bijbelcitaten zijn weggelaten. In principe, maar niet aldoor, is de gehele titel getranscribeerd. Den Hollander deelt dit alles wel mee, maar verantwoordt niet—waarom moet een 16de-eeuwse titel nu per se 'leesbaar' zijn?—waardoor het niet bevredigd. Vooral de titel zou volledig getranscribeerd moeten zijn, want ondanks de overwegend redelijke reproducties is de tekst daarop niet altijd leesbaar.

Den Hollander heeft met zijn studie en bibliografische lijst een vooral technische bijdrage geleverd tot ons beeld van Nederlandse bijbelvertalingen tussen 1522 en 1545, die de validiteit van moderne hulpmiddelen voor dit soort wetenschappelijk onderzoek demonstreert. Het belang daarvan schuilt vooral in de controlemogelijkheid van anderszins verkregen inzicht in een materie. Als er niet tevoren, op grond van niet-technisch onderzoek, de verwachting was gewekt van een teksttraditie der bijbelvertalingen 1522-1545, is het de vraag of dit onderzoek mogelijk geweest was.

G.C. Zieleman


Hartmut Bobzin’s point of departure is the year 1543, the date of publication of three works connected with the Quran. In Basel Theodor Bibliander published Robert of Ketton’s translation of the full text completed in Toledo exactly 400 years earlier, in 1143. In Nuremberg Johann Albrecht Widmanstetter published his Mahometis Abdallae filii theologia dialogo explicata which included the Epitome Alcorani, an abridged version of the Quran, and in Paris Guillaume Postel published extensive quotations from the Quran in his De orbis terrae concordia. These three publications allow Professor Bobzin to investigate the entire history of the translation of the Quran in Europe from the early Middle Ages until the Reformation and to situate the efforts of Bibliander, Widmanstetter and Postel in the particular confessional context in which they appeared.

Starting with the Greek quotations in the work of John of Damascus, Bobzin assesses and compares the various translations which soon began to accumulate. Robert of Ketton was followed by Mark of Toledo in the thirteenth century. The Florentine Dominican, Ricoldo da Montecroce, quoted the Quran at length in his Libellus contra legem Saracenorum in the early fourteenth century. Over a hundred years later we find the Quran being studied by Denys the Carthusian. It was translated by Juan de Segovia—a version which has been lost—and, later still by Juan Andrés. Pico della Mirandola’s intriguing Hebrew teacher, Flavius Mithridates, put two suras into Latin for the benefit of the Duke of Urbino. That Robert of Ketton’s translation should be the only one to have been published was a somewhat unfair whim of fortune. It was very far from being the best translation, or even a particularly good one. Bobzin shows that the versions of Mark of Toledo and of Juan Andrés were far superior, but the former remained in manuscript, while Juan Andrés merely quoted from the Quran in his Confusión dela secta mahometica y del alocran published in Valencia in 1515. This did not mean, however, that they were unknown to scholars in the west. Both Postel and Widmanstetter were indebted to Juan Andrés, and it has been suggested that the seventeenth-century translator of the Quran into French, André du Ryer, knew Mark of Toledo’s manuscript.
But what of the confessional circumstances in which the three works appeared? Bibliander’s Quran, which only came out in Basel in the face of strong opposition, had the full support of some of the leading Reformers, most especially of Luther and Melanchthon. Luther wrote a “praefatio” to it and Melanchthon a “praemonitio” (which was initially attributed to Luther). Luther was behind the plan from the start. He had long been interested in Islam, and had already himself translated Ricoldo da Montecroce’s work into German. To begin with he had believed that the pope and Muhammed were the two heads of Antichrist, but, as his familiarity with Islam increased, he abandoned that idea, sustaining that Antichrist was the pope alone. Nevertheless Islam had to be combated. For this there were various reasons. Like a number of Protestants Luther equated the importance of good works in Islam with Catholicism. Above all the attack on Islam was part of a far broader plan to attack all the enemies of the Reformation, and was to serve as a preparation for extending the campaign to Judaism, Anabaptism and Antitrinitarianism. If Bibliander’s edition of the Quran can be regarded partly as a product of Protestant propaganda, Postel and Widmanstetter, the latter more cautiously than the former, both implied an equation between Islam and Protestantism. Bibliander himself, however, had been a keen admirer of Postel’s earlier works and shared many of his convictions. Both men regarded Islam as the scourge of God, intended to punish Christians for their divisions. Both believed that, with their work, they could contribute to healing the schisms of Christendom and, ultimately, to converting the Muslims to Christianity.

Very occasionally Professor Bobzin presents views which are liable to criticism. His idea that David Joris may have acted as an agent of the Family of Love in Basel, and that Postel may have encountered Hendrik Niclaes in that manner, is implausible. A more important point is Bobzin’s interpretation of the woodcut by Hans Brosamer serving as frontispiece to Cochlaeus’s Sieben Köpfte Martini Luthers of 1529. Bobzin (like R.W.Scribner in his For the sake of simple folk of 1981) reaches the perfectly understandable conclusion that the third head, which seems to have a turban, shows Luther as a Turk. Yet this has been doubted, especially by Peter Newman Brooks in Seven-Headed Luther (1983). Brooks points out that, above Luther’s head (wearing not a turban but a scissored nobleman’s hat), there is a baton. Rather than indicating a Turk, this suggests Junker George, the Elector of Saxony who, at the time, was a marshal of the empire.

Der Koran im Zeitalter der Reformation is a book with many digressions and is not always easy to follow. But it contains an immense amount of fascinating material, much of which is new, and presents a solution to various problems which have been defeating scholars. Bibliander’s Quran is a bibliographer’s nightmare. Besides the text of the Quran it contained most of the Corpus Toletanum, the body of manuscripts left by Robert of Ketton and his associate Herman of Carinthia. But it also included a vast number of other tracts concerning the history of the Turks, published in a variety of combinations. Bobzin has made his way through the labyrinth and cleared up the many misunderstandings to which the work has given rise. Then there is the question of the quality of the Quran translations. Of the three men who tackled the Quran in 1543, Bibliander can hardly be said to have been a good Arabist. Widmanstetter based his own abridgement on Robert of Ketton, and may also have used Juan Andrés. Postel, on the other hand, even if he occasionally turned to Andrés, translated directly from the Arabic. His knowledge of the language has been questioned in the past, notably by Fück,