The "Antiquarianization" of Biblical Scholarship and the London Polyglot Bible (1653-57)

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The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were the heroic age of the antiquaries. Roaming from text to context and back again, these scholars completed the revolution begun by the humanists who realized that Greek and Roman texts could never be understood isolated from the men and societies that made them. These scholars, from Petrarch to Poggio, from Panvinio to Peiresc to Perizonius, looked beyond the page and collected, described, and compared the material remains of the ancient world. That these investigations transformed the understanding of the past and effected a revolution in the method of historical inquiry was insisted upon by Arnaldo Momigliano beginning half a century ago.[1] In recent years these antiquaries have also attracted the attention of historians of early modern art, science, archaeology, politics, and scholarship.[2]

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[1] Arnaldo Momigliano, "Ancient History and the Antiquarian," *Contributo alla Storia degli Studi Classici* (Rome, 1955), 67-106; "L'eredità della filologica antica e il metodo storico," *Secondo Contributo alla Storia degli Studi Classici* (Rome, 1960), 463-80; and "The Rise of Antiquarian Research," *The Classical Foundations of Modern Historiography* (Berkeley, 1990), ch.3.

[2] Notable examples include Anthony Grafton, *Defenders of the Text: The Traditions of Scholarship in an Age of Science 1450-1800* (Cambridge, Mass., 1991) and *Joseph Scaliger: A Study in the History of Classical Scholarship* (2 vols.; Oxford, 1983-93); Alain Schnapp, *La conquête du passé: Aux origines de l'archéologie* (Paris, 1993); Bruno Neveu, *Erudition et religion aux XVII^e^ et XVIII^e^ siècles* (Paris, 1994); Ingo Herklotz, *Cassiano dal Pozzo und die Archäologie des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Munich, 1999); Anna Schreurs, *Antikenbild und Kunstanschauungen des Pirro Ligorio (1513-1583)* (Cologne, 2000); *Documentary Culture: Florence and Rome from Grand-Duke Ferdinand I to Pope Alexander VII*, ed. E. Cropper, G.

This renewed focus on antiquaries as agents of late humanism has tended to concentrate on their contribution to understanding ancient Greece and Rome, but they were also responsible for the first generation of serious scholarship about the ancient and modern Near East. Drawing on the same methods to ask the same questions they had asked of classical antiquity these antiquaries directed their attention to the extra-European world. Like the study of the earlier Renaissance of Greece and Rome, that of Israel and Egypt was stimulated by a profusion of new materials, streaming back to scholars' studies from the missionaries, merchants, and diplomats traveling to the Ottoman East in greater and greater numbers. It is breadth of inquiry that characterizes this new approach—more texts in more languages—but also a much greater explanatory weight placed on objects as evidence and more confidence in using knowledge provided by people presently living in far-away places to shed light on those who lived there long ago. In this approach to a region and its culture as a whole early modern antiquaries created oriental studies.

Because so much of the contemporary interest in the Near East was driven by the ingrained association of these lands and their peoples with the history narrated in the Bible, early oriental studies is inseparable from biblical scholarship. Pietro della Valle's letters from the East were, after all, signed "Il Pellegrino," and Fabri de Peiresc's efforts to recover the Samaritans and their history were triggered by his desire to contribute to the publication of their Pentateuch. It is because oriental studies like these were shaped by the ways and means of antiquaries that so much seventeenth-century biblical scholarship can be described as having been "antiquarianized." Like the earlier humanists who had given Virgil and Horace a context, those fascinated and obsessed with understanding every jot and tittle of the sacred text turned to the Bible's context for help: the history of the ancient Near East as it could be reconstructed from texts, objects, and the long-lived traditions preserved by marginal groups like the Samaritans or in out of the way places like the Coptic monasteries of Wadi Natrûn. This antiquarianization reflects the move from the word to the world that had begun with Petrarch. Early modern sacred philologists—the Englishman Thomas Fuller called this figure "The True Church Antiquary"—set out to prove, by the most sophisticated methods available, that sacred history was historical.

At the heart of this inquiry lay a belief in *historia sacra*, understood as both a theory of providential history and a methodology of historical scholarship. The theory gave them the confidence to pursue with reason the truth of revelation because all had to reflect the plan of the One Creator. The practice encouraged scholars to recruit the evidence of history, philosophy, archaeology, and geography to the service of the sacred, all confirming the triumph of Christianity. They

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Perini, F. Solinas (Bologna, 1992); and *Cassiano dal Pozzo: Atti del Seminario Internazionale di Studi. Napoli, 18-19 dicembre 1987*, ed. Francesco Solinas (Rome, 1987).

were convinced that erudition could only amplify, and not undermine, the conclusions already reached by faith.[3] It was this confidence that served as their safety tether, enabling them to edge out further and further on the thin ledge of their own learning—and blinded them to the fact that once the sacred was made fully and finally historical, it ceased to be sacred. Spinoza's innovation was not a matter of introducing new arguments for the Bible-as-history but in recognizing that something crucial was lost by reducing the sacred to the status of the historical. It was for just this reason that Giambattista Vico's *Scienza Nuova* kept sacred and profane history completely separate: he realized that only by repudiating the practice of sacred history could he preserve its sacredness.[4]

One could enter the landscape of sacred scholarship through any number of its surviving monuments, though perhaps none so spectacularly evokes for us the power of *historia sacra* than the great Polyglot Bibles that were produced between 1500 and 1650 at Alcalá, Antwerp, Paris, and London. These were giant, multi-volume works running up to ten double-folio tomes that presented more than two ancient versions of the sacred text in their entirety, eventually including not only the Hebrew, Greek, and Latin Bibles but also those in the languages of the early Christians, whose use lent a retrospective imprimatur of sacredness: Aramaic, Syriac, Arabic, and Ethiopic. Samaritan, spoken by neither Jews nor Christians, was of interest for the light it shed on the history of the Hebrew text. Modern translations into the vernacular languages were deemed not inspired and were therefore excluded. Of course where "inspired and ancient" ended and "modern" began was a complex issue: the Persian Pentateuch, for example, was a translation made by medieval Jews.[5]

According to Jacques Lelong, author of what is still the only history of the Polyglot Bibles (Paris, 1713), the "history of books" made up one of the most important parts of *historia litteraria*. Within this category the story of these Bibles was especially valuable because it opened on to so many different and complex issues. The cost and prestige of such collaborative enterprises, for example, something akin to space research in the late twentieth century, meant that there was always an implicitly political dimension to their production. Because

[3] On confessional motivations underlying other later sixteenth-century encyclopedic projects see P. Pettitmangin, "Deux *Bibliothèques* de la Contre-Reforme: *La Panoplie* du Père Torres et la *Bibliotheca Sanctorum Patrum*," *The Uses of Greek and Latin*, ed. C. Dionisotti, A. Grafton, J. Kraye (London, 1988), 127-53.

[4] Arnaldo Momigliano, "La Nuova Storia Romana di G.B. Vico," *Sesto contributo alla storia degli studi classici e del mondo antico* (Rome, 1980), 209.

[5] See Brian Walton, "Prolegomena," *Biblia sacra polyglotta: complectentia textus originales, hebraicum, cum pentateucho samaritano, chaldaicum, graecum: versionumque antiquarum, samaritanae, graecae, vulg. lat. quicquid comparari poterat* (6 vols.; London, 1653-57), 1, XVI.2, 101. On this version, first printed in the Hebrew Polyglot (Constantinople, 1546) see Jacques Lelong, *Discours Historique sur les principales editions des Bibles Polyglottes* (Paris, 1713), 39.

the production of multi-lingual texts depended upon the existence of manuscripts, the history of these Bibles was bound up with the history of travel to the lands of the Bible, often with the blessing if not with the active support of the state. Moreover, the number and variety of collaborating scholars gave these projects the character of small academies for the study of oriental languages, at a time when formal proposals for the establishment of such institutions were being circulated.[6]

The principal purpose of the Polyglots, Lelong argued, was to facilitate comparison of the sacred text with its "most ancient versions." Comparison made it easier to spot errors that had crept in over time and by following the "rules" of "good criticism to discover which of the variant readings was true." Comparison also brought out the fullness of a divine speech that could not be contained by only one interpretation. And if the complete meaning would always exceed the limits of human comprehension, *more* of that meaning could be grasped by comparison than by any other means.[7]

The pioneering aspect of these works was recognized by their promoters, who typically added a volume or two of learned apparatus that included dictionaries, maps, engravings and explanatory discourses designed to help the fledgling student of oriental languages. These works both reflect the state of learning and helped promote its advancement. But as much as these projects were about erudition and interpretation, they were also about revelation and redemption. Spread across the page, the different scripts and different languages were testimony to the universality of the Christian revelation and proof of the success of the Apostle's mission. Just as God began the history of human society by overturning the Tower of Babel, confusing languages and scattering peoples, and the Incarnation provided a means for their ingathering in the Church, so the making of a Polyglot marked a sort of second coming, reversing the direction of time's arrow, and implying the restoration of all that had worked to destroy the unity of mankind in the intervening millennium and a half.[8]

As Lelong observed, because they were such complex ventures they enable us to examine a wide range of issues bound up with their production. In each project we can assess the state of technology, locate the cutting edge of humanist

[6] See Henri Omont, "Projet d'un Collège Oriental a Paris au début du règne de Louis XIII (1612)", *Bulletin de la Société de l'histoire de Paris et de l'île de France*, 22 (1895), 123-27; G. J. Toomer, *Eastern Wisdome and Learning: The Study of Arabic in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1996), 187-201, "The London School of Oriental Studies."

[7] Lelong, *Discours Historique*, sigs. Aii-Av. See Joan-Pau Rubiés, "Hugo Grotius's *Dissertation on the Origin of the American Peoples* and the Use of Comparative Methods," *JHI*, 52 (1991), 221-44, and "The Antiquary's Art of Comparison: Peiresc and *Abraxas*," *Philologie und Erkenntnis. Beiträge zu Begriff und Problem Frühneuzeitlicher Philologie*, ed. Ralph Häfner (Tübingen, 2001).

[8] Walton, *Prolegomena*, V.1, 34; and see Jean Céard, "De Babel à la Pentecôte: La transformation du mythe de la confusion des langues au XVI[e] siècle," *Bibliothèque d'humanisme et renaissance*, 42 (1980), 577-94.

erudition, detail the flow of new materials from the east to western scholars, note shifts in theology, and mark the political maneuvering that affected these endeavors of huge cost and prestige.

The London Bible was the greatest and last of the Polyglots (1653-57).[9] The fruits of a century-and-a-half's study of the Bible and a half-century's closer contacts with the Ottoman Empire were displayed in the nine languages arrayed across the page and in the two volumes of learned disquisitions and painstakingly gathered variant readings. It was also a triumph of technology: the first Bible to print all the versions side-by-side on the same page. That it could be produced at all reflected the increasing prominence of oriental studies in particular and the high standard of antiquarian scholarship in general that characterized English scholarship in the first half of the seventeenth century. That it was paid for by subscription shows us that there was already a substantial audience for this kind of work in mid-century England.[10]

The London Bible is not only distinguished by its lateness, which enabled it to harness the cumulative learned efforts of several generations of scholars—this, after all, is just an accident of fate—but by the self-conscious ambition of its organizer, Bishop Brian Walton, to recapitulate the whole history of humanist biblical scholarship.[11] The early Bibles might contain a volume of apparatus or prefaces that explained in general terms the value of making a Polyglot Bible, but in none of the other three do we find anything at all like the *Prolegomena* written by Walton and printed in volume I of the London Bible. Its 102 folio pages are divided into sixteen discourses that begin with the nature and origin of language and letters, turn to the history of the Bible's editions and conclude with detailed discussion of the history of each of the nine versions and the variations within and between them.

Walton's extraordinary *tour d'horizon* won for himself and his Bible an importance that lasted on into the nineteenth century. Immediately after it appeared a man possessed of some discernment in these matters, Jean Morin, who had translated the Samaritan Pentateuch and edited the sixth volume of the Paris Polyglot, proclaimed in a letter to Cardinal Francesco Barberini of February 1658 that "ce sera le plus grand, et le plus auguste ouvrage qui ait jamais esté

[9] Constraints of space do not permit discussion here of the three earlier Bibles.

[10] Alasdair Hamilton, *William Bedwell the Arabist 1563-1632* (Leiden, 1985); Toomer, *Eastern Wisdome and Learning*; H. T. Norris, "Professor Edmund Castell (1606-85), Orientalist and Divine, and England's Oldest Arabic Inscription," *Journal of Semitic Studies*, 29 (1984), 155- 67; idem, "Edmund Castell and his *Lexicon Heptaglotton*," *The 'Arabick' Interest of the Natural Philosophers in Seventeenth-Century England*, ed. G.A. Russell (Leiden, 1994), 70-87.

[11] *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Right Rev. Brian Walton*, ed. Henry John Todd (2 vols.; London, 1821), with eighteen short biographies of other major figures ("Of Dr. Walton's Assistants").

entrepris en cette matiere."[12] The *Prolegomena* would be reprinted in 1673 along with the other historical treatises in volume I, and then alone in Leipzig in 1777 and in Cambridge in 1827.[13] It is still the best introduction to the unfamiliar landscape of Polyglot scholarship.[14]

The history of the London Polyglot cannot be separated from the fate of the Anglican Church and the English civil war. Like his exact contemporary, Cardinal Richelieu, Archbishop Laud recognized that in the Ottoman East lay an arsenal of early Christian knowledge, albeit locked away in hitherto inaccessible Greek, Syriac, and Arabic manuscripts. As the English ambassador in Constantinople put it at the time, these documents were "weapons fitt for Champions."[15] Hugh Trevor-Roper has sketched out the intellectual program undertaken byArchbishop Laud in order to re-shape the Church of England.[16] Laud's patronage of scholars followed from this idea. He provided the material encouragement that made possible scholarship of a high technical expertise, endowing a professorship in Arabic at Oxford and providing a stipend to enable the professor to travel to Constantinople and the Levant "for the better perfecting himself in the Arabicke and Eastern Languages."[17] Looking back, this period seemed to Walton like "almost a Garden of Eden."[18] With the attack on the Church of England and Laud in particular, all this patiently cultivated labor was overthrown. Laud was executed by Parliament in 1645 on charges of high treason and the patronless Polyglot was produced much later by his orphaned scholars in Oxford and London, many of whom, like Walton himself, had been ejected from their livings or otherwise harassed by parliamentary forces.

How the project managed to get off the ground in these difficult years remains obscure, but we know that on 11 July 1652 Walton managed to secure the approval of the Council of State.[19] An undated copy of his petition to the Coun-

[12] Morin to Barberini, 8 February 1658, Vatican, MS. Barberini-Latina 6510, fol.122^{r}. See Charles Perrault, *Les Hommes illustres qui ont paru en France pendant ce siècle* (Paris, 1697), 21-22; Paul Auvray, "Jean Morin (1591-1659)," *Revue Biblique*, 66 (1959), 397-414.

[13] On a projected second edition of the Polyglot as a whole, augmented with new materials, see the letter from Samuel Clarke to John Lightfoot, quoted in Lelong, *Discours historique*, 245; also Toomer, *Eastern Wisdome and Learning*, 227-29.

[14] See Angelo Vivian, "Biagio Ugolini et son *Thesaurus Antiquitatum Sacrarum*: Bilan des études juives au milieu du XVII^{e} siècle," *La République des lettres et l'histoire du Judaisme antique XVII-XVIII siècles*, eds. Chantal Grell and François Laplanche (Paris, 1992), 115-45.

[15] Quoted in R. J. Roberts, "The Greek Press at Constantinople in 1627 and Its Antecedents," *The Library*, 22 (1967), 26.

[16] Hugh Trevor-Roper, "Hugo Grotius and England" and "The Church of England and the Greek Church in the Time of Charles I," *From Counter-Reformation to Glorious Revolution* (Chicago, 1992), 47-82, 83-112; "Laudianism and Political Power," *Catholics, Anglicans and Puritans: Seventeenth-Century Essays* (Chicago, 1987), 40-119.

[17] From Laud's *History of his Chancellorship of Oxford*, 136, quoted in *Walton Memoirs*, I, 217; see also Toomer, *Eastern Wisdome and Learning*, ch.4: "Laud and Arabic at Oxford."

[18] Walton, "Praefatio," *Biblia sacra polyglotta*, sig. C^{v}.

[19] Toomer, *Eastern Wisdome and Learning*, 203, n. 264, notes that the earliest mention of the Polyglot is found in a letter from Selden to Pocock of February 1651/52.

cil has been preserved in manuscript. He emphasized the usefulness of the project in a matter-of-fact manner. Walton also stressed the need to put the project on a fiscal basis more sound than the Paris Polyglot, which bankrupted its promoter.

> And whereas your petitioner having perused the said Editions, and compared the same with sundry others, and finding that a more compleat and perfect edition then any of them may be made, wch may be more usefull and withall afforded at one fifth part or thereabout of the price of the Paris Bibles, wch by the same will become more common & great encouragement given to the study of those tounges which conduce most to the understanding of the Text, hath with the advise of sundry learned men, drawn up the form of an edition in the originall Languages, with the most auncient Translations according to better and more authentick coppies then those of the former editions, with addition of sundry thinges usefull wch are wanting in them all, and the same digested in such order, whereby the severall Languages may be represented to the readers view at once, and the whole maybe printed in a few and easy volumes, and sold at the price aforesaid.[20]

The Archbishop of Armagh, James Ussher and the parliamentarian John Selden added their approbations: "this work will become more complete and perfect, and also more useful than any that hath been hitherto published in that kind."[21]

Once approved, the enterprise seems to have moved swiftly, an indication of the advanced state of preparations as well as of the skills of its organizer. John Evelyn reports being asked to help promote the project on a visit to London in November 1652.[22] By September 1653 printing had begun, and on 30 October the first sheet was sent by Walton to Edward Pocock, the holder of Laud's Arabic chair, for review. A year later Volume One was finished and delivered to subscribers with the recommendation that it not be bound, since the *Prolegomena*, destined for inclusion in that first volume, was to be printed only after completion of the last of the six, scheduled for 1657 and actually completed in 1657.[23] In another letter to Cardinal Barberini, Morin commented on the feat of actually meeting such a daunting schedule.[24] The peculiar condition of these Royalist scholars marooned in Cromwell's London or revolutionary Oxford is reflected

[20] London, British Library, Additional Manuscripts 32,093, fol.333^{r}.

[21] *Walton Memoirs*, I, 45.

[22] *Walton Memoirs*, I, 31-33.

[23] Other editions of the Bible exist in six volumes spread over these same years.

[24] Morin to Barberini, 26 July 1658, Vatican, MS. Barb.-Lat. 6510, fol. 124^{r}: "Depuis la derniere lettre que j'ay escrit a vostre Eminence, on a apporté de Londres a Paris quelques Exemplaires de cette Bible entiere, l'a ou estoit le sixiesme, et dernier volume qu'ils m'avoient promis que vers la fin de cette année, mais ils ont devancé leur promesse."

in the two dedications of the Polyglot: one to Cromwell and a second to Charles II, hurriedly inserted in copies not yet sold as of 1660.[25]

The survival of Walton's petition, and the existence of the two dedications, reminds us of the complicated politics of the Interregnum that had to be navigated. This was a project whose features were marked by the civil war, including the death of its patron and the dislocation of its scholars. But if the specific circumstances in which the Bible was made—war and revolution—were unique, they brought to the surface a series of complex relationships between theology and hermeneutics that were rarely addressed so explicitly in calmer times. These theological resonances help us understand why it was that Polyglot Bibles appeared when they did—and also why they ceased to be produced.

If awareness of his own context had led Walton to explore the theological underpinning of Polyglot scholarship, the decision to prepare a *Prolegomena* that surveyed its history forced Walton to confront the question of the relationship between the Hebrew original and the ancient translations. This cut to the heart of the whole endeavor. For without a good explanation for the value of the versions there was no reason to make a Polyglot Bible.

Finally, the history that Walton offers in the *Prolegomena* itself bears witness to the wider process of the antiquarianization of biblical scholarship. For him, and those whose work he discusses, the history of the text cannot be separated from the history in which the text was produced. Drawing on information surviving in classical literature or published by travelers or just dug from the earth, Walton assembled a history of the ancient and modern Near East that situated each of the nine versions in their time and place.

These three issues, the theological underpinning of sacred philology, the nature of the ancient translations of the Bible, and the impact of antiquarian methods on biblical interpretation, are central to an adequate understanding of the early modern enterprise of making Polyglot Bibles. These themes are confronted head-on in Walton's *Prolegomena* as they rarely are elsewhere during those years. In what follows we will examine Walton's survey of the field as he saw it.

The Theology of Polyglot Bibles

Walton undertook the enterprise of a Polyglot Bible because, like a whole generation of scholars from Grotius and Casaubon to Peiresc and Selden, he saw Europe's civil wars of religion as fueled by ignorance, sometimes actively abetted by obscurantism. It was precisely because the interpretation of Scripture had become the cause of such laceration in the body of Christendom that it was imperative to create an instrument that, by eliminating the possibility of casual

[25] *Walton Memoirs*, I, 67-71.

misinterpretation, could deprive the contentiousness of the oxygen it needed to thrive. This was the substance of Walton's repeated insistence in his petition on the "usefulness" of Polyglot scholarship. Thinking of some way to ameliorate disagreement, "nothing seemed more opportune" to him than to try and gather in one volume the authentic text of the Bible alongside its ancient versions in order to produce a pure and uncorrupted text. This was essential "especially since the Divine Word is today everywhere bent, twisted and arbitrarily corrupted or totally rejected, blasphemed, and exploded as if a dead letter by the most despicable impostors" ("ubique hodie flectant, torqueant, & pro arbitrio corrumpant, vel in totum rejiciant, blasphement, & ut literam mortuam explodant impostores nequissimi").[26] Indeed, one of the features of the contemporary crisis was the abuse of texts, each interpreting Scripture according to his own lights.[27]

In the printed Preface to the Bible Walton returned to the link between these grand issues of ecclesiology, fought out at the national and even international level, and the personal conditions of those men whose careers had been made by Laud in a more catholic moment in the history of Anglicanism and then broken on the rising tide of Calvinist fanaticism. The Church of England, he wrote, was like Christ crucified between two thieves, with the "superstitious Romanists" to one side and the "fiery Novellists" to the other. What had been the fate of Laud and the Church of England as a whole was now his own: "this, which was the condition of the mother, is now become the lot of some of her sons in the late edition of the *Biblia Polyglotta*."[28] He bolstered his mockery of the "hard" Protestant insistence on private judgment with Jerome's complaints to Paulinus about the danger of allowing the least intelligent of men to pass judgment on the most complex of matters.[29] It is perhaps this same Arminian's distaste for demagoguery that lurks behind Walton's later complaint that an anonymous critic of the Polyglot could only have intended malice by writing in English against a text written in Latin, "to expose the *Biblia Polyglotta* and publishers of it to popular hatred."[30]

Walton's *équipe* was committed to history, for as we will discuss below, chronology and geography had become, along with philology and philosophy, the hand-maidens of theology. Opposed to them stood the idiosyncratic interpretations of individuals that pretended to the "mystical sense." Against the sectaries

[26] Walton, "Praefatio," *Biblia sacra polyglotta*, sig. C^{v}.

[27] Walton, *Introductio ad Lectionem Linguarum Orientalium* (London, 1655^{2}), 8-9.

[28] Walton, *The Considerator Considered: or, a brief view of certain considerations upon the Biblia Polyglotta, The Prolegomena, and appendix thereof* (London, 1659), in *Walton Memoirs*, II, 2.

[29] Walton, "Praefatio," *Biblia sacra polyglotta*, sig.C^{v}: "Verba enim S. Hieronymi nostris temporibus apte quadrant, Epist. ad Paulinum, 'Sola Scripturae ars est quam passim sibi omnes bendicant. Hanc garrula anus, hanc delirus senex, hanc Sophista verbosus, hanc universi praesumunt, lacerant, docent antequam discunt....' "

[30] Walton, *The Considerator Considered,* in *Walton Memoirs*, I, 22.

who had ruined his life and that of many of his friends, Walton insisted that "the word of God is not in texts, whether manuscript or printed, but properly resides in the true sense of the word which no man can better express than the true Church."[31] It was unwise in the extreme to begin by pondering God's intent and, "by the neglect of the literal sense, supply the figments of his own imagination for the mystical sense." Walton could not have been clearer: "It is not permitted to just anyone to create a mystical sense of Scripture at will."[32] The Church, as embodiment of the Apostolic tradition, was the sole keeper of the mystical sense. This attack on inspired hermeneutics was actually presented under the cover of a denunciation of Kabbalistic exegetical license. The Kabbalists, or, more correctly, their Christian imitators, "adulterated the mystical sense as they desired and substituted their fantasies and delirium for the sacred sense of the Divine Word."[33]

But if current events elicited this explicit recognition of the link between hermeneutics and theology, Walton understood that the connection between them went much deeper. In the history of biblical scholarship he recognized that those who undertook the burden of Polyglot scholarship and defended its usefulness had also envisioned a Christianity able to accommodate differences of opinion in matters indifferent to faith and morals. Because the publication of the versions, especially side-by-side, made it easier to spot these differences, only those equipped with a suitable theology could remain unruffled by the prospect of such a Bible. The confidence that underpinned *historia sacra*, that all created things, knowledge as well as people, had to complement each other, upheld the doctrinally-minimal position that looked to avoid divisiveness and also provided the framework for a textual practice that sought to defuse the threat in every difference. The collapse of *historia sacra* in turn undermined the philology represented in Polyglot Bibles. Indeed, this connection between theology and hermeneutics can be precisely noted in its negative: when Richard Simon proposed in 1684 to undertake a new Polyglot Bible his intent was to reproduce the Hebrew with all the different variants relegated to the notes. Precisely that element of testimony which was central to the great Polyglots, and which reflected the vision of *historia sacra*, was discarded.[34] The Age of Criticism had arrived.

[31] *Prolegomena*, V.3, 34: "Verbum Dei non in literis, sive scriptis sive impressis, sed in vero verborum sensu proprie consistere: quem nemo melius explicare potest, quam Ecclesia vera, cui sacrum hoc depositum Christus commisit."

[32] Walton, *Prolegomena*, VIII.32, 53: "Ideoque inutilem operam ponunt in sensu mystico indagando, qui, neglecto sensu literali, proprii ingenii figmenta pro sensu mystico venditant; quae vel in ipsa Scriptura, vel traditione Catholica fundamentum non habent." Walton was unequivocal: "Non licere unicuique pro libitu sensum mysticum in Scriptura fingere."

[33] Walton, *Prolegomena*, VIII.32, 53: "Cabalistae etiam pro libitu sensus mysticos comminiscuntur, & somnia sua ac deliria pro Verbi divini sensu mystico obtruduent [sic]."

[34] Part of Simon's *Novorum Bibliorum Polyglottorum Synopsis* (1684) is reprinted in *Walton Memoirs*, I, 322-23.

Walton looked back to three predecessors as examples of this combination of "sacred" scholarship and an accommodating theology. Origen, Erasmus, and Grotius were in Walton's day deeply controversial figures. They had become subjects of dispute in seventeenth-century debates about sacred philology, the legitimacy of using pagan wisdom for understanding Scripture, and doctrinal minimalism. If some approved of their adaptation of pagan learning for interpreting the Bible others denounced their methods and their vision of Christianity. For Walton to identify himself with them was to associate his project, in both these dimensions, with theirs.

Origen's *Hexapla*, with its parallel columnar disposition of different Hebrew and Greek versions of the Bible, provided the model for how scholarship could elucidate sacred meaning. By gathering together the different Greek versions alongside the Hebrew original he had been able to restore the pure, original text of the Septuagint.[35] The criticism directed at Origen—for too much care in preserving the Hebrew and for having included so much information that it became too easy for the other Greek versions (not the Septuagint) to be taken as authentic—was, according to Walton, all so much "carping."[36] If only the *Hexapla* had survived, a work whose importance warranted the epithet *Opus Ecclesiae*, Walton lamented, "many of today's controversies concerning the text's integrity and, particularly, letters, vowel points, true reading and correct pronunciation, could be resolved."[37]

Erasmus was the other great historical figure admired by Walton. His "extraordinary pains in publishing the Greek Testament by comparing ancient Copies and Translations" had followed Origen's practice—indeed Erasmus was the first modern editor of Origen and, as André Godin has shown, read his Origen very carefully over a long period of time.[38] Erasmus's Bible was sharply attacked in his day and these same arguments were reused in the attack on the London Polyglot. John Owen, (1616-83) a critic of Walton's Bible, named Erasmus as the first of that accursed breed of sacred philologists; Walton defended his own work in observing that Erasmus had "compared divers Copies of the New Testament, to make his Edition the more perfect, and several Translations and expositions of the ancients."[39] He repeated as his own Erasmus's ex-

[35] Walton, *Prolegomena*, IX.21, 62.

[36] *Prolegomena*, IX.24, 63.

[37] *Prolegomena* IX.21, 62: "Nam ex illo, Textus Ve.Testamenti, ejusque sensus verus illustrari, & sinceritas demonstrari posset; multaeque controversiae hodiernae, de ejus integritate, ut & de literis, punctis vocalibus, vera lectione, & recta pronunciatione, determinari possent." Cf. *Prolegomena*, IV.13, 32.

[38] *Walton Memoirs*, II, 3-4. See André Godin, *Erasme Lecteur d'Origène* (Geneva, 1982) and "Fonction d'Origène dans la Pratique Exégètique d'Erasme: Les Annotations sur l'Épitre aux Romans," *Histoire de l'exégèse aux XVIe siècle*, ed. Olivier Fato and Pierre Fraenkel (Geneva, 1978), 17-44.

[39] Walton, *The Considerator Considered*, in *Walton Memoirs*, I, 164.

planation of what he did when the plain sense could not be readily determined: "from comparing languages and exemplars, from reading of the translations of celebrated authors, one discerns the reading which is most acceptable."[40]

Grotius was a third figure often linked to Origen and Erasmus. His annotations on the Old Testament were reprinted in the Polyglot's volume of apparatus, and Walton's defense of him reveals the extent to which doctrinal minimalism was in some sense a necessary theological prerequisite for the kind of textual scholarship embodied in Polyglot Bibles. As with Erasmus, Walton declared that Grotius's scholarship, attacked as it was by both Catholics and Protestants, was ever in the service of the "earnest study of the peace of the Church, and endeavour to close up, rather than to make wider the breaches and wounds of Christendom." It was this same ecumenical dream—a reminder of Grotius's proposal to James I via Casaubon for the unification of all Protestant Churches—that was taken up by Walton as justification for the Polyglot itself.[41]

The Original and the Versions

Adiaphora, as a principle of interpretation and of theology, was a pre-condition for Polyglot scholarship. It explains how believers like Walton could pursue a project that only made it easier to spot the divergences between different versions of the same supposedly divinely-authored text. In a published description of the proposed enterprise Walton explained that putting the versions side-by-side helped to see what he termed "the errors" that had crept in, whether by "the negligence of scribes, and injury of times, or by the wilful corruption of sectaries and heretics." In other words Walton saw the glass as half-full: comparison did not threaten the text but rather allowed for its repair. Hence the importance of relying on the best aids, understood as the oldest versions, because these had exercised the "greatest authority" in the Church, and in the eastern languages, which because "of their affinity and nearness to the Original are fittest to express, and in regard of their antiquity and general use, in the first and purest ages, are the truest glasses to represent that sense, and reading, which was then generally received into the Church of Christ." The "harmony and consent" of these versions was nothing less than "the voice of God testifying from heaven."[42]

At about the same time that the first volume appeared Walton also published an introduction to the study of oriental languages (*Introductio ad lectionem Linguarum Orientalium*) that was a Berlitz for budding orientalists. A history of the versions, of the eastern languages, and of their relationship to one another was followed by detailed grammars of each of nine languages along with the

[40] *The Considerator Considered* in *Walton Memoirs*, II, 165.
[41] *The Considerator Considered* in *Walton Memoirs*, II, 120.
[42] *Walton Memoirs*, I, 33.

occasional encouragement to students, for instance, that the rudiments of Arabic could be mastered in 4 or 5 weeks of regular, but not excessive, study.[43] Publication of this volume was designed to create a larger audience for the Polyglot to come. Here again Walton emphasized the linguistic affinity of the ancient oriental versions to the Hebrew original and the authoritative place they occupied in the early Church. On this rested their usefulness for plumbing ambiguities in the sacred text. For comparison of these ancient versions was about more than exercising skills of textual interpretation; they offered access to nothing less than an understanding of Scripture by the lights of the ancient Church itself.[44]

This was the argument that Walton emphasized in the Preface to the Polyglot and in his key discussion of the "Versions of the Bible" (*Prolegomenon* V), where he explained that if the commentaries of individuals could be accepted as authoritative "how much more confer the ancient versions everywhere received and approved by the Church, and which exhibit to us the sense and judgment not of one or many private men but of the whole Church."[45] The Apostles were sent out into the wide world with the mandate to preach the Gospel to every person in his own language and "to this end conferred [on the Apostles] the celestial grace of different languages."[46] But after the age of the Apostles, the genuine meaning of the text, which resided in "the true sense of the words," had to be interpreted by the Church. The existence of versions of the Bible in these vernaculars reflected the end of God speaking directly to men and the beginning of history.[47] This momentous process was relived through the Polyglot Bible. When Walton proclaimed that since "Ecclesia vero sine Scripturis esse non potest" he was arguing that a sacred community could not exist in the absence of a sacred text.[48] But implicitly he was also suggesting that the versions of the Bible could serve as a guide to that world whose existence called them into being. Indeed, his accounts of their distinct histories—and each would repay the most detailed reading—are contributions towards a history of early Christianity. As with the Ethiopic version Walton argued that there had to have been a Persian one because of the existence of a substantial Christian community in late antique Persia—and he then provided what evidence he could.[49]

[43] Walton, *Introductio ad Lectionem Linguarum Orientalium*, "Praefatio," 42-43.

[44] Walton, "Praefatio," *Introductio ad Lectionem Linguarum Orientalium*, 7-8.

[45] *Prolegomena*, V.3, 34: "Si enim Commentaria virorum doctorum multum conferant ad Scripturae intelligentiam, quae idcirco in locis obscuris & dubiis omnes solent consulere: quanto magis conferunt Versiones antiquae ubique receptae, & ab Ecclesia approbatae, quae non unius vel plurium privatorum hominum, sed totius Ecclesiae sensum & judicium nobis exhibent."

[46] *Prolegomena*, V.3, 34: "Cum enim Apostolos in universum mundum misit, cum mandatis, ut 'omnes gentes docerent & omni creaturae Evangelium praedicarent'; ipsisque in hunc finem variarum linguarum *karismata* caelitus contulit."

[47] Walton, *Prolegomena*, V.1, 34.

[48] Walton, *Prolegomena*, XV.12, 100.

[49] Walton, *Prolegomena*, XVI.6, 102.

But what was to be done if—really when—discrepancies between the different versions were found? Walton's response is at first breathtaking: he acknowledged their presence but denied their meaning. It was simply unreasonable to expect anything human to be devoid of errors. If the word of God was perfect, the human links in the chain of tradition most certainly were not. "Who of sane mind could deny" that through the sloth and ignorance of scribes many sorts of inconsequential errors of transcription crept into even the best guarded of texts. "Daily experience" showed this conclusively.[50] To Walton, it was clear that while God's word was "always certain and infallible," human media were not.[51] That none of these errors occurred in anything important—touching *fides & mores*—was, however, itself an illustration of Divine Providence at work.[52] Walton cited the claim of the great French Protestant scholar, Louis Cappel, in his giant *Critica sacra* (1650), that there were two sorts of Scriptural text. One contained things necessary to salvation, and the other information about the world: chronology, names and places. Here and only here were some errors to be found.

But even without accepting Cappel's neat division or denying the existence of error, it was still possible to uphold the reliability of the text. Here Walton fell back on the argument of another French Protestant scholar, Samuel Bochart. He had asserted in his massive *Geographia Sacra* (1646) that no one dared claim that because there were scribal errors scattered in manuscripts of Suetonius or Livy "therefore there is nothing certain in Roman history" ("ergo in historia Romana nihil est certi"). In the same way Walton thought that a few obvious and trivial errors could not undermine the reliability, let alone divinity, of the Bible.[53]

The explicit likening of the methodologies of classical and sacred studies was rare but discussion of the common problems of interpretation was not. Montaigne had pointed out the fiction of a self-evident Biblical text. "Those who believe that they can assuage our quarrels and put a stop to them by referring us to the express words of the Bible cannot be serious: our minds do not find the field any less vast when examining the meanings of others than when formulating our own."[54] Walton's friend John Selden, himself one of the greatest of contemporary antiquaries, explained the particularly resistant nature of sacred literature. "The Scripture may have more sense besides the literal, because God understands all things at once, but a man's writing has but one true sense, which, is that which the author meant when he writ it." Because "the text serves only to guess by, we must satisfy ourselves out of the authors that lived about those times."[55]

[50] Walton, *Prolegomena*, VI.1, 36.
[51] *Introductio ad Lectionem Linguarum Orientalium*, 59.
[52] Walton, *Prolegomena*, VI.1, 36.
[53] Walton, *Prolegomena*, VI.3, 36.
[54] Montaigne, "Of Experience," *Essays*, tr. M. A. Screech (Harmondsworth, 1991), 1208.
[55] Selden, *Table Talk* (London, 1689), "Tradition," "Bible."

It was precisely this difference between a human text, with its defined range of semantic possibilities, and the divine one, characterized by a plenitude of possible meanings, that created the need for a thoroughly contextual practice. Confronted by discrepancies and ambiguities Walton recommended some approaches he thought capable of stabilizing the text: analogy, study of ancient writings and commentaries, and the collation of ancient versions. But it was in the text itself, Walton thought, that the most satisfying solutions were to be found, through context ("sive antecedentia & consequentia") and parallel passages ("locorum parallelorum & similium observatio"). Walton even enumerated a set of rules for scholars: those readings were to be favored that came from the oldest texts that diverged the least from other old texts, and whose meaning was least in dispute. Where two texts seemed equally viable, the advice was to follow the reading already accepted by the Church.[56]

Walton maintained that the purpose of the versions was to illuminate the Original. Here again he had no qualms about relying on the opinion of a Roman Catholic authority. He culled from Cardinal Bellarmine a list of conditions for use of the versions: where there was a printer's error in the Vulgate, where manuscripts varied, when a word or sentence was ambiguous, when the emphasis was on a Hebrew word, to understand the sense of the Original, to differentiate a reading from the infidels', to extract more senses, and to understand Latin borrowings from the Greek and the Hebrew.[57] In general, although a staunch defender of the priority of the original to the versions, Walton acknowledged that sometimes, in the case of clear error, careful comparison of the versions could be used to correct the original. In all other instances, however, the original was to be followed.[58]

Everyone conceded that "the original texts were dictated by the Holy Spirit." Differences only arose over the role of the versions. Walton explained tartly that only a blind person would deny their usefulness for understanding God's word—provided of course that the appropriate philological tools were employed. For the versions presented the views of the early Church and were therefore a treasury of the most authentic biblical interpretation. If the Hebrew text was always considered authoritative, the relationship between text and versions was mutually supportive: the former lent credibility to the latter, while the latter helped make sense of the former.[59] The Church Fathers had explained the necessity of translation: to "serve as so many pipes or channels to convey those living waters of salvation from the fountains to every particular nation and people, that so all may read and hear the wonderful works of God in their own tongue." Presenting

[56] Walton, *Prolegomena*, VI.6, 36-37.

[57] Walton, *Prolegomena*, VII.23, 43. I wish to thank Piet van Boxel for help with understanding Bellarmine's position.

[58] Walton, *Prolegomena*, VII.24, 44.

[59] Walton, "Praefatio," *Biblia sacra polyglotta*, sig.A2^{v}.

the versions so that "they may, at one view, be all compared together," as they were in Polyglot Bibles, was most likely to achieve this result.[60]

Antiquarianization

One of Momigliano's most famous claims for the prominence of antiquarianism in the seventeenth century was that the recourse to objects helped rebut the skepticism that had undermined the *fides* of many a classical text. Walton's attempt to restore the Bible to ancient history and the parallels he drew between Biblical and classical texts exposed Scripture to the scourge of skepticism. The Bible-as-history lay open in the same measure to the Pyrrhonists's challenge to the reliability of classical history. Walton could not of course find a particular artefact that would prove that the Bible was true. Indeed, what was to guarantee that an object's *fides* could be established more reliably than a text's? Rather, we have seen that Walton's defense of the sacred text rested on the claim that God had preserved intact those passages touching on *fides et mores* and that while God's voice was "certain and infallible" the media which He used "to generate faith" were not.[61]

More sophisticated and interesting was his recourse to a mitigated skepticism to parry the full-blown variety. In his discussion of the reliability of the Greek Bible Walton cited assessments of its fragile textual skeleton and concluded that "Mathematical demonstrations are not to be expected, which are not possible in things of this nature." With the Bible reliability could only be ascertained from study the times, careful comparison with other ancient texts, and attention to the agreement and later practice of Jews and Christians.[62] Walton played the Pyrrhonist with the Pyrrhonists: just as their skepticism at the level of practice dissolved into conformity with the customs and practices of their own day, the Bible scholar could in the last resort point to faith lived over time as the most convincing form of textual interpretation. "If there should still remain ambiguity in the word and a double sense," he argued, "one has to turn to the best and to the most ancient codices, to the use and custom of the Church, how the most ancient Fathers of the Church read, or to the ancient versions approved by the Church or whatever reading accepted by the Church today."[63]

The scholar's integrity was still another response to the solvent of skepticism. This challenge was faced across the world of antiquaries; in his contemporary

[60] Walton, *The Considerator Considered* in *Walton Memoirs*, 92-93.

[61] Walton, *Prolegomena*, VIII.24, 44.

[62] Walton, *Prolegomena*, IX.35, 66.

[63] *Prolegomena*, III.51, 29: "Si vero adhuc vox maneat ambigua, & sensum duplicem habeat, respiciendum est ad codices optimos & vetustissimos, ad Ecclesiae usum & consuetudinem, quomodo legerunt veteres Ecclesiae Patres, vel antiquae versiones ab Ecclesia probatae, & vel quaenam lectio ab Ecclesia hodie recepta sit."

Life of Peiresc, Pierre Gassendi explicitly answered the challenge of vanity with a portrait of the scholar's practice as a moral exercise.[64] In the Polyglot, Walton cited the account of how he worked given by a close friend and collaborator, Edward Pocock. Meaning, Pocock wrote, "could be elicited not only from the Hebrew text and the circumstances of its passage but also from the ancient versions (whose authors lived at the same time in which the affairs and language of the Jews flourished), which are principally the Septuagint and Chaldaic; and from the Rabbis, who were most practiced in this language which they acquired knowledge of from birth; and as to words, the more judicious Christians accorded them no little authority; and also from comparing the neighboring languages: Syriac, Chaldaic and Arabic."[65] Pocock makes clear the extent to which the shape of early oriental studies follows directly from the practice of humanism.

Texts had histories, which is to say they changed over time, but so too did languages. This was one of the great discoveries of the century, and Walton did not flinch from its consequences for the stability of the Biblical text. "As, truly, all sublunary things are in flux," Walton wrote, "so nothing is more subject to change than languages."[66] Languages mutated, Walton thought, due to "the vicissitude of all things" subject to "time, the devourer of all": *Tempus edax rerum*.[67] Walton cited for support Bodin's account of linguistic change in the *Method for the Easy Understanding of History*. In addition to the impact of time, Bodin noted the importance of human circumstances, such as conquest or migration, as well as biology and climate.[68] Putting Bodin's maxims to work, Walton rejected the early modern sport of learned etymology-making and insisted that the relationship of languages to one another could only be explained historically, as developing through time "from mutual trade, new colonies and other causes."[69]

Even the alphabet was not fixed. Walton began by quoting, approvingly, Galileo's claim in the *Dialogue on the Two World Systems* that it was "the most stupendous" and the "model of all the admirable human inventions." Walton, an

[64] See my "The 'man of learning' defended: seventeenth-century biographies of scholars and an early modern ideal of excellence," *Representations of the Self from Renaisance to Romanticism*, eds. Patrick Coleman, Jayne Lewis, and Jill Kowalik (Cambridge, 2000), 39-62.

[65] *Prolegomena*, IX.45, 67: "... quae non tantum ex textu Hebraeo & loci circumstantiis erui potest, sed & ex Versionibus antiquis, (quarum auctores vixerunt temporibus, quibus Judaeorum res & lingua magis florerent, & facilius haec addisceretur,) quales praecipue Graeca LXX, & Chaldaica; & ex Rabbinis, qui in hac lingua, quam a teneris unguiculis statim addiscunt, exercitatissimi sunt: & quod ad verba attinet, non parum iis tribuunt Christianorum cordatiores; & tandem ex vicinarum linguarum collatione, Syriacae, Chaldaicae, & Arabicae" (quoting from the appendix of Pocock's *Portae Mosis*).

[66] Walton, *Prolegomena*, I.15, 4: "Ut vero omnia sublunaria in perpetuo fluxu sunt, sic nulla mutationi magis obnoxia sunt quam linguae."

[67] Walton, *Prolegomena*, I.16, 4.

[68] Walton, *Prolegomena*, I.21, 5.

[69] Walton, *Prolegomena*, I.10, 3.

Erasmian long *après la lettre*, was a defender of Galileo when it was still a political act, calling him "the great Galileo" and "the greatest and most illustrious mathematician of our century and most famous for glorious new inventions."[70] But as a human thing the alphabet was subject to time. Every squiggle, in every character, presented the trained eye, and mind, with a sedimentary history of human culture. As if to demonstrate this claim, Walton inserted into his account a large chart that spilled over three-and-a-half pages and contained the alphabets of the nine languages of the Polyglot in majuscule and miniscule and with variants (three Syriac scripts are presented), but also Armenian, Coptic, Illyrian, Cyrillic, Georgian, Runic, and even Chinese writing. This was a map of human culture in a visual shorthand, parallel to the story locked away in the history of the Bible's versions.

The history of the alphabet provided ample illustration of this constant change over time. Walton dissented from Athanasius Kircher's argument crediting the Egyptians with invention of the alphabet and its transmission to the Greeks. He declared instead for a Phoenician vector. He then sought to locate Phoenician among the languages of the ancient Levant and in this effort took a prominent position in this first generation of scholars to bring the Phoenicians, like the Bible, into European history. He followed Scaliger in identifying their script with that of the Samaritans, used by the Jews before Ezra.[71]

The history of the alphabet led Walton far afield. In addition to rejecting Kircher's claim of an Egypto-genetic origin of language, Walton also dismissed the first arguments made on behalf of the other great cultural giant, China.[72] Hieroglyphics, he thought, were totally different "because they do not signify a simple thing, but whole concepts full of mystery; as the beetle signifies not only the animal itself, but also the secret operations which are caried out not only by the sun in the visible world, but also by its Archetype in the intelligible world." Chinese pictograms, by contrast, indicated simple concepts containing no hidden mysteries (*nullo sub eis latente mysterio*). Furthermore, while hieroglyphics made a sacred script intended only for initiates, the Chinese characters were popular.[73]

[70] Walton, *Prolegomena*, II.1, 7: "Super omnes inventiones stupendas... Esto hoc omnium admirandarum inventionum humanarum sigilllum." This citation was prefaced by the words: "Concludam verbis summi nostri seculi Mathematici & novorum inventorum gloria clarissimi, Magni Galilaei...."

[71] Walton, *Prolegomena*, II.10, 8; XIII.7, 89.

[72] Walton, *Prolegomena*, II.15, 9.

[73] Walton, *Prolegomena*, II.20, 10: "... quod illa non rem aliquam simplicem significant, sed integros conceptus mysteriosos: ut scarabaeus, non solum ipsum animal praecise, sed occultas operationes, quas non tantum Sol in mundo visibili, sed et quas Archetypus in mundo intelligibili efficit," Walton's tripartite division invokes a contemporary taxonomy of allegory that distinguished between archetype, prototype and ectype, on which see E. H. Gombrich, "Icones Symbolicae. Philosophies of Symbolism and their Bearing on Art," *Symbolic Images: Studies in the Art of the Renaissance. II* (Chicago, 1985 [1972]), 156.

If languages had a history, their comparison opened up the vista of a comparative history. In his discussion of the Persian language Walton explained that it was a mixture of those of its conquerors, most notably the Turks and the Arabs. Yet there were many puzzling affinities with both German and English. "This is not at all easy for anybody to understand," wrote Walton, as there was no record of any commerce between these peoples or of colonies sent from the one to the other. Scaliger, for one, had rejected any relationship out of hand: "Nothing is so dissimilar from another than German is from Persian." Yet, for Walton, Marcus Boxhorn's "seemed the more probable opinion." He had written that words in common belonged to neither the one language nor the other "but from those from which the Persians and the Germans both took it: from the Scythians or Tartars, whose invasions of the Orient as in the Occident introduced that similarity and identity of words in places so distant from each other."[74] And with this excursus into the history of a language whose Bible was written by medieval Jews, perhaps descendants of Mordechai and Esther, begins the fateful history of Indo-European.

Momigliano speculated that "as soon as the antiquarian leaves his shabby palace ... and enters modern life, he becomes the great collector, he is bound to specialise, and he may well end up as the founder of an institute of fine arts or of comparative anthropology."[75] From the vantage point provided us by Weber's *Das Antike Judentum*, we can see clearly that Walton and those he cites were indeed asking the sorts of questions about ancient Judaism and Christianity that would later be posed by sociologists, anthropologists, and historians of religion. This kind of approach to the past is commemorated in Europe's Polyglot Bibles and described for us, in detail, in Walton's *Prolegomena.* The absence of an adequate history of their questions has obscured the *longue durée* of antiquarianism in the various methodologies of the human sciences.

But this absence is also a result of the triumph of the New Science, which has tended to obscure the view of intellectual leadership as it appeared to Europeans of the seventeenth century. Yet we know this was the case. Praise of oriental scholarship within the circle of scholars that produced the Polyglot echoes this trope.

The edition of the Aramaic Targum, or paraphrase, published in 1649 by Francis Tayler, one of Laud's scholars, was prefaced by an extraordinary letter written to him by the great Selden in 1646. Lacking knowledge of "Orientalis

[74] Walton, *Prolegomena*, XVI.4, 101-2: "Probabilis tamen mihi videtur Boxhornii sententia ... Vocum istiusmodi originem nec a Persis, nec a Germanis petendam; sed ab iis a quibus tam Persae, quam Germani ea accepere; a Scythis sive Tartaris, quorum irruptiones tam in Orientem, quam in Occidentem vocum quarundam similitudinem & identitatem in locis longe a se dissitis introduxerunt."

[75] Momigliano, *Classical Foundations*, 54.

disciplinae, seu Talmudicae," Selden wrote, Europeans were condemned to ignorance "of the first origins of affairs and customs of sacred letters." Under these circumstances the most erudite at best "enact triumphs now ridiculous, now pernicious" and, at worst, "most audaciously fashion dreams in their own interest and, most craftily, impose them, like a burden, on others." This was, Selden added, typical of the *Pontificii*—should we not understand this as referring to the supporters of the Pope and the Papacy?—and those others who, if controverted, immediately decided to conceal "the new lights as if risen in the sky." Intellectual dishonesty was embodied in these men who sought to hide something as plainly visible as a star. The allusion to the Galileo affair that follows is too precise to be coincidence: "Certainly, we trust the starry messengers (*Sidereis nuntiis*) who, having been made lynx-like (*Lyncei*), with the aid of telescopes taught that there were new stars." Galileo's *Siderius Nuncius* (1610) proclaimed his discovery of the moons of Jupiter, and he was a member of the Accademia dei Lincei. Selden drew a distinction between these Galileans and one who "trusted rashly the sharpness of his vision however depraved" and discerned "I know not how many suns and moons in the skies and dragons and lions in the clouds." The use of the telescope made it possible for even those otherwise ignorant to see sharply. "Which likewise," Selden concluded, bringing the parallel to a head, "should be said of the practice of Oriental studies, which reveals the rise of all Christianity." Scholars like Tayler, and by extension all those who worked on the London Polyglot, were heroes of intellectual inquiry in the same praiseworthy way as Galileo. For they provided the tools with which the properly educated could acquire knowledge of the ancient Near East and thus see clearly and truly the rise of Christianity, like the birth of new stars in the sky.[76]

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[76] *Walton Memoirs*, I, 41n-43n.: "Orientalis disciplinae, seu Talmudicae, in eo monumenta sunt ac vestigia aliquot non contemnenda. Certe sine ea triumphos agit nunc Ridiculos, nunc Perniciosos nimis in Occidente, pomposa et alioquin docta multorum Ignorantia; quae dum Origines Primosque rerum morumque in sacris literis occurentium Fontes nimium nescit, Somnia sibi, sed quae e re inter homines sua fuerint, audacissime finit, aliisque vaferrime, ut sarcrinas, imponit. Sic Pontificii, non raro. Sic alii; qui et *Nova Lumina* sibi velut coelitus orta, si quis adversetur, statim, obtendunt. Certe Sidereis nuntiis, qui, Telescopii vitrei beneficio, Lyncei facti, stellas docuere novas, credimus, gratias habemus, maximi eos idque meritissimo facimus. Non ita, ubi quis, suae tantum oculorum aciei, utcunque depravatae, temere confisus, nescio quot lunas solesve in Coelo, aut Leones Draconesve in nubibus, cernere se asseverat. Telescopii usu communicato, idem ipsum cum Nunciis illis cernimus ipsi, alias ignari. Quod pariter de Orientalis disciplinae, unde Christianismi totius ortus, usu dicendum. Citra eam, creberrimo in Sacrorum judiciis fallimur, fallimusque conjectando ingeniique qualiscunque venditando portenta. Sed haec obiter. Ut lucem cum primis meretur *illua tua Versio*, ita a studiosis, quorum pauci originem intelligunt, summopere desideratur." I thank G. J. Toomer for his transcription of the letter which I have used to amend slightly this text.