript of one of these versions is MS Sinai, Ar. 151, which represents a translation made in

Letters: Josephus Barbatus or Abudacnus the Copt”, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 57 (1994), 123-150; and Alastair Hamilton, and Euan Cameron. “In Search of the Most Perfect Text: The Early Modern Printed Polyglot Bibles from Alcalá (1510-1520) to Brian Walton (1654-1658)”, in Euan Cameron (ed.), *The New Cambridge History of the Bible*, vol. III (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 138-156.

²⁰ Alastair Hamilton, “The Study of Tongues: The Semitic Languages and the Bible in the Renaissance”, in Euan Cameron (ed.), *The New Cambridge History of the Bible*, vol. III (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp.17-35

²¹ John Robert Jones, *Learning Arabic in Renaissance Europe (1505-1624)*, Ph.D dissertation submitted at University of London, 1988.

²² See also Johann Fück, *Die arabischen Studien in Europa bis in den Anfang des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Leipzig: Harrassowitz, 1955).

Damascus by Bishr ibn al-Sirrī in 867; its text is based on the Syriac Peshitta.²³ Another example, this time from a Greek *Vorlage*, is MS Sinai, Ar. 155 and its *membrum disjectum* MS London, British Library, Or. 8612; originally a single manuscript, this is dated to the 9th century based on its paleographical features.²⁴ In general, the surviving manuscripts from these early centuries are fewer in number than later manuscripts, but nevertheless, the manuscript evidence suggests that these versions continued to be copied from the 9th century through to the 13th century but disappeared after that.

By the late 12th century and especially during the 13th century, the rest of the versions arrived on the scene and some of them started to dominate, although the older versions were still in use, and two new versions in particular predominate. The first is a Peshitta-based version, the version that has been called the Egyptian Vulgate, as mentioned above; in this paper we will refer to it as Arab^{Syr}. The second version was translated from a Greek source text, and was very common in the Melkite Greek Orthodox tradition, particularly in liturgy. Later, it was also printed in the Paris and London Polyglots. These two versions eclipsed the older ones and were widely copied and distributed starting from the 13th century on.

The earliest manuscript of Arab^{Syr} which we know of is MS Sinai, Ar. 161, which dates to the late 12th century, more precisely to 1192 CE.²⁵ It would appear to have been used in a Melkite denomination, since its liturgical rubrics bear signs of Byzantine liturgy. However, based on the manuscript evidence, it seems that this version was not accepted in this denomination following this, as no other manuscripts of this version are detected in it. In fact, Arab^{Syr} prospered in the Coptic Church—of the 127 extant manuscripts of this version, fifty-three are found in Coptic churches or monasteries. The majority of the sixty-four Arab^{Syr} manuscripts currently in European repositories also bear witness to their Coptic provenance in their colophons, in their *waqf* or ‘endowment’ statements, in readers’ notes, or by being Coptic-Arabic manuscripts. Similarly, a manuscript of this version that is now found in the Chaldean cathedral of Mardin, in modern Turkey, under the shelf mark

²³ For an edition and translation of this manuscript, see the following: Harvey Staal, *Mt. Sinai Arabic Codex 151: Acts of the Apostles, Catholic epistles [Edition]* (Leuven: Peeters, 1984); Harvey Staal, *Mt. Sinai Arabic Codex 151, I. Pauline Epistles* (Leuven: Peeters, 1983); Harvey Staal, *Mt. Sinai Arabic Codex 151: Acts of the Apostles, Catholic epistles [Translation]* (Leuven: Peeters, 1984).

²⁴ Gibson edited MS Sinai, Ar. 155 in Margaret D. Gibson, ed. *An Arabic Version of the Epistles of St Paul to the Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, with Part of the Epistle to the Ephesians from a Ninth Century MS. in the Convent of St Catharine on Mount Sinai* (London, Cambridge: C.J. Clay and Sons, 1894). For a study of the manuscripts that represent this version, see Vevian Zaki, “The Textual History of the Arabic Pauline Epistles: One Version, Three Recensions, Six Manuscripts”, in Miriam L. Hjälml (ed.), *Senses of Scripture, Treasures of Tradition: The Bible in Arabic among Jews, Christians and Muslims* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), pp. 392-424.

²⁵ Aziz Suryal Atiya, *Catalogue Raisonné of the Mount Sinai Arabic Manuscripts: Complete Analytical Listing of the Arabic Collection Preserved in the Monastery of St. Catherine on Mt. Sinai*, translated from English by Joseph N. Youssef. (Alexandria: Al-Maaref Establishment, 1970), p. 315; Margaret D. Gibson, *Catalogue of the Arabic Mss. in the Convent of S. Catharine on Mount Sinai* (London: C. J. Clay and Sons, 1894), p. 24.

Mardin, CCM 56, contains a colophon to the effect that it was written in the monastery of St. Macarius (Mercūriyūs), in Wādī al-Naṭrūn in Egypt.²⁶

It certainly appears that Egypt was the main center of production of manuscripts containing the Arab^{Syr} version of the Pauline Epistles. Interestingly, the Copts not only adopted Arab^{Syr}, but they also adapted its text, using it as a base for new Arabic versions. These later versions were made by famous 13th-century Coptic scholars such as Yūḥannā al-Qalyūbī, Ibn Kātib Qayṣar, and the priest Gabriel (Ġubryāl) who later became the Coptic pope (1268–70). It seems justified, then, that this version, while from Syriac origins, is called the Egyptian Vulgate.

Arabic Manuscripts in Europe

The history of Arabic manuscript collections in Europe is, rather oddly, closely connected to the long history of the separation between churches in the East and the West. Following the Council of Chalcedon in 451 CE, Christological conflicts led to a clearer distinction between these churches. In the East, most of the churches were non-Chalcedonian. The Coptic and West Syriac churches, doctrinally ‘Jacobite’ or miaphysite, were distinguished from the East Syriac Church, which was doctrinally ‘Nestorian’ or dyophysite. While the former churches stressed the unity of the human and divine natures of Christ, the latter church stressed the individuality of these natures after their union, and was consequently considered heretical by other churches.²⁷ Another Eastern church, the Melkite, ‘Rūm’ or Greek Orthodox Church, kept the Chalcedonian doctrine along with the Western Catholic Church. However, these gradually embarked on divergent paths. The doctrinal gap between the two churches was exacerbated in particular by their differing views on the procession of the Holy Spirit: from ‘the Father and the Son’ versus from ‘the Father’ alone. This conflict became known as ‘Filioque’, a Latin term meaning ‘and from the Son’.²⁸

In addition to these divisions within Christianity, the rise of Islam in the 7th century represented a major challenge to all the Christian communities within the new formed Islamic territories, whether they were Chalcedonian or non-Chalcedonian. They became more involved in dealing with this new context, and in turn their isolation from Rome escalated. Not the least of the challenges were the various waves of conversion to Islam among these communities, which led to them becoming a minority.²⁹ Another major

²⁶ Addai Scher, *Catalogue des manuscrits syriaques et arabes conservés dans la Bibliothèque épiscopale de Séert (Kurdistan) avec notes bibliographiques*, (Mosul: Impr. des Pères Dominicains, 1905), p. 30; Graf, *GCAL*, vol. I, p. 178.

²⁷ The story of the East Syriac Church is detailed in Wilhelm Baum, and Dietmar W. Winkler. *The Church of the East: A Concise History* (London: Routledge, 2010).

²⁸ For more on the schism between the Eastern and Western churches, see V. C. Samuel, *The Council of Chalcedon Re-Examined* (Philadelphia, PA: Xlibris, 2001).

²⁹ For the classical study of the quantitative analysis of conversion in different regions of the Near East, see Richard W. Bulliet, *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period an Essay in Quantitative History* (Cambridge,

challenge was the switch from their original languages (Coptic, Greek, and Syriac) to Arabic, which required adjustments to daily life, in the works they authored, and in translating their written heritage and scripture. In sum, both doctrinal differences and internal challenges widened the gap between the churches in the Islamicate world and the Western churches and strengthened their estrangement.

Many attempts at a union between the two sides took place across the centuries on the part of Rome. This may have been influenced by the end of the Crusades and the search for some cultural element with which to unite Eastern and Western Christians.³⁰ One of the most important attempts at unity—and here the discussion begins to relate once more to the formation of Arabic manuscript collections—was the Council of Florence (1438–45). It was called by Pope Eugene IV and primarily aimed at uniting the Eastern and Western churches, an endeavor that was never truly achieved.³¹ However, this council proved to be a watershed moment in the formation of the oriental manuscripts collection of the Vatican Library. Arabic manuscripts presented to the pope on this occasion, mainly by the delegates of the Coptic Church, were the seeds of the huge oriental collection which has been growing ever since.³² Slowly, many such collections were formed in other European libraries and museums. The golden age for the acquisition of Arabic manuscripts, including biblical manuscripts, commenced at the close of the 16th century and stretched into the 17th century. For example, the Bodleian Library at Oxford had a single Arabic manuscript at the beginning of the 17th century, yet by the end of that century it had amassed a collection of more than 1500 manuscripts.³³

Attempts at unification took strength again at the end of the 16th century, with the reign of two Coptic popes who showed a certain flexibility and willingness to unify with the Catholic Church: John XIV (pope 1571–85) and Gabriel VIII (pope 1587–1603).³⁴ As a

Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1979); for a recent study see Nimrod Hurvitz, Christian C. Sahner, Uriel I. Simonsohn, and Luke B. Yarbrough, eds., *Conversion to Islam in the Premodern Age: A Sourcebook* (Oakland, Ca: University of California Press: 2020).

³⁰ Aurélien Girard, “Teaching and Learning Arabic in Early Modern Rome: Shaping a Missionary Language.” in Jan Loop et al. (ed.) *The Teaching and Learning of Arabic in Early Modern Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), pp. 189-212, espec. 189; Alastair Hamilton, “The English Interest in the Arabic-Speaking Christians”, in Gül A. Russell (ed.), *The “Arabick” Interest of the Natural Philosophers in Seventeenth-Century England* (Leiden: Brill, 1993), pp. 30-53, espec. 31.

³¹ See more details about this council in Alastair Hamilton, *The Copts and the West 1439 - 1822: the European Discovery of the Egyptian Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 49-57.

³² The other collection that is connected to this council is the Armenian manuscript collection, with manuscripts donated by the Armenian delegates. See Hamilton, “Eastern Churches and Western Scholarship”, pp. 227-232.

³³ Colin Wakefield, “Arabic Manuscripts in The Bodleian Library: The Seventeenth-Century Collections”, in Gül A. Russell (ed.), *The “Arabick” Interest of the Natural Philosophers in Seventeenth-Century England* (Leiden: Brill, 1993), pp. 128-146, espec. 128.

³⁴ Magdi Guirguis, and Michael Shelley. *The Emergence of the Modern Coptic Papacy: The Popes of Egypt*. vol. III. (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2011), pp. 20-25. It seems that the process of negotiation

result, the learning of Arabic and the acquisition of manuscripts became crucial and heated topics during that era.³⁵ Arabic studies departments were inaugurated in many universities, and missionary work was an element in the scholarly learning and teaching of Arabic. Arabic scholars were biblically oriented and used the text of the Arabic Bible in their learning and teaching and in producing grammar books.³⁶ In Rome, the initiative was taken by Pope Gregory XIII (pope 1572–85) through the establishment of the Maronite College in 1584 for both Eastern Christians and other converts to Christianity from the Near East. Moreover, he was influential in establishing the Medici Press in Rome to print books in oriental languages. In 1622, Gregory XV founded the *Congregatio de Propaganda Fide*, which systematically continued what Gregory XIII had initiated by promoting oriental languages.³⁷

Following the Reformation, the Protestants saw in the Eastern Christians a rejection of the basic beliefs of the Catholics such as papal supremacy, despite their similar practices. This increased Protestant interest in Eastern Christians, with a desire to learn more about them.³⁸ However, the learning and teaching of Arabic were less organized among the Protestants, and this need was felt by individuals who strove to learn Arabic in the absence of sufficient materials. In Rome, neophytes and converts were mainly responsible for transcribing Arabic manuscripts; however in Protestant areas (by which I mean primarily England, Germany, and the Netherlands), European scholars undertook this task themselves, and consequently there was a greater lack of manuscripts among Protestant scholars.³⁹ Some of the most influential European scholars in these countries, William Bedwell (1563-1632) in England and Thomas Erpenius (1584-1624) in the Netherlands, for instance, never travelled to the Near East. In turn, they either had to transcribe Arabic manuscripts themselves, or depend on agents to buy Arabic manuscripts from. It is no surprise, then, that those manuscripts that were available were borrowed back and forth and shared by several scholars, each utilizing them for different purposes. Even if this were not the case for all Arabic manuscripts, it is very evident when it comes to manuscripts of

involved delegates being dispatched back and forth, with little concrete result except for more Arabic manuscripts being brought to Rome; see Hamilton, “Eastern Churches and Western Scholarship”, p. 225.

³⁵ For the learning of Arabic in Europe in the Middle Ages, see G. J. Toomer, *Eastern Wisdom and Learning: The Study of Arabic in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 7-13.

³⁶ More details on scholars who learned and taught Arabic are found in Toomer, *Eastern Wisdom and Learning*; Jones, “Learning Arabic in Renaissance Europe”; and Loop et al., *The Teaching and Learning of Arabic*.

³⁷ Girard, “Teaching and learning Arabic in Rome”, pp. 191-194.

³⁸ Hamilton, “The English Interest”, pp. 31-32.

³⁹ They were not, however, absent for teaching. The Egyptian Joseph Barbatus or Yūsuf ibn Abī Dāqūn taught Erpenius the colloquial language, and Aḥmad Qāsim al-Hajarī taught him the formal language. See Hamilton, “An Egyptian Traveller”, and Hamilton, “The English Interest”.

the Pauline Epistles—to the best of my knowledge, in these Protestant circles, only three manuscripts existed, to which we will now turn.⁴⁰

The Pauline Epistles in Arabic in Europe

Currently, eighty-five manuscripts of the Pauline Epistles in Arabic are known to be extant in European repositories.⁴¹ These manuscripts arrived in Europe over a long period, from the 15th century to the 20th century. It is not always possible to trace the whole acquisition history of a manuscript, however, we know of only three manuscripts that had reached the Protestant parts of Europe by the late 16th century. In this section we draw a full profile of their backgrounds in the East before they were transmitted to Europe.

MS Vatican, BAV, Ar. 23 (Vatican, Ar. 23)

Vatican, Ar. 23 falls in two volumes with a total of 323 paper folios, mostly in five bifolia quires. The volumes are small (14 x 18.5 cm), and the average number of lines per page is 13.⁴² The manuscript is the work of an anonymous monk in the monastery of St Mercurius, in Egypt, and it was completed in AM 990/1274 CE.⁴³ The manuscript contains the Pauline Epistles, the Catholic Epistles, and then the Acts of the Apostles. The Pauline Epistles in this manuscript are divided into smaller chapters, following the Coptic system. The scribe had neat, large Naskh handwriting, with full diacritics, and there are regular margins containing some Coptic letters, probably to mark another division or readings in the church calendar. Old Testament quotations are marked in the margins by recording the name of the Old Testament book in Arabic. Although the scribe frequently wrote prayer requests at the end of the epistles, he never signed with his name.

⁴⁰ Although the version of the Pauline Epistles included in the *Biblia Sacra Arabica* is also Arab^{Syr}, the discussion in this paper is limited to the three manuscripts in the Protestant side. For details on the history of the *Biblia Sacra Arabica* see, Vollandt, “Che portono al ritorno qui una Bibbia Arabica”.

⁴¹ In fact, there are 104 manuscripts in Europe containing the Pauline Epistles in Arabic, however nineteen of these are scholarly manuscripts transcribed in Europe, so are left out of the count for our purposes.

⁴² Angelo Maio, *Scriptorum veterum nova collectio, e Vaticanis codicibus*. vol. IV (Rome: Typis Vaticanis, 1831), p. 75; Graf, *GCAL*, vol. I, p. 175.

⁴³ The colophon (ff. 323^v–324^r) reads:

وكان الفراغ من هذا الكتاب في الثاني والعشرين من بابه سنة تسعين وتسع مائة للشهداء الأبرار وذلك بدير القديس العظيم
مرقوريوس المعروف بدير (شهرات) والمجد لله دائماً أبداً

‘the completion of [the transcription] of this book was on the twenty-second of Bābih in the year AM 990, in the monastery of the great Saint Mercurius, known as the Monastery of (Shahrāt), and the glory be to God for ever and ever.’

MS Leiden, UBL, Or. 217 (Leiden, Or. 217)

Leiden, Or. 217 is a full NT manuscript in 262 paper folios, transcribed in the monastery of St. John the Little (Abū Yaḥnas al-Qaṣīr), Wādī al-Naṭrūn, Egypt, in AM 1059/1343 CE.⁴⁴ Its text is written in fully dotted, partially vocalized Naskh, in 21–23 lines per page, with no chapter divisions. Its contents are in the following order: The Gospels, the Pauline Epistles, the Catholic Epistles, the Acts of the Apostles, and Revelation. It measures 23 x 30.5 cm, and its quires consist of ten bifolia each. The bifolia of each book are individually numbered in Latin letters probably by a European scholar, so Romans consists of sixteen bifolia and 2 Corinthians has thirteen bifolia. The anonymous scribe frequently asks for prayers at the end of the individual books, and the only colophon follows the Gospels (f. 127r); that is, it is nearly in the middle of the manuscript.⁴⁵

The text of Leiden, Or. 217 is characterized by many mistakes and slips that the scribe has made, at least in the case of the Pauline Epistles. For example, Romans 3:5 should read ‘I pronounce (*antiq*) this as a man’, yet the scribe mistakenly added a letter, thus making it ‘I go (*antaliq*) like a man’. Similarly, in verse 13 of the same chapter, the scribe missed the word *taht* ‘below’ in ‘the venom of the vipers is below their lips’. These many slips have had an impact on the scholarly usage of this manuscript, as will be seen below.

MS Leiden, UBL, Acad. 2 (Leiden, Acad. 2)

MS Leiden, Acad. 2 survives in 360 folios and each page has 17 lines. It contains the Pauline Epistles, Catholic Epistles, and Acts of the Apostles. For a while, it was misdated, having been dated as 1079 CE based on one of two notes in its margins. This probably happened because in Voorhoeve’s catalog the date is given as 1079 with no specification of

⁴⁴ Jan Just Witkam, *Inventory of the Oriental Manuscripts of the Library of the University of Leiden*, vol. I (Leiden: Ter Lugt Press, 2007), p. 96; Petrus Voorhoeve, *Handlist of Arabic Manuscripts in the Library of the University of Leiden and Other Collections in The Netherlands* (The Hague: Leiden University Press, 1957), p. 50; Caspar René Gregory, *Textkritik des Neuen Testaments: Die Übersetzung-die Schriftsteller-Geschichte der Kritik*, vol. II (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1902), p. 586; M. J. de Goeje, *Catalogus Codicum Orientalium Bibliothecae Academiae Lugduno-Batavae*, vol. V. (Lugduni-Batavorum: Brill, 1873), p. 79.

⁴⁵ The colophon reads:

وكان الفراغ من نسخها في شهر بشنس سنة ألف وتسعة وخمسين للشهداء الأبرار بدير القديس بويحنس للاغومنس بالبرية المقدسة
والسبح لله دائماً أبداً

‘And the completion of its transcription [the Gospels] was in the month of Bashans in the year AM 1059, in the monastery of Abū Yaḥnas (of the Ighūmans) in the Holy Desert, and the praise be to God for ever and ever.’

a calendar.⁴⁶ In fact, a careful reading of these notes (on ff. 1v and 16r) demonstrates that they are birth notes made by an owner of the manuscript. He recorded the birth of his two sons as taking place in 1072 and 1079 according to the Coptic calendar, which correspond respectively to 1356 and 1362 in the Common Era; the first note was written in a Palestinian city, and the second was written in Cyprus. This dating implies that the manuscript was in use by 1356 CE, and therefore was produced at around this time or earlier. Paleographically, it is written in a fully vocalized style using diacritics, and would seem to have been produced in the 14th century.⁴⁷ The margins are full of Coptic letters, marking the liturgical readings and also in some cases giving the names of Old Testament books beside quotations from them. The scribe did not write a colophon in this manuscript; nevertheless, some prayers requests are scattered at the end of some books.

Although Arabic manuscripts arriving in Europe during the Middle Ages came from different regions of the Near East, all three of these manuscripts show evidence of being associated with the Coptic Church. In the cases of Vatican, Ar. 23 and Leiden, Or. 217, this is clear from the colophons. The third manuscript, Leiden, Acad. 2, does not have a colophon, but there are several hints that imply a Coptic provenance. The use of the Coptic calendar is one hint. The order of the Pauline Epistles in all three manuscripts is the order that was common in monasteries in Wādī al-Naṭrūn, with Hebrews as the fourteenth epistle.⁴⁸ Further, the order of units of the NT which is found in manuscripts of Coptic provenance—that is, the Pauline Epistles, the Catholic Epistles, and then the Acts of the Apostles—is present in all three of these manuscripts. Leiden, Acad. 2 also shares with Leiden, Or. 217 one of the common Coptic introductions that usually preceded the Pauline Epistles. The manuscripts were all copied in the 13th or 14th century, and above all they reveal the same version (Arab^{Syr}), with little variation. Despite the similarities, there are some differences in layout, paratextual features, and paleographical features. For example, only Vatican, Ar. 23 is divided into chapters according to the Coptic divisions; the texts of the other two manuscripts lack any divisions.

The Three Manuscripts in European Scholarship

MSS Vatican, Ar. 23, Leiden, Or. 217, and Leiden, Acad. 2 made their separate journeys to Europe, and eventually reached the same circle of European scholars. Since the first

⁴⁶ Voorhoeve, *Handlist of Arabic Manuscripts*, p. 50. Witkam has written that there is a note dated to 1079 without specification of the calendar as well, see Jan Just Witkam, *Inventories of the Oriental Manuscripts of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences in Amsterdam* (Leiden: Ter Lugt Press, 2006), p. 9.

⁴⁷ P. de Jonge, *Catalogus Codicum Orientalium Bibliothecae Academiae Regiae Scientiarum* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1862), pp. 180-183.

⁴⁸ Coptic-Arabic bilingual manuscripts of the Pauline Epistles have the Epistle to the Hebrews in the tenth position (between 2 Thessalonians and 1 Timothy), positioning it as the final epistle to the churches and before the Pastoral Epistles.

registered European owners of these manuscripts all lived in the late 16th century, it is probable that all three arrived in Europe at around the same time.

The first known owner of Vatican, Ar. 23 in Europe was Guillaume Postel (1510–1581), who wrote an early work giving a basic outline of the Arabic language (among another twelve Eastern languages) and then the first comprehensive Arabic grammar.⁴⁹ Postel made two voyages to the East. Although the first journey (1534–37) included a visit to Egypt as well as to Istanbul and Tunis, it seems that he obtained Vatican, Ar. 23 on his second trip (1549–50), to the Levant. At least, this is the conviction of Jones;⁵⁰ and it would not be surprising if it were true since the Coptic Church exported manuscripts containing this version of the Pauline Epistles to many places in the Near East. The manuscript did not remain in Postel’s possession for long; five years later, he had to pawn his manuscripts to the Elector Palatine in Heidelberg. They remained there until 1622, when the library was sacked and its manuscripts were moved to the Vatican Library.⁵¹ All known scholarly activities related to Vatican, Ar. 23 took place during its presence in the Palatine library, especially during the 1580s and 1590s. After it arrived in the Vatican Library, it was kept in good condition; however, it was not further studied by scholars.

Vatican, Ar. 23 was involved in three types of scholarly works: copying, printing, and translation. Although it contains the Catholic Epistles and the Acts of the Apostles in addition to the Pauline Epistles, most of the work which used it involved part or all the Pauline Epistles.

The lack of materials available for learning and teaching Arabic provided strong motivation for scholars to copy those Arabic manuscripts to which they had access. These copies are usually called scholarly manuscripts, and nineteen such copies of the Pauline Epistles in Arabic are still extant.⁵² One of the most active scholars in this regard was Jacob Christmann (1554–1613), a professor of Hebrew and professor *extraordinarius* of Arabic at Heidelberg University.⁵³ Christmann practiced his Arabic through copying Vatican, Ar. 23 several times. He copied a treatise of John Chrysostom from another source in addition to Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians from Vatican, Ar. 23 in what is now MS Groningen, UBG,

⁴⁹ Guillaume Postel, *Linguarum duodecim characteribus differentium alphabetum introductio ac legendi modus longe facilimus* (Paris: apud Dyonisium Lescuyer, 1538); Guillaume Postel, *Grammatica Arabica* (Paris: Venaevnt apud Petrum Gromorsum, 1540). For more on Postel and his approach to the Arabic language, see Jones, “Learning Arabic”, pp. 149-158.

⁵⁰ See the details of Postel’s journeys in Jones, “Learning Arabic”, pp. 28-31; and also in Hamilton, “The Study of Tongues”. Kuntz states that on his second voyage, Postel had access to several copies of the Arabic and Syriac NT, see Marion Leathers Kuntz, *Guillaume Postel, Prophet of the Restitution of All Things: His Life and Thought* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1981), p. 97.

⁵¹ It was moved to the Vatican as a result of the army of Tilly sacking the library of Heidelberg in 1622, see Toomer, *Eastern Wisdom and Learning*, p. 36. For a list of the Arabic manuscripts that were in this collection, see Levi della Vida, Giorgio. *Ricerche sulla Formazione del Più Antico Fondo dei Manoscritti Orientali della Biblioteca Vaticana*. (Vatican: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1939), pp. 293-294.

⁵² For more details about these manuscripts, see my forthcoming Vevian Zaki, *The Pauline Epistles in Arabic*.

⁵³ On Christmann’s career, see Toomer, *Eastern Wisdom and Learning*, pp. 37-38.

460.⁵⁴ In 1608, he copied a few chapters from Romans in MS Leiden, UBL, Or. 2083.⁵⁵ For the grammar book he authored, he used the Lord's Prayer from unknown source and a passage from Philippians from our manuscript as chrestomathy.⁵⁶

The first printed book in Arabic in Germany was an edition of the Epistle to the Galatians that was printed in Heidelberg in 1583. Ruthger Spey, a pastor and Arabist, printed this epistle using woodcuts, and the text was taken from Vatican, Ar. 23.⁵⁷ Spey made no changes to the text, as he wanted to represent and teach the text as it was read by Arabic-speaking Christians.⁵⁸ This Palatine printed book was very humble, especially in comparison to the Gospels that were luxuriously printed by the Medici Press in Rome a few years later (1590/1591).⁵⁹ The book was intended to be a grammar, with an appendix containing Galatians to be used as a reading exercise. Nevertheless, Spey, as a biblical scholar, gave more attention to the epistle, which made the grammar section look superfluous.⁶⁰

Franciscus Junius (1545–1602) was a theology professor at Leiden University, known for translating the Old Testament from Hebrew into Latin.⁶¹ He translated into Latin the Acts of the Apostles and the two Epistles to the Corinthians from Vatican, Ar. 23, to accompany a discussion of the value of Arabic in textual criticism.⁶² This translation was later used by John Mill (1645–1707) in his Greek NT edition, along with translations of other versions in languages that he did not speak, to assist him in his aim of restoring the original text.⁶³

⁵⁴ See Voorhoeve, *Handlist of Arabic Manuscripts*, p. 51; Hajo Brugmans, *Catalogus Codicum Manuscriptorum Universitatis Groninganae Bibliothecae* (Groningen: J. B. Wolters, 1898), p. 250; and Graf, *GCAL*, vol. I, p. 181.

⁵⁵ Jan Just Witkam, *Inventory of the Oriental Manuscripts of the Library of the University of Leiden*. vol. III (Leiden: Ter Lugt Press, 2008), p. 33; Voorhoeve, *Handlist of Arabic Manuscripts*, p. 51; Graf, *GCAL*, vol. I, p. 181.

⁵⁶ See Jakob Christmann, *Alphabetum Arabicum cum Isagoge Scribendi Legendique Arabice* (Naples: Harnisch, 1582), pp. 16-17.

⁵⁷ Ruthger Spey, *Epistola Pauli ad Galatas, item sex primaria capita christianae religionis Arabice: quibus ad finem adiunctum est compendium grammatices arabicae* (Heidelberg: Excudebat Iacob Mylius, 1583).

⁵⁸ Spey, *Epistola Pauli ad Galatas*.

⁵⁹ Raimondi and Tempesta, *Evangelium Sanctum Domini nostri Iesu Christi*.

⁶⁰ Another printed book from the same manuscript was made by Peter Kirsten (1575–1640), who printed the Epistle to Jude, the shortest of the Catholic Epistles; see Petrus Kirstenius, *Epistola S. Judae Apostoli ex manuscripto Heidelbergensi arabico ad verbum translata a Petro Kistenio additis notis etc* (Berslau: Typis Arabicis & sumtibus autoris, in officina Baumanniana, 1611).

⁶¹ Toomer, *Eastern Wisdom and Learning*, p. 37.

⁶² Franciscus Junius, *Sanctorum Apostolorum Acta ex Arabica Translatione Latine Reddita* (Heidelberg: Apud Ioannem Marschellum Lugdunensem, 1578); Vollandt, *Arabic Versions of the Pentateuch*, pp. 12-13 (n. 32).

⁶³ John Mill, *Novum Testamentum cum Lectionibus Variantibus MSS Exemplarium, Versionum, Editionum, SS Patrum & Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum* (Oxford: E Theatro Sheldoniano, 1707). The first edition of Mill's work was published just before his death, but it was soon improved and republished many times. The details of the manuscripts and translations he used are in Adam Fox, *John Mill and Richard Bentley: A Study of the Textual Criticism of the New Testament, 1675 - 1729*. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1954).

We know that other scholars, such as Erpenius and Bedwell, examined Vatican, Ar. 23 during their visits to Heidelberg. However, they did not employ it in their work. Erpenius even borrowed some manuscripts from the Palatine library, but Vatican, Ar. 23 was not one of them. It should also be mentioned that Vatican, Ar. 23 does not bear the “fingerprints” of the scholars who handled it—in other words, there are almost no Latin words, Arabic variant readings, or other forms of marginalia in the manuscript. The reason for their absence might be that Vatican, Ar. 23 was a library manuscript, not a personal one, unlike the next manuscript to be discussed.

Leiden, Or. 217, sometimes known as the Scaliger manuscript, has a very straightforward history in Europe, although nothing is known about its journey to Europe. Joseph Scaliger (1540–1609), an erudite scholar who mastered many languages and produced works in many fields, was probably the first and only owner of Leiden, Or. 217 in Europe. Scaliger lived in Paris for a long time, and while there he was in possession of a large number of manuscripts, which he left behind upon moving to Leiden in 1593.⁶⁴ He is not known to have made any trips to the East, and he generally acquired his manuscripts through agents. In Leiden, he once again gathered a collection of manuscripts and printed books, this time amounting to more than 1500 items. Of these, many of his manuscripts were auctioned off later; yet he bequeathed 170 oriental manuscripts to Leiden University directly, and among them was Leiden, Or. 217.⁶⁵ Therefore, the fact that some of Scaliger’s manuscripts turned out later to belong to Raphelengius does not affect the acquisition history of Leiden, Or. 217.⁶⁶

Leiden, Or. 217 was examined in Leiden by local scholars, such as Erpenius and Raphelengius. Visiting scholars such as Bedwell also checked it when they visited Leiden.⁶⁷ The latter compared the text of Leiden, Or. 217 to his own transcription of the Johannine Epistles which was printed in 1612 by the Raphelengius printing house in Leiden.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ See the story of his collections in the introduction by De Jonge to the auction catalogue: Henk Jan de Jonge, *The Auction Catalogue of the Library of J.J. Scaliger: A Facsimile Reprint* (Leiden: Brill, 1977), pp. 2-3.

⁶⁵ It appears in the collections of Leiden University in 1612; see Daniel Heinsius, *Catalogus librorum bibliothecae lugdunensis pro bibliothecarij munere gratiarum actio catalogus bibliothecae Lugduno-Batavae* (Leiden: Universiteitsbibliotheek, 1612), p. 30.

⁶⁶ The details of the confusion over some of these manuscripts can be found in Alastair Hamilton, “Nam Tirones Sumus’ Franciscus Raphelengius’ Lexicon Arabico-Latinum (Leiden 1613).” *De Gulden Passer* 66–67 (1989), pp. 557-589; and Alastair Hamilton, “The Perils of Catalogues”, *Journal of Islamic Manuscripts* 1 (2010), pp. 31-36.

⁶⁷ On his life and works, see Hamilton, *William Bedwell*; Toomer, *Eastern Wisdom and Learning*, pp. 56-64; and Mordechai Feingold, “Learning Arabic in Early Modern England.” In Jan Loop et al. (ed.), *The Teaching and Learning of Arabic in Early Modern Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), pp. 33-56.

⁶⁸ William Bedwell, *D. Iohannis apostoli et evangelista Epistolae catholicae omnes arabicae ante aliquot secula factae antiquissimo Ms. exemplari descriptae, et nunc demum latinae reditae opera et studio Wil. Bedwelli* (Leiden: Ex Offic. Plantiniana Raphelengii, 1612); Hamilton, “The Study of Tongues”, p. 32.

No evidence survives of scholarly copies of Leiden, Or. 217, unlike with Vatican, Ar. 23; nonetheless, two important printed books based on it do survive.⁶⁹ The first is Erpenius's 1616 edition of the whole manuscript that was discussed in the introduction to this paper. It was the first complete Arabic NT to be printed in Europe, and as mentioned, it gained great fame among scholars. The second printed material was actually printed earlier than the edition of the whole manuscript, since it was a specimen in which Erpenius chose to offer the epistles to Romans and Galatians.⁷⁰ Erpenius does not mention why he selected these two epistles for printing. Together they have roughly the same length as one of the Gospels, and this could be relevant. However, it might be that the selection was more theological in nature: Romans and Galatians are theologically difficult but important for the many Christian doctrines they discuss, and perhaps Erpenius was testing his ability to print these not-so-easy theological texts.

That part of Leiden, Or. 217 that contains the Pauline Epistles bears clear signs of European scholarly activity.⁷¹ Between the lines or in the margins, there are many variant readings, corrections of scribal errors, and completions of missing phrases or sentences, as well as a few Latin comments. These were added in a neat, small, Arabic script that is clearly written by a non-native hand. According to the preface of Erpenius in his edition of the NT, the person responsible for these marginalia was Raphelengius.⁷² The manuscript source that he used in making these comments and corrections was not described, but the evidence suggests that it was Leiden, Acad. 2, to which we now turn.

The last of these three manuscripts, Leiden, Acad. 2, was what we might call a 'phantom' manuscript, moving in the same scholarly circles as Vatican, Ar. 23 and Leiden, Or. 217, but never explicitly identified—often in this period, scholars will mention a manuscript of the epistles without specifying its owner, source, or shelf mark. For instance, Raphelengius himself mentioned in a letter to a friend, Abraham Ortelius, that his son Frans had obtained for him a manuscript of the NT from England, and that he intended to use this for his dictionary.⁷³ It is easy to conclude that this manuscript is the one that Raphelengius used as the source in making his comments on Leiden, Or. 217. Yet, the identity of this manuscript is obscure.

⁶⁹ Hamilton refers to another printed book of Erpenius, excerpts of the Gospel of Matthew; see Hamilton, "The Study of Tongues", p. 31.

⁷⁰ Erpenius, *Novum D.N. Jesu Christi Testamentum arabice*; and Erpenius, ed. *Pauli apostoli ad Romanos epistola, Arabice: ex Bibliotheca Leidensi [Pauli apostoli Epistola ad Galatas]* (Leiden: Typographia Erpeniana Linguarum Orientalium, 1615).

⁷¹ Such signs can also be detected in the Catholic Epistles and Acts to a lesser extent but are barely detectable in the Gospels.

⁷² See the first page of the preface of Erpenius, *Novum D.N. Jesu Christi Testamentum arabice*; and also Hamilton, *William Bedwell*, p. 76 (n. 81); Graf reiterated the same information, see Graf, *GCAL*, vol. I, p. 175.

⁷³ See Hamilton, "Nam Tirones Sumus", p. 569.

One way to identify this manuscript is to compare the textual additions which Raphelengius wrote in Leiden, Or. 217 with the Arabic manuscripts of the Pauline Epistles that we know would have been available at the time. The difficulty remains, of course, about how to decide among the huge number of manuscripts that currently exist in Europe or ones that might have been lost. As a starting point, I will consider only manuscripts in the Netherlands. There is one manuscript in the University of Groningen, however it contains only a part of the Pauline Epistles, and thus could not have been the relevant one.⁷⁴ Leiden University now has four manuscripts of the Pauline Epistles in Arabic. Two of them can be excluded for chronological reasons, and also because they do not contain the appropriate material;⁷⁵ and the third is Leiden, Or. 217, which obviously was not the source of the variant readings. Thus, the only remaining manuscript for the purpose of this comparison is Leiden, Acad. 2.

At the end of Galatians 3:18, while Leiden, Acad. 2 reads ‘the promise that He had promised (*wa’adabu*)’, Leiden, Or. 217 reads ‘the promise that was (*kāna*)’. Over the verb *kāna* in Leiden, Or. 217, Raphelengius has written *wa’adabu*, seen in Leiden, Acad. 2. One verse earlier, he has added the particle *ann* ‘that’, which was absent from the verse, so that it matches Leiden, Acad. 2 and reads ‘I say this [statement], that (*ann*) the covenant’. Another interesting case is that of Galatians 3:21–22. Two words based on the same Arabic root were usually used to denote ‘promise’, *maw’id* and *maw’ūd*. Leiden, Or. 217 has *maw’id* in verse 21 and *maw’ūd* in verse 22, while Leiden, Acad. 2 has the opposite ordering of the terms. What Raphelengius has done is to add a wāw above the first term in Leiden, Or. 217, and omitted the *wāw* in the second by using a slash; that is, he has matched them exactly with Leiden, Acad. 2. This change seems pointless, since the two terms are synonyms, but it shows us how meticulous Raphelengius was in his work, and perhaps shows his desire to record all the variant readings between the two manuscripts.

Of course, it could be suggested that, since we are discussing a single version of the Pauline Epistles—the version known as the “Egyptian Vulgate” or here called Arab^{Syr}—many other manuscripts would have exactly the same text as Leiden, Acad. 2 and Leiden, Or. 217. So how can it be asserted, for example, that Raphelengius did not use Vatican, Ar. 23, which we know was circulating among the same scholars, as mentioned above? In fact, Arab^{Syr} is a very flexible text, and it is impossible to find exactly the same text in any two manuscripts of this version. We can illustrate this by comparing the relevant passages in Vatican, Ar. 23. For the first example above, Vatican, Ar. 23 reads exactly like Leiden, Acad. 2, with *wa’adabu*. However, in the second case, it adds an adjective to ‘the covenant’,

⁷⁴ Voorhoeve, *Handlist of Arabic Manuscripts*, p. 51; Graf, *GCAL*, vol. I, p. 181; Brugmans, *Catalogus Codicum Manuscriptorum*, p. 250.

⁷⁵ One of them was written later by Christmann (see above), and the other is MS Leiden, UBL, Or. 14.447, which is a 19th-century manuscript. See Jan Just Witkam, *Inventory of the Oriental Manuscripts of the Library of the University of Leiden*, vol. XV (Leiden: Ter Lugt Press, 2007), p. 212; and Witkam, *Inventories of the Oriental Manuscripts*, p. 532.

so that it reads *al-mithāq al-qadīm* ‘the old covenant’; this adjective is not found in Leiden, Or. 217, nor was it added by Raphelengius as one of the variant readings, and it is certainly not found in Leiden, Acad. 2. When it comes to the third example, Vatican, Ar. 23 uses the same term, *maḥʿid*, for ‘promise’ in both Galatians 3:21 and 3:22.⁷⁶

Thus, it can be concluded that Leiden, Acad. 2 probably belonged to Raphelengius, who died in 1597.⁷⁷ In that same year it was in the hands of Joannis Boreel (1577–1629), according to a Latin note on the manuscript: “Liber Joannis Boreel Middelburgensis 1597”.⁷⁸ Boreel was a known jurist and collector of manuscripts, though he himself is not known to have studied the manuscripts. While the timing is appropriate, it is not known how Boreel obtained Leiden, Acad. 2, whether from Raphelengius directly or from his sons after his death. However, entering Boreel’s collection did not mark the end of the activity around Leiden, Acad. 2; it appears that this activity continued, although once again with the precise identification of the relevant manuscript obscure.

Another ‘phantom’ manuscript was used by the English Arabist Bedwell, who transcribed the Arabic Pauline Epistles in six manuscripts. Only in one of these did Bedwell transcribe the entirety of the Pauline Epistles together with the Catholic Epistles (MS Oxford, Bodl., Laud Or. 135); his other transcriptions contain only one or two epistles.⁷⁹ He transcribed the Epistle to Philemon three times: once with a Latin translation (MS Oxford, Bodl., Selden Supra 50), which he dedicated to Francis Burley, another orientalist and a vicar; the second time with a Judeo-Arabic transliteration (MS Hamburg, Bible 19);⁸⁰ and the final time jointly with the Epistle to Titus along with a Latin translation (MS London, BL, Sloane 1796), which he dedicated to Andrews Lancelot, a scholar and bishop.⁸¹ Bedwell had intended to print this last transcription, but did not do so since some of his colleagues had just published the same epistle.⁸² Bedwell also separately transcribed Colossians (MS Cambridge, CUL, Dd.15.4) and 1 Thessalonians (Oxford, Bodl, Laud Or.

⁷⁶ A further example that can be cited is Colossians 1:13, where both Leiden, Acad. 2 and Leiden, Or. 217 read *ja’ binā* ‘brought us’, while Vatican, Ar. 23 reads *naqalanā* ‘transfer us’. As we would expect, Raphelengius made no addition here, since the two verbs were the same in Leiden, Or. 217 and what we believe to be his source, Leiden, Acad. 2.

⁷⁷ Raphelengius did not write any variant readings in the Gospels, however, he wrote some marginalia in the book of Revelation as well, but its source is unknown.

⁷⁸ Witkam, *Inventories of the Oriental Manuscripts*, p. 9.

⁷⁹ He also transcribed the three Epistles of John, and printed them, as mentioned above: Bedwell, *D. Iobannis apostoli et evangelista Epistolae*.

⁸⁰ This manuscript was mistakenly attributed to Petrus Kirstenius by Vollandt, but the careful comparison of its paleography and ornamentation confirms that it is the work of Bedwell, see Ronny Vollandt, “Codex Orientalis 19”, *Manuscript Cultures* 6 (2014), pp. 56-58.

⁸¹ This final manuscript also contains a preface about the usefulness of the Arabic language and its relationship with the Hebrew language.

⁸² Hamilton, *William Bedwell*, pp. 39-40 (n. 49).

24); the manuscript of Colossians was dedicated to Archbishop Bancroft.⁸³ Dedications were a common political act at that time to get sponsorship for future printing projects.

The order in which Bedwell transcribed these manuscripts is unknown. Further, when the exemplar used for his transcriptions is discussed, the only conclusion is that it was a manuscript in Oxford whose identity remains undiscovered.⁸⁴ A textual comparison excludes the possibility of the source manuscript being Leiden, Or. 217, which we know Bedwell had access to at a later point upon his visit to the Netherlands (1612). During this visit, he used Leiden, Or. 217 to compare the text of the Johannine Epistles that he had already transcribed.⁸⁵ The same also applies to Vatican, Ar. 23; in addition, this manuscript was never at Bedwell's disposal, although he examined it briefly in Heidelberg. What remains once again as a possibility for this 'phantom' manuscript is Leiden, Acad. 2, a hypothesis that gains force by collating its biblical text and paratextual features with Bedwell's transcriptions. To give a single, but very clear, example of correspondence, Leiden, Acad. 2 contains a prayer at the end of Philemon, which is identical to the one in Bedwell's manuscripts:

اذكر يا رب عبدك الخاطيء المذنب الناقل في ملكوت السموات وسائر أولاد المعمودية

«Remember O Lord, your servant, the guilty sinner scribe in the kingdom of heaven along with all the children of baptism».

At the end of Philemon in Vatican, Ar. 23, on the other hand, there is a prayer request that reads:

كل من يقرأ ويذكر الحقير المسكين ناقلها بالمغفرة والرحمة الرب يتعطف عليه برحمته ويجعل حظه مع من
أرضاه بأعماله آمين. آمين.

«whomever should read [this] and pray for the forgiveness and mercy for the poor despicable scribe, may the Lord grant him mercy and make his lot with Him whom he pleased with his deeds. Amen, amen».

Leiden, Or. 217 has a third prayer here:

بالمحبة الروحانية ايها السيد القاري اذكر حقارة الناقل الخاطيء الغارق في بحر الذنوب ليعطيه الرب توبة
قبل الموت...

«In spiritual love, esteemed reader, remember the scribe, the humble sinner, drowned in the sea of iniquities, so the Lord may give him repentance before death...»

⁸³ See part of its translation in Hamilton, *William Bedwell*, pp. 24–25, and see also the dedication in Appendix II/3 on p. 112 of the same book.

⁸⁴ See Hamilton, *William Bedwell*, p. 25.

⁸⁵ Hamilton, *William Bedwell*, p. 40.

How Bedwell accessed Leiden, Acad. 2 is obscure, but I can offer a hypothesis. Bedwell met Boreel during his visit to Leiden in 1612. At that time, though, he had already transcribed the manuscript several times, and was preparing to publish part of it. Thus, he must have had an earlier opportunity to copy it. We know that Boreel used to lend his manuscripts to other scholars, such as Scaliger and Erpenius—for example, Scaliger borrowed the Syriac-Arabic dictionary of Jesus bar ‘Ali (MS Leiden, UBL, Or. 213), and Erpenius relied on a manuscript from Boreel’s collection in preparing his Syriac edition of the Psalms (1625).⁸⁶ Due to the lack of Arabic materials, it was not uncommon that persons and even libraries would lend their precious manuscripts.⁸⁷ It is plausible, then, to believe that Boreel could have lent Leiden, Acad. 2 to someone who took it to England where it remained for a while.

The unpublished manuscript of Bedwell’s Arabic-Latin dictionary (Paris, BNF, Ar. 4337) demonstrates that he had access to Leiden Acad. 2 during the making of the dictionary in 1599.⁸⁸ Along its folios, he gives references to many verses of the Pauline Epistles in particular, and the Catholic Epistles and Acts of the Apostles occasionally. This means that during preparing this dictionary he had Leiden Acad. 2 itself, since his transcription does not contain Acts. Bedwell, however, offered the classical scholar Isaac Casaubon (1559-1614), in his letter to the latter in 1606 to provide him with all the epistles of the NT in one manuscript for publishing along with Casaubon commentaries.⁸⁹ It is plausible to think then that by this time he had already transcribed MS Oxford, Bodl., Laud Or. 135, and that Leiden, Acad. 2 was not anymore at his disposal. It might be the case that Bedwell seized the opportunity to copy the entire epistles from the manuscript at some point; he would then have used his own transcription to make other copies later. Thus, the mysterious Oxford manuscript that later scholarship mentions as the source of Bedwell’s transcriptions would in fact be MS Oxford, Bodl., Laud Or. 135, his own transcription of Leiden, Acad. 2.

The acquisition history of Leiden, Acad. 2 continues on, through continuous movement and obscurity. We do not know how and by whom it went back to the Netherlands (presumably before 1606), and who owned it following Boreel; however it is used explicitly in 1654 in another printed edition of some of the Catholic Epistles with corresponding

⁸⁶ Wilhelmina Maria Cornelis Juynboll, *Zeventiende-Eeuwsche Beoefenaars van Het Arabisch in Nederland* (Utrecht: Kemink, 1931), pp. 50, 114. I am indebted to Dr. Arnoud Vrolijk, the curator of oriental manuscripts at Leiden University Library, who guided me to this reference and helped me find out more about the history of this manuscript.

⁸⁷ Hamilton, *William Bedwell*, p. 26.

⁸⁸ This manuscript was the second issue of this dictionary. An earlier issue (1595) that I do not have access to is MS Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodl., Or. 372.

⁸⁹ Hamilton, *William Bedwell*, p. 25.

Ethiopic text and a Latin translation.⁹⁰ Later, it became part of the library of D. A. Walraven (1779–1804), a professor of oriental languages and antiquities at the Athenaeum Illustre in Amsterdam, and it was then bought by Joannes Willmet (1750–1835), his successor at that institution. After the latter’s death, it joined the other items of his collection in the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1856, and from there arrived at Leiden University Library as a permanent loan.⁹¹

Conclusion: The Impact of Arab^{Syr}

Manuscripts containing the Arab^{Syr} version of the Pauline Epistles arrived in Europe via different routes,⁹² and resulted in printed copies of the Pauline Epistles in Arabic that were based on manuscripts of Coptic provenance that had been produced relatively recently (the manuscript was less than three hundred years old at the time it reached Europe).

This version was used in European scholarship as well as in missionary work. Subsequently, it traveled back to Eastern Christians in printed form, and became even more widely disseminated. In his catalog of printed Bible editions, Darlow registered more than ten printed books of this same version issued for Near Eastern Christian communities by different institutions across the following two centuries.⁹³ Each printing project adopted and adapted the text in its own ways and for its own purposes. The multiple publishing of the Arab^{Syr} overshadowed older translations of the Pauline Epistles that had existed in the East, and so these were not considered in making new translations.⁹⁴ Moreover, the production of Arab^{Syr} continued in manuscript form in the Eastern churches from printed copies of this edition. For example, the Pauline Epistles in MSS Leiden, UBL, Or. 14.447

⁹⁰ Johann Georg Nissel, and Theodorus Petraeus, eds. *S. Johannis apostoli & evangelistæ, Epistolæ catholicae tres, Arabice & Æthiopice: omnes ad verbum in Latinum versæ, cum vocalium figuris exactè appositis. Quò studiosæ juventuti accessus ad hæc linguas expeditior, culturaque earundem uberior conciliarentur* (Leiden: Ex officina Johannis & Danielis Elsevier. Academ. Typograph., 1654); J. G. Nissel, and T. Petraeus, eds. *S. Jacobi Apostoli Epistola Catholica versio Arabica et Æthiopica: Latinitate utraque donata, nec non a multis mendis repurgata, punctis vocalibus accurate insignita, et notis philologicis e probatissimorum Arabum scriptis illustrata* (Leiden: Ex officina Johannis & Danielis Elsevier. Academ. Typograph., 1654); and J. G. Nissel, and T. Petraeus, eds. *S. Judæ apostoli Epistola catholica versio Arabice et Æthiopice, in Latinitatem translata, et punctis vocalibus animata, additis quibusdam variae lectionis notis* (Leiden: Ex officina Johannis & Danielis Elsevier. Academ. Typograph., 1654).

⁹¹ See Witkam, *Inventories of the Oriental Manuscripts*, p. 9.

⁹² See Hamilton, “Eastern Churches and Western Scholarship”.

⁹³ Thomas Herbert Darlow and Horace Frederick Moule, *Historical Catalogue of the Printed Editions of Holy Scripture in the Library of the British and Foreign Bible Society* (London: Bible House, 1903), pp. 63-80.

⁹⁴ During the preparation of the widely used translation of 1865, the Arabic Polyglot versions and the version of the Congregatio de Propaganda Fide were consulted, but older Arabic versions are not mentioned in this context; see Smith, Eli, and Cornelius V.A. van Dyck. *Brief Documentary History of the Translation of the Scriptures into the Arabic Language by Rev. Eli Smith, D.D., and Rev. C.V.A. Van Dyck, D.D.* (Beirut: American Presbyterian Mission Press, 1900), pp. 6-7.

and Cairo, COP, Bible 177 are copies of printed editions of Arab^{Syr}.⁹⁵ In addition, these two manuscripts both include the entire text of the NT, a trend that became more popular in Near Eastern manuscripts as a reflection of the printed editions of the NT. Prior to this, manuscripts generally contained only a single biblical unit, such as the Gospels or the Pauline Epistles, or sometimes two or three units together, such as the epistles together with the Acts of the Apostles. Manuscripts like Leiden, Or. 217, which contained the complete NT, were rare.

A whole scholarly circle in Europe worked on the basis of three manuscripts that contained the Pauline Epistles, using them as a tool for learning, teaching, copying, printing, and so on, and these three manuscripts consequently had a number of impacts on European scholarship. First, despite the existence of some variant readings, the text of these manuscripts represents the same version. Since some of these scholars collated these manuscripts, they became aware of this, and it contributed to the idea that this version is “the” Arabic Bible, the “Egyptian Vulgate”. Second, scholarly study of the three manuscripts paid more attention to the Pauline Epistles, which were ideal for these purposes. Pragmatically speaking, they are shorter than the other NT books. As a result, several scholars transcribed individual epistles as a chrestomathy or even as a gift to their sponsors. Even Bedwell only switched to printing the Johannine Epistles after his plans to print one of the Pauline Epistles were ruined. This meant that the Pauline Epistles were printed in a chain of printed editions through the late 16th and early 17th centuries. They were printed as a unit within the full Arabic text of the NT, some of the epistles were printed on their own, or at other times two epistles were printed together in a volume. With the intense focus on these three manuscripts, it is not a surprise that all early printed editions of the epistles in Arabic (except for the ones in the Polyglots) are of the same version.

What remains to be answered is the question of why most European scholars in the 19th century—even the Catholics among them, such as Scholz—used the edition of the Protestant Erpenius, and not the Catholic *Biblia sacra arabica* of 1671. In my opinion, the reason is the reputation that the text of the *Biblia sacra arabica* had as being an adaptation of the Latin Vulgate. Thus, it was known that its text was not the “pure” version, prepared and used by Near Eastern Christian communities, unlike the Erpenius edition.

It was not until 1844 that Petermann published his edition of Philemon in which he compared five different versions of the Arabic text of that epistle.⁹⁶ This was, to the best of

⁹⁵ See Jan Just Witkam, *Catalogue of Arabic Manuscripts in the Library of the University of Leiden and Other Collections in the Netherlands*. vol. V (Leiden: Brill, 1989), p. 532; and William F. Macomber, *Final Inventory of the Microfilmed Manuscripts of the Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate, al-Aḥḥakīya, Cairo*. vol. II (Provo, Utah: Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, 1997), pp. 43-46. Arabic manuscripts being prepared from printed copies is a known phenomenon for other units of the Arabic Bible as well; see, for example, the Pentateuch manuscripts in Vollandt, *Arabic Versions of the Pentateuch*, pp. 272-276.

⁹⁶ Jul. Henr Petermann, ed. *Pauli epistola ad Philemonem specimenis loco ad fidem versionum orientalium veterum una cum earum textu originali graece* (Berlin: Sumptibus C.G. Lüderitz, 1844).

my knowledge, the first critical interaction of the European scholarship with many versions of the Arabic Pauline Epistles in a single work. The five versions used by Petermann included, of course, the edition of Erpenius; however, his work also made visible the variety of the versions of the Pauline Epistles in Arabic, variety that had been hidden for a long time.

Abstract: This paper explores part of the history of those Arabic Bible manuscripts that traveled to Europe in the early modern period, focusing on Arabic manuscripts of the Pauline Epistles. These manuscripts played an important role in European scholarship about the Arabic Bible, Arabic teaching and learning in Europe, and textual criticism. When one looks at early European scholarship on the Pauline Epistles in Arabic in the 16th and 17th centuries, it is very noticeable that, by and large, it restricted itself to an examination of a single version. In this paper, I reconstruct the history of the three earliest manuscripts of this version to be studied in European scholarship: MS Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Ar. 23; MS Leiden, Universitaire Bibliotheken Leiden, Or. 217; and MS Leiden, Universitaire Bibliotheken Leiden, Acad. 2. By tracing their history, I analyze the impact of this version, and it transpires that this version became, for a while, the standard one, what we might call the “Vulgate” of the Arabic Bible in Europe.

Key Words: Arabic Bible manuscripts, Arabic learning in the Early Modern period, Arabic manuscript acquisition history, the Egyptian Vulgate, the Erpenius edition.

Resumen: Este trabajo explora parte de la historia de los manuscritos árabes bíblicos que viajaron a Europa a principios de la Edad Moderna, centrándose en los manuscritos árabes de las epístolas paulinas. Estos manuscritos jugaron un papel importante entre los estudiosos de la Biblia en árabe en Europa, la enseñanza del árabe y su aprendizaje en Europa y la crítica textual. Cuando uno observa los primeros estudios europeos sobre las epístolas paulinas en árabe de los siglos XVI y XVII, es muy apreciable que se dedica a la exanimación una única versión. En este trabajo, reconstruyo la historia de los tres manuscritos más tempranos de la versión estudiada por la academia europea: MS Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Ar. 23; MS Leiden, Universitaire Bibliotheken Leiden, Or. 217; y MS Leiden, Universitaire Bibliotheken Leiden, Acad. 2. Para trazar su historia, analizo el impacto de esta versión resultando ser, por un tiempo, la versión estándar, que podríamos llamar ‘Vulgata’, de la Biblia árabe en Europa.

Palabras clave: Manuscritos bíblicos en árabe, Aprendizaje del árabe en la Edad Moderna, Historia de la adquisición de manuscritos árabes, la Vulgata egipcia, la edición de Van Erpe.