
L E T T E R X V I I I .

An EPISTLE *written by* DON GREGORIO MAYANS, *to the late*
SIR BENJAMIN KEENE, *containing a full Account of the*
COMPLUTENSIAN POLYGLOTT, &c. &c.

MAY it please your EXCELLENCY! You having hinted to me, that you desired some information concerning the COMPLUTENSIAN BIBLE, and those MSS. which the learned editors of that work made use of, if they were any where now in being, I shall endeavour to give your Excellency all the intelligence on that point in my power.

DON ALVARO GOMEZ, who wrote the Life of Cardinal XIMENES, says, * “ That XIMENES, fearing lest the sacred mysteries of our religion should suffer some detriment, from the Scriptures being ill understood, began most timely to be apprehensive, lest the Spaniards should become entire strangers, and totally unacquainted with the books of THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT.”

† DON ANTONIO DE LEBRIXA tells us, in the preface to his *Apologia*, how despised and neglected the knowledge of the learned languages was at that time, and how little the professors of them were esteemed. This state of ignorance continued to the

* Book II. p. 36, 38.

† *i. e.* ANTONIUS NEBRISSENSIS.

days of MONTANUS, and MARIANA*, and I wish it did not continue now.

GOMEZ adds, “ That XIMENES, therefore, (in imitation of
 “ the great ORIGEN, who with amazing diligence put together
 “ all the translations of the Bible then extant, and united them
 “ in those famed HEXAPLA) ordered an edition of the Bible to
 “ be set on foot, to remedy this evil. In that edition, the books
 “ of the *Old Testament* are divided into three columns. In the
 “ first column is placed the *Hebrew*, in the middle the *Vulgate*,
 “ in the third the LXX. and its translation. At the bottom of
 “ the page is placed the *Chaldee Paraphrase*, with its Latin trans-
 “ lation.—But the *New Testament* has the most correct Greek
 “ text possible, with the *Vulgate*. In the last volume is added a
 “ dictionary of Hebrew words and phrases, admired by the skil-
 “ ful in that language. This addition was much wanted in some
 “ Bibles, through the carelessness of those who kept them, and
 “ was a great detriment to the reader. This undertaking of
 “ Cardinal XIMENES was highly laborious, magnificent, and
 “ great; it not only required a man of his eminence, but of his
 “ abilities likewise, to surmount all the difficulties which at-
 “ tended such a work: He therefore sent for men of letters,
 “ well skilled in the Greek and Latin languages, to assist him.
 “ These were, first, DEMETRIUS CRETENSIS, by birth a
 “ Greek, whom AUBERTUS MIRÆUS tells us †, XIMENES had
 “ sent for out of ITALY, by offering a large premium. Second-
 “ ly, ANTO. of LEBRISA: It was owing to this man’s sole ad-
 “ vice, that XIMENES undertook an edition of that *Complutensian*
 “ *Bible*, as ANTO. tells us in his *Apologia*, which is a very valu-
 “ able work. In that you will see the envy and ill will which
 “ this great reviver of Spanish learning experienced, for his en-
 “ deavours to make it flourish in the university of SALAMANCA.
 “ In the beginning of his book, he thus addresses the Cardinal.

“ MAY it please your Eminence! I am in doubt, whether my
 “ genius did not owe me a grudge, when it prompted me to

* See B. A. MONT. on JOSUA, and MARIANA’s Defence of the Vulgate, Chap. 8:
 † Scriptor. Sæculi XVI. Cap. 45. P. 140.

“ think of nothing, but what was difficult, to attempt only
 “ great enterprises, to publish nothing but what occasioned
 “ me much hatred and ill-will. Had I given my time to visiting
 “ my friends; had I spent my night watchings in fable and poe-
 “ tical fiction; had I read or wrote history; had I flattered the
 “ living or the dead; I might have had the united applause of all
 “ the SPAINS: But now, because I labour after the meat which
 “ does not perish, and, as JEROM says, trace out on earth that
 “ knowledge which only abideth in Heaven; because I am thus
 “ employed, I am called impious, sacrilegious, a false Catholic,
 “ and I am in some danger of being summoned in chains to plead
 “ my cause before the Inquisition as an heretic: there will not
 “ be wanting an accuser; there are those who are ready and wil-
 “ ling enough.—So that I may apply to myself very justly those
 “ words of ECCLESIASTES, He that increaseth knowledge in-
 “ creaseth trouble.—If, Sir, it is the duty of a legislator to re-
 “ ward the wise and good, and to punish the wicked and hereti-
 “ cal subject,—What are you doing, great Cardinal, in that go-
 “ vernment, where, &c.”

I omit the rest, because I *dare not* transcribe it. This great man, therefore, was one of the chief compilers of the Complutenfian Bible.

GOMEZ adds, “ That XIMENES sent likewise for * LOPEZ
 “ ASTUNICA, or DE ZUNIGA, as we Spaniards write it; he
 “ sent also for FERNANDUS PINTIANUS, whose Spanish name is
 “ FERNANDO NUNEZ DE GUSMAN, a native of VALLADOLID,
 “ which is vulgarly called PINTIA. How eminent this man
 “ was for his knowledge in the Latin and Greek tongues, may
 “ be seen in JUSTUS LIRSIUS, A. SCHOTTUS, N. ANTONIUS,
 “ and many others †.” But whereas GOMEZ tells us, that PIN-
 “ TIANUS’s works were in every one’s hands in his time, it was not
 “ so in 1580.

* See Critici SS. Tom. ix. p. 2. col. 3552. A. Schotti Hisp. Bibl. Tom. iii.
 p. 584.

† DE THOU, Lib. xi. p. 401. L. XXI. p. 727.

GOMEZ adds, " That XIMENES sent for these men, who were eminent Greek and Latin professors, and whose works were in every one's hands; and for ALPHONSUS, a Physician at ALCALA DE HENARES, * PAULUS CORONELLUS, ALPHONSUS ZAMORA †, all eminent *Hebraeans*. These had been public professors of that language in their schools, but having afterwards taken holy orders, they were very properly sent for by Cardinal XIMENES, to execute so great a work, which would require their virtue, their learning, and their perseverance. With these men the *Cardinal* consulted about the plan; promised to support them most liberally with money; and invited them separately to undertake the work, by giving them large presents. Above all, the *Cardinal* recommended to them the utmost dispatch, Lest, says he, as all human things are uncertain, you should lose so willing a patron to this work, or I should lose such able assistants, whose company, and whose labours, I value more than the Archbishopric of TOLEDO.—This speech of the *Cardinal's* had its effect, and these learned men never ceased their labours till they had finished the work. They first sent for all the MSS. of both Testaments, which could be procured, in order to fix the purest new text, to amend the errors of the old, to settle the true reading of doubtful passages, and to explain the obscure."

THE greatest part of these MSS. particularly of the Old Testament, were fetched from the Jewish synagogues, and principally from those of TOLEDO and MAQUEDA. These were easily to be come at, because the Jews had been driven out of SPAIN ten years before, in 1492. These MSS. were afterwards chained down to the shelves in the college of SAN. ILDEPHONSO, at ALCALA DE HENARES, by the order of the CARDINAL, and yet, notwithstanding that caution, many of them were afterwards stolen.

GOMEZ adds, " But the most useful collection of MSS. to XIMENES, was that of the *Vatican Library*, which were of a most venerable antiquity."

* See COLMENARES Hist. SEGOV. p. 707.

† This man did the 6th volume of the Polyglott.

THIS appears plainly by a letter of the CARDINAL's to LEO X. prefixed to the PENTATEUCH; "For," says he, "we can fairly testify to your Holiness, that our greatest care has consisted in employing the most able linguists, and in procuring the most ancient and most correct MSS. from all quarters. With incredible pains we collected an amazing multitude of Hebrew, Greek, and Latin MSS. It was to your Holiness that we owed the Greek MSS. for you very politely sent us the most ancient MSS. of the Old and New Testament from that Apostolic library, and which were of the greatest use to us in this work."—The same CARDINAL, in his preface to the reader, says, "With regard to the Greek part of Scripture, you must know, that we did not take any vulgar or common MSS. for to fix our text, but the most ancient and most correct, which Pope LEO X. sent me from the Vatican; MSS. of such integrity, that if you cannot credit these, you can credit none.—To these we have added not a few, partly transcribed from that most correct MS. of BESSARION, sent me by the senate of VENICE, and partly procured by me at vast labour and expence.

"WE have also compared JEROM's Latin version with many MSS. of the greatest antiquity, particularly with those in the public library of my university at ALCALA DE HENAREZ, which are in *Gothic characters*, and were written above 800 years ago, and with such amazing exactness, that you cannot discover the omission of a tittle throughout; yet some of the proper names, which were wrong spelt, by a mistake of the copyist, we let remain designedly as they were."

BESIDES the *Vatican* and *Venetian* library, MIRAEUS tells us, they made use too of the *Medicean*.

GOMEZ adds, "These Vatican MSS. were sent to the Cardinal by Pope LEO X. who admiring the magnificent spirit of XI-MENES, conceived the greatest opinion of him; and that Pope sent to him afterwards for his advice in matters of high importance to the Romish church, though the Cardinal was then in
"AFRICA.

“ AFRICA.—The version of the Seventy was done partly by
 “ Complutensian scholars, partly by DEMETRIUS, PINTIANUS,
 “ and ASTUNICA; and was so happily executed, that nothing
 “ was omitted in the version, of the force of those Græcisms,
 “ which are so frequent in the Seventy.

“ AMONG the learned men called together upon this occasion,
 “ was JOHN VERGARA, who had *the Books of Wisdom* for his
 “ lot. He restored the text of them in many places, as he has
 “ often said himself; and when very old, he used to wish for
 “ nothing so much at his leisure, as to publish some scholia on
 “ ECCLESIASTICUS; but his ill health prevented that design.”

THIS JOHN VERGARA was afterwards a canon of TOLEDO; he not only translated the Books of Wisdom from the Seventy into Latin, but added a comment likewise*.—Yet this great man was afterwards thrown into the *Inquisition*, in April 1534, by ALPHONSUS MANRICUS, Inquisitor General, as L. VIVES tells ERASMUS, in one of his † Epistles: But VERGARA got happily out of that prison again, and lived to 1558.

GOMEZ adds,—“ They were employed in this work from the
 “ year 1502, more or less, fifteen years; that one may almost
 “ say, that the Cardinal’s life, and the edition of this work, end-
 “ ed at the same period.—It would take me up too much time
 “ to give a minute detail of the labour and trouble those Editors
 “ went through, in comparing and examining the MSS. while
 “ XIMENES in the mean while had perpetual avocations with the
 “ affairs of state.”

THE Complutensian Bible was begun in 1502, and began to be printed just ten years afterwards, in 1512: It was finished in 1517. This was the very year in which XIMENES died.—

GOMEZ adds,—“ With regard to the whole expence of this
 “ edition of the Complutensian Polyglott, you must know first,

* See DE THOU, Lib. xxi. c. 11.

† Tom. II. p. 676.

“ that

“ that only seven Hebrew MSS. which are now at ALCALA
 “ DE HENARES, were bought by ALPHONSUS ZAMORA, Pro-
 “ fessor of Hebrew, in different countries, at a no less sum than
 “ § 4000 crowns, as was heard from his own mouth.”

LIST of HEBREW MANUSCRIPTS now preserved at ALCALA
 DE HENARES.

1. Hebrew Bible, written in the ninth century.
2. Ditto, written in the twelfth century.
3. One volume of the Hebrew Bible, no date.
4. Hebrew Pentateuch, no date.
5. Two volumes of a Chaldee Bible.

LIST of GREEK MANUSCRIPTS there.

1. Greek Bible, modern character.
2. Greek Psalter, very old character.

LATIN MANUSCRIPTS there.

1. Bible, in Gothic characters, almost 1000 years old.
2. Bible, almost as old, as appears by the character.
3. Bible in two volumes, twelfth century.
4. ST. PAUL's Epistles, with a gloss.
5. The New Testament, with notes.

GOMEZ adds,——“ To say nothing of the Greek and the La-
 “ tin MSS. the former of which came from ROME; the latter
 “ from foreign countries, and from the several Libraries in
 “ SPAIN; particularly those in Gothic characters, which are
 “ above 800 years old, were brought to ALCALA DE HENARES
 “ at a vast expence.—Then, if you reckon the wages of the
 “ type-founders and amanuenses, the rewards given to the learn-
 “ ed Editors, the sums paid to messengers and agents, and
 “ other servants; all this together will make the whole expence
 “ above * 50,000 crowns; which I have heard the oldest peo-
 “ ple say was the sum.”

§ He means the Half Pistole; it is almost 2000 l.

* Above 20,000 l. sterling.

BUT

BUT as BENEDICTUS ARIAS MONTANUS published our *Royal edition of the Bible*, and made use of some Complutensian MSS. which the Cardinal's editors could not do, it will not be improper here to give some account of that very great man.

MONTANUS was born at FREGENAL DE LA SIERRA; *Sierra* signifies in Spanish a ridge of mountains, and therefore he was called MONTANUS; this village being under the jurisdiction of the city of HISPALIS, he therefore calls himself *Hispalensis*. MONTANUS was the first person who obtained a lawrel crown in the University of SALAMANCA in the year 1552. He was a man of the greatest probity, strongest talents, and uncommon judgement; could write with a masterly style, either in prose or verse, and had amazing skill in languages: He was a master of the *Greek, Latin, Hebrew, Syriac, Chaldee, Arabic, French, Dutch, English, and Teutonic* languages. MONTANUS says himself, in his comment on *Isaiab*, that he knew thirteen languages. Besides this, he was a good poet, as well as a great scholar, and blended the Belles Lettres with his severer studies. It was very fortunate therefore for SPAIN, that when the copies of the Complutensian Bible began to be so scarce——(For there never were more printed of that edition than 600 volumes, that is, as I understand it, about 100 copies; as appears by comparing the Letters of LEO X. to the Bishop of AVILA, and the Archdeacon of CORDUBA. It was the printing so small a number, that has made the book so scarce,) that it possessed such a man as MONTANUS, who in conjunction with PLANTIN the printer, could stir up the mind of PHILIP II. to a greater work than that of the Complutensian Bible, though not so expensive. For PHILIP II. though he loved fame, was very covetous of his money; yet he consented to this work in 1578, and sent MONTANUS into HOLLAND with orders to re-print the COMPLUTENSIAN BIBLE, with improvements. For MONTANUS had made use of *seven* Hebrew MSS. which XIMENES procured from VENICE, but could not make use of himself: And MONTANUS had likewise a MSS. Latin Version of the Chaldee Paraphrase.