



Immortalizing the “Martyrs of Córdoba:” A Tale of Two Centuries

KENNETH BAXTER WOLF
POMONA COLLEGE

ABSTRACT

Between the years 850 and 857, forty-six Christians were decapitated by the Muslim authorities in Córdoba for religious offenses against Islam.¹ There are a number of remarkable things about these executions. First, the majority of the victims were condemned for blasphemy, having deliberately flouted well-known proscriptions against public expressions of disrespect for Muhammad. Second, the Córdoba Christians were far from one mind when it came to interpreting such provocative acts; while some were inclined to embrace their executed coreligionists as martyrs of the classic Roman type, others criticized them as self-immolators, whose unprovoked outbursts only complicated the working relationship between the Christian community and the Muslim host society. Third, the debate between these two factions sheds unusually bright light on the surprisingly wide spectrum of religious identities within a *dhimmi* Christian community, ranging from those who had learned to “render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s” to those for whom the *dhimmi* condition was no

¹ The so-called “martyrs of Córdoba” have been the focus of many studies, particularly over the past fifty years. The most recent, supplemented by the first complete English translation of Eulogius’s writings, is to be found in Kenneth Baxter Wolf, *The Eulogius Corpus*, Translated Texts for Historians 71 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2019). This paper is loosely based on part of the introduction of that book.



longer acceptable.² Given the focus of this symposium, one could easily add a fourth *admirandum* to this list: the fact that we know so much about this unusual incident in the first place. For this we are particularly indebted to the efforts of two denizens of Córdoba separated by over 700 years: a ninth-century priest named Eulogius (d. 859) who took it upon himself to record the events in the first place, and a sixteenth-century historian named Ambrosio de Morales (d. 1591) who edited Eulogius's works, saving them, as it turned out, from oblivion. This paper will explore the very different challenges that Eulogius and Morales faced in their respective efforts to immortalize the neomartyrs of Córdoba.³

ESSAY

When Isaac, the first of the spontaneous blasphemers, was executed on June 3, 851, there was, according to Eulogius, an immediate outpouring of local Christian sympathy and support. "Everyone, clerics and laymen alike, boldly began to celebrate what had happened and to extol the determination of such a preacher with the highest praise."⁴ It was probably at that moment that Eulogius – as a priest and *magister*, responsible for educating new priests⁵ – decided to write a *passio* in Isaac's honor, in the interests of promoting cultic activity on his behalf. He may have had in mind the *passio* (now lost) that his mentor, Abbot Speraindeo, had written on behalf of John and Adulphus, two

² For more on the notion of multiple "Christian identities," see Éric Rebillard, *Christians and Their Many Identities in Late Antiquity, North Africa, 200-450 CE* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012).

³ Some scholars refer to Christians executed for religious offences against Islam as "neomartyrs" to distinguish them from the classic "paleomartyrs" of pre-Constantinian imperial Rome. Christian Sahner, "Old Martyrs, New Martyrs and the Coming of Islam," in *Cultures in Motion: Studies in the Medieval and Early Modern Periods*, ed. Adam Izdebski and Damian Jasinski (Krakow: Jagiellonian University Press, 2014), 94-97.

⁴ *Memoriale sanctorum*, prefatory letter to Alvarus (Wolf, *Eulogius Corpus*, 53).

⁵ Paul Alvarus, *Vita Eulogii* 3. (Wolf, *Eulogius Corpus*, 127).

Christian brothers put to death – most likely for apostasy – in the early 820s.⁶ The simple fact that John’s and Adulphus’s names appear side by side in a later Córdoba liturgical calendar suggests that Speraindeo’s hagiographic efforts were consistent with communal Christian sentiments at the time.⁷ In the case of the blasphemer Isaac, however, the *vox populi* turned out to be more fickle. Within four days of his execution, seven more Christians followed his example, publicly denouncing Muhammad and thus inviting their own deaths. This unusual form of Christian dissidence prompted the Muslim authorities to put pressure on bishop Reccafredus,⁸ who in turn leaned on the Córdoba Christian leadership in an effort to staunch the flow of blasphemers. As a result of this crackdown:

everyone, terrified by the wrath of the raging tyrant, all at once changed their minds with unheard of fickleness and began cursing both those who were doing such things and those who supported them, declaring them to be the authors of a great crime. Thus [...] very few were left who, distancing themselves from this sacrilege perpetrated by the others, did not change their original opinion with regard to the venerability of such saints.⁹

⁶ *Memoriale sanctorum* 2.8.9 (Wolf, *Eulogius Corpus*, 226). Eulogius tells us that John and Adulphus were the brothers of Aurea, whom he independently described as having “Arabic roots.” *Memoriale sanctorum* 3.17.1 (Wolf, *Eulogius Corpus*, 292). That makes it likely that the three of them were products of a religiously mixed marriage and had illegally embraced their mother’s Christianity. That being the case, John and Adulphus were most likely executed for apostasy. For the liturgical afterlife of John and Adulphus, see *Le Calendrier de Cordoue*, 2nd edn., ed. Reinhart Dozy, tr. Charles Pellat, *Medieval Iberian Peninsula Texts and Studies* 1 (Boston and Leiden: Brill, 1961), 142-43 (September 27).

⁷ *Le Calendrier de Cordoue*, ed. Dozy, 142-43 (September 27).

⁸ The exact identity of Reccafredus is a bit of a mystery. He attended a council in 839 as the bishop of Córdoba and Cabra. *Corpus scriptorum Muzarabicorum*, ed. Juan Gil, 2 volumes (Madrid: CSIC, 1973), 1:141. Yet, by the early 850s, the Córdoba see was occupied by Saul. This may have been because Reccafredus had been appointed metropolitan of Seville. Paul Alvarus describes local Christians as being “subject to him by royal decree,” presumably because Reccafredus supported the emir’s efforts to end the public acts of blasphemy. *Vita Eulogii* 6 (Wolf, *Eulogius Corpus* 130-131); cf., *Ibid.*, 4 (Wolf, *Eulogius Corpus*, 26).

⁹ Eulogius, *Memoriale sanctorum*, pref. letter to Alvarus (Wolf, *Eulogius Corpus* 148). Eulogius used similar language when describing the reaction to Muhammad I’s crackdown. “Many from the priesthood

The sudden division of opinion about the militant actions of Isaac and his imitators would have left Eulogius in an awkward position. The hagiographer who at first had every reason to believe he was simply channeling community sentiments now had to take a side. His decision to add to the *passio* of Isaac, packaging each subsequent execution as a martyrdom and developing a sophisticated *apologia* for doing so, is the first real indication we have that the level of Eulogius's support for the neomartyrs was unusual; that many, perhaps even most, of his fellow clerics saw the actions of Isaac and his imitators quite differently.¹⁰ "I have endeavored to press on with this work," wrote Eulogius, "so that, offering testimony to future generations, regardless of whether, in the process, I earn from them the distinction of praise or a reputation for perpetrating falsehoods, I might hope to receive some recompense from the Lord as a defender of justice."¹¹ And elsewhere: "Let each of them believe, say, or feel what he wants," wrote Eulogius, "but that party that venerates their cult and extols their honor with the highest reverence has secured a firm defender in me."¹²

The relative size of the Córdoba Christian contingent that came to question the actions of the spontaneous blasphemers is impossible to determine. One might reasonably expect to find the most sympathy for the martyrs in the hinterland surrounding Córdoba where contact with Muslims was less a feature of daily life and where the monastic

as well as from among the laity, who previously, with good sense, acclaimed along with us the victories of the martyrs, hailing their determination, praising their trophies, and extoling their struggles, change their minds, feel differently, and judge as imprudent those whom they previously regarded as most fortunate." *Memoriale sanctorum* 2.15.1 (Wolf, *Eulogius Corpus*, 260).

¹⁰ Eulogius captured the division this way: "From this the most prudent readers will easily be able to see how appropriately this work has labored in praise of these saints, erecting barriers against the distrustful and the doubters who disapprove of them being venerated as martyrs." *Memoriale sanctorum* 1.10 (Wolf, *Eulogius Corpus*, 172).

¹¹ *Memoriale sanctorum*, prefatory letter to Alvarus (Wolf, *Eulogius Corpus*, 149).

¹² *Memoriale sanctorum* 1.32 (Wolf, *Eulogius Corpus* 196).

retreats that contributed Isaac and so many of the other blasphemers were located.¹³ Conversely, urban Christians who lived and worked in the closest proximity to Muslims might have been less likely to applaud the provocative actions of Isaac and his imitators once the consequences for the *dhimmi* community as a whole had become clear.¹⁴ What made Eulogius immune to the reservations held by other Christians living in Córdoba? The answer, as I have explored elsewhere, seems to lie partly in the relationships he developed with five would-be martyrs, particularly Flora and Aurelius, and partly in the souring of his relationships with the local Christian leadership, especially Bishop Reccafredus.¹⁵ By equating the neomartyrs of Córdoba with the paleomartyrs of Rome, Eulogius seems to have found a way to embarrass Reccafredus, holding up their militancy as a foil to the prevailing Christian tendency to comply with the terms of their subordinate *dhimmi* status. How did Eulogius propose to bridge the gap between the communal memory of martyrdom in Roman times and the executions of his own day? First, he carefully edited the paleomartyrial legacy (that is, the recorded memory of Christians executed by Roman authorities for refusing to sacrifice to pagan images) to make it fit the neomartyrial reality (that is, Christians executed by Muslim authorities for spontaneous acts of blasphemy). Second, he creatively spun the memory of the blasphemers as well as the perception of *dhimmi* life in ways that resonated better with the Roman martyrs and their imagined persecutory context.¹⁶

¹³ For more on this, see Christian Sahner, *Christian Martyrs under Islam: Religious Violence and the Making of the Muslim World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 213-16, 223-24.

¹⁴ It should be noted that despite the controversy concerning the actions of the blasphemers, there seems to have been considerable interest in the physical remains they left behind. Eulogius regularly reported on the fate of these relics, recounting in most cases the process by which they were recovered and transported by sympathetic Christians to a local church or monastery. Eulogius's unusually detailed recount of Rudericus's *translatio*, led by Bishop Saul of Córdoba himself, is particularly interesting in this regard. *Liber apologeticus martyrum* 33-34 (Wolf, *Eulogius Corpus*, 349-50). Saul also presided over the interment of Perfectus in the church of St Acisclus. *Memoriale sanctorum* 2.1.5 (Wolf, *Eulogius Corpus*, 207).

¹⁵ For more on this see Wolf, *The Eulogius Corpus*, 55-66.

¹⁶ For a detailed consideration of these strategies in action, see Wolf, *The Eulogius Corpus*, 66-109.

For all the effort Eulogius put into the promotion of the neomartyrs, they seem to have gained very little traction, liturgically speaking, in or around Córdoba.¹⁷ The same *Calendar of Córdoba* that contains the previously-mentioned entry for John and Adulphus lists only two of Eulogius's four dozen candidates, Perfectus and Emila, and does so in ways that suggest that Eulogius's works were not a factor in their memorialization.¹⁸ The neomartyrs actually fared better in France and the greater Christian north. This was mostly due to the translation of the relics of three of them, George, Aurelius, and Sabigotho (a.k.a., Nathalia), which was undertaken in 858 by the monks Usuard and Odilard of Saint-Germain-des-Prés. The two had originally come to Spain to secure the relics of the Roman-era martyr, St. Vincent, but when this proved impossible, they took a detour to Córdoba and negotiated with the bishop, Saul, for the bodies of the three neomartyrs. Interestingly enough, Aimoin's *De translatione sanctorum martyrum Georgii monachi, Aurelii et Nathaliae* (c. 870) makes no reference to the fact that there was anything unusual or controversial about the deaths of the three neomartyrs.¹⁹ Beyond ignoring the sticking points – in particular, the lack

¹⁷ The only one whom we know read Eulogius's writings was Paul Alvarus, to whom Eulogius sent preliminary copies of the *Memoriale sanctorum* and the *Documentum martyriale* for his perusal (Wolf, *Eulogius Corpus* 148, 298). The *Vita Eulogii* that Paul Alvarus wrote to immortalize his friend after Eulogius's execution in 859 is clearly informed by his reading of the Eulogius corpus, including his letters.

¹⁸ Perfectus, who died on April 18, 850, is listed in the calendar under April 30. Emila, who died on September 15, 852, appears under September 15 as "Emilianus," with no mention of Hieremias, who died with him. Dozy, *Le Calendrier de Cordoue*, 74, 138. Aside from John and Adulphus, the calendar also includes Speraindeo (May 7; *Ibid.*, 82), who authored their *passio*. The entry for Speraindeo indicates that he was killed (*interfectio*), but if this were the case, it is hard to imagine that Eulogius and Paul Alvarus would have been silent about it given their pro-martyr sentiments. Oddly enough, a feast dedicated to "Alvarus" is listed for November 7 (*Ibid.*, 162), but there is no mention of Eulogius, the only one of the two that we know suffered execution. For more on the *Calendar of Córdoba*, see Ann Christys, *Christians in Al-Andalus (711–1000)* (Richmond: Curzon, 2002), 116-27.

¹⁹ Aimoin of St-Germain des-Prés, *De Translatione SS. Martyrum Georgii Monachi, Aurelii et Nathaliae*, ed. Jacques Paul Migne, *Patrologia Latina* 115 (1852): 939-60. This is consistent with the *passio* of George, Aurelius, and Sabigotho (Nathalia) that was prepared in Córdoba for Usuard and Odilard, probably by Eulogius himself. For a detailed study of this version of the *passio*, see Rafael Jiménez Pedrajas, "San Eulogio de Córdoba, autor de la pasión francesa de los mártires mozárabes cordobeses Jorge, Aurelio y Natalia," *Anthologica Annua* 17 (1970): 465-583.

of an obvious persecution and the fact that the “persecutors” were not pagans – that had dogged Eulogius’s best efforts to promote their cult in Córdoba, Aimoin also dutifully recorded the healing miracles that, tellingly, only began to grace the relics of the three neomartyrs once they had crossed over into France.²⁰ The liturgical niche that Aimoin’s *translatio* helped carve for the neomartyrs on the other side of the Pyrenees²¹ was reinforced by the martyrology that Usuard himself would later prepare (c. 875) at the request of Charles the Bald. It contained not only the names of the three translated neomartyrs, but listed twenty-nine of the others.²² As in the case of Aimoin’s *De translatione*, Usuard’s martyrology is silent about the intramural divisions that had prompted Eulogius’s apologetic forays, making it hard to distinguish the neomartyrs from the bona fide paleomartyrs of Roman times. The same could be said of those martyrologies that were independently produced in Christian Spain over the next few centuries, ones that included the names of those few Córdoba neomartyrs whose relics were eventually translated north out of al-Andalus: none of them are forthcoming about

²⁰ Aimoin, *De translatione*, books 2 and 3. One of the criticisms that Eulogius had to address in his *Memoriale sanctorum* was that the deaths of the neomartyrs had failed to produce miracles. *Memoriale sanctorum* 1.12 (Wolf, *Eulogius Corpus* 172-77) and *Liber apologeticus martyrum* 3, 7-11 (Wolf, *Eulogius Corpus*, 326, 329-32).

²¹ John Tolan, *Saracens: Islam in the Medieval European Imagination* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 101-02. For more detail, see: Tolan’s “Reliques et païens: la naturalisation des martyrs de Cordoue à Saint-Germain (IX e siècle),” in *Aquitaine-Espagne* (VIII e – XIII e siècle), ed. Philippe Sénac (Poitiers: Centre d’Études Supérieures de Civilisation Médiévale, 2001), 39-55; and, Juan Carlos Lara Olmo, “El relato del traslado de los santos mártires Jorge, Aurelio y Natalia: un valioso escrito hagiográfico y documental histórico de mediados del siglo IX,” *Hispania Sacra* 51 (1999), 55-89.

²² Despite Usuard’s direct contact with Eulogius, not all of the executions recorded by the priest made it into the martyrology. Moreover, four of them have different anniversaries than the ones indicated by Eulogius. The neomartyrs mentioned in Eulogius’s writings who ended up being included in Usuard’s martyrology were: Adulphus, John, Perfectus, Isaac, Peter, Walabonsus, Sabinianus, Wistremundus, Habentius, Hieremia, Paul, Nunilo, Alodia, Flora, Maria, Aurelius, Felix, George, Sabigotho (Nathalia), Liliosa, Leovigildus, Christopher, Emila, Hieremias, Fandila, Abundius, Helias, Paul, Isidore, Rudericus, and Solomon. Eulogius himself also made it into the martyrology thanks to information provided by an agent of Charles the Bald who was sent to Córdoba in 860 to confirm the identities of the translated martyrs Aurelius and George. Baudouin de Gaiffier “Les notices hispaniques dans le martyrologe d’Usuard,” *Analecta Bollandiana* 55 (1937): 274-76. See also Usuard, *Le Martyrologe d’Usuard: Text and Commentary*, ed. Jacques Dubois, *Subsidia Hagiographica* 40 (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1965), 94-95.

the unusual circumstances that surrounded their executions.²³ In short, even when the Córdoba neomartyrs managed to earn some liturgical respect outside of al-Andalus, they did so only after having been shorn of Eulogius's apologetic efforts. The only exception to this rule was Eulogius himself, who was executed on March 11, 859 for illegally overseeing the conversion of a young Muslim woman. When his remains were translated to Oviedo in early 884 as part of a peace treaty negotiated between Muhammad I and the Asturian king Alfonso III,²⁴ they were apparently accompanied by a codex containing a complete, unexpurgated set of his writings. And yet, far from informing a cult of St. Eulogius, that codex would languish in obscurity for almost seven hundred years before it was published in 1574 with a very different Christian audience in mind.

The earliest known reference to the Eulogius codex occurred in 1557, when Pedro Ponce de León (1510-1573) – who was bishop of Ciudad Rodrigo at the time but would be transferred to the see of Plasencia three years later – became aware of it in his quest to locate books about Spanish saints, and arranged to borrow it from the cathedral library at Oviedo.²⁵ As a native of Córdoba, the bishop was especially taken with this venerable tome, which he determined, based on its appearance, must have been a

²³ This explains the five that ultimately appeared in the *Passionary of Silos*: Abundius, Rudericus and Solomon, and Leocritia and Eulogius. Javier Pérez-Embid Wamba, *Hagiología y sociedad en la España medieval. Castilla y León (siglos XI–XIII)* (Huelva: Universidad de Huelva, 2002), 19, 32-39.

²⁴ Tolán, *Saracens*, 98, 310.

²⁵ Roger Collins, "Ambrosio de Morales, Bishop Pelayo of Córdoba, and the Lost Manuscripts of Visigothic Spain," in *Wisigothica. After M. C. Díaz y Díaz*, ed. Carmen Codoñer and Paulo Farnhouse Alberto (Florence: Sismel Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2014), 486. Collins cites his sources for the timing of Ponce de León's discovery as follows: "MS Madrid, BNE 1312, f. 130; Georges Cirot, *De codicibus aliquot ad historiam Hispaniae pertinentibus olimque ad Ambrosio de Morales adhibitibus*, Bordeaux, Université de Bordeaux, 1924, p. 110." As Collins suggests, Ponce de León may have first learned of the existence of the codex from Cristóbal de Rojas y Sandoval, the former bishop of Oviedo and a fellow delegate to the Council of Trent (1545-1563).

product of Eulogius's own time.²⁶ Challenged by the difficulties he encountered reading and transcribing the text, Ponce de León enlisted the aid of another proud Córdoba, Ambrosio de Morales (1513-1591).²⁷

In 1563, Morales, who held a chair in rhetoric at the Complutense in Alcalá de Henares, petitioned Philip II to be certified as a royal chronicler. His principal motivation for doing so was a conversation he had had three years earlier with some Italian ambassadors in Toledo who were critical of the Spanish intellectual community for failing to produce an up-to-date, comprehensive Iberian history.²⁸ Morales, who, by his own account, could not remember a time when he did not dream of recording the history and "antiquities" of Spain, took this to heart and resolved to remedy the cultural defect: "from that point on, I truly readied myself for this task, to satisfy this need of my nation, and to restore the honor and authority of our Spain."²⁹ Morales did not have to start from scratch. Florián de Ocampo (d. 1558), who had been named royal chronicler by Charles I in 1539, had published the *Corónica general de Espanã* (1543), covering the history of Spain from Creation up to 210 BCE in five volumes, with the expressed but

²⁶ Morales, *Divi Eulogii... opera*, Ponce de León dedicatory letter to Philip II, IIIv (for full reference see note 34 below).

²⁷ The product of the union of two distinguished Córdoba families, Ambrosio de Morales was educated in Salamanca and Alcalá de Henares, distinguishing himself in Latin and Greek, but ultimately studying theology. Opting for the religious life, he entered San Gerónimo de Valparaiso, just outside of Córdoba. Shortly thereafter he castrated himself, prompting his dismissal from the order, but ultimately leading to a chair in rhetoric at Alcalá. The late eighteenth-century edition of the *Corónica, Corónica general de España que continuaba Ambrosio de Morales coronista de Rey nuestro señor Don Felipe II*, 12 volumes (Madrid: Oficina de Benito Cano, 1791-1792) includes an introductory essay re-creating Morales's historical career ("Noticias de la vida del coronista Ambrosio de Morales, sacadas en la mayor parte de sus obras," pp. 1-70). For a more modern and short biography, see Rafael Ramírez de Arellano, *Ensayo de un catálogo biográfico de escritores de la provincia y diócesis de Córdoba*, 2 vols. (Madrid: Revista de Archivos, Bibliotecas y Museos, 1922-1923), 1:349-380. For a more detailed one, see Enrique Redel, *Ambrosio de Morales: Estudio biográfico* (Córdoba: Real Academia Española, 1909).

²⁸ Ambrosio de Morales, *La corónica de España; proseguiendo adelante de los cinco libros que el Maestro Florian de Ocampo dexo escritos* (Alcalá de Henares: Juan Yñiguez de Lequerica, 1574), fourth page of the unnumbered prologue.

²⁹ Idem.

unrealized intention of writing a sixth that would cover the rest of Roman history “up to the Goths.”³⁰ As an official royal chronicler, Morales took up where Ocampo left off. In March, 1572, he submitted the first installment of his continuation – that is, the sixth book of the series, which extended Ocampo’s *Corónica* up the death of Theodosius (395) – to the two official censors, who approved it the following November.³¹ It is not clear exactly when Morales, busy at work on the *Corónica*, received the Eulogius codex from bishop Ponce de León, but he was ready to submit his edition of it that same November of 1572.³² With it came a dedication to bishop Ponce de León, appropriately crediting him with bringing the “blessed Eulogius back to life, as it were, from the sepulcher.”³³ The bishop would die the following January, a little more than a year before the volume was published in Alcalá de Henares.³⁴ His

³⁰ Despite claims to the contrary, Ocampo actually had made very little progress on what would have been the sixth volume. Morales discovered this when reviewing Ocampo’s papers and drafts after his death (1558).

³¹ *Corónica general* (1574), second unnumbered page after the title page. See also: *Corónica general* (1791), 3:36. The first edition of Morales’s continuation of the *Corónica general*, covering up through the reign of Theodosius (Ocampo’s original intention), was printed in Alcalá de Henares (en casa de Juan Iñiguez de Lequerica) in September 1574, the same year that Morales edition of Eulogius’s writings appeared. The *Corónica*, published in a single volume, is divided into ten books. In April 1577, a second volume appeared (from the same press), containing books eleven (from the Visigoths through the reign of Liuvigild) and twelve (from the accession of Reccared through the Arab conquest). At the very end of book twelve (215^r), when assessing the status of the Christians who remained in territory controlled by the Muslims, Morales provides a “sneak preview” of the Córdoba neomartyrs. The third and final volume of the *Corónica*, published in 1586 (no month indicated, and this time printed by Gabriel Ramos Bejarano of Córdoba), added five more books. Books 13-14: from the rise of Pelayo into the reign of Ordoño I (d. 866); book 14 (still under rubric of Ordoño I): the martyrs of Córdoba (89^r-132^v), followed by an attempt to figure out where the martyrs were killed (132^v-136^r), an account of the translation of Eulogius’s remains (136^r-138^v), and additional historical information up to death of Ordoño I; book 15: from the accession of Alfonso III “el Magno” (866) to the death of Ordoño II (914); book 16: from the accession of Fruela II through the reign of Ramiro III; book 17: from the accession of Vermudo II of León (985) to the death of Vermudo III (of León 1037), ending with Fernando I’s unification of León and Castile. In 1575, Morales published *Las antigüedades de las ciudades de España* as a fourth volume of the *Corónica*, using it as a repository of miscellaneous historical information that he figured would only have complicated the narrative of the *Corónica*.

³² See the end of Morales’s dedicatory letter to Bishop Ponce de León, in Morales, *Divi Eulogii... opera*, V^r.

³³ Morales, *Divi Eulogii...opera*, IV^v.

³⁴ The full title of this first edition of Eulogius’s works: *Divi Eulogii Cordubensis martyris, doctoris, et electi archiepiscopi Toletani opera; studio et diligentia illustrissimi ac reverendissimi Petri Poncii Leonis a Corduba episcopi Placentini, summique fidei Christianae per regna & ditiones Philippi II regis catholici inquisitoris reperta; ejusdem sanctissimi martyris vita per Alvarum Cordubensem scripta; cum aliis nonnullis sanctorum martyrum Cordubensium monumentis; omnia Ambrosii Moralis Cordubensis*

death meant that Morales not only assumed the responsibility of seeing the project through to its completion but apparently incurred some of the costs as well.³⁵

Editing the Eulogius corpus was a labor of love for Morales, one that had the added effect of inspiring him to extend his *Corónica general* far enough to include the ninth-century neomartyrs and thus give them the historical attention they deserved.³⁶ He was thus the first to find a place for the “martyrs of Córdoba” in Spanish history as a whole. When Morales sent the third and final volume of his continuation of the *Corónica* to the printers, he confessed that no part of the project had given him more pleasure than that portion (book 14) devoted to the martyrs.³⁷ “Because in it I was obliged to write about many holy martyrs through whom the glory of Spain is sovereignly exalted in heaven and on earth, before God and men alike [...] and even more because all of the martyrs were crowned in Córdoba, leaving my homeland illuminated with their worthy triumph.”³⁸ Morales’s pride in his native city as well as in the Spain that had added the

regii historici scholiis illustrata, eiusque cura & diligentia excussa (Alcalá de Henares: Juan Iñigues a Lequerica, 1574).

³⁵ Morales, *Divi Eulogii...opera*, Ilr (“*Ambrosius Morales ad lectorem*”). See also: *Corónica general* (1791), 3:40.

³⁶ In Morales’s own words: “[...] This was one of the principal reasons that moved me to advance the continuation of this chronicle beyond King Pelayo [d. 737]: so that the history of these saints would be better publicized and more widespread, communicated to so many more Spaniards, it being in Castilian.” *Corónica general* (1586) book 14, volume 3, 89^v. See also Morales’s dedicatory letter to bishop Antonio of Córdoba at the beginning of volume one. Morales’s original intention, as indicated in the short “Suma de la historia de España” that he wrote as a preface to his continuation of Ocampo’s *Corónica*, was to extend the history “hasta la entrada de los moros en España.” *Corónica general*, Book 6, vol. 1, 12^r. The fact that the first volume that Morales submitted only went as far as Theodosius did not deter one of the censors from approving his history “up to the entrance of the Moors.” *Corónica general* (1574), second page after the title page.

³⁷ *Corónica general* (1586) book 14, volume 3, 89^v. The neomartyrs do indeed receive a great deal of attention relative to the *Corónica* as a whole, a point that elicits a passing *apologia* from Morales. *Corónica general* (1586) book 14, volume 3, 90^r. Though Book 14, in volume three, runs from 89^r to 145^v, all but the last thirteen pages are dedicated to mining the Eulogius corpus, Paul Alvarus’s *Life of Eulogius*, and an account of the translation of Eulogius’s remains to Oviedo. The part pertaining to the neomartyrs themselves is comprised of short chapters dedicated to each of them in what amounts to a paraphrase of the martyrological portions of the *Memoriale sanctorum* and the *Liber apologeticus martyrum*.

³⁸ *Corónica general* (1586) book 14, volume 3, 89^v. Like Eulogius, Morales felt honored and at the same time humbled by such a task, regarding himself as having been selected for it by God. *Ibid.*, 89^v-90^r. It

great naval victory at Lepanto (1571) to its long list of military achievements against the Muslims, is evident in his manner of presenting the martyrs in the *Corónica general*. His purpose was to illustrate the heroism of a handful of Córdoba Christians, doing what they could to resist the encroachment of Islam some four centuries before the liberation of their Andalusian homeland.³⁹ Morales saw no need to recreate the tensions that had split the ninth-century community in Eulogius's time. For the most part, he simply translated and paraphrased the *passiones* of the martyrs, omitting altogether the lengthy apologies that Eulogius felt obliged to append to his martyrologies. The seven centuries that separated Eulogius and Morales, seven centuries that had witnessed a complete reversal in peninsula hegemony, had removed all need to justify the self-destructive zeal of the martyrs. Still Morales was not immune to the potential awkwardness of martyrdom in the absence of persecution: "Although the Christians of Córdoba enjoyed the great consolation of their churches and monasteries [...] and a kind of freedom to practice their religion, still the greatest and truest consolation, which they had from the hand of our Lord in that time, and the most marked mercy with which he desired to bestow them, was to give them many worthy martyrs."⁴⁰ In this he mirrored the sentiments of Eulogius, who interpreted the executions in Córdoba as a singular "gift," a reprise of those most "fortunate times of the past" when Christians had the opportunity to bear witness to their faith with their very lives.⁴¹

should be noted that Morales also had an affective relationship with the quintessential "neomartyr" of the Visigothic period of Iberian history, Hermenegild, son of the last Arian king, Liuvigild. *Corónica general*, book 11, vol 2, 78^v-81^r. See also the end of volume two for an appendix with an original Latin hymn composed by Morales in honor of Hermenegild. *Ibid.*, 216^r-225^v. Morales's fascination with Iberian saints is evident in the fact that his first known foray into historical writing was the *Memoria sanctorum qui orti sunt in Hispania, vel alibi nati, eorum corpora in eadem Provincia seu Regione feliciter requiescunt*, begun in 1541 (when he was 28). *Corónica general* (1791), 3:25.

³⁹ King Fernando III of León-Castile conquered Córdoba in 1236, ending 525 years of Muslim rule.

⁴⁰ *Corónica general* (1586) book 14, volume 3, 92^v.

⁴¹ *Memoriale sanctorum* 1.37 (Wolf, *Eulogius Corpus*, 199-200).

Pedro Ponce de León and Ambrosio de Morales deserve a tremendous amount of credit for “plucking” the Eulogius corpus “from the perpetual oblivion of darkness;”⁴² all the more so because at some point after its transcription, the Oviedo codex disappeared never to be found again. The loss of this unique manuscript would be less of a problem had its editors not felt obliged to take certain liberties when interpreting the text. In a letter appended to the end of the original 1574 edition, Ponce de León reflected at some length on the challenges that the codex posed for him and his staff:

Written in a Gothic hand, much of it was incapable of being read without a great deal of experience. Add to this the extraordinary antiquity of the codex, which was determined – by comparison with others – to have been produced some six hundred years ago. [...] So when it came to transcribing it, it was the source of immense difficulties. At length, when the members of my household – to whom I had entrusted the responsibility and effort – began to despair, I lent my own assistance to this excellent labor and, with the help of the large team to which these ones belonged, we managed to transcribe it. While engaged in this labor, I by no means shirked the other significant [tasks] of emending [*emendandi*] and elucidating [*illustrandi*] the texts with notes.⁴³

This “emending” and “elucidating” was ultimately delegated to Ambrosio de Morales, who, in a dedicatory letter to his episcopal collaborator, used the very same gerunds when referring to his own contribution: “When your eminence wanted me to take up a part of this excellent labor, you ordered [me] to take charge of emending the works (*operibus emendandis*) of Eulogius, as well as elucidating (*illustrandis*) and

⁴² Morales, *Divi Eulogii... opera*, 107^v.

⁴³ Idem.

augmenting them with notes.”⁴⁴ Immediately following this letter in the 1574 edition is a prefatory note written by Morales, titled: “Concerning the fabricated and novel words, and the language of blessed Eulogius as a whole.”⁴⁵ In it he first complimented Eulogius for “the magnitude of his genius” and his “excellent command of sacred scripture,” and then proceeded to criticize his Latin:

Although his pen is always devout and often agreeable, it is so inferior to the magnitude of his talent [*ingenium*] and natural eloquence, that you may find it highly deficient. [...] The excellence and purity of the Latin language had [at that time] already degenerated a great deal everywhere, a great baseness obscuring the brilliance of the same; and our own great calamities here [in Spain] buried it even further. Given the dire captivity and wretchedness that had already been endured for almost one hundred and fifty years by the time of blessed Eulogius, one might conclude that what he managed to accomplish in this regard is worthy of praise, rather than ascribing to his own shortcomings what he failed to achieve. [...] You may indeed be able to appreciate the wordplay, the subtlety, the degree of vehemence, and the extent of the effort expended in the direction of sublimity with regard to such great matters. But you may also bemoan the fact that these exceptional struggles are blunted and obscured by a great disregard for words and indeed for the whole language. Respectfully struck as I was with a certain reverence, I wanted

⁴⁴ Morales, *Divi Eulogii... opera* IV^v.

⁴⁵ The Latin reads: *De vocabulis fictis et novatis, et toto divi Eulogii sermone.*

to correct [*emendare*] nothing, deeming it necessary only to append here a catalogue of fabricated and novel words and phrases.⁴⁶

After providing a sample of some of these linguistic “novelties,” Morales generously exculpated Eulogius for all the problems with the transcription: “It is clear that the confused genders, the perverse cases, the neglect of number in nouns and verbs, and thus the scattered structure (*structura dissipata*) of [his] Latin [as a whole] was not the fault of the author but of the scribes.”⁴⁷ With this assessment, Morales gave himself license to clean up the text as long as he left the meaning intact. As he succinctly put it, “I have emended everything of this sort, while with regard to the rest I have not permitted myself anything” in the way of correction.⁴⁸

Judging from the endnotes (*scholia*) that he added to each of Eulogius’s works, however, this overarching description of Morales’s approach appears to have been more aspirational than actual. When it came to correcting obvious mistakes in the text, for instance, Morales seems to have been of two minds. He did correct a year that had been erroneously transcribed⁴⁹ and he added a *non* to a sentence that was clearly intended to be negative.⁵⁰ But for some reason he decided not to correct a reference to Spain as an

⁴⁶ Morales, *Divi Eulogii... opera* V^v.

⁴⁷ Apart from positing the existence of such scribes, Morales also indicated a place in the text where there is evidence of a second hand. Morales, *Divi Eulogii... opera* 106^v.

⁴⁸ Morales, *Divi Eulogii... opera* V^v.

⁴⁹ Morales, *Divi Eulogii... opera* 75^r (*Memoriale sanctorum* 3.11.4).

⁵⁰ In Morales’s own words: “The old codex had only *expertis*, but without a doubt this was a mistake of the scribe, since this clearly goes against the meaning. So we have added the negation.” Morales, *Divi Eulogii... opera* 76^r. Elsewhere he identified a place where there is a word missing; he offered two guesses as to what that word might be, but ultimately left the wording as he found it. Morales, *Divi Eulogii... opera* 105^v. He also used independent sources related to the Huescan martyrs, Nunilo and Alodia, to help him emend the relevant part of the Eulogius corpus. Hence his correction of the name “Elodia” and the date of their execution. Morales, *Divi Eulogii... opera* 57^v (*Memoriale sanctorum* 2.7.2); *Ibid.*, 58^r (*Memoriale sanctorum* 2.7.2).

insula, simply noting it in passing as an example of a misused word (*catachresis*).⁵¹ With regard to the vernacularizations, there is a similar range of editorial response. Morales flagged Eulogius's use of *eglesia* as an obvious *hispanismus*, and informed his reader that he would be changing it to *ecclesia* throughout the text.⁵² Yet other notes simply identify the "hispanisms" without correcting them.⁵³ Morales was more consistent with the neologisms, many of which he had already included in his list of "fabricated words," leaving them as he found them. But he could not resist drawing his reader's attention to such "howlers" as *victoriando* and *convulsibiliter*.⁵⁴ At one point, faced with the phrase *triumpho adorearum*, Morales simply observed: "As I have noted elsewhere, blessed Eulogius greatly loves unusual words of this sort!"⁵⁵

Faced with a few parts that he simply could not read due to the condition of the codex, Morales either left the corresponding section of the transcription blank or provided the words that he felt made the most sense given the context. He described one spot toward the end of the single longest *passio* as *mutilus*, simply noting the extent of the lacuna: "a whole line and a half left empty."⁵⁶ Occasionally, he took it upon himself to fill the gaps: "this part was hopelessly torn and corrupted, making no sense whatsoever. To the extent that I was able, I emended it, filling it in (*emendavimus et supplevimus*)."⁵⁷ Unfortunately even when he admitted emending the text, he was rarely precise about

⁵¹ Morales, *Divi Eulogii... opera* 61^r (*Memoriale sanctorum* 2.10.25).

⁵² Morales, *Divi Eulogii... opera* 29^r-29^v (*Memoriale sanctorum* 1.6).

⁵³ Morales, *Divi Eulogii... opera* 59^v (*Memoriale sanctorum* 2.8.3), 60^v (*Memoriale sanctorum* 2.10.2), 94^v (bis: *Documentum martyriale* 1 and 12).

⁵⁴ Morales, *Divi Eulogii... opera* 105^v (*Memoriale sanctorum*, pref. letter: Eulogius to Alvarus).

⁵⁵ Morales, *Divi Eulogii... opera* 94^v (*Documentum martyriale* 1).

⁵⁶ Morales, *Divi Eulogii... opera* 61^r (*Memoriale sanctorum* 2.10.34).

⁵⁷ Morales, *Divi Eulogii ... opera*, 94^v (*Documentum Martyriale* 6). See also: Morales, *Divi Eulogii ... opera*, 75^r, 62^r (*Memoriale sanctorum* 3.11.1), and 103^r (*Documentum martyriale*, pref. letter: Alvarus to Eulogius).

which words were his and which were present in the “old codex.”⁵⁸ On the bright side, if the relatively few times where Morales actually admitted to such an intervention accurately reflects the number of times he faced indecipherable text, then there is little cause for concern. But there is simply no way of knowing how consistent he was about signaling such problems. It should also be noted that in some places the words in the codex were clear enough to Morales and yet he could not make sense of them. In reference to one part of the *Liber apologeticus martyrum*, he wrote: “I cannot figure out what these words might mean even by guessing, nor did it help for them to be emended in any way.”⁵⁹

Beyond such issues stemming from the condition of the codex and the language of the text, there were also times when Morales’s sixteenth-century Catholic morals got in the way, prompting him to censor parts that he thought might offend his reader. A predictable victim of this kind of intervention was one of Eulogius’s diatribes against Islamic notion of paradise in the first book of the *Memoriale sanctorum*.

In this place Blessed Eulogius described in detail the wicked things that Muhammad passed down, by means of that nefarious Qur’an, about Christ the Savior and his most sacred mother. We have removed some of these lines for appropriate reasons. For what was, in that time, necessary for exposing the turpitude of this abominable sect, could now offend the ears of the pious. And given the most provident decrees of

⁵⁸ Morales, *Divi Eulogii... opera* 73^r (*Memoriale sanctorum* 3.8.1). In this case, Morales assumes the text is *corruptus* because the meaning of one particular word (*cenibus*) is not clear to him and he admits to not knowing how to salvage it. See also: Ibid., 75^r (*Memoriale sanctorum* 3.11.1), where he identifies the endpoints of another “corrupt” area, while summarizing his efforts as follows: “We emended to the extent that we were able, adding one or another word.”

⁵⁹ Morales, *Divi Eulogii... opera* 86^v. See also: Morales, *Divi Eulogii... opera* 62^r (*Memoriale sanctorum* 2.15.3).

the holy Inquisition, one should beware lest the nefarious teachings of the Qur'an be read far and wide.⁶⁰

For historians of the earliest Christian views of Islam, this kind of *lacuna*, the self-inflicted kind, is particularly frustrating. But it could have been worse. Given Morales's scruples in this regard, we are lucky that any of Eulogius's more lurid outbursts on the subject of Islam survived.⁶¹

In the absence of the original codex, there is, of course, no way to determine how faithful Morales's edition of Eulogius's writings is to the ninth-century original.⁶² But even if the Eulogius corpus will always have an asterisk next to it, at least we have it, thanks to the efforts of this royal chronicler, not to mention the bishop who had the foresight to entrust Morales with the task. Informed by his impeccable command of Latin, and motivated by his deep love of Córdoba and the pride he felt in the Catholic Spanish empire that seemed poised to turn the tables on Islam, Morales was unquestionably the right person in the right place at the right time to appreciate Eulogius's writings, at least in the way Eulogius wanted his writings to be appreciated. He never questioned Eulogius's "spin," that is, his creative effort to turn Christians who

⁶⁰ *Memoriale sanctorum* 1. 7. Morales, *Divi Eulogii ... opera*, 29^v. A second predictable target for such editing: the description in the second book of Perfectus's rant about Muhammad's "adulterous" union with Zaynab. Morales, *Divi Eulogii ... opera.*, 54^r (*Memoriale sanctorum* 2.1.2).

⁶¹ For a sense of what this might have looked like without the editing, see Alvarus, *Indiculus luminosus* 24. *Corpus scriptorum Muzarabicorum*, ed. Gil, 1:297-98.

⁶² As a result, all subsequent editors of the corpus have essentially reproduced Morales's version with minor variations that must, of course, remain speculative. For a list of the editions (dating from 1589, 1608, 1785, 1885, 1959, 1973) that have appeared since that of Ambrosio de Morales (1574), see Herrera Roldán, *San Eulogio*, 42-43. To my knowledge, the most recent edition of the Eulogius corpus is the one that appeared in 1973 as part of Juan Gil's *Corpus scriptorum Muzarabicorum*, a collection of all known Latin texts produced by Andalusí Christians. *Corpus scriptorum Muzarabicorum*, ed. Gil, 2:362-503. Apparently, Professor Gil is in the process of editing a second edition of this indispensable resource. For a detailed look at what can be lost when editors of early medieval Latin texts take too many liberties with their transcriptions, see Juan Gil Fernández, "Para la edición de los textos visigodos y mozárabes," *Habis* 4 (1973): 189-236.

had been executed for violating Islamic law into legitimate martyrs. He never tripped over the obvious discrepancies between the paleomartyrs of ancient Rome and the neomartyrs of ninth-century Córdoba, the discrepancies that prevented Isaac and his imitators from being embraced by their less militant coreligionists. All of Eulogius's efforts to resurrect martyrdom – a form of sanctity that for all intents and purposes had been safely relegated to the “heroic age” of the pre-Constantinian church – and make it relevant as a Christian response to Muslim rule were music to Morales's ears. A comparison between Eulogius's imagined Christian audience with the one that finally applauded his efforts reminds us that, while martyrdom had long been central to the Christian primordial narrative, it was much easier to appreciate in retrospect. Though the Christians of ninth-century Córdoba universally hailed the victims of the third and early fourth-century Roman persecutions, the idea that Isaac and his imitators fell in the same category was guaranteed to be a tough sell to contemporaries who by no means felt inclined to follow their example. It had to wait for the historical hindsight that allowed for unqualified adulation.

The Christians of ninth-century Córdoba were not the first to have their doubts about the martyrs of their own day. Not unlike Eulogius, Tertullian (d. c. 220) cajoled an imagined audience of Carthaginian Christians into embodying a level of militancy that brought with it risks that most Christians at the time were unwilling to embrace.⁶³ And not unlike Eulogius, Tertullian was ultimately vindicated by a sea change in historical context. Tertullian's pro-martyr pitch was retroactively vindicated by the rise of the cult of the saints in the wake of the Christianization of the empire; Eulogius's by the

⁶³ Rebillard, *Christians and Their Many Identities*, 9-47.

emergence of Spain as the defender of Christendom against Islam in the sixteenth century. Just as the victims of the Roman persecutions could be universally hailed as heroes only after Rome had adopted Christianity as its official ideology, so the ninth-century “victims” of Andalusí “persecution” could be universally hailed as heroes only after the Christian kings of Spain had taken back the territory lost to Islam. Under these circumstances, it is hardly surprising that the neomartyrs, who had attracted so little positive attention in the Córdoba of their own day, could, in the sixteenth century, actually “awaken a devotion throughout the city that was so great it could not be overestimated.”⁶⁴ As essential as the writings of Eulogius were for keeping the memory of his martyrs alive in the first place, all that effort would have been for naught without the timely intervention, seven hundred years later, of another Córdoba, whose circumstances predisposed him to accept Eulogius’ hagiographical construct at face value.

⁶⁴ Morales, *Corónica general* (1586), dedicatory letter to Bishop Antonio of Córdoba.

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