Christian Arguments for Including Targums in Polyglot Bibles

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Introduction

Several scholars and printers in the sixteenth and seventeenth century made plans to produce a polyglot Bible. Some succeeded, others edited a part of the Bible, some only began to assemble manuscripts and made notes on how to accomplish the project. They were all Christians, some of them aided by converted Jews. Nevertheless, most of them included, or planned to include, the Aramaic text of one or more Targums. That choice was not self-evident, because many Christian scholars opposed the dissemination and study of Jewish literature. The leading question of this article is therefore: what arguments did the makers of polyglot Bibles give to include the Targum?

To find the arguments we examined the introductions of all the polyglot Bibles.¹ The editors gave account of their choices and way the material was presented. Two things must be borne in mind. First, these introductions were also meant to please the reader and the censor. The editor mainly provided those arguments that were appropriate to the average user and well understood. Therefore, we also relied on secondary literature. Second, some arguments not

¹ The following abbreviations are used:
• op II = second prologue to the Octaplus Psalterii;
• op apud Ps. 18 = marginal comments to Psalm 18 in the Octaplus Psalterii;
• CPB II,1 = first prologue to the second volume of the Complutensian Polyglot Bible, etc.;
• WPB Micah = prologue to the Micah volume of the Wittemberg Polyglot Bible series, etc.;
• APB I,1 = first prologue to the first volume of the Antwerp Polyglot Bible, etc.;
• APB I,13 = thirteenth prologue to the APB = PPB XI = eleventh prologue to the PPB, viz. the letter of recommendation by Gisbert(us) Schoock and colleagues;
• APB II = prologue to the second volume of the APB;
• APB XIII, title = prologue under the title mentioned in the eighth volume of the APB;
• NPB I = prologue to the Nuremberg Polyglot Bible;
• Abgad II = second prologue (= ‘Vorrede an die Christliche liebe Jugend’) to Hutter 1597;
• PPB III = third prologue of the Paris Polyglot Bible, viz. the letter of recommendation by Jean de Bertet and Etienne Moreau;
• LPB XII,10 = twelfth prologue to the London Polyglot Bible, section 10, etc.
only concern the Targums, but the entire project of the polyglot Bible. We will indicate these circumstances, where necessary.

The editors and printers of the polyglot Bibles that were investigated for this article are the following:\(^2\)

- Agostino Giustiniani (1470–1536), who published an *Octaplus Psalterii* (OP) in 1516, not only containing the Psalter in five languages, but also notes from Midrash Tehillim and Jewish commentaries in the margin (cf. Cevolotto 1992; Grendler 2008, 233–240).
- Francisco Jiménez de Cisneros (1435–1517), who completed the Complutensian Polyglot Bible (CPB) in 1517, although it was not distributed until 1522. The colophons of mss 4 (Biblioteca de la Universidad Complutense, Madrid; dated 1517), M1–M3 (Biblioteca General Histórica Universidad de Salamanca, Salamanca; dated 1532), and 7542 (Biblioteca Nacional de España, Madrid; dated 1533), which were produced by Alfonso de Zamora, serve as background information for this polyglot Bible.
- Johannes Draconites (1494–1564), who edited eight books of the Old Testament in five languages in Wittenberg (WPB) in 1563–1565. He adapted the Aramaic text, probably taken from the First Rabbinic Bible, in order to produce his word-for-word polyglot editions.
- Benito Arias Montano (1527–1598), who edited, and Christophe Plantin (c.1520–1589), who printed the *Biblia Regia*, or the Antwerp Polyglot Bible (APB), in 1569–1572.
- Elias Hutter (1553–c.1605), who edited the Nuremberg Polyglot Bible (NPB) in 1599. It comprises the books of Genesis through Ruth—according to the Christian order—in ancient and modern languages. Theodore Bibliander’s work on the languages will be used as background information for Hutter’s ideas (Amirav & Kirn 2011).

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\(^2\) We do not include Giovan Battista Raimundi (1536–1614), director of the *Typographia Medicea*, who hoped to reprint the *Biblia Regia* in more languages (Hamilton 2005, 5). He would have called his edition the *Biblia Pontificia*, in honour of Pope Gregory XIII (Hamilton 1985, 83). The plans were not carried out due to lack of funds and the death of his patron.

Some polyglot Bibles of these centuries do not contain the Targums at all, e.g., the Heidelberg Polyglot Bible (1586, 1599), probably of Bonaventure Corneille Bertram (1531–1594); the Hamburg Polyglot Bible (1596) of David Wolder (~1604); Elias Hutter’s Psalter in four languages (1602); and the Leipzig Polyglot Bible (1750–1751) of Christianus Reineccius (1668–1752).