

Textual Criticism of the Bible in the Spanish Renaissance

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1. Studies in textual criticism have developed considerably over the last few centuries. At the present time, the results, the number of documents, and the studies which exist have meant that the criteria for their development have undergone many changes. Spain, indeed, is one of the countries with a large group of researchers who are dedicated to biblical textual criticism in all the original languages, principally, Hebrew, Greek, Latin, and Aramaic. It should also be remembered, however, that this is part of a long tradition of biblical studies in Spain which dates from the XVI century. There were many scholars already dedicated to the study of the Bible before this period, but their approach was different: I am referring to the large number of Jewish biblical commentators who compiled their studies in important collections of manuscripts, people such as Abraham Ibn Ezra, Qimhi, Maimonides, and Abrabanel. Their work was of prime importance for the development of textual criticism prior to the XVI century. This century was Spain's age of glory in textual study but was followed by decades of relative obscurity until well into the XX century.

2. The foundation of the University of Alcalá dates back to the end of the XV century, when Pope Alexander VI issued a bull for the founding of a college for students. This was a positive response to the request from the Archbishop of Toledo, Francisco Jiménez de Cisneros, for the foundation of a university which would teach theology, canon law, the arts, and philosophy. Cisneros wanted, in this way, to set up a centre where the clergy would receive the necessary education in the Holy Scriptures, which would then be passed on to the faithful. Salamanca and Valladolid were taken as models, and work began on 15 March 1500. Although from an architectural point of view the structure was considered to be reasonably simple, work was not completed until 1508. However, this original building was replaced, in 1543, by another with a plateresque façade which remains today.

3. While the project initially included eighteen minor colleges, Cisneros was only to see seven. He also worked towards the creation of an area around the central building which would be set aside for the everyday life of the students, an area we would probably call today the "university zone", including a hospital and printing rooms. Initially, these presses had little to compare to the large presses of Europe as far as quality and importance were concerned. However, they were quickly to gain in prominence with the printing of the Complutensian Polyglot Bible (CPB).

4. Rather than the jurists and specialists in rhetoric who made up most of the universities of the age, the University of Alcalá was made up principally of theologians and exegetes. Publishing enterprises took on a particular importance with the publication of the Polyglot but also of missals, breviaries, and all other types of liturgical books. It is obvious from all these publications that the principal aim was to make the university a centre for the training of future clergy, teachers, and leaders. No effort was lost in making Christianity the solid base on which future generations should be brought up. During the XVI century, the educational reforms that took place at Alcalá were the most important in all of Spain, and the Erasmian movement played a special role in their development.

5. The College of San Ildefonso was built in the most important central position in the newly created university. Founded in 1519, there were 33 normal college students together with a number of other categories (ecclesiastical beneficiaries, associates, etc.).¹ The students of San Ildefonso became the élite of all the colleges in Alcalá, given the strict selection process they had to go through in order to be accepted. The college also had strict rules, obligatory for all, and which were laid down in a very exact, constitutional framework. Among the chairs that were established in the college some had already been filled: those of Latin, Greek, and the biblical languages (Hebrew and Chaldean or Aramaic).

6. Cisneros died on 8 November 1517 leaving behind him another undertaking which was well under way: the famous *Trilingüe* College founded in 1528. It is within this college that biblical studies were to take on greater importance. At its beginnings, there were twelve students in Latin, about the same number in Greek, and six in Hebrew, all on three year courses. Some writers believe that the college owed its creation to the commitment to the publication of the CPB; a perfectly plausible view. Until that time, nobody had really thought of the need to have a place where scholars of the Bible could be correctly trained in accordance with the criteria set out by Cisneros and his collaborators for the Polyglot edition. This was a way of establishing textual criticism as a subject of study in the three principal biblical languages. Appropriately, the college is dedicated to Saint Jerome.

7. One of the questions that is of particular interest to us is the importance that Cisneros gave to the original languages. He believed that the knowledge of the original languages was of prime importance to the interpretation of the scriptures and surrounded himself with experts in those languages, thus putting philology on a prominent footing. In the words of Álvarez Turienzo, “Alcalá was the home to men with a humanistic orientation ... a refuge for those [followers] of Erasmus” (Álvarez Turienzo, 1991, 2-33); quite different was Salamanca, where the scholastic theologians congregated. However, although it may seem that the initial idea of Cisneros had some resemblance to the ideas of Erasmus regarding publication of the Bible, we must not forget that there were several details which separated them. Thus, the CPB was finally published with the Latin Vulgate text with no new Latin translation of the OT. To ensure the success of his venture, Cisneros made sure he had the best; he sent emissaries to seek out the best specialists in Europe: Antonio de la Fuente travelled to Paris, Louvain, and Bruges in search of specialists who could serve the needs of the University of Alcalá. Not surprisingly, he had access to a substantial sum of money, and no expense was spared when it came to accumulating a large number of manuscripts in all the original languages of the Bible. Moreover, knowing full well of the prestige of Erasmus as a biblical scholar, Cisneros invited him to participate in the project. Erasmus, however, refused the offer with the famous phrase *non placet Hispania*. This was most probably due, according to his biographer Marcel Bataillon, to the very anti-Semitic nature of Erasmus (Bataillon, 1966, 77-78). But some time later, in 1517, it would seem that he regretted not having taken part in the project, saying that it would have been better to go to Spain than to Germany (Bataillon, 1966, 79). Thus, in this enormous task, Cisneros ensured that he had the best experts possible with him.

8. The specialists in languages constituted a special group within the university. Those chosen for the faculty were humanists who were able to comprehend the biblical texts in their original languages, along the lines of the decree of the Council of Vienna in 1311, although this Council was more directed towards missionary ends. Accordingly, it was decided that at Alcalá there

¹ For a description of the setting up of the college, see Alvar Ezquerra 1996: 27-40 and Garcia Oro: 1992.

would first be a chair of Greek, and later chairs of Hebrew, Arabic, and Syriac were added.² Apart from the specialists in Latin or Greek, our special interest lies in the experts in the Hebrew language. Cisneros had in his service the converts Alfonso de Zamora, Alfonso de Alcalá, and Pablo Coronel, all dedicated to the Hebrew and Aramaic parts of scripture. The texts tell us that:

San Ildefonso looked after the needs of those who were of particular interest to Cisneros and who worked in the Academy, such as doctor Tarragona, Master Nebrija, and Alonso de Zamora, professor of Hebrew ... the same goes for Masters Almarez and Pablo Coronel, but on a more temporary basis. At times, Master Zamora and especially the men chosen by Cisneros to work on the Polyglot were provided with lodgings according to their standing in Santiago Street [García Oro, 1992, 216].

The fact that Coronel, Alcalá, and Zamora were converts has already been noted above. This fact brings with it two fundamental attributes: a knowledge of Jewish culture and the Bible, and a knowledge of Christian culture. We know they were all educated in the Jewish faith, which has implications for the study of the Talmud, the Bible, and the Jewish sources. Their upbringing gave them a particularly useful background when it came to interpreting the texts. Moreover, Alfonso de Zamora had a special predilection for studies in the Cabbala, which gave him an even wider vision of Jewish thought. Pablo Coronel, from Segovia, had been a collaborator of Cisneros since 1502, from the very beginning of his ventures. He was the author of a Hebrew glossary of the OT and the paraphrase of Syriac texts, as well as the writer of the Hebrew text of the OT and the Targum of the first volume of the Bible in the CPB. Alfonso de Alcalá and Alfonso de Zamora both collaborated with him; the latter is of particular interest for the excellent Hebrew education he received in his home town of Zamora. He held the first chair of Hebrew in the University of Alcalá, appointed July 1512, and he was also the author of numerous texts.³ Both Coronel and Alfonso de Zamora, as we shall see a little further on, were important contributors to the collection of manuscripts which were used for the Polyglot edition. Alfonso de Zamora, more especially, always left his mark on the manuscripts, even when he was a copyist. Many of his works make up the collections in our libraries.

9. This complexity of scholars, students, and masters produced a parallel complexity in Alcalá itself, centred around books and everything related to them. Little by little the city filled up with manuscripts, libraries, printing presses, and copyists, given that in this initial period the new art of printing was to live side by side with the copying of manuscripts, the method chosen for the incorporation of new acquisitions. New spaces appeared to house them, the Calle de los Libreros (Booksellers Street), that of Los Escritores (Writers Street), and the Calle Tinte (Ink Street), where the small related businesses were to be found. All this brought about significant changes in the urban outline of Alcalá. Cisneros started the library by ordering books both in Spain and the rest of Europe. It should, however, be noted that San Ildefonso had its own. Just as the teachers of languages were sought throughout the north of Europe, the model of the libraries in these countries, notably that of Paris, had a strong influence on the design and form of the libraries in Alcalá. Thus, the works of Judoco Clitchove, librarian in the Sorbonne at the beginning of the XVI century, have their place in San Ildefonso. It must be taken into account that in this first stage the library was created *de novo* with a large one-off investment over a short space of time, and this meant that it was difficult to cover a wide range in all the subjects. Not

² With reference to the Language Chairs in the University of Alcalá, see Bataillon 1966: 18ff.

³ About Alfonso de Zamora's studies and life see Pérez Castro 1950 XXXIIss and Revilla Rico 1917: 17-18 and 21-22.

until the second half of the XVI century shall we see any more acquisitions of note as were made in this founding period. There is little information, and indeed very imprecise information, about the first Hebrew manuscripts in this library. Although it has been the subject of much research, it is not possible to say more than that which appears in the inventories such as the Catalogue which was drawn up in 1565 and which appears in the National Historical Archive (bk. 920 F). In this list⁴ there are grammatical works such as D. Qimhi, *Sefer ha-Šorašim* and *Sefer Miklol*, as well as commentaries by the same author of other biblical books, Hebrew paraphrases with a Latin version, and a few other biblical codices either in Hebrew or in Latin. In our catalogue, manuscripts 58, 59 and 104 correspond to two *Sefer ha-Šorašim* of David Qimhi, both with notes and additions by Alfonso de Zamora, as well as the manuscripts 53, 54, 55, 57 and 103, which are five copies of the *Sefer Miklol* of David Qimhi and which were occasionally supplemented and annotated also by Alfonso de Zamora; the last one includes a Latin translation written between the lines. Numbers 60 and 61 correspond to the *Sefer ha-Šorašim*, but there are no signs that they had been used by Alfonso de Zamora.

10. As for the Bibles, Numbers 1 and 2 of our catalogue were also used by Alfonso de Zamora. Both retain his chapter headings, biblical books, etc., in his characteristic red ink. N° 2 includes a colophon in his hand in which he laments his physical condition, his old age and even his very existence.⁵ Also mss 21, 22 and 88, a Targum of the Latter Prophets, a Targum of the Writings and the Former Prophets, and a Ruth in Aramaic with a Latin translation, are in the hand of Alfonso de Zamora, as can be seen in the colophon. His way of writing marginal notes in the exterior margin of the manuscript is curious: showing the Hebrew root and text reference in minute Latin letters with the same form as in the Complutensian Polyglot. Our information on where these manuscripts came from is also vague. However, given that all the biblical Hebrew manuscripts in Alfonso de Zamora's collection are of the Sephardic type and that several are from Toledo, we doubt that it was necessary to travel far to obtain a good number of them. Moreover, the origins of Alfonso de Zamora himself, as well as his declarations concerning the quality of manuscripts in some Jewish communities in Spain, leads us to believe that he found more than one among his fellows. The manuscripts which have passed through his hands are easily recognizable: they all contain annotations, usually in red ink, marking the chapters and the names of the biblical books. Interlinear translations are inserted, also in red, and colophons are added in the middle or at the end of the manuscript indicating the date of the copy when he had done it himself. In short, he leaves many traces of his passage through them.

11. All this data is of great use to us, helping us to understand his point of view, what questions were important to him and which he thought were worth highlighting. On many occasions, he includes marginal annotations on the translation of Hebrew roots or others on grammatical matters such as verb or nominal forms. Some manuscripts were copied by him alone, such as 57; he mentions in a note that the manuscript was copied by him for Alfonso López de Zúñiga, commissioned by Cisneros. It is at present kept in the library of El Escorial, as it became part of the collection of Arias Montano. There is also the above-mentioned 21, 22 and 88 which are today in the History Library of the Complutense University of Madrid for the first two parts while the third is to be found in the National Library. Alfonso de Zamora also copied the Hebrew part of n° 103 in its entirety for Fray Juan de Azcona, as is testified in his colophon. All the codices are kept in leather or parchment bindings, and nearly all are stamped with the shield of Cisneros. They are a type of XVI century binding particular to the University of Alcalá and the

⁴ A list which is drawn up in detail in Garcia Oro 1992: 360, n. 9.

⁵ See the translation of this colophon in Ortega Monasterio 1978: XXII.

workshop of the Cardinal. The manuscripts remained in the University for several centuries unknown to the well-known writers of studies on Hebrew collections. There is no mention of them in the catalogues of De Rossi, Kennicott nor any others in the centuries to follow. However, several must have gone to the collection of Arias Montano during the XVI century. There are, in fact, several manuscripts in El Escorial which, having passed through the hands of Zamora, passed on to Montano's collection and were probably used for the compilation of the Antwerp Bible or the *Biblia Regia*. Indeed, in his prologue, Arias Montano states that he used the text of the Complutensian as well as other sources and manuscripts.⁶ It was not only in Antwerp that it was used. The Hebrew text of the CPB was an important influence on the biblical editions published in the following two centuries, especially the Heidelberg Polyglot (1586) and those of Hamburg (1596) and Paris (1645).

12. Printing was to play a primordial role in the publishing of the Complutensian Polyglot. Several printers had set up presses in Alcalá, but that of most renown was certainly the press of Arnao Guillén de Brocar.⁷ This famous printer had been summoned to Alcalá with the specific purpose of setting up his workshop to print the Polyglot, a task which was to bring him fame and keep him occupied until 1517. He had worked previously in Germany and also in Spain, in Pamplona and Logroño. The typefaces he created for the task in question had so much success that they were used by other printers such as Plantino for the *Biblia Regia*, but he had also to find Greek typefaces. He started work in Alcalá in February 1511 with a treatise of El Tostado, followed by a Spanish translation of the life of St. Catalina of Sienna by Raimundo de Capua. Just over 600 copies of the Polyglot were printed on paper and a few more on vellum. It is regrettable that nearly all of them have been lost. Already in 1519 Felipe II was complaining in a letter to Arias Montano that, "... there were so few books of the Polyglot of Alcalá that money could not buy them..."⁸ Today, there are just three in vellum, of which one remains in the Library of the Complutense University of Madrid. The others are incomplete, with one or more volumes missing. Apart from the Polyglot, Brocar was responsible for all the prestigious publications that came out of Alcalá and was in direct competition with other well-known printers such as Varela in Salamanca. He would later be succeeded by his son Juan, but his son-in-law, Miguel de Eguía would play a more important role. Brocar always left his mark on his work, stating where it originated and signing himself off as "the honourable Arnao Guillén de Brocar ... respectable expert in the art of printing" or "the honourable and highly industrious authority in the art of printing, A.G. de Brocar, citizen of Logroño" (García Oro 1992: 390). But it is in his edition of the Bible that he really praised himself, writing a new inscription once having printed the New Testament. After praising the patronage of Cisneros for the work, he writes: "... with all the diligence and skill of the most honourable gentleman Arnao Guillén de Brocar, master in the art of printing. In the year of our Lord one thousand five hundred and fourteen, on the tenth day of the month of January."⁹ The four volumes of the Old Testament followed, and the printing finished on 10 July 1517. The solemn presentation of the work to Cisneros by the son of Brocar, Juan, is a well recorded event. The work of the Polyglot is made up of six volumes: the Old Testament occupies the first four, the fifth is dedicated to the New

⁶ A complete description of the manuscripts used for the composition of the CPB appears in Revilla Rico 1917: 83-89.

⁷ For more about this printer, see Norton 1966: 33-48.

⁸ "Instrucción al Doctor Arias Montano para entender en la impresión de la Biblia que se había de hacer en Anvers" in *Memorias de la RAH*, Madrid 1832, VII: 140. Original translation.

⁹ CPB, see page in volumes 5 or 6 and 4. Also, García Oro 1992: 392. The colophon ends with verses in Latin and Greek.

Testament and the sixth comprises a Hebrew-Latin dictionary, an explanation of Hebrew proper names, a Latin index and a Hebrew Grammar. They are not all presented in the same way: the first, given over to the Pentateuch, shows six different texts on each page, and the number decreases as we go further on, until we reach the fourth volume which has just two columns.

13. The task of textual criticism which this work supposes is enormous. The prologue explains that the texts have been checked against the most ancient available. When the text is considered to contain some defect it is corrected according to the most reliable manuscripts. There are many explanatory notes in the margins, including both grammatical and lexical, as well as a treatise in the final volume. However, and despite the importance of the Hebrew text of the Bible, for the first time in a Christian edition, the Jewish conception of the biblical text and the text itself are affected by the Christian conception of the work. Ginsburg lists all these occurrences in detail (Ginsburg 1966: 912ff): among others there is the foliation from left to right following the norm in western texts and the grouping of the biblical books according to the Vulgate. But the most noticeable, from a grammatical point of view, are those which affect the punctuation of the Hebrew text. The complicated accents of the Hebrew are eliminated, except the *sof pasuq*, and are substituted by a mark on the tonic syllable. The *atnah* still appears but is used incorrectly, since it is not written in the appropriate place in the Hebrew text but is used in the place of a comma. The vocalisation is also simplified; the median vowels are eliminated, along with the *rafeh*, the *maqef* and the *dagesh* in many cases; and the *patah* is changed for the *qames* and the *seré* for the *segol*. This is, indeed, all explained in the prologue of the Complutensian edition. But, for these reasons, the resulting Hebrew text is no longer valid from the moment it fails to reflect the Masoretic text. This means that when it came to verifying the original manuscripts, only the readings and not the punctuations were taken into account.

14. Nevertheless, given the context in which the Polyglot was produced, it represents a great value for its time within the context of textual criticism. A proof of this is the high esteem in which it is held by certain modern biblical editors, such as Kittel.¹⁰ As I have already pointed out, this Polyglot was the starting point for other later polyglots. The work of textual criticism was not finished for the Spaniards. The work started by Cisneros was to find its continuity in Arias Montano. Some 50 years later, still in the XVI century but now during the reign of Felipe II and after having been charged by him to set up the library of El Escorial, Arias Montano undertakes the editing of the Antwerp Polyglot or Biblia Regia. With this task, he continues the studies of the Hebrew text of the Old Testament using original manuscripts, many of which came from the collection of Alfonso de Zamora.

15. Felipe II entrusted Montano with the charge and emphasised on many occasions the importance of the Hebrew text. In a letter sent to Montano in March 1570, he remarked: “Thus, trusting in your good will, we charge you to make your way to Antwerp to be present at the printing of the aforementioned Bible and oversee the work as outlined below.... Apart from the texts and translations of the Complutensian Polyglot, you will ensure that from the Pentateuch to the end of the Old Testament the Chaldaic text be followed and as it was printed in Rome and in Venice. You will also make sure that a Hebrew dictionary appears at the end of the Bible and that it be the best available, ... and, if it is feasible, three other dictionaries should be added, one Greek, another abbreviated Chaldaic and a third Syriac together with a way to read the Syriac writing.”¹¹ The new edition is made up of eight volumes, keeping the order of the biblical books

¹⁰ See the prologue to *Biblia Hebraica* 1905-1906: 91.

¹¹ Letter from Felipe II to Arias Montano of 25 March 1568, in Macías Rosendo, B. 1998, Original translation.

of the Vulgate. The first four make up the edition of the Old Testament, whose Hebrew text is the result of bringing together the text of the rabbinic Bibles of Venice and the text of the Complutensian Polyglot. For both the text of the Targum and the Latin text that accompany it, the translations used were those done for the Complutensian by Alfonso de Zamora and Pablo Coronel and revised by Arias Montano. The Greek text of the Septuagint is also included. The New Testament makes up the fifth volume with the Greek text, that of the Vulgate and the Syriac version with its translation in Latin. The work is completed with the so-called *Apparatus* by Arias Montano, in three volumes (volumes VI - VII of the larger work) and of his own making. In the VIth volume is the Greek New Testament with an interlinear Latin translation which mixes the text of the Vulgate with his own translation, the text of the Hebrew Old Testament together with the translation by Santes Pagnino and a short work by Arias Montano on certain characteristics of the Hebrew. Volume VII comprises several works: a Syriac grammar and vocabulary by Andreas Masius, a Syriac-Aramaic dictionary by Guy Le Fèvre de la Borderie and a Hebrew dictionary by Santes Pagnino. Finally, volume VIII contains different grammatical treatises by Arias Montano.

16. Montano's concern for a faithful rendering of the Hebrew text is ever-present, a concern that he passes on to his collaborators. An example, Guillermo D. Lindano explains in a very long letter to Juan Willens Harlemio the importance of not confusing the Hebrew characters with others.¹² The editing of the *Biblia Regia* was not an easy task. Arias Montano came up against a number of difficulties, be they at the economic level¹³ or in getting papal approval for his work. He even embarked on publishing projects such as the printing of breviaries and missals through which, both he and the king hoped to cover costs.¹⁴ On another level, the criticisms he received for having followed too closely the Rabbinic and Cabalistic teachings meant long delays for him.¹⁵ Arias Montano's contribution to textual criticism is enormous. More than simply transmitting the philological baggage of the CPB, he also brings to it the work of the new polyglot expressed through his own translations, his philological treatises, his dictionaries, glossaries and grammars, and finally, his studies of the manuscripts at his disposal, either those inherited from the authors of the CPB or those which he himself acquired for the library of El

¹² Ibid., 370-381.

¹³ There are letters from Arias Montano to Felipe II or to Zayas expressing the need for funds to continue with the work despite the not inconsiderable amounts already conceded by the king, for example, AGS, Estado 583, folio 20 B. Arias Montano to Zayas on 9 October 1570 or folio 19, B. Arias Montano to Felipe II on 9 May 1570.

¹⁴ AGS Estado 583, folio 20, in a letter from B. Arias Montano to Zayas on 9 October 1570, he says: "I trust my letter has arrived there in which I expressed how much gain for the service of his Majesty we could get from the breviaries. I repeat my affirmation that if his Majesty uses these he will make at least a third more by sending them to be printed here rather than there and the work will be good, without any marks like those that have come and come from the printers in Rome and Venice which are intolerable. I know about printing and how it is done over there and at what price. And the difficulty that exists to print in two colours, and I insist that there will be at least the half to gain by printing here. And I can give other ideas that will increase the desire to buy the breviaries.... The same goes for the missals which will come out of here with great advantages and will be much cheaper and his Majesty will make a large amount in escudos".

¹⁵ These problems are also found in the correspondence of AM. See AGS, Estado 583, folio 30, chapters of the letters of Doctor Arias Montano to Zayas on 13 December 1571 or folio 40, Arias Montano to Zayas on 18 April 1574.

Escorial. The system he followed in his labour is basically that of the exegesis of Erasmus, which gives maximum importance to grammatical meaning. He received strong criticism for this, in particular from León de Castro. In the *Praefatio* he already presents his views on the importance of the faithful transmission of the Hebrew text. He uses the Hebrew term *masora* and in his treatise insists on the importance of the Hebrew vocalisation and accentuation, and he gives particular relevance to the work of the masoretas in their endeavour to preserve the sacred texts of the Bible.¹⁶ He goes so far as to say in the *Praefatio* to the *Biblia Regia* (**3) that the Masora is an enriching treasure for the custody and the preservation of the Hebrew text. His task was duly completed by Masius, Postel and Plantino, but out of his work, whose original purpose was simply a new edition of the CPB,¹⁷ came a new Hebrew text, this time with all its vowels and accents, which, together with the new Latin and Aramaic translations, would give birth to a new Bible with new material. In the words of Pérez Castro, “this opened new horizons for biblical textual criticism; it was an important milestone in the long process which has led us step by step closer to the reality and problematic of the sacred texts” (Pérez Castro and Voet 1973: 20-21). The work on textual criticism which was undertaken in the Spain of the XVI century declined after these works. The biblical studies which followed were carried out by scholars who had little training as far as Judaism was concerned, and studies in textual criticism based on original texts were no longer the order of the day. We have to wait until the XX century for this subject to be taken up once again.

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¹⁶ About Arias Montano’s ideas, see Fernández Tejero 1997a: 170-173.

¹⁷ Postel, Masius and even Plantino just wanted to carry out a new edition of the Polyglot, without any changes or innovations. See Fernández Tejero 1997b: 156.

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