

# Targum as Interpretation and the Interpretation of the Targum: Joel 2:12–14 in the Targum and Its Latin Translations of the Sixteenth Century

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Translation always involves interpretation, although students in biblical studies regularly learn first to translate and then to interpret what they have translated. That order, however, is impossible to maintain. In order to illustrate and underline that claim, this article traces the historical journey of one biblical passage, Joel 2:12–14, from the Hebrew Bible via the Jewish Aramaic translation to the Latin versions of that translation in the sixteenth century. We will see that each process of translation was interpreting and translating at the same time. It is not for nothing that the word for translating and interpreting in Hebrew is the same.<sup>1</sup>

The Hebrew text of Joel 2:12–14 is quite metaphorical, prophetic, and full of moments that force a translator to consider the deeper meaning of the sentence. The Jewish Aramaic translation—normally indicated by the name Targum, which means “translation”—attempts to render these verses as clear as possible for the Jewish people of the first centuries of the common era. Yet achieving this clarity involved transla-

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<sup>1</sup> See Gustav H. Dalman, *Aramäisch-Neuhebräisches Handwörterbuch zu Targum, Talmud und Midrasch* (Hildesheim & Zürich & New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 1987), 448, s.v. תרגם.

tion, interpretation and even paraphrasing some elements. When sixteenth-century Christian scholars began to study the Targums they wanted to make them accessible to people who lacked knowledge of Aramaic. In translating the Targums into Latin, they evidently found the Targums not clear enough, and thus the translators had to interpret and choose between different possible translations.

## HEBREW TEXT

Joel 1 warns of the coming of a locust plague, which is seen as signalling the coming Day of the Lord. The people are summoned to return to God, to mourn. The second chapter shifts attention away from the locusts to a human enemy that, like the locusts, are coming to plunder the land.<sup>2</sup> Again, Joel calls for repentance and a return to the Lord. The anguish underlying both chapters stems from the fact that the locusts and the enemies will not leave anything behind and famine will set in. Then, even offerings to the Lord shall be impossible, and the people of Israel, without anything to sacrifice, will be unable to turn to the Lord.

<sup>12</sup> “And even now,” utterance of the LORD,

“Turn/return to me with all your heart  
and with fasting and with weeping and with lamentation.”

<sup>13</sup> And rend your heart and not your garments  
and turn/return to the LORD, your God,  
for gracious and compassionate is He,  
long-suffering and abundant in mercy,  
and repenting Himself of the evil.

<sup>14</sup> Who knows whether He will turn/return and repent  
and leave a blessing behind Him –  
a meal-offering and a drink-offering unto the LORD, your God.  
(Joel 1:12–14)

This passage is united not only by the use of the words “(re)turn” (12, 14), “heart” (12, 13) and “repent” (13, 14), but also by all the words be-

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<sup>2</sup> Willem van der Meer, *Oude woorden worden nieuw: De opbouw van het boek Joël* (Kampen: Kok, 1989), 285.

longing to the realm of penance and grief.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, it must be acknowledged that there is a change of speaker in the text.<sup>4</sup> First, the Lord speaks through his prophet Joel, but then the prophet speaks about the Lord—as if verses 13–14 are meant to clarify God’s words in verse 12. Verse 13 reflects critically on the outward actions in verse 12, while verse 14 looks forward to a possible, though not inevitable, salvation from God’s side.<sup>5</sup>

Several problems confront translators of this passage. Firstly, what is the exact meaning of the verb שׁוּב, “to turn, return,” in this context, and what is the relationship between the blessing of verse 14 and the offerings? Secondly, how does one translate the metaphor “rend your heart”? Is it clear to the reader if one does so literally? Thirdly, there are some theological problems: for example, is God’s (re)turn (v. 14) exactly the same as a human’s return (vv. 12–13) or must a translator choose two different words? Another theological problem is the meaning of מִי־יֹדֵעַ, “who knows.” Does this refer to hope, uncertainty or despair?<sup>6</sup> And how to translate it in this context? And last, but not least, how is one to understand the “spiritualization” of the cultic actions?

The last question needs some elaboration, because it will appear that translators handle the “spiritualization” of the text in various ways. Their choices are closely linked to their implicit theology, and the text appears to be interpreted within this theological framework. The critical, metaphorical reflection on the literal, physical form of rending one’s garments in verse 13 needs to be interpreted by a translator. It does not necessarily exclude all external acts—there is, after all, a call for fasting, weeping and lamentation in verse 12<sup>7</sup>—but Joel does underline the internal sincerity of the people’s return. In this regard, Joel differs from

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<sup>3</sup> Van der Meer, *Oude woorden worden nieuw*, 63, 71.

<sup>4</sup> Van der Meer, *Oude woorden worden nieuw*, 69.

<sup>5</sup> Van der Meer, *Oude woorden worden nieuw*, 163–64.

<sup>6</sup> Commentators regularly refer to God’s sovereignty, e.g., Douglas Stuart, *Hosea–Jonah*, WBC 31 (Waco: Word Books, 1987), 252.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Stuart, *Hosea–Jonah*, 252, also referring to Hosea 14:2 and Amos 5:4.

other prophets who appear to exclude cultic forms and ask for justice and mercy toward their fellow Israelites.

In his book on the spiritualization of the cult Hans-Jürgen Hermisson draws attention to three ways in which the Hebrew Bible responds critically to the cult:<sup>8</sup>

1. Justice *instead* of the cult, as some prophets appear to say.
2. Justice or individual prayer can be *appreciated* as cult, as in Ps 141:2.
3. Only the cultic actions of a just, committed or upright *person* pleases God.<sup>9</sup>

Joel's words seem to belong to the third category: only the genuine return of an Israelite to God is valued.<sup>10</sup> The question is whether the authors of the Targum and later Christian scholars thought along similar lines.

## ARAMAIC TEXT

Targums are Jewish translations of the Hebrew Bible into Aramaic. Although there are various Targums of the Pentateuch, there is only one Targum to the Prophets, the so-called Targum Jonathan. The official

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<sup>8</sup> Hans-Jürgen Hermisson, *Sprache und Ritus im altisraelitischen Kult: Zur "Spiritualisierung" der Kultbegriffe im alten Testament* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1965), 118.

<sup>9</sup> The triplet of "just, committed, upright" is mine, Hermisson lacks the word "committed."

<sup>10</sup> See, e.g., John Merlin Powis Smith et al., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Micah, Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Obadiah and Joel*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1912), 105; Leslie C. Allen, *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah*, NICOT (London etc.: Hodder and Stroughton, 1976), 79; Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 252; C. van Leeuwen, *Joël* (Nijkerk: Callenbach, 1993), 105; David W. Baker, *Joel, Obadiah, Malachi*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 81. This is not the interpretation of Hans Walter Wolff, *Dodekapropheten 2: Joel und Amos* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1969), 62, who differentiates between Joel's words and the Jerusalem cult: "nicht im funktionierenden Gottesdienst Jerusalems das Ende der Wege Gottes sehen, sondern unter dem ergangenen prophetischen Wort auf den warten, der sich unbestreitbar als der Herr in der Völkerwelt erweisen will."



Targums were used both in the synagogue (where they functioned as a translation and interpretation alongside the Hebrew text) and at home (where Jews prepared themselves for the synagogue service by reading the Hebrew text twice and the Aramaic translation once).<sup>11</sup> Flesher and Chilton note that the Targums follow several rules of translation, three of which apply to Joel 2:12–14:<sup>12</sup>

1. When a Targum translates or presents the original text, it does so literally.
2. When a Targum adds material into the translation, it integrates the addition smoothly so as not to interrupt its flow.
3. Poetic passages are often expanded rather than translated.

### Text and Interpretation

Translating a Targum is, therefore, a combination of rendering each Hebrew word in the same order and smoothly making small additions to give the right interpretation to the reader. Since poetic Hebrew is more difficult to understand than prosaic, Targum Jonathan adds supplemental words to prophecies and poetry in order to explain them to the reader. This can be seen in the following translation of Joel 2:12–14:<sup>13</sup>

#### Translation of Hebrew Joel 2:12

“And even now,” utterance of  
the LORD,  
“Turn/return to me  
with all your heart

#### Translation of Targum Joel 2:12

“And even now,” said  
the LORD,  
“Turn/return to my work/service/  
worship/cult with all your heart

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<sup>11</sup> See Alberdina Houtman, “The Role of the Targum in Jewish Education in Medieval Europe,” in *A Jewish Targum in a Christian World*, ed. Alberdina Houtman et al., Jewish and Christian Perspectives 27 (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2014), 81–98.

<sup>12</sup> Paul V. M. Flesher & Bruce Chilton, *The Targums: A Critical Introduction* (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2011), 40, mention seven rules, of which the following three are especially adaptable to Joel 2:12–14.

<sup>13</sup> I do not completely follow the translation of Kevin J. Cathcart & Robert P. Gordon, *The Targum of the Minor Prophets*, The Aramaic Bible 14 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1989), 69, because I try to link the translation of the Targum as closely as possible to the translation of the Hebrew in order to facilitate a comparison of the two.

and with fasting and with  
weeping and with lamentation.”

and<sup>14</sup> with fasting and with  
weeping and with lamentation.”

The Targum is quite literal here, even to the point of not defining the verb שׁוּב. Two things are clarified, however: the “utterance” of the Lord is considered something that the Lord has “said” to Joel and which Joel now repeats before his audience. The theologically vague “turn to me” is also clarified:<sup>15</sup> A human being cannot literally turn to God—how would he find Him?—but he can return to his service. Yet the Aramaic word for “service” is still rather vague and can mean, for example, that people either work for God by keeping the commandments or serve God by joining the cult.<sup>16</sup>

**Translation of Hebrew Joel 2:13**

And rend your heart  
and not [rend] your garments  
and turn/return to  
the LORD, your God,  
for gracious and compassionate is He,  
long-suffering and  
abundant in mercy,  
and repenting Himself of the evil.

**Translation of Targum Joel 2:13**

And<sup>17</sup> remove wickedness from your heart  
and not by<sup>18</sup> rending your garments  
and turn/return<sup>19</sup> to the work/service/cult  
of the LORD,<sup>20</sup> your God,  
for gracious and compassionate is He,  
removing anger and  
multiplying doing good deeds,<sup>21</sup>  
and returning His word from the evil.

<sup>14</sup> Omitted by Ms c, implying that the four things with which one should return to God are not on the same level, but making “with all your heart” the first condition and the fasting, weeping, and lamentation the second.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Josep Ribera-Florit, “Targum de Joel. Targum of Joel,” *Miscelánea de Estudios Árabes y Hebraicos* 53 (2004): 271–86, esp. 281.

<sup>16</sup> See Gustav H. Dalman, *Aramäisch-Neuhebräisches Handwörterbuch zu Targum, Talmud und Midrasch* (Hildesheim & Zürich & New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 1987), 245.

<sup>17</sup> Omitted in Ms z, thereby implying that verse 13 is not an addition to the commandments in verse 12.

<sup>18</sup> Ms c reads “like,” making it a comparison.

<sup>19</sup> Ms c reads “draw near,” implying a more cultic sense of the next word.

<sup>20</sup> Omitted by Ms c.

<sup>21</sup> The first and second Rabbinic Bibles add “and truth,” see Targum Exodus 34:6.

Again, Joel's words are concretized, but not in the manner I have sketched earlier. I joined several modern commentators in interpreting the rending of the heart as a sign of sincerity, the heart being a symbol of the innermost part of a human being. But one look in a Hebrew dictionary reveals that the heart in Hebrew has nothing to do with feelings or honesty, but rather with determination, purpose, or courage. Where is a person going and what are his intentions? Rending your heart is therefore not about simply being honest or feeling upright, but rather about making a sincere, purposeful repentance and return to God. In this sense, the Targum is quite straightforward: remove wickedness from your heart! This expression is based on a verse from Deuteronomy (10:16), where a similar metaphor is used: namely, the circumcision of the heart. Targum Jonathan consciously alludes to this verse by using the verb "remove."<sup>22</sup>

Again, returning to God is interpreted as returning to his work, service or cult. One manuscript is more concrete by using the verb קרב, "to draw near," a technical term for going to the sanctuary, sacrificing or praying. This manuscript interprets the whole phrase as something cultic.

God's characteristics are also concretized, because his deeds are much more important than his feelings or his traits.<sup>23</sup> Instead of being long-suffering and abundant in mercy, he now concretely removes his anger and multiplies his good deeds. Finally, the theological question about whether God can turn back as humans do is answered in a negative way: God does not return or change his mind,<sup>24</sup> but he returns his word, his decree. This aligns with what Rabbi Abbahu has said: "The God of Israel said, to me [David] spoke the Rock of Israel (2 Sam. 23:3) [means]: I rule man; who rules Me? [It is] the righteous; for I make a decree and he

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<sup>22</sup> So Yehuda Komlosch, "The Exegetical Method in Targum to Joel," in *Beer-Sheva II: Studies by the Department of Bible and Ancient Near East*, eds. Mordechai Cogan & Shmuel Abramsky (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1985), 131–35 (134).

<sup>23</sup> Ribera-Florit, "Targum de Joel," 281.

<sup>24</sup> So Cathcart & Gordon, *Minor Prophets*, 69, n. 24, referring to 1 Samuel 15:29.

[may] annul it” (*b. Mo’ed Qaṭ* 16b). This is also more concrete than the Hebrew text about God’s repentance.

An addition was made in Ms Solger, which found its way into the Rabbinic Bibles and from there into many Jewish and Christian works: in that manuscript, God is not only doing “good deeds,” but also “acting truthfully.” The combination “good deeds and truth” stems from Targum Exodus 34:6, where we find a similar description of God’s hopeful characteristics. Again, Joel’s words are linked to words from the Torah.

**Translation of Hebrew Joel 2:14**

Who knows whether

He will turn

and repent

and leave a blessing behind Him –

a meal-offering and a drink-offering  
unto the LORD, your God.

**Translation of Targum Joel 2:14**

Whoever knows that

he has sins in his hand,<sup>25</sup>

let him turn back from them

and he<sup>26</sup> will be shown compassion;

and whoever repents,

his sins shall be forgiven,

and he will receive

blessings and consolations,

and his prayer will be like that of a man

who presents offerings and libations in

the Sanctuary<sup>27</sup> of the LORD, your God.

Here, the Targum strives to explain the words of this verse within its theological framework for an audience without temple and sacrificial service. Because of the inherent impossibility of rendering “who knows” in a way literally referring to God, which would leave the Jewish people with great uncertainty and without strong encouragement, the Targum had it simply refer to the human person: “who knows..., he will return and repent.” Furthermore, after verse 13—which says that God does return his word from evil—it is theologically unsound to doubt God’s benevolence.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Ms c reads “in him” instead of “in his hand.”

<sup>26</sup> Ms c reads “we and he,” applying the verse to the audience as well.

<sup>27</sup> Many manuscripts and early prints read “in the house of the Sanctuary,” a more normal construction in Aramaic.

<sup>28</sup> Similar pastoral notions can be found in the Christian tradition, for example

The last clause of verse 14 poses an additional problem: namely, the unclear relationship between the blessing and the offerings in the Hebrew text. If the offerings are part of that blessing, how can the verse be explained to an audience that cannot bring offerings, seeing as the Targum was most likely translated for an audience after the destruction of the Second Temple?<sup>29</sup> To solve this problem the Targum inserts a reference to prayer.<sup>30</sup> While the blessings in the Hebrew text may literally yield the offerings, because the harvest is spared, the Targum sees the offerings as a grateful reaction to the blessings that are not necessarily interpreted in terms of fertility. Gratefulness is expressed through prayers, which in their turn are counted as offerings.

## Conclusions

Where the Hebrew was metaphorical and compact, the Targum clarifies by using simple, direct language and adding contemporary examples such as prayer. Some questions are not entirely solved, such as the meaning of the Hebrew שׁוּב, “turn, return.”

The three options of Hermisson can now be considered. The Targum certainly does not interpret Joel 2:12–14 in the light of option one, justice instead of the cult. There are too many highly valued cultic ele-

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Gregory Nazianzen, *Oration* 16, 14, who himself answers Joel’s question by “This I know certainly” in his oration, titled “The Silence of the Father” in times of severe hailstorms (see <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/310216.htm>), and John Calvin in his commentary on this verse, who comments *Quis enim scit? Hoc est, Deus est placabilis, et non est desperandum*, “For who knows, which means, God is placable and we must not despair” (see <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/calvin/joel/2.htm>).

<sup>29</sup> Making the biblical text up-to-date again is one of the main motives of Targum Jonathan, see Eveline van Staalduine-Sulman, *The Targum of Samuel*, Studies in the Aramaic Interpretation of Scriptures (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2002), 117–21.

<sup>30</sup> Prayer is very important for Targum Jonathan, see Cathcart & Gordon, *Minor Prophets*, 8; Michael Maher, “The Meturgemanim and Prayer,” *JJS* 41 (1990): 226–46. A similar movement from the expression “rend your heart” to prayer can be found in the Christian tradition, e.g. Cyprian of Carthage, *Laps.*, 3; Aurelius Augustine, *Civ.*, 32; John Chrysostom, *Homily*, 19.

ments that appear in the text to consider this option: fasting, lamentation, the service to the Lord—even if this term is ambiguous, it does indicate that the Targum does not regard God's service as negative—prayer that is appreciated as an offering, and the mentioning of the sanctuary of the Lord.

The second option is clearly added to the text: prayer and the cultic service of God are appreciated equally. Hermisson's example, Ps 141:2, is almost copied by the Targum: Prayer is not considered "as incense," as in the Psalm, but "as offerings and libations."

The third option—that only the worship of the upright or the just is pleasing to God—is still visible in the Targum interpretation, but the Targum softened it and gave it another character. It is softened, because the contrast between the rending of the heart and the rending of clothes is reduced. The Targum simply shows the path from sin via repentance to forgiveness and blessing. It is not removed from Targum Jonathan; on the contrary, it is added to some other passages.<sup>31</sup> It is given also another character more generally, because the Targum infuses the whole passage with an active and slightly moralizing tone.<sup>32</sup> One must remove wickedness and sin, turn to the Lord's service—whatever that means exactly—and pray. The Lord is an example of compassion, who removes his anger and multiplies his good deeds. Where modern commentators see option three (or even option one), the Targum here prefers option two and diminishes, but does not remove, option three.

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<sup>31</sup> E.g. Targum Hosea 2:4: "Reprove the congregation of Israel and say to her that, because she does not humble herself in my worship, my Memra will not hear her prayer, until she removes her evil deeds from before her face..." and Targum Malachi 1:11: "on every occasion when you fulfil my will I hear your prayer."

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Cathcart & Gordon, *Minor Prophets*, 8: "There is ... a strong moralizing and educative aspect" and "to encourage the reader (or hearer) to be a doer of those things that were acknowledged to represent the heart of true religion."

## Hermeneutics

Returning to the Hebrew text, we must ask ourselves whether we did not interpret it from our own perspective. If we take the Hebrew word לֵב to mean “heart”—or, more fully, “with all your heart”—it is the question whether we really understand what is meant or whether we rely on our understanding “heart” today? Most commentators, as mentioned above, interpret the heart as something “internal,” the source of “sincerity.” Conversion, for example, must be “sincere and heartfelt.”<sup>33</sup> Yet commentators also regularly say that לֵב refers to the mind (the will)<sup>34</sup> and is the source of “moral purpose and resolve”<sup>35</sup> Would it not, then, be better to translate it as “with a complete commitment”?<sup>36</sup> Is it not commitment what the Deuteronomist asked for: serve the Lord alone and keep all his commandments?

The translation “a complete commitment of oneself” appears in an article by a Roman Catholic author, who did not stress the opposition between the inner and outer repentance. Another Roman Catholic author even stressed the strong connection between inward and outward, between mind and body, on the basis of Joel 2:13: “We must turn to God ... with fasting because ‘our repentance is to be incorporate into the body, no less than the sin was.’”<sup>37</sup> Conversely, a study about fasting by a Lutheran author stressed that the God of Joel “wanted more than external show.” Directly after this comment, the author proceeded to discuss the fasting in the New Testament, namely Jesus’ utterance in the Gospel

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<sup>33</sup> Allen, *The Books*, 79.

<sup>34</sup> So Stuart, *Hosea–Jonah*, 252; Smith, *Critical*, 105.

<sup>35</sup> So Allen, *The Books*, 79, referring to S. R. Driver.

<sup>36</sup> So Mirosław Łanoszka, “The Relationship between God and Israel as a Biblical Portrayal of the Bond Between God and the Person in the Light of Deuteronomy 1:1–4:43,” <http://czasopisma.upjp2.edu.pl/thepersonandthechallenges/article/viewFile/658/657>.

<sup>37</sup> Owen F. Cummings, *Eucharist and Ecumenism: The Eucharist Across the Ages and Traditions* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2013), 84, quoting from Kenneth Stevenson, “Lancelot Andrewes on Ash Wednesday: A Seventeenth-Century Case Study on How to Start Lent,” *Theology* 108 (2005): 3–13, esp. 5.

of Matthew that while fasting you must not appear sombre as the hypocrites do.<sup>38</sup> Thus, while we may literally translate “with all your heart” and not explain what that means, modern Roman Catholics seem to associate it with commitment and Protestants with sincerity. The contrast between inner and outer conversion is stressed by Protestants and not by Roman Catholics.<sup>39</sup>

The medieval Jewish commentators took an intermediary position. David Qimhi combined “with all your heart” with Psalm 12:3, where the author is speaking of a “double heart.” Qimhi then stressed that conversion must be inward (“hidden”), although he also admitted that outward signs can lead to true conversion.<sup>40</sup> The contrast between rending your heart and rending your clothes is not necessarily considered a contrast between inside and outside. Only Rashi offered such an interpretation—“rending your clothes does not impress anyone”—but he, like Qimhi, explained that if you rend your heart, you do not have to rend your garments; God will be merciful and you will not have to mourn. Abraham Ibn Ezra cleaved close to the Targum when he stated that the rending of the heart is like removing the heart’s armour in order to make it acknowledge the truth.<sup>41</sup> In conclusion, we have to admit that the Jewish translation differs as much from Christian translations as modern interpretations differ from each other!

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<sup>38</sup> Joel Prange, “A Study of Fasting in the Scriptures and the Life of the Church,” <http://essays.wls.wels.net/bitstream/handle/123456789/3755/PrangeFasting.pdf?sequence=1>. He wants to give an overview of all the fasting passages in the Bible, but by passing from Joel to Matthew unconsciously made the connection between these two passages.

<sup>39</sup> The Protestant preference for sincerity might well be an Enlightenment trait, as well, because it is a combination of the ideal of spirit above body (spirituality above rituals) and of individuality in choices. See also my “The Evangelical Movement in the Enlightenment,” in *Evangelical Theology in Transition: Essays Under the Auspices of the Center of Evangelical and Reformation Theology*, eds. Van der Kooi, E. van Staalduin-Sulman, and A. W. Zwiep, AmSTaR 1 (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 2012), 40–67.

<sup>40</sup> See texts and translations in Gottfried Widmer, *Die Kommentare von Raschi, Ibn Ezra, Radaq zu Joel* (Basel: Volksdruckerei, 1945), 70.

<sup>41</sup> Widmer, *Die Kommentare*, 72.



## LATIN TRANSLATIONS

Targums were meant to clarify the Hebrew text, and therefore Christian scholars in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries began to study, edit and translate these Targums. If Christians read the Hebrew text differently from both Jews and each other, then they certainly also differed in their reading of the Aramaic Targums.

Translating the Targums in general started five hundred years ago. In 1517, two major projects were finished. The first was the Rabbinic Bible, edited by a converted Jew named Felix Pratensis and printed by Daniel Bombergh in Venice. It contained the Hebrew and the Aramaic texts, as well as some Jewish commentaries on all the biblical books.<sup>42</sup> The second was the Complutensian Polyglot Bible, edited by scholars under the supervision of Cardinal Francisco Jiménez de Cisneros and printed by Arnao Guillon de Brocas.<sup>43</sup> It contained the Old and New Testaments in Hebrew, Greek and Latin; only in the Pentateuch was the Aramaic version with a Latin translation provided. The other Targums were considered too paraphrastic. Both Bibles would be the first in a long tradition: seven Rabbinic Bibles were edited within two centuries, along with seven Polyglot Bibles with an increasing number of languages.<sup>44</sup> The Aramaic Pentateuch with accompanying Latin translation was an inspiration for subsequent scholars. Several of them made other Targums widely available by translating these texts. The Minor Prophets were especially popular.<sup>45</sup> Latin translations of the Targums were usually assisted by the Vulgate: the translator took the Vulgate as the base text and changed whatever needed to be adapted to the Targum text.

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<sup>42</sup> Felix Pratensis, *Arba'ah ve-esrim* ... (Venice: Daniel van Bomberghen, 1517).

<sup>43</sup> Franciscus Jiménez de Cisneros (ed.), *Vetus testamentum multiplici lingua nunc primo impressum* ... (Complutense: Brocario, 1517).

<sup>44</sup> See Eveline van Staalduine-Sulman, *Justifying Christian Aramaism: Editions and Latin Translations of the Targums from the Complutensian to the London Polyglot Bible (1517-1657)*, Jewish and Christian Perspectives 33 (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2017), 238–39.

<sup>45</sup> Van Staalduine-Sulman, *Justifying Christian Aramaism*, 234–35.

Some general comments must be made. The Targums were regarded highly in these times, especially Targum Onkelos to the Torah and Targum Jonathan to the Prophets. Christian scholars dated these two from the first century before Christ or perhaps during Jesus' life. That date was important, because it meant that these translations were made before the Jews rejected Christ and went in their own theological direction.<sup>46</sup> Opinions differed on whether or not the Holy Spirit had inspired these translations. Some scholars, however, remained convinced that one could learn about Jesus Christ—not the Messiah in general—from these early Targum texts.<sup>47</sup> At the same time, the Targums were systematically called *paraphrasis* and never *versio*, implying that their status was beneath that of a real translation.

### The Translators of Targum Joel

Five different scholars in these centuries translated the Targum of Joel in particular. Their history begins in the South with a Jewish Catholic in Spain, continues with two Catholic scholars in Paris and one Jewish Protestant in Germany, and finally comes to a Catholic in Antwerp.

Pablo Núñez Coronel (c. 1480-1534) was most likely a Jewish convert.<sup>48</sup> He worked, together with two other Jewish converts, Alfonso de Alcalá and Alfonso de Zamora, in the Polyglot Bible project of Cardinal Francisco Jiménez de Cisneros at the University of Alcalá de Henares. The Cardinal wanted to make the first complete Polyglot Bible, both Old and New Testament, in three languages. Yet in the Pentateuch he added a fourth language, Aramaic. It was accompanied by a Latin translation, produced by Núñez Coronel. The Cardinal did know of other

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<sup>46</sup> Van Staaldvine-Sulman, *Justifying Christian Aramaism*, 246.

<sup>47</sup> Van Staaldvine-Sulman, *Justifying Christian Aramaism*, 247.

<sup>48</sup> See Jesús de Prado Plumed, "El hebraísmo y la Biblia Políglota cisneriana: Las fuentes de la Veritas hebraica / Hebraism and the Cisnerian Polyglot Bible: The Sources of Veritas Hebraica," in *V Centenario de la Biblia Políglota Complutense ...*, ed. José Luis Gonzalo Sánchez-Molero (Madrid: Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Servicio de Publicaciones, 2014), 246–54, esp. 246 n. 1.

Targums, though he did not want to add those to his Polyglot Bible, because he considered them corrupt and filled with talmudic tales and trifle: in short, not worthy to be published alongside the Holy Scriptures. Nevertheless, he allowed his team to produce manuscripts with these Targums and their accompanying Latin translations. Some of these manuscripts have survived until today.

After the burning of the Talmuds in Rome in 1553 and a ban on the Talmud and other Jewish books in 1559, Southern Europe was no longer the centre for printing Jewish literature. Now Paris, a city previously without Jews, saw the growth of a “Jewish” quarter, where scholars and printers collaborated in the production of Hebrew and Aramaic texts.<sup>49</sup> The *Collège Royal* became famous for its study of biblical languages. Hebrew was taught by François Vatable (Franciscus Vatablus, d. 1547) and Paul Paradis (from 1530-1549), the latter being a Jewish convert from Venice. Vatable’s pupil, Jean Cinquarbre (1514-1587), was professor of Hebrew and Syriac at the Collège de France from 1554 onward. He translated Targum Lamentations,<sup>50</sup> Hosea,<sup>51</sup> Joel, Amos, and Ruth.<sup>52</sup> His comments on the translation are meant to elucidate the Aramaic text in all its facets and also to interpret it in a Christological way. An example from the notes to Joel will suffice to demonstrate this: the “teacher of righteousness” (2:23) is explained as “Jesus Christ, our Lord, Son of God” with a reference to 1 Peter 2.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Cf. Theodor W. Dunkelgrün, *The Multiplicity of Scripture: The Confluence of Textual Traditions in the Making of the Antwerp Polyglot Bible (1568-1573)*, PhD diss. (Chicago, 2012), 75.

<sup>50</sup> Iohannes Quinquarboreus, *Targum seu paraphrasis Caldaica in Lamentationes Ieremiae Prophetarum, nunc primum latini donata* (Paris: Martinus Iuvenus, 1549).

<sup>51</sup> Iohannes Quinquarboreus, *Targum seu paraphrasis Caldaica, quae etiam Syriaca dicitur, Ionathae Caldae antiquissimi... Scripturarum interpretis, in Hoseae prophetarum... nunc primum latinate donata* (Paris: Martinus Iuvenus, 1554).

<sup>52</sup> Iohannes Quinquarboreus, *Targum, seu paraphrasis Chaldaica, quae etiam Syriaca dicitur, Ionathani Caldae ... in Hoseae, Joelis, et Amosi, gravissimas prophetias, atque etiam in Ruthae historiam et Lamentationes Ieremiae Prophetarum incerto auctore Caldae, nunc primum latinitate donata* (Paris: Martinus Iuvenus, 1556).

<sup>53</sup> Quinquarboreus, *Targum, seu paraphrasis Chaldaica*, 65.

In the same fashion Gilbert G  n  brard, a Benedictine exegete and orientalist (1537-1597), translated Targum Joel (not completely, but in those verses that deviated from the Hebrew). He wrote a commentary on the prophet of Joel in 1563, in which he makes use of the works of Rashi, Ibn Ezra and David Qimhi.<sup>54</sup> He provides a Latin translation of the Hebrew in one column, in which he has references to alternative translations in the Targum. After the Bible verse with Targumic references G  n  brard gives a short, mostly Christological, explanation of the verse, followed by the notes of the three Jewish commentators. For example, his explanation of 2:28 (= 3:1) is that Peter already interpreted this verse as a prophecy about the coming of the Holy Spirit. He could agree with the explanation of the Jewish authors, but criticized Ibn Ezra for linking the verse to the period of King Jehoshaphat.<sup>55</sup>

Immanuel Tremellius (also: Tremelius; c. 1510-1580) was born the ghetto of Ferrara, and known as Emanuele Tremellio.<sup>56</sup> He learnt Hebrew at home and in the synagogue along with Latin (not uncommon for Italian Jews). He even learnt Greek. The Reformation movement was strong in Ferrara in the 1530s and in 1540 Tremellius was baptized by Reginald Poole, a Calvinist-minded cardinal in Padua. Tremellius then became teacher of Hebrew in the convent of San Frediano until the Inquisition began in early 1542. Many protestants fled to Geneva, others—including Tremellius—to Strasbourg. There he married and was employed once again as a teacher of Hebrew, first in Strasbourg, later in Cambridge, Zweibr  cken and Heidelberg. In Heidelberg he produced a Latin translation of the entire Hebrew Bible and of the Targum to the

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<sup>54</sup> Gilbert Genebrardus, *Ioelis Prophet   vaticinium et chaldaea eius paraphrasis ab Hebraeo differt, cum commentariis trium Rabbidorum Selomonis Iarhii, Abrahami Abben Ezrae, Davidis Kimhii* (Paris: Martinus Iuvenes, 1563).

<sup>55</sup> Genebrardus, *Ioelis Prophet   vaticinium*, 53.

<sup>56</sup> His life and work is described in two biographies: Wilhelm Recker, *Immanuel Tremellius: Ein Proselytenleben im Zeitalter der Reformation*, 2nd ed. (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1890); Kenneth Austin, *From Judaism to Calvinism: The Life and Writings of Immanuel Tremellius (c. 1510-1580)*, St. Andrews Studies in Reformation History (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2007).

Minor Prophets in 1567.<sup>57</sup> He justified his translation “on the grounds that the more versions one has of the biblical texts, the better understanding one will have as a result, through a comparative study.”<sup>58</sup> Tremellius tried to translate his Targum as literally (*verbum de verbo*) as possible.

Benito Arias Montano (1527-1598)<sup>59</sup> was a famous theologian and one of the foremost scholars of oriental languages.<sup>60</sup> He had studied at the University of Alcalá de Henares, where he had learnt his exegetical methods that combined Hebrew and Aramaic sources and aimed for a well-founded correction of the Vulgate and Septuagint texts.<sup>61</sup> His outstanding knowledge of the Semitic languages gave him the nickname *Jerónimo español*, “the Spanish Jerome.”<sup>62</sup> He had, for example, translated David Qimhi’s commentaries on Isaiah, Jeremiah and Malachi into Latin and Castilian.<sup>63</sup> He was sent to Antwerp by King Philip II in order to guide the making of the Antwerp Polyglot Bible in the printing shop of Christophe Plantin. Montano made use of the Complutensian Polyglot Bible and manuscripts of Coronel, though he revised the Latin translations. His translations would be used and reprinted in many books to come, especially in the Paris and London Polyglot Bibles. The translation of the Antwerp Polyglot Bible became authoritative, although one Anglican scholar, Edmund Reeve, in his Latin version of Targum Canticles, altered this text whenever it “really reek[ed] of pop-

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<sup>57</sup> Immanuel Tremelius, *Ionathae Filii Uzielis, Antiquissimi & summae apud Hebraeos autoritatis Chaldaea paraphrasis in duodecim minores Prophetas* (Heidelberg: Martinus Agricola, 1567).

<sup>58</sup> Austin, *From Judaism to Calvinism*, 121.

<sup>59</sup> For a more extensive biography, see Dunkelgrün, *Multiplicity*, 126–55.

<sup>60</sup> Léon Voet, “De Antwerpse Polyglot-Bijbel,” *Noordgouw* 13 (1973): 32–55, esp. 39.

<sup>61</sup> Bernard Rekers, *Benito Arias Montano 1527-1598. Een studie over een groep spiritualistische humanisten in Spanje en de Nederlanden, op grond van hun briefwisseling* (Groningen: V. R. B. Kleine, 1961), 20.

<sup>62</sup> Rekers, *Benito Arias Montano*, 21.

<sup>63</sup> Dunkelgrün, *Multiplicity*, 138.

ery.”<sup>64</sup> Comparison of the translation of Targum Canticles in the APB with Reeve’s text reveals that he was disturbed by the translation of one word, the Aramaic זכותא. The APB consistently translates this word by *meritum*, “merit, reward, benefit,” while Reeve replaces that translation fourteen times by *puritas*, “purity, innocence,” and once by *probitas*, “soundness, goodness, righteousness.”<sup>65</sup> This example shows that it is worthwhile to investigate the exact words in the various translations of Targum Joel.

### Differences between the translations

All of these men had to choose how to translate the words and sentences of the Targum, and a few examples of these choices are discussed below.

With regard to the phrase “to the work/service/cult of the LORD, your God” the Latin translations differ in their rendering of פלחנא, a very broad term. As already noted, it can mean “work, service, worship, or cult.” One cannot translate this word without first establishing the best interpretation. What does Targum mean by פלחנא? Good deeds, liturgy, or individual worship such as prayer? Núñez Coronel translated it as *servitus*,<sup>66</sup> while all the others chose *cultus*. Arias Montano used Coronel’s translation and seems to revise it, because *cultus* has been defined by Thomas Aquinas as the worship of the one God, while *servitus* could also be used for human kings and other high-ranking people.<sup>67</sup> Cinquarbre uses the word *cultus* first, but *religio* the second time. The word “religious” is defined by Aquinas as “those who consecrate their whole life to the Divine worship.”<sup>68</sup> In the sixteenth century it was also

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<sup>64</sup> Edmundus Rivius, “Ad Lectorem,” in *Thargum, hoc est, preclarissima paraphrasis in Canticum Canticorum, antiquitus Chaldaica dialecto conscriptae & diebus iamdudum praeteritis in Latinum conversa* (London: Nic. Okes, 1614), A4r.

<sup>65</sup> Tg. Cant. 1:8; 2:8; 3:6; 4:5; 5:12; 6:9 (*probitas*), 11; 7:2, 5, 8, 9, 13; 8:5, 8, 9.

<sup>66</sup> Not systematically, see for example 1 Sam 10:19 in Mss t703s and t704s, where he rendered *cultus*.

<sup>67</sup> Thomas van Aquino, *Summa Theologica*, Deel II–II, 103.3.

<sup>68</sup> Thomas van Aquino, *Summa Theologica*, Deel II–II, 81.1.

used for the different factions of Christianity, for example, *cuius regio, eius religio*.<sup>69</sup> If we follow Aquinas' definitions, Núñez Coronel seems to stress the adherence to God's commandments (service), Arias Montano the cultic forms (liturgy) and Cinquarbre the total commitment of man toward his God (personal dedication). Each rendering is an interpretation of the same Aramaic word.

Cinquarbre chooses to use two words, *cultus* and *religio*, but in his comments he adds another perspective. At the end of verse 14 he provides a note to indicate that God's mercy and reversal is not automatic. The note begins with *si resipiscant*, "if they come to understanding." Cinquarbre hereby safeguards God's sovereignty, but also adds the perspective of rationality. Conversion is also coming to understanding, to more awareness.

The translation of שׁוּב, "turn, return," also differs. The word occurs four times in these three verses, leaving the translator with the following options: he may either choose one translation and imitate the Targum's repetition or choose as many translations as possible to show the broadness of this word. Only Coronel and Générard use the same Latin word in every case (i.e., *convertor*, "turn around, turn to," although Générard uses the word *poenitentia* in his comments). Tremellius also uses the word *convertor* twice, but he later turns to *resipisco*, "come to understanding, reflection." This Jewish Protestant seems to stress the rational side of conversion, just as Ibn Ezra did in his explanation that the heart had to come to the recognition of truth. Cinquarbre and Arias Montano use four terms in order to avoid mere repetition and to offer a broad translation. Cinquarbre uses *revertor* and *redio*, "return," *depello*, "expel [the sins]," and *poenitentia duco*, "repent, do penance." Arias Montano uses *convertor*, *revertor*, *abscedo*, "move away [from sins]," and *poenitentia ago*, "repent, do penance." Both stress the turning back, the active removal of sins and the cultic expression of the

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<sup>69</sup> Coined by Joachim Stephani in 1582, see Eike Wolgast, *Aufsätze zur Reformations- und Reichsgeschichte*, Jus Ecclesiasticum 113 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 157.

sinner's return to God. This broad choice does not conflict with the intention of the Targum text. Nevertheless, my Protestant heart suspects these two Catholic authors have an appreciation for the word *poenitentia*, but perhaps I am just influenced by Luther's ninety-five theses, the first two of which state that "When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, 'Repent' (Mt 4:17), he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance. This word cannot be understood as referring to the sacrament of penance, that is, confession and satisfaction, as administered by the clergy?"<sup>70</sup>

The word לבא, "heart," is rendered in various ways. As noted above, this word can lead to different interpretations, even if it is translated by one word. The most recurring translation is the most obvious: *cor*. Only Cinquarbreg chooses *toto animo vestro*, "with all your soul/desire," in verse 12, although he uses *cor* in verse 13. The difference is explained by Thomas Aquinas in a treatise on Deuteronomy 6:5:<sup>71</sup> "heart" refers to intellect, while "soul" refers to the lower appetitive power, the desire.<sup>72</sup> Cinquarbreg adds a note to his translation of verses 12–13 referring to the hypocrisy "of his time" and to persons who "simulated penance by external sadness."<sup>73</sup> Did he choose *animus* to stress that one must genuinely long for the return to God's service? In his commentary on the Targum Gênébrard seems to have understood the activist tendency of the Targum. He also renders *toto corde vestro* as "with all your heart," but he explains it by citing John the Baptist, who demanded his hearers to "produce fruit in keeping with repentance" (Matt 3:8).

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<sup>70</sup> *Dominus et magister noster Iesus Christus dicendo "Penitentiam agite etc." omnem vitam fidelium penitentiam esse voluit. Quod verbum de penitentia sacramentali (id est confessionis et satisfactionis, que sacerdotum ministerio celebratur) non potest intelligi.* Adopted from <http://www.luther.de/en/95th-lat.html>. The English translation stems from <http://www.luther.de/en/95thesen.html>.

<sup>71</sup> Thomas van Aquino, *Summa Theologica*, Deel II–II, 44.5.

<sup>72</sup> Thomas also refers to others with different opinions.

<sup>73</sup> Cinquarbreg, *Targum*, 61 note f.



## Conclusion

The three examples show the difficult choices the Christian translators of the sixteenth century faced. Coronel and G  n  brard chose to render one Aramaic word with one Latin word as often as possible, Cinquarbre and Montano chose to translate the ambiguity of the Aramaic words, while Tremellius takes a position in between. If you take the notes into account, Cinquarbre offers the broadest interpretation: it is about cult and religion, about heart and soul and rationality, against hypocrisy and safeguarding God's sovereignty.

The Roman Catholics Cinquarbre, G  n  brard and Montano are the most cultic, using the word *cultus* and *poenitentia*. The Jewish converts are the least cultic: neither Coronel nor Tremellius gives the word *poenitentia*, the first stressing the service of God, probably by keeping his commandments, the latter rendering the more rational perspective of coming to understanding and reflection.

## CONCLUSION

We have wandered far from a Hebrew text in which God called for repentance and the prophets commented on this call. We considered the meaning of the expression "with all your heart" and the differences between the phrases "rend your heart" and "rend your garments." We concluded that the actual interpretation may depend on the denominational (and other) background of the reader. Taking Hermisson's three types of spiritualization into consideration we also concluded that the Hebrew text fits type three, although we found one modern Lutheran interpreter who seems to lean towards type one. Protestants tend to prefer to translate and interpret the Hebrew text as referring to being upright, while Roman Catholics interpret it as being fully committed. Hermisson's type three must be broadened to "only the cultic actions of a committed or upright person pleases God."

Continuing with the Aramaic translation we concluded that the Jewish translators cared little about Hermisson's type three, diminishing

that aspect of the text and preferring a translation emphasizing being just. Within this context Hermisson's type three can therefore be reformulated again, now as "only the cultic actions of a just person pleases God." At the same time, the Targum brought in type two by valuing prayer as much as offerings and libations.

The turn to Christian translators of the Targums brought new insights. Again, we saw a difference between Roman Catholic scholars and others, now on the level of conversion. Some seemed to stress good deeds, others more rational insight and reflection. The Roman Catholics expressed God's call by referring to the removal of one's sins and to penance. The activism of the Targum is rightly incorporated in almost all the translations, except in the Protestant one. Hermisson's type two and three have been conserved in the translations, but type three seems to be "only the cultic actions of a just or committed person pleases God."

Translation always involves interpretation, because in the process of translation the translator must continually choose between all possible meanings of a word. He must, at the same time, keep in mind the general intention of his passage. Yet with this interpretation comes a small risk, for it betrays the background and biases of the translator, over and over again.