

The Textual Significance of Spanish Polyglot Bibles *

M.^a Victoria SPOTTORNO
CSIC, Madrid

It is generally accepted that the royal decision to achieve religious and political unity among Spanish Kingdoms was a traumatic experience for the society of the late years of the 15th century. Two important circumstances contributed to make it more difficult: on the one hand the end of the Muslim official presence in the Peninsula and the expulsion of the Jews, that generated a considerable number of conversos who did not wholly abandon their religious traditions; and on the other hand the deficient intellectual and theological preparation of the clergy, otherwise morally depraved, that was gradually declining. Cardinal Cisneros took both issues to heart and worked with his resources, energy and perseverance for the sake of the changes he thought imperative. The Inquisition was the instrument to deal with the conversos, and a vast program of reformation was planned for the clergy. Devoted to the administrative duties and political activities, he wisely drew the core of his plans of renewal: the University of Alcalá and the edition of the Polyglot Bible. Only at the end of his life could he contemplate the stimulating success of his twofold enterprise.

In the Middle Ages the Bible had been gradually substituted by compilations of holy stories and scholastic accounts of the Old and

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New Testaments. These pseudo-texts were usually introduced by Jerome's Prologues to the Sacred Books, disguised with a Biblical appearance, but they were not the Bible. The Bible was read with the aid of manuals ¹, glossaries and studies such as those of Nicolas de Lyra or Hugues de Saint Victor, which were meant to guide the faithful reader to the *correct* interpretation of the Scriptures in their four dimensions: literal or historical (Jerome), alegoric (Ambrosius), moral (Gregorius) and anagogic or transcendent (Augustin) ². Among medieval authors Nicolas de Lyra was closer to the spirit of the Renaissance in his attempt to recover the sense of the true *Hebraica veritas* –referred to the Hebrew text and not to Jerome's *Vulgata* as it was understood at that time.

The editorial work carried out through the Middle Ages produced thousands of manuscript copies all over the Eastern and Western countries. The Jewish communities of Sefarad developed important schools of that industry outstanding in beauty and accuracy. When the printing press appeared in the 15th century, manuscripts were progressively replaced by copies made with the new invention.

Hebrew printing began in Italy (Bologna, Ferrara, Rome, Mantua, Naples), and followed very soon in Spain and Portugal, where books of great quality were edited. The Book of Psalms was the first Biblical print in 1477, probably in Bologna ³, and the Pentateuch became the most frequent print ⁴. The first edition of the whole Hebrew Bible was published by Soncino in 1488, and the two Great Rabbinic Bibles were printed in Venice by Daniel

¹ S. BERGER, *La Bible au XVI^e siècle: Étude sur les origines de la critique biblique* (Paris 1879; repr. Genève 1969) pp. 10 ff.

² As it was said in the popular verses: «Littera gesta docet, quid credas allegoria, / Moralis, quid agas, quo tendas anagogia».

³ As a matter of fact, it was the edition of David Qimhi's Commentary on the Book of Psalms. The text of Psalms itself introduces the commentary.

⁴ The first one was the Bologna Pentateuch (1482), the second was printed in Faro (Portugal) in 1487, and the third in Híjar (Spain) in 1490. It is also worth mentioning the two editions of 1491, one at Naples, at Soncino's print, with vowels and accents, and the other at Lisbon, the most beautiful Hebrew print, edited by Joseph ibn Yahya and Joseph Calphon, with Targum Onkelos and Rashi's Commentary. Other parts of the Bible and Hebrew works, about a hundred titles in all, were printed before 1500 in South Europe.

Bomberg, in 1517-1518 Felix Pratensis', and in 1525 Jacob ben Ḥayyim's ⁵. The production of Hebrew printings at that time was generous: about five hundred works were published between 1500 and 1540.

The Greek Bible did not have such great protagonism. The *editio princeps* of the Greek Old Testament was that of the Complutensian Polyglot (1517). Other printings took place around those years: André Asolatus also published the whole Septuaginta in Venice, called the Aldine Bible, as it was composed at Aldo Manucio's press in 1518-1519, a year after the Complutensian was printed, but before it was published. His text was based on a few Venetian manuscripts. Previous to these editions, the Greek Old Testament had been edited only partially ⁶. It was at the end of the century (1587) when the Sixtine Bible (the Greek Old Testament, published under Pope Sixtus V) became *the* text of the Septuagint.

The Complutensian also was the first printed edition of the Greek New Testament. The work of the group of Helenists that prepared the text –Hernán Núñez de Guzmán (also called «el Pinciano» or «el Comendador»), Demetrio Ducas («el Cretense»), Diego López de Zúñiga, and Juan de Vergara– has been praised by critics of all times ⁷. The volume was issued from the print house of Guillelmus Brocarius in Alcalá de Henares on January 10th, 1514.

A little later –the 7th of April 1515– Beatus Rhenanus, in a letter written in the name of the printer Froben from Basel, required from Erasmus a text of the New Testament, and in February 1516 Erasmus' edition gained currency, while the Complutensian Polyglot was still waiting for the papal approval. Erasmus' haste, or his publisher's, succeeded in anticipating and outnumbering the Complutensian diffusion; however, the text of Erasmus was defeated by the Complutensian for its much greater excellence. Perhaps

⁵ With the material collected through seven penurious years, he drew a text that has become the standard Masoretic Text of the Hebrew Bible for four centuries.

⁶ Three editions of the Greek Psalter were published, one in 1481 in Milan, and two in Venice before 1498 by Aldo Manucio.

⁷ Cf. Á. Sáenz Badillos, *La filología bíblica en los primeros helenistas de Alcalá* (Madrid 1990).

the date of publication, or perhaps Erasmus' character and relevance in his social and intellectual milieu made his New Testament prevail over the Complutensian, but the critical weakness of the text became evident when he had to make multiple corrections through the five editions he published⁸. In the second one he corrected some of the innumerable errata of the first, and only in the fourth did he rely on the Complutensian to improve his own text, especially in the Apocalypse. The severe disputes with López de Zúñiga did not allow Erasmus to accept openly the Complutensian readings. The result of his contumacy is well summarized in F. Delitzsch' words: «it would have been a great fortune if it had not become Erasmus' text, but the Complutensian one, the basis of the later called *textus receptus*»⁹.

There were a few Greek fragments antedating the print of the Complutensian New Testament: the two songs *Magnificat* and *Benedictus* annexed to the Greek Psalter (Milan 1481, Venice 1486, and Venice 1496/1497), the first six chapters of John's Gospel, published in Venice by Aldo Manucio in 1504, and fourteen verses of chapter 6 of John, printed in Tübingen in 1514.

Concerning the Latin text, the editors accepted Jerome's translation which had become the standard text of the Church. But this Vulgate had suffered considerable corruptions derived from the exhaustive use that the Western world had made of it. Cisneros observed in the *Vulgata* the same deficiencies as did Jerome in the Greek Septuagint and the Old Latin versions; both scholars verified the differences between the current text and the Hebrew, and in different ways they strove to give the community the original true text, although Jerome's translation obviously was not the assumed original Bible.

⁸ 1516, 1518-1519, 1522, 1527, and 1535 reprinted in 1540.

⁹ M. REVILLA RICO, *La Políglota de Alcalá* (Madrid 1917) p. 131. I add a meaningful datum in favour of this evaluation: Ph. W. COMFORT, in *The Quest for the Original Text* (Grand Rapids, Michigan 1992), suggests that Nestle-Aland's 26th edition of their *Novum Testamentum Graece* (Stuttgart 1979) should be revised in fifty-eight cases on the evidence of the earliest manuscripts; it is worthily valuable that in ten out of these cases the Complutensian readings coincide with the papyri.

THE COMPLUTENSIAN POLYGLOT

No expenses ¹⁰ nor political abilities ¹¹ were spared by Cardinal Cisneros to achieve this enterprise. In spite of the difficulties, he remained on the idea that renewal should begin with instruction, and returning to Biblical sources would be the sturdiest foundations for theology, philosophy, and even physics, in the new times. Although the medieval religious climate was critically put in question, theocratic principles did not vanish from social and political life. Still, it was the Church who guided intellectual progress –and power. Cisneros was sensitive to the forthcoming Reformation and gave the society two weapons to preserve the Catholic truth: a University, to obtain a well prepared intellectual élite, and the original text of the Bible, to provide theologians with an authoritative instrument for their argumentations. He sought a Bible without secrets, a book in which the texts could be compared and their differences be considered. He surely understood Origen's philological intention in his *Hexapla*, with all the texts simultaneously visible in parallel columns.

It is surprising that the Greek Introduction, in the New Testament volume –the first printed, hence the most genuine expression of the spirit of the whole edition–, goes very straight in explaining how the text has been edited in order to preserve its purity, why such printing types have been chosen, and what mechanisms of control have been adopted to keep the versions in correspondence with the original text, etc. Only at the end the reader is drawn to religious considerations. That very first Introduction was developed throughout the several chapters of the main Prologue in the first volume.

The editorial conception and performance of the texts reveal that they were ruled by the Humanistic trend of returning to

¹⁰ Manuscripts, workers, typographer, vitellum, paper, binding, etc. were paid by Cisneros, fifty-thousand ducats odd, in opinion of his biographer Alvar GÓMEZ (*De rebus gestis a Francisco Ximeno Cisnerio, archiepiscopo toletano*, 1569). Dr. HEFELE in *Der Cardinal Ximenes und die Kirchlichen Zustände Spaniens am Ende des 15 und Anfange des 16 Jahrhunderts...* (Tübingen 1844), says that those amounts could only be spent by a man that had the income of a king and the needs of a monk (cf. REVILLA RICO, *La Políglota de Alcalá*, pp. 47-48).

¹¹ As General Inquisidor, he could keep the works of the Bible free from domestic controversial attacks.

sources, based on philological practices. A didactic intention inspired the methodology in most of the technics applied in the edition. The Polyglot was specifically intended for teaching, namely to make the Bible accessible to those men of letters ¹², who had overcome the intellectual decay of the preceding century ¹³.

Description

The text of the Hebrew Testament is placed in the outer part of every page. Before every word, a small superscript letter indicates the correspondence with a word or group of words of the Latin Vulgate. In the Targum and the Greek Septuagint such correspondence is not marked, since they have their own Latin translation. The Latin translation of the Targum is placed aside, and that of the Septuagint is interlinear. The roots of some Hebrew words –mainly verbs– are presented in a Masora Parva style in the margins, bearing their referential small letter ¹⁴.

The functions of accents in Biblical Hebrew (stress on words and phrases, identifying syntactical periods in order to set up the sense), have not been considered by the Complutensians. Probably because of the difficulties in printing, they restricted their use only to the two principal disjunctive accents: the *sôf pasûq* at the end of each verse, and the *ʾatnah* in the meaningful pauses. To indicate

¹² See the Greek Introduction to the New Testament, volume V of the Polyglot: «... this work has been intended to help not only the very cultivated people, but all those who are dedicated to the Sacred Scripture...», and the final paragraph: «May you, lovers of instruction, receive with enthousiasm this divine and sacred work recently printed. And if you exert yourselves to be considered imitators of Christ Lord and God of ours, and you get it, you must know that there is no pretext left to prevent you from entering the divine scripture».

¹³ Nebrija describes the uncultured preaching of some priests in his letter to Cisneros, «Epístola del Maestro de Lebrija al Cardenal cuando avisó, que en la interpretación de las Dicciones de la Biblia no mandasse seguir al Remigio sin que primero viessen su Obra», transcribed by R. CHABÁS, *Revista de Archivos, Bibliotecas y Museos* VIII (1903) pp. 493-496 (cf. REVILLA RICO, *La Políglota de Alcalá*, p. VIII, note 4).

¹⁴ Sometimes these marginal notes are superfluous or erroneous. Such as in Exodus 16:31, where the word *כְּפִתָּה* 'like a bun' is appointed to the root *כִּתְּ* 'vase' (otherwise vocalised with *patah*, *כִּתְּ*), while the root should be a hypothetical *כִּתְּ*, or the proper word *כִּתְּ* or *כִּתְּ*, as it is written in the text. This annotation is also superfluous because the angle above the *כ* already indicates that this particle does not belong to the root.

the stress on particular words, they put a roman grave accent on the emphasised syllable of the paroxytone words only (וְיִלְכּוּ, for example), excluding that mark from the oxitone words, most frequent in Hebrew.

The didactic purpose of this text is also reflected in a small angle above the prefixed particles -ל, -כ, -ב, -מ, above -ה when it is an article, and above -שׁ when it is a relative pronoun, indicating that these particles do not belong to the root of the word.

Like the Hebrew column, the text of the Targum also bears marginal notes with the roots of ambiguous words. The reason why the Complutensians restricted the Targum to the Pentateuch is that in other books of the Bible, according to Cisneros, the Targumim are corrupted, «sprinkled with Talmudic bagatelles», and do not deserve to be printed together with sacred codices¹⁵.

The Septuagint column has no specific signs. The reason is explained in the Introduction to the V volume:

But in the Greek edition of the Old Testament, because it is a translation and not an original text, it did not seem convenient to take off or to change anything from the common use of writing¹⁶.

The intention of the editors to make it comprehensible to the reader is still visible in the Latin supralinear translation of the Greek column, different and apart from the Latin Vulgate.

The Greek types used by the printer were the cursive characters created by Aldo Manucio (1449-1515), not easily readable. They bear accents and breathings, and present the most common abbreviations, as the Latin also does.

In the New Testament volume the printing types were created by Brocarius himself, inspired in the handwriting of the 11th-12th

¹⁵ «Nam Chaldaica in caeteris libris praeterquam in Pentateucho corrupta est aliquibus in locis: et fabulis merisque Thalmudistarum nugis conspersa: indigna prorsus quae sacris codicibus inseratur.» *Prologus. Ad lectorem. De his que ad lectionem Ueteris...*

¹⁶ «... ἐν δὲ τῆς ἀρχαίας διαθήκης ἐλληνικῇ ἐκδόσει ὅτι αὐτὴ μετάφρασις παντὶ-
που ἄλλ ὅν πρωτοποίητος σύνταξις οὐκ ἔδοξέ τι ἐκ τῆς κοινῆς ἐν τῷ γράφειν
συνηθείας ἢ ἀφαιρεῖν ἢ ἐναλλάξαι» (Here and henceforth original dots and
spelling are reproduced).

century manuscripts. Their elegance and clarity are quite impressive. They are a noticeable contribution to Greek typography.

In contrast to the Septuagint, in the New Testament the original language is Greek. In this connection, Greek accents and breathings lack. The reason, explained in the Introduction, is that the most ancient Greek copies were written without dots:

... so it is patent that superscriptions of these little commas and dots had not been created in that first genesis of the Greek language ... Since everyone admits that the whole New Testament ... has been composed in Greek as it was revealed by the Holy Spirit ... it seemed convenient to us to preserve with purity the antiquity and the magnificence of its language, and to publish the work without those tiny things, in the manner of ancient writings ¹⁷.

Nevertheless, the Complutensians could not leave aside their pedagogical purpose, and betrayed this principle by placing Spanish accents over the stressed syllable of those clean Greek words presumably identified with the most ancient way of writing. This practice is also explained in the Greek Introduction:

In order that no-one may have a doubt about to which syllable it corresponds to adjust the stress, one simple accent has been added to the polysyllabic words only. This certainly must not be taken as a Greek accent, but as a certain indication or sign by which the scholar might be guided, so that he may never be wrong in the pronunciation and rhythm of the words ¹⁸.

This precision, far from being formal or secondary, is the proof of the care and respect that the Complutensians intended to dictate towards the text. Undoubtedly their insights marked the point of departure for modern textual criticism.

¹⁷ «... ὥστε πάντως εἶναι πρόσδηλον, ῥαβδίσκων τούτων καὶ κεραιῶν ὑπερθέσεις ἐν τῇ πρώτῃ ἐκείνῃ τῆς γλώττης ἐλληνικῆς γενεσιουργία μὴ ἐπινενοημένας, ... ἐπειδὴ δὲ καὶ πᾶσαν τὴν νέαν διαθήκην ... ἐλληνικὴ ἀπ' ἀρχῆς διαλέκτῳ ὥσπερ καὶ ὑπὸ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος ἐχρηματίσθη, ... ἐδοξε καὶ ἡμῖν ἀρχαίαν ἐν αὐτῇ τῆς αὐτῆς γλώττης παλαιότητα καὶ μεγαλοπρέπειαν ὁσίως διατηρεῖν, καὶ τὴν βίβλον ἄνευ ὁποσούν ἐλαχίστων προσθηκῶν, ἀρχαίων γραφῶν δίκην ἐκδιδόναι».

¹⁸ «ὅν μὴν ἀλλὰ ἵνα μή τις ἀπορήσῃ ἐν ποίᾳ τῶν συλλαβῶν προσήκει τὸν τόνον ἐφαρμόζειν, ἀπλὴ μόνον ἐν ταῖς πολυσυλλάβοις λέξεσι κεραία προσηρτήθη. οὐ μέντοι τόνος αὐτῇ ἐλληνικῶς ὑπολαβέσθω, ἀλλὰ γνωμῶνιόν τι καὶ σημεῖον ὑφοῦ ἀπευθύνοντι ὁ φιλομαθής, ὥστε μὴ διαμαρτάνειν ποτὲ ἐν τῇ ἐκφορᾷ καὶ ἐν ρυθμῇ τῶν λέξεων.»

The Latin text was Jerome's *Vulgata*. The former editors of this Vulgate had not done a good critical work; as Revilla Rico says «dieron muestras de ignorar la historia del texto y se preocuparon más de satisfacer la devoción de los fieles que de responder a las exigencias de la crítica que apenas conocían»¹⁹. While the editions systematically reproduced the text printed in Paris in 1504, the Complutensians were working with ancient manuscripts. They used two manuscripts called by Pablo Coronel «Biblia nostra antiqua», in Gothic characters, of the 7th(?)–9th centuries²⁰, and other later texts.

The dispute between Cisneros and Elio Antonio de Nebrija proves once more that the guide-lines of the work of the Polyglot implied a great respect towards the text. Nebrija, not far from Reuchlin and Erasmus' opinion, thought that, being all Latin Bibles corrupted, it was necessary to correct them in accord with the Hebrew. Although he was right about the corruptions, the respect for the history and transmission of the originals won the quarrel, and Nebrija had to abandon his participation in the Polyglot. Even in our days the editions follow Cisneros' criteria.

The question of whether the Complutensians had adjusted the Greek to the Latin in the New Testament motivated an ardent debate in the 18th century. J.J. Wetstein and J.S. Semler accused them of having modified the original Greek according to the Vulgate. Opposing that position, J.M. Goetze demonstrated that their accusation lacked thorough basis, arguing that if there are nearly nine hundred discrepancies between both texts, one can hardly say that the editors had made alterations to conform to each other. In the end Semler had to admit that he had adopted Wetstein's opinion without even having seen a copy of the Polyglot²¹. In our century, Revilla Rico adds another convincing proof. He revised an early 16th century manuscript²² containing a New Testament Latin translation made from the Greek text of Alcalá,

¹⁹ REVILLA RICO, *La Políglota de Alcalá*, p. 138.

²⁰ MSS 1 and 2 of the Complutensian University, numbered 115-Z-7 and 115-Z-6.

²¹ REVILLA RICO, *La Políglota de Alcalá*, pp. 118–119.

²² MS 117-Z.-1, now in Madrid, at the Library of the Complutensian University, bound together with two printed works: Lorenzo VALLA's *Annotationes in latinam Novi Testamenti interpretationes*, and the appendix to the Complutensian Polyglot *Interpretationes hebraeorum, chal., graecorumque nominum N. T.* (cf. REVILLA RICO, *La Políglota de Alcalá*, pp. 167–169).

or, more precisely, from the basic manuscripts of the Polyglot ²³. Attached to this translation was another work, the *Annotationes Complutenses Novi Testamenti*, written most likely by Zúñiga, who annotated the discrepancies between the Vulgate and the Greek. These disagreements are found in the Complutensian Bible, so we may accept that systematic corrections of the Greek according to the Vulgate were not made. Notwithstanding, the Greek New Testament could have been modified in very few passages; one of them, Mt 6:13, has been fully justified by the editors ²⁴. In other cases, as 1 Jn 2:14, or Mt 10:25, and 2 Cor 6:15, the assumed modifications might have well been included in the manuscripts they handled. Thus, the alterations made by the Complutensians can be reduced to only one, the *comma joanneum*: «for there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, and the three are into one» ²⁵. This probably was not in their copies, because there is no indication that they would have access to the few Greek manuscripts that contained these sentences. Another reason is that Zúñiga, when attacked by Erasmus about this point, relied upon Jerome's Prologue to the Canonic Epistles, and not upon the manuscript evidence, to affirm that Greek manuscripts without those clauses are corrupt in this passage.

The texts of the Complutensian Polyglot are still in the need of a deep and sound study within the scope of today's textual advances ²⁶. Some formal difficulties make scholars reluctant to

²³ One of the first Latin versions of the Renaissance, and of great excellence (cf. REVILLA RICO, *La Políglota de Alcalá*, p. 168).

²⁴ Although it was present in the Greek copies, they omit a sentence which they considered a corruption originated by liturgical use. It is explained in a marginal note *ad loc.*: «... quod in missa graecorum postquam chorus dicit illa verba orationis dominicae, sc. Sed libera nos a malo, sacerdos respondet ista verba supra dicta, sc. quoniam tuus est regnum, etc.» (cf. REVILLA RICO, *La Políglota de Alcalá*, pp. 120-121).

²⁵ 1 Jn 5:7 ὅτι τρεῖς εἰσὶν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐν τῷ ουρανῷ, ὁ πατήρ καὶ ὁ λόγος καὶ τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα, καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἐν εἰσὶ. In a marginal note they refer to doctrinal points supported by St. Thomas, against abbot Joachim. Note that the Complutensian reading καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἐν εἰσιν, 'and the three are into one' does not reproduce exactly the Latin sentence *et hi tres unus sunt*, that should be καὶ οἱ οὗτοι οἱ τρεῖς ἓν εἰσιν 'and these three are one' of which there are some witnesses.

²⁶ Since the work of F. DELITZSCH, at the end of the last century, only partial studies have been done. He was right when he said at the end of his English Preface to his work written in German, *Studies on the Complutensian Polyglot*

face that work; perhaps the inconveniences of localization of passages (verses were not yet numbered), the size of volumes inadequate for convenient handling, too many letters per sq. cm., etc. In addition, we have but vague references about the manuscripts used in the edition ²⁷, which constitutes a problem to evaluate to what extent the printed text is an eclectic edition. But by no means should these considerations prevent us from approaching this enormous work «igual a milagro», as it was qualified by its contemporaries ²⁸. Every meaningful contribution is a worthwhile step for the history of our texts.

CISNEROS AND ARIAS MONTANO

The air of the Renaissance, joined to Cisneros' aptitudes for coordination, were propitious for the religious-scientific enterprise of the Polyglot. The Cardinal had the right perception to make it feasible. He also had the opportune situation of unifying his power as a Regent with the dignity of being Grand Inquisidor, a relevant and very useful charge for matters of religious character.

Cisneros accomplished his purpose step by step. The works of the Alcalá Polyglot began in 1502; the 10th of January 1514 the New Testament was printed; in May 1515 volume VI, containing dictionaries and the *Apparatus*, was finished ²⁹; and the 10th of

(London s.d. [1872]): «It will be no easy matter to find a second person who would occupy himself for twenty years, as I have done, with this abstruse task...».

²⁷ Is it simply rethoric what it is said in the Prologue of the V volume? «this should not be hidden to the reader: that we have acquired for our printing manuscript copies of no little value or found by chance, but very ancient and corrected as much as possible, and precisely for being so ancient they so much deserve to be trusted, that not to follow them would be not only inconvenient but absolutely wicked» (κακεῖνο τὸν φιλομαθῆ μὴ λανθανέτω, ὅν φαῦλα ἡμᾶς οὐδὲ τυχόντα ἐπὶ τῇ ἡμετέρᾳ ἐντυπώσει ἐσχηκέναι ἀντίγραφα, ἀλλ' ἀρχαιότατα καὶ καθόσον οἰόντε ἦν ἐπηνορθωμένα, καὶ δὴ καὶ κατὰ τὴν παλαιότητα οὕτως ἀξιόπιστα, ὥστε μὴ πείθεσθαι αὐτοῖς, πρὸς δυσκόλῳ εἶναι το παρὰπαν καὶ βεβήλου). See information about the manuscripts in BERGER, *La Bible au XVI^e siècle*, pp. 50-53, and REVILLA RICO, *La Políglota de Alcalá*, pp. 27-29, 71-79, 83-87, 95-105, 115-118 and 139-143.

²⁸ Cf. Alvar GÓMEZ DE CASTRO, *De las hazañas de Francisco Jiménez de Cisneros* (Madrid 1984) [edited, translated and annotated by José OROZ RETA, from the original edition *De rebus gestis a Francisco Ximénio, Cisnerio, Archiepiscopo Toletano, libri octo. Alvaro Gomecio Toletano authore*, Compluti 1569].

²⁹ This interesting volume contains: 1) an extensive Hebrew Lexicon followed by an Index of Latin words with reference to the previous Lexicon, 2) an interpretative Lexicon of Hebrew and Greek Proper Nouns (Old and New Testament)

June 1517, a few months before the death of Cisneros ³⁰, the four volumes of the Old Testament left the printing house. The six hundred copies in paper and some more in vellum ³¹ were not distributed till 1521. The causes of that delay are not clarified: negligence?, obscure manipulations? After three years it was Pope Leo X who initiated the process. He dictated a *motu proprio* on March the 22nd 1520 with his solemn approval and thence the Bible was distributed. Curiously, the expectation that such delay generated did not bring economic gains; the volumes were sold at a very low price ³², and a good number of copies were lost in a ship wreck on the way to Italy ³³. Very soon a reprint was required, and the Spanish King Philip II regarded with favour Plantin's proposal of reediting the Complutensian Polyglot. He entrusted the Extremenian Hebrew scholar Benito Arias Montano with the revision of the texts.

When Philip II sent Arias Montano to the Netherlands with an introductory letter to the Spanish Governor the Duke of Alba, his plans embraced a renewal of the Complutensian only, but in fact he was sowing the seed for the new edition, the *Biblia Regia*, which took center stage in the second half of the century. The new enterprise seemed to be greater than the preceeding, and led the Spanish Biblical humanism to its highest step.

In contrast with Cardinal Cisneros, Montano was a scholar, an intellectual worker, not a states-man. Although he did not handle the power that Cisneros had assumed, he enjoyed the consideration and benefits that he personally had won by his qualities from King Philip II and his Secretary Gabriel de Zayas. He was

followed by the lists of variant forms of some of them, indicating how they must be corrected, and 3) a Grammar of the Hebrew language, probably the work of Alfonso de Zamora. Cf. REVILLA RICO, *La Políglota de Alcalá*, pp. 149-157.

³⁰ The 8th of November.

³¹ This number was very small compared with the 3,300 of Erasmus' first edition of the New Testament (cf. BERGER, *La Bible au XVI^e siècle*, p. 57).

³² Apparently the Bible was sold for six ducats, price much inferior to attain to the expenses. Cisneros was extremely generous with this enterprise.

³³ Very few copies have been preserved (cf. REVILLA RICO, *La Políglota de Alcalá*, pp. 43-44). This lack has been supplied some years ago with a facsimile edition prepared by the Biblical Spanish Foundation and the Complutensian University of Madrid, and beautifully published in Valencia (1986). An interesting *Anejo a la edición facsímil de la Biblia Políglota Complutense* was published a year later (Valencia 1987) by several authors.

threatened by the Inquisition, and strongly attacked by his adversaries, especially the Latin scholar and Greek Professor León de Castro. On the other hand he was highly admired and loved by his collaborators and disciples. His life was devoted to study and spiritual reflexions. With an extremely delicate character, he cultivated deep friendship with Netherlands and Spanish humanists, Catholic or Protestant, being fond of the *Familia charitatis*, the Family of love, a kind of sect that encouraged the practice of an inner anti-ceremonious religion. In his last years, in the solitude of his cottage in the Peña de Aracena (Huelva), he maintained a fluent correspondence with Plantin and his Antwerpian friends, which smoothed over the bitterness of the misunderstanding he had suffered from some Spanish fellows. Perhaps his intelligent and wise spirit was affected by the dark and gloomy atmosphere of some scholarly circles, and melancholia sprouted up several times from his youth ³⁴. Although he appeared humble and pleasant, ambitious feelings led him during the first stage of his career ³⁵.

The Polyglots were for Cisneros and Montano an endurance test and a demonstration of their intrepidity. They knew that the original text of the Bible would not perturb their faith, and they did not fear being accused of sharing activities with conversos, Jews, and reformists. Their work showed the broad face of religious Spain, otherwise specially strict and intolerant.

THE BIBLIA REGIA

Spanish Biblical development in the 16th century openly shows our Jewish heritage, first with the conversos Pablo Coronel and Alfonso de Zamora who were in charge of the Complutensian Old Testament, and then with Benito Arias Montano, significant scholar in Hebrew language. His human profile explains the contradictions in which the edition of the Biblia Regia was involved. Montano was defeated when he tried to widen the narrowness of some traditional minds that still

³⁴ Cf. E. FERNÁNDEZ TEJERO, «Cipriano de la Huerga, Luis de León y Benito Arias Montano: Tres hombres, tres talentos», in *Anatomía del Humanismo: Benito Arias Montano 1598-1998*, ed. L. GÓMEZ CANSECO (Huelva 1998) pp. 181-200.

³⁵ B. REKERS, *Benito Arias Montano (1527-1598)* (London – Leiden 1972) pp. 3 and 6. This period can be extended into 1572, when Montano experienced a deep political disappointment with the activities of the Duke of Alba in Flanders.

did not accept the philological principles of the Complutensians, and also when in 1575 he went to Rome and attempted a more liberalized interpretation of the Tridentine decree about the Vulgate.

In spite of his failures he remained faithful to his conception of the Polyglot, and unified the efforts of the Antwerpian project, inspired by Andreas Masius and coordinated by Plantin in 1565. Guy and Nicolas Lefèvre de la Boderie and Raphelengius, Plantin's son-in-law, disciples of the Parisian orientalist Guillaume Postel, collaborated in the enterprise, and when Montano arrived in 1568 they had the Syriac text of the New Testament already supervised by Postel. Plantin had obtained the Hebrew types from his friend Bomberg, who was then established in Cologne.

Although some authors ³⁶ disregard the Spanish contribution to this Polyglot, we must consider the reality as it was: from Spain came, on the one hand, the previous works of the Complutensians –in the Aramean Targum, for example– ³⁷, and the Polyglot itself with years of efforts; on the other hand, Montano's own work on the Hebrew and the Latin Old and New Testament, plus the supervision of the whole, and the redaction of the treatises that constituted the volume of *Apparatus* full of critical and philological remarks. In addition, Philip II gave the royal support to commence the enterprise. Other collaborators assumed significant roles; these were the reports of the Spanish counsellors Pedro Serrano, Luis de Estrada and Ambrosio de Morales, who advised Montano of the dangers of some not very orthodox phrases and passages, on which León de Castro based his invectives; whatever the case Montano did not follow their words of warning.

The Louvain censors, Harleminus, Hunnaeus and Reyneri Goudanus, having been good advisors and collaborators at work, were also strong defenders in Montano's fight for the Papal approval ³⁸. In September 1572 Pope Gregory XIII signed a *Motu proprio* with the ecclesiastical acceptance. However, the attacks did not stop and León de Castro submitted the Vulgate question to the *Congregatio Concilii* who pronounced against Montano. Finally the Pope, willing to maintain a good relationship with Spain, asked the Inquisition for a

³⁶ REKERS, *Benito Arias Montano*, p. 48 and p. 54 note 1.

³⁷ REVILLA RICO, *La Políglota de Alcalá*, p. 7 note 2.

³⁸ REKERS, *Benito Arias Montano*, pp. 55-57.

clear settlement. It was the Jesuit Luis de Mariana who reported a rather impartial evaluation of the Polyglot, concluding that nothing in it was against the doctrinal principles. But Mariana's severe judgement, disliking the frequent references to Jewish commentaries in the treatises, or the careless haste reflected on numerous errors –in his opinion– deeply hurt Montano's self dignity. Finally, the *Apparatus* and some of the works of Montano were placed in the *Index* of 1607, which is an expressive sign of who won the struggle between biblicists and theologians³⁹.

The Biblia Regia compared with the Complutensian introduced various innovations:

- The Hebrew text was revised and modified with the Rabbinic Bible of Jacob ben Ḥayyîm. The spirit that inspired the subsequent modifications is plausible, but it did not bring philological improvements⁴⁰. The text was printed with accents.

- The *Vulgata* also was the Latin text of this Polyglot. The version of Santes Pagnino was printed instead of the Vulgate in the sample that Plantin sent to Philip II, who immediately ordered Montano to cancel this decision⁴¹. He argued in favour of the authority of the Vulgate in the universal Church as the most important of all the versions, and asked him to tell Plantin that this text should keep the same place as in the Complutensian edition, i. e. between the original Hebrew and the Septuagint. Santes Pagnino's version was printed in the *Apparatus* volume with corrections made by Arias Montano in order to approach the original Hebrew.

- In the New Testament the Syriac version (the *Peshitta*) was included, with its Latin translation by Guy Lefèvre de la Boderie. The Old Testament references were added on the margins of the Vulgate.

³⁹ Cf. N. FERNÁNDEZ MARCOS, «Filología bíblica y humanismo: las controversias del siglo XVI español en torno a la Biblia», *Cuadernos de pensamiento* 12 (1988) pp. 93-110.

⁴⁰ F. PÉREZ CASTRO and L. VOET, *La Biblia Políglota de Amberes* (Madrid 1973) p. 20.

⁴¹ Letter of 25 March 1568; REKERS, *Benito Arias Montano*, pp. 141-142.

– The Aramaic Targum was printed also in Prophets and Writings, using the Complutensian unpublished material.

– The treatises on philological Biblical matters were published in the *Apparatus* volume, most of them written by Arias Montano. Of special interest is *De arcano sermone*, a hundred and twenty-two pages divided into ninety-eight items; this was supposed to be a great obstacle for the Papal approval of the Polyglot. Montano explains in it the secret meanings of Hebrew words with cabalistic trends and Rabbinic methods ⁴².

In my opinion, the aim of the Royal Polyglot was also didactic, following and improving the methods of the Complutensian. However, some scholars argue in favour of the liturgical purpose of this edition for economic reasons ⁴³; they are based on the assumption that, if the Bible would have been printed to be used in liturgy, the deficit generated in Plantin's accounts would have been easily overcome ⁴⁴. Against this argumentation we have the evidence of the Introductions and the treatises collected in the volume of *Apparatus*, showing that the work was intended to illustrate all those who searched the right knowledge of the Sacred Scriptures. The style and the intention of two small treatises, *...de varia in Hebraicis libris lectione, ac de Mazzoreth ratione atque usu*, and *...de Psalterii Anglicani exemplari animadversio* ⁴⁵ may provide an example of how far Montano was from the liturgical use of his Bible and how interested he was in propagating the correct comprehension of the words and the history of the text.

⁴² Cf. N. FERNÁNDEZ MARCOS, «El tratado *De arcano sermone* de Arias Montano», in *Biblia y Humanismo. Textos, talantes y controversias del siglo XVI español*, eds. N. FERNÁNDEZ MARCOS and E. FERNÁNDEZ TEJERO (Madrid 1997) pp. 177-184.

⁴³ Cf. G. MOROCHO GAYO, «Felipe II: las ediciones litúrgicas y la *Biblia Real*», *La Ciudad de Dios* 211 (1998) pp. 813-882.

⁴⁴ Plantin took advantage from the Bible by many different means (cf. L. VOET, «La Bible Polyglotte d'Anvers et Benedictus Arias Montanus. L'histoire de la plus grande entreprise scripturaire et typographique du XVI^e siècle», in F. PÉREZ CASTRO and L. VOET, *La Biblia Políglota de Amberes* (Madrid 1973), pp. 51-53/70-74).

⁴⁵ Both translated into Spanish by Emilia Fernández TEJERO, «Dos tratados de Benito Arias Montano»; cf. also her commentaries «Benedicti Ariae Montani... *De Mazzoreth ratione atque usu*», and «Benedicti Ariae Montani... *De Psalterii Anglicani exemplari animadversio*»; all three articles in *Biblia y Humanismo*, pp. 169-176, 155-160, and 161-167.

In the following century the Biblia Regia was still the object of controversy ⁴⁶, but soon after it was relegated to a minor position and considered, roughly, as the cultural work of Philip II, or simply as a typographic monument. In reality it deserves a higher place in the history of Biblical humanism ⁴⁷.

There were four great Polyglots, and all of them were published in modern times ⁴⁸. Spain was the pioneer and merits the honour of having edited the first two: the Complutensian (1514-1517) and the Biblia Regia (1569-1572). They were the basis for the other two, one published in Paris (1629-1645/1655) in nine volumes, a great and expensive project, coordinated by Guy Michel Le Jay, that did not enjoy a satisfactory reward, perhaps because of the difficulties in using it ⁴⁹, and soon was supplanted by the fourth Polyglot, published in London (1654-1657) by Brian Walton in six volumes, a beautiful printing with a positive influence on all times ⁵⁰.

The progressive improvements in quality and quantity of these later Polyglots did not degrade the value of the first two, which have regained the critical significance of the versions in reference to the original, and have opened the way to modern philology.

⁴⁶ Cf. E. FERNÁNDEZ TEJERO and N. FERNÁNDEZ MARCOS, «La polémica en torno a la Biblia Regia de Arias Montano», in *Biblia y Humanismo*, pp. 229-237.

⁴⁷ Cf. N. FERNÁNDEZ MARCOS, «La Biblia Regia de Arias Montano: ¿Biblia de la concordia o Biblia de la discordia?», in *El Humanismo extremeño. II Jornadas. Fregenal de la Sierra*, 1997 (Trujillo 1998) pp. 89-103.

⁴⁸ Other secondary and partial Polyglots were also printed in the 16th century. The *Psalter of Giustiniani*, published in Genoa, 1516, in Hebrew, Latin, Greek, Arabic and Aramaic, with notes. The *Psalter of Polken*, published in Cologne in 1518, in Hebrew, Greek, Latin and Ethiopic (called Chaldaic); this version was reproduced in Walton's Polyglot. Two *Pentateuch* published in Constantinople in 1546 and 1547; the first one presents the Hebrew text with the *Targum*, and the Persian and Arabic in Hebrew characters with a Rabbinic commentary; in the second one the two versions are replaced by a neo-Greek and a Spanish versions, also in Hebrew characters. Several Bibles, as the one published in Heidelberg in 1587, reproduce the texts of some part of the main Polyglots. A peculiar case was Elijah Hutter, a printer in Nuremberg, who published several imperfect Polyglots, some of them in twelve languages, at the end of the century.

⁴⁹ In order to have a simultaneous look at all the texts it is necessary to handle two volumes at a time.

⁵⁰ Like the Paris Polyglot, it included at least five old versions: the Old Testament in Hebrew, Latin, Greek, Aramean, Syriac, and Arabic, plus Samaritan Hebrew in the Pentateuch, each one with its Latin translation; the New Testament in Greek, Latin, Syriac, Arabic, Persian and Ethiopic, also with Latin translation.

RESUMEN

Dentro de la historia del texto bíblico, las Biblias Políglotas españolas del siglo XVI son obras monumentales que no merecen quedar en el olvido. En este artículo se ponen de relieve los aspectos históricos y filológicos que mejor transmiten su significación en el mundo renacentista y su trascendencia indudable para la filología bíblica. El tesón y la generosidad del Cardenal Cisneros primero y la sabiduría de Benito Arias Montano después hicieron posible que estas dos Biblias Políglotas españolas, Complutense y Regia, se llegaran a publicar. Constituyen el punto de partida de la moderna crítica textual bíblica, cuyos principios mantienen vivo aquel espíritu inicial que conduce a un mayor conocimiento del texto.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Texto bíblico, Biblias Políglotas, Renacimiento español, Cardenal Cisneros, Arias Montano, siglo XVI.

SUMMARY

Within the history of the Biblical text, the 16th century Spanish Polyglot Bibles are monumental productions that do not deserve to fall into oblivion. This article points out the historical and philological aspects that better reveal their significance in the world of the Renaissance and their unquestionable transcendence in Biblical philology. Cardinal Cisneros' tenacity and generosity first, and then Benito Arias Montano's knowledge made possible the edition of these two Spanish Polyglot Bibles, the Complutensian and the Royal. They constitute the point of departure of modern Biblical textual criticism, whose principles keep alive that initial spirit that leads to a wider acquaintance with the text.

KEYWORDS: Biblical text, Polyglot Bibles, Spanish Renaissance, Cardinal Cisneros, Arias Montano, 16th Century.