

The Ximenez Polyglot

FRANCES LUTTIKHUIZEN

Abstract

The Ximenez Polyglot Bible was part of a larger educational project—the University of Alcalá—implemented by Cardinal Cisneros at the turn of the sixteenth century in order to revive learning and encourage the study of the Scriptures. Following a brief biography of Cisneros, his reforms, and the social-religious context in which the Bible was produced, this article goes on to discuss the project itself, the manuscripts consulted, the printing, and the scholars involved. Cisneros’s focus on biblical studies at the University of Alcalá developed into an interest in Christian humanism and the writings of Erasmus, which would later bring forth fruit in the evangelical movements in Seville and Valladolid in the 1550s.

Introduction

We cannot fully understand the significance of the Ximenez Polyglot Bible if we do not first look into the complex personality of the man behind the project.¹ As a young man, Francisco Ximenez de Cisneros (1436–1517)—better remembered as Cardinal Cisneros

¹ Much has been published in Spanish regarding Cardinal Cisneros—also known as Ximenez de Cisneros—and his polyglot Bible, but little in English. One of the first biographical sketches in English was compiled by the book collector James P. R. Lyell, *Cardinal Ximenes: Statesman, Ecclesiastic, Soldier and Man of Letters, with an Account of the Complutensian Polyglot Bible* (London: Grafton, 1914; repr., Pensacola, FL: Vance Publications, 2001). Recent studies are those of Erika Rummel, *Ximenez de Cisneros: On the Threshold of Spain’s Golden Age* (Tempe,

—studied canon and civil law at the University of Salamanca. In 1459 he traveled to Rome to work as a consistorial advocate and through a colleague became acquainted with the Franciscan order of Friars Minor, or “observants.” On his return to Spain in 1465, he first occupied a chaplaincy at Sigüenza and was soon named vicar general of the bishopric by Cardinal Mendoza. In 1484 at the age of forty-eight, he decided to become an observant Franciscan friar. He first entered a monastery in Toledo and shortly afterwards transferred to the observant convent of La Salceda, where he lived in extreme austerity for the next ten years. Meanwhile, Cardinal Mendoza, now archbishop of Toledo, had not forgotten Cisneros, and in 1492 he recommended him to Queen Isabella as her confessor. When Cardinal Mendoza died three years later, Queen Isabella procured a papal bull nominating Cisneros to Mendoza’s vacant archbishopric.

I. Reforms

From his new influential position as archbishop of Toledo, Cisneros set about introducing reforms in the Franciscan order, which was at the time experiencing a bitter conflict between the “conventuals,” who had diverged considerably from the austere regulations of St. Francis, becoming feudal lords and indulging in worldly pleasures, and the strict “observants.” In 1497 Cisneros convoked a synod, in which he addressed the issue of religious education. One specific regulation required parish priests to catechize the children, that is, to teach them the doctrines of the church as they were found in the official *Doctrina Cristiana*. Another of his reforms required the monks to engage daily in one and a half hours of mental prayer.

To make this experience meaningful, Cisneros began commissioning Spanish translations of medieval mystical texts that would raise the cultural and spiritual level of both the clergy and the common people. He especially encouraged the reading of Jean Gerson’s *Contemptus mundi*. The books printed at the request of the cardinal constituted an introduction to contemplation and mystical life. They included translations into Spanish of St. Augustine, St. Bonaventure, John Climacus, Angela of Fuligno, Catherine of Sienna, Hugh of Balma, and others. Prior to this, Cisneros had also been instrumental in commissioning a translation into Spanish of *Vita Cristi*

AR: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 1999), and José Luis Gonzalo Sánchez-Molero et al., eds., *V Centenario de la Biblia Poliglota Complutense: La Universidad del Renacimiento: El Renacimiento de la Universidad* (The Fifth Centennial of the Complutensian Polyglot Bible: The University of the Renaissance: The Rebirth of the University) (Madrid: Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2014).

(*Life of Christ*) by the Carthusian monk Ludolph of Saxony, as well as a new translation of the *Epistles and Gospels for the Liturgical Year*.²

The cardinal's reforms came at a time when people were asking questions such as, How should God be worshiped? The enthusiasm for things spiritual created by his reforms also developed into deep spirituality among many sectors of society, especially those that gravitated around Diego Hurtado de Mendoza in Guadalajara, and it would find its greatest expression in the *alumbrado-deixado* movement in Escalona. These reforms required priests to reside in their parishes and to preach every Sunday. Many of them did not know Latin, hence, *Epistles and Gospels* gave them material for their sermons. Indeed, *Epistles and Gospels* was a sort of manual, in Spanish, of pastoral theology from which these priests, as well as devout laypersons who wanted to meditate on them, greatly benefited. The work enjoyed many reprints until it was put on the Index of Prohibited Books in 1559 as a result of the decree that banned the printing of the Scriptures in the vernacular.

Cisneros also encouraged the diffusion of the writings of his Italian contemporary Girolamo Savonarola even after the Florentine monk had been condemned and burned at the stake. Savonarola's commentary on Psalm 51—*Devotissima exposicion sobre el psalmo de Miserere Mei Deus*—was printed in Alcalá in 1511 by Arnao Guillen de Brocar, the same printer who would begin printing the polyglot Bible the following year.³ Cisneros never quoted Savonarola by name; nevertheless, their similarities do not cease to draw attention: austerity of life, desire to educate the clergy, desire to reform the church, and more. We could also draw a parallel between Savonarola's "Bonfire of the Vanities" and Cisneros's order to burn thousands of Arabic manuscripts in Granada.⁴ The period was clearly a turning point. Gonzalo Sanchez-Molero offers the following explanation for Cisneros's drastic behavior:

² *Epistles and Gospels* contained the passages of Scripture read in Latin in the churches each Sunday interspersed with commentaries and sermons by Hugo de Prato, Johann Herolt of Basel, Walafriad Strabo's "Glossa ordinaria," Anselm of Laon's "Glossa interlinearis," Nicholas of Lyra's "Postilla literalis," etc.

³ Savonarola's work was reprinted in Valladolid in 1512 and in Seville in 1513, 1514, and 1527. In the 1540s, Savonarola's works again became popular in Spain. They were printed in Antwerp in one volume: *Las Obras que se hallan romançadas del excelente doctor fray Hieronymo Savonarola de Ferrara* (Antwerp: Martin Nucio, 1558).

⁴ In 1499 Cisneros accompanied the monarchs to Granada. Discontented with the moderate missionary approach of the archbishop, Hernando de Talavera, Cisneros ordered the burning of all religious texts written in Arabic. This led to an open revolt, suppressed with the *moriscos*—Muslims—given a choice of exile or baptism.

If there was a collective sensation that Spain was being punished by God, how was this to be interpreted? And, above all, how were the consequences to be alleviated? Cisneros's severe intervention in Granada (1499–1500) has greatly surprised his biographers, but his concerns have to be understood in this context, that is, that men had to find a response to divine wrath. Coinciding with this, Cisneros began work on his two great projects: the University of Alcalá (1498) and the Polyglot Bible (1502). In our opinion the idealism and mysticism so prominent in the cardinal's mentality led him to think of the College of San Ildefonso and the publication of the Bible as tools to bring about Spain's social, religious and political renewal.⁵

The French historian Joseph Perez suggests that Cisneros found his inspiration in three basic sources: the Franciscan Friars Minor, Ramon Llull, and Girolamo Savonarola.⁶ I would go further and add a fourth source, namely, the Spanish mystic Francisco de Osuna. To the Franciscan observants Cisneros owed his efforts in favor of a religion not limited to the outer forms of worship but concerned with developing an authentic spirituality amidst the laity, often neglected by the clerical elite. To Llull he owed his missionary zeal, which culminated with his crusading project in North Africa in 1505 and 1509.⁷ To Savonarola he owed his determination to found an institution of higher learning that would prepare young men for the mission field. Both Llull and Savonarola considered the study of oriental languages of utmost importance to the preaching of the gospel and the conversion of the infidels. These men envisioned the project; Cisneros brought it to fruition. Indeed, Cisneros's best-known answer to the question of education was the creation of the University of Alcalá and the publication of the polyglot Bible. Cisneros's fourth source, Fray Francisco de Osuna, may have been one whom he admired more than one who inspired him. Osuna, who had received his preliminary education at a convent in Torrelaguna founded in 1507 by Cisneros, entered the University of Alcalá in 1517. Osuna was a "model observant" who practiced *recogimiento* (withdrawal) in the strictest tradition, and Cisneros must have seen in him the ultimate culmination of his aspirations: a young man instilled with mystic principles, trained in the humanities, and desirous to acquire theological instruction in his newly founded university.⁸

⁵ Gonzalo Sánchez-Molero, *V Centenario de la Biblia Poliglota Complutense*, 100.

⁶ Joseph Perez, *Cisneros, el cardenal de España* (Madrid: Taurus, 2014), 226–227.

⁷ A preliminary expedition, equipped at Cisneros's expense, captured Mers El Kébir, a port town in northwestern Algeria near Oran. Another expedition, accompanied by Cisneros in person, captured Oran in 1509.

⁸ Osuna would later become one of the foremost proponents of *recogimiento*, formulated maxims for meditation that he arranged alphabetically and published: *Tercer Abercedario* (1527), the *Primero* (1528), the *Segundo* (1530), etc. *Recogimiento* tenets spread rapidly and even influenced the *alumbrados-deixados*. However, whereas *recogimiento* functioned alongside

II. *The University of Alcalá*

Cisneros's project to create a center of higher learning had several recent precedents in Spain. When Cisneros became archbishop of Toledo in 1495, he saw this as the right moment to implement his own project. The project began with the College of San Ildefonso, the main college or *colegio mayor*. Next came a number of lesser colleges or *colegios menores*. The institution opened its doors on July 26, 1508, and by 1510 there were eighteen *colegios menores*. Two were devoted to grammar, where Latin and Greek were studied; another offered a two-year course in Aristotelian dialectics and philosophy; another offered a two-year course in physics and metaphysics. In 1514 the theological college was added, and in 1528, the Trilingual College was organized, to which thirty students were admitted: twelve studied Latin and rhetoric, twelve Greek, and six Hebrew.

From the beginning Alcalá was different from other institutions. Firstly, it had no faculty of civil law because Cisneros considered legal studies detrimental to the study of theology. Secondly, the university offered a three-fold approach to theology, with the teaching of Thomism, Scotism, and Nominalism centered on the texts of the German theologian Gabriel Biel. Thirdly, Alcalá emphasized the direct study of the Bible with the help of ancient languages and the study of patristic literature. Cisneros, like Gerson a century earlier, wished to banish scholastic subtleties from university studies and to put evangelical warmth into them, giving them a more spiritual and practical focus. His interest in biblical studies may have taken root during his time in Italy, where he could not have failed to notice the growing interest in Greek studies.

One of the great contributions of the Italian Renaissance was to encourage the study of oriental languages. Even before the massive arrival of Byzantine scholars in Italy, with their ancient Greek scrolls under their arms, fleeing the advance of the Turks after the fall of Constantinople in 1453, the Italian humanist philosopher Lorenzo Valla (1406–1457) was busying himself with philological issues. Valla's comparison of St. Jerome's Latin translation of the Bible with the Greek text of the New Testament laid the foundations of critical biblical scholarship.

Valla had defended the critical revision of the Bible in the University of Pavia. Some years later, Pedro de Osma (1430–1480) did the same in the

traditional Catholic practices and concerned itself with active seclusion in order to achieve union with God, *deixamiento* rejected these practices, as well as the Catholic concept of justification, and called for passive submission to God's will.

University of Salamanca. He found more than eighty divergences between the text of an ancient Vulgate Bible he found in the university library and the 1455 Mazarin Vulgate.⁹ Antonio de Nebrija, who had been one of Osma's students at Salamanca and who formed part of the original team of philologists working on the polyglot, tried to persuade Cisneros that the Latin text of the Vulgate should be revised, but Cisneros would not give in. He was willing to collate and correct the Greek, Hebrew or Aramaic texts, but he would make no changes in Jerome's Latin text. The tension between scholastic theologians and philologists was not new, but when humanists began applying philological methods to the sacred text, the debate became more intense, and what began as literary debates turned into turf wars.¹⁰ Cisneros's reluctance to revise the Vulgate has puzzled many historians. Gonzalo Sanchez-Molero explains Cisneros's position thus:

What Nebrija proposed was politically unacceptable. It must be remembered that one of the main aims of the College of San Ildefonso when it was founded was to facilitate the religious assimilation of Jewish converts and Moriscos. Admitting that the Latin version of the Bible, attributed to St. Jerome, was not correct would have involved too great a risk. Indeed, in connection with this issue, we may well ask whether the preparation of the Polyglot Bible was also an attempt to favor the assimilation of Jewish converts.¹¹

III. *The Ximenez Polyglot*

The founding of the University of Alcalá cannot be separated from Cisneros's other great project, namely, the publication—and financing¹²—of the first complete polyglot Bible, the *Biblia Sacra Polyglota*, known today as the Ximenez Polyglot¹³ or the Complutensian Polyglot.¹⁴ The two projects were

⁹ Pedro de Osma's findings were condemned by the Inquisition, and copies of his book—*De confessione*—were publicly burned after High Mass on June 15, 1479.

¹⁰ Erika Rummel, ed., *Biblical Humanism and Scholasticism in the Age of Erasmus* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 2–3. Also see Natalio Fernández Marcos, *Filología bíblica y humanismo* (Madrid: CSIC, 2012).

¹¹ Gonzalo Sánchez-Molero, *V Centenario de la Biblia Poliglota Complutense*, 114.

¹² According to Lyell, "Gomez [Alvaro Gomez de Castro], whose life of Ximenez is the chief authority for most of the existing information about his life, tells us that the Cardinal spent no less than 50,000 gold ducats upon the work. As an illustration of the lavish nature of the expenditure, he recounts how 4,000 ducats were paid for seven Hebrew manuscripts alone. ... How far these were used it is now impossible to say, and indeed one writer (Quintanilla) alleges that these particular manuscripts arrived too late to be employed" (Lyell, *Cardinal Ximenes*, 34, 38).

¹³ When in 1522 Christopher Columbus's son Hernando sent one of his assistants to Alcalá for a copy to add to his library, he called it the Cardinal's Bible. It was also called the Trilingual Bible of Alcalá or the Alcalá Bible in Six Volumes or the Bible in Four Languages.

¹⁴ "Complutensian" is from *Complutum*, the Latin name for Alcalá, which in turn was an

carried out simultaneously. Preliminary work on the Bible began in the summer of 1502 when Cisneros summoned Antonio de Nebrija, Diego Lopez de Zuñiga, Herman Nuñez de Guzman, Pablo Coronel, and Alonso, a physician from Alcalá, to Toledo to discuss his project. They were commissioned to collect as many ancient manuscripts—both Greek and Hebrew—as possible to be used as source material both for his polyglot Bible and for teaching material for the university. This may have taken some time; it seems that work on the Bible did not begin in earnest until 1508, the same year the university opened its doors. There is evidence that in 1503, and again in 1507 and 1509, Cisneros's secretary Jorge de Baracaldo was busy purchasing books and manuscripts—grammars, Greek and Hebrew glossaries, etc.—from book dealers in Salamanca, Medina del Campo, and Valladolid.¹⁵ Taking into consideration that these men had to divide up their time over the next decade as professors and editors, it is understandable that progress was slow. In the meantime, Cisneros himself also had serious matters of state to attend to. In 1504 Queen Isabella died, and he had to organize the state funerals. In 1506 the ruling prince, Philip the Handsome died suddenly and, in the light of the power vacuum left by the declared insanity of the new Queen Juana—and Ferdinand's absence—Cisneros became regent governor of Castile until Ferdinand's return the following year.¹⁶ Despite all these distractions, by 1508 Cisneros was back in Alcalá to open his new university and to reunite with the scholar-editors he had selected for his project and to discuss editing procedures.

The six large folio volumes of Cisneros's polyglot Bible came off the press gradually between January 10, 1514, and July 10, 1517. The first volume to be printed was volume five (New Testament), which appeared in January of 1514.¹⁷ A few months later, May of 1514, volume six (glossaries) came off the press. It took another three years for volumes one, two, three, and four (Old Testament) to appear, and still another several years before the work was put in circulation.

The delay had several causes. Once the sanction of Pope Leo X was obtained, on March 22, 1520, copies had to be sent off for the pope's examination, but the ship carrying the copies suffered shipwreck en route to Italy

Arabic word meaning fortification or citadel. "Alcalá de Henares" means "Alcalá on the Henares River."

¹⁵ Gonzalo Sánchez-Molero, *V Centenario de la Biblia Políglota Complutense*, 223. Also see Elisa Ruiz García, *Preparando la Biblia Políglota Complutense: los libros del saber* (Madrid: Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2013).

¹⁶ That year—1507—Cisneros was given the cardinal's hat.

¹⁷ Had this first volume (printed in January 1514) been put in circulation immediately, it would have pre-dated Erasmus's New Testament.

and the copies were lost. This meant that new copies had to be sent, which took time. The volumes for the pope finally entered the Vatican Library on December 5, 1521, and the Bible was officially put on the market early the following year.¹⁸ Moreover, the intense battles fought in that area of Castile during the *Comunero* uprising (1520–1521) put a halt to both commercial and academic activity, and this may also have delayed marketing plans.

The title page of the first volume contained the title and Cisneros's coat of arms, printed in red, set within a woodcut border composed of flower pots, flower baskets, and floral arabesques. Next came a prologue addressed to Pope Leo X by Cisneros, followed by a series of prefatory notes and St. Jerome's preface to the Pentateuch, all in Latin. On the verso of the last leaf of this preliminary matter was Leo X's bull sanctioning the printing of the work, followed by a short address to the reader by the Bishop of Avila, Francisco Ruiz, to whom Leo had addressed his bull.¹⁹ In the dedicatory to Pope Leo X, Cisneros expressed his purpose in publishing the work:

There are many reasons, Holy Father, that impel us to print the languages of the original text of Holy Scripture. These are the principal ones. Words have their own unique character, and no translation of them, however complete, can entirely express their full meaning. This is especially the case in that language through which the Lord himself spoke. The letter here of itself may be dead and like flesh, which profits nought ("for it is the spirit that gives life" [2 Cor. 3:6]) because Christ concealed by the form of the words remains enclosed within its womb. But there is no doubt that there is a rich fecundity so astonishing and an abundance of sacred mysteries so teeming that since it is ever full to overflowing "streams of living water shall flow out from His breast" [John 7:38]. And from this source those to whom it has been given "to behold the glory of the Lord with an unveiled face and thus be transformed into that very image" [2 Cor. 3:18] can continually draw the marvelous secrets of His divinity. Indeed there can be no language or combination of letters from which the most hidden meanings of heavenly wisdom do not emerge and burgeon forth, as it were. *Since, however, the most learned translator can present only a part of this, the full Scripture in translation inevitably remains up to the present time laden with a variety of sublime truths, which cannot be understood from any source other than the original language.*

Moreover, wherever there is diversity in the Latin manuscripts or the suspicion of a corrupted reading (we know how frequently this occurs because of the ignorance and negligence of copyists), it is necessary to go back to the original source of Scripture, as St. Jerome and St. Augustine and other ecclesiastical writers advise us to do, to examine the authenticity of the books of the Old Testament in the light of the correctness of the Hebrew text and of the New Testament in the light of the Greek copies. *And so that every student of Holy Scripture might have at hand the original texts themselves and be able to quench his thirst at the very fountainhead of the water that*

¹⁸ Of the six hundred sets printed, less than a hundred are known to have survived (Lyell, *Cardinal Ximenes*, 49–50).

¹⁹ The pope, who was informed that Cisneros had died, sent the bull to Cisneros's executor, Francisco Ruiz, the bishop of Avila.

flows unto life everlasting and not have to content himself with rivulets alone, we ordered the original languages of Holy Scripture with their translations adjoined to be printed and dedicated to your Holiness. And we first took care to print the New Testament in Greek and Latin together with a lexicon of all the Greek expressions that can help those reading that language. Thus we spared no effort on behalf of those who have not acquired a full knowledge of the Greek tongue. Then before we began the Old Testament we prepared a dictionary of the Hebrew and Chaldean words of the entire Old Instrument.²⁰ There not only the various meanings of each expression are given, but (we believe this will be most useful to students) the place in Scripture where each meaning occurs is cited.

We now send this entire work to your Holiness, for to whom should all our vigilant efforts be dedicated than to that Apostolic See to whom we owe everything? Or who with greater joy ought to accept and embrace the sacred books of the Christian religion than the sacred Vicar of Christ? May your Holiness receive, therefore, with a joyful heart this humble gift, which we offer unto the Lord so that the hitherto dormant study of Holy Scripture may now at last begin to revive.

We beseech your Blessedness most earnestly, however, that you examine these books that now prostrate themselves before you and pass the most severe judgment on them so that, if it seems they will be of use to the Christian commonwealth, they may receive permission from your Holiness to be published. We have held them back until now, waiting to consult that sacred oracle of the Apostolic Office. But let this suffice for your Blessedness. We turn now to instruct the reader about the make-work of this work.²¹

The Vulgate text between the Greek and Hebrew texts in the Old Testament had a special symbolic significance: the Christian version (the Vulgate) placed between the Synagogue (the Hebrew version) and the Orthodox Church (the Greek version) was allusive to the way as Jesus was placed between the two thieves.

The biblical content was divided up as follows. The Old Testament took up the first four tomes. Volume one contained the text of the Pentateuch arranged in three columns per page, one with the Masoretic Hebrew text, the other the Greek text of the Septuagint, with the official Latin Vulgate between the lines, and in the middle—in a column narrower than the others—the Latin text of the Vulgate. The lower section of the page was divided into two columns: the left containing the Aramaic translation of the Pentateuch known as the *Targum Onkelos*, the right containing the Latin translation of that text. Volumes two, three, and four contain the remainder of the Old Testament arranged in the same way: the Masoretic Hebrew text,

²⁰ Erasmus entitled the first edition of his New Testament in 1516 *Novum Instrumentum*. The term *instrumentum* means a written document stipulating a pact or covenant.

²¹ Translation by John C. Olin, italics mine. John C. Olin, *Catholic Reform: From Cardinal Ximenes to the Council of Trent, 1495–1563*, 4th ed. (New York: Fordham University Press, 1990), 62–64.

the Greek text of the Septuagint with the Latin translation between the lines, and the Latin Vulgate text in the middle.

Volume five contained the Greek and Latin texts of the New Testament printed in two columns: the Greek on the left and the Latin Vulgate on the right. The Book of Acts followed the Epistle to the Hebrews, a variation also found in the Codex Sinaiticus. Immediately before the Epistle to the Romans there were six leaves containing Greek prefaces to the Epistles. These were an insertion and were obviously printed later. They are missing in some copies, but their presence is frequently alluded to in sale descriptions in catalogues. The type used for these six leaves has the ordinary accents and breathings, which are lacking elsewhere, and this is another indication that they were printed at a later date than the rest of the New Testament.²²

Volume six contained a reverse vocabulary in which the Latin headword led to its Hebrew or Aramaic equivalent in the previous vocabulary. It also contained an index of translations (interpretations) of Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek names that appear in the Old and New Testaments, an index of proper names whose form had been corrupted in the text's transmission, and, finally, an elementary Hebrew grammar attributed to Alonso de Zamora.

IV. *The Scholar-Editors*

The men commissioned to edit the polyglot Bible were also professors at Cisneros's newly founded university. Paul Coronel, Alphonso de Zamora, and Alfonso, a *converso* (converted Jew) physician from Alcalá, were entrusted with the Hebrew and Aramaic dictionaries and the Hebrew grammar. After the polyglot Bible was completed, Alfonso de Zamora continued to teach at Alcalá for many years. He also compiled an interlinear translation of the Hebrew Bible, of which at least two manuscript copies survive.

Demetrius Ducas was a Greek scholar from Crete who had worked previously in Venice with the printer Aldo Manuzio. He arrived in Spain in 1508, invited by Cisneros.²³ Although Ducas did not initiate the study of Greek in the Iberian Peninsula, he had the honor of being the first professor of Greek at the University at Alcalá.²⁴ Ducas may have been slightly disappointed: in the postscript to his 1514 interlinear edition of Byzantine scholar Manuel Chrysoloras's grammar *Erotemata*, he states, "I was called to Spain by the Rev. Cardinal Cisneros to teach Greek, and finding such scarcity, or better

²² Lyell, *Cardinal Ximenes*, 36–37.

²³ Julian Martín Abad, *La imprenta en Alcalá de Henares* (Madrid: Arco Libros, 1991), 67.

²⁴ A chair of Greek studies had already been established at the University of Salamanca in 1495 by the Portuguese humanist Ayres Barbosa (1460–1540), who had studied at Florence.



From left: the title page for volume 1 of the Ximenez or Complutensian Polyglot; a sample interior page (Exodus 1:1–14).

said, total absence of books in Greek, I printed on my own behalf some grammars and poetics with the founts I had on hand, with no help from anyone, neither for the expenses nor the cumbersome job of correcting.” In 1519 he left Alcalá for Salamanca, and in 1526 he was back in Rome, where he published a new edition of the Greek Liturgy.²⁵ He was succeeded as professor of Greek at Alcalá by Herman Nuñez.

Nuñez—also called “el Comendador” or “el Pinciano,” a name taken from Pintia, the Latin name of Valladolid, his hometown—had earned his degree in 1490 from the Spanish College of San Clemente in Bologna. He returned to Spain in 1498 as tutor to the Lopez de Mendoza family in Granada, where he applied himself to the study of Hebrew and Arabic. Cisneros may have met him in Granada when he accompanied the Catholic monarchs to that city in 1499. In 1511 Nuñez competed against Alfonso de Zamora for the chair of Semitic languages at the University of Salamanca, but the post was declared void. This may have encouraged both scholars to move to Alcalá, where Nuñez was named professor of rhetoric and Alfonso

²⁵ Deno J. Geanakoplos, *Greek Scholars in Venice: Studies in the Dissemination of Greek Learning from Byzantium to Western Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962), 238.

de Zamora professor of Hebrew. When Ducas left Alcalá for Salamanca, Nuñez took his place as Greek professor, but only until 1521, when he also left for Salamanca.²⁶ Nuñez was succeeded by Francisco de Vergara, one of Erasmus's most committed followers in Spain.

Another scholar who collaborated in editing the Ximenez Polyglot was Diego Lopez de Zuñiga, known also by his Latin name, Jacobus Stunica. When Erasmus's New Testament reached Alcalá in 1516, Lopez de Zuñiga collated it carefully with the Complutensian text and found several errors. Cisneros discouraged him from publishing his findings and suggested he communicate them privately to Erasmus, but Zuñiga disagreed. As soon as Cisneros died, however, which was the following year, Zuñiga gave vent to his anger and published his criticisms in *Annotationes contra Erasmum Rotterodamum* (Annotations against Erasmus). Zuñiga, who had solid linguistic and theological training, was suspicious and averse to innovation, and he became involved in controversies in defense of the Vulgate tradition against both Lefèvre d'Étaples (Jacobum Fabrum Stapulen) and Erasmus that went on for years.²⁷ It appears that Zuñiga left Alcalá for Rome around 1520. Had he remained, he would have had to contend with the growing number of Erasmian enthusiasts who were gaining foothold in Alcalá.

V. The Manuscripts

In addition to distinguished scholars, Hebrew, Greek, and Latin manuscripts were also needed if the project was to succeed. There was no lack of Hebrew manuscripts and scholars in Spain. Until the expulsion of the Jews in 1492, the flourishing Jewish synagogues had jealously guarded valuable Hebrew codices. In this respect, the editors of the Ximenez Polyglot had access to the Alba Bible produced by Moses Arragel from Guadalajara in 1422–1433, the Lisbon Pentateuch of 1491, and an Old Testament Hebrew edition printed by Soncino at Naples in the same year.²⁸ Manuscripts in Greek for the New Testament were much harder to find. There was no Hellenist tradition in Spain, and one had to go to Italy to find manuscripts. Several codices were

²⁶ Many of the professors at Alcalá were actively involved in the Comunero Revolt in 1521, and when the comuneros were defeated, they found themselves *personae non gratae* at Alcalá.

²⁷ Patrick Preston and Allan K. Jenkins, *Biblical Scholarship and the Church: A Sixteenth-Century Crisis of Authority* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 59–65. Also see Guy Bedouelle, "Attacks on the Biblical Humanism of Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples," in *Biblical Humanism and Scholasticism in the Age of Erasmus*, ed. Erika Rummel (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 129.

²⁸ In 1488, a complete Hebrew Bible was printed at Soncino, in the duchy of Milan, by Yehoshúa Shlomó Soncino, the head of an Italian Ashkenazic family of Jewish printers. In 1492, smaller-size editions of the Torah were printed by Yehoshúa's nephew, Gershom Soncino.

purchased in Venice and others in Florence and Rhodes. The Cardinal also managed to have several codices kept in the Vatican library sent on loan with the permission of Cardinal Giovanni di Lorenzo de Medici, who a short time later would become Pope Leo X. Most of these Greek codices have been lost or have never been identified. It must also be remembered that Pablo Coronel, Alonso de Zamora, and Herman Nuñez had many books and old manuscripts in their own private libraries.²⁹

Cisneros speaks of “very ancient codices of both the Old and New Testament which Pope Leo had sent, and which had aided them very much in their work.” Domingo Malvadi’s recent research has identified most of the early manuscripts employed in editing the Ximenez Polyglot:

Pope Leon X authorized Abbot Alfonso Garcia de Alcala to loan several codices from the Vatican Library for use in the edition of the Polyglot Bible. These codices have been identified with the Vatican Greek codices Vat. Gr. 330 and Vat. Gr. 346, both from the 13th century, containing the entire Old Testament with the exception of the Psalms and the Prophets. The volumes were returned in 1519. The Venetian Senate also sent a manuscript containing part of the Old Testament produced from one of the codices donated by Cardinal Besarión to the Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana. Gregorio de Andrés identified the Venetian manuscript with the codex V and the copy that remained in Alcala with BH MSS 2216. Another of these codices is the Greek manuscript, which has not survived, known as the Rhodes codex, as it was produced on the island of Rhodes, and which contained the canonical epistles. Its existence is documented primarily because it is mentioned by one of the collaborators in the Polyglot Bible, Diego Lopez de Zuñiga, in his controversy with Erasmus. Gregorio de Andrés also matched it with one of Zuñiga’s manuscripts that appeared together with another two Greek New Testament manuscripts in the inventory of the library at College of San Ildefonso, dated 1512 (AHN. Universidades, Libro 1090 F, f. 33), specifically with the one that appeared under the title “Actus Apostolorum et canonicae epistolae.” These three manuscripts together with the copy of the Old Testament sent by the Senate of Venice also appear in the School inventory dated 1523 (AHN. Universidades, Libro 1091 F, f. 12). Lastly, the manuscript BH MSS 23 containing the Psalms in Greek, although acquired in 1517, was also used for editing this part of the Old Testament.³⁰

²⁹ Juan Signes Codoñer, *Biblioteca y epistolario de Hernán Núñez de Guzmán (El Pinciano): una aproximación al humanismo español del siglo XVI* (Madrid: CSIC, 2001).

³⁰ Arantxa Domingo Malvadi, “The Greek Language Sources of the Polyglot Bible,” in *V Centenario de la Biblia Poliglota Complutense. La Universidad del Renacimiento. El Renacimiento de la Universidad*, ed. José Luis Gonzalo Sánchez-Molero et al. (Madrid: Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2014), 270–272. See also Gregorio De Andres, “Catálogo de los códices griegos de las colecciones: Complutense, Lázaro Galdiano y March de Madrid,” *Cuadernos de filología clásica* 6 (1974): 221–266, and Ignacio Carbajosa and Andrés García Serrano, *Una Biblia a varias voces. Estudio textual de la Biblia Poliglota Complutense* (Madrid: Ediciones Universidad de San Dámaso, 2014).

Today twenty-one Hebrew and Aramaic manuscripts, two Greek manuscripts, and several Gothic Bibles that served to establish the text of the polyglot Bible are kept in the Complutense University Library in Madrid.³¹

VI. The Printer

The printing was done by Arnao Guillen de Brocar, one of the most prestigious printers at the time. Brocar had first set up a shop in Pamplona and later moved to Logroño. In 1511 he was invited by Cisneros to come to Alcalá to print the polyglot Bible. In Logroño, Brocar had printed several works by Antonio Nebrija, who in turn may have recommended the printer to the cardinal.³² Bruce M. Metzger describes Brocar's undertaking in detail:

The Greek type used in the New Testament volume was modeled after the style of the handwriting in manuscripts of about the eleventh or twelfth century and is very elegant. It is printed without rough or smooth breathing marks and accented according to a system never heard of before or since: monosyllables have no accent, while the tone syllable in other words is marked with a simple apex, resembling the Greek acute accent mark. Each word or group of Greek words is coded to the adjacent column of the Latin Vulgate by small supralinear roman letters, thus assisting readers with little Greek to find the equivalent words in each column. The Septuagint is printed with the familiar cursive style of Greek characters popularized by Aldus Manutius, the famous Venetian printer.³³

Although Brocar's printing of the Ximenez Polyglot was unanimously praised, the content was not exempt from criticism. The editors were accused of willfully distorting the Greek text in order to make it coincide with the Latin Vulgate. One specific accusation was that they had left out the last five words of 1 John 5:7, which are present in the Vulgate.³⁴ The Ximenez

³¹ Marta Torres Santo Domingo, "In the Wake of the Polyglot Bible: the Bible Collection in the Complutense Library," in *V Centenario de la Biblia Políglota Complutense. La Universidad del Renacimiento. El Renacimiento de la Universidad*, ed. José Luis Gonzalo Sánchez-Molero, et al. (Madrid: Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2014), 163–90.

³² Rummel, *Ximenez de Cisneros*, 58.

³³ Bruce M. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration*, 4th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 140.

³⁴ "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one." This final clause, originally a marginal note, seems to have had its origin in a fourth century Latin homily in which the text was allegorized to refer to members of the Trinity. From there, it made its way into copies of the Latin Vulgate. The Trinitarian formula "and these three are one," known as the *Comma Johanneum*, is familiar in the English-speaking world because it was also inserted in the King James translation. Erasmus left the words out in his first two editions (1516 and 1519), but on Lopez de Zuñiga's insistence that he justify the exclusion, he promised to insert it if any Greek manuscript could be produced in its favor. For this, the Codex Montfortianus (Evan. 61), now in Trinity College, Dublin, was produced with

Polyglot editors justified the omission in a note. Other annotations include a reference to the omission of the Doxology in the Lord's Prayer—"For thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen." (Matthew 6)—and two alternative renderings of 1 Corinthians 13:3 and 1 Corinthians 15:31.

VII. *The Antwerp Polyglot*

Some fifty years after the publication of the six-volume Ximenez Polyglot appeared the eight-volume Antwerp Polyglot, or *Biblia Regia* (1572), printed in Antwerp by Christopher Plantin under the auspices of Philip II. One of the great innovations of the Antwerp Polyglot was the inclusion of the Syriac text along with the Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and Chaldean/Aramaic texts. In the fifty years between the publication of the two polyglots, philological studies had advanced greatly. One step forward was the printing of the Syriac New Testament, or Peshitta, in Vienna in 1555.³⁵ The German orientalist Johann Albrecht Widmannstetter, editor of the 1555 Peshitta, had had Diego Lopez de Zuñiga as his Arabic teacher when both men were in Rome in the 1520s. Widmannstetter continued to have correspondence with Zuñiga up until the Spanish scholar's death in 1531. There could hardly have been talk of a new polyglot Bible at that time; nevertheless, Zuñiga may have already had a special interest in updating the Ximenez polyglot with older manuscripts, if for no other reason than to triumph over Erasmus, whom he criticized severely for lacking a good command of Hebrew and Aramaic.

Conclusion

After the cardinal's death, the influence of Llull's thinking and Savonarola's mysticism, which Cisneros sought to instill in his newly founded university, was replaced by the ideas of Erasmus, many of whose objectives coincided with the philosophical and religious currents that prevailed in Spain as the century got underway. Cisneros's emphasis on biblical studies and ancient languages, and the departure from staunch scholasticism and return to the

the passage, and Erasmus inserted the words in his third edition of 1522. Luther's German translation, which was based on Erasmus's second edition (1519), lacked the *Comma*. The King James translators, who based their work mainly on Theodore Beza's tenth edition of the Greek New Testament (1598), popularized the *Comma* for the English-speaking world. The clause is found only in eight late manuscripts, four of which have the words in a marginal note. Lyell, *Cardinal Ximenes*, 42–44.

³⁵ For an account of the arrival of the Peshitta in Europe and its publication, see Frances Luttkhuizen, "El siriano en la transmisión de documentos bíblicos," *Tu Reino* 13 (2006): 9–37.

church fathers, had brought with it a growing interest in Christian humanism and enthusiasm among the faculty and students for Erasmus and his writings. But this was short lived. Despite their enthusiasm, there were others who opposed Erasmus and accused him of heresy.³⁶ By the early 1540s, Erasmianism was no longer an articulate force in Spanish intellectual life. What had begun at the beginning of the century as an attempt on the part of Cisneros to reform the church and the clergy had turned into a counter-reformation. The traditionalists—with the support of the Spanish Inquisition—had won the day. Following the pronouncement of the Council of Trent (April 8, 1546), anyone possessing a Bible was suspected of heresy and was to be dealt with accordingly. In 1552 some three hundred Latin Bibles were confiscated in Seville alone. Cisneros must be remembered, nevertheless, for having planted the seed of inquiry that would later bring forth fruit in the evangelical movements in Seville and Valladolid in the 1550s.³⁷

The epitaph that adorns Cisneros's tomb in the San Ildefonso Church in Alcalá de Henares, executed two years after the cardinal's death by Bartolome Ordoñez, reads thus:

In this humble sarcophagus lie I, Francisco, who raised a University in honor of the Muses. I wore the purple and the sackcloth, the helmet and the cardinal's hat; I was a friar, leader, minister, and cardinal. At one time, through no seeking of my own, I wore the crown and cowl, and Spain obeyed me as it would a king.

The words recount the highlights of his life, but how could Ordoñez have left out something as noteworthy as the publication of the first complete polyglot Bible, the *Biblia Sacra Polyglota*? Was Cisneros the author of the epitaph or did Ordoñez, less sympathetic towards—or ignorant of—this great achievement, write it?

³⁶ Alejandro Coroleu, "Anti-Erasmianism in Spain," in *Biblical Humanism and Scholasticism in the Age of Erasmus*, ed. Erika Rummel (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 73–92.

³⁷ See Frances Luttikhuisen, *Underground Protestantism in Sixteenth Century Spain: A Much Ignored Side of Spanish History* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2016).