H.T. Norris

EDMUND CASTELL (1606-86) AND HIS
LEXICON HEPTAGLOTTON (1669)

The Reverend Edmund Castell was the second holder of the Sir Thomas Adams Professorship in Arabic at the University of Cambridge. He occupied this status between 1667 and 1685. That he ever attained the office was in part due to his father’s inheritance, in part due to his friends and in part due to favour which he received from King Charles II, to whose chaplaincy he was appointed in 1666. It is, however, one work, his only and only masterpiece, that brought him some fame, though hardly success, and gave him a permanent mention within the annals of British Orientalism, namely his Lexicon Heptaglotton.

Edmund Castell was baptized in East Halley church, Cambridgeshire, on 4th January 1606. From his father he inherited a fair estate which was to be the mainstay of his life of academic labours. In 1621 he entered Emmanuel College, Cambridge, and he took the successive degrees of Bachelor (1624–5), Master of Arts (1628), Bachelor (1635) and Doctor (by mandate 1661) of Divinity. He next moved to St John’s College, mainly on account of its library. Whenever he came to Cambridge from his incumbencies, he would often stay in lodgings at Catherine Hall at the invitation of his friend the Rev John Lightfoot, its Master, with whom he regularly corresponded. He was esteemed by some of his efforts in assisting Bryan Walton to complete his Polyglot Bible. This was matched by the admiration of others for Castell’s own labours to complete his Lexicon Heptaglotton which was begun in 1651 and finally published in 1669. This labour had already cost him £12,000 by 1667, and the maintenance of seven English and seven foreign assistants who eventually forsook him. He wrote in despair ‘I am now, therefore, left alone, without amanuensis or corrector; my bodily and mental strength impaired, my eyesight almost gone’. Initially the Lexicon met with a cold reception in England, as the London Gazette (no 429, December 23-27, 1669) shows in its sales advertisement. It had detractors as well as admirers. Walton’s Polyglot (in 6 volumes and published at a cost of £8,400) had been stigmatized as ‘affording a foundation for Mohammedanism; as a chief and principal prop of Popery; as the root of much hidden Atheism in the world’. Castell’s Lexicon was also criticized. Castell’s writing at times was eccentric. His embellishment, in a number of Semitic languages and in Persian, of the customary odes to Charles II, on the latter’s succession, called ‘The Sunrising on England, under the auspices of Charles the Second, most glorious of Kings’, make this abundantly plain.

The Lexicon became Castell’s obsession, taking precedence over all other tasks and other duties. It remained the sole consolation of his life, whether as the holder of a chair at the University of Cambridge, or else as an incumbent in his parishes in Essex, Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire. He put up his own monument in Latin and in Arabic, in Higham Gobion church, which stands on the edge of the Chilterns near Hitchin and where he ended his days. It is to be noted that in the Latin inscription, amidst his titles, only the Lexicon Heptaglotton receives a mention. In his will, dated 24th October 1685, it is again the Lexicon which figures in the bequests left to his near relatives and friends.

What motives lay behind this eccentric single-mindedness? ‘It is one of the striking characteristics of Dr Castell’, wrote the Bedfordshire historian, Ivan O’Dell, ‘this astonishing persistency and determination. His great work, the Lexicon Heptaglotton, that should have brought him recognition, cost him untold labour and anxiety.’ Near the end of his Oratio ..., in secondum Canonis Avicennae Librum (1667), Castell remarks sadly to his audience of young scholars:

So that literature flourishes and more every day, which people here have until now held to be very exotic. Through you, let this Arabic of ours, which abounds with such great and rich treasures, not remain a desert. Look at me, the image of a faithful [promiscuid], how readily, willingly and happily I have brought forth those things which I have accumulated through a long career of many years, tireless labours, unceasing vigils and expenditure scarcely to be believed.

ORIENTALISTS OF THE CAMBRIDGE REGION AND THE BACKGROUND TO CASTELL’S STUDIES

In order to assess Castell’s labours it is of some relevance to bear the following in mind:

(a) There was a substantial number of Orientalists in the Cambridge region who were personal friends and colleagues, both within the University itself and in parishes outside it. They were in close contact with each other as well as with their Oxford colleagues. An amusing feature of the Arabists was the
way that their writings, including their private correspondence, were sometimes cuffed or tailored with pious Arabic words or expressions. A letter might open with the basmala—in the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful; or it might be signed by Bedwell with al-faqih, the academic master, written in a Maghribi hand. A letter to Abraham Wheelock, for example, is addressed to al-hudbud, the hoopoe.

(b) These orientalists shared deeply held and zealous religious aims.

(c) The London Polyglot Bible, compiled under the superintendent of Bryan Walton, and printed by Thomas Rycroft in 1657 made a strong impression upon those amongst them who were Hebraists, philologists, and lexicographers.

(A) Orientalists To The South Of Cambridge

The rural districts to the south of Cambridge, in the seventeenth century, were the home of a significant number of incumbents and scholars who were prominent figures in Semitic and Oriental studies, more especially in the latter half of the century. The incumbencies included the parish of Great Hallingbury in Essex, to the east of Bishops Stortford, where William Bedwell, the Arabist (1563-1632) was baptized. After 1692 it was the parish of Robert Huntington, a friend of Pococke and who, prior to that date, was an inveterate hunter of Oriental manuscripts, especially those of the Eastern Churches. Fortunately enough to have the opportunity to visit the East, he undertook this whilst he was chaplain to the Levant Company in Aleppo after 1670. Huntington, who corresponded with al-Duwayhi, the Maronite patriarch of Antioch, amongst other Eastern Primates, was struck by what seemed to him to be similarities between the Eastern Churches and the Anglican Church, and he shared his impressions with his colleagues.

Edmund Castell may have benefitted from the help of Robert Huntington both before, and certainly after, the publication of his Lexicon Heptaglotton. It was so in the case of the John Lightfoot, the vicar of Wadesmill and Great Mundon in Hertfordshire to the south of Royston, an incumbency close to an old route between London and Cambridge. Lightfoot regularly corresponded with Edward Bernard of St. John's College, Oxford, who, in turn, offered to contact Huntington on Lightfoot's behalf. Bernard wrote to Lightfoot in 1674:

Reverend and right learned, I cannot but acquaint you, that the learned and pious Mr Robert Huntington, present minister of the church of the English factory at Aleppo, hath lately sent over hither a good Samaritan Pentateuch, together with an account of the religion of the Samaritans of Sychem, written by themselves there upon his request, and sent as it were to their brethren here.

1. The Arabic inscription included on Edmund Castell's own monument, which was put up by him, in Higham Gobion Church, near Hitchin.
in England (as they mistook Mr Huntington, who told them that there were Hebrews here, he meaning Jews, and they their own sect). The translation whereof into Latin out of the Samaritan (which is nothing but the Biblical Hebrew, save some Aramias here and there: for that is the language commonly made use of by them at Sychem), I have here sent; and, if you think it worthy the while, I will also transmit a copy of the Samaritan unto you. Mr Huntington acquaints me, that there are about thirty families of these Samaritans at Sychem, and not more, and that they desire correspondence here. But care is to be taken that we do not dissemble with them, but beg their history of Joshua, and their liturgy; and also examine them upon points that may be material. If you please to send what questions you would desire resolution from them in, I will send them to Mr Huntington, to whom I shall write about these weeks hence.

Lightfoot was in regular correspondence with Johannes Buxtorf, noted Hebrew scholar in Basel, with Pococke, in Oxford, with Samuel Clarke and with John Worthington, sometime master of Jesus College, Cambridge. Lightfoot's personal relationship with Castell was close. This is reflected in their correspondence. According to an entry in the Appendix to the life of Lightfoot, containing extracts from twenty-three letters between Castell and Lightfoot during 1664 to 1670, the following remarks and comments are made:

One conference ... between Dr Castell, who was 'The Propounder,' — and our Doctor [Lightfoot], 'The Resolver,' — was upon this subject proposed by the former, 'Whether when the ordinary interpretation of any Hebrew words render the sense hard and rough, recourse may not be had to the interpretation of those words according as they signify in Syriac, Chaldee, or Arabic.'

Another Cambridge Orientalist who took a personal interest in Castell's endeavors was John Worthington. In December 1660 he wrote the following in a letter to Samuel Hartlib:

If the Christian religion were but once freed from all those unworthy dogmas which have clogged and encumber'd it, then would the beauty, healthfulness, and vigor of it be discover'd; and it would be fitted for better entertainment in the world, and a quicker passage through the nations of the earth. ... I know no two designs so considerable for such like advantages to Christianity, as the publishing this ancient body of the Jewish religion, the Mishneh, and also the Alcoran, in a language generally known, as the Latin is. ... Dr Castell writes to me, that he thinks Petrusav is yet in Holland, and that he hath seen Petrusav his new Ethiopick piece, viz, Ruth, an homely of S Chrysostom, and the four first chapters of Genesis in Ethiopick, which was lent him by an ambassador to persue. I am heartily sorry for Dr Castell's difficulties.

Among other Orientalists, both predecessors and contemporaries of Castell, there was, for instance, Francis Burley, the vicar of St Michael's parish church in Bishops Stortford and of neighbouring St James's, Thorley, who was formerly at St Catherine's, at Queen's and at Pembroke Hall, Cambridge. He collaborated with William Bedwell, under the supervision of Bishop Lancelot Andrews, on the translation of the Bible. Lancelot Andrews fostered Oriental studies in Cambridge in the late sixteenth century, and it was his idea to begin the undertaking of a great Arabic dictionary.

A collaborator with Worthington, and also incumbent during part of his life, was Ralph Cudworth, the vicar of Ashwell, west of Royston, between 1662 and 1668. He spent much of his life in Cambridge, first at Emmanuel and then as Master of Clare in 1645 and Master of Christ's in 1654. Cudworth became a leader among the group generally known as the Cambridge Platonists. Among his contemporaries at Emmanuel were Nathaniel Culverwell, John Wallis, the famous mathematician, Benjamin Whichcote and John Worthington.

At the Restoration, Cudworth contributed a copy of Hebrew verses to the 'Academic Cantabrigiensis', a volume of congratulatory poems to Charles II, expressing sentiments similar to those of Castell. In 1662 he was presented by Bishop Sheldon to the rectory of Ashwell, Hertfordshire.

No list of Castell's contemporaries and predecessors in Cambridge can leave unmentioned the occupant of the Chair in Arabic before him, Abraham Wheelocke (1593-1653), one of the early pioneers in Oriental studies, who urged,

(Sir) Thomas Adams (1586-1667) to induce some city company to endow a chair of Arabic at Cambridge. This Adams declared to be impossible; but he offered to provide a stipend of £40 for such a purpose for two or three years, Wheelocke to be the first professor, and he afterwards made this endowment permanent. Wheelocke appears to have both taught and studied Arabic diligently, and in Adams's letters to him (preserved in the Cambridge University Library) there are frequent references to his 'Arabic mill'; but he published little or nothing bearing on the subject, owing, he says, to the want of Arabic types and compositors capable of setting them up. In a letter to Uscher dated 1640 he mentions that he had prepared a refutation of the Koran, but that the missionary to whom he had shown a specimen of the work had discouraged him from proceeding with it.

Wheelocke also took part in drawing up the plan of Walton's Polyglot, and wrote a letter to the vice-chancellor of Cambridge University, commending that work, of which he was to have corrected the Arabic and Persian texts, but death prevented his executing much of this scheme.

Sir Thomas Adams himself, although born in Shropshire and who spent much of his time in London, was buried in the church of St Mary and St Margaret, Sprowston, outside Norwich. His monument, with its lengthy Latin inscription, perhaps inspired Castell's own monument in Higham Gobion church.
Adams is linked with the Orientalists of the Cambridge region, primarily, of course, through the endowment of the Arabic chair in the University. His Arabic interests figure prominently in the inscription which reads, translated:

Thomas Adams and his most gifted wife lie beneath this marble tomb. He was a Scholar, Lord Mayor of London, a Member of Parliament and at one time a most renowned Minister. He served his country as a Soldier and Baron, dispensed justice sincerely, championed the orphan’s cause, and acted as a Governor of St Thomas’ Hospital. His home and birthplace was Wem in Shropshire, where he was a diligent schoolmaster. He was a most worthy student and patron of Cambridge University, and endowed Arabic lectures from his own income. He always opened his doors to the poor, his doors to strangers, and his intellect to students of the arts. He was a man of absolute trust and integrity, who stood out in a dark age. He was held in the Tower of London, but preferred imprisonment rather than offend his conscience and denounce the King. He showed himself a man of zeal as a London magistrate, a distinguished member of the Wool Guild, and a Minister at the Treasury. Thus he lived for 30 years doing good, despite having suffered the most awful torture which he bore for 15 years. With his patience undefeated he died on February 24th, 1667, released from the burden of this life and raised to the bliss of heaven.

His sweet wife bore him five sons and four daughters from whom there are three granddaughters and one grandson. He, it is, Jules, baron and heir, who has erected this monument to his dear parents?

Sir Thomas Adams also had land to the south of the city of Cambridge. He owned property in North-West Essex, between Saffron Walden and Bishops Stortford. In his will, dated 1667/1668 there are references to property in Broxted, Manuden and Strethall, including one specific reference to the manor of Chaworth Hall, Broxted, still shown on the Ordnance Survey map half a mile to the east of Chichley church, and land called Hinkley. Broxted, maintaining a £40 annuity for an ‘Arabique Lecture’ at Cambridge University. This bequest must refer to the one recorded in the Dictionary of National Biography:

He also founded the Arabic Lecture at Cambridge, to which he gave £40 a year for ever, and, at the instigation of Mr Wheelocke, the first reader of Arabic, bore the expense of a translation of the Gospels into the Persian language for circulation in that country with a view to the conversion of Mahometans.

(B) The Christian Mission Of The Orientalists

This last quotation shows how important were the religious aims of certain the Orientalists. As Professor of Arabic, A. J. Arberry in his inaugural lecture on 30th October 1947, entitled The Cambridge School of Arabic drew attention to this. In 1636, it was the view of the Vice-Chancellor of the University that

2. The monument in St. Mary and St. Margaret Church, Sprowston, Norfolk, to Sir Thomas Adams, who endowed the first Arabic Professorship at Cambridge.
the development of Arabic studies could serve three distinct and important purposes: literary, or, as Arbbery suggests, scientific, commercial including political, and religious. Note, however, the order of these priorities. Arbbery quotes the letter written to Thomas Adams by the Vice-Chancellor and Heads of Colleges on 9th May 1636, which, in its contents lists the University’s aspirations:

The work itself was conceived to tend not only to the advancement of good Literature by bringing to light much knowledge which yet is lost up in that learned tongue; but also to the good service of the King and State in our commerce with those Eastern nations and in God’s good time to the enlarging of the borders of the Church, and propagation of Christian religion to them who now sit in darkness.

Wheeleck’s commitment to mission has been mentioned. Edmund Castell, his successor, was seemingly more introspective. His goal was heavenward, as the Arabic inscription on his epitaph declares, ‘in the hope of the City that is better than that [in this world]. Dedicated to strengthening the links with the Eastern churches, and seemingly indifferent to the formidable challenge of Islam itself, which merits little mention anywhere in his writings, it is first of all the translation of the scriptures into Eastern tongues which fired his enthusiasm, and, at the same time determined his study as a lexicographer. 16

There had always been a split in the thinking of the Christian world about the Arabian. Arabia in Christendom, was not only Deserta but Felix. This duality dated back to the Middle Ages, even before the Crusades. It left its mark on the York and Chester Mystery Plays, upon Chaucer and upon the thinking of the schoolmen and the scholastics. *Arabia Deserta* evoked the image of Hagar’s Ishmael and Mahound, that false prophet, *par excellence*, whose Alcoran required translation, then study, then refutation, after which Arabia’s desert ranger, it was hoped, would bow the knee to the Nazarene in worship. *Arabia Felix* evoked another image altogether. First of all there was the Queen of Sheba, whose art bewitched wise Solomon, King of Israel, and about whom Handel wrote, in his libretto to his oratorio, *Solomon* (1748):

From Arabia’s spicy shores
boarded by the hoary mains
Sheba’s queen these seats explores
To be taught thy heavenly strains.

This vision was taken up again in the persons of the Magi, or at least one of them, Melchior the Wise, seer, star-gazer and adoring king who had already bowed the knee. More important than all of these was Job, the Arabian. He was neither an alien from Arabia *Deserta* nor from Arabia *Felix*, but was one of the major established figures of Holy Writ in Christendom. In a letter dated 14th April 1624, sent to Wheeleck by Footh (Cambridge *Dd. 3. 12. p. V 6. the latter remarked, ‘The Arabick will be a great help for opening the native signification of some few words in Job who was an Arabian himself, otherwise arabick words are either few or rare in the rest of the Scripture’.

*Arabia Felix* and Ethiopia were clearly close neighbors. The link between *Arabia Felix* and Chaldea and Persia was, in part through their association in the same Wise Men, in part through the Old Testament, and in part through the lands being remote, exotic and esoteric. Despite the commercial contact between Christendom and Islam in the seventeenth century and despite the Renaissance and the great strides made in Oriental learning, some of these notions, from an earlier age, lingered on, and still linger.

They are by no means absent from the writings of Edmund Castell—nor, for that matter, from part of Walton’s *Polyglot*—but by a mixture of unabated zeal, misguided enthusiasm and sheer scholarship, Castell succeeds in carrying us with him into his Arabia, although it is as individual and unreal as Walter De La Mare’s.

Take, for example, his forty-page inaugural lecture on the merits of the Arabic as exemplified by the interpretation of the *Canon of Avicenna, Oratio ... in secundum canonis Avicennae Liberum* published by Thomas Rycroft (London, 1667). It was included in Kapp’s ‘Clarississimorum Virorum Orationes Selectae’. 11 This bizarre lecture appeared just before the final publication of the *Lexicon Heptaplopton*, to which a passing reference is made, and which is also full of flora and fauna. It offers an insight into Castell’s interests; why he held the Semitic tongues in such regard; and more especially, what he saw as the prime object of his labours and those of his colleagues both in England and on the Continent. For example, he remarks (*Oratio*, p.9):

But to move from places to the language which in all of them especially obtains, discourse is quick with Arabic. About whose antiquity, breadth, agreeableness, readiness, necessity and utility for absolutely all pursuits—logic, arithmetic, history, chronology, drama(?), ethics, philosophy, mathematics, medicine, astronomy and theology, three eruditions of Erpenius may be consulted; further, there are also CI [Clarissimus?] Pococke, the famous Dr Tho Greaves, Math Passor [sic], Vitus Welfri and the others who are everywhere offered praise in this context of language.

The richness of Arabic could be illustrated by the forms and patterns of its words, such as participles and nouns, which were derived from its verbal roots, some forms denoting habitual action or something highly specific or a temporary status: thus *qatira* denoted a woman who restrained her eyes from
looking at any other person but her husband, while rubba' iraba' (sic Castell) indicated, to cite Lane, 'a period which is assigned to a husband when he has been pronounced incapable of intercourse with his wife, so that if he go to her (it is well with him and he may remain her husband); but if not, a separation is made between them'. Myriad Arabic forms and strange meanings filled the lexicons, and not only Arabic lexicons, since the Syriac fathers and the storehouses of learning and wisdom of the Chaldeans, the Medes and the Persians were also inexhaustible founts of learning, inspired, ultimately, by the Creator Himself.

Plants, herbs, remedies, soils and substances which appeared in Ibn Sinā (Avicenna) and in other Arabic works which drew upon the Classics—those Materia Medica the Arabs would class amongst the khawāṣṣ al-adwī—were discussed extensively between pages 16 and 23. Some names are Arabic, others Persian, some derived from Greek. Castell debates what plant or shrub or tree or drug is meant and what light could be shed on holy writ by comparative study were it appropriate or relevant.

Amongst the plants mentioned by Castell, derived from Avicenna are: zarnīj harra'ī; darwānj (doronicum or leopard’s bane); habb al-summa identified with paliurus or Christ's thorn, azadarakhi with ceterach or a species of fern, qulqas with colocasia, which is described by Lane in his Lexicon (1863) as 'arum colocasia, the root of a certain plant, which is eaten cooked, and used medicinally'; rīfāqīn is identified as cepsaascolonica and yāmirūnā is identified by Castell as spina graeca, tracing the name to ancient eastern tongues and finding that the Arabic form had passed through Spanish. These interests of Castell should be seen as supplementing research included in premodern Africa and Asia by expatriots for the enquiring at home, as is apparent, for example, in a letter dated 24th November 1681. It is sent by Wyld Clarke, agent in Ifni in Southern Morocco, to John Aubrey, and cited in the latter’s Three Prose Works.

Elsewhere, Castell relates his studies wider to Holy Scripture. On page 26, he questions the authorized version of Habakkuk 3.17, 'Although the fig tree shall not blossom'. He cites the Arabic innal-tūnā lā tahništū thamaraatāt to show that, here, fruit is meant, giving backing, in fact, for the translation of the verse in the recent Good News Bible, 'Even though the fig-trees have no fruit and no grapes grow on the vines'. On page 29, Castell finds that 'the perfume of myrrh and aloes is on your clothes' mentioned in Psalm 45, verse 8, relates to the Arabic, rad', saffron, and similarly to taraqqun, 'dying with henna'. He concludes with matters of theology, to show/emphasize how both Arabic and Chaldean shed light and knowledge to the vision in Numbers that 'a king like a bright star will arise in that nation (of Israel)'.

(C) The London Polyglot of Bryan Walton (1657)
In his article on the Oriental Arabist, Edward Pococke (1604-91), P. M. Holt, noted the part which he played in this major linguistic project of English Orientalism in the first half of the seventeenth century. Holt pointed out, however, that this Polyglot was not the first of its kind but only the latest of a series which were published in Western Europe. Like its predecessors, the Complutensian (1514-17), Antwerp (1569-72) and Paris Polyglots (1628-45), the English Polyglot was a product of the biblical humanism of the Renaissance; unlike them, it was the work of Protestant scholars.

Bryan Walton, later Bishop of Chester, was educated at Cambridge, at Magdalene and at Peterhouse, though he went to Oxford in 1642, but his project to achieve the publication in England of this Polyglot Bible entailed the continuous participation of several Oriental scholars, both in Oxford and outside it. It was in Oxford that he seems to have acquired some knowledge of Oriental languages. According to the Dictionary of National Biography:

Nine languages are represented in the work, but no single book of the Bible appears in more than eight versions. The correcting committee consisted of Stokes, Wheelock, Thornatherine, Pococke, Grevaeus, Vicars, and Thomas Smith; on the death of Wheelock in 1653, Hyde was substituted for him. Lightfoot was invited to take part in the work of correcting, but declined; much was done by Castell, whose 'Heptaglot Lexicon' afterwards formed a valuable supplement to the Polyglot and who, though given an honorarium by Walton, complained that his services had not been adequately acknowledged. Several other scholars had a hand in the work. . . . Walton, however, claimed responsibility for the whole, and provided it with preface and introduction as well as a critical study of the texts and some account of the languages which they represent.

Something further will be said about the London Polyglot Bible in my conclusion.

(D) The Lexicon Heptaglotton
Castell’s Lexicon Heptaglotton has been viewed as a 'supplement' to Walton’s Polyglot. Is this how Castell viewed it himself? Certainly in an undated letter, addressed to His Highness the Lord Protector, signed by himself together with Alexander Haish and Samuel Clarke, it is apparent that the purpose of the Lexicon was to offer an original work in its own right:

That whereas by the good hand of God, upon the unwearied labours of the publishers of the great Bible in many languages, the same is now very near accomplished, to the Glory of God, and the great Honor and benefit of this nation, the like never having been before performed. And for as much as there is no lexicon extant for all these languages together, and for some of them not
at all, without which that most excellent work cannot be so useful, as otherwise it might be, your petitioners (who have long addicted themselves to the study of those languages, and have been all along assistant to ye words of the Bible, and thereby had the more opportunity to observe the propriety and use of words therein) have upon the request of divers persons of worth and learning undertaken the composing and publishing of such a work, wherein the labours of former lexicographers at cheaper rate, than some lexicon of one language, could heretofore be had. May be completed by their observations, and the same be had at a far cheaper rate, than some lexicon of one language, could be had.

The request concludes with an appeal for the import of five thousand reams of royal paper, excise and custom free. It even if it be conceded that Castell 'trod in the footsteps of Bedwell's Lexicon', the Lexicon Heptaglotton is a magisterial work of some 4007 pages. It opens with a somber portrait of Castell himself. Acknowledgements to famous Orientalists follow, with homage to King Charles II, and a Preface wherein Bedwell is praised along with others of his Orientalist fellow countrymen. Scholars in the Low Countries and in Italy are lauded, for their labours, in Armenian Coptic and Turkish. Sources used are cited. They include Arabic-Samaritan liturgies, Arabic manuscripts of the Gospels, and Wheelock's Persian Gospel. The Ethiopic sources are likewise mentioned. An Errata follows, then a series of alphabets, differing little from those in Walton's Polyglot except for the format. The Semitic alphabets and the Persian are reproduced here in long columns. This is followed by a detailed grammatical description of Arabic, Ethiopic, Samaritan, Syriac, Chaldean and Hebrew, often side by side. The derived forms I-IV of the Arabic Verb are explained with a greater density of detail than forms V to XIII. All the weak verbs are separately treated. The Lexicon itself is arranged according to the Hebrew alphabet and each entry is filled with disparate information, including geographical localities, dialectal forms, flora and fauna. For example, on page 3947, 'TRK' is not only explained as a Semitic root indicating 'abandonment', but also as the races of Turcicum and Turcomanni. A few fragments from the Qur'an are cited, which itself is entered under 'QR'. Alcoranus a collectione captuum quae primum dispersa erant ut diversis temporibus a Muhammad promulgata. Elsewhere Sura Yisaif 12. 69 is quoted and Bedwell's name cited as the source. Some entries, for example, Malath, 'angel', are very extensive. Alcoran, Dialekts, is described as Beelzebub in Alcoran and again Bedwell's name is cited. Throughout the work there is citation of Avicenna's writings, thereby linking the Lexicon to selected passages already mentioned in Castell's Oratio.

The quantity of the material is enormous, the meticulous referencing, despite the highly unsatisfactory format of Castell's bizarre writing and the printing, is remarkable though often the choice of word and comment strikes one as arbitrary. In contrast, the nineteenth-century Lexicon of E. W. Lane is far removed in intent from Castell's Lexicon. The latter showed little if any influence from Arabic lexicons in the substance quoted. There is no citation from Arabic verse either and no systematic description of Arabic roots and the innumerable vocalic forms which stem from them. These are a handicap, though Castell was not alone. E. W. Lane wrote on pages xxv-xxvi to the Preface of his Lexicon:

Of the learning of Golius and the industry of Freytag, I wish to speak with sincere respect, and with gratitude for much benefit derived from me from their works before circumstances gave me advantages which they did not enjoy. But lest I be charged with omitting important matters in some of the originals from which my work is composed, it is necessary for me to state that, in countless instances, both of these lexicographers have given explanations, more or less full, as from the Shi'ah or Qummi or both, while not one word thereof, nor even an indication, is found in either of those originals; and that matter of what Freytag has given as from the Qummi is from the Turkish Translation of that lexicon, of which I have before spoken, a work of considerable learning but of no authority when no voucher is mentioned in it.

It is interesting, however, to compare the Lexicon Heptaglotton with the far better printed and arranged Polyglot of Walton. Here may be found printed parallel passages of Holy Writ in Arabic, Ethiopic and Latin with a minimum of lexicographical data. Yet for Arabists, Volume I of Walton's Polyglot (Prolegomena XIV, pp. 93-97) contains information of interest left unsaid in Castell's Lexicon. It draws upon those ideas put into writing at greater length by Pococke and by Samuel Clarke. Arabia and Arabic, we are told, began in Arabia Felix. The Arabs are descendants of Sheba, whilst the Saracens are 'men of the Orient (shargiyin), and are not the offspring of Sarah. Muhammad, illiterate Prophet (nabiiyyan ummiyyan), was born amongst the Quraysh. The southern Arabs had their own script and alphabet, the Musnad of the Himyarites. The ancient Arabs were men who boasted of their genealogies and who took pride in their early bardic poetry. These bards were like the Druids, we are informed, brothers to the seers of Ancient Britain and Gaul. Arabic spread as the Arabs, and later the Muhammadans spread, westward to the land of the Garamantes and ultimately to Spain and to Morocco, and eastward towards India and the Indies, heavily influencing the Persians and the Turks. The biographer, Ibn Khallikan, receives a mention among other Muslim writers. Arabic was and is a rich literary language, the source of knowledge derived from the Greeks and the heritage of the Arab Christians of the East.
Conclusion

The lexicographical labours of Castell and of Walton amongst the Arabists of the seventeenth century, as we look back in time from a long period of Orientalism in this country, may to us, appear marginal to the absorption and translation of literature of the heartland of the Muslim World. The study of Islamic and non-Islamic texts conditions and defines our comprehension of the Arab East today. A textual study of Arabic centered on understanding the Bible is no longer so easy for us to comprehend. Yet the learning of Arabic, as one amongst the other Semitic languages, acquired with a view to a better comprehension of God’s Word, is what we owe to these Orientalists. Castell is amongst them, even if, in some ways, his efforts seem pointless and retrogressive. Something of this seventeenth-century tradition survived. It influenced, for example, the pioneer thinking and the writings of W. Robertson Smith in his Burnett Lectures of 1888-89. In the preface to the first edition of his classic Lectures on the Religion of the Semites, he remarked:

The value of comparative studies for the study of the religion of the Bible was brought out very clearly, two hundred years ago, by one of the greatest of English theologians, Dr John Spencer, Master of Corpus Christi College in Cambridge, whose Latin work on the ritual laws of the Hebrews may justly be said to have laid the foundations of the science of Comparative Religion.  

I would like to conclude with one example to illustrate the overlapping interest of these scholars. Arabists and others are familiar with the story of the wandering poet-king, Imru’ul-Qays of Kinda, who was uncertain of the way he could avenge his father. According to Charles Lyall:

That Imra-al-Kais was himself a heathen there can be no doubt: this is plain not only from his name—the man of al-Kais, a deity among the pagan Arabs—but also from his visit, before he set out northwards with his Himyarite troops against Asad, to the temple of the oracle Dhul-Khalash in the valley of Tabilah north of Najran, belonging to the tribe of Khaibam. This oracle was consulted, as usual at all such shrines in heathen Arabia, by shuffling before the image of the god a set of arrows; these were here three in number, called respectively ‘the Commanding’, ‘the Forbidding’, and ‘the Waiting’. He drew the second, and thereupon broke the arrows and flung them in the face of the idol, saying ‘if thy father had been slain, thou wouldst not have restrained me’.  

This story was not unknown to the seventeenth-century Orientalists. In the pages of Walton’s Polyglot and in the entries in Castell’s Lexicon Heptaglotton, there are allusions to parallels to Arabian custom in Old Testament lore. Attention in this instance is drawn to Ezekiel, 21:21 which, in the New English Bible, reads:

Then carve, a signpost, carve it at the point where the highway forks. Mark out a road for the sword to come to the Ammonite city of Rabbah, to Judah and to Jerusalem at the heart of it. For the king of Babylon hails to take the onions at the parting of the ways, where the road divides. He casts lots with arrows, consults teraphim and inspect the livers of beasts. The augur’s arrow marked ‘Jerusalem’ falls at his right hand: here, then, he must raise a shout and sound the battle cry, set battering-rams against the gates, pile siege-ramps and build watch towers.

These early Bible-schooled Orientalists, and their writings, have still something to tell us, if we read with care and patience those works which they laboured to complete; some milestones, others blind alleys, along the road to the multivared disciplines which together make up Oriental and African studies as we know them today.

Notes

I am grateful to my friend David Poole for the rendering of the curious Latin original from Avicenna’s Canon, Book II, quoted on pp. 3 and 14.


2 Twenty-three letters of Castell to Lightfoot, 1664-70, in Lightfoot’s Works, ed. Pitman, “Preliminary Matter to Volume I” of the English folio edition, (Appendix to Author’s life), pp. 94-95. A further example of the manuscript hunting which took place in the Near East in the seventeenth century may be read in correspondence with Wheelock preserved in Letters to Abraham Wheelocke 1624-40, Cambridge University Library, DD.2.12. Letter I.I is a despatch signed by Thomas Davies, dated 20th August 1624 and sent from Aleppo. It records the discovery of a sougher after Samaritan copy of the five books of Moses, joined together as part of the Old Testament. The writer adds that he had sent to Damascus to obtain further copies and would enquiries as far as Mount Gerizim (Nabíus) if need be. He had also sent to Mount Lebanon and to Tripoli to try to obtain Syriac manuscripts. Information about the East was a tradition handed down at parish level in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This was certainly true of the Eastern Counties and it no doubt was extensive in other regions of the realm. The study of Oriental tongues by the aristocracy can be observed in records about the habits of family members. The parish of Kirtling in Cambridgeshire is but one example. The chancel of this church contains a brass to Edward Myrfin who travelled in the Levant in the early sixteenth century. The inscription reads:

Here resteth the cors of Edward Myrfin, gentlemen, borne in y’citie of London, educated in good vertue and learning, travelled through all the countries and notable cities, princes counties, with other famous places of Europe, and likewise of y’isles of Greece, and so to the Turkes court, then being in the citie of Haleppo, on the borders between Armenia and Siria, and so returning through Jurie to Jerusalem, and saw to Damascus, and from thence passing by diverse countries with sondry Adventures, arrived at length in his owne Native Citie, where shortly he endid his life, in the year of Our Lordes God of MCCCCC fifty and three, and in the XXVIIe yere of his age.
In the following century, in this same parish, the sister of Baron William North (who fought at Blenheim), Dusley, was a distinguished scholar. She learnt Latin and Greek at Kirtling, though, unlike her brothers, she also studied Oriental languages. During church services she followed the lessons in her blue morocco Hebrew Bible. She died of "overwork" at the age of thirty-seven and she was buried in Kirtling church in 1712. Her collection of Oriental books was transported to Rougham in Norfolk. As they were destroyed later by fire, unfortunately no record survives of their titles and their contents.

1 Lightfoot’s Works, ibid., p. 93.
2 Remains Historical and Literary Connected with the Palatine Counties of Lancaster and Chester, published by the Chetham Society, 1897, Vol XII, p. 242-245.
3 See ‘Ralph Budworth’ in the Dictionary of National Biography, p. 271.
4 ‘Abraham Wheelocke’, ibid., p. 443. Neither Wheelocke nor Castell had a reputation for any calligraphical art in the Arabic language. Little attention was paid at all to this in the teaching of Arabic in the universities at that time. In a letter sent to Wheelocke by Gilbert Wigmore, dated 27th August 1629 (Cambridge University Library, op cit. Dd.1.12, V 5 (a), he remarked in regard to his friend, Mr. Boise:

Mr Boise is fallen in love with Arabicke: and that which seemed before to him very difficult, now he thinketh to be easie: he can read most words with recourse to the Alphabete... I have shewed Mr Boise your Arabicke notes and he liketh them very well wherever he could read them; but in many places we could not read them. I have now sent you them back again, because you may have use of them.

7 The reference to Arabic in the Latin original reads, ‘Habet et Alma mater Cambriaca cui Tanto gaudeat Filio et Patrono Praejectiones enim suis sumptibus fundavit Arabicas’. The translation is quoted from Roy W Tricker, Parish of Stowton, Churches of SS Mary and Margaret and St Culbert, A Short Guide (1976), pp. 17 and 18. The author mentions that Sir Thomas was Lord Mayor of London in 1645. He was a draper by trade and a loyal supporter of the Royalist cause, having given the exiled Charles II £10,000, and helped to bring him home.

8 Lightfoot’s Works, p. 43. In a letter which he wrote to Lightfoot in 1664, when the Lexicon Hepagnlotton was still incomplete, Castell remarked:

Sir, though I perish, it comforts me not a little to see how Holy Writ flourishes. I lately received an Armenian palter given me by Professor Golius, come newly off the press, where they are printing, at Leyden, the whole Bible in that language. The Old Testament is there printing in the Turkish language, perfected by Levitius Warnensius. The New Testament in Turkish, done by Mr Seaman, is just now in the press at Oxford: of which I have some sheets by me: as I have also of the old Gothic, and Anglo-Saxon gospels, now printed with a glossary to them at Leyden. Mr Petreus hath printed some parts of the Old Testament in Ethiopic, and hath many more prepared both in that and the Coptic language.

10 According to Stanley Lane Poole’s biography of Castell in the Dictionary of National Biography, p. 272, ‘Some marginal manuscript notes of Castell’s are preserved in the copy of Flimmers’ Canon of Avicenna (1658) in the British Museum’, which I have not had an opportunity to examine.


as to Said Inquiry desiderat[e] about the plant Surum, I cannot find any plant bearing that name known to the Moors. A mineral there is which they make use of to dispillar the secret parts of their women. If Said Inqulity had hinted some of its virtues, I might have better got light of it; & as for Peyronis, all arte with them is utterly lost, & they know no Certainer then Mercury, which I have often bin solicited for by them, & by Seveullal, to informe them if [I] know any way. ... As for your Granum Sulphur, it being a Latin word none here understand it, but I cannot find by strict inquiritie of Moores & Jews any thing to have Such vertues. Sir, if you had given me the way of preserving Alheanas [?] fit to plant, could have what I will. If per next you give your selfe the trouble, I shall observe the Method & also as to other plants and berries & bring with me next Summer, then intending for England.


14 The copy of the Lexicon Hepagnlotton to which I have referred is to be found in the Town Library, Saffron Walden, RI. 72110, donated by G. S. Gibson, a great benefactor to the town. I have also referred to the extracted Lexicon Syriacum (S.W. Library No 72108) with addenda by Joannes David Michaelis (Cottigen, 1785) and Dictionarium Persico-Latinum, separate to the Lexicon itself (S.W. Library No. 72105). I am very grateful to the librarian and his colleagues for their assistance. Despite the limited number of copies of the Lexicon that were published, the distribution of copies of the work in libraries, colleges and private collections is very wide. For example, in Sarajevo, in Bosnia, Jugoslavia, I have been shown the copy of the Lexicon in the Orientalist Institute. The copy is in excellent condition and it is a prized possession of this institute which, is devoted to the study of Arabic, Persian and Turkish language, literature and the religious sciences in Muslim Bosnia and Herzegovina.
