

# “COMO OTRA AGAR”. COUNTERREFORMIST AND MULTICONFESSONAL SPAIN, THROUGH THE LENSES OF A BIBLICAL NARRATIVE

Andrea Celli\*

Pues, ficho de Ādam, llora con tu Señor en todas las cinco partidas del día y de la noche, que no saldrá lágrima de tus ojos que no sea al-ḥurra en poder de Allāh. Dice otro declarador que las lágrimas en poder de Allāh que son alyaqutas de piedad.

Mancebo de Arévalo, *Tafsira*

Reappraisals of the Biblical story of Hagar and Ishmael in Early-Modern Spain represent a relevant though almost overlooked case of conflicting interpretations of the same foundation myth across confessional borders<sup>1</sup>. This section of the Abrahamic narrative had long played a central role in late-antique and medieval derogative Judeo-Christian representations of Islam, as well as in Christian representations of Judaism, whereas Islamic traditions offered a diverging version of the story that Muslim scholars often construed in opposition to the other faiths<sup>2</sup>.

---

\* University of Connecticut (USA).

1. In memory of Osvaldo Pardo. My gratitude to Juan Carlos Villaverde Amieva, who drew my attention to relevant *aljamiado* sources, making them available to me, and helping me clarify some of their passages. I would also like to thank Mayte Green-Mercado and Mónica Colominas Aparicio, who have shared with me some of their works and findings. Finally, my thanks to Miguel Gomes, and Fiona Somerset, for their comments on the draft. The responsibility for the interpretation and rendering of Spanish and *aljamiado* texts in English remains mine. I have simplified the orthography of quotes from *aljamiado* texts, although preserving *aljamiado* terminology, to make them more accessible to non-specialized readers.
2. On the Islamic treatment of Ishmael, see R. FIRESTONE, *Journeys in Holy Lands: The Evolution of the Abraham-Ishmael Legends in Islamic Exegesis*, Albany (NY), State University of New York Press, 1990. On Hāḡar in the Islamic traditions, see B.F. STOWASSER, *Women in the Qur'an, Traditions, and Interpretation*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1994, pp. 43-49. Copious are *aljamiado* references to Abraham's sacrifice of Ishmael, an episode that in the Islamic versions of the narrative is a sign of the firstborn's divine election. See V. BARLETTA, "The Aljamiado 'Sacrifice of Ishmael.' Genre, Power, and Narrative Performance", *Revista de estudios hispánicos*, XL, 2006, pp. 513-536. In this paper I will not deal with this passage of the Abrahamic cycle.

However, from the fifteenth century until the expulsion of *moriscos* from Spain, and beyond, while Catholic apologetics mostly resorts to disparaging adaptations of the story (with some remarkable exceptions in the context of Biblical exegesis and juridical literature)<sup>3</sup>, alternative readings of this genealogical myth circulate in *morisco* milieus, mostly based on previous *mudejar* works<sup>4</sup>. Numerous *aljamiado* sources not only reiterate the Islamic version of the narrative, but also display affirmative usages of it in order to contrast Jewish and Catholic genealogical labels. While the earliest authoritative Islamic sources do not mention Hagar (she is referred to as Ishmael's mother), in *aljamiado* sources she becomes a character with a name. This might be interpreted as an additional proof of the interaction of *morisco* communities with the Spanish society at large.

Recent studies have also shown that Hagar's narrative afforded an opportunity for *cristianos nuevos* to perform their identities in disguise<sup>5</sup>. Moreover, Islamic versions of the story were made available to Catholic audiences via influential works such as the *Confusión o confutación de la secta Mahomética y del Alcorán*, by Juan Andrés (Valencia 1515)<sup>6</sup>.

The aim of the present paper is to discuss these diverging versions of the same foundation story as parts of an interconnected text. The story becomes a

- 
3. This paper presents some results from a multidisciplinary research project on Early-Modern representations of Hagar and Ishmael in the Counterreformatist Mediterranean. The monograph, whose tentative title is *Hagar's Tears: The Early-Modern Invention of 'Abrahamic Religions'*, aims to underline the interreligious and cross-cultural significance of this symbol. As my book will show, in the early-modern period, and more specifically in Italy, sources reveal a significant shift in the way Hagar's narrative was interpreted. Certainly, in apologetic writings the mother and her son were still identified with ostracized groups and contemporary foes, not only Turks, *moriscos*, and Jews, but also Protestants and American indigenous populations. However, Hagar became a favored subject in visual arts, sacred eloquence, and oratorios, openly acknowledged as a figure worthy of compassion. In some cases, Hagar is even adopted as a symbol of social emancipation (Angolan slaves in Brazil) or outcast religious minorities. See my "The Early-Modern Invention of 'Abrahamic Religions.' An Overview of Baroque Approaches to the Hagar Narrative", in A. DUBRAU, D. SCOTTO, R. VIMERCATI SANSEVERINO (eds.), *Legacies, Transfers & Polemics: Interactions between Judaism, Christianity and Islam from Late Antiquity to the Present*, Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck (forthcoming).
  4. See M. COLOMINAS APARICIO, *The Religious Polemics of the Muslims of Late Medieval Christian Iberia. Identity and Religious Authority in Mudejar Islam*, Academisch Proefschrift ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor aan de Universiteit van Amsterdam, 2015.
  5. Over the course of the sixteenth century there are several examples of appropriations of this narrative by the *cristianos nuevos* of Jewish and *morisco* communities. See A. ÁLVAREZ SELLERS, *Del texto a la iconografía: aproximación al documento teatral del siglo XVII*, Valencia, Publicacions de la Universitat de València, 2008. Another noteworthy example is offered by the *Espejo de consolación de tristes*, a popular devotional text where Hagar's tribulations are praised as a rewarding spiritual trial (pp. 108-109). See Juan de DUEÑAS, *Espejo de consolación de tristes*, Burgos, en casa de Juan de Ju[n]ta, 1540. There are historical evidences of heterodox usages of this text by Spanish *conversos*. See S. NALLE, *God in La Mancha: Religious Reform and the People of Cuenca*, Baltimore (Md.), Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992, *ad indicem*; Ch. AMIEL, "Les cent voix de Quintanar. Le modèle castillan du marranisme", II, *Revue de l'histoire des religions*, 118 (2001), pp. 487-577, pp. 524-531.
  6. See R. SZPIECH, "Preaching Paul to the Moriscos: The Confusión o confutación de la secta mahomética y del Alcorán (1515) of 'Juan Andrés'", *La Corónica*, XLI, 1, 2012, pp. 317-343.

tool for defining communities in terms of genealogical legitimacy. The author of each source, whether known or anonymous, resorts to the narrative to define his community in opposition to the other(s). God's election of an Abrahamic ancestor seems to play against the other Abrahamic lineage, which is deprived of the same divine favor. In most cases, sources repeat, often without originality, standardized late-antique readings of the narrative or authorized interpretations of the Sacred Texts. However, they also betray awareness of the way the same myth was employed by (and among) other communities: the outside gaze is incorporated in the tradition, so to speak. It is therefore essential to highlight the inherently dialectic nature of these interconnected texts.

The eventual goal of the study is twofold: on the one hand my intent is to show the remarkable resilience of the symbol, attested by its adaptability to new circumstances and by the variety of theological and political positions that find expression through it, even within the same community of faith. On the other hand, I aim to point to the gradual emergence, as laboriously slow as unavoidable, of a universalist idea of Abrahamic religions, in the age of the Reformation.

## HAGAR IN SPANISH COUNTERREFORMIST DISCOURSE: REAPPRAISAL AND ADAPTATION TO THE PRESENT

Innumerable are the Early-Modern sources, in Spanish or in Latin, that mention the story of Hagar and Ishmael: apologetic writings, arguing the legitimacy of the expulsion of the *moriscos*, historiography, commentaries on the Bible, juridical treatises, sermons, but also novels and poems, *autos sacramentales*, and *belles lettres* more generally<sup>7</sup>. Sometimes references are incidental, but in many instances, they are central to the argument. This paragraph does not offer an exhaustive inventory of occurrences of the story in writings. Its purpose is to recognise through notable examples the existence of different types of interpretation, thus making evident the composite and sometimes conflicting nature of the strategies at play within the Catholic world.

There are five main tendencies recognizable in the Early-Modern treatment of the story: 1) figural (prophetic) and genealogical adaptations of the narrative to the present; 2) moral usages of the story<sup>8</sup>; 3) readings of the Biblical narrative as a juridical source; 4) humanistic exegeses of the Bible (based on the knowledge of Jewish sources); 5) popularizations of Islamic narratives. They range from the

7. From the sixteenth century, the story becomes a major subject in Flemish and Italian paintings. Not in Spain though (with very few exceptions), possibly because of the negative connotation of Hagar and Ishmael in apologetic writings and political debates.

8. On the four senses of the Scripture, see the classic H. de LUBAC, *Exégèse médiévale: les quatre sens de l'écriture*, Paris, Aubier, 1979. Also B. SMALLEY, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, Notre Dame (Ind), University of Notre Dame Press, 2007.

most contemptuous identification of *moriscos* with their slave and mischievous ancestors, passing through a condescending attitude, inclined to their assimilation to the Catholic society, to an impartial critical examination of Biblical and Rabbinic sources, that sometime betray a more sympathetic consideration of the story. I will discuss here the first four types of sources<sup>9</sup>.

## FIGURAL AND GENEALOGICAL ADAPTATION OF THE NARRATIVE

Some of the most hostile and biased treatments of the narrative are to be found in the corpus of apologetic treatises that were written in the aftermaths of the expulsion. These works were meant to offer a post-factum justification to a royal decree whose juridical premises from a Roman point of view were fragile to say the least<sup>10</sup>. As one might expect, their authors resorted more than any other to the medieval slanderous reading of the Biblical narrative, epitomized by the anti-humanistic *Tractatus contra principales errores perfidi Machometi et turcorum sive saracenorum* (1459) by Juan de Torquemada.

A feature common to all these works is the genealogical adaptation of the story: contemporary events were fulfilling Biblical omens. Hagar and Ishmael stood for the *moriscos* both from a genealogical and a figural point of view. A clear example of this conception can be found in Jaime Bleda's *Coronica de los moros de España* (1618), a well-known apology for the expulsion, disguised as a chronicle. The title of Chapter XI of Book VIII states that "the expulsion of Hagar and Ishmael was *figura* of that of the Moors of Spain, and is exemplar of the rigor that the Christian Princes must exert on the heretics"<sup>11</sup>.

"We read in Holy Writ (*Genesis*, 21), that when Sarah, the wife of the Patriarch Abraham, saw that Ishmael, son of Hagar the slave, was playing with her son Isaac, she told her husband: 'my lord, chase out this slave and her son, because

- 
9. Given the page limit of the present publication, I will discuss the fifth typology in an extended version of the chapter.
  10. G. MAGNIER, *Pedro de Valencia and the Catholic Apologists of the Expulsion of the Moriscos: Visions of Christianity and Kingship*, Leiden, Brill, 2010, pp. 119-136. R. BOASE, "The Morisco Expulsion and Diaspora: an Example of Racial and Religious Intolerance", in D. HOOK & B. TAYLOR (eds.), *Cultures in Contrast in Mediaeval Spanish History and Literature. Essays Presented to L. P. Harvey*, IV, London, King's College, 1990, pp. 9-28; S. PASTORE, "La posición del Vaticano frente a la expulsión", in M. GARCÍA-ARENAL & G. WIEGERS (eds.), *Los moriscos: expulsión y diáspora: una perspectiva internacional*, València, Universitat de València; Granada, Universidad de Granada; Zaragoza, Universidad de Zaragoza, 2013, pp. 127-148.
  11. J. BLEDA, "De la expulsion de los Moros de España fue figura la de Agar, y Ismael, y exemplar del rigor que deuen executar los Principes Christianos en los herejes" (Book VIII, Chap. XI), in IDEM. *Coronica de los moros de España: diuidida en ocho libros*, Valencia, En la impression de F. Mey, 1618, pp. 906-910.

the son of the slave must not become an heir together with my son Isaac'. And even though such a decision seemed harsh, and saddened Abraham, it was confirmed by God's decree. Thus, they had to be expelled. The glorious Saint Augustin (*Tractatus in evangelium Ioannis*, XI, 12)<sup>12</sup> finds in these facts deep mysteries and hidden secrets and says that they were *figura* of future things. This allows us to say, that without any doubt the expulsion of Mahoma's ancestros, Ishmael and Hagar (after whom [the moors] are called Hagarens), represented this great deed in their bodies: the expulsion of the *moriscos* from Spain. The holy Doctor also says that these ancient events carried signs and indications of things that would happen in the future. And Saint Paul and almost any Father of the Church argue in the same way when they affirm that what happened to the holy Patriarchs and Prophets was a *figura* [image but also prefiguration] of what was bound to happen in the Christian Church"<sup>13</sup>.

The chapter does not resort to the Biblical narrative in generic allegorical terms: it suggests that the expulsion of the *moriscos* was prophetically announced (*pre-figured*) in the Bible. It therefore implies that Philip III's edict of expulsion fulfilled a decree of God. The King Philip III is Abraham, as Queen Marguerite is Sarah<sup>14</sup>. It can be argued that a prophetic reading of the Biblical story replaces sound arguments based on Canon Law, that the advocates of the expulsion had failed to provide. As contemporary events were inscribed in the Sacred Text, according to Bleda there was no need for further justification. This line of reason-

- 
12. AUGUSTINUS HIPPONENSIS, *In Iohannis Evangelium Tractatus CXXIV*, ed. D. Radbodus Willems, Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina, 36, Turnhout, Brepols, 1954, 118-19. Augustine's writings against Donatism are often quoted in literature on Islam and more specifically *moriscos*. The African setting of Augustine's polemics may have made his writings timely.
  13. "Leemos en la Sagrada Escritura del Genesis (Cap. 21), que Sara 'muger del Patriarcha Abraham viendo, que Ismael el hijo de la esclaua Agar jugaua con su hijo Isaac, dixo luego a su marido: echad, señor, y despedid esta esclaua, y a su hijo: porque no ha de ser heredero el hijo de la esclaua juntamente con mi hijo Isaac. Y aunque Abraham se entristecio, de oyr esta resolucio al parecer dura, y rigida, fue confirmada con decreto de Dios: y assi huuo de executar la expulsion de los dos'. El glorioso San Augustin (*Tractatus in evangelium Ioannis*, XI, 12) halla profundos misterios, y muy reconditos Sacramentos en este hecho, y dize, que no sabe, que cosa de las venideras se figuraba por el, dandonos licencia, para que sin recelo digamos, que esta hazaña de la expulsion de los Moriscos de España fue representada al viuuo en aquella de los progenitores de Mahoma Ismael, y Agar, de quien tomaron el apellido Agarenos. Dize allí el santo Doctor, que en estos hechos antiguos huuo todas las señales y indicios, de lo que en tiempos venideros auia de suceder, y lo mismo dizen casi todos los santos padres, y san Pablo afirmando, que todo lo que passo con los santos Patriarchas, y Profetas, era figura, de lo que en la Iglesia Christiana auia de acaecer".
  14. The same identification appears in Marco de GUADALAJARA Y JAVIER's *Memorable expulsion y ius-tissimo destierro de los moriscos de España*, Pamplona, Nicolas de Assiayn, 1613, p. 154 v. See I. BURSHATIN, "The Moor in the Text: Metaphor, Emblem, and Silence", *Critical Inquiry*, XII, 1, 1985, pp. 98-118 (pp. 113-114). Moreover, see my "The Early-Modern Invention of 'Abrahamic Religions.' An Overview of Baroque Approaches to the Hagar Narrative", in A. DUBRAU, D. SCOTTO & R. VIMERCATI SANSEVERINO (eds.), *Legacies, Transfers & Polemics: Interactions between Judaism, Christianity and Islam from Late Antiquity to the Present*, Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck (forthcoming).

ning shares many features with sixteenth and seventeenth centuries prophetic writings<sup>15</sup>, with their apocalyptic anticipation of imminent traumatic events. Yet, Bleda's prophecy is retroactive: it is formulated in the wake of the events, suggesting their eschatological necessity, and discharging the King from blame. In fact on this issue Spain was in conflict with Rome. Measured against the background of the Sacred Text, violence is not only permissible, but imperative.

"This is why Sarah, that is the Church, or those who wished the Church's growth, insisted on the expulsion of Hagar, and her treacherous infidel [infiel] son: the dispute lasted until God our Lord declared his will to Abraham, our pious and mighty King. And [God] eased the expulsion, flattening the huge obstacles that previous Sovereigns had to face: chasing them [the *moriscos*] out was a simple task, as when one morning Abraham sent Hagar and her son Ishmael away, with a portion of bread, and water on her back (*Genesis*, 21). And even the thirst that they suffered in the wilderness of Beersheba, could represent what they suffered on the solitary shores of Africa, on which they were disembarked. Hagar suffered great sorrow, and yet Saint Paul does not call it persecution, because it was a well-deserved punishment, decreed by God"<sup>16</sup>.

No matter how distasteful this adaptation of the narrative might seem to us, we cannot fail to mention some of its innovative features: the most significant is Bleda's reference to the prodigious *facilidad* (easiness) of the expulsion, ordered and assisted by God. It does not actually matter whether the expulsion was in fact an easy process, from a factual point of view: what is relevant here is the praise of the efficiency of the State administration, the machinery of a modern State, responding smoothly to the will of its divinely inspired head, the King. What the Dominican is suggesting is the justification of exceptional forms of violence as a means for safeguarding the welfare of the State. In modern terms, we might say that *Gewalt* (violence) is the essence of *Verwaltung* (administration)<sup>17</sup>.

- 
15. See for instance the *Vaticinia Severi et Leonis in Oriente Impp. cum quibusdam aliorum aliis, interitum Regni Turcici sub Mechemete hoc III. Praedicentia*, (t. II) per Jo. Theodorum et Jo. Israelen de Bry fratres, Frankfurt/Main, J.T. e J.I. de Bry, 1597. See also the prophecies edited and explained by the Jesuit Antonio Vieira, on João IV, King of Portugal: "Finalmente, que reynará sobre a casa de Agar (que sao os Agarenos, & Turcos) que conquistará Jerusalem, & porá a imagem do crucificado sobre o santo Sepulcro, & que será o mayor Monarca do mundo", *Palavra de Deos empenhada, e desempenhada: Empenhada no serman das exequias da rainha N. S. Dona Maria Francisca Isabel de Saboya*, Lisbon, M. Deslandes, 1690, pp. 156-157.
  16. "Insistia por esto Sara, esto es la Iglesia, o los que desseauan su [de la Iglesia] acrecentamiento, en que fuesse expelida Agar, y su hijo infiel, y traydor: duró la contienda, hasta que Dios nuestro Señor declaró su voluntad a Abraham, a nuestro piissimo, y fortissimo Rey, y facilitó la expulsion, allanando los montes de dificultades, que se ofrecieron a los Reyes passados, y fueron echados con la facilidad que Abraham despido a Agar con su hijo Ismael vna mañana con la provision de pan, y agua a costas (Cap. 21. Del Genesis), y aun la sed que ella, y Ismael padecieron en la soledad de Bersabe, pudo significar la que estos miserables padecieron en las costas solitarias de Africa, donde los desembarcaron. Grande affliccion padecio Agar en esta triste expulsion, y con todo San Pablo a este trabajo no lo llama persecucion, porque fue castigo muy merecido, y mandado por el mismo Dios", J. BLEDA, *Coronica de los moros de España*, p. 906.
  17. See W. BENJAMIN, *Critique of Violence [Zur Kritik der Gewalt, 1921]*, in IDEM. *Reflections. Essays, Apophorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, ed. by E. Jephcott, New York, Schocken Books, 1986, pp. 277-300.



It is also to be noted that Hagar and Ishmael at this point are a *figura* of the *moriscos* as well as many other enemies:

“The son of the servant plays with the master [Isaac], and the Holy Apostle [Galatians 4:29] calls this ‘persecution’, implying that it should come as no surprise to the irredeemable heretics if God encourages and incites against them the authorities of the land: in fact, God Himself incited Sarah and ordered her to be the scourge of Hagar, who is a *figura* of infidelity. [...] There is nothing else that preserves the safety and well-being of Kingdoms, better that a well-defended faith, and a well-grounded and flourishing religion. This is shown with grim arguments by pope Adrian VI, in that gold rescript [papal missive] that he sent to Frederick Duke of Saxony<sup>18</sup>, ordering him to chase Martin Luther out of his lands”<sup>19</sup>.

Hagar and Ishmael represent any form of religious dissidence, capable of threatening the order of the Kingdom. It is in this context that the familiar silhouette of the Turco-Calvinist (or more precisely Turco-Lutheran) enemy emerges. The inclusion of new foes in Hagar’s lineage is a trend characteristic of the sixteenth century.

## MORAL USAGES OF THE STORY

A quite different approach to the narrative is to be found in Juan Márquez’s *Vida del venerable P. Fr. Alonso de Orozco*. The Augustinian Juan Márquez (1565-1621), “predicador del Señor Rey D. Felipe III, catedrático de Vísperas en la Universidad de Salamanca”, is to be linked to a Spanish network of humanists close to the court. Many of them opposed the expulsion as a solution to the *morisco* issue<sup>20</sup>.

In Marquez’s *Vida del venerable P. Fr. Alonso de Orozco*, posthumously published by another Augustinian, Tomás de Herrera (1585-1654), we find a figural (genealogical) adaptation of the Biblical narrative, disguised as a moral reading of the character of Hagar. Alonso de Orozco (1500-1591), an Augustinian friar, “royal preacher” of Charles V and Philip II, was venerated for his austere lifestyle and affinity for the poor. After his death, personages of society and culture, such as the Princess Isabel Clara Eugenia, the Dukes of Alba and Lerma,

18. Frederick III, Elector of Saxony (1463-1525), ensured Luther would be heard before the Diet of Worms in 1521 and subsequently secured an exemption from the Edict of Worms for Saxony.

19. “Tuega el hijo de la criada con el amo, y a esso llama persecucion el santo Apostol, dando en ello a entender, como aduierte San Augustin, que no deuen marauillarse los hereges incorregibles, si Dios incita, y prouoca contra ellos las potestades de la tierra: porque el mismo Dios mouio a Sara, y ordeno que fuesse açote de Agar, figura de la infidelidad. [...] Ninguna cosa hay que tanto conserue los Reynos, como la fe bien defendida, y la religión bien fundada, y dilatada, como con grauissimas razones lo muestra el Papa Adriano Sexto, en aquel rescripto de oro, que embio a Federico Duque de Saxonia, mandándole que echasse de sus tierras a Martín Lutero”, J. BLEDA, *op. cit.*, p. 908.

20. G. MAGNIER, *op. cit.*, pp. 354-356.

or the writers Lope de Vega and Francisco de Quevedo, were witnesses in his process for canonization. The *Vida* of the friar was meant to be a substantial piece of evidence for his beatification dossier<sup>21</sup>. As a proof of the virtues of the friar's charismatic rhetoric, the biographer recounts the anecdote of a North-African slave that Orozco managed to convert:

"After listening to him, one had to be really stubborn, not to surrender to him, because he captured souls with the softness of his argument, as with a golden net. A lady from Seville had a bondmaid [una esclava] from Barbary [Berberia] who was so obstinate in her allegiance to the sect of Mahoma that there was no way to sponsor her sacred Baptism (in fact her mother, who had ransomed herself, kept writing her to stand firm in her faith [ley], because she hoped to rescue her in the future). [This Lady], who was a devotee of the holy man, reported this story to him. So, he asked the girl to be sent to him. He received her with great humanity and started contending that our Lord loved her, and in order to save her soul, He had resorted to the most expensive means, giving for her on the Cross the most holy blood of his veins. Then he went on showing the ruse of the infernal Mahoma, who with his accursed doctrine had been the cause of so many people's misery. She didn't utter a single word: but the look on her face showed that she was pleased with what she was hearing, therefore without waiting for an answer, he told her: May God bring you light, follow him, and tell your Mistress that you want to become a Christian, so that your Baptism shall be performed, and your name be Maria. She left the chapel and, *like another Hagar*, changed by the Angel's words, threw herself at her Mistress' feet and implored: I want to become a Christian, give me Baptism"<sup>22</sup>.

21. Juan MÁRQUEZ, *Vida del venerable P. Fr. Alonso de Orozco, Religioso de la Orden de N. P. S. Agustín, y Predicador de las Catolicas Magestades de Carlos V y Felipe II*, [...] sacada a luz por Tomas de Herrera [...], en Madrid: por Iuan Sanchez, 1648. See A. de OROZCO, *Catecismo provechoso*, ed. Luis Resines, in IDEM, *Obras completas, I. Obras castellanas I*, ed. Rafael Lazcano, Madrid, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 2001, pp. 695-843.

22. "Muy rebelde auia de ser el que oyendole con atencion no se le diesse a partido, porque enlaçaua las almas con la suauidad del razonar, como con prisiones de oro. Tenia vna señora en Seuilla vna esclaua de Berberia tan pertinaz en la seta de Mahoma, que por ningun camino se podia acabar con ella que recibiese el santo Bautismo; (auiase su madre rescatado siendo esclaua, y escriuiala que estuuiesse firme en su ley, que ella la rescataria.) Dio cuenta de esto al santo varon, de quien era muy deuota, y el la pidio que se la embiasse. Respondiole, que todo seruiria de nada, y no ostante su desconfiança porfió en que la auia de ver, y lleuaron-sela a la capilla del santo Crucifixo, que está en aquel Monasterio. Recibiola con grande humanidad, y començó a encarecerla el amor que la tenia nuestro Señor, y los medios tan costosos con que auia procurado el remedio de su alma, hasta dar por ella en la Cruz la santissima sangre de sus venas. Y de aqui passó a declararla en engaño del infernal Mahoma, que con su maldita dotrina auia sido causa de la condenacion de tantos. No le respondió palabra; pero en las muestras del semblante, parecia que le oía con agrado, y sin esperar otra respuesta la dixo; Dios os alumbre, id con èl, y deuid a vuestra señora, que quereis ser Christiana, para que se solemnize vuestro Bautismo, y os pongan por nombre Maria. Partiose luego de la capilla, y ya, como otra Agar, mudada por las palabras del Angel, se echó a los pies de su señora, y dixo a voces: Christiana quiero ser, denme el Bautismo. Tan en el alma lleuó la fuerça de sus razones", J. MÁRQUEZ, *op. cit.*, pp. 38-39.



The use of the narrative here is fascinating when compared with Bleda’s: the traditional *topos* of Muslim’s descent from the slave Hagar is not explicit, although the relationship between Sarah and Hagar is quoted as perfectly mirroring the dependence of a Moroccan (or Algerian) bondmaid on a Sevillian noblewoman, while the friar plays the role of the Biblical angel, appearing to the runaway servant near Beer-lahai-roi (Gn 16:7-14). Significantly, Hagar, the proud slave rebel to her mistress (Gn 16:4), becomes a figure of redemptive hope that suits an ideal of Augustinian humility in Counter-Reformist Spain.

What here is put forward is the idea of assimilating Muslims to the Christian society through their conversion, while at the same time Hagar becomes a positive figure, capable of deliverance from sin and of social emancipation. After her baptism, she becomes Mary. This anecdote must be read against a complex “economy of redemption” (spiritual and therefore social) in the early-modern Mediterranean<sup>23</sup>. Although the friar Alonso de Orozco is known for his lack of sympathy toward Islām, as his apologetic works show<sup>24</sup>, baptism is in his view a viable means of emancipation and inclusion, in contrast to the option that prevailed in the following decades, that is the expulsion of the descendants of Hagar from the Iberian Peninsula.

## READINGS OF THE NARRATIVE AS A JURIDICAL SOURCE AND HUMANISTIC EXEGESIS OF THE BIBLE

Another significant example of exegetical adaptation of the narrative is to be found in legal literature, and more specifically in the debates that contributed to shaping the so-called *Leyes de Indias*, the body of law that the Spanish crown promulgated from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries for the government of its colonies in the Americas and other continents. The Biblical narrative, which had been used in medieval jurisprudence mainly in relation to Jews and Muslims, became a political-theological framework to argue in favor, or against, the legitimacy of conquests in the Americas and the dispossession of the indigenous populations from their lands and properties.

“Fili Agar, q[ui] sunt infideles, debent ejici ab haereditate et possessione”: the sons of Hagar, that is the infidels, must be deprived of inheritance and possession. This quote is taken from a handwritten *parecer*<sup>25</sup>, a legal opinion, that

23. See D. HERSHENZON, “The Political Economy of Ransom in the Early Modern Mediterranean”, *Past and Present*, CCXXXI, 2016, pp. 61-95.

24. See L. RESINES, “Alonso de Orozco”, in D. THOMAS & J. CHESWORTH with J. AZUMAH, S. GRODŹ, A. NEWMAN, D. PRAT (eds.), *Christian-Muslim Relations. A Bibliographical History. Volume 6. Western Europe (1500-1600)*, Leiden, Brill, 2014, pp. 219-223.

25. Real Academia de la Historia, A-75, Colección Muñoz, XLVIII, fols. 198-209v. I quote the text from V. DE QUIROAGA, *De debellandis Indis: un tratado desconocido*, R. Acuña (ed), Ciudad Universitaria, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1988. Acuña’s edition does not acknowledge occasional *glossæ* on the margins of the manuscript. The quote is added by an unidentified hand on the margins of f. 207r.

was attached to some of Bartolomé de las Casas' papers<sup>26</sup>. The authorship of the *parecer* is still debated<sup>27</sup>. It is clear though that its author, familiar with medieval Canon Law, sided with the position expressed by Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda against Bartolomé de las Casas' during the Valladolid debate (1550-1551), summoned by the emperor Charles V.

"Sarah means the Church, as the Apostle (*Ad Galatas*, 4) and *Genesis* (16) say. Her sons are said to be Catholics of the Church, while the infidels come from Hagar, the wretched servant (c. *Quando* and c. *Si Ecclesia*, [causa] 23, quaest. 4)<sup>28</sup>. And the lord ordered those sons of Hagar, the servant, to be barred and excluded from inheritance and possession, and they would not partake [of the inheritance] with the sons of Sarah, the free woman (c. *Recurrat* and c. *Dixit Sara*, [causa] 23, quest. 4). Therefore, as the so-called new Indians are and were infidels and idolaters, they were in a certain way Hagar's illegitimate sons, because *partus sequitur ventrem*"<sup>29</sup>.

Drawing from medieval canonical jurisprudence (the author of the *parecer* is probably quoting Augustine through Odoardus de Ponte's *Consilia*)<sup>30</sup>, he equates the *novi indi* to Muslims and Jews, the sons of Hagar par excellence. In the same years, a similar use of the narrative and indeed the same uncompromising attitude toward the American new "infidels" can be found in other legal works, concerned with the idea of just war<sup>31</sup>. However, many exegetes rejected this interpretation of the narrative and more importantly they considered

26. After his death, they were transferred by order of Philip II to the Colegio de San Gregorio in Valladolid.

27. See I. PÉREZ FERNÁNDEZ, "Identificación y análisis de un parecer sobre la conquista de las Indias", *Analecta sacra tarraconensia: Revista de ciències historicoeclesiàstiques*, 70, 1997, pp. 25-80. The *parecer* has been attributed to the bishop of Michoacán (Mexico), the humanist, and social reformer Vasco de Quiroga (1477/78- 1565). Isacio Pérez Fernández highlights discrepancies between Quiroga's sophisticated ideas, as they emerge from his works, and the one-sided dogmatism of the *parecer*. On this basis, he is inclined to identify the unknown author of the *parecer* with Luis de Villalonga, known as the Archdeacon of Mallorca.

28. Oldradus de PONTE, *Consilia*, commenting on the *Canon Law*. See N. ZACOUR, *Jews and Saracens in the Consilia of Oldradus de Ponte*, Toronto, Pontifical Institute for Medieval Studies, 2000.

29. "Ecclesia intelligitur secundum Saram, ut per Apostolum (*Ad Galatas*, 4), *Genesis* (16), cujus filii dicuntur esse Catholici Ecclesiae, et ab Agar, ancilla maledicta, processisse dicuntur omnes infideles (c. *Quando*, c. *Si Ecclesia*, 23, q. 4). Et mandavit Dominus quod tales filii Agar ancillae ejicerentur et repellerentur ab hereditate et possessione, nec partem haberent cum filiis Sarae liberae (c. *Recurrat* et c. *Dixit Sara*, 23, q. 4). Nam cum dicti novi Indi sin[t] et essent infideles et idolatrae, quodammodo illegitimum filiorum Agar reputabantur, quia partus sequitur ventrem," Vasco de QUIROGA, *De debellandis Indis*, cit., p. 178; PÉREZ FERNÁNDEZ, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

30. The epithet *maledicta* associated with Hagar can be found in fourteenth century Oldradus de Ponte's *Consilia*. See N. ZACOUR, *op. cit.*, 2000, p. 82.

31. See A. ÁLVAREZ GUERRERO, *Thesaurus Christianae religionis et speculum sacrorum summorum Romanorum, pontificum, imperatorum, ac regum et sanctissimorum episcoporum*. 'Venetiis': Apud Cominum de Tridino Montisferrati, 1559. The assimilation of 'New Indians' to Muslims is common of conquistadores' writings. For instance, Cortés equates Aztec temples to mosques. See H.G.H. TABOADA, *La sombra del Islam en la conquista de América*, Prólogo de S. Fanjul, México, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2004, p. 223.

its use incorrect in the context of the Spanish colonization of the Americas. For instance, Bartolomé de las Casas harshly dismisses this juridical analogy in his *Apología* (1553<sup>32</sup>), written in response to de Sepúlveda’s *Demócrito II*:

“It cannot be ignored that a certain charlatan who presents himself as a jurist, perhaps looking for a good opportunity to attack [Thomas] Cajetan’s doctrine, and hoping to be rewarded for adulating the king, made this argument: the Indians of the New World are descendants of Hagar, the bondmaid of Abraham, and therefore they must be deprived of all their goods and kingdoms. To this, my main answer is that Hagar was Abraham’s wife. Even though she was not his principal wife, she was by no means a wretched slave, as he argues. And who could adequately describe the silliness, vulgarity and shamelessness of this useless man? O immortal God, how sorry we should feel for our Spain, who otherwise would be the blissful mother of ingenious people, and instead deems such scraggy brains to be great men! And the men who should be light and example of virtues, prefer to sell their souls by defending such a pointless idea, a dangerous one, impious and worthy of the fire. And against the example and doctrine of the Apostles, uncountable people, redeemed by Christ’s blood, will perish for the eternity, and will die such a cruel death at the hands of greedy Spaniards”<sup>33</sup>.

Las Casas’ indignation against “a certain charlatan” (most certainly the unknown author of the aforementioned *parecer*) points here mainly at the greed of Spanish conquistadores, whose actions juridical arguments aimed to legitimize. It must be noted that, from a quite different historical vantage point, the same use of the Biblical narrative was to be discussed many decades later by Juan de Solórzano Pereira (1575-1655), *oidor* (a high court judge with powers of a governor) of the Audiencia de Lima (Perú), and arguably the most important commentator of the *Leyes de Indias*. This means that the use of the narrative as a juridical tool was less incidental and odd than las Casas might have wanted to admit.

32. B. de LAS CASAS, *Apología, o declaración y defensa universal de los derechos del hombre y de los pueblos*. Edición paleográfica y crítica de V. Abril Castelló (dir.), M.A. Sánchez Manzano, S. Rus Rufino, J.A. Barreda García, I. Perez Fernández y M.J. Abril Stoffels, Salamanca, Junta de Castilla y León, 2000. As for the date of composition of the *Apología*, see V. ABRIL CASTELLÓ, *Estudio preliminar*, p. XLV.

33. “Non est pretereundum quod jureconsultus quídam rábula, aucupans fortassis (ut sunt res humanae) maiorem aliquam fortunam aduersus doctrinam Caietani, ut per adulationem regi gratificaretur, protulit hoc argumentum : indi noui orbis descendunt ab Agar, ancilla Abrahæ ; ergo sequitur eos omnibus facultatibus et regnis suis spoliari debere. Primum, Agar uxor fuit Abrahæ, licet non precipua, non tamen fuit ancilla maledicta, ut ipse inquit. Deinde, huius vanissimi hominis argumentum, qua, sit stupidum, crissum, impudens, quis digne declarare queat? Deum inmortalem! Quam est dolendum Hyspaniam nostrum, felicissimam alioquin ingeniorum parentem, tam crassa capita pro magnis uiris suspicere. Deinde, uiri qui lumen et regula virtutis esse deberent, rem vanissimam, periculosissimam impiam et incendio dignam, in exitium animæ sue, proferunt, ut innumeri mortals, Christi sanguine redempti, contra exemplum et doctrinam Christi et apostolorum, in eternum permeant et crudelissime a rapacissima Hyspanorum gente trucidentur”, de B. de LAS CASAS, *op. cit.*, pp. 265-266.

Juan de Solórzano was trained at the School of Salamanca<sup>34</sup>, where a new notion of just war, fostered by humanistic debates, was elaborated, gradually superseding hostile usage of the medieval sources to which las Casas' opponents resorted. The *oidor* does not dismiss the use of the story of Hagar and Ishmael with the same passion and straightforwardness shown by the Dominican friar in his *Apology*. Solórzano is a jurist, who displays an astonishingly meticulous knowledge of a large array of sources. In Book II of *De Indiarum iure* (1639), that deals with the *acquisitione Indiarum*, he ponders the arguments in favor of (and opposed to) infidelity as a lawful motive for subjugating the *indos* (chapter X). Here the familiar usage of the Biblical narrative is thoroughly presented in two paragraphs: "Ecclesiae Catholicae dominatio supra infideles in Sara et Agar significatur," and "Infideles sunt servi et filii ancillae et sic dominii incapaces"<sup>35</sup>. Because of its impartiality, Solórzano's assessment of the use of the narrative intends to be even more conclusive than las Casas', as it is based on a dispassionate weighing of its juridical soundness.

And yet, it is worth noticing that las Casas' apparently swift dismissal of the Biblical narrative as a warfare device is less abrupt than it might seem and accurately references contemporary exegesis of the Bible: "Primum, Agar uxor fuit Abrahae, licet non precipua, non tamen fuit ancilla maledicta, ut ipse inquit". First and foremost, Hagar was Abraham's lawful wife and she was not a wretched slave. On the one hand, las Casas draws attention to the *littera* of the Bible: the *ancilla* is never called *maledicta*, as she is often labeled in apologetic writings, on the contrary she is the recipient of a divine promise and she is visited twice by an angel. On the other hand, las Casas validates an alternative midrashic interpretation of the juridical status of the woman: rather than a concubine, Hagar is a lawful wife (*uxor*) of Abraham<sup>36</sup>. Therefore, her offspring cannot be considered illegitimate. It should be noted that, if that was the case, this would have had consequences not only for the New Indians, but also for the other putative sons of Hagar, Jews and Muslims. The Dominican friar does not seem willing to further develop this potentially heretical line of reasoning further<sup>37</sup>.

34. "Podemos afirmar que son Francisco de Vitoria y José de Acosta los que sin duda ejercen sobre él un influjo más directo y decisivo en todas las cuestiones filosófico-teológicas de alguna importancia", C. BACIERO, "Juan de Solórzano Pereira y la defensa del Indio en América", *Hispania Sacra, Missionalia hispanica*, 58, 117, 2006, pp. 263-327 (p. 265).

35. Juan de SOLÓRZANO PEREIRA, *De Indiarum iure (Lib. II: De acquisitione Indiarum) (cap. 1-15)*, C. BACIERO, L. BACIERO, A.M. BARRERO, J.M. GARCÍA AÑOVEROS, J.M. SOTO & J. USCATESCU (eds.), Madrid, Centro Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1999, pp. 349-381.

36. See H. FREEDMAN & M. SIMON, *Midrash Rabbah: Translated into English with Notes, Glossary and Indices*, London, Soncino Press, 1961, p. 380.

37. Nevertheless, as Ángel Losada argues, "si bien Las Casas no logra superar la doctrina tradicional de la Iglesia, de considerar *pueblo deicida* al pueblo judío [...] se nos presenta como un auténtico defensor del *trato justo y de derecho* (como textualmente sienta) a este pueblo", in J.G. de SEPÚLVEDA & F. B. de LAS CASAS, *Apología*, traducción castellana de los textos originales latinos, introducción, notas e índices por A. Losada, Madrid, Editora Nacional, 1975, p. 21. As

However, what is more relevant to underline here is the impact of humanistic Biblical exegesis on juridical debates. When Las Casas says that Hagar was a lawful wife, most likely he is quoting a Roman Dominican, Thomas de Vio, also known as Cardinal Cajetan (1469-1534), who is perhaps the most relevant theological reference, together with another Dominican, Francisco de Vitoria, in Las Casas’ writings. On the basis of midrashic sources made available to humanist scholarship, a more nuanced and complex image of the Biblical narrative and its protagonists started emerging in the late fifteenth century. This philological form of literalism seems to bear ethical consequences and is congenial to a more universalist (evangelical in Las Casas’ words) approach to contemporary issues.

It is no coincidence that the *pars destruens* of the anonymous *parecer*, unfavorable to Las Casas’ line of argumentation, finds its principal antagonist in Thomas Cajetan’s famous distinction between three different classes of infidels: those who are subjects *de iure* and *de facto* to the Christians (Jews, Moors, and heretics who live in Christian lands); others who are subjects only *de iure*, because they rule on lands that used to be Christians and are at war with Christians; and finally those who are subjects neither *de facto* nor *de iure* to the Christians, because they lived in territories that never had been Christian<sup>38</sup>. The indigenous American populations, victims of Spanish rapacity, fell into this category. Cardinal Cajetan, who was General of the Dominicans from 1508 to 1518, managed to slip this note, that addressed the issue of New Indians, into his influential *Commentary* to Thomas of Aquinas’ *Summa theologiae*<sup>39</sup>, thus preparing the ground for the School of Salamanca and for Bartolomé de las Casas.

But Thomas de Vio was also the author of commentaries to the Bible, whose innovative character derived from a literal exegesis of the texts, based on the *Hebraica veritas*<sup>40</sup>. His explanation of the Bible was often ill-received by the cus-

---

Losada explains, Las Casas states that “Todo judío, mahometano o idólatra que no habita en un reino cristiano no está sometido a la jurisdicción ni de la Iglesia ni del príncipe cristiano de tal reino, por muy graves que sean los crímenes que cometa contra la Ley natural”, *ibi.*, p. 20.

38. See Thomas de Vio’s comment on Thomas of Aquinas’ *Summa theologiae*, IIam-IIae, q. 66, a. 8 [“Utrum rapina possit fieri sine peccato”]. THOMAS AQUINAS, *Opera omnia, iussu impensaue Leonis XIII P. M. edita*, t. 9, *Secunda Secundae Summae Theologiae*, a q. 57 ad q. 122, Cum commentariis Thomae de Vio Caietani. Romæ, Ex Typographia Poliglotta & C. De Propaganda Fide, 1897, pp. 94-95. It was out of the question from an ecclesiastical point of view to reassess the status of the other two classes of infidels.
39. In 1517, he completed the commentary *In secundam partem secundae*, that was published in Venice the following year.
40. Although he did not know Hebrew himself, he resorted to Jewish scholars for assistance. “Nam enim interpretis graeci, aut latini, sed ipsius tantum hebraei textus autoritas est, quam complecti cogimur et complectimur fideles omnes”, Th. de VIO, *Praefatio*, in IDEM, *Commentarii illustres planéque insignes in quinque Mosaicis libros, adjectis insuper ad marginem annotationibus a Antonio Fonseca, Parisiis, Petit, 1539*. See M. SÆBO, M. FISHBANE, J.L. SKA, *Hebrew Bible, Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation*, Vol. II, *From the Renaissance to the Enlightenment*, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008, pp. 616-623.



todians of the Roman orthodoxy and respected by prominent protestant figures, even if he was one of the most fervent critics of the Reformation<sup>41</sup>. In his commentary to *Genesis* 16, the Dominican not only states that Hagar was indeed a lawful wife of Abraham<sup>42</sup>, but also suggests a striking parallel between Hagar and the Virgin Mary:

“And the angel יהוה (that is the Tetragrammaton) told her. The fact that Moses clearly mentions these specific words, suggests that when Hagar heard the warning to go back and humble herself, she wondered silently, because she did not know who it was who warned her: just as the Blessed Virgin, when an angel hailed her, pondered the nature of that greeting. And while Hagar was reflecting, the angel kept silent, then he added: I will greatly multiply your progeny, so that it will be impossible to count because of its great number”<sup>43</sup>.

Hagar as a model of the self-humbling soul, that parallels the humility of the Virgin Mary is a theme that will be later explored by Franciscan and Jesuit counter-reformist rhetoric<sup>44</sup>. What this contrast between biblical exegesis elaborated in Rome and juridical literature circulating in Valladolid and Salamanca, shows is not only the interconnectedness of these different geographies and domains of humanistic scholarship: it would not be novel to observe that efficient intellectual networks connecting likeminded scholars across countries and continents were building up within the expanded horizons of early-modern empires. What is more remarkable to notice, as the treatment of the Biblical narrative demonstrates, is that a universalist approach to the *Christiana veritas* is developing, although not yet capable of a clear utterance. And the story of Abraham’s multiple offspring is gradually acknowledged as a symbol of a potential *salus extra ecclesiam* (a salvation outside the Church), extremely problematic to formulate within a Catholic paradigm of revelation.

41. See J.L. THOMPSON, *Writing the Wrongs: Women of the Old Testament among Biblical Commentators from Philo through the Reformation*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001: “Cajetan’s is a peculiar commentary for his day: he rarely cites any of the Fathers or medievals, he virtually ignores everything but the literal sense, and he is obsessed with capturing the nuance of the original language in his own translation, even if a literal rendition leaves the meaning obscure”, p. 70. With regard to his collaboration with Jewish scholars, see A.F. VON GUNTEN, “La contribution des ‘Hébreux’ à l’œuvre exégétique de Cajétan”, in O. FATIO & P. FRAENKEL (eds), *Histoire de l’exégèse au XVIe siècle*, Geneva, Droz, 1978, pp. 46-83.

42. De VIO, *Commentarii illustres*, p. lxxix: “Perpendi quoq. nihil indecenti habuisse tunc huiusmodi pluralitatem vxorum sed solitam ac communi more probatam”.

43. De VIO, *Commentarii illustres*, p. lxxx: “Et dixit ei angelus יהוה Tetragrammaton est. Ex hoc quod moyses distincte narrat hæc alia verba angeli, insinuat quod hagar audita monitione ut reverteretur & humiliaret se, tacita secum cogitabat nesciens quis esset qui eam monebat: quemadmodum Beata Virgo salutata ab angelo cogitabat qualis esset illa salutatio. Et meditante Hagar, angelus siluit: & postea subiunxit. *Multiplicans multiplicabo semen tuum: & non numerabitur præ multitudine*”.

44. See my “Agar in Brasile. La migrazione dei simboli in Antonio Vieira”, in E. COLOMBO, M. MASIMI, A. ROCCA, C. ZERON (eds.), *Schiavitù del corpo e schiavitù dell’anima. Chiesa, potere politico e schiavitù tra Atlantico e Mediterraneo (Sec. XVI-XVIII)*, Milan, Biblioteca ambrosiana, 2018, pp. 177-198.



This case also confirms the fact that Counter-reformation was not a monolithic culture, merely reactive to protestant reformers: dissonant cultural positions were fighting for hegemony within its perimeters, and public enemies were often less of a danger than official coreligionists.

## HAGAR IN *ALJAMIADO* DISCOURSE: INCORPORATING THE JUDEO-CHRISTIAN GAZE

The execution of the decrees of expulsion was underway (1609-1613) when Juan de Toledo, a *morisco* descendant who was probably trying to ingratiate himself the inquisitorial authorities superintending the prison in Toledo where he was incarcerated, testified against a cellmate, a Portuguese *converso* called Felipe de Naxara (or Naxera), who had been accused of being a Judaizer<sup>45</sup>. The confession, offered by the *morisco* spontaneously<sup>46</sup>, contains a precious testimony of the circulation of the Hagar narrative among lay people and more specifically in *morisco* and *converso* milieus. In the transcription of his confession he says that

"the aforementioned bachelor [Felipe de Naxara] also told him that when Hagar, slave of Abraham, gave birth to Ishmael, she was exiled [desterrada]. That is when an angel appeared to her and comforted her, telling her that she should not be sad, because from her son a very great nation would come to life and that was the meaning of the blessing that he gave when he said 'faciam te ingentem magnam' [sic] and the *moors* and the *Turks*, who are so wealthy and powerful, come from this son"<sup>47</sup>.

Like any document resulting from a confession to the Inquisition, this text poses many questions: did the cellmate really say what the prisoner of *morisco* ancestry is reporting to the inquisitors? Why a *converso* (accused of being a Judaizer) would mention a legend circulating among Muslims? Was the informer putting into de Naxara's mouth a story that was familiar to him, as a descendant of *moriscos*? The quote from the Bible is also extremely meaningful: "faciam te ingentem magnam"<sup>48</sup>. In the *Vulgata*, the promise is made to Abraham. In this

45. I am indebted to Mayte Green-Mercado, who has generously shared with me this information. The document is from the Archivo Histórico Nacional (AHN), Inquisición, Leg. 168, exp. 1, fol. 179v.

46. Mayte Green-Mercado tells me that Marco was tried for "hechicería": he was a physician and was not accused of belonging to the "secta de Mahoma".

47. "Iten dixo [Juan de Toledo, Morisco] que tambien dixo a este el dicho bachiller [Felipe de Naxara/Naxera, Converso] que quando nacio Ismael de Agar esclava de Abrahan siendo desterrada la dicha Agar se la apareçio un angel y la consolaba deciendola que no hubiese pena porque de aquel su hijo avia de suceder un muy grandísimo pueblo y que aquello significaba la bendiçion que ha echo quando la dixo 'faciam te ingentem magnam' y que deste hijo procedian los moros y los turcos por ser tan ricos y tan poderosos", Archivo Histórico Nacional (AHN), Inquisición, Leg. 168, exp. 1, fol. 179v.

48. In the *Vulgata*, it would be: "faciamque te in gentem magnam et benedicam tibi et magnifico nomen tuum erisque benedictus" (*Genesis*, 12:2-4); "Sed et filium ancillae faciam in gentem magnam, quia semen tuum est" (*Genesis*, 21:13), and "surge tolle puerum et tene manum illius quia in gentem magnam faciam eum" (*Genesis*, 21:18).

quotation, the promise is made by the angel to Hagar (*faciam te*). A woman, instead of a man is the direct recipient of the divine blessing. If the Latin quotation were not an insertion of the inquisitorial scribe, it would mean that a *morisco* descendant, who received a Christian education and was possibly trying to present himself as a devout Christian, 'translated' into terms that were familiar to the inquisitors a story that was circulating among crypto Muslims.

The anecdote confirms a reality that is well documented in *aljamiado* sources: the narrative not only circulated among *moriscos*, but in its early-modern versions also bear witness to complex interactions with Christian and Jewish accounts of the same story. Dialogism and intertextuality<sup>49</sup> are inherent to the narrative and reflect specific social and political circumstances in which *moriscos* were living.

Certainly, this dialectical appropriation of the story could be traced as back as to the very Quranic treatment of the Abrahamic cycle, and to the earliest *tafsīr* and *ḥadīth* traditions. For instance, the 'substitution' of Ishmael for Isaac in the episode of the sacrifice (corresponding to *Genesis 22*), emerges early in Islamic traditions, and in many respects, it aims at countering the subordination and debasement of Ishmael, ancestor of the Arabs, in *midrashic* literature<sup>50</sup>. Another notorious example of intertextual dialogism is offered by Hagar's 'promotion' to the rank of princess in Islamic literature: while her name is not even mentioned in the Qur'ān, she later is presented as daughter of the Pharaoh, on the ground of *isrā'īliyyāt*, that is Islamic traditions containing elements of Judaic provenance<sup>51</sup>.

However, it is unclear whether references to the royal ancestry of Hagar, "gran princesa", that we find in the Spanish poems of Muḥammad Rabadán<sup>52</sup>, a late *morisco* author, are only reminiscent of early Islamic *isrā'īliyyāt*, or reflect a more recent influence of baroque esthetics and perhaps even some familiarity with Rabbinic accounts of the story<sup>53</sup>. The description of the first encounter between Hechera (Agar) and her adoptive family is telling of a sophisticated response to Catholic disdainful portrayals of the Egyptian woman. The Pharaoh ("rey Agar", *sic*) had just discovered that Sarah, shielded by Allā (Allāh) from the Pharaoh's "fuerça lasçua" (lust), was Abraham's wife. Hagar though, instead of being a gift of the Pharaoh to Sarah, as most of Muslim and Rabbinic ac-

49. See M. BAKHTIN, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, Austin, University of Texas Press, 1992. As for the notion of intertextuality in relation to this narrative, see S. NIKAIIDO, "Hagar and Ishmael as Literary Figures: an Intertextual Study", *Vetus Testamentum*, LI, 2, 2001, pp. 219-242.

50. See C. BAKHOS, *The Family of Abraham: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Interpretations*, Cambridge [Mass], Harvard University Press, 2014.

51. See FIRESTONE, *op. cit.* Also F. LEEMHUIS, "Hājar in the Qur'ān and Its Early Commentaries", in M. GOODMAN, G.H. VAN KOOTEN, J.T. VAN RUITEN (eds.), *Abraham, the Nations, and the Hagarites: Jewish, Christian, and Islamic Perspectives on Kinship with Abraham*, Leiden, Brill, 2010, pp. 503-508.

52. See G.A. WIEGERS, *Islamic Literature in Spanish and Aljamiado: Yça of Segovia (fl. 1450), His Antecedents and Successors*, Leiden/New York, E.J. Brill, 1994, pp. 181-183.

53. These could be explained in multiple ways: oral transmission, Catholic training, knowledge of previous *aljamiado* sources.

counts say, voluntarily decides to follow Çara and Hibrahim, because they are righteous people, who follow God’s path (“justos / que siguen de Dios la bía”):

“[Sarah and Ibrahim] were still captive [of the Pharaoh], honored and served with the greatest delight and merriment. A daughter of the king, whose name was Hechera [Hagar], who was graceful, noble, and beautiful, young and sole heiress of kingdom and household, had grown so fond of Sarah, and the righteous and holy zeal that she found in Abraham so moved her, that she humbly begged her father, with heartfelt supplications: ‘father and lord, from you I ask a favor to be granted to this beloved daughter of yours: give me permission, I say, to travel to the blessed Arabia in company of Sarah and Abraham, under the care [custodia] of these righteous, who follow God’s path. I give up my kingship, with its pomp and honors, to attain the eternal kingdom, whose seat is everlasting. I believe that my request is righteous, sincere and pure. I beg you to respond in kind’. O well founded petition! O pure and holy will! O ripe heart, o sincere, pure and clear faith! Undoubtedly you deserved the high name that they gave you, serene Princess, because you fully deserved becoming the source and the stream of the noble light!”<sup>54</sup>.

The agency of Hagar is unmistakably enhanced by the *morisco* author. She is not objectified: she voluntarily relinquishes any worldly pomp in favor of eternal redemption, becoming a model of conversion. Her features seem to have their sources, both aesthetic and religious, in Christian representations of feminine sainthood: renunciation is a virtue. The anaphoric eulogies that seal this quotation are a reminder of Marian devotional literature, and culminate in a formula whose language is typical of praises of the Virgin Lady: “por cierto mereciste / el nombre que te apellidan, o serenísima infanta”. The name of the Princess itself encapsulates her divine election, the *morisco* says.

This is however a troubling allusion. From an Islamic standpoint, Hāğar, the Arabic name of Hagar, is undoubtedly meaningful: in fact, it can etymologically be linked to the *hiğra*, the migration or journey of the prophet Muğammad from Mecca to Medina, accompanied by the *muğāğirīn*, the first converts to Islām. Indeed, she is *figura* of the *hiğra*, because she follows Abraham and Sa-

54. J.A. LASART LÓPEZ, *Poemas de Mohamad Rabadán: Canto de las lunas. Día del juicio. Discurso de la luz. Los nombres de Dios*, Zaragoza, Diputación General de Aragón, Departamento de Cultura y Educación, 1991: “En el inter que [Çara and Hibrahim] estubieron / detenidos estos días, / regalados y serbidos / con gran goço y alegría, / una hija deste rey / que Hechera se decía / Hermosa, gallarda y bella / de edad loçana y creçida / eredera unica y sola / del reyno, casa y familia, / de la compañía de Çara / acariçada y mouida, / de aquel çelo justo y santo / que de Hibrahim conoçía, / con mil amorosos ruegos / a su padre el rey se umilla / diciendo: ‘padre y señor, / suplico sea conçedida / una merçed que te pide / esta tu hija querida: / que me des liçençia, digo, / para que en la compañía / de Çara con Abraham, / baya a la Arabia bendita / en custodia desto justos / que siguen de Dios la bía, / que yo desisto del reyno / y de sus pompas y estimas / por ganar el reyno eterno / que es perdurable su silla; / y pues esta mi demanda / es justa sinçera y limpia, / suplicote me respondas / come de ti se confía’. / ¡o petiçion bien fundada! / ¡o voluntad sancta y limpia! / ¡o pecho bien çimentado / fe sinçera pura y fita / bien por cierto mereciste / el nombre que te apellidan, o serenísima infanta, / pues mereciste ser digna / de la fuente y manatío de la luz esclareçida!” (pp. 115-116).

rah to *Arabia bendita*. The meaning of her name in Rabadán's quote is not so obvious though: the sentence says that she is worthy the name she has been given because she is depository of the *luz esclarecida*. This is a reference to the Islamic legend of the spermatic seed of light that traveled from Adam, through Abraham and Ishmael to Muḥammad<sup>55</sup>: it is the light of prophetic election, that find its ultimate vessel in the prophet of Islām. This legend circulated widely in Spain, centuries before the fall of Granada and well after the expulsion of the *moriscos*<sup>56</sup>. But encrypted in Rabadán's eulogistic formula there are also evident Catholic and Jewish elements. On the one hand, she resembles Mary, symbol of humbleness and receiver of God's seed. On the other, it might betray a memory of a passage from the *Midrash Rabbah*:

"R. Simeon b. Yohai said: Hagar was Pharaoh's daughter. When Pharaoh saw what was done on Sarah's behalf in his own house, he took his daughter and gave her to Sarah, saying, 'Better let my daughter be a handmaid in this house than a mistress in another house'; thus it is written, and she had a handmade, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar, he (Pharaoh) saying, 'Here is thy reward (agar)'"<sup>57</sup>.

A play on the name of Hagar (אגַר, in Arabic *aḡar*), meaning *reward*, would offer a better understanding of Rabadán's allusion: indeed, she asked a *merçed* from her father. And her request made her deserving of an even higher reward. She did voluntarily decide to leave Egypt, the land of the Pharaoh, and to follow the righteous couple in their journey to Arabia. Do we see here a further allusion to the destiny of *morisco* communities, who did freely relinquish their right to the Kingdom (Spain), and undertook a journey of spiritual salvation and redemption to the lands of Islām?

55. M.L. LUGO ACEVEDO (ed.), *El libro de las luces: Leyenda aljamiada sobre la genealogía de Mahoma*, Estudio y edición crítica, Madrid, Sial, 2008.

56. In a longer version of this paper I will offer a close reading of two other *aljamiado* sources: Mancebo de Arévalo's "Capítulo que trata del alkawssariya de Ibrāhīm, quiere decir su genealogía" (in Mancebo de Arévalo, *Tratado [Taḡsīr]*, edición de M.T. Narváez Córdoba, Madrid, Trotta, 2003, pp. 236-239), and the polemical treatise by 'Alī al-Garibo, Junta IX, fols. 205r-223r, edited by G.S. LAUREANO GARCÍA, *Tradiciones musulmanas* (Ms. IX de la Biblioteca de la antigua Junta para la Ampliación de Estudios de Madrid), Memoria para aspirar al grado de doctor, Universidad de Oviedo, Departamento de Filología española, Oviedo, 2008, pp. 103-106, pp. 445-459 –and Junta VIII, fols. 397v-412v– edited by M.J. FERNÁNDEZ, *Libro de los castigos*, Ms. aljamiado no 8 de la Junta, Edición, introducción, estudio, glosario y notas, Tesis doctoral (inérita), 3 vols., presentada en la Universidad de Oviedo en 1987 bajo la dirección del Dr. Antonio Vespertino Rodríguez. As COLOMINAS APARICIO explains (*op. cit.*), 'Alī al-Garibo's treatise is a vernacular version of an earlier Arabic *mudejar* treatise, the *Kitāb Miḡtāh al-Dīn*, by Muḥammad al-Qaysī. See P.S. VAN KONINGSVELD, P. SJOERD, & G.A. WIEGERS, "The polemical works of Muhammad al-Qaysī (fl. 1309) and their circulation in Arabic and Aljamiado among the Mudejars in the fourteenth century", *Al-Qanṭara: Revista de Estudios Árabes*, XV, 1, 1994, pp. 163-199. For the *aljamiado* version in MS BNE 4944 and the adaptor al-Gharīb, see also M. COLOMINAS APARICIO, "Disputa con los cristianos [MS BNE 4944, Aljamiado XVI (or XVII) century]", in D. THOMAS & J. CHESWORTH, with J. AZUMAH, S. GRODZ, A. NEWMAN, D. PRATT (eds.), *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History*, vol. IV, 1500-1600 (Western Europe), Leiden, Brill, 2014, pp. 43-48.

57. FREEDMAN & SIMON, *op. cit.*, p. 380.

## A PROVISIONAL CONCLUSION

As this short review of Spanish Early-Modern versions of the same foundation narrative across confessional divides shows, the Abrahamic cycle constitutes a playground of sort, on which multiple confessional players are competing. The contest is never binary though: multiple lines of fragmentation emerge from within the same front; awareness about polemical usages of the narrative among other groups is ubiquitous; and each side, at several historical stages, incorporates and adapts alien interpretations of the story.

This dynamic certainly finds its explanation in intellectual and theological trends emerging from humanism, in forced processes of acculturation, and in daily *convivencia*. But from a hermeneutical point of view, it is also possible to argue that there is a *dynamis*, a ‘potentiality’ of the symbol, open to the interpretation and to the future. The nature of the symbol is potential and *in progress*. In a phase of acute conflict and turbulent transformations, witnessed by Spain in the Early-Modern period, awareness about the latent resources of this genealogical symbol grows, and it is the prelude to a universalistic interpretation of the Abrahamic story, the idea of an Abrahamic family, in which many confessions would finally find articulation.

## RESUMEN

Las reevaluaciones de la historia bíblica de Agar e Ismael representan un relevante aunque pasado por alto caso de interpretaciones en conflicto del mismo mito fundacional a un lado y otro de las fronteras confesionales. Desde el siglo XV hasta la expulsión de los moriscos de España –y aún después–, mientras la apologética católica recurría fundamentalmente a despreciativas adaptaciones de la historia (con algunas remarcables excepciones en el contexto de la exégesis bíblica y la literatura jurídica), ciertas lecturas alternativas de este mito genealógico circulaban en medios moriscos y conversos. El propósito de este trabajo es discutir estas versiones divergentes de la misma historia fundacional como partes de un texto interconectado. En la primera parte del trabajo se examinan cinco tendencias en el tratamiento católico de la historia: 1) adaptaciones figurales (proféticas) de la narración; 2) usos morales de la historia; 3) lecturas de la narrativa bíblica como fuente jurídica; 4) exégesis humanística de la Biblia (basada en el conocimiento de fuentes judías); y 5) popularización de las narraciones islámicas. En la segunda parte son analizadas algunas fuentes aljamiadas.

**Palabras clave:** Exégesis bíblica, apologistas de la expulsión, religiones abrahámicas, Agar e Ismael, literatura aljamiada.

## ABSTRACT

Reappraisals of the Biblical story of Hagar and Ishmael in Early-Modern Spain represent a relevant though almost overlooked case of conflicting interpretations of the same foundation myth across confessional borders. From the fifteenth century until the expulsion of *moriscos* from Spain, and beyond, while Catholic apologetics mostly resorted to disparaging adaptations of the story (with some remarkable exceptions in the context of Biblical exegesis and juridical literature), alternative readings of this genealogical myth circulate in *morisco* and *converso* milieus. The aim of the paper is to discuss these diverging versions of the same foundation story as parts of an interconnected text. In the first part of the paper, five tendencies in Catholic treatments of the story are examined: 1) figural (prophetic) adaptations of the narrative to the present; 2) moral usages of the story; 3) readings of the Biblical narrative as a juridical source; 4) humanistic exegesis of the Bible (based on the knowledge of Jewish sources); 5) popularization of Islamic narratives. In the second part, some *aljamiado* sources are discussed.

**Key words:** Biblical exegesis, apologists of the expulsion, Abrahamic religions, Hagar & Ishmael, *aljamiado* literature.