

CHAPTER FIVE

PEDRO DE VALENCIA: BIBLICAL SCHOLAR, HUMANIST AND SOCIAL CRITIC

Pedro de Valencia (1555–1620) was a humanist and biblical scholar, a disciple, collaborator and amanuensis of Benito Arias Montano (1528–1598) and close friend of Fray José de Sigüenza (1544?–1606), librarian of El Escorial after Arias Montano (1593).¹ He was also an impassioned social and political commentator of the Spain of his time and took its reputation abroad very much to heart. In the conclusion to his critique of the apocryphal Lead Books of Granada he wrote:

I know full well that there is no risk that either the universal Church or its Supreme Pontiff will be taken in or deceived. [However], the reputation of Spain is at great risk because, when these books have been seen in Rome, it will be apparent what they are and many will be surprised that they have moved us so much.²

Valencia wrote many dissertations on biblical, philosophical, social, religious, political and economic topics; he was first and foremost a biblical scholar; he was also a much-esteemed humanist, lawyer, *inventor* of mythological iconology and literary critic; a man held in very high esteem by his contemporaries. In this chapter, there is a brief biographical sketch of Valencia's life, which attempts to show the poly-facetic nature of Valencia's erudition.

In 1607 Valencia was appointed both *cronista del reino (de Castilla)* (Chronicler for the kingdom of Castile) and *cronista de Indias* (Chronicler for America) of Philip III.³ He was born in Zafra in 1555

¹ Sigüenza was also principal of the school there from 1595 to 1597 and from 1600 to 1603. He was elected prior in 1603 and re-elected in 1606, the year of his death.

² Valencia, *Pergamino y láminas*, p. 32; Valencia, *Obras*, IV, 2, pp. 454–455.

³ Gaspar Morocho Gayo has discovered that Valencia was both *cronista del reino* for Castile and *cronista general de Indias*. He was appointed *cronista de Indias* on 4 May 1607 and *cronista del reino* on 22 May of the same year: *Humanistas españoles: Pedro de Valencia*, V, *Relaciones de Indias*, I. *Nueva Granada y Virreinato de Perú*. Estudios introductorios y notas históricas por Jesús Paniagua Pérez Edición crítica por Francisco Javier y Jesús Fuente Fernández (León: Universidad de León, 1993), pp. 44–57.

to Melchor de Valencia and Ana Vázquez and died in Madrid on 10 April 1620. There is an anonymous, short biography in manuscript form in the Biblioteca Nacional in Madrid, which is the main source for his early years.⁴ His father, Melchor de Valencia, was a lawyer or *letrado* in the service of the House of Feria, whose main demesne was the town of Zafra. His son would later follow him in this role and maintain close relations with two dukes of Feria, Don Lorenzo Suárez de Figueroa y Dormer (1560–1607) and Don Gómez Suárez de Figueroa y Mendoza (1587–1634). Pedro de Valencia's early education was probably in the ducal school in Zafra, which had been reorganised by the charismatic preacher, writer and mystic Maestro Juan de Ávila, who had close relations with the House of Feria.⁵ Juan de Ávila's possible influence on Pedro de Valencia is discussed in Chapters 7 and 9. Melchor de Valencia went to Montilla with the Count and Countess of Feria in 1568 and Pedro accompanied his family. He had already begun his studies in the Jesuit school in Córdoba (1567–1568), where he developed an interest in theology:

His father returned to Córdoba and there, when he [Pedro] was very young, he read arts in the Jesuit school and began theology and all were astonished at his intelligence.⁶

However, because he was an only son, his parents discouraged him from studying theology and he went to Salamanca to study law (1573–1576). There he came under the influence of Francisco Sánchez de las Brozas, *el Brocense*, with whom he studied Greek:

From his earliest years he busied himself reading all the good writers and he was very well known there [in Salamanca] among the other students and the booksellers, whose bookshops he frequented a great deal. They knew how much he loved his studies so that when Cornelius Bonnart received, among other books, the heroic Greek poets, in a volume printed by Henri Étienne in 1566, he [Bonnart] told him to buy it and he [Valencia] was so pleased with the book that, on leaving the shop, he met Master Sánchez and told him that he would like to learn Greek, because of having bought that book etc.⁷

⁴ Anon., MS 5781, fols 135^r–136^v.

⁵ Valencia, *Obras completas*, V/I, p. 20

⁶ “Bolvióse su padre a Cordova i alli, siendo de mui poca edad, oyo las artes en el Colegio de la Compañia y començo la theologia con gran admiracion de su ingenio”: Anon., MS 5781, fol. 135^r.

⁷ “Ocupose desde sus primeros años a la lecion [sic] de todos buenos autores i alli era mui conocido entre los demas estudiantes i los libreros, cuyas librerias el frecuen-