

JUAN BAUTISTA PÉREZ AND THE *PLOMOS DE GRANADA*:  
SPANISH HUMANISM IN THE LATE SIXTEENTH  
CENTURY

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In the last years of the sixteenth century, the discovery of a series of relics in Granada sparked a heated debate among intellectuals in Spain and abroad. The plaques, cremated remains, and leaden books (*plomos*) unearthed in the decade after 1588 purported to establish a Christian heritage for the city that pre-dated the Muslim conquest of the eighth century. The writings, in Castilian, Arabic, and Latin, identified the human remains as those of early Christian martyrs including St. Cecilio, an Arab converted by Jesus himself who later served as the first bishop of Granada. Spurred on by these finds, Granadans promoted the veneration of Cecilio and other saints to remove the stigma associated with their status as the most recently reconquered city in Spain (1492). Many commentators on the *plomos*, swayed by the seeming antiquity of the books (or perhaps by their potential as catalysts for urban renewal), accepted them as genuine and solicited their approval by the papacy. From the very beginning, however, some scholars raised their voices in protest, decrying the relics as dangerous falsifications and positing that they had been planted rather than “discovered”. These critics were not well received by enthusiasts of the growing cult of the Granadan *plomos*, but their point of view ultimately carried the day in 1682, when Pope Innocent XI officially denounced the writings as a forgery. Among modern scholars, the interest of the *plomos* lies not in their dubious authenticity so much as in their importance to the religious and social history of early modern Granada.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Harris, A. K., «Forging History: The *Plomos* of the Sacromonte of Granada in Francisco Bermúdez de Pedraza’s *Historia Eclesiástica*», *Sixteenth Century Journal* XXX/ 4 (1999), 945-966; Alonso, C., *Los apócrifos del Sacromonte (Granada)*, Valladolid, 1979.

*Al-Qanṭara* XXIV, 2 (2003) 427-448

This article will address the *Parecer* or opinion of Juan Bautista Pérez (d. 1597), one of the earliest critics of the leaden books. As bishop of Segorbe and an active humanist, Pérez had a vested interest in the reception of the *plomos* in more senses than one. The diocese of Segorbe, located in the Mediterranean region of Valencia, included many communities of moriscos (baptized Muslims). These converts to Christianity, who generally maintained the Islamic beliefs and customs of their ancestors in private, provided a challenge for bishops seeking to bring about their true conversion. Pérez adopted a relatively progressive morisco policy, and his advocacy of parish reform and preaching in Arabic separated him from his more cynical colleagues in the Church. Given his interest in the evangelization of moriscos, Pérez might well have welcomed the *plomos*, which celebrated an Arab convert in creating a history that encompassed both Muslims and Christians. His scholarly rigor, however, led him to conclude that the *plomos* were a modern creation, and an unintelligent one at that. An expert in ancient languages, Biblical studies, and classical antiquity, Pérez kept abreast of developments in humanist circles through his ample correspondence. In his *Parecer* (1595), he brought his learning to bear in an array of arguments, historical, linguistic, and logical, demonstrating the inconsistencies and errors of the relics. The falsity of the discoveries was to his mind beyond any question, and at several points he even suggested how a more clever forgery might have been carried out.

Pérez' object, however, was not limited to debunking the *plomos*. "I hold these leaden books to be new, fabricated by men of little conscience to lead the people into sin, not seeing the danger of venerating bones that are not from saints".<sup>2</sup> The overriding concern lay in preventing scandal and sin, and he marshaled his humanist arguments to the greater cause of religion. This Catholic dimension to his response hints at the importance of the *Parecer* as an example of Spanish hu-

<sup>2</sup> "... que tengo por nuevas estas planchas y fingidas por algunos hombres de poca conciencia para hacer pecar a las gentes, no viendo el peligro en que los ponen de reverenciar huesos que no sean de santos". "Parecer del obispo de Segorve D. Juan Bautista Pérez sobre las planchas de plomo que se han hallado en Granada, escritas con nombres de algunos santos, este año 1595. Copia sacada de la que existe entre los manuscritos del Ilmo. Sr. D. Francisco Pérez Bayer en la Biblioteca de la Universidad de Valencia", in Villanueva, J. L., *Viage literario a las iglesias de España*, Madrid, 1804, 2<sup>nd</sup>. ed. Madrid, 1902, vol. III, 259-278.

manist scholarship. In his sensitive use of texts, his historical understanding of language, and his respect for the traditions of the Church, Pérez suggested the forms that humanism could take after the *autos de fe* of 1559. In decades past, historians led by Marcel Bataillon argued that Spanish humanism flourished in the age of Charles V, when scholars including Juan Luis Vives practiced the Christian humanism of Erasmus. In Bataillon's view, Erasmian humanism held out the promise of a more tolerant, progressive Catholicism in Spain until its association with Protestantism led the Inquisition to drive the movement abroad or underground. After the triumph of scholasticism in the mid-sixteenth century, Spanish humanism was essentially moribund, focused on producing academic editions of ancient texts rather than original scholarship.<sup>3</sup> More recently, a generation of scholars in Spain and abroad has challenged this connection between Erasmianism and Spanish humanism, examining the various ways in which Spanish humanism survived the official condemnation of Erasmus' works. Revisionist studies of the age of Charles V have been complemented by much-needed examinations of humanism in the later sixteenth century, including work on important figures such as Benito Arias Montano, Pedro de Valencia, and Pablo de Céspedes.<sup>4</sup> This growing body of evidence promises to disprove the idea that Spanish humanism began and ended with expatriates such as Vives, or that Spain's native tradition of humanism was removed from the center of debate under Philip II and Philip III. On the contrary, the new challenge lies in understanding how humanists adapted their classical and religious education to the changing needs of an empire in crisis. The *Parecer* of Pérez represents an important contribution to this conversation among Spanish humanists in the later sixteenth century.

Juan Bautista Pérez was born around 1534 in the city of Valencia, the son of an Aragonese tailor. With the support of his family, he took

<sup>3</sup> Bataillon, M., *Erasmus y España*, Mexico, 1966.

<sup>4</sup> Gómez Canseco, L. M., *Anatomía del humanismo: Benito Arias Montano, 1598-1998*, Huelva, 1998; Sánchez Rodríguez, C., *Perfil de un humanista: Benito Arias Montano (1527-1598)*, Huelva, 1996; Gil Fernández, L., *Panorama social del humanismo español (1500-1800)*, Madrid, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 1997; Ynduráin, D., *Humanismo y renacimiento en España*, Madrid, 1994; Rubio Lapaz, J., *Pablo de Céspedes y su círculo*, Granada, 1993; Homza, L. A., *Religious Authority in the Spanish Renaissance*, Baltimore, 2000.

up the study of Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and Arabic.<sup>5</sup> This linguistic background served him well at the University of Valencia, where he studied canon law before assuming a chair as professor of languages.<sup>6</sup> His abilities drew the attention of Martín Pérez de Ayala, a theologian who held the position of archbishop of Valencia briefly in the 1560s. After the death of Pérez de Ayala in 1566, Pérez traveled to Madrid in search of a new patron. By the early 1570s he had begun a long and mutually beneficial association with Gaspar de Quiroga, bishop of Cuenca in eastern Castile. Pérez remembered his *señor* fondly in his will, stating that he served Quiroga “as examiner of the clergy, and secretary of Latin correspondence”. Under Quiroga’s employ, Pérez established his reputation as a humanist, church historian, and authority on questions of religion. Pope Gregory XIII had ordered Quiroga to assemble a collection of Spanish ecclesiastical councils, comparing published records with manuscripts from the Escorial and other archives.<sup>7</sup> Quiroga delegated this task to Pérez, who embraced the opportunity to hone his skills and extend his circle of colleagues. His correspondence with Antonio Agustín, archbishop of Tarragona, illustrates the humanist character of their investigations, in which they exchanged both sources and ideas. In one letter from 1576, Agustín responded to documents pertaining to Toledan councils, assessing their reliability with reference to other contemporary sources, internal consistency, and the quality of their Latin.<sup>8</sup> Pérez continued his work on this project after accompanying Quiroga to Toledo, where the prelate was appointed archbishop in 1577. In 1580 Quiroga sent the completed compilation to Rome, praising his young protégé for his erudition.<sup>9</sup> Over the course of the 1580s Pérez held prestigious

<sup>5</sup> In his testament, Pérez bequeathed 200 Valencian *libras* to his sister-in-law, “porque yo en el discurso de mis studios he gastado parte de la dote de dicha Angelica Cabellos”. Villanueva, *Viage literario*, vol. III, 289.

<sup>6</sup> Godoy Alcántara, J., *Historia crítica de los falsos cronicones*, Madrid, 1868, 2<sup>nd</sup>. ed. 1981, 35.

<sup>7</sup> Aguilar, F. de A., *Noticias de Segorbe y de su obispado*, Segorbe, 1890, 2<sup>nd</sup>. ed. Segorbe, 1983, 306. I am grateful to Profs. Jorge Catalá and Pablo Pérez of the University of Valencia for making this source available to me.

<sup>8</sup> Antonio Agustín to Pérez, Lérida 30 Aug. 1576, in Antonio, N., *Censura de historias fabulosas*, Valencia, 1742, 2<sup>nd</sup>. ed. Madrid, 1999, 683-685.

<sup>9</sup> “Usus in primis opera Johannis B. Perezii ministri mei, qui in superioribus emendationibus, ut puto, laudabiliter versatus, horum librorum veterum magnum usum habet”. Quiroga to the papacy, Oct. 1580. Aguilar, *Noticias de Segorbe*, 306.

positions such as cathedral canon and church librarian, and in 1582 he acted as secretary to the provincial council of Toledo. This gathering, led by Quiroga and the eminent humanist Benito Arias Montano, called upon Pérez to apply his detailed knowledge of ecclesiastical history to the task at hand.<sup>10</sup> The secretary's extensive collection of writings and annotated documents attests to his careful source work and attention to historical context.<sup>11</sup>

Pérez came into his own, as a scholar and cleric, when Philip II appointed him bishop of Segorbe in 1591. In the final years of his life, Pérez demonstrated his expertise as a religious authority among Old Christians and as a dedicated missionary among the moriscos. He approached his responsibilities as bishop with the same commitment and historical sensibilities that characterized his other endeavors. In 1593, for example, in response to the papal bull *Romanus Pontifex* (1585), Pérez carried out an *ad limina* visitation of his diocese and submitted a report to Rome. Whereas other bishops might send a single folio page recounting the principal issues of the day, Pérez saw fit to begin with a history of Segorbe, from its Visigothic origins through the sixteenth century.<sup>12</sup> He explored these issues further in his works on the bishops, synodal decrees, and benefices of Segorbe.<sup>13</sup> These academic efforts were not, however, disjointed from his practical duties as bishop. On the contrary, Pérez utilized this research in his reforms of Segorbe, as when he strove to elevate the conduct of the clergy or overhaul the system of benefices in the cathedral.<sup>14</sup> Further-

<sup>10</sup> Pérez, J. B., *Varios papeles... pertenece al Concilio Provincial de Toledo, año 1582 y 1583, 1753*. Montano had accompanied Martín Pérez de Ayala to the Council of Trent: Tellechea Idigoras, J. I., «Benito Arias Montano y San Carlos Borromeo», in Gómez Canseco, ed., *Anatomía del humanismo*, 64, 72.

<sup>11</sup> Examples include his *Notae ad Concilia Hispaniae, Series Regum Gothorum Hispaniae*, and *Colección de antiguos Historiadores Españoles*. Ximeno, V., *Escritores del reyno de Valencia*, Valencia, 1747, vol. I, 200-205. A detailed examination of his library, including many copies of medieval manuscripts, can be found in Villanueva, *Viage literario*, vol. III, 173-220.

<sup>12</sup> Cárcel Ortí, Ma. M., ed., *Relaciones sobre el estado de las diócesis valencianas*, Valencia, 1989, vol. III, 1445-1451.

<sup>13</sup> Ximeno, *Escritores*, vol. I, 204.

<sup>14</sup> In the report of 1593, for example, Pérez decried clerical absenteeism: "Quod ad residentiam attinet valde doleo abesse plurimos tum ex canonicis, tum vero maxime ex beneficiatus, sed huic malo mederi hactenus non potui propter pendentes plurimas lites de quibus nunc agit reverendissimus Vestrae Sanctitatis nuncius". Cárcel Ortí, *Relaciones*, vol. III, 1449. On the dispute with the cathedral, see Llorens y Raga, P. L., *Episcopologio de la diócesis de Segorbe-Castellón*, Madrid, 1973, vol. I, 321.

more, his correspondence reveals that many people looked to him to arbitrate questions over saints' festivals, the translation of relics, and the burial of eminent persons.<sup>15</sup> His opinion was valuable because of his learning, but also because he understood the importance of rituals in their local context. Upon arriving in Segorbe, for example, he drank from the waters of the Cueva Santa (Sacred Cave), thereby observing a local custom; in subsequent years, he engaged in a protracted dispute with a nearby monastery over the proper administration and financing of the shrine.<sup>16</sup> In an age when the Catholic Church sought to celebrate its traditions in spite of Protestant critics, bishops took on an increased responsibility to regulate clerical behavior and to channel lay devotions into forms acceptable to the official Church.<sup>17</sup>

The sizeable morisco population in Segorbe presented Pérez with an even more formidable challenge. According to the report of his predecessor, the diocese included twenty morisco towns, with some 1,600 New Christians, as they were still known.<sup>18</sup> The previous bishop painted a bleak portrait, citing the moriscos' continued ignorance of Christian doctrine, their adherence to Muslim ritual, and their secret alliances with the dreaded Ottoman Turk. "The moriscos ridicule and scorn the Christian religion, our holy mother Church, and our prayers... they only go to Mass when compelled and bribed by their rectors".<sup>19</sup> The persistence of Islamic customs among the

<sup>15</sup> Villanueva, *Viage literario*, vol. III, 164. In his synod of 1592, Pérez attempted to regularize worship on festival days and in weekly services. Aguilar, *Noticias de Segorbe*, 308-309.

<sup>16</sup> Aguilar, *Noticias de Segorbe*, 309-310, 322; Llorens y Raga, *Episcopologio*, vol. I, 321.

<sup>17</sup> For a further examination of these issues in the Valencian context see Ehlers, B., «Negotiating Reform: Archbishop Juan de Ribera (1532-1611) and the Colegio de Corpus Christi, Valencia», *Archive for Reformation History*, forthcoming.

<sup>18</sup> "Sunt in dicto episcopatu Segobricensi viginti oppidi occupata a mauris, in quibus sunt mille et sexcenti vicini..." "Información de presbíteros y de médicos sobre los impedimentos del obispo Martín de Salvatierra para hacer personalmente la visita". Segorbe 9 Feb. 1589. Cárcel Ortí, *Relaciones*, vol. III, 1441.

<sup>19</sup> "Item, se confirma mas esto y la notable burla y menosprecio que todos ellos [los moriscos] hacen de la religion xpiana y de nuestra sancta madre iglesia y de sus sacreficios y oraciones pues jamas los an visto ni veran entrar en las iglesias los dias de hacienda ni los de las fiestas y entonces solamente van a la hora de la missa compelidos y apremiados por los rectores..." "Parescer de Don Martín de Salvatierra", Madrid 30 July 1587, in Boronat y Barrachina, P., *Los moriscos españoles y su expulsión*, 1901, 2<sup>nd</sup>. ed. Granada, 1992, vol. I, 622.

moriscos belied their status as baptized Christians, and this rift between practice and theology sparked disagreements among Spanish authorities as to the best course of action. Many officials seized upon the readily available logic provided by common perceptions of the moriscos, arguing that their notorious heresy and collusion with Spain's enemies made them guilty of apostasy and treason. The archbishop of Valencia Juan de Ribera (1532-1611), whose morisco policy evolved considerably over the course of his 42-year tenure, became one of the most outspoken critics of the moriscos in the last decade of his life.<sup>20</sup> His counsel would provide the theological basis for the expulsion of the moriscos from the peninsula in 1609-1614, after the devout king Philip II was succeeded by the more circumspect Philip III. Other commentators, by contrast, maintained their faith in the power of the Word to effect the conversion of the moriscos and dedicated themselves to programs of evangelization. The millennial optimism that fueled the Franciscan missions in the New World was not dead in the morisco areas of Spain, and several clerics and scholars opposed expulsion on theological and practical grounds. Pedro de Valencia, a humanist and colleague of Pérez, wrote a treatise arguing for the gradual assimilation of the moriscos through close contact and intermarriage with Old Christians. Comparing the moriscos to the subject peoples of ancient Rome, Pedro de Valencia praised assimilation (“permixtión”) as “the most ancient, celebrated, and proven means... of achieving public peace, security, growth, and perpetuity of kingdoms and empires”.<sup>21</sup>

The morisco policy of Pérez does not fall easily into the categories of pro- or anti-expulsion, but nonetheless holds important implications for his opinion with respect to the *plomos* of Granada. On the one hand, Pérez evinced none of the wide-eyed idealism that might

<sup>20</sup> Benítez, R., *Heroicas decisiones: la monarquía católica y los moriscos valencianos*, Valencia, 2001; «Felipe II y los moriscos. El intento decisivo de asimilación, 1559-1568», *Estudios de Historia de Valencia*, Valencia, 1978, 183-201. See also Benjamin Ehlers, «Christians and Muslims in Valencia: The Archbishop Juan de Ribera (1532-1611) and the Formation of a *Communitas Christiana*», Ph. D. Diss., Johns Hopkins, 1999, ch. 4-6.

<sup>21</sup> “... la permixtión, que es el medio más antiguo, más loado y aprobado, con razones y experiencia, y el de mejores efectos, que se ha hallado en el mundo para la pública paz y concordia, para la seguridad, y acrecentamiento, y para la perpetuidad de los Reynos y Ymperios”. Pedro de Valencia, *Tratado acerca de los moriscos de España (manuscrito del siglo XVII)*, Málaga, 1997, 133.

have characterized a younger prelate, or a bishop of an earlier generation. Well into his fifties when he arrived in Segorbe, Pérez recognized the reality of the situation. Complacent seigneurs (including the powerful Dukes of Segorbe) turned a blind eye to the religious beliefs of their most profitable tenants, and greedy inquisitors contented themselves with exploiting morisco apostasy for financial gain. The task of instruction was left to the bishops, whose ongoing efforts had borne little fruit: as Pérez noted, “in the seventy years since the moriscos were baptized there have been many councils of prelates and royal advisors, and up until now a sufficient remedy for these problems has not been found... nor do I know one”.<sup>22</sup> The issue demanded resolution on account of “the many homicides and robberies that the moriscos commit on the roads out of hatred for the Christians”, as well as their espionage on behalf of the Turk, and “the great danger that they will rebel, as they have attempted several times”.<sup>23</sup> These hazards led Pérez to the pragmatic conclusion that all courses of action “can be reduced to two: instruction, or exile”.<sup>24</sup> In a treatise to Philip II, Pérez showed himself to be more receptive to the prospect of expulsion than his colleague Pedro de Valencia. He defended this measure against those who claimed that sending the moriscos to Berbery would necessarily lead to the apostasy of baptized Christians: “[send the moriscos rather] to Guinea, where there are Gentiles, or to northern islands, where they will not have the chance to be Moors”. In the event that the moriscos then proceeded to North Africa, Pérez added grimly, “better that they be Moors there than in Spain”.<sup>25</sup>

In the absence of a royal decree of expulsion, however, Pérez threw himself into the task of evangelization, and in this effort he acted upon

<sup>22</sup> “... ha setenta años que se baptizaron y después acá ha habido muchísimas juntas de prelados y consejeros de S. M., y hasta ahora no se ha podido hallar bastante remedio para los daños... ni yo lo sé”. “Sobre la reformación de los moriscos del reino de Valencia”, cited in Aguilar, *Noticias de Segorbe*, 314.

<sup>23</sup> “... muchos homicidios y robos que hacen por los caminos con el odio que tienen a los cristianos... por el peligro grande que hay de rebelarse como lo han intentado algunas veces”. Aguilar, *Noticias de Segorbe*, 314-315.

<sup>24</sup> “pero a mi parecer todos los medios de que se puede tratar se pueden reducir a dos, es a saber: Instrucción o destierro”. Boronat, *Los moriscos*, vol. I, 364.

<sup>25</sup> “... sino en tierras de Guinea donde son gentiles o en yslas septentrionales donde no se les de ocasion para ser moros... menos mal es que sean moros alla [in Berbery] que en España”. Boronat, *Los moriscos*, vol. I, 365.

a number of comparatively progressive ideas. As a young protégé of Martín Pérez de Ayala in Valencia, Pérez witnessed firsthand the missionary enterprise of a remarkably open-minded archbishop. In the space of a few years, Pérez de Ayala held a diocesan synod, published a catechism in Spanish and Arabic, and urged the Duke of Gandía to fund a chair of Arabic to instruct preachers and curates in morisco areas.<sup>26</sup> In his early studies, Juan Bautista Pérez wrote in his own hand a *Dictionarium arabicum*, in which he identified hundreds of Arabic terms in Latin, and occasionally Hebrew and Greek.<sup>27</sup> He conferred this willingness to delve into the culture of the Other —by no means generally accepted among his colleagues— to his morisco policy as bishop of Segorbe. Pérez ordered friars who usually went only to Old Christian areas to preach to moriscos as well, and advocated speaking in Arabic at first.<sup>28</sup> In a letter to Philip II he agreed that predication “is very much in keeping with the holy zeal that Your Majesty has for the spiritual health of your subjects. I have preached [to the moriscos] in person many times, and I will name preachers to procure their instruction”.<sup>29</sup> In addition to sending occasional instructors to the moriscos of Segorbe, Pérez also sought to bring a more permanent Christian influence into their lives by revitalizing the parish system. Although parish lines had been drawn in New Christian communities back in the 1530s, in many cases these demarcations remained a dead letter over the sixteenth century. Secular landlords refused to contribute their share of the cost of instruction, and priests avoided these impoverished and even dangerous posts at all costs. Noting that “there is no reason to exhaust oneself searching for means of instruction, if there are no resident rectors with a decent salary”, Pérez attempted to combat absenteeism by

<sup>26</sup> Pérez de Ayala, M., *Doctrina cristiana en lengua árabe y castellana para instrucción de los moriscos*, Valencia, 1566, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Valencia, 1911; Gutiérrez, C., «Don Martín Pérez de Ayala (1504-1566), figura de vanguardia», *Estudios Eclesiásticos* 41 (1966), 459.

<sup>27</sup> Villanueva, *Viage literario*, vol. III, 178-179.

<sup>28</sup> Aguilar notes that in his “Sobre la reformación de los moriscos”, Pérez “advierte que los religiosos que suelen predicar siempre a cristianos viejos, deberían ir también a los nuevos, a quienes convendría al principio predicar en árabe”. *Noticias de Segorbe*, 315.

<sup>29</sup> “Todo ello es muy conforme al sto. zelo que V. Magd. tiene de la salud spiritual de sus subditos, y en quanto a lo primero yo por mi persona les he predicado muchas bezes y procuro que les ynstruyan y agora hare particular nombramiento de algunos predicadores...” Pérez to Philip II, Segorbe 27 Feb. 1596. Boronat, *Los moriscos españoles*, vol. I, 363, fn. 40.

elevating several former annexes to parish status, and by increasing the endowment of morisco parishes to 100 Valencian *libras*.<sup>30</sup> By raising salaries, enforcing residence, and bringing in foreign clerics as rectors, Pérez tried to bring regular Christian worship to areas that had often gone largely untouched since the forced baptisms of the 1520s.<sup>31</sup>

The overall pattern which emerges is of a bishop who, despite his keen understanding of the historical difficulties involved, worked hard to create dialogue and points of agreement between Old Christians and moriscos in Segorbe. Unlike his more complacent predecessors, Pérez was willing to ruffle feathers in this enterprise, and ultimately the noble seigneurs who had blocked prior efforts at conversion hampered the implementation of his program as well. Nonetheless, the tenor of his morisco policy illustrates important points vis-à-vis his vision of Christian-Muslim relations in Spain. At each turn, Pérez embraced any available language—including the language of the Koran—to open a dialogue with his New Christian parishioners. Even music held out hope for him: it was an old tradition that matins be sung during Corpus Christi and other festival days in Segorbe, and Pérez wrote to Rome seeking permission to extend this practice to other occasions, evidently because this format appealed to the moriscos.<sup>32</sup> Given his commitment to evangelization and his search for a form of Christianity that resonated among moriscos, Pérez might have welcomed the *plomos* of Granada as a means of ushering the New Christians into the fold. The nature of the *plomos* and the circumstances of their appearance, however, prompted Pérez to take a leading role in decrying them as falsifications. His desire to convert the moriscos did not extend to endorsing relics he believed to be dangerous to the Church and all its followers.

The discoveries of the Sacromonte stirred a far-reaching controversy that one historian has compared to an early modern soap opera.<sup>33</sup> In the spring of 1588, workers carrying out the destruction of

<sup>30</sup> “no hay para que cansarse en buscar formas de instrucción, si no hay rectores residentes con salario competente”. Aguilar, *Noticias de Segorbe*, 316.

<sup>31</sup> Aguilar, *Noticias de Segorbe*, 314-321. Boronat, *Los moriscos españoles*, vol. I, 361-365.

<sup>32</sup> This petition from Segorbe was rejected by the Congregation of Rites. Aguilar, *Noticias de Segorbe*, 313.

<sup>33</sup> Morocho Gayo, G., «Estudio introductorio», in Pedro de Valencia, *Obras completas*, León, 1999, vol. IV/2, 252.

an old minaret discovered a lead box containing a few odd objects and a folded parchment. A Latin inscription on the document identified one of the relics as a new prophecy of St John, given to St. Cecilio by St. Dionysius the Areopagite. Cecilio translated the prophecy, which foretold with uncanny accuracy the arrival of Muḥammad and Martin Luther, from Hebrew to Castilian and appended an Arabic commentary for the people of Granada. The Latin inscription went on to say that Cecilio, the first bishop of Granada, had given the relics to a local priest to preserve them from the Moors.<sup>34</sup> Whereas the archbishop of Granada Pedro de Castro (appointed 1590) and his parishioners celebrated these discoveries, the reaction of the scholarly community was a bit more guarded. Philip II, in response to entreaties by Castro, appealed to Spain's most respected humanist, the Sevillian Benito Arias Montano.<sup>35</sup> Although he had little desire to become entangled in this situation, when pressed Arias Montano did deliver a carefully worded but clear opinion. Deferring to the authority of Scripture, reason, and tradition, Arias Montano expressed doubts concerning the antiquity of the handwriting, ink, and language of the document. Comparing the parchment of 1588 to astrological works and other known falsifications, he hinted that it owed more to the medieval hispano-Arabic tradition of prophecy than to the Johannine writings of the apostolic period.<sup>36</sup> Arias Montano's reservations set the tone for a dispute that would escalate: the archbishop Castro and other supporters of the relics found themselves opposed by the scholars most qualified to pass judgment on the relics.

The stakes of this controversy were raised by a second round of discoveries, initiated in February 1595 by treasure-hunters in the hills near Granada. The earliest finds included four lead plaques, inscribed in Latin, describing the martyrdom of Cecilio and Tesifon, two Arab brothers and disciples of St. James. During the reign of Nero, according to the plaques, these two men and five other martyrs had been cremated and buried in Granada. Provocatively, one plaque also made certain reference to the prophecy discovered in the minaret in 1588.

<sup>34</sup> Harris, «Forging History», 945-946.

<sup>35</sup> Alonso, *Los apócrifos*, 50-54. B. Rekers identifies Montano as "the first to see through this hoax": *Benito Arias Montano (1527-1598)*, London, 1972, 11.

<sup>36</sup> Benito Arias Montano to Juan de Fonseca, dean of the cathedral of Granada, Seville 4 May 1593. Rep. in Pedro de Valencia, *Obras completas*, vol. IV/2, 362-367.

The growing army of diggers subsequently unearthed the putative human ashes as well as twenty-two books, featuring Arabic rendered in strange characters carved onto thin sheets of lead. These *plomos*, ostensibly written by Tesifon and Cecilio, addressed subjects such as the lives of the apostles, the virtues of Mary, and the nature of God.<sup>37</sup> The people of Granada redoubled their enthusiasm, converting the hillside of the Sacromonte (as it was now called) into a forest of crosses.<sup>38</sup> As part of his drive to prove the authenticity of the relics to Philip II and the papacy, the archbishop Castro printed a *relación* or report relating the content of the discoveries. These printed materials, along with other accounts by observers in Granada, circulated in Rome, at Court, and around Spain. By these means defenders of the *plomos* courted public opinion and subtly defused the quiet criticisms of the relics that emerged among parties not swayed by the growing cult of the Sacromonte.

The Inquisitor General Gerónimo Manrique de Lara, perhaps resentful of Castro's attempts to appeal directly to Rome in the matter of the *plomos*, numbered among those who declined to accept the authenticity of the relics on faith. On the contrary, after reviewing the materials sent from Granada he chose to forward a copy of Castro's *relación* to Juan Bautista Pérez in Segorbe.<sup>39</sup> This should come as no surprise; Pérez had always enjoyed a strong reputation as a linguist and historian, and in recent years he had spoken openly on the subject of falsifications. In 1594, the bishop denounced the so-called *Chronicones* of Dextro and Máximo, purportedly ancient histories of the early Church in Spain.<sup>40</sup> (Pérez evidently received a copy of the work from the likely author himself, the Jesuit Jerónimo Román de la Higuera, and voiced his doubts in his reply).<sup>41</sup> In the case of the *plomos* of Granada, Pérez never enjoyed the opportunity

<sup>37</sup> "Relación y argumento de los libros plúmbeos", in Pedro de Valencia, *Obras completas*, vol. IV/2, 280-288.

<sup>38</sup> Harris, "Forging History", 947.

<sup>39</sup> Alonso, *Los apócrifos*, 75-77.

<sup>40</sup> Villanueva, *Viage literario*, vol. III, 166; Mayans y Ciscar, G., *Obras completas*, Valencia, 1983, vol. I, 355.

<sup>41</sup> "Estos días escribí al Padre Higuera, diciendole que es fingido el *Chronico* de Fulda en nombre de Dextro, i Maximo, cuya copia aqui tengo: i puedo probar ser fingido con cien argumentos: pero no tengo lugar para escrivillos". Pérez to Maestro Christóbal de Palomares, church librarian in Toledo, Segorbe 28 Jan. 1595. Rep. in Antonio, *Censura*, 529.

to examine the relics themselves. Rather, he formulated his opinions on the basis of the *relación*, which included excerpts from the parchment and the lead plaques, as well as summaries of the first few leaden books.<sup>42</sup> In short order, Pérez composed his concise *Parecer*, which included fifteen enumerated arguments demonstrating the falsity of the *plomos*.<sup>43</sup> He forwarded this manuscript to González de Valcárcel, a lawyer and royal councilor in Madrid, asking him to circulate these objections quietly, divulging the name of the author only to trusted persons.<sup>44</sup> Pérez did not, it seems, have high hopes with respect to the possible impact of his *parecer*. A few days later he wrote a letter to an unnamed friend, most likely Arias Montano: “you ask me to give my opinion [of the *plomos*] to send to the Archbishop of Granada. I started to write him, that I think it is all fiction for many arguments I could make against it. But it doesn’t seem to me that he has asked for opinions, as he should, in determining such a grave matter; because I have read that there are already processions on the mountainside, as if it were a certainty. Thus there is no reason to send my *Parecer* to the Archbishop, because what has already gone so far will not turn back now... at this point my opinion would only be good for laughs”.<sup>45</sup> Pérez apparently did not know that the archbishop Castro had indeed solicited opinions, including (at the behest of Philip II) that of Arias Montano. But even from Segorbe he sensed correctly that his views would not arrive in time to stop a Granadan cult of debatable legitimacy, and that they would not be warmly received by Castro.

<sup>42</sup> Arias Montano, by contrast, apparently did examine the original parchment in 1593, a task in which he was assisted by Pedro de Valencia. Pedro de Valencia, *Obras completas*, vol. IV/2, 225-226, 363.

<sup>43</sup> The *parecer* runs to 21 pages in a modern edition: Villanueva, *Viage literario*, vol. III, 259-280.

<sup>44</sup> Pedro de Valencia, *Obras completas*, vol. IV/2, 250. In 1596 Pérez complained to Pedro de Castro after the Lic. López Madera cited Pérez by name in a defense of the *plomos*. Alonso, *Los apócrifos*, 94, 131-132.

<sup>45</sup> “... me pide vm. que diga mi parecer para enviarle al Señor Arzobispo de Granada. Yo comencé a escribirle, y lo tengo todo por ficción por muchos argumentos que puedo hacer contra ello. Pero no me parece que han pedido pareceres, como era razón, en cosa tan grave antes de determinarse; porque me escriben que ya van en procesiones todos al monte, como cosa cierta. Y así no hay para que enviar mi parecer al Arzobispo; porque no volverá atrás si lo ha puesto tan adelante... Mi parecer ya no servirá ahora sino de risas”. Pérez [to Arias Montano], Segorbe 8 June 1595. Villanueva, *Viage literario*, vol. III, 169-170.

Despite these reservations, Pérez constructed a careful and detailed *Parecer*, making a case for the falsity of the *plomos* through a series of diverse arguments. For heuristic purposes, these might be divided into three categories, historical, linguistic, and logical. Pérez opens his treatise with a discussion of the claim that Cecilio, Tesifon, and the other saints died near Granada during the second year of Nero's reign and were buried in the Sacromonte. In the first place, he objects, only Cecilio died in Granada; the others served as bishops in other cities, and were buried in other places. All credible sources, furthermore, identify these saints as confessors rather than as martyrs, leading Pérez to question the *plomos* on this score. Pérez also points out that these saints were disciples of Peter and Paul, not James, and that the persecution of Christians under Nero did not begin until the tenth year of his reign. In raising all of these objections, Pérez supports his claims with documentary evidence. His sources include the martyrology of the Venerable Bede, mozarab breviaries, and manuscripts such as "a book of ancient parchment, written in Gothic lettering, in the library of the college of Alcalá de Henares", containing early histories by Jerome and Isidore of Seville.<sup>46</sup> He complements these works with discoveries from the newly emerging field of archaeology, which he and Antonio Agustín had pursued through their correspondence. The identification of Illiberis as the city of Granada is proven through Roman lapidaries, many of which were unearthed in the sixteenth century.<sup>47</sup> In each of these cases, Pérez demonstrates a humanist's approach to texts, comparing sources and assessing their reliability. He is particularly aware of errors in copying and interpretation that have crept into the histories over time, such as the confusion between *Illipula* (near Córdoba) and *Illiberis* (Granada); given that he dates this mistake to a history written in the time of Ferdinand and Isabella, Pérez finds it especially troubling that it would reappear in the *plomos*.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>46</sup> "Pero donde está más a la larga es en un libro de pergamino antiguo, que está escrito de letra gótica en la librería del Colegio de Alcalá de Henares..." Pérez, "Parecer", in Villanueva, *Viage literario*, vol. III, 261.

<sup>47</sup> Pérez, "Parecer", in Villanueva, *Viage literario*, vol. III, 264. Agustín's fascination with ancient inscriptions, coins, and medals is amply demonstrated in his correspondence: Flores Selles, C., ed., *Epistolario de Antonio Agustín*, Salamanca, 1980.

<sup>48</sup> Pérez traces this error to the work of Juan Margarit, bishop of Gerona. "Pero este fingidor de las planchas se engañó por un autor que se llama Juan Margarit, obispo de Gerona, que escribió una historia latina en tiempo de los Reyes Católicos, y allí pensó

Pérez also questions the antiquity of the *plomos* through an examination of their language. Reiterating a concern raised by Arias Montano, he notes that the falsifier “had very little Latin with which to falsify; the poor idiom, as anyone who has heard ancient Latin will understand, is not ancient but that of today... what is more, the poor orthography of these engravings, according to the copy I have been sent, does not correspond to ancient practice”.<sup>49</sup> In the matter of the odd Salomonic characters in which the Arabic passages were written, Pérez expresses even more deep-seated reservations. In the Old Testament, he argues, Solomon wrote in Hebrew, using the standard Hebrew alphabet of his age. The invention of an esoteric script, useful in writing exorcisms and other forms of secret knowledge, Pérez attributes to “magicians and enchanters, because necromancers have a certain book of spells with unknown characters, which they call *Clavicula Salomonis*, and it is prohibited in all the catalogues of the Inquisition”.<sup>50</sup> He rejects the idea that this script can be traced to a book found by Virgil in a cavern in Arabia, since he finds no such conclusion in Scripture. This denunciation supports his thesis on more than one level. On the one hand, Pérez seeks to associate the *plomos* with relatively recent works of astrology and necromancy, books that often fell under suspicion in the inquisitorial age. His reference to Virgil’s apocryphal discovery also compares the *plomos* to another seemingly miraculous forgery, and suggests one possible inspiration behind the suspiciously familiar circumstances of their disinterment. Moreover, his objections to the Salomonic script bespeak his humanist approach to Scripture. Like Erasmus and other Christian humanists, Pérez upheld the Bible as the gold standard, an exemplar of clarity and doctrinal purity. In this sense, his denuncia-

que Illipula era Granada”. Pérez, “Parecer”, in Villanueva, *Viage literario*, vol. III, 270. Julio Caro Baroja comments upon this error in his *Las falsificaciones de la historia*, Barcelona, 1992, 132.

<sup>49</sup> “Lo décimotercero tengo por fingidas las láminas en este tiempo y por hombre que sabía poco latín para fingir, por la mala frasis, como lo entenderá el que tuviera buen oído al latín antiguo, porque son frasis de ahora y no antiguas... Y demás de esto, las malas ortografías de estas láminas, según la copia que me han enviado, no se compadecen en la antigüedad”. Pérez, “Parecer”, in Villanueva, *Viage literario*, vol. III, 276.

<sup>50</sup> “Item, que el llamar caracteres de Salomón suena cosa de mágicos o encantadores, porque los nigrománticos tienen cierto libro de conjuros con caracteres incógnitos, el qual llaman *clavicula Salomonis*, y está vedado en todos los catálogos de la Inquisición”. Pérez, “Parecer”, in Villanueva, *Viage literario*, vol. III, 272.

tion of the *plomos* as obscurantist echoed earlier humanist critiques of scholasticism.<sup>51</sup> The simple Hebrew of Solomon contrasts sharply to the Arabic in the *plomos*: “since the book is in Arabic, it would make more sense to write it in Arabic characters; because writing one language in the characters of another seems like a joke, designed to create work for those trying to decipher it. There is no example of such a book in all of antiquity”.<sup>52</sup>

Just as it does not seem logical to Pérez that Tesifon would write Arabic in another script, so he finds other internal inconsistencies within the *plomos*. Indeed, he opens the question of whether Tesifon, whose name suggests he was Greek, was an Arab at all. If he was called Abenatar before his conversion to Christianity, why did he choose a Gentile name afterward? Given that there were no Arabs in Spain in the first century, why would the apostles select such a preacher to send from Rome to Iberia? Pérez proceeds to perhaps the most obvious criticism of the *plomos*, the fact that Tesifon wrote the book in Arabic hundreds of years before the Muslim conquest, supposedly for the benefit of the faithful: “if he wrote the book for the Spanish, it was ridiculous to write it in a language that no one in Spain understood”.<sup>53</sup> Tipping his hand, he suggests that there is no reason for this illogicality, “unless, this author wants us to venerate some Moor from Granada named Abenatar as a saint”.<sup>54</sup> Pérez follows up on this point in his discussion of the alleged disciples of these martyrs, whose names appear in no other source. Comparing them to

<sup>51</sup> Domingo Ynduráin has argued that given their hostility to the intricate logic of scholasticism, “... la impresión que producen los humanistas es la de unos intelectuales que predicán el antiintelectualismo”. Ynduráin, *Humanismo y Renacimiento*, 133.

<sup>52</sup> “... porque más conforme a razón era que, siendo en lengua arábica, se escribiese con caracteres arábigos; porque escrito de una lengua con caracteres de otra parece juguete para sólo hacer trabajar a los que se precian de descifrar, y no hay tal exemplo de libros en toda la antigüedad”. Pérez, “Parecer”, in Villanueva, *Viage literario*, vol. III, 272. This last comment may be a veiled reference to the contemporary aljamiado literature of the moriscos, which consisted of Spanish written in Arabic characters. Cardaillac, L., *Moriscos y cristianos: Un enfrentamiento polémico (1492-1640)*, Madrid, 1979.

<sup>53</sup> “Y si él escribía su libro para los españoles, era cosa de burla escribirlo en lengua que nadie la entendiese de España”. Pérez, “Parecer”, in Villanueva, *Viage literario*, vol. III, 272.

<sup>54</sup> “... entonces ni se usaba lengua arábica acá en España, ni andaban los árabes en el occidente, ni es de creer que los apóstoles sacarían predicadores de Arabia para enviar dende Roma a España, si no es que nos quiera este autor hacer adorar por santo algún moro de Granada llamado Abenatar”. Pérez, “Parecer”, in Villanueva, *Viage literario*, vol. III, 271.

the heretics venerated by followers of Priscillian in late antique Spain, he wonders if “these leaden books were invented by some heretic to ridicule the Church”.

Following these considerations, Pérez situates the *plomos* within a long-standing tradition of forgeries, including ancient falsifications such as the Gospel of St. Thomas and more recent frauds perpetrated by Anno of Viterbo and the Marquis of Pescara.<sup>55</sup> (His certainty on this score brings out his dry wit. “Since this fabricator didn’t know languages, he tried to disguise the Spanish language he did know, without noticing that Solomon didn’t write with letters like those of today”. Sounding rather like a disappointed schoolteacher, Pérez suggests that a more clever forgery would have at least borrowed characters from foreign alphabets, several of which were readily available in published form).<sup>56</sup> The especially emphatic conclusion of the *plomos*, he adds, which “urges the veneration of these saints with such insistence, makes me suspect that these lead books were made with no other purpose than to promote this veneration”.<sup>57</sup> The fact that they had apparently been designed to foster a cult to these saints made them more pernicious than they otherwise would have been. His historical knowledge, linguistic abilities and reason, led Pérez to the conclusion that these fabrications constituted a willful attempt to manipulate the religiosity of the Granadan people.

What became of the *Parecer* of Juan Bautista Pérez? This is a clouded question, because some of the documentation surrounding the controversy over the *plomos* was subsequently altered or even invented by defenders of the Sacromonte. In this area, the layers of falsification pile one upon the other. The royal councilor González de Valcárcel did introduce the *Parecer* at Court, where it circulated along with other criticisms of the *plomos* in manuscript form.<sup>58</sup> Allies of Castro sent the treatise to the archbishop, who evidently

<sup>55</sup> Pérez, “Parecer”, in Villanueva, *Viage literario*, vol. III, 276-277.

<sup>56</sup> Pérez helpfully suggested the work of Guillaume Postel, among others. “Pero como el que fingió esto no sabía lenguas, arrojóse al alfabeto español disimulado que él sabía, y no echó de ver que Salomón entonces no escribía letras parecidas a las españolas de ahora”. “Parecer”, in Villanueva, *Viage literario*, vol. III, 274.

<sup>57</sup> “... y me hace sospecha el ver que al fin de estas láminas hace tanta fuerza en que honren estos santos, que parece no se hicieron estas láminas para otro efecto sino para persuadir que los honren”. Pérez, “Parecer”, in Villanueva, *Viage literario*, vol. III, 275.

<sup>58</sup> Alonso, *Los apócrifos*, 76, 83.

wrote to Pérez to recruit him to the cause.<sup>59</sup> Thanking the humanist for his questions, Castro appraised him of the progress of the authentication process and asked him to recommend suitable translators for the *plomos*. Pérez played along, perhaps, suggesting a Valencian Jesuit who was too old to travel to Granada and a medical doctor from Gandía who had no expertise in theology.<sup>60</sup> Their correspondence ended inconclusively with the death of Pérez in 1597, at which point he ceased to be a thorn in Castro's side. In his final testament Pérez left instructions that his criticisms of the *plomos* be published in a *santoral* of local saints, but his successor in the diocese of Segorbe, a supporter of the Sacromonte, declined to carry out this request.<sup>61</sup>

Even in manuscript form, however, the *Parecer* of Pérez proved to be a seminal work within the literature opposed to the *plomos*. When the humanist Pedro de Valencia wrote his own negative opinion of the leaden books in 1607, he acknowledged a debt to Pérez, "a man of great piety and doctrine".<sup>62</sup> By the early years of the seventeenth century, moreover, humanist scholars could be found on both sides of the debate: Pablo de Céspedes and his disciple Bernardo de Aldrete set aside their philological reservations and publicly endorsed the growing cult of the Sacromonte in the interest of religious and political harmony.<sup>63</sup> The fact that a few humanists of the next generation capitulated to a state in need of a Christian heritage did not silence the opposition incepted by Montano and Pérez. Through his own opinion and his influence on others, Pérez figured prominently in the body of scholarly opinion that contributed to the papal condemnation of the

<sup>59</sup> Castro's supporters at Court included the royal tutor, García de Loaisa, and the historian Fernando de Mendoza. Pedro de Valencia, *Obras completas*, vol. IV/2, 248.

<sup>60</sup> Pedro de Valencia, *Obras completas*, vol. IV/2, 249. The physician, Dr. Alí, evidently did see the *plomos* and declare that he could not understand them. Alonso, *Los apócrifos*, 130-131.

<sup>61</sup> Feliciano de Figueroa, bishop of Segorbe, explained his views to Pedro de Castro in a letter dated 9 May 1599. Heredia Barnuevo, D. N., *Místico ramillete. Vida de D. Pedro de Castro, fundador del Sacromonte*, Granada, facs. ed. 1998, 56-57.

<sup>62</sup> "Contra las láminas también han argüido muchos, señaladamente el obispo de Segorbe, varón de gran piedad y doctrina". «El discurso de Pedro de Valencia sobre el pergamino y láminas de Granada», in *Obras completas*, vol. IV/2, 432.

<sup>63</sup> Rectifying humanist scholarship with their support of the Sacromonte was not an easy task. Aldrete had argued in 1606 that the Castilian language did not exist in ancient times, and this obligated him to insist that the presence of Castilian in the *plomos* attested to their miraculous creation. Rubio Lapaz, *Pablo de Céspedes*, 56-62, 85-86.

*plomos* in the later seventeenth century.<sup>64</sup> Over the course of the next 200 years, moreover, historians of a more Enlightened persuasion celebrated Pérez as a courageous critic who did not allow religious zeal to cloud his view of these blatant forgeries. For Gregorio Mayans y Siscar, who saw the *plomos* as “wellsprings of execrable lies”, Pérez represented a “very wise impugner of false chronicles”.<sup>65</sup> In the dramatic phrase of José Godoy Alcántara, “the most expert of the clergy, terror of the fabricators, don Juan Bautista Pérez mercilessly let fall the mace of his critical abilities in a writing noteworthy for its erudition and good sense”.<sup>66</sup>

Viewed from another perspective, the *Parecer* of Juan Bautista Pérez helps to nuance our understanding of Spanish humanism around the turn of the century. First, the case of Pérez suggests that humanists who took issue with the *plomos* of Granada were not necessarily opposed to the assimilationist spirit that guided their creation. As the leaden books were translated and circulated in the 1590s, their intended goals with respect to the morisco question came into sharper focus. In addition to the pivotal role of their supposed authors, the Arab converts Cecilio and Tesifon, the *plomos* offered a syncretic version of Christianity that incorporated numerous elements from Islam. The likely authors of the *plomos* were two assimilated moriscos who had served Philip II during the second uprising of the Granadan moriscos in 1568-1571, falsifying documents intended to quell the rebellion.<sup>67</sup> The doctrines contained within the leaden books included celebrations of the omnipotence of God, passages placing Christ in the tradition of prophets, an omission of limbo, and other aspects designed to accommodate Catholicism to moriscos by emphasizing areas of agreement and downplaying contentious issues such as the Trinity and the Eucharist.<sup>68</sup> Pérez, in a similar vein, had called upon

<sup>64</sup> Caro Baroja, *Las falsificaciones*, 136-137.

<sup>65</sup> “... manantiales de mentiras execrables”; “Don Juan Bautista Pérez, impugnador juiciosísimo de los falsos chronicones”. Mayans y Siscar, *Obras completas*, vol. I, 326.

<sup>66</sup> “... lo más granado del clero, aventajándose a todos el terror de los falsarios, don Juan Bautista Pérez, que dejó caer despiadadamente su maza crítica en un escrito donde resaltan, como en todos los de su pluma, su erudición y buen sentido”. Godoy, *Historia crítica*, 107.

<sup>67</sup> Miguel de Luna and Alonso del Castillo, who probably did not work alone in creating the *plomos*. See Cabanelas, D., *El morisco granadino, Alonso del Castillo*, Granada, 1991.

<sup>68</sup> Pedro de Valencia, *Obras completas*, vol. IV/2, 280-288; Godoy Alcántara,

his preachers and parish rectors to seek out connections to the morisco community, through patient dialogue and the use of Arabic. His opposition to the *plomos* did not emerge from any *a priori* hostility to the continued presence of the moriscos in Spain, or to the willingness to tailor the Gospel in trying to reach New Christians. Rather, he objected to the blatant anachronisms of the relics and their destructive potential for all Spaniards.

The opinion of Pérez also attests to the vitality of the Spanish humanist community at the time of the discoveries in Granada. According to the conventional wisdom, humanism had been largely exterminated in Spain by mid-century, or at the very least driven away from the center of debate into narrowly antiquarian activities. The activity of Pérez, Arias Montano, and Pedro de Valencia demonstrates that much like their forebears of an earlier generation, Spanish humanists of the late sixteenth century “were capable of equivocation and nuance”.<sup>69</sup> This *Parecer* constitutes a new application of humanist techniques to a central issue of the day, with the goal of adverting the authorities of a potentially disastrous forgery. Though Pérez brought his extensive learning to this subject, he was not a positivist concerned solely with reason and empirical rigor. On the contrary, his objections arose both from the falsity of the *plomos* and from their evident use to foster a cult of the Sacromonte in Granada. “The danger of venerating bones that are not from saints”: Pérez noted in conclusion that an infinite number of Muslims had been buried in Granada over the centuries, and that even if the *plomos* were genuine there would be no way to verify the identity of these remains. “I have examined these points in detail because I understand that it is a service to God to disabuse in a matter as important as venerating true or false relics”.<sup>70</sup> Like humanists in the age of Charles V, Pérez harnessed his erudition in an attempt to remedy abuses in the practice of religion. His sensitivity to

*Historia crítica*, 50-54; Menéndez Pelayo, M., *Historia de los heterodoxos españoles*, Madrid, 1965, vol. IV, 352. Though apparently intended to create a common history and religion for moriscos and Old Christians, these aspects of the *plomos* ultimately figured in the papal condemnation of 1682: “Hay en ellos pasajes con resabios de mahometismo y clara influencia coránica”. Caro Baroja, *Las falsificaciones*, 137.

<sup>69</sup> Homza, *Religious Authority*, 213.

<sup>70</sup> “He sido largo en desmenuzar algunas cosas porque entiendo que es hacer servicio a Dios desengañar en materia tan grave como es venerar verdaderas o falsas reliquias”. Pérez, “Parecer”, in Villanueva, *Viage literario*, vol. III, 278.

context and his willingness to oppose a popular cult illustrate that long after the works of Erasmus appeared on the inquisitorial Index, Christian humanism remained a forceful and independent voice in the critical questions facing Spain.

#### ABSTRACT

This article addresses the *Parecer* of the humanist Juan Bautista Pérez (d. 1597), one of the earliest critics of the relics unearthed in Granada in the decade after 1588. Given his relatively progressive morisco policy as bishop of Segorbe, Pérez might well have welcomed the *plomos*, which created a history that encompassed both Muslims and Christians. His humanist training, however, led him to conclude that the *plomos* were a modern forgery, and that their veneration would lead the Spanish people astray. The *Parecer* (1595) of Pérez represents one example of scholarly rigor, creativity, and religious devotion among Spanish humanists in the later sixteenth century.

#### RESUMEN

Este trabajo examina el parecer del obispo y humanista Juan Bautista Pérez (ca. 1534-1597), uno de los primeros críticos de las reliquias desenterradas en Granada a partir de 1588. Dada su política morisca bastante progresista en la diócesis de Segorbe, bien habría podido Pérez aprobar la aparición de los plomos, que creaban una historia común para cristianos y musulmanes. Su erudición, por el contrario, le hizo concluir que los plomos fueron una fabricación moderna, y que su veneración pondría en peligro de desviación religiosa al pueblo español. El parecer de Pérez (1595) es un ejemplo de rigor, creatividad, y devoción religiosa entre los humanistas de finales del siglo XVI.