

## An imagined book gets a new text: Psalms of the Muslim David

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**Abstract:** Numerous Arabic manuscripts of the ‘Psalms of David’ contain not the Biblical Psalms but Muslim compositions in the form of exhortations addressed by God to David. A survey of five manuscripts reveals that all such texts studied to date can be traced to two early source collections, whose contents were rewritten and expanded by three medieval authors and numerous copyists to produce four distinct texts in seven different recensions. These texts intersect with several types of literature: rewritten Bible, interreligious polemic, sermons, wisdom literature, divine sayings, law, Tales of the Prophets, and ‘dialogues with God’ (*munājāt*). They should be regarded not as polemical rewritings of the Bible, but as rewritten Qur’an, in which each author employs the idea of David and his Psalms to lend the authority of revelation to his own message.

**Keywords:** Psalms, David, Wahb ibn Munabbih, Sufism, asceticism (*zuhd*), piety, rewritten Bible, apocryphal Bible books, falsification of scripture (*taḥrīf*), interreligious polemic, Muslim use of the Bible, proofs of prophethood, sermons, wisdom literature, divine sayings (*ḥadīth qudsī*), Tales of the Prophets (*qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ*), dialogues with God (*munājāt*).

Muslims have approached the text of the Bible, including the Psalms, in many ways, most of them polemical or apologetic. But they have used the imagined idea of ‘the Psalms of David’ constructively, as the *raison d’être* for a distinctly Islamic literature. Several Muslim authors have rewritten the Psalms, drawing their materials and their inspiration from a variety of mostly Islamic literatures, but presenting their work as David’s *mazāmīr* (psalms) or *Zabūr* (the Qur’an’s term for David’s revealed book). This article identifies two source collections of such ‘Psalms of the Muslim David’, and describes how their contents were rearranged and rewritten

and expanded by three medieval authors and numerous copyists to produce four distinct texts in seven different recensions that are extant today. It then points out how these texts intersect with several kinds of literature: rewritten Bible, interreligious polemic, Islamic sermons, wisdom literature, divine sayings, law, Tales of the Prophets, and ‘dialogues with God’ (*munājāt*). It concludes that these Islamic psalms constitute principally intrareligious rather than interreligious argument, and are better described as rewritten Qur’an than rewritten Bible.

### Source collections, texts, recensions, and manuscripts

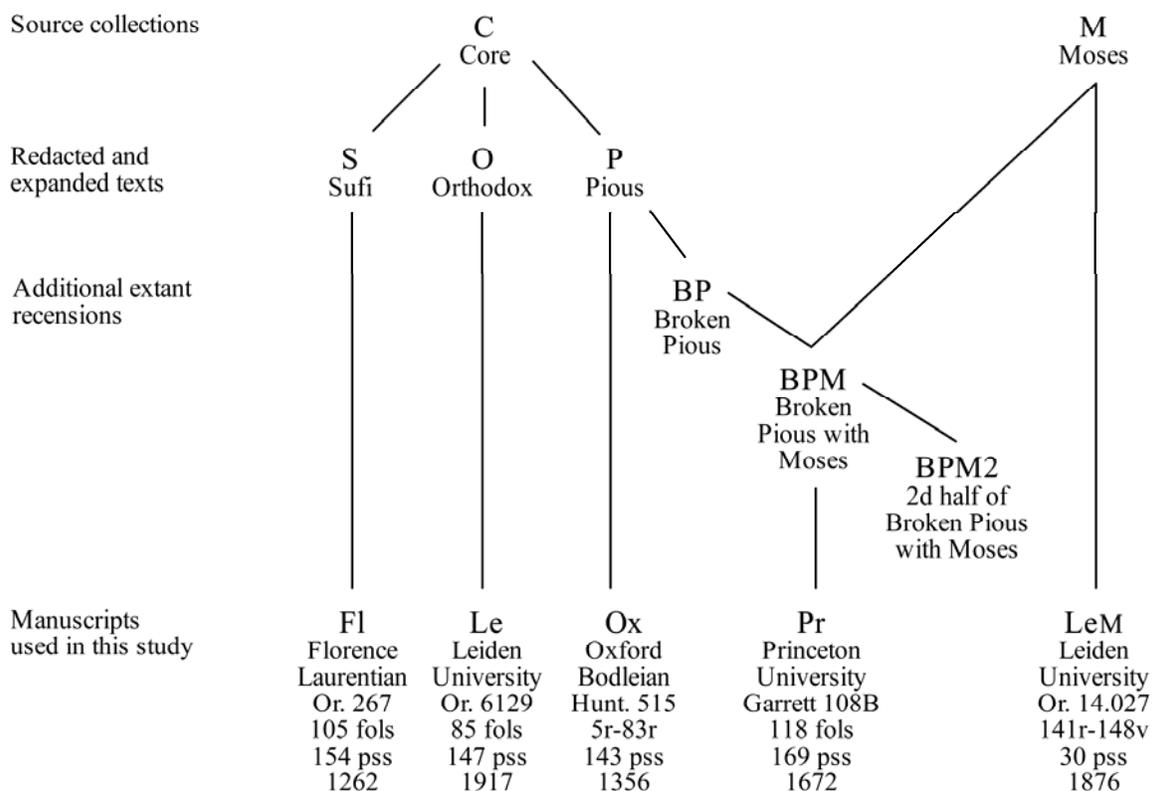
This literature exists in numerous scattered manuscripts,<sup>1</sup> but these are not always readily identifiable because they are often titled and catalogued in the same way as ordinary Arabic translations of the biblical Psalms. Several were partially studied by orientalists early in the twentieth century. In 1909, O.Chr. Krarup published an edition and German translation of 19 Psalms from a Florence manuscript, and cited just enough from manuscripts in Oxford and St Petersburg to show that they departed markedly from the Florence text and from each other. In 1910, L. Cheikho published the first 18 psalms from a manuscript he found in Mosul, which diverged from Krarup’s published excerpts after the first few lines (1910, 41–3, 47–56). In 1915, S.M. Zwemer described a manuscript he purchased in Cairo, which appeared, from the one psalm he quoted, to correspond closely to the Florence text. Then, in 1932, ‘A.A. Mukhliş described a Jerusalem manuscript that seemed to have no connection to any of the previously mentioned texts, though he later noted that it had the same ending as a manuscript in Princeton (1932, 627–30; 1933, 341–2). Yet another text was added to the mix in 1986, when J. Sadan described a rewritten ‘Torah of Moses’ that was also sometimes presented as the Psalms of David.<sup>2</sup> This essay attempts to map some of the main sources and trajectories of this literature, based on published descriptions or cursory examination of several dozen

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<sup>1</sup> In addition to the manuscripts described below, and those listed in notes 5, 21, 30, 57, 74, and 75, others that may contain Muslim psalms but which I do not have sufficient information to identify further are: Jerusalem, JNL, Yahuda Ar. 261 (about 170 fols); Istanbul, Nuruosmaniye 48/1; Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Bağdatlı Vehbi 3; Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Ar. 760 and Ar. 1397; Cambridge, University Library, Add. 3256; a manuscript in the National Library in Madrid titled *al-Zabūr al-munazzal ‘alā nabīyy Allāh Dā’ūd*; and a manuscript from Cairo mentioned by Krarup (1909, 3).

<sup>2</sup> See Sadan 1986, 370–98. Copies ascribed to David are mentioned on pp. 379–80 n. 76, and pp. 397–8.

manuscripts, and on a more complete but still superficial indexing of the main themes or opening lines of every psalm in five selected manuscripts. The relationships between these manuscripts, and the recensions, texts, and source collections that they represent, are sketched, tentatively and no doubt too simplistically, in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Source collections, texts, recensions, and manuscripts used in this study.

The ‘Moses’ source collection (M) is a recension of the ‘Torah of Moses’ studied by Sadan, presented as the *Zabūr* of David. In the Leiden Moses manuscript (LeM, dated 1876), M contains one opening chapter (M 0 = BPM 140) followed by 30 numbered ‘*sūras* of the *Zabūr*’ (M 1-30 = BPM 141-169).<sup>3</sup> These also appear, with some omissions, at the end of the ‘Broken Pious with Moses’ recension (BPM), and also at the end of a recension that exists in two Jerusalem manuscripts and consists of only the second half of BPM (BPM2).<sup>4</sup> Several other extant

<sup>3</sup> The copyist forgot the headings of M 23 (which should begin on LeM 146r.2) and M 24 (which should begin on LeM 146r.11), but he correctly numbered the next *sūra* 25.

<sup>4</sup> See note 75.

manuscripts contain only the Moses text.<sup>5</sup> M's psalms are tightly structured, and often use rhyme, as in the following verses from M 22:<sup>6</sup>

2	O Moses son of 'Imrān,	<i>Yā Mūsā Ibn 'Imrān,</i>
3	O bearer of revelation,	<i>yā ṣāhib al-bayān,</i>
4	listen to my speech, for I am God, the pious king.	<i>Isma' kalāmī innī anā Allāh al-malik al-dayyān.</i>
5	There is no interpreter between you and me.	<i>Laysa baynī wa-baynaka tarjumān.</i>
6	To those who consume interest and disobey, give good tidings of the wrath of the Merciful One	<i>Bashshir ākil al-ribā wa-al-'āṣī bi- ghaḍab al-Rahmān</i>
7	and of the slashing [fiends] of hell.	<i>wa-muqaṭṭi'āt al-nīrān.</i>

The fact that God's speech here is still addressed to Moses rather than David shows that this material was originally composed in the form of a revelation to Moses, and only later co-opted as a psalm of David. We will not dwell on the Moses source collection, since it has already been analyzed perceptively by Sadan.

Another much longer source collection provided the Core (C) of material that appears in some form at the beginning of all known manuscripts except those few that contain only the Moses text. This shared Core was not noticed in earlier studies, because C was rearranged and sometimes radically rewritten by the redactors of what I am calling the Orthodox (O), Sufi (S), and Pious (P) texts, and because one influential recension (Broken Pious, BP) skips over two folios' worth of material from near the beginning of P. Nevertheless, if one compares the themes and vocabulary of O 1–99, S 1–52, and P 1–78 (or the corresponding psalms in P's various recensions), one finds that they all stem, directly or indirectly, from a common source that I am calling C. After that point, each of the redacted and expanded texts takes off in its own direction: O 100–147, S 53–154, and P 79–143 have almost no material in common.<sup>7</sup> Because of this, and because neither O nor S nor P contains all the material that the other two

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<sup>5</sup> Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Ar. 5647 and Ar. 5681; Cairo, Taymūriyya, *diyānāt* 3 and *diyānāt* 4. Sadan 1986, 397–8.

<sup>6</sup> Translated from BPM 161 (Pr 106v.2–5), equivalent to M 22 (LeM 145v.15–17).

<sup>7</sup> My rough indexing detected only two shared psalms beyond this point: P 79 and 80 (Ox 51r.6–52v.8) begin with material similar to O 114 and 118 (Le 60v.12–61v.4, 64v.3–65r.11). Perhaps P and O both worked from an expanded recension of C that included these psalms.

share, none can have been the basis for any of the others; they must have been produced independently from C, or from various recensions thereof.

To assist future work on these texts, Table 1 shows the correspondences that my rough indexing was able to discern between the most important texts and recensions. It shows only approximate correspondences between large blocks of text, overlooking numerous smaller additions, omissions, and reorderings (not to mention radical rewriting) within those blocks. It assigns psalm numbers to C based on O, because O does not seem to have omitted very much of C (at least not much to which both S and P bear witness), or to have modified the ordering or ideology or literary form of C as much as S and P did. But the division and numbering of psalms is of little importance, as it was performed rather arbitrarily by each redactor and copyist. Folio numbers are given in parentheses to permit identification of each segment of text.

**Table 1.** Approximate correspondences between texts and recensions

<b>C</b>	<b>O (Le)</b>	<b>S (Fl)</b>	<b>P (Ox)</b>	<b>BPM (Pr)</b>
1:1-7	1:1-7 (1v.3-10)	1:1-5 (2v.4-9)	1:1-7 (5v.2-11)	1:1-7 (1v.2-10)
1:8 - 2:3	1:8 - 2:3 (1v.10-2r.10)	1:6 - 2:3a (2v.10-3r.11)	1:8 - 2:3 (5v.11-6r.12)	-
2:4 - 3:6	2:4 - 3:6 (2r.10-3r.8)	-	2:4 - 5:3 (6r.12-7v.7)	-
3:7 - 5	3:7 - 5 (3r.8-5v.8)	-	5:4 - 7 (7v.7-10v.7)	1:8 - 3 (1v.10-5v.8)
6-11	6-11 (5v.11-14r.12)	6-11 (9v.12-14v.1)	8-13 (10v.9-16r.10)	4-9 (6r.1-12v.5)
12-18	12-18 (10v.3-16r.1)	2:3b - 5 (3r.11-9v.10)	14-18 (16r.11-20r.7)	10-14 (12v.7-17r.5)
19-36	19-36 (16r-25r)	14-23 (16v-23r)	-	-
37-46	37-46 (25r-29r)	24-26 (23r-26r)	19-28 (20r-25r)	15-24 (17r-23r)
47-52	47-52 (29v-31v)	12-13 (14v-16r)	29-35 (25r-28r)	25-31 (23v-27r)
53-65	53-65 (31v-37v)	27-35 (26r-33r)	36-48 (28v-33v, 42r-v, 34r)	32-44 (27r-35r)
65-68	65-68 (37r-39r)	35-37 (32v-34v)	61-64 (39r-41v)	57-60 (41r-44r)
68-82	68-82 (38v-43r)	37-40 (33v-37r)	48-61 (42v, 34r-40r)	44-57 (34v-42r)
82-99	82-99 (43r-51v)	40-52 (36v-45v)	64-78 (41r-v, 43r-51r)	60-74 (43r-54r)
-	100-147 (51v-85r)	-	79-80 (51r-52v) resemble O 114, 118	75-76 (54r-55v) match P 79-80
-	-	53-154 (46r-105v)	-	-
-	-	-	81-143 (52v-83r)	77-139 (56r-92r)
-	-	-	-	140-169 (92r-115r) match M 0-30 (LeM 141r-148v)

It is to be hoped that a copy of C itself will soon be discovered in one of the many manuscripts that remain unstudied.<sup>8</sup> In the meantime, however, one can form a general impression of C from the material that is shared by O, S, and P. Like the material those three redactors added, C was pietistic in tone, and called its readers to turn from the preoccupations of this world and seek the rewards of the afterlife. Several features, however, distinguish its outlook from those of the redactors. C shows a special concern with wealth, sexual sin, asceticism, reliance on God for one's sustenance, and repentant nighttime devotions. It is also noteworthy for its many echoes of different parts of the Bible. C 1 and C 2 include paraphrases of parts of Psalms 1 and 2, and although most of C is placed in the mouth of God, several of its psalms imitate the biblical Psalms by incorporating words spoken by David to God.<sup>9</sup> Some psalms echo themes from the Biblical Psalms, such as David's appeal to God in Psalm 25.2, 'Do not let me be put to shame; do not let my enemies exult over me.'<sup>10</sup> David's sin and his repentance come up several times,<sup>11</sup> and C seems to share the biblical and early Muslim view that his sin was at least partly sexual in nature. Thus in C 12 God promises David that a certain 'event' (presumably his sin) will result in a wise son, if he stays up late in prayer.<sup>12</sup> In S 18:6–7 (Fl 20r.5–7) David complains that his sins have worn him out and made him weep, and then asks in frustration: 'Does Satan have no other net than women?' This line was omitted by the Orthodox redactor in O 29:6 (Le 22r.3), perhaps because by his time Muslim exegetes had been making David's sin less and less a sexual matter (see Déclais 1999a, 187–211, esp. 209–11; and Déclais 1999b). Similarly, S 3:23–28 (Fl 5v.2–6r.3) preserves rules about divorce and adultery that seem pointedly directed at David's sin; but only the tail end of this passage survives in O 12:5 (Le 10v.11–12), while

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<sup>8</sup> Several manuscripts at the Süleymaniye Library in Istanbul are especially good candidates because they start out similarly to O, but are shorter: Hüsrev Paşa 4 (fols 1–37), Ayasofya 30 (47 fols), Halet Efendi ve Eki 11 (26 fols, 110 pss), and Fatih 28 (95 fols, 118 pss plus conclusion, dated 1229, reproduced as Arab League Microfilm *al-kutub al-samāwiyya* 36). The last is also the earliest known manuscript of these psalms, and may prove crucial to any edition or in-depth textual history of this literature. I consulted it briefly, but was unable to use it in this study because of Turkish export restrictions.

<sup>9</sup> E.g. S 18:6–9 (Fl 20r.5–9); cf. O 29:6 (Le 22r.3).

<sup>10</sup> Biblical quotations are from the NRSV. Cf. O 36:4 (Le 24v.5–6), S 23:4 (Fl 22v.13).

<sup>11</sup> See e.g. O 75–77 (Le 40v–41v), S 39 (Fl 35r–36v), and P 54–56 (Ox 36r–37v).

<sup>12</sup> O 12:4 (Le 10v.9–11), S 3:22 (Fl 5r.13–5v.2).

elsewhere P follows a late exegetical tradition by turning David's sin into a case of hasty judgment.<sup>13</sup> From the Gospels C echoes the Golden Rule,<sup>14</sup> and the saying about the birds of the air who neither sow nor reap.<sup>15</sup> C 4:22 offers a variation on the story of Solomon's judgment between two women arguing over a child.<sup>16</sup> Most of these allusions appear to stem not from direct study of the biblical text, but from Islamic traditions, which incorporated many such biblical motifs. Colorful non-biblical stories also appear. C 4:15 rebukes those who anxiously protect their wealth with the tale of how God nourishes the Behemoth (who holds the earth on his back) without his even having to open his mouth to ask.<sup>17</sup> C 65 tells of a hornet which God inspires to eat of a snake and then to go sting a mighty and wicked king, who promptly swells up and dies a gruesome death.<sup>18</sup> Using images familiar from Buddhist texts, C 18 tells how God sends a dragon to light with its breath a fire that threatens a busy merchant, but then envelops the man in a cloud of steam, thus keeping him oblivious to the fire that is about to consume him, just as his preoccupation with his worldly business makes him forget the fire of hell.<sup>19</sup>

Such a colorful collection of tales and admonitions, demonstrating direct knowledge of both biblical and non-biblical sayings and stories, is just the kind of text that Muslim writers readily attributed to Wahb ibn Munabbih (d. ca. 728), an early Muslim famous for his knowledge of pre-Islamic scriptures, who was credited with a collection of Davidic lore and a translation of the Psalms. It is not surprising, therefore, that one manuscript of S opens with a chain of transmission going back to Wahb (Zwemer 1915, 399). R.G. Khoury is inclined to think that some material from Wahb does indeed lie behind these rewritten psalm texts (1972, 261–3). C could well stem from some very early traditions, especially considering the strong view of

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<sup>13</sup> P 56 (Ox 37v); cf. O 77 (Le 41v) and part of S 39 (36r.11–36v.2). For this exegetical tradition see Déclais 1999a, 197, 210–11; and Déclais 1999b, 436–8.

<sup>14</sup> O 7:7 (Le 7r.2), S 7:7 (Fl 10v.13), P 9:7 (Ox 12r.5–6). Cf. Matthew 7.12 and Luke 6.31.

<sup>15</sup> See for example O 3:8 (Le 3r.10–12) and P 5:5 (Ox 7v.9–11). Cf. Matthew 6.26, Luke 12.24.

<sup>16</sup> O 4:22 (Le 5r.1–3); cf. P 6:23 (Ox 9r.9–12) and BPM 2:23 (Pr 4r.5–8). Cf. 1 Kings 3:16–28.

<sup>17</sup> O 4:15 (Le 4r.10–4v.2). The story is misunderstood and corrupted in P 6:16 (Ox 9r.3–7) and BPM 2:16 (Pr 3r.5–9).

<sup>18</sup> O 65 (Le 37r–v), S 35 (Fl 32v–33r), P 61 (Ox 39r–40r), BPM 57 (Pr 41r–42r). Text and translation in Krarup 1909, 12–13, Arabic 14–16.

<sup>19</sup> As explained below, I take S 5:7 (Fl 7v.13–8r.3) rather than O 18:6–8 (Le 14v.3–9) to reflect C's original text.

David's sin that it hints at, and its lack of any prediction of Muhammad – something later redactors all felt compelled to add.<sup>20</sup> The most we can say is that in time it very naturally came to be associated with Wahb.

The recension that appears to follow C most closely is O, for whose text I have had to rely on a rather poor, late manuscript, Leiden University Or. 6129 (Le).<sup>21</sup> Frequently O agrees with either S or P in preserving a short simple text, which is expanded or polished by the other redactor. For example, where O 37:2 (Le 25r.5–6) says simply 'blessed are those whose inside is more beautiful than their outside,' S 24:2 (Fl 23r.13–23v.2) cannot resist adding the converse 'and woe to those whose outside is beautiful but whose inside is ugly,' but P 19:2 (Ox 20r.11) confirms that C contained O's simpler text. In the very next psalm (O 38:2, Le 25v.6–8) O says that 'if the inhabitants of heaven and earth joined together to harm a believer whom I intend to help, they would not harm him by as much as a fingertip.' This time S (25:1, Fl 23v.11–13) agrees with O in preserving the short text of C, improving it only slightly, while P (20:2–3, Ox 21r.1–4) changes 'fingertip' to the more vivid image of 'the weight of a mustard seed', and adds the converse statement: the inhabitants of heaven and earth could not avert a mustard seed's weight of harm from someone God intends to harm. O is far less given to such enhancements and elaborations. O sometimes abbreviates material whose original longer form is preserved in S and P,<sup>22</sup> but I have not noticed any instances in which S and P agree on a simple text while O elaborates independently. One sometimes suspects, however, that O has tried to rectify some

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<sup>20</sup> It is conceivable that the prediction in O 18:1 (Le 14r.8–10) was in C but was omitted by S, but there is no corresponding psalm in P to confirm this, and I suspect it was added by O. The fact that S and P both felt compelled to add such predictions suggests that C did not originally contain one. See P 92 (Ox 59v–60r), BPM 88 (Pr 64r–v), and S 107 (concluding on Fl 76r; the prediction itself was on the prior folio, which is missing).

<sup>21</sup> Le is dated 1917, consists of 85 folios, and contains 147 psalms, which are numbered (incorrectly after 46) as 'sūras of the Zabūr'. Other manuscripts that may contain O include several in the Süleymaniye Library in Istanbul: Fatih 28 / Arab League microfilm *al-kutub al-samāwiyya* 36 (dated 1229, 95 fols, 118 pss); Damat İbrahim Paşa 5 (1303, 125 fols, 157 pss); Ayasofya 30 (47 fols); Halet Efendi ve Eki 11 (26 fols, 110 pss); Hüsrev Paşa 4 (fols 1–37); and Fatih 29 (120 fols). Also St Petersburg, National Public Library 51 (1609, 72 fols, 150 pss); and a manuscript in Mecca, Maktabat al-Ḥaram (1860, 117 fols, 148 pss, translation ascribed to 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib). Some of these might contain C rather than O; see note 8.

<sup>22</sup> For example, O 13:6 (Le 11r.10–12) omits phrases that are preserved in both S 5:41 (Fl 9v.7–10) and P 14:6 (Ox 16v.7–10).

aspect of C that he found problematic. For example, S 14:27 (Fl 17v.11–12) asks how one can possibly hope to trick God by sinning and then quickly asking for forgiveness, when God is the one who created trickery. O 22:3 (Le 18r.5–7) explains that God’s trickery is to blind hearts with desire. Such an explanation is not the kind of thing S would have omitted; it seems more like something a redactor might add, in reaction to the uncomfortable (though perfectly orthodox) idea of God creating evil. I suspect also that the story of the dragon and the merchant preserved in S 5:7 (Fl 7v.13–8r.3) was original to C, and that O 18:6–8 (Le 14v.3–9) has modified it to make it more Islamic: two men are faced with a business opportunity at the time of prayer; one chooses prayer while the other chooses commerce; but God sends clouds to distract the latter so that he misses his opportunity for both trade and prayer. This is an awkward, forced accommodation of the dragon story to more familiar Islamic themes. The cloud made more sense in the story of the dragon and the fire. But since P omits these particular psalms, we have no independent witness to help us decide between O and S. A definitive statement of how O redacted C will have to await more detailed analysis of psalms shared by all three redactions, or better yet the discovery of C itself. For now I have no definitive evidence that O has strayed very far from C.

In O 100–147, which are O’s independent additions to C, we find more secure evidence of O’s religious ideology. I call him the Orthodox redactor, not because the others were heretical, but because O was especially concerned to remain within mainstream orthodoxy. Rather than speaking of God’s love, as S does, O speaks much of God’s greatness and sovereign decree,<sup>23</sup> and defends at length God’s creation of unbelief.<sup>24</sup> Rather than urge his audience to long night vigils spent in tears, he emphasizes the importance of obedience;<sup>25</sup> but he does not neglect the importance of asking God’s forgiveness,<sup>26</sup> and he is not averse to the term *zuhd* (asceticism).<sup>27</sup> When in O 131 (Le 73v–74r) he offers his own rewriting of the biblical Psalm 1, composed independently of C’s paraphrase which O quoted in O 1 (Le 1v), he emphasizes God’s law, calling it *farḍ* and *sunna* and *sharī’a*. He is particularly fond of Qur’anic-sounding phrases, and he quotes Q 112 almost verbatim in O 118 (Le 64v), changing it so that God speaks of himself in the first person. Compared with S and P, his style is not very polished or

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<sup>23</sup> E.g. O 119 (Le 65v), 129 (Le 72v).

<sup>24</sup> O 132 (Le 74r–75r).

<sup>25</sup> E.g. O 103 (Le 55r.7–8), 115 (61v), 116 (62v), 125 (69v), 130 (73r), 134 (76r), 135 (77r).

<sup>26</sup> O 110 (Le 58v), 113 (60r), 115 (61r), 134 (76r), 138 (79r), 147 (84r).

<sup>27</sup> O 135 (Le 77r).

imaginative. He simply does what he feels he needs to do to complete his collection of psalms, working in a prediction of Muhammad,<sup>28</sup> and expanding his text from the 99 psalms he found in C to about 150 or so,<sup>29</sup> probably to fit an image of the Psalms gleaned from Jews and Christians. He is content to perform his task rather mechanically, reiterating over and over a subset of C's themes.

The 'Sufi' recension (S) is more distinctive. It is represented in this study by a good, early manuscript from the Laurentian Library in Florence, Orient. Palat. 267, Assem. XXVIII.<sup>30</sup> S's modifications to C are often obvious, contrasting sharply with the texts of O and P. Considered along with S's independent additions (S 53–154), they reflect a moderate Sufi vision of divine love<sup>31</sup> and forgiveness, of *dhikr*<sup>32</sup> and night worship<sup>33</sup> and tearful repentance, and of a common spirituality that is at least potentially shared by the Bible and its adherents. 'Praise to him who delivers aspiring servants (*al-'ibād al-murīdīn*) from destruction, and by his will brings them round to obedience, and makes them drink from the cup of his love, and washes the filth of their sins from their hearts' (S 87:1 Fl 66r.2–3). S's model of how humans should relate to God is less a matter of obedience than of repentance and dependence. S preserves and builds upon C's vision of disdain for this passing life,<sup>34</sup> focusing on death<sup>35</sup> and the afterlife, and

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<sup>28</sup> See note 20.

<sup>29</sup> The Leiden manuscript of O has 147 psalms, but that number probably varied from copy to copy, as psalms were split or run together. Many extant manuscripts have between 130 and 170 psalms.

<sup>30</sup> It is dated 1262, consists of 105 folios, and contains 154 numbered psalms (*mazāmīr*). One folio is missing between fols 75 and 76. Another manuscript that probably contains S is the one described in Zwemer (1915). I have been unable to locate it; it is not at Hartford Seminary, nor does it appear in the handlist of manuscripts that Yale acquired from Hartford Seminary. Thanks to Adam Simnowitz, Steven Blackburn, and Robert Babcock for their efforts to help me locate it. A manuscript that may represent a precursor to S is Berlin, State Library, Spr. 466 (1766, fols 33v–140, 137 pss), which begins with Core material that has not undergone the Sufi author's editing, but ends with some of the same additional material as S.

<sup>31</sup> S 84 (Fl 64r), 87 (66r), 95 (69r), 115 (80v).

<sup>32</sup> S 87 (Fl 66r), 96 (69v).

<sup>33</sup> S 84 (Fl 64r), 97 (70r).

<sup>34</sup> S 60 (Fl 50v), 82 (63v), 83 (63v), 105 (75r), 114 (80v), 118 (83v).

calling for dependence upon God alone,<sup>36</sup> particularly for one's physical needs<sup>37</sup> – without going so far as to urge complete disregard for this world.<sup>38</sup> He is not as concerned with legally correct behavior as O or P. Where O and P describe the penalties for theft and adultery, S omits the latter.<sup>39</sup> Where O and P give a long list of commands, S gives just a few.<sup>40</sup> He is less concerned with outward deeds *per se* than with the character of the heart,<sup>41</sup> dealing with one's inner self (*nafs*),<sup>42</sup> controlling one's tongue,<sup>43</sup> sincerity,<sup>44</sup> and the correspondence between a person's outward deeds and inner attitudes.<sup>45</sup> He does not shy away from mentioning sin; indeed he seems to relish it. The sins listed in S 13:30–31 (Fl 16r.6–12) are far more scandalous than those in P 35:1–3 (Ox 28r.6–12) and O 52 (Le 31v.4–9), and there are frequent references and allusions to David's sin.<sup>46</sup> But sin in general, and David's sin in particular, serve primarily as the occasion for weeping,<sup>47</sup> shame,<sup>48</sup> repentance, and divine forgiveness.<sup>49</sup> David's sin allows him to become a model of S's piety, as he stands weeping through the night.

S also tends to minimize polemics against Jews and Christians. He does not shy away from the claim of scriptural corruption, perhaps because that is what legitimates his project of

<sup>35</sup> S 74 (Fl 59v), 77 (61r), 101 (72v), 123 (87v).

<sup>36</sup> S 93 (Fl 68r), 104 (74r), 134 (94v).

<sup>37</sup> S 59 (Fl 50r), 76 (60v–61r), 129 (91r), 143 (99v).

<sup>38</sup> S 75 (Fl 60r) and 92 (68r) urge a middle way.

<sup>39</sup> S 13:6 (Fl 14v.13–15r.3), corresponding to O 49:6–7 (Le 30r.8–10) and P 32:7–8 (Ox 26v.4–8).

<sup>40</sup> S 40:1–3 (Fl 36v.11–37r.2), corresponding to O 82–83 (Le 43r–v) and P 64–65 (Ox 41r–v).

<sup>41</sup> S 65 (Fl 54v), 81 (62v), 89 (66v.5–6), 96 (69v–70r), 112 (79r), 127 (89r).

<sup>42</sup> S 109 (Fl 77r).

<sup>43</sup> S 125 (Fl 88r).

<sup>44</sup> S 119 (Fl 84v).

<sup>45</sup> S 53 (Fl 46r), 121 (86r), 147 (102r).

<sup>46</sup> S 39 (Fl 35r–36v), 55 (46v), 63 (53v), 72 (58v–59v), 98 (71r–v).

<sup>47</sup> S 77 (Fl 61r), 122 (87r).

<sup>48</sup> S 111 (Fl 78v), 117 (82v).

<sup>49</sup> S 138 (Fl 96v), 139 (97r), 154 (105r).

rewriting the Psalms. He retains C's reference to that corruption in C 37:8,<sup>50</sup> and when he adds his own prediction of Muhammad in S 107 (Fl 76r), he curses those Christians, born of Satan's seed, who will erase Muhammad's name from their scriptures. But he omits C's story of why certain Jews were transformed into apes and pigs,<sup>51</sup> and in S 86 (Fl 65v) he condemns oppression of non-Muslims. Even when he implicitly condemns Christian aggression against Muslims in his rewriting of the biblical Psalm 2, he does not call for revenge, but for Christians to join his Muslim audience in repenting and looking only to God for their sustenance.<sup>52</sup> And he omits a denial of the divinity of Christ that C offered as a response to Psalm 2.7 ('You are my son; today I have begotten you').<sup>53</sup> This omission is all the more remarkable because in general it is S, rather than C or O or P, who shows the greatest interest in the text of the biblical Psalms. C is based on the biblical Psalms only in the first half of C 1, which paraphrases Psalm 1 rather loosely, and then again in the first few verses of C2; but S brings its paraphrase of Psalm 1 more closely into line with the biblical text, and then responds to nearly every aspect of Psalm 2 and Psalm 3.1-4, drawing in material from C 14 that he could relate to Psalm 2.<sup>54</sup> It appears that S had access to an Arabic translation of the Bible with which he interacted very creatively through the beginning of Psalm 3. At that point he gave up trying to follow the biblical text, but occasionally he echoed themes and language from the Psalms,<sup>55</sup> and added material in the biblical form of human address to God.<sup>56</sup>

This 'Sufi' recension stands in marked contrast to what I am calling the Pious recension, which is contained in a good manuscript at Oxford: Bodleian, Hunt. 515, fols 5r-83r, dated 1356, containing 143 unnumbered psalms.<sup>57</sup> The Orthodox and Sufi redactors were each concerned

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<sup>50</sup> S 24:8 (Fl 23v.8), corresponding to O 37:8 (Le 25r.12) and P 19:7 (Ox 20v.7-8).

<sup>51</sup> O 47 (Le 29v), P 30 (Ox 25v).

<sup>52</sup> S 2 (Fl 3r-v). In a still unpublished paper presented to the Society of Biblical Literature in 2007 I argued that S read the Biblical Psalm 2 as a militant Christian text, and transformed it into a divine rebuke of aggression against a Muslim shrine, possibly the *ḥaram* in Jerusalem.

<sup>53</sup> O 2:4 (Le 2r.10-12), P 2:4 (Ox 6r.12-6v.3); cf. S 2 (Fl 3r-v).

<sup>54</sup> Compare O 14 (Le 11v) and P 15 (16v.10-17v.2) with S 2:3b-9 (Fl 3r.11-3v.11).

<sup>55</sup> E.g. S 63 (Fl 53v), 150 (103v).

<sup>56</sup> S 57 (Fl 48r), 58 (49r), 63 (53v).

<sup>57</sup> Ox fol 42 is out of place, and must be read between fols 33 and 34. Another partial copy of P is Oxford, Bodleian, Bodley Or. 429, fols 1v-64v, which was transcribed from Oxford's Hunt. 515.

with their own kinds of piety, but P makes a point of pushing an obedience-based form of piety to its utmost, guarding against any suggestion of licentiousness. He downplays those elements of C that provided fodder for S, and transforms them into appeals for obedience. For example, where O 2:8 (Le 2v.1–2) urges mindfulness of God night and day, the corresponding passage in P 3:3 (Ox 6v.9–11) urges obedience. Where C quotes a divine saying about loving God, P makes it refer to obeying God and following his prophets.<sup>58</sup> Where C says that the dirt of sin cannot be removed with water but only with forgiveness, P substitutes repentance for forgiveness.<sup>59</sup> P adds numerous references to the necessity of outward obedience and punishment for disobedience.<sup>60</sup> He even reinterprets the story of the Behemoth, which was originally about how God provides the beast with its sustenance, so that now the Behemoth threatens to swallow the earth in punishment for sin.<sup>61</sup> He does not reject Sufi themes outright: he still mentions inner virtues<sup>62</sup> and the importance of seeking God's forgiveness,<sup>63</sup> weeping, and even asceticism.<sup>64</sup> But they are not central. P's perspective is exemplified by P 18:9–13 (Ox 20r.1–7), which he inserts into his redaction of C 17:

All ye pious obedient ones, blessed are you if when you come to the resurrection you are known by your marks – that is, that I make for you a light by which you find light. O David, I made my garden for those who feed [the poor] because of me and from fear of my fire. Blessed are those who forego the desires of this world on account of me. Blessed are those who forego shameful deeds on account of me. Blessed are those who think of their destination, and prepare provisions for their journey. I am great and wise.

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<sup>58</sup> Compare O 14:2 (Le 11v.4–5) and S 2:3b (Fl 3r.11–3v.1) with P 15:2 (Ox 17r.1–4).

<sup>59</sup> Compare O 37:1 (Le 25r.4–5) and S 24:1 (Fl 23r.12–13) with P 19:1 (Ox 20r.9–10).

<sup>60</sup> E.g. P 99 (Ox 63r), 101 (63v), 103 (64v), 123 (74v), 105 (65v), 134 (80r), 138 (81r).

<sup>61</sup> Compare O 4:15 (Le 4r.10–4v.2) with P 6:16 (Ox 9r.3–7) and BPM 2:16 (Pr 3v.5–9).

<sup>62</sup> E.g. P 140 (Ox 81v).

<sup>63</sup> P 128 (Ox 77r).

<sup>64</sup> P 10:7 (Ox 13v.6–8) seamlessly omits a reference to asceticism, but this may have been the choice of a copyist rather than the redactor: it was restored as a correction in the margin, and preserved in later recensions based on P (see BPM 6:7, Pr 9v.4–7). P adds his own independent affirmation of asceticism in P 111 (Ox 68v).

P even ensures that David's piety lives up to his own sense of propriety. He drops C 12:4, which alluded to the 'event' that gave David a son.<sup>65</sup> In P 56 he mitigates David's sin by identifying it as a case of hasty judgment between two plaintiffs.<sup>66</sup> C 7 urges David, in case he should be attracted to a beautiful woman, to ask God to marry her to him in this world and the next, but P revises this heavily so that David's request is delayed until the resurrection, and God never promises to grant it.<sup>67</sup> This reflects a certain discomfort with physical pleasures: in P 8:3 he defers another promise of spouses to the afterlife,<sup>68</sup> and in describing paradise he specifies that its perfumes are not like those of this world.<sup>69</sup> He speaks frequently of law,<sup>70</sup> and emphasizes the legal content of revealed books.<sup>71</sup> One especially telling redaction occurs in P 24: C 42 contained a short line about how disobedience takes away the light of one's faith, which S omitted as too works-oriented; but P expands upon it, adding that faith decreases with sin.<sup>72</sup> This disputed point of theology is associated with the pietistic Hanbalite doctrine that works are an essential constituent of faith, so that faith increases and decreases in proportion to one's deeds.

Of the three redactions, P was the most polished, and it proved very influential. An early copy of it omitted P 1:8–5:3 (Ox 5v.11–7v.7), probably because two folios went missing,<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> See O 12:4 (Le 10v.9–11), S 3:22 (Fl 5r.13–5v.2); the corresponding psalm is omitted between P 13 and P 14 (Ox 16r).

<sup>66</sup> See note 13.

<sup>67</sup> Compare O 7:2–3 (Le 6v.4–7) and S 7:2–3 (Fl 10v.3–6) with P 9:2–3 (Ox 11v.6–9).

<sup>68</sup> Compare O 6:3 (Le 6r.2–4) and S 6:3 (Fl 10r.3–6) with P 8:3 (Ox 11r.3–5).

<sup>69</sup> Compare O 8:9 (Le 8v.1–7) and S 8:10 (Fl 12v.1–7) with P 10:9 (Ox 13v.11–14r.8).

<sup>70</sup> E.g. P 130 (Ox 78r).

<sup>71</sup> P 19:6–8 (Ox 20v.5–9), comparing O 37:7–9 (Le 25r.11–25v.1) and S 24:7–9 (Fl 23v.7–9). See also P 82 (Ox 53r).

<sup>72</sup> Compare O 42:1 (Le 27r.9) with S 26 (Fl 24r-v) and P 24:1 (Ox 22v.6–8).

<sup>73</sup> The omission is seamless, because the breaks occur at the junctures of self-sufficient textual units, but it may nevertheless have been purely accidental. The missing text, P 1:8–5:3, is exactly four times as long as P 1:1–7 (44 lines to 11 lines in Ox), so it could have been contained on the four pages that followed P 1:1–7 in the copy from which BP was made.

and this Broken Pious recension (BP) was reproduced over and over.<sup>74</sup> Sometimes the Moses text described earlier was tacked on at the end to produce the ‘Broken Pious with Moses’ recension (BPM) that is contained in Princeton Garrett 108B (dated 1672, 118 fols, 169 pss). At some point BPM was itself broken up and copied without psalms 1–66, resulting in a recension containing only the second half (BPM2).<sup>75</sup> This widespread and inconsistent copying of P created the false impression, in earlier studies, of a plethora of independent texts, but many of those texts are in fact recensions of P.

### Literary intersections

It is now evident that the ‘Psalms of the Muslim David’ are not a single book with a few textual variants; they are a small body of literature, and a form of writing all their own. This writing began with the composition of the Core source by an author familiar with biblical and extra-biblical sayings and stories; others redacted C and made their own additions to produce the Orthodox and Sufi and Pious texts; more psalms were borrowed from a similar rewritten ‘Torah of Moses’; and all this material was recopied and recombined to produce at least four basic texts in seven different recensions that are extant today: M, O, S, P, BP, BPM, and BPM2.

How do these texts fit into Arabic and Islamic literature? Their form and content place them at the intersection of several different kinds of writing.

First and foremost, it would seem natural to place these psalms under the broad umbrella of ‘rewritten Bible’ – a term used by biblical scholars to describe the afterlife of

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<sup>74</sup> BP appears to be the recension in the manuscript from Mosul described and partially edited by Cheikho (1910, 41, 47–56) (90 pp., 137 pss, present location unknown). It may also exist in four manuscripts in the Süleymaniye Library in Istanbul: Hamidiye 14 (1755, 94 fols); Carullah 5 (155 fols); Laleli 19 (125 fols, illuminated); Laleli 20 (97 fols, illuminated). These four, however, could contain BPM.

<sup>75</sup> Two Jerusalem manuscripts containing BPM2 were described in Mukhliş 1926, 413, and Mukhliş 1932. The manuscript from Maqām Dā’ūd (dated 1738) was then in the library of al-Sayyid Ḥasan Şidqī al-Dujjānī, and a recent copy of it was in the Khālidīyya Library. The first psalm of this recension, BPM2 1, corresponds to BPM 67 (Pr 46v.7–8); the other four quoted by Mukhliş correspond to BPM 68, 69, 109, and 164 (Pr 47r.1–7, 47r.9–48r.1, 75v.4–8, and 108v.9–109r.6). BPM2 therefore seems to be simply a recension of BPM that lacks the first 66 psalms.

biblical content in literatures such as the Apocrypha, the Targums, the New Testament, and the Church Fathers.<sup>76</sup> But in fact very little biblical content survives in these psalms, beyond the first two, which echo the Bible just enough to establish a rhetorical connection to the biblical Psalms. We have seen that C and S did occasionally echo biblical themes and sayings, or employ the Psalms' defining format of human speech extolling or calling upon God. S even preserved the heading of Psalm 3, 'a Psalm of David', rewording it as 'the speech of David' (S 2:10, Fl 3v.11), which allowed him to retain Psalm 3's very human prayer for protection from enemies. But God is the main speaker in all these texts, addressing David and through him the Children of Israel or the Children of Adam, in language that is more Qur'anic than biblical. These psalms are not an attempt to interpret or imitate or replace the biblical book of Psalms, as earlier orientalists like Goldziher and Zwemer assumed – with the result that they perceived them as forgeries (Goldziher 1878, 351; Zwemer 1915, 402-3).<sup>77</sup> The freedom with which our three redactors rearranged and improved their material shows that they saw their work as a constructive and creative literary endeavor, not as an attempt to recover the genuine Psalms of David. These texts constitute rewritten Bible in name only.

Second, even if these texts are only nominally biblical, the very decision to call them the Psalms or *Zabūr* of David makes them a contribution to the discourse of Muslim–Jewish and Muslim–Christian polemics. They repeat and embody the oft-repeated claim that Jews and Christians had corrupted the texts of their scriptures, and erased their predictions of the Prophet Muhammad.<sup>78</sup> They also occasionally attack the doctrines and character of Christians: the Christian interpretation of Psalm 2.7 as a declaration of Christ's divine sonship is explicitly rejected by O and P;<sup>79</sup> there are passing references to God not having a child;<sup>80</sup> S 2 criticizes

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<sup>76</sup> On the history and meanings of the term 'rewritten Bible', see Koskenniemi and Lindqvist 2008.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. Cheikho's curious assumption that the Qur'an's references to the *Zabūr* referred not to an imagined scripture, but to an actual pre-qur'anic text whose content differed from the biblical Psalms, and which might be preserved in these Islamic psalms (1910, 33, 39–43).

<sup>78</sup> See S 24:7–9 (Fl 23v.7–9), S 107 (Fl 76r), O 18:1–2 (Le 14r.8–11), O 37:7–9 (Le 25r.11–25v.1), P 19:6–8 (Ox 20v.5–9), P 92 (Ox 59v), BPM 15:6–8 (Pr 17v.6–9), BPM 88 (Pr 64r), BPM 141 (Pr 93r), and M 1 (LeM 141r).

<sup>79</sup> O 2:4 (Le 2r.10–12), P 2:4 (Ox 6r.12–6v.3).

<sup>80</sup> S 40:3 (Fl 37r.1), S 51 (Fl 44v.8), O 98 (Le 50v), P 141:2 (Ox 82r.8), BPM 137:2 (Pr 91r.1).

Christian aggression;<sup>81</sup> and M 9 rebukes the People of the Book for failing to live up to the principles of the Sermon on the Mount.<sup>82</sup> But such polemic is sparsely scattered in O and P, and even rarer in S. It seems quite incidental to the main thrust of these psalms, as though it were included out of sheer habit, or as a nod to the similar polemic of the Qur'an. The principal criticisms and condemnations and warnings that are the heart of these psalms concern faults such as worldliness and hypocritical religiosity which the authors clearly thought affected Muslims just as much as Christians and Jews. Sadan, writing about the rewritten Torah that became our Moses text, noted that its artfulness stems from the way it actually addresses Muslims, even while appearing to address the Children of Israel. It must be read, he said, at two levels, with interreligious polemic being distinctly secondary to the exhortation of Muslims (Sadan 1986, 386–8; 390, n. 96; 391, n. 98; 392, nn. 100, 106). This is true of all the Islamic psalm texts. They constitute an internal critique directed at worldly members of the authors' own religious community, even if that critique is ostensibly addressed to the Children of Israel.

This suggests a third literature with which these psalms intersect: Islamic sermons (*maw'īza*). Sadan argues that the Moses text was composed not as a putatively sacred text, but as a set of sermons (ibid., 374–8, 384–5). One copy of it was in fact preserved in an anthology of sermons.<sup>83</sup> Quotations from prophets were commonly used in sermons as a rhetorical device (ibid., 385, see also 397), and it would have been just a short step from composing sermons full of prophetic sayings to compiling whole collections of prophetic logia. The idea of 'the Psalms of David' provided an ideal hook on which to hang such an anthology of sermon material.

Fourth, much in these texts would fit naturally into Islamic wisdom literature (*ḥikma*). Al-Mubashshir ibn Fātik, in his *Mukhtār al-ḥikam*, recounts how the sage Luqmān (who is quoted in Q 31) learned wisdom from David, and quotes numerous Luqmān sayings about this world, asceticism, *dhikr*, and weeping (al-Mubashshir ibn Fātik 1958, 260–79). These sayings could have come straight from C or S, and they employ many of the same forms as our psalms: 'blessed are those' and 'woe to those' formulas, exhortations to sit or associate with certain types of people, pious aphorisms, and parables or similes much like the one in S 38:

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<sup>81</sup> See note 52.

<sup>82</sup> M 9 (LeM 142v.20–143r.4), BPM 149 (Pr 98r.6–98v.3); cf. Matthew 5.43–47 and Luke 6.27–35.

<sup>83</sup> Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Reisülküttab 927, where the material is labeled as Torah (described in Sadan 1986, 374).

What would you think of a man who bears a sword with no hilt, or a bow without arrows; will he intimidate his enemy? In the same way, affirmation of my oneness is not complete without works.<sup>84</sup>

The following ten similes, some of which recall Gospel sayings, appear in M 29 sandwiched between very qur'anic opening and closing phrases:

- 1 O ye who believe, fear God with the fear that is due him, and do not die without being Muslims.
- 2 Knowledge without works is like thunder and lightning without rain.
- 3 Knowledge without works is like a tree without fruit.
- 4 Knowledge without works is like a bow without a string.
- 5 Knowledge without the alms tax is like planting wheat on the rocks.
- 6 Knowledge is to a fool as pearls and sapphires are to animals.
- 7 A hard heart exposed to knowledge is like a stone soaked in water.
- 8 Preaching to one who doesn't care is like playing the flute in a graveyard.
- 9 Giving alms from ill-gotten wealth is like washing excrement from one's clothes with one's urine.
- 10 Prayer without the alms tax is like a body without a spirit.
- 11 And without repentance, knowledge and works and the alms tax are like building without a foundation.
- 12 Do they feel safe from God's stratagems? None but the lost feel safe from God's stratagems.<sup>85</sup>

Compare these with the saying attributed to Idrīs (Hermes) and Luqmān: 'Reason without *adab* (manners or culture) is like a barren tree; reason with *adab* is like a fruitful tree' (al-Mubashshir ibn Fātik 1958, 19, 277). Such similarities of both form and content suggest that a thorough search in Arabic wisdom literature might turn up some of the textual source material used by C or M or the later redactors.

Some parts of our psalms come from a fifth source, the literature of divine sayings. C 14:1–2 echoes a famous divine saying (*ḥadīth qudsī*) that is dear to Sufis: 'When I love [my servant], I become his hearing by which he hears, his sight by which he sees, his hand with

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<sup>84</sup> S 38:2 (Fl 35r.1–4); cf. O 71:2 (Le 39v.8–10), P 51:2–3 (Ox 35r.9–35v.1), BPM 47:2–3 (Pr 36r.9–36v.4).

<sup>85</sup> Translated from BPM 168 (Pr 113r.6–113v.8); cf. M 29 (LeM 148r.2–10).

which he strikes, and his foot with which he walks; if he asks me I will surely give to him, and if he takes refuge in me I will surely protect him.<sup>86</sup> This allusion ties the psalms to the larger universal body of divine speech from which all revealed texts are supposed to be drawn. In fact, some copyists of the Moses text thought it should belong to the literature of divine sayings, and presented it as such (Sadan 1986, 378 n. 74; 381). C edited this particular saying to refer to the servant's love rather than God's, and then, as we have seen, P transformed it to serve his own more legalistic piety, by replacing the servant's love for God with 'obeying me and following what I have revealed to my prophets'.<sup>87</sup>

Sixth, even law plays a minor role in these psalms. We have already mentioned several verses about divorce rules and the penalties for theft and adultery – all matters dealt with by the Qur'an, phrased here in very qur'anic terminology.

A seventh type of literature with which these psalms intersect is the Tales of the Prophets (*qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'*). One copyist included the Moses text in an anthology of such literature.<sup>88</sup> Like the life of Muhammad in the Qur'an, David's biography is never narrated in detail in these psalms, but there are occasional references to his actions and his character. For example, S 2:8 (Fl 3v.7–9) alludes to several standard elements of the story of David as it is known in Islamic literature: his beautiful voice with which he recited the Psalms, his wisdom, his sin, his repentance, and God's forgiveness. Early and classical writings on the Tales of the Prophets present David as so overcome by remorse for his sin, and by fear of the day of judgment, that he weeps in continual prostration until his tears cause grass to grow beneath him. His story makes him the perfect exemplar of repentance, and that is how he is principally used in ascetic works such as the *Book of Asceticism* attributed to Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (2004, 101–5), but another strand of Islamic literature that is reflected in Ibn Qutayba's *Uyūn al-akhbār* employs David as an illustration of the legitimacy of worldly pleasure as a complement to spiritual discipline (2002, 1:322). Our psalms side with the more ascetic portrait, and urge their audience to imitate David by arising in the dark of night 'with fearful hearts and tearful eyes'.<sup>89</sup> In this way they participate in an ongoing debate over the figure of David, but they do not

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<sup>86</sup> Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb al-Riqāq*, bāb 38.

<sup>87</sup> O 14:1–2 (Le 11v.3–5), S 2:3b (Fl 3r.11–3v.1), P 15:1–2 (Ox 16v.11–17r.4), BPM 11:1–2 (Pr 13r.9–13v.4).

<sup>88</sup> Leiden University Or. 14.027, fols 141r–148v (described in Witkam 1983, 46–8).

<sup>89</sup> O 1:9 (Le 1v.11–12). For details of the Muslim portraits, see Déclais 1999a, passim, especially chs 8–10.

reproduce much detailed content from the biographical literature. What interests them is not David's life, but the imagined figure of David, which perfectly embodies their message of repentant and otherworldly piety, and the imagined idea of David's Psalms, which provides the perfect literary form for that message.

An eighth type of comparable writing is known as *munājāt*. This term covers a range of literature and traditions, including various dialogues between God and Moses that have been studied by O. Ali de Unzaga (2004). These touch on a few of the same themes as our psalms, and their dialogue format resembles those relatively few occasions when our psalms quote David and then give God's response. They also serve a similar function, taking a biblical and qur'anic figure who spoke with God and interpreting that motif, expanding it, and turning it into an independent genre in order to communicate a Muslim author's own moral and spiritual message (Ali de Unzaga 2004, 387).

Although our texts intersect to some degree with all of these literatures – rewritten Bible, interreligious polemic, sermons, wisdom literature, divine sayings, law, Tales of the Prophets, and *munājāt* – they do not really fit into any one of these genres. This multifaceted nature is precisely what makes them comparable to a ninth type of literature, which is not a genre but a unique text: the Qur'an. Like our psalms, the Qur'an quotes at most a few fragments of biblical text, but it frequently refers to the Torah and Psalms and Gospel as imagined textual entities, and it recasts many biblical themes and stories to suit its own rhetorical and religious purposes. Like our psalms, the Qur'an argues against Jews and Christians, but addresses those polemics as much to the Prophet's own followers as to the religious other. The Qur'an is replete with sermons, and it quotes from the same wisdom traditions as our psalms, while adding its own parables to that literature. As William Graham (1977) has shown, the Qur'an is also closely related to the non-qur'anic divine sayings from which our psalms quote. It addresses the same kinds of legal problems as our psalms. And it alludes to the stories of numerous prophets, seldom narrating them in detail but always holding them up as examples, despite their trials and failings. Sometimes it even reports their dialogues with God himself. The Qur'an contains these elements in somewhat different proportions than our psalms, but it combines them in much the same way.

Moreover, the authors, redactors, and even the copyists of our psalms deliberately emphasized their work's resemblance to the Qur'an. They frequently quoted specific qur'anic

verses, or alluded to them, adapting them quite freely to suit their own purposes.<sup>90</sup> More tellingly, they reproduced many of its formal features. The divine voice speaking to a people through a prophet, the *bismillāh* at the beginning of each ‘*sūra*’, even the full vocalization and elegant illumination in some manuscripts,<sup>91</sup> are all intended to establish that these psalms are similar in nature to the Qur’an. Since, as a matter of dogma, our authors held the Qur’an to be inimitable, they did not attempt to imitate it stylistically. Rhyming, for instance, is relatively rare, being most common in the Moses text. But apart from style, which had become the central focus of the doctrine of inimitability, they took the Qur’an as their model for both the form and content of their compositions.

Accordingly, we should no longer regard the ‘Psalms of the Muslim David’ as an attempt to rewrite the Bible, as Orientalists such as Goldziher and Zwemer did. At first glance these texts appear to constitute an interreligious argument, co-opting figures and stories and sayings from another tradition, and challenging the text of someone else’s scripture. But our analysis of the outlooks and purposes of the several authors and redactors who produced these psalms reveals that they were principally concerned to make an intrareligious argument within an Islamic literary context. They drew their textual material and their image of David and his Psalms almost entirely from Islamic literature. They deployed that Muslim David in service of an intramural argument against alternative conceptions of a more worldly David, against alternative visions of the religious life, and against the general spiritual negligence of the largely Muslim societies in which they lived. As happens so often in religious dialogue, what looks like an interreligious conversation turns out to be driven primarily by intrareligious divisions and agendas.

Instead of regarding these psalms as a challenge to the Jewish and Christian Bible, we should regard them as rewritten Qur’an.<sup>92</sup> The imagined figure of a sinful but repentant David, tearfully chanting the Psalms at night in his beautiful voice, provided an ideal opportunity for our Muslim authors and redactors to try their hands at composing in the genre (if it can be called that) of divine revelation. Each one deployed the imagined figure of David, and the

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<sup>90</sup> For example, O 2:3 (Le 2r.9–10) is an almost verbatim quotation of Q 61.8. P 2:3 (Ox 6r.11–12) is similar, but closer to Q 9.32. S 2:2 (Fl 3r.7–8) replaces this with an inverted allusion to Q 9.40. O 118 (Le 64v) quotes Q 112, putting it into the divine first person: ‘I am God the one, the *ṣamad*’, etc. Other examples are numerous.

<sup>91</sup> For example, Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Laleli 19 and 20.

<sup>92</sup> Cf. Ali de Unzaga’s notion of “the qur’ānisation of previous scriptures” (2004, 387).

imagined text of his Psalms, to lend the authority and rhetorical force of scripture to his own particular religious vision – whether that vision was cautiously orthodox, inclined to Sufism, or zealously pious.

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