In recent years, the study of Arabic texts produced by Jews, Samaritans and Christians has increased rapidly. The growing scholarly interest in this field reflects a wider concern for the transmission and adaption of central ideas and texts in various linguistic and cultural milieus. This is especially true for the biblical narratives that through translations are constantly re-coded and made relevant for various social contexts and new generations of readers/listeners. Yet, more than a thousand Arabic Bible manuscripts, running translations and liturgical renditions, remain unstudied and unedited—a deficiency which greatly hampers a proper evaluation of the use and understanding of the Bible in Arabic. In light of this shortage, the new contribution by Juan Pedro Monferrer-Sala, *Evangelio árabe*, is most welcome.

In this work, Monferrer-Sala offers a diplomatic edition of a tenth- or eleventh-century Andalusi manuscript with the shelfmark Qarawiyīn 730, preserved in the Qarawiyyīn Mosque-University in Fez. The manuscript covers Mark 6:39–16:20 and is collated with five additional witnesses (see below). These manuscripts represent the version of the Gospels commonly attributed to the famous Isḥāq b. Balašk al-Qurṭubī who was active in Cordoba in the tenth century, and his family. However, Monferrer-Sala demonstrates that the transmission of this manuscript family is more complex than previously thought and that the authorship of Ibn Balašk needs to be more closely defined.

The study comprises a discussion of the historical and literary settings in al-Andalus and a text edition. Its purpose is clear. Firstly, the author contributes a scholarly edition of an Arabic Bible translation to the field and by doing so he offers methodological solutions of how to reproduce a textual tradition characterized by an abundance of variant renditions and, most significantly, non-standardized orthography. Secondly, the author presents us with a text of undeniable importance for the Christian Arabic communities in al-Andalus. By comparing different witnesses to this family tradition, the author increases our understanding of the multitude of religious denominations that flourished on the Iberian Peninsula at the time and demonstrates how thoughts and texts in different languages were adopted and adapted by various communities.

Much of the Arabicization process in al-Andalus remains obscure. Monferrer-Sala argues that the major incentive behind the early production of Christian Arabic texts, including biblical renditions, was the defense of the
Christian religion rather than an internal liturgical need. Not only did the apologetic necessity oblige Christians to learn Arabic, it also impelled them to comprehend doctrines of their religious opponents and their religious texts, as a means of thwarting their accusations.

One early Arabic text which circulated in the area was the version of the Gospels attributed to Ibn Balašk, completed in 946 CE. The most homogeneous manuscripts of this text is represented by MS arabic 234 and MS arabic 238, both preserved at the Bavarian State Library in Munich, as well as by MS 35 kept in the Cathedral of León. Three additional manuscripts are commonly included in this manuscript family: MSS Qarawiyīn 730; British Library (formerly Museum > BM) Add. 9061; and MS 4971 located at the National Library of Madrid (BNM). Monferrer-Sala argues that these three rather heterogeneous manuscripts in fact constitute earlier representatives of the more standardized text type commonly attributed to Ibn Balašk. It appears that the Qarawiyīn manuscript, which displays an ample number of independent renderings, represents the oldest witness of the three. The author presents two theories to explain these circumstances. Either the version attributed to Ibn Balašk is in fact the result of a revision process, or the more homogenous version commonly attributed to the composer is a later development of the text composed in 946. Monferrer-Sala arranges the manuscripts into the following stemma (p. 56):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Qarawiyīn 730} & \quad \text{B.M. Add. 9061} & \quad 4971 \text{ BNM} \\
\text{Versión de la ‘Familia Isḥāq b. Balašk’} & \quad \text{Cod. ar. 238} & \quad \text{Cod. ar. 234} & \quad \text{Cod. León 3}
\end{align*}
\]

According to Monferrer-Sala, MS Leipzig, 1059 B does not belong to the present family of manuscripts.

Throughout the historical discussion, Monferrer-Sala stresses the complexity of the socio-cultural settings in al-Andalus. The Islamic rulers in al-Andalus took pains in integrating different ethnic, tribal, social, and religious groups into an Arab-Islamic model with various degrees of success. Christians in the cities, he claims, seemed to be fairly Arabicized in the middle of the ninth century, whereas in rural areas, they retained their vernacular (romandalusí) combined with Arabic dialectal traces, to a large degree. Moreover, it appears that the acculturation process occurred mainly among urban strata belonging to the upper classes and among the ecclesiastical curia.

Another point stressed by Monferrer-Sala is the coexistence of a variety of Christian denominations on the Peninsula. The traditional historical approach,