

Translational Resonance, Authenticity and Authority in the Bible and the Quran: translation and religious change

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ABSTRACT

Challenging the traditional conception of what makes a religious text “translatable”, this paper attempts to explain why there are such marked differences between religions in their acceptance of translations of their scriptures, and why there is such a varying impact of translation on religious thought and practise. The paper suggests that the scriptural genre is distinct from other areas of translation studies research and introduces the concept of “translational resonance” as a means of approaching the translation of religious texts. Translational resonance is defined as the degree to which a religious text is accepted as authentic and authoritative in translation. Using the Bible and the Quran as examples, it will ask what effect translation has on religious attitudes and behaviours: whether (and, if so, under what circumstances) translation can undermine religious authority, and whether the translational resonance of a text, according to the author’s definition, can help to explain the relationship between scriptural authority and religious change.

KEYWORDS: translational resonance, authenticity, authority, religious texts.